The 46-year old musician is no temporary talent or cultural monoglot. The son of an architect who made gamelan instruments, Yudane started his career, primarily as a sound and scenic designer in theater. That was after studying at the Academy of Performing Arts in Denpasar, graduating in 1991.

Gamelan arrived in New Zealand in late 1974, when ethnomusicologist Allan Thomas imported an antique Gamelan from Cirebon on the north coast of West Java, assisted by Jack Body. As they later wrote: “About 25 years ago we set out on bicycles into the countryside with the price for the instruments and wayang puppets (the equivalent cost of a certain number of bags of rice).”

Thumbnail Dominion 19 Nov 1974 Nzbc GongsPrior to this, in May 1974, the Indonesian Ambassador had presented the NZBC Symphony Orchestra with a set of gongs which had remained unplayed until Jack Body composed a piece for them with guitar on his return from Java. View press clippings from 1974.

After a brief time in Auckland, Allan brought his Cirebon gamelan down to Wellington where it was played initially at the Wellington Teachers’ Training College (a University Extension class was offered in June 1975 for 6 evening meetings for a fee of $4) and then as part of Victoria University’s musicology programme where Allan was employed as ethnomusicologist.

In 1975, the Indonesian embassy received a complete central Javanese gamelan, one of twelve which were commissioned by the then First Lady Ibu Tien Suharto and presented to various embassies around the world. Allan Thomas taught gamelan to staff and others at the Indonesian embassy using these instruments.

In 1983 the Embassy engaged the first teacher of gamelan, Midiyanto, a dalang (puppeteer) selected from the best new graduates of the performing arts institute (STSI) in Solo, Central Java.

1974/75 - demonstrations and workshops at Auckland’s Epsom Showgrounds and Mt Eden Prison

1976 - performances in Sonic Circus II (contemporary music festival) in Wellington and at South Pacific Festival of the Arts in Rotorua

1977 - first performance of classic Cirebon music at the opening of Symphony House, Wellington

1978 - workshops and performances at the Dowse Gallery Puppet exhibition, Lower Hutt, Wellington. (Jack Body returned from two years in Indonesia)

1979 - Malaysian gamelan repertoire researched by Bee Hoon Tee. Third World Cafe programme included gamelan.

1979 - Recording made of one of the first NZ compositions for gamelan: Ostinato For Gamelan by David Farquhar at the “Festival of New Zealand music and sound installations” by New Zealand composers for the National art gallery, Wellington, 18 October - 11 November (“New Directions in New Zealand Music” LP pressed by EMI - PRA 9001)

1980 - gamelan workshops and performances as part of Te iti Kahurangi for the Central Regional Arts Council

1981 - Cirebon gamelan performance at Nambassa (a five day music and peace festival) - a memorable event that was very hot but VERY wet - the gamelan truck got stuck in the mud and had to be tractored out

1982 - Regional Tour to Wanganui and New Plymouth (Cirebon gamelan music accompanying slides of Cirebon batik); concert in the New Directions in New Zealand Music Festival, including David Farquhar’s compositions for Cirebon gamelan: Ostinato (1975) and Palindrome (1978).

1983 - Widiyanto arrives as teacher/dalang. Performance as part of Asia in New Zealand, a programme of music and dance from several Asian countries held at Government House, Wellington; performance and workshop at the National Music Education Conference and at an Indonesian Exhibition at the National Museum, Wellington; visit from composer, Lou Harrison, and instrument builder, William Colvig as Fulbright scholars - Harrison composed Ketawang Wellington and Colvig tuned both gamelan and made suling.

1984 - Gamelan compositions performed at the Asia Pacific Festival and Composers’ Conference in Wellington, including a performance of Ton De Leeuw’s Gending.

1985 - “Summer City” children’s gamelan workshops

Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

References

http://gamelan.org.nz/gtj-teachers/