

## ABOUT KYM PURLING

Kym Purling was born around November 2, 1972 in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), two and a half years before the end of the Vietnam War. The exact date of his birth is unknown. He was found abandoned as a baby at only a few days old and was then briefly hospitalized before being placed in an orphanage in Saigon, where the directress of the orphanage gave him the name Vu Tien Quyen. Note: In Vietnam, Vu is the family name and the given name Quyen, means bird. The middle name Tien, can mean sky, heaven, spirit or angel but can also mean to move forward, improve or develop in the way of power and human rights.

Soon after, Kym was placed in a second orphanage run by World Vision called the New Life Babies Home. While receiving vaccinations, he received an alias name, David Hùng. This name was given to him by the nurses in order to confuse and cast away the evil spirits so that he would return to good health. Meanwhile, a South Australian couple, David and Judith Purling, had already spent two long years battling 'red tape' and lobbying governments and aid agencies in the hope to demonstrate their protest to the war and to adopt an orphaned Vietnamese baby. With the help of an Australian matron at the home, Ms. Joan Staples (formerly Joan Potter), Kym was finally adopted at the age of seven months, becoming the first international adoption of any nationality in Australia. He was renamed Kym, an Asian and western name that would be easier for his Australian friends to pronounce. His middle name, David, was chosen not only in reference to his new father's name but also because of the alias name he was given while in Vietnam.

Kym, along with three other babies and a 13 year old Vietnamese girl, were secretly airlifted from Vietnam to Melbourne (Australia), where Judith Purling and three other anxious mothers awaited the orphans' arrival on August 24, 1973. The 13 year old girl, Tuyet White, was the first to exit the plane to be reunited with her sister that she had not seen in two years. Her exit served as a diversion to the awaiting media while Kym and the other babies departed through the back door of the plane into the arms of their new mothers. Note: Kym Purling has since reunited with Joan Staples, Tuyet White and the three other babies; Melody Hayes, Tai Jordan and Eric Nicholls. Interestingly, now in their adult lives, all four are involved in music either professionally or semi-professionally.

Kym Purling's musical life began at the age of three, when friends of the family had observed that he could sing in reasonably perfect pitch. Kym's eldest sister would practice quite hard at the piano and by age five, Kym was already playing by ear and mimicking the songs his sister was practicing while also constructing simple melodies and scales at the piano. At the age of six, he began formal classical training. He continued classical studies until the end of high school and taught himself to play various other styles of music. He played trumpet and various percussion instruments through his schooling life and toured to Malaysia at the age of fourteen playing trumpet.

He began working semi-professionally as a pianist during his teens and was also teaching, accompanying and playing for several national dance companies such as the acclaimed Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre. During these years, Kym also engaged in some acting and film work. He had a major role in a documentary film called Moving Up and also acted in a feature film titled Sebastian and the Sparrow, by filmmaker Scott Hicks, director of Shine and Snow Falling On Cedars.

In 1992, Mr. Purling earned a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies at the University of Adelaide, a step that that would put him on a new but certain direction. He began working extensively as a jazz pianist in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne with his own trio, which also served as a rhythm section for many leading Australian vocalists and

instrumentalists. He engaged in some studio session work, performed regularly at local establishments and appeared at many music, arts and jazz festivals. During the early nineties, he worked extensively in the corporate sector, making 200-250 performances each year.

He has performed with many national and international artists such as The Mills Brothers, Kay Starr and Buddy Greco and has opened for other artists such as Julio Iglesias, There Might Be Giants, Sandra Bernhard, James Morrison and the Ray Brown Trio. He has also musical-directed for a vocalist with Wayne Newton and came close to accepting a position as pianist and musical director for stage and film legend, Mickey Rooney.

Since 1994, he has recorded four compact discs under his own name, the first three being recorded and released in Australia and remaining in the 'top ten' of CD sales in South Australia for several months. He continued recording and doing session work for television and radio commercials, while playing several residencies in local establishments. He also performed regularly for many charities such as the Variety Club of South Australia and the Australian Cranio-Maxillo Facial Foundation.

In 1996, following his second nomination, he was presented the award for the Most Outstanding Keyboard Player of the Year at the South Australian Music Industry Awards. He declined an offer to teach at the University of Adelaide after being awarded a performing arts residency in Vietnam by Asialink, a Melbourne-based university and governmental ambassadorship program. During the residency in Vietnam, (the first time he had returned to his homeland since being adopted), he performed and taught music with Vietnamese children, students, adults and professional musicians, while also making solo recordings for educational purposes. He performed sold out concerts in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and spent a large amount of his time writing arrangements, teaching and performing with The Saigon Jazz Band. This band was a project that he created with the famous vocalist Tuyet Loan, a woman who frequently performed in the G.I. camps during the Vietnam War.

