

Assorted Personal Tidbits (aka “Ethno-gossip”)

As in a wayang, the serious message of the drama is often followed by the “clowns”, who bring a little levity to the proceedings, and poke some fun at the follies of their superiors.... The following is compiled by “Anonymous” — please direct e-mail comments to the usual suspects. Or, paraphrasing Mudita’s ex, “if you don’t like this gossip, go out and make some of your own...” Modesty forbids... recounting the many failed romances, artistic differences, petty squabbles, emotional meltdowns, and falling outs (fallings out?) we’ve had over the years, but then again — none of us is a self-absorbed, egocentric, opinionated, volatile artistic type, right? That said.... perhaps it IS worth recounting a few of the positive, heartwarming personal success stories since those long ago ASEA days, along with a few humorous anecdotes from what Toufiq Touzene refers to affectionately as “The Center for WEIRD Music.”

Graeme Vanderstoel met Eve when they both worked in the ASEA office during the 1960’s. Graeme remembers — after traveling overseas together in 1970 — when they returned to ASEA a year and a half later, someone exclaimed “You two have been together a LONG time!” (Yes, dear reader, you must admit, in those days, one and one-half years indeed WAS a long relationship....) The good news is that Graeme and Eve are still happily married, living in El Cerrito, California. Eve works at the University Art Museum.....

For almost as long as there were “Curry Concerts” at Wesleyan, Cal Arts, ASEA or The Center for World Music, Peggy Dey was instrumental in providing the “curry”. Indeed, if there were to be a “Miss Popularity” in our alumni class, Peggy would win hands down — the praise from our respondents for her food and cooking all those years was UNANIMOUS..... Although Peggy herself remembers a rather steep learning curve in perfecting her craft — one of the earlier concerts at Wesleyan she was apparently a bit too heavy on the hot spices, and succeeded in sending none other than Bob Brown himself to the Campus Infirmary.....

The other half of Kris Kargo’s dynamic-Asian-Arts duo, Doug Vurek, is a mrdangam player who actually predates ASEA in his relationship with Sam and Luise Scripps... Doug remembers going up to their house in the Berkeley hills in the very early 1960’s, for house concerts and visits — before ASEA was even founded. Renee Renouf remembers accompanying Doug to the Scripps’ house one November day in 1963, only to find an incredible pall over the place — President Kennedy had just been assassinated..... During the ensuing years that

we were all at ASEA or CWM, Doug was studying and playing music in India and Paris...

Ruth Rosenblatt(Kaplan) says "I followed Robert E. Brown around like a puppy in those days eating up every word he said, enjoying all the people and artists he brought to Wesleyan and ASEA, enjoying his support at a difficult time.....Listening to Bob's piano and organ playing was a great treat. I never understood Debussy either as a listener or player, but when I heard Bob play Debussy, it was a revelation, not to speak of his Bach on the organ." Ruth has earned her living for many years as a first grade teacher. And in this era of merciless budget cuts, with music being one of the first subjects cut out of school curriculums, Ruth has continued to teach her students songs she learned by heart from the several cultures she studied at ASEA. She also has used the songs to teach phonics because she didn't have any other materials.....

Roger Long remembers watching America's moon walk in the Summer of 1969 with a room full of Javanese — who were playing cards while barely watching the event — because "that's what Americans are good at"....

Jody Diamond remembers during the 1971 Summer Program held in Bali, that there was small food stall across the street, run by a woman with a purple towel on her head and a gold tooth who always said "*Pisang goreng, ada!*" which translates as "Yes, we have fried bananas." And one day during a big rainstorm we were on the covered porch of the big house when in flew the largest beetle I had ever seen in my life. "What is that?" we screamed out to Wenten. "Oh", he said ominously, "that is a seranga besar!" We scrambled to the dictionary to find out the name of this bizarre creature, and found that Wenten's somber pronouncement meant "big insect."

Judy Mitoma (Susilo) remembers at the 1972 Mills Summer Program carrying newborn daughter Emiko around in her arms, and someone exclaiming repeatedly all afternoon "That is the CUTEST baby I have EVER seen!". When reminded of this recently, Judy's reply: "You should see my new granddaughter....."

David Roche met Cathy Adachi during that 1973-74 winter, and they have been together ever since, presently working and living in Chicago with their two children..... David and Paul Drescher toyed with the idea of a 20th CWM Reunion, and then a 25th, but it never got off the runway.....

Barbara Benary was a Wesleyan ethno-grad who came to visit personal friends at the '74 program. There she met Steve Silverstein who was teaching with "Music For a While" [the early European music group]. They have subsequently been married for 26 years....

