

PREFECTICE

THE VERY BEST IN LIFE

MAY 2011



HAUTE
COUTURE
PARIS
FASHION
WEEK

GIFTS FROM
THE GRAVE
LEGACIES OF THE
RICH AND FAMOUS

THE FACES OF
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION

THE SHOPPING
OF ART
PEARL LAM BUYS
WHAT SHE FANCIES

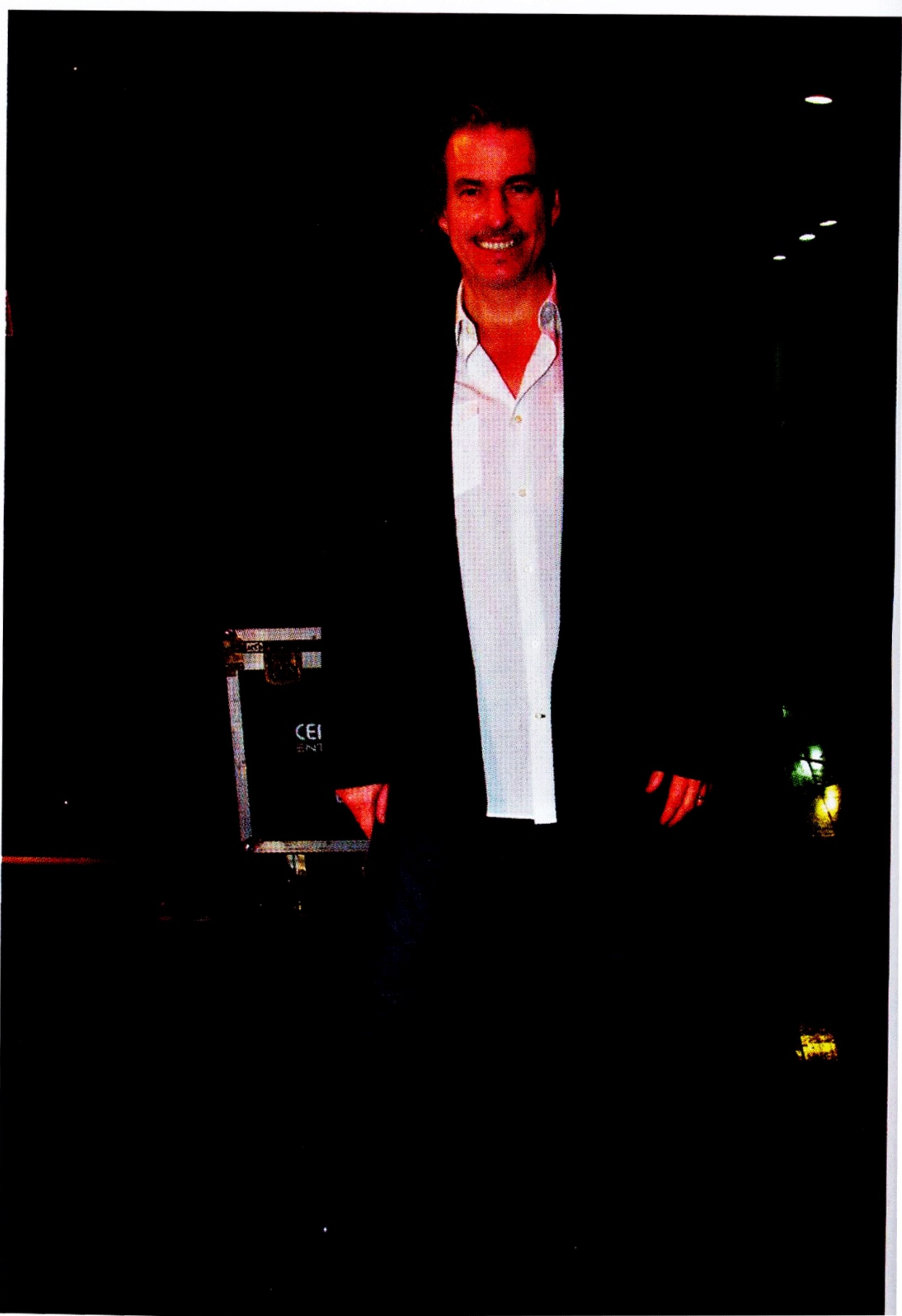
DR DISAPHOL
CHANSIRI
A LIFE MOST VIBRANT

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THEY DREAMED A DREAM

Over 150 kids and young adults from throughout Asia are a bit closer to making it on Broadway, as Nicholas Snow reports

THE CURRICULUM WAS, WELL, ALL THAT JAZZ, Broadway musicals, hip hop dance, piano, chamber music and string orchestra. Instructors hailed from Thailand and America's finest universities, with a couple from Broadway itself. Now more ready for their close-up are students from Thailand, Nepal, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Pakistan who participated in the YES Academy Thailand (created by the NGO American Voices), a 10-day intensive in the classrooms of Rangsit University Conservatory of Music.



The life-changing experience culminated in gala performances at the Centerpoint Playhouse in CentralWorld with a playful Guys & Dolls Broadway review, an energetic Hip Hop & House Dance extravaganza, a can't-help-but-dance-along-in-your-seat "Forever Motown" set, and all performers converging for a non-stop, inspirational "Lean on Me" finale (the jazz and string students performed the following night).

It wasn't just anybody teaching at the YES Academy. Broadway director/actor Gabriel Barre (Tony-nominated for best actor in a musical) has directed plays around the world, including the recent world premiere of the Frank Wildhorn musical Tears of Heaven in Seoul, and he is currently in Beijing preparing a major new musical based upon the ancient Chinese folk tale, The Monkey King. Barre credits a high school drama teacher for encouraging him to follow his dreams.

Of the YES Academy students, Barre explained, "They don't have to learn necessarily how we perform on Broadway or in America. They can create their own way to do it—the Bangkok way to tell a story, using the traditions here mixed with what these kids know. You can see them hip hop dancing on the street corners and in the malls. It's fantastic... What we're doing here at the YES Academy is teaching about entertainment, about storytelling, and ways to command an audience with your instrument, which is in our case the body, and no matter how you're going to tell your

story or in what disciplines, you learn those basic ingredients, and this is a great place to start."

As for who the students leaned on for such an opportunity, the United States Embassy in Bangkok is a key sponsor, and HE Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney was one of the most enthusiastic members of a very excited audience, telling *Prestige* that art is "a global connector. There is no border in music or dance at all," and said of the kids, "their talents go so far beyond their borders and their creativity links them to the rest of the world... There's nothing that connects us all better than art." 📌

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