respected journalist in Peking, whereas Backhouse, an English aristocrat and scholar of Chinese who taught at the University of Peking, was an enigmatic character who delighted in the interplay of fact and fiction. His extraordinary pornographic account in French, unpublished till now, of 'La Décadence Mandchoue' describes his adventures at court, and his love-affair with the Empress-Dowager. This so-called autobiography bears witness to the extravagance, intrigue and perversion which hastened the decline of the Manchu dynasty. Backhouse's fantastic stories of his exploits resemble those of the hero of Segalen's novel, *René Leys.*

*René Leys,* a novel published after Segalen's death, is a play on fact and fiction based on the author's life in Peking just before the fall of the Manchu dynasty. This ironical novel undermines Segalen's efforts to verify the documentation for his exotic novel, *Le Fils du Ciel*; it represents the antithesis of his exotic method.

A young Frenchman, Maurice Roy—the Belgian René Leys in the novel—who speaks several Chinese dialects fluently, offers to teach him the Pekinese dialect. He soon reveals an intimate knowledge of the Forbidden City, and is able to comment on the verisimilitude of Segalen's descriptions of court life. On intimate terms with the dissolute young Manchu nobles who delighted in play-acting, and revelled in the local tea-houses, he relates fantastic stories to Segalen of his secret entry into the Forbidden City, his friendship with the late Kuang-hsü and latterly with his brother the Regent, Prince Ch'un. Through his services to the court, he surpasses in glory heroes such as 'Chinese' Gordon, winning, as did Gordon, the coveted Yellow Riding Jacket, becoming, he claimed, head of the secret police, and lover of the widow of Kuang-hsü, the new Empress-Dowager, Lung-yu.

Segalen takes as the structure of this novel the plan of Peking, which Marco Polo had described in the twelfth century as having the form of a chess-board. In a series of subtle moves for control of the Empire, the imperial chessmen combat the shadowy forces of the revolutionaries led by their "king-figure", Yuan Shihk'ai. The game gives an air of unreality to an already fantastic subject. The figures in the game are playing roles in the game of chess or in the court drama. Unreal and insubstantial, they represent a vision of the world as illusory, where values are relative, and all things are subordinate to aesthetic beauty of form.

This autocritical novel, which satirises Segalen's attempts to get inside his subject, at once reveals the limitations of exoticism and broadens its boundaries. The narrator finds it impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction. He is confronted with the impossibility of knowing the truth, whether about Kuang-hsü and his court, about his fellow-European René Leys or ultimately about himself.

Exoticism as an exploration of unfathomable mystery is extended in this novel beyond the precincts of the Manchu court. *René Leys* foreshadows the movement in the modern novel away from a projection of external realism; it explores the fantasies and illusions of the human mind.

THE AUTHOR: *Mrs. Helen Reid, who has travelled widely in South-East Asia, is completing a doctoral thesis on Segalen in the Department of Romance Languages, Australian National University.*

# JAZZ AND QUARTER TONES

*Jack Lesmana interviewed*

This interview, done in a garden in Canberra where the only other sounds came from blackbirds and magpies and sparrows, represents a couple of the few quiet hours that Jack Lesmana, Indonesia's leading jazz-player, spent in a hectic but rewarding few weeks as Australia's guest. It was done off the cuff, and the relaxed atmosphere shows through the casual conversation.—Editor.

*When was the lid lifted off jazz in Indonesia after President Sukarno had sort of forbidden it for so long and it had been kept going with the help of smuggled records brought in at the bottom of people's suitcases?*

I played jazz for the first time in 1942. Of course I started with Dixieland music, but earlier I was a classical musician—a guitarist. I played with several bands, including a Navy band. Since 1959 I have lived in Jakarta, and once I played at the Palace for President Sukarno. He did not tell me he didn't like jazz, but he did tell me he didn't want improvisation. I met your famous jazz musician Don Burrows first in 1960 and did a tour with him. In 1966, we put a group together called *The Indonesian All Stars* with the best Indonesian musicians. We went to Germany and other countries in Europe, took part in the West Berlin Jazz Festival, the Dusseldorf Festival, and we had a lot of success. When we got back to Indonesia, we split up, and since 1970 I have done what I could to promote jazz. I started with rock and pop to attract the public, esepcially the younger musicians. As a money-spinner, it was a loser,

but after seven years, although I am broke, I feel I have achieved something because we have a good public for jazz.

I give a jazz concert once every three months and, once a month, a jazz television show. I work in a private school, called the *Yayasan Seni Musik Indonesia,* where I am head of musical education; as well I have my own studio at home, where I have my own pupils for jazz. At the school we only teach classical music for guitar and piano in addition to organ and bass.

