

Baby strikes a chord

Critics love him, but Russian pianist Yevgeny Sudbin is most happy as the father of a baby girl

corrie tan

Russian pianist Yevgeny Sudbin may be only 30 years old but he has already been hailed as one of the most exciting musical finds to have emerged in the past decade.

However, in Singapore yesterday ahead of a concert at the Esplanade Concert Hall, the doe-eyed pianist had other things on his mind.

He is a new dad. He and his piano-teacher wife, Sally Wei, are the parents of a seven-month-old baby girl.

Sudbin looked visibly tired and rubbed his eyes constantly during an interview with Life!. He had flown here from Tokyo

in the wee hours of the morning.

But he perked up immediately when asked about his daughter.

An avid photographer, he said with a huge grin: "I have taken thousands of pictures of her."

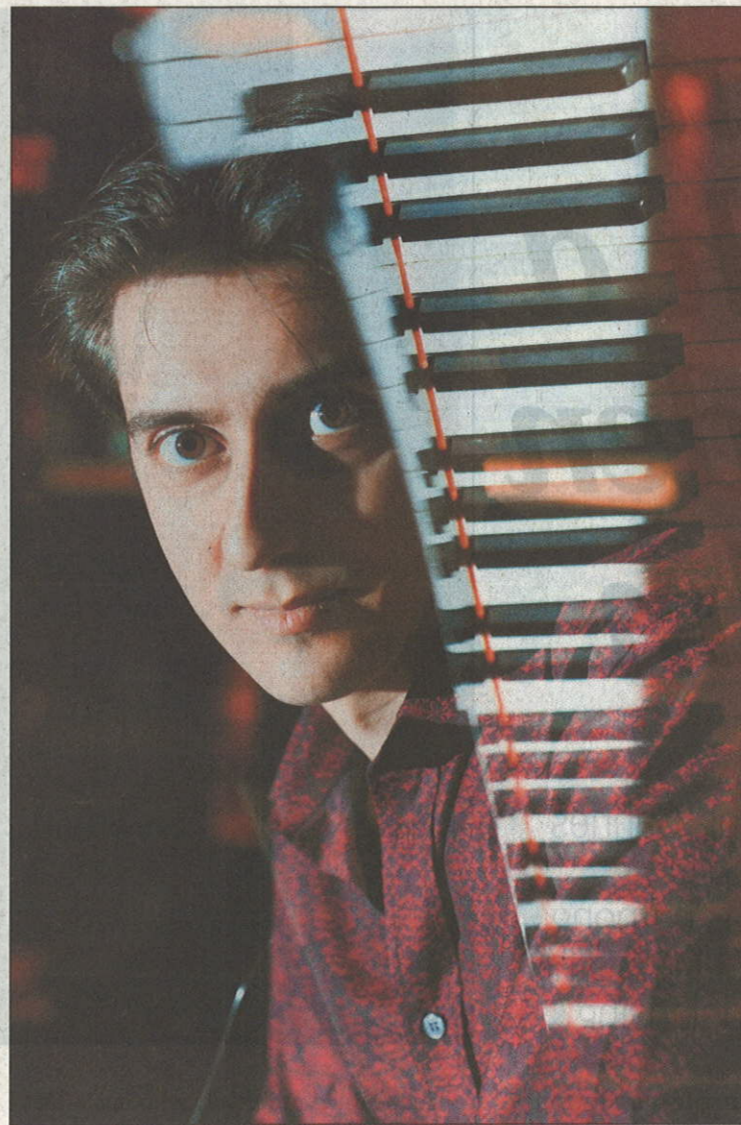
After his concert, he will fly to Taiwan to join his wife, a British-Taiwanese, and baby.

Does he want his daughter to follow in his footsteps? He says with a smile: "It's up to her. Completely her choice, no pressure."

Fatherhood aside, Sudbin, who has been likened to the late great Russian pianist Vladimir Horowitz, dismisses the lavish praise heaped on him by critics with a shrug of his shoulders.

Speaking in Russian-inflected but polished English, he said he has stopped reading any reviews of his performances and adds: "They are just distracting. I have a few people I trust who are my critics."

He adds with a chuckle: "My wife is one of my biggest critics. She gives me constructive criticism and so do a few



ST PHOTO: ASHLEIGH SIM

'They are just distracting. I have a few people I trust who are my critics'

Yevgeny Sudbin (left) on why he does not read reviews of his performances

other people like my ex-teachers and my friends."

He goes on to say that reading reviews can get confusing. Having one concert reviewed by different critics can be like reading about five different concerts.

His concert tomorrow with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) is titled Young Lions.

He will be playing Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's Piano Concerto in F-sharp minor, under the baton of 38-year-old Estonian conductor Kristjan Jarvi. Jarvi has been hailed by The New York Times as "Leonard Bernstein reborn" and also has a Grammy nomination under his belt.

Sudbin, who is mostly based in London, came to Singapore in 2006 to perform with the SSO and in 2009 for the 16th Singapore International Piano Festival.

He holds about 50 to 60 concerts a year and does recordings in between them.

Nursing a glass of orange juice, he says: "After recording a CD, I am usually flat on my back for a few days. I just eat and sleep. It's so exhausting because you spend something like eight hours constantly performing.

"But I love it, it's like the nice feeling you get after running a marathon."

But most of all, he appreciates time spent with his family.

"It's very hard being apart from them, especially my baby. I always want to know what's going on with her. I don't want to miss anything," he adds.

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hook it

YOUNG LIONS

Where: Esplanade Concert Hall

When: Tomorrow, 7.30pm

Admission: \$12 to \$78.75 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)