

## Tour Yuri Honing Trio Indonesia, January 2004



23 January

I arrive in Djakarta early in the morning. I just spent a month in Australia with my son Kaili. He moved to Australia a year ago and this was my first visit to his new home. It has been an intense and emotional month. I really felt like going home after this and didn't feel like going to Indonesia at all. Leaving Kaili at the airport was difficult. I will only see him in 5 months. But once I was on the plane I felt a little better. Happy to go back to work again. I haven't touched a bass in more than a month and I really miss it. It is almost a physical feeling in my arms and body. I did bring my electric gamba to Australia. A new instrument that I just got a few weeks ago. It's based on a seven string baroque viola da gamba. It has great possibilities and I am excited to play on it. I practised on it every day so at least I had some exercise.

At the airport I am picked up by the driver of the embassy who will bring me to the hotel. Everything is well organised and before I know it I am sitting in my Ibis hotel room in the middle of Djakarta. Yuri and Joost will arrive a day later so I have one day alone to explore the city. Djakarta is huge, smelly, humid and warm. 17 million people living together, most of them struggling for survival. I am quite shocked to see how poor this country is. In some ways it reminds me of Egypt and Cairo.

24 January

Joost and Yuri arrive in the morning. It's great to see them. I missed my Dutch friends while I was in Australia. We decide to visit the town. Joost brought a Lonely Planet guide of Indonesia and we look for things worth visiting. The old Dutch settlement Batavia comes highly recommended. We take a taxi and arrive in that part of town that should remind us of Amsterdam. Including a "great canal with old style Dutch buildings". When we find the canal we are sure this can't be it. The water on one side of the bridge is literally covered with cans, bottles, plastic bags, food, paper and all kind of unidentified waste. The smell is unbearable. It's probably the worst smell I ever experienced including the smell at the pigs slaughterhouse I visited when I was young (my father thought it would be a nice idea but it almost made me a vegetarian....almost). On the other side of the bridge the water is ink black and looks like sirup. The circles in the water look like raindrops at first but it doesn't rain. After closer inspection it proves to be little bubbles of gas that emerge everywhere from the rotting canal. If this is one of Djakarta's top attractions I feel reluctant to

visit the other ones. We do visit the harbour with its "huge fleet of colorful sailing boats". It's quite nice. Not what one would imagine it to be but it is intriguing to see that these sailingboats are still the main form of transportation between the islands. Nicely built huge wooden ships with small masts and sails.

The evening we have dinner with Bob, a very friendly Dutch speaking Indonesian man who works for the Erasmushuis. The Erasmushuis is the dutch cultural centre where we will play the next day.



26th of January

in the morning we go shopping. One of the rituals of the yuri honing trio. We can spend hours walking around local markets and shops looking for whatever is either very typical or very cheap (we are Dutch remember) we spent some hours in Glodok, the chinese part of town where there are hundreds of shops (and i mean hundreds) with dvd's, software, games and cd's. Prices are ridicule. Average of less than one euro per dvd.

the end of the afternoon we go to the Erasmushuis. Everything is perfectly organised, all the instruments are there and of good quality. I didn't bring my bass because of my stay in australia and i am relieved to find a reasonable instrument. It is great to play bass again. There is no other instrument that gives me so much satisfaction. All of us didn't play much recently for different reasons but we play surprisingly well. Yuri brought a new song by brazilian singer Djavan and it works very well. It gives some fresh new ideas about the trio's music. The place is packed and we really have a nice concert. Some years ago we would always play bad the first night but lately we seem to play well from the start. I guess we mature with age.

27 januari

today we fly to Solo, a small town on the east of the island Java. We will have a concert there tomorrow. Solo is a smaller city, a bit more spacious and friendly. Solo is known for it's batik (a way of coloring cloth) and has a nice antique market. The city itself is as poor and ragged as djakarta. It's raining heavily that day. We take bicycletaxi's called betjaks to the antiquemarket and roam the deserted market for massproduced "antiques". After some hours i take a betjak home. The man riding it is an old worn out man, in a way i feel pity for him that he has to ride me around. On the other hand it's his job and why should i pick a young stronger man that way he would be out of work. The problem is that he didn't know where my hotel was but was

too eager to take the ride. After half an hour around the town he stops somewhere and asks, of course Murphy's law decided it was on the other side of town. I wish I could ride the bike and he could sit in front but I wouldn't know how to bring that across. The man seems desperate but he insists to drive me there. In total we are riding around for more than one hour, a ride which would normally take ten minutes.

28 januari

today we have a concert in the house of a famous Indonesian choreographer, Sar Dono. He has a beautiful 150 years old house that used to belong to the palace. He uses it for concerts and dance performances. It's a magical place. The house has no walls and is surrounded by a garden. The wooden stage and the pyramid shaped roof provide a beautiful acoustic for our music. The audience sits on the floor around the stage and on chairs in the garden and in a neighbouring house. The audience is extremely attentive and receptive. The only drawback for me is the bass they provided. Probably the worst I ever had. The strings must be more than ten years old and are covered with resin which makes it difficult and painful to play. But I manage, more or less. I just try to find out what this bass wants, what it can do. Usually there is always a solution.

this is also the first public concert that I play on my gamba. I play a solo piece that is still in the making and we play one of Yuri's tunes, Fritz. It's a delight to play in this environment, as I play my solo, bats fly up to the roof, some distant rain and thunder form the acoustic background. I will never forget this concert. It's one of my most favourite concerts ever. Everything is just right, even the stubborn bass finds his way.