Kris Kargo went on from doing all those Center for World Music posters and graphics to — among other things — redesigning Garuda Airways, Air India, and Japan Air Lines so when you've been winging back and forth to Asia, perhaps many of you have sat on her seats, used her boarding cards, flown in her colorful aircraft....

Does anybody remember the opening picnic in Tilden park for the '74 summer, featuring Jamilah, the Egyptian Belly Dancer?.... Leonard Pitt and a few of the other gentlemen remember having to take Pak Nugraha and Pak Rutjita aside and give them some "male counseling and comfort"....for, harking from the rather austere puritanical Moslem western end of Java, Pak Nugraha and Pak Rutjita had never before seen so much undulating female flesh in broad daylight, and experienced particularly male reactions to same.....

A couple people remembered accompanying some of the Indonesians out to the spontaneous street party which broke out on Telegraph Avenue the night President Nixon resigned after Watergate, in the Summer of '74. The Indonesians were a little hesitant and reluctant at first, coming from a rather strict Military Government at the time, where such demonstrations were — needless to say — frowned upon. They were particularly tickled by one of the street characters — a Wavy Gravy type dressed as a clown, dancing merrily, wearing a sign saying "Bozo Must Go" — referring to the new President, Gerald Ford.... [come to think of it, not an inappropriate slogan for the present day...]

Judy Caporale remembers taking a group of Javanese teachers to see a double feature — 'Monty Python's Holy Grail' and 'Bedazzled' because Nanik used to giggle at Monty Python on television and then... afterwards, Suharto so politely explaining that they were not as familiar with the British Accent....

Only Lisa Gold and Ron Bogley mentioned the Halloween Party in 1974.... Lisa remembers Pak Rutjita dressing up as one of the female wayang golek puppets. Ron remembers going dressed as a cowboy, only to find to his astonishment that Bu Bei — of all people — was a great fan of cowboy movies! (She apparently spent much of her free time in the U.S. watching them on television [!?!]) "She said my costume was perfect" says Ron, "After that, we were kinda sweet on each other for the rest of her stay — what a delightful spirit and total sweetheart she was"

Ron's 7-year-old son Rian has grown up with a wall of Pak Rutjita's Wayang Golek puppets in his room.... "Rian has been able to say 'Kumbakarna' practically since he could talk... but for some time it came out sounding more like 'arugula'"

Lisa also chimes in as the only person connecting the fact that The Center For World Music “reminded me a bit — I tell my son now when I read Harry Potter to him — of Hogwarts Academy. They’re similar in many ways”.... [for the uninitiated: Harry goes to a school where in every classroom they teach one form of magic or another — very much like the Center for World Music].

And then there were ASEA/CWM child prodigies Joshua Redmon-Shedroff and Casey Lee — both were less than 10 years old at the time..... Casey now lives in Southern California, is still dancing with Wenten and Nanik, and is a mother of three; Josh, son of Irene Shedroff, is of course one of today’s premier Jazz Saxophonists.....

Several of Bu Bei’s singing students during the summer of ‘74, studying “Langendriyan” remember suddenly learning with horror that they were going to be expected to DANCE while singing ... (Langendriyan being a type of “operatic” dance drama)...

David Roche recently made a Google search for Anand Bodas and discovered “a cool matrimonial site on the web” (Anand's son is looking for a bride), and also Anand's address: Siliguri, 24, D.L.Roy Sarani, Mahananda Park, Siliguri. Assam, India

And out of all of us, Marjie Havelin hit the jackpot — when she left to study in Java in 1976 on an ASEA overseas scholarship. “Not long after I arrived in Yogya, Judy Mitoma introduced me to Endo Suanda, and we’ve danced through our life together ever since. Both of our sons, Ata and Umay, have gone to Wesleyan. Umay played in the gamelan while Ata was an enthusiastic African drummer and dancer. Endo is a leading force now behind the development of a new school curriculum in the arts which encourages appreciation and respect for diverse cultural traditions.” [The editors might add that, besides being the nicest guy in Sunda, Endo is also one of the most multi-talented.... Indeed, ASEA might have retained its financial solvency had they been so fortunate as to retain his services in 1974, instead of bringing five Sundanese teachers.... Endo could have single-handedly taught all the classes in music, dance, woodcarving, puppetry, and probably pesinden — and saved ASEA a lot in salary and travel expenses..... But alas, Endo had just signed on to teach at ASTI Jogja, and was not available to come to the States at that time....]

Dan Schmidt’s son recently took a world music class at U.C. Riverside in Southern California, where the visiting instructor was none other than good old Mas Wenten. Dan’s son was utterly amazed and astonished to hear Wenten say “Hey, how’s your Dad?”[It’s surprising what the old man knew about when he was your age, eh, sonny?...]