While in Ho Chi Minh City, Kym's hotel room often became an unplanned teaching studio due to the young and enthusiastic Vietnamese who were interested in jazz and had discovered where Kym was residing. Many times they appeared unannounced at his hotel room door, introducing themselves and requesting instruction in jazz improvisation. Kym served as a performing arts ambassador between Australia and Vietnam, forming vital administrative, musical and personal connections between the two countries. He had extensive interest from newspapers and radio stations during the residency, all of which had much interest in Kym's life story and his performances, which were the first non-classical or traditional music concerts ever held at Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, or Nhạc Viện Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh. Kym Purling was also offered a teaching position at the Conservatory of Music but sadly declined due to commitments awaiting him back in Australia. Note: Interestingly, five years later, a Vietnamese woman had discovered one of the many Vietnamese newspaper articles that featured Kym and claimed that he was her biological son.

Kym Purling toured to London, Amsterdam and Den Haag in 1998, where he performed each day at The North Sea Jazz Festival, the world's largest indoor jazz festival boasting an audience of 85,000 people. On completion of the tour, he moved to the United States to teach on the faculty and complete a Masters Degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). During the following two years, Kym taught at the university while performing extensively around Las Vegas in the showrooms, concert venues, major hotels and casinos. He soon made a strong base for himself and used his contacts in Australia to personally organize an international tour to Australia for the 20-piece UNLV Big Band. The tour was very successful, impressing

Australian jazz fans, critics and musicians with his American fellow musicians and the performances he made with his former Australian trio.

Kym returned to Las Vegas to continue his teaching and performing before touring to Scotland in August 1999, with a U.S. jazz quintet. The group performed nightly for two weeks at the world-renowned Edinburgh Festival, receiving notable reviews from various Scottish newspapers.

By 2000, Kym had established his own following in Las Vegas. He created this audience through his widely varied performances at many of the new resorts that had opened since he had moved there. Kym was one of the first musicians to perform at The Bellagio, Paris Las Vegas, Mandalay Bay, The Venetian, The Aladdin and the Eiffel Tower Restaurant, where he performed with his Las Vegas Trio on the evening of December 31, 1999 as fireworks sprinkled down past its windows and the clock ticked over into the new millennium.

In May, Kym toured again to Australia to present some reunion performances with his former Australian trio. Soon after his return to the United States, he was offered the position of keyboardist on the 2000-2001 U.S. National Tour of Footloose the Musical, a traveling Broadway show from New York City. Soon after joining the show, he was promoted to Musical Director and Conductor for the remainder of the U.S. tour, traveling to 247 cities in just eleven months. Whilst on the road with Footloose, Kym was commissioned to compose the score for a new musical that premiered in Chicago later that year. He then returned to his performances in Las Vegas and began working on aspects of his own original musical.

Soon after, Kym was appointed as pianist for the 2002-2004 U.S. & Canadian National Tours of the acclaimed Broadway musical, Miss Saigon. Kym made the decision to travel with the show not only to discover more of America and Canada, but because of the many parallels between the story of Miss Saigon and his own life. Due to Kym's personal connection to the show and his own professional accomplishments, he received an incredible and overwhelming amount of media interest and attention from newspapers and radio and television stations all across the United States. Many of these newspaper articles, radio interviews and television clips can be found in the Portfolio and Film & Television sections of this website.

The U.S. tour of Miss Saigon continued for a further two years, however, Kym left the show partway through after being appointed as Musical Director and Conductor for the 2004-2005 Japanese and North American Tours of the acclaimed Broadway musical, 42nd Street. Kym particularly enjoyed Japan because after conducting his show each night, he would seek out the many small jazz clubs hidden around Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka and play with the local Japanese jazz musicians until the early hours of the morning.

In August 2006, Kym returned to Australia to play a concert with David Helfgott, the acclaimed classical pianist and subject of the motion picture, 'Shine'. He also performed a series of jazz concerts and workshops throughout Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Kym Purling has now traveled to fourteen countries around the world and toured 49 of the 50 North American states. Understandably, he is currently off the road and is working on long term projects.