29 januari

back in Jakarta. Back to this huge city of 17 million people. Today we give a workshop at the first professional jazz school in Indonesia. 9 young and highly motivated students await us in a bungalow somewhere in Jakarta. The school was founded 4 years ago by a pianoplayer singer who used to live in Europe. She puts a lot of effort into teaching these kids the cultural background of jazz and western music. They seem to be well informed and all of them have a nice sensitive style of playing. They are very eager to learn and we enjoy working with them.

later that day I go to the gym and do some training. I think that my life on the road is usually healthier than at home. I eat healthy breakfasts with lots of fruit in the morning and grab every opportunity for swimming pools and gyms. I even had a massage yesterday. Quite an experience.

Joost usually joins me swimming. Usually we have some really nice conversations while we do this. It's quite interesting to see how this trio behaves as almost a three-way relationship. We developed these little habits together. I guess we know more of each other than most of our best friends and even girlfriends or wives. It's a delicate balance.

30 januari

usually during these kind of tours to exotic places we depend heavily on the Dutch embassies in those countries. They give us support both logistically as financially. In this case the support is absolutely superb. Both Bob and Antje, who work for the Erasmushuis, have become good friends the past 7 days and we are really grateful for all the things they have done for us. This story is probably even a bit dull since not much went wrong this tour.

Usually support by the embassy also means that we do one concert at the embassy. Some as a background for tea or drinking parties but in this case it is more like a house concert for about 150 international guests. We play quite well although not as good as in solo. I hate the bass this night. It's very stubborn and hard to play. But we manage. We receive lots of compliments especially for Bagdad (our Arab song) and our new Brazilian song, Oceano.

After the concert we have some nice conversations with some of the guests. They tell us their view on Indonesia and its complex political and social problems. One of these problems is the chicken flu that broke out four months ago but was only admitted by the government last week. Already 40 million chickens died (four million according to the government) of a total population of one billion(!) chickens (4 per Indonesian). It is the chicken industry itself that takes strong measures. The government is lacking any serious initiative.

One woman, a beautiful Argentinian artist, tells me some more inside stories. Her husband is working in a company concerned with environmental issues and his efforts to help the Indonesian awareness of pollution find no ground with the government. Their only concern seems to be the total freedom of businesses and industry. A catastrophic strategy for this beautiful but highly populated country.

She also tells me about the hidden prostitution and women trade. In this Islamic country this is more hidden than in other countries like Thailand and I hadn't noticed it yet. Some times we would be greeted in overenthusiastic manner by some younger women but I held that for a display of the famous Indonesian hospitality but it seems that at night in the clubs and dancing their hospitality turns into rude seduction. This results in the fact that, in contradiction to most countries, it is easier for foreign women to go out than it is for men. Men are constantly harassed while the women have nothing to fear. A Lithuanian woman at the concert tells us that most expat women don't allow their husbands to go out. Afraid they will not be able to resist the unquestionable charm and beauty of the Indonesian women.



31 jan 1 feb

we travelled to Gambung by train. It's the first time that we see anything outside the city. Here I see what I expected to see in Indonesia, rolling hills with endless terraces of ricefields, little villages where time seemed to have stopped a long time ago. I look at a man working in a rice field, children laying along the traintracks and I compare my busy and hectic life to theirs. It feels like a different planet. Probably they stare at me with the same puzzled curiosity as I stare at them. This is way past my comprehension. Here I am with my organiser, cellphone and digital camera in a

hurry on my way to the next concert. Believing that i have to do what I do in order to keep the world turning. One side of me would love to change for a while and live a normal local life but on the other hand I would not be able to look at these trains coming by without wondering where they are going and how life would be over there. I guess I lack inner peace or I ask too many questions in life. Anyway, it's a beautiful trip and prefer the countryside to the city.

we play in Gambung, by the feel of it a small town but 2 million people live here. We play a concert in the Institute Francais. The theatre is absolutely packed with mainly young Indonesians. We play an energetic pop oriented set, something we didn't do for a while. Somehow we automatically adapt to the audience and without discussing it or deciding it before the concert we just call of the tunes as we go.

The response is outrageous. We play two encores and sign hundreds of autographs. When they ask for cd's we take out our cd's that are left and before we know it we are smothered by tens of young boys and girls some ripping the cd's out of our hands and running away with it. Luckily some are polite enough to pay the cd and some of the stolen cd's come back to be signed by us and we can recollect them. Some people give us presents and many want our addresses and more.

after the concert we have a nice dinner with bob at a great restaurant. It has been a successful and great tour. But i must say i am happy to go back home. I have been away now for a month and a half now and i really look forward to continue my life in holland. Even if it is cold and raining over there.