

KYM PURLING – BIOGRAPHICAL INFO

(Biography also attached as Word file & PDF)

Biographical Online Links

Home Page

www.kympurling.com

Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kym_Purling

ABOUT KYM PURLING

EARLY LIFE

Kym Purling was born 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. Knowledge of who Purling's biological parents are is also unknown. Purling 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 director 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, Purling 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. (Note: This name was given to him by the nurses in order to confuse and cast away the evil spirits so that Purling would return to good health). Meanwhile, a South Australian couple, (soon to be Kym's adoptive parents), 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, Purling 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 hospitalized in Vietnam.

Purling, along with three other babies and a thirteen-year-old Vietnamese girl, were secretly airlifted from Vietnam to Melbourne (Australia), where Mrs. Purling and three other anxious mothers awaited the arrival of the orphans. The thirteen-year-old girl 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 Purling and the other babies departed through the back door of the plane into the arms of their new mothers. (Note: Purling has since reunited with the matron in the home in Saigon, the thirteen year old Vietnamese girl and the three other babies. Interestingly, now in their adult lives, all four are involved in music either professionally or semi-professionally. See the first of two 60 Minutes television specials on YouTube).

MUSICAL LIFE

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. Purling's eldest sister was studying classical piano and by age five, Purling 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 piano 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. Purling was raised in the church, (Purling's father and sister are both ministers/pastors), which also provided him the opportunity at a young age to play from lead sheets and/or without music, a foundation towards playing jazz, a music which Purling later fell in love with.

Purling began working semi-professionally as a pianist during his teens and was also teaching, accompanying and playing for several national Australian 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.

Purling later earned a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies at the University of Adelaide (Australia), 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 studio session work for radio and television commercials, performed regularly at local and national establishments and appeared at many music, arts and jazz festivals. During the early nineties, he also worked extensively in the corporate sector, making 200-250 performances each year.

Purling has performed with many national and international artists such as The Mills Brothers, Kay Starr, Buddy Greco, The Pied Pipers, Clint Holmes, Natalie Cole and Engelbert Humperdinck. He has shared the stage with many other artists such as Julio Iglesias, Arturo Sandoval, There Might Be Giants, Sandra Bernhard, Harry Connick, Jr., James Morrison and the Ray Brown Trio. He has also musical-directed for a vocalist with Wayne Newton and was also offered the position as pianist and musical director for stage and film legend, Mickey Rooney.

Since 1994, Purling has recorded five compact discs under his own name and appeared as a sideman on countless albums in Australia, the US and abroad.

In 1996, following his second nomination, Purling 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 offered a position as an Ambassador for the Performing Arts, between Australia and his homeland Vietnam. During the ambassadorship, (the first time Purling 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, 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, Purling'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 Purling was residing. Many times they appeared unannounced at his hotel room door, introducing themselves and requesting instruction in improvisation. Purling 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 Purling's life story. Purling's performances were the first non-classical or traditional music concerts ever held at the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, or Nhạc Viện Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh. Purling was also offered a teaching position at the Conservatory of Music but sadly declined the offer 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 Purling and claimed that he was her biological son).

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 and completed a Masters Degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. During this time, Purling 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. (See second of two 60 Minutes TV Special on YouTube). The tour was very successful, impressing Australian jazz fans, critics and musicians with his American fellow musicians and the reunion performances he made with his former Australian trio. (Funding for the tour was provided in part by U.S. comedian Drew Carey).

Purling 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, Purling 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. Purling 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 2000, Purling 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 musical-director and conductor for the U.S. National Tour of Footloose the Musical, a traveling Broadway show from New York City. With Footloose, Purling traveled to 247 cities in just eleven months. Whilst on the road with Footloose, Purling was also commissioned to compose the score for a new musical that premiered in

Chicago later that year. He composed and wrote the music on a small keyboard and laptop while touring on buses and planes. At the conclusion of the Footloose tour in Springfield IL, Purling drove to Chicago the next night and watched his musical score being performed on stage by singers, actors and dancers he had never met before. He then returned to his performances in Las Vegas and began working on his own original musical and other long-term projects.

Soon after, Purling was appointed as pianist for the 2002-2004 U.S. & Canadian national tours of the acclaimed Broadway musical, Miss Saigon. Purling 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 Purling's personal connection to the show and the work achieved in his own career, Purling received an incredible and overwhelming amount of media interest and attention from newspapers and radio and television stations all across the United States and Canada. (Many of these newspaper articles, radio interviews and television clips can be found in the Portfolio and Film & Television sections at www.kympurling.com. Also see clips in YouTube).

The U.S. tour of Miss Saigon continued for a further two years, however, Purling left the show partway through after being appointed as musical director and conductor for the Japanese and North American tours of the acclaimed Broadway musical, 42nd Street. Purling 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.

Purling later returned to Australia to headline 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.

Purling later relocated to Florida and continued to perform locally, nationally and internationally. He has engaged in regular national television work, including a one-hour television special with Natalie Cole, the daughter of legendary singer Nat 'King' Cole. Purling then continued to travel the world as musical director, conductor and pianist for vocal legend, Engelbert Humperdinck. He has made numerous performances for charity and most recently produced and headlined a concert to raise money to feed 2000 children in Nepal.

Since his post with Engelbert Humperdinck, Purling has traveled extensively around the world as a musical director, bandleader and pianist for two world renown cruise lines, Holland America and Seabourn. Kym Purling now brings his vast experience on land and at sea to another new chapter - performing as a guest entertainer on various cruise lines all around the world.

See www.kympurling.com and www.blackburninternational.com for more information.