*What's the jazz scene like in Indonesia these days? You teach because you have to earn a living, I suppose, like many people in other countries.*

We have a lot of modern jazz and rock and some *avant-garde* jazz. There are not many jazz musicians, and that's why I am working on this project to have more jazz players.

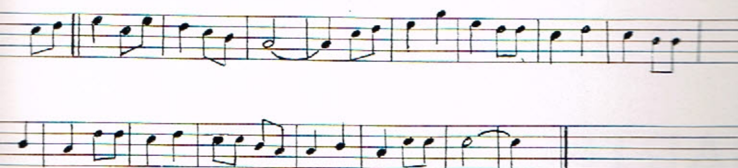
*What about outside the capital, say, in Macassar, in Sulawesi, or over in North Sumatra — anything doing there?*

Well, I haven't heard anything about jazz in Ujang Pandang, as Macassar is known these days, but in Java, Surabaya is quite heavy with jazz; Bandung, of course, and, as we said, Jakarta. And, in north Sumatra, Medan —of course it's not as big a scene there as in Bandung and Jakarta.

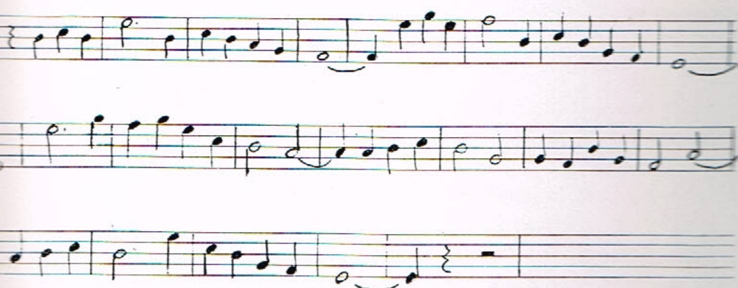
*Do you think the Batak, the people from around Medan will be dancing to rock rhythms instead of the traditional ones?*

No, I don't think they will do that, because we keep the traditional as traditional.

*But you haven't: you've adapted a traditional Kalimantan melody — this one called Baris Barantai.*



We have also incorporated Javanese modes and the pentatonic scale, so we keep some kind of identity by combining the gamelan, the Javanese sound, and modern sound, as in this example: *Gambang Suling* by *Narto Sabdo.*



You know, Don Burrows has a 'connection' program— last year with Brazil and this year with Indonesia. We had a long talk, and I am trying to work in with him.

*What sort of thing is Don doing — taking Indonesian melodies and, literally, jazzing them up?*

That's what he wants to do. Of course, we have some difficulties because of the quarter tones, because we are using gamelan instruments, but I will see what I can do in Indonesia by including all or some of the instruments; the Indonesians are writing some of the music, and the Australians will be contributing their share. I was thinking of putting the rhythm of Balinese music in it and we can have the melody on Western instruments.

*Don, of course, is very well known in Indonesia.*

About four years ago he was last in Indonesia with guitarist George Golla and drummer Laurie Thompson; we played together and had a workshop.

*You find it easy to work in with a musician like Don, who has been brought up in a completely different tradition — apart from jazz, that is?*

Music is the same in any language; it doesn't matter where you come from, what you are . . . music is music, jazz is jazz . . .

*Are you actually using gamelan instruments in any of your combos in Indonesia?*

There are some young musicians, like Guru Sukarno, the son of the former President, who does a lot with the gamelan, which sounds very good; it's a good start.

*What instruments would he have, then?*

He has a drum, electric piano, guitar, synthesisers and a group of gamelan players—a full gamelan. It sounds very, very good—amazing, although it's not jazz, but it's lovely. I'm not too fanatical, you know: it doesn't matter if it is jazz or classical or rock or pop as long as the music is good.

*I wonder what his grandmother would say, because she was Balinese, wasn't she?*

I don't know what she would have thought.

*Grandmothers don't usually approve of improvisation in anything, do they?*

No, but he has done well. There's another young fellow in Bandung, called Harry Roesli, who is doing the same thing, but his style is a bit different from Guru's. So, there are two people working hard on it. We tried before; in 1957, but we failed because we were too strict in our treatment of the gamelan; still, these days, with synthesisers, more things are possible and I'm very happy that these young kids are doing this—something's happening.

*Since you're on the way to becoming a grandfather too, I suppose you find it's encouraging to see the youngsters working on?*

I have a lot of pupils and so I have been able to encourage young musicians, not necessarily to play jazz, but to play good music.