Marianne (Fainstadt) Ariyanto met Bambang Ariyanto, a Javanese artist, while she was in Bali in 1977-78, and in 1980 they were married. They lived in Lincoln, Nebraska from 1980-1985, where she was an assistant professor, and where their daughter Melanie was born. Their son Aryo joined the family in 1992. For the last several years she's been "caught up in the fast-paced Jakarta life and family life. We own a house as well as a painting studio here in Jakarta. I don't get to Bali as often as I would like. But my husband and I own land in Bali and do plan to live there one day again....."

Betty Wong has one story which characterizes for her the unity of our human culture: "After a South Indian concert one night, my friends and I gathered in the lobby of Julia Morgan and were yakking away in Cantonese (southern dialect) and there was much noise from the excitement of the concert and people still high from it. I was particularly aware of a cluster of South Indians in a corner doing the same — when suddenly they stopped, and the noise level went down considerably. They had overheard my group in conversation and to their ears our Chinese dialect sounded strangely similar to their Indian dialect. We looked across to each other and just howled with laughter! This kind of instant recognition has to be cherished" ...

Karen Elliot and husband David Weinberg's daughter Naomi is a student at U.C. Davis. Karen says "At ASEA/CWM, my understanding of music, of how joy can be expressed and how music, dance and the sacred can be joined, my feeling of belonging to, and participating in our global community, kindled in me an appetite for world music and dance of all kinds. Through the years, I have tried to communicate this sense to our daughter, whose own understanding of the world has certainly thereby been enriched: Bulgarian choirs, South African harmonies, Tibetan throat singing, American gospel, Tahitian dance, Alvin Ailey, Bharatanatyam, taiko — they have all become part of her understanding of the nature of life, of us human beings. Naomi attended Berkeley public schools — to her, diversity is as natural as breathing, and the diversity of cultures is one of the gifts of being alive" [Can't be said much better than that, Karen....]

Pamela (Rogers) Aguiniga's husband of 20+ years, Hector, is a Mariachi musician. Of their three children, Pam says, "You would think they would have inherited a shred or two of music and art genes from their parents — instead, they are all super-competitive in sports". Daughter Sarita is a championship ice-skater, just a tick away from Olympic level; twins Marco and Matteo play soccer all the time..... "When they're not playing outdoors, they play indoors", says Pam. "Neither of their parents is the least interested in competition — how does this happen?....."

Lauren Paul remembers: in school we had to demonstrate, in some type of project, that we understood the nuances of the five element system. My project

was a dance piece choreographed a la Bharata Natyam in conjunction with a classmate's guitar accompanied love song. It was a fascinating example of what Bala meant when she explained how important music is to the art of dance....."

In 1981, Jody Diamond started teaching at Mills College at the invitation of Lou Harrison, "from whom I learned to honor the human instinct for creativity." He had begun to build aluminum gamelan directly modeled on Kyai Udan Mas. "Lou was to become a great friend and honorary family member. I met my husband Larry Polansky in Lou's backyard at John Cage's 70th birthday party. When we were all at Mills, Tuesday was the night 'the kids' came over to Lou and Bill's campus apartment for dinner. Since Lou's death in 2001, I have become the caretaker of the gamelan Si Betty and AGI is publishing all his compositions for gamelan."

ASEA's main candidate for Sainthood is undoubtedly Leonard Pitt..... besides carrying on his busy and varied artistic life, several years ago Leonard stepped into single-parenthood by adopting his son Steven out of an orphanage. Steven was then nine years old, is now a college student and has grown into a fine young man. He just recently spent Spring Semester in Paris — where he was joined by Leonard, who is researching his second book on "The Paris of Yesteryear"

And lastly....Ron Bogley met his charming and lovable wife Malgosia in 1982, when she had just arrived in Berkeley as a refugee from the Martial Law crackdown on "Solidarnosc" in Poland.... Ron was coincidentally building a room addition on Leonard Pitt's house, when she came walking down the driveway to see what was going on.....

Of course, this has nothing to do with ASEA or the Center for World Music, except for the fact that, all during the 1980's, Malgosia was incredibly homesick for her family in Warsaw. So, upon the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ron and Malgosia packed up and moved to Eastern Europe... (But what's that they say about 'can't go home again'....?)

What do you think the outcome was? Malgosia was hopelessly homesick for California! So, they packed up and moved back ...

All of which brings us around to the fact that they happened to move just down the street in Berkeley from the old "Rumah Sunda" and the Julia Morgan Center, and it was always so good to see old friends from ASEA, that one day when Ron was talking to Graeme, Graeme first uttered the words "We should have a Reunion....."

SUDAH!