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Solo Music Festival Reveals Dynamic Fusion

Ari Susanto spoke with a musical duo whose distant origins and diverse backgrounds blend harmoniously

Most audiences expect that the traditional Indonesian *kendang* drum would not go together with the more modern flute but the recent Solo International Ethnic Music Festival in Solo, Central Java, proved everyone wrong.

The festival featured the collaboration of Indonesian *kendang* maestro Suryadi "Plenthe" Nugroho and Spanish jazz and classical flute player Rodrigo Parejo Mateos, on stage to perform their own experimental music.

"Our music is spontaneous, not based on arrangement. While playing, I know where Mateos is going and he also knows where I am going too as we agreed to play in one concept in advance. This way, our instruments lead our performance," Plenthe said.

For them, playing music does not merely require the skill of mastering an instrument. Rather, it is about figuring out concepts of music that will express the passion and character of each player. Doing so, according to them, the most difficult phase is not learning to play an instrument, but finding other musicians with the same passion to share the idea.

"We hadn't known each other personally yet, but we played music as though we were old friends. In an impromptu collaboration, we can identify our partner's ego and emotion as our own characters are uncovered," Mateos said.

"What you saw was a sonic interaction between Mateos and me. During the concert, we abandoned our egos, and kept playing with heart to feel what each of us want to come up seconds ahead," Plenthe said.

The result is fascinating compositions which encompass unusual melodic qual-

ities and odd beats which are far from mainstream. Instead it is immediate and full of expression.

By this way, both are familiar with unusual combination of different instruments since they believe all kind music instrument from various cultures can join in one stage if they are arranged in one concept of performance.

When Mateos and Plenthe met, each was mesmerized by his partner's style of playing, and soon they formed the duo. They are now preparing to record their work in Solo for non-mainstream musicians.

Mateos is a prominent flute player of The Hague Ethospheric Orchestra (THEO), a jazz group from the Netherlands. He was born in Extremadura, Spain, and studied at Royal Conservatory of The Hague majoring in jazz and classical music. He also presented music classes in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, and Cambodia before moving to Indonesia.

Deeply interested in traditional *gamelan* music, Mateos received a scholarship to master a Javanese orchestra instrument at the Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) in Solo last year.

"I was interested in gamelan since I was in the Netherlands. I watched as it was played well in some Indonesian cultural festivals, and it led me to come here later," he recalled.

He is an adventurous musician seeking to improve the creativity in his work as he performs with different musicians, artists, dancers, poets, actors and painters. Along with jazz, he plays traditional music of different parts of the world, such as flamenco, Brazilian and African.

"Music is the universal language by which we can talk to people from different cultures. Music is too large to fit and to play only in one genre," Mateos said.

Meanwhile Plenthe is mostly self-taught. He started to play Sundanese *kendang* when he was eight. He also comes from a non-musical family who disapproved of his passion to play the traditional drum.

Plenthe once performed on the streets, hopping from one bus to the next, for

small change. He was eventually discovered by Didi Kempot, a recording artist famous for mixing two of Indonesia's popular music Keroncong and Dangdut.

Impressed by Plenthe's *kendang* playing, Didi offered him to become his regular *kendang* player on stage and on track.

"Didi Kempot provided me a path for my professional career," he said.

Plenthe stayed in Didi's band for 10 years before he went on to develop his own music.

Plenthe's passion for traditional drum playing led him to study other ethnic percussions from around the world. Despite having no formal music training, the ISI was so impressed by his skills and knowledge that he was asked to be a lecturer.

Along with other ISI lecturers and students Plenthe performed in several countries like Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Australia and Suriname. Plenthe's current professional project is not only playing percussion, but also arranging contemporary music combining traditional and modern instruments.

They are able to play together albeit improvising, but respect one another enough as not to diminish the other's personal sound.

The result of Bosso's and Mazzariello's collaborations can be considered true pieces of art; they both love to improvise and refuse to be pigeon-holed to a certain music genre, thus incorporating different styles into their experimental performances.

With these two musicians, no performance is ever the same as a previous one—and while the audience will be curious to see what they will come up with for their Jakarta show, they can be certain about one thing: the concert will feature their signature charming sound, exciting improvisation and loads of energy.

'Shuffle'

Jan. 28 at 7:30 p.m.
Usmar Ismail Hall
Jalan Rasuna Said Kav. C22
Kuningan, South Jakarta
Tel. 021.3927531

Two Italian Jazz Maestros Ready to Dazzle Their Audience in Jakarta

Katrin Figge

Music lovers, brace yourself as the Italian Institute of Culture in Jakarta offers yet another jazzy treat: on Tuesday,

Italian jazz stars Fabrizio Bosso and Julian Oliver Mazzariello will share the stage for an eclectic night of sound and rhythm.

A true child prodigy, jazz trumpeter Bosso, who was born in Turin in 1973, started playing when he was only 5 years old.

While he took his earliest lessons with his father, he later moved on to study at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Turin, from which he graduated at 15. It was here that he first discovered jazz music—and he stayed faithful to the genre since. Playing with big bands and in smaller groups, Bosso was quickly hailed

as the new Italian jazz sensation.

He was awarded a scholarship at St. Mary's College in Washington where he further refined the flawless technique and personalized sound for which he is famous today.

Mazzariello, on the other hand, spent the first 17 years of his life in London. Born in 1978 to an English mother and an Italian father—who was also a musician who had moved to the British capital in the late 1960s—he soon discovered his love for the piano and later on, for jazz. After he won an award at a prestigious festival for young musicians, Mazzariello knew that this was his true calling. He has since relocated to Salerno in Campania, Italy, and during his time living there, became one of the most recognizable faces of the city in terms of jazz music.

The two musicians have known each other for years, and the chemistry between

Fabrizio Bosso, left, and Julian Oliver Mazzariello will perform in Jakarta on Tuesday. Photos courtesy of the Italian Institute of Culture

them on stage is palpable. They are able to play together albeit improvising, but respect one another enough as not to diminish the other's personal sound.

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