*You're making a difference between jazz and good music?*

No. You can be a bad musician and so you play bad jazz.

*Have you got a regular group?*

No. I usually play with some of my pupils and some professionals, occasionally with all professionals — for

instance at the first reunion in ten years of *The Indonesian All Stars*.

*Have the Filipinos, who are anyway mainly for dancing, made much of an inroad into the Indonesian scene as they have in other parts of Asia?*

Everywhere in South-East Asia you find Filipinos working. There are some good jazz musicians among them, but many of them copy American jazz. When I say 'copy' I mean you can do the American stuff and vary it according to the way you feel, but too many people copy off the records.

*In Australia, we're not entirely innocent of that: in the early days of television they used to have a hit parade kind of program and had Australians miming recordings of American singers.*

*Who have you met in Australia, apart from Don Burrows?*

Ed Gaston, who was with the group with Don Burrows; Judy Bailey, who is going to Indonesia in early June with a group. I've met Bill Motzing, who is head of the Jazz School at the Conservatorium in Sydney, and played with Terry Wilkinson—a very fine piano player—and have met a lot of other musicians—very good musicians.

*How do you find the jazz scene as far as you've been able to judge in Australia?*

In Sydney, there are so many musicians that you seem to hear jazz almost everywhere. I've met musicians in the Basement Musicians' Club and in Pymble, a suburb to the north of the city . . . That's one thing we don't have in Indonesia—jazz clubs. There's only one, in Surabaya, and they only have a program once a month. That's why I'm putting these jazz programs on once every three months in Jakarta. Also, of course, if people want to play jazz, they come back to my house and play in the studio there. By the way, I also listened to Brian Brown from Melbourne —a very good group.

*Among the people you have met was Don Banks, our foremost electronics composer.*

A very nice fellow: he knows all about jazz.

*And his offsider, the very musicianly technician, at the Canberra School of Music, John Crocker, who was associated with a radio program which won the Prix Italia some years ago.*

John Crocker showed me through the electronic set-up and explained how they teach electronic music there — very interesting.

*But, apart from meeting the professionals, you've found time to listen to kids' bands in schools?*

Yes, I was at Narrabundah College, a senior secondary school in Canberra, where I played for the students, one of whom was a very gifted guitarist. I had a good talk with him. At Narrabundah Primary School, I listened to

*Right: Jack Lesmana and fellow-guitarist, George Golla, in Sydney, and, above, with a group in Jakarta (his son is on the right).*

*Left: Jack Lesmana with students of Narrabundah College in Canberra, and above, Don Burrows, who on many occasions has toured Asia, with his own quintet, justifiably well-known both at home and abroad because of Don Burrows' tours and his frequent performances on Radio Australia.*

the school band—beautiful. For the kids it was wonderful, and it was something new for me. And it was a revelation to meet such youngsters.

*Apart from traditional music in Indonesia, which makes up a very varied bundle, there's one invention that I don't think you'd like much more than I: kronchong. What is it?*

*Kronchong* is now accepted as Indonesian music because if you say *'kronchong'*, people know it is from our part of the world. I'm not so keen about this *kronchong;* I don't even know where it comes from, and I'm not even sure it is Indonesian. It's hard, you know, talking about 'Indonesian music': we can talk about *gamelan,* about Javanese music, about Balinese, Sumatran—but I don't know about *Indonesian music.* A few musicians are mixing rock and *kronchong* together now.

*At least that would liven it up a bit.*

Yes, and it's popular now. I don't play much *kronchong:* I like to hear it, of course, but what I really like is *stamboul. Stamboul* is something that reminds me of the blues; you play the blues and they have a certain structure; *stamboul* has the same structure. You start with one four-bars, four two-bars, back to one, to five two-bars — its the same thing, with so many melodies. *Stamboul* is the same: you start with four. It is a kind of *kronchong,* it has the *kronchong* beat, but we call it *stamboul.*

*Where did it originate—in Indonesia, too?*

I think it's from Jakarta, I don't know where the name comes from, but it's good to listen to, mainly because the players and singer are improvising all the time.

*What do you see as the future of jazz in Indonesia?*

It's pretty secure, but I could do with some more backing: I'm broke because of it. And, I hope to come back to Australia; I've already seen Musica Viva, your musical organisation, which has sent many Australian groups of both classical and jazz musicians abroad. I would like to come back in a few months with a group, and my son, but the trouble is the plane fare.

