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# The odd couple

**P**aye Srinarong and Paulo Zereu look like complete opposites. Juxtaposed, the two are a little reminiscent of Luke Skywalker and Yoda. Had the energetic and talented young Jedi been Thailand's most successful living violinist, he would probably look much like Paye; stylish in his purple button-down and designer jeans, the genre-defying frontman of Vietrio moves with the boundless enthusiasm of a young man eager to attack his next project.

Zereu, by contrast, is every bit as relaxed and laidback as a world-class musician can be, with the manner of someone who has seen it all before and has wisdom to impart, not unlike the Jedi master. The Brazilian pianist has lived around the world, and his voice reflects the experience of having spent years in Europe, South America and Asia.

The pair share their musical experiences with *Life* and reveal what the audience can expect when they team up for a concert at Thailand Cultural Centre tomorrow.

## How did you get started in music, and how did you end up here?

**Paye:** Oh jeez [laughs], where to begin? My father was one of the founding members of the Bangkok Symphony, and always encouraged me to pick up an instrument. I started playing concerts, and what began in Thailand spread to Asia, and finally I started playing concerts in the West. My musical career had grown such that I realised the right move for me was to go abroad, and that's when I found myself in London for eight years, where I got my undergraduate degree in music. After that I found myself at Yale, where I learned a great deal and had a fantastic time. Thereafter, I moved to New York, got my doctorate, and here I am.

**Zereu:** I, too, got my start from a very musical family. My mother was a pianist and my grandfather was a conductor. I played piano throughout my youth just like any other kid, and when I decided I wanted to make music my career, got my bachelor's degree in piano performance from the Rio Grande do Sul State University. Oddly enough, the Polish government, of all things, gave me a scholarship to study piano at the Krakow Academy of Music. Then I spent 17 years in Germany, where I furthered my studies at the University of Music Karlsruhe. In 2005, I started teaching at

Assumption University here in Bangkok, and also functioned as the cultural event organiser for the Portuguese embassy. Today, I fulfil a similar role for the Brazilian embassy.

## You both have lived all over the world. How does that affect your sound, the way you approach pieces and your relationship with your instrument?

**Paye:** You know, the old saying is that 'you live and you learn', and nothing could be truer. When you go through tough times, or happy times, or whatever else, you get transformed into a different performer. As corny as it sounds, it's your job as a musician to provide a window into your soul, and your soul will look the way it does based on your experiences, your passions, and frequently your heartbreaks.

**Zereu:** Right. Here's the deal: music is a language. Just like English, or Portuguese or anything else. No matter what genre you're playing, whether it be classical, pop, or jazz, you're telling a story. Only then can we truly fulfil our jobs as musicians. Playing scales and learning theory? That's the easy part. The next step is to make art.

## Tell us a little about your concert tomorrow.

**Paye:** Paulo and I will be at Thailand Cultural Centre, playing a diverse selection of Brazilian and Thai music. Our goal is to really elucidate on the various musical aspects of each culture. Everyone knows *The Girl From Ipanema*, but how many people know about Brazilian classical music? Almost nobody.

**Zereu:** I'm particularly proud of this concert because I think it's important for countries to show diplomatic solidarity, and, like I said earlier, music is a common language.

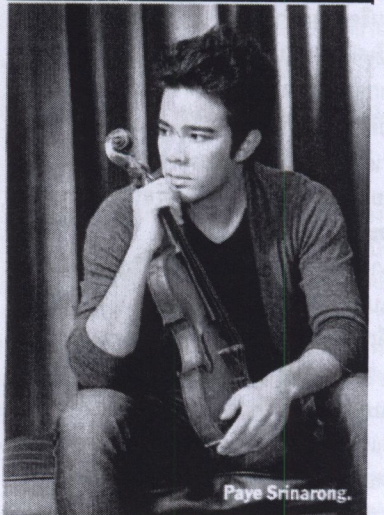
## What are your funniest gig stories?

**Paye:** Well, [pauses] I played a show with an emo rock band. They convinced me to paint my nails black, pick up an electric violin, and wear eyeliner. I was really self-conscious at first, but everyone in the stadium was screaming and yelling and I just got really into it. I felt like a gladiator or something. I started jumping on amplifiers and crowd surfing. It was very different from Carnegie Hall [laughs].

**Zereu:** I'm not nearly as exciting as Paye, but I saw [Vladimir] Horowitz live in concert once, and the old man himself started getting into it with a journalist who had written a bad review of



Paulo Zereu.



Paye Srinarong.

Horowitz's last concert. He wouldn't start playing until the journalist was removed!

**Paye:** Wow, and I thought I was fussy.

## So how sick are you two of playing *The Girl From Ipanema*?

[Paye starts to laugh uproariously. Paulo shakes his head and puts his face in his hands.]