*You talk about being alone in the jazz field, but you're not the only musician in the family?*

No, there's my son. Like most fathers, I think he's outstanding. Part of the reason why he's so good at jazz already — he started at the age of ten — is because we have so much jazz in the house. Let's say, if you put Dizzy Gillespie's son in a community where there's no jazz, he will never become a good jazz musician; but you can take any child, from China or India or anwhere else, and put him in a community where you have only jazz, then he will have a better chance of becoming a jazz musician. My son spends a good deal of time with me, at home as well as when I'm lecturing or making records, so he has a feeling for jazz. He gave his first concert after only eight months studying the piano. He's a good musician for his age, writing his own songs and doing his own arrangements, and he's now studying music with Nick Mamahid, a brilliant musician, who studied classical music in Holland.

*Your eldest son got away from it all and went to the United States, though?*

Yes, he's studying business administration. My daughters will probably not turn into musicians: one has a very good ear and plays a little organ and piano; the other loves cooking and sings quite well. My wife, though, was a singer: she's my manager, my wife, my secretary — I don't know what I have to do tomorrow, but she keeps everything running: 'Jack, you have to do this, tomorrow you have this, tonight you have to do this'. I only play.

*You've had a pretty full stay in Australia, then?*

Yes, and a most interesting and rewarding one. I enjoyed the two weeks in Sydney, five days here in Canberra and the stay in Melbourne was exciting, too.

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(Photo: Doug McNaugh

# TODAY'S INDONESIAN WRITING

Guests of the Australian Government at the Adelaide Festival of the Arts, which ended last month, were three Asia Jayanta Mahapatra from India, who has published several books of his own poetry and a couple of volumes of translati Carunungan, the noted Filipino writer of novels and novellas as well as Djoko Sapardi, Lecturer in Comparative Litera University of Indonesia, Jakarta, editor of *Horison*, and a well-known writer. They are shown above with Mrs Rosema of the Adelaide Festival of Arts Writers' Committee. During his stay in Canberra, on his way to Adelaide for Writers' W Festival, Sapardi was interviewed for *Hemisphere*.—Editor.

*Who's writing what, and what kinds of things, these days in Indonesia?*

Among the poets is a group of people who are getting better known and more popular in Indonesia. The most popular is Rendra, who visited Australia a couple of years ago; then there's Taufik Ismail, Gunawan Mohammed and Sutardji, from Bali—a rather controversial one, Sutardji.

*What is Rendra producing these days?*

He is still writing poetry and drama for his own theatre in the back garden of his house in Yogyakarta, and it is still prospering. His latest important play is called *The Town Clerk (Sekretaris Daerah)*, a kind of social protest about the conditions in which some people in Indonesia have to live.

*That's the kind of material people are writing just about everywhere in the world, isn't it?*

Yes.

*What about Gunawan Mohammed?*

I think he's the finest poet we have.

*Who would he compare with in the English language field?*

In the United States (though it's hard to compare), Snodgrass, and in Britain, Ian Hamilton, and Peter Porter, who is an Australian but lives in England.

*With occasional visits back home.*

Gunawan is a lyricist, with a style very much l a very original poet.

*How would you classify Sutardji?*

He is quite revolutionary in that he introdu words into Indonesian—especially dirty words Rendra, he is our best poetry reader, and the always crowded for his readings. He is origin influenced by poets like e. e. cummings and by tional poets of his native district, which is islands lying between Singapore and Central S

*Coming from the Strait of Malacca, he would be influenced by the Malay language as muc closely related Indonesian?*

He always says that nobody in Indonesia ha to be a poet unless he comes from Riau. Acc Sutardji, you see, the Indonesian language co Riau.

*Taufik Ismail was down here a few months ag*

He's writing poetry still, and has done s scenarios, but I think he is as popular as a po his film work. Actually a writer considered by ma in Indonesia to be one of our best poets is Australia, at Flinders University in Adelaide. H late (he's now over fifty) and has a very distinc

he's more intellectual than most and has written a number of good works of criticism. He is Subagio Sastrowardojo.

Then there's Ajip Rosidi, who is Director of the publishing firm *Pustaka Jaya* and Chairman of the *Dewan Kesenian*, the Arts Council of Jakarta. He is a prolific writer and although he's only a litle more than forty, he began writing poetry at the age of thirteen and in all he's produced a total of about sixty books of poetry, short stories and novels.

*And what are you writing?*

Poetry and criticism.

*The second one being the easy bit?*

That's right.

*How would you classify yourself?*

Well that's really difficult. I am simply a lyricist; the subjects are nature and the relationship between God and man and other things like that.

*I'm interested to hear you talk about so much activity in film-making. We've had a revival here, which has produced some very interesting work. What are current Indonesian films like?*

They are basically commercial, because there is an Indonesian Government regulation saying that everyone who imports films from outside must also produce Indonesian films.

*Do they have a big sale, say, in Malaysia?*

I think so — at least, the Indonesian films are very popular there.

*Are they realist, or escapist?*

They mostly deal with the dreams of the common man: there are always very beautiful motor cars, very beautiful women, and the problems are not really those of the man in the street.

*In other words, they're not attacking problems of living in the way that our playwright, David Williamson, is doing, analysing Australian society honestly and openly. We used to make the escapist type of film before the war: nearly everyone had a horse, and a big property and lots of sheep and rode a horse and was a hero. So maybe you'll follow the same way, and get to the more realist kind of film.*

There are some Indonesian directors who are interested in such films, but the producers are interested in making money of course, and are not interested in films about everyday life. Most of the films are sentimental or for children. The films for children are an important part of the industry. They're not the best, but they sell well because of the demand.

*There was a French actor, who died a few years ago, Louis Jouvet, who used to make detective films for money, that he used to finance his own theatre in which he did what he really wanted—producing the great French classics. Maybe an Indonesian director could make money on the popular films and use it for more serious jobs.*

*The novel has never had much of a place in Indonesian writing, has it?*

No, but now they are getting more and more widely read, and some are especially popular. This began in the last few years with the rise of the big-circulation magazines. The editors of the magazines feel they are respectable if they publish fiction; that's why they need many, many writers of fiction for novels and short stories. Usually, they publish one or two short stories, and serialise the novels, and then the novels come out in book form. A lot of this writing is very promising, done by younger writers. Last year, one of the popular women's magazines, *Femina,* held a competition for novelists, and the winner was the Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Indonesia at Jakarta, which shows it was literature. The younger writers, many of them under thirty, include Marga T., La Rose (a pseudonym for a woman writer), Ashadi Siregar, Tegu Esha. A most promising one, writing both popular and serious literature, is Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha. He writes poetry and drama as well as novels and short stories and wins most of the competitions, especially the annual one run by the Arts Council of Jakarta.

*Is anyone writing material similar to the poems by Chairil Anwar during the time of the Revolution?*

No—it was all too long ago, although the influence of Anwar is still felt, and most of the poets writing now respect his work although they don't write like that any more. There is a very important movement, though, which we call *Puisi Mbeling,* or 'rascal poetry', produced by the younger generation. (*Mbeling* is a Javanese word — not one from Bahasa Indonesia, by the way.)

*It wouldn't be fair to use the word that some bands playing here in Australia and elsewhere in Western countries who play what they call punk rock?*

Something like that, yes. They started in popular magazines, rock music magazines and ones like that; one of the magazines runs a page for poetry headed *Puisi Mbeling.* The important thing is that it has no roots in the Indonesian poetic tradition. In a humorous way—for that's an outstanding characteristic of this poetry—the young people are trying to attack everything. They make their social and political protest and protest against the older generation of poets and the seriousness of poetry written earlier.

*So there are 'angry' writers.*

Although they are angry, the most important characteristic is humour. I think the later generation of poets — the one after my age-group (we are in our late thirties) will make greater use of humour in their work. In this field, the one I mentioned, Yudhistira, will make his mark.

*Is their anyone in Indonesia now who is actually living from his or her writing?*

Again, Yudhistira. He's not living well, but in a recent article he said he can make a living by writing. Last year he published two or three novels, and already this year he has brought out two or three novels — very, very productive. In his writing, he is a realist and has a very powerful sense of humour.

*In one way, of course, Indonesian writers are luckier than ours, because they've got a much bigger home market.*

That's right.

*What are you teaching at the University of Indonesia?*

Comparative literature. Last year, I taught creative writing. This year, I'm going to include Australian writing in my comparative literature course because I have done some translations of Australian poems and published them in the magazine I edit, *Horison,* and I plan to make an anthology of Australian poetry. That is one of the reasons for my visit here, as well as to meet the writers and critics. Also, we want to get a course of Australian studies in the Faculty of Letters. I think we will soon have American studies and South Asia studies. For us, Australian studies is very important. We have to know much more about this country.

*Someone — an Australian — who has never been to Indonesia said once that she found Australians and Indonesians very similar. What do you think about that?*

It's really hard to say, but there is an openness of approach in each country and when I read Australian poetry, I feel that I'm reading something that I know; it's different if I read English poetry or Dutch poetry.

*In other words, as many Australians do when they are in Indonesia, you feel at home with it.*