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The ‘talking machine’ comes to the Dutch East Indies
The arrival of Western media technology in Southeast Asia

Of all my inventions, I liked the phonograph best...¹

Introduction

The invention of sound recording technology in the nineteenth century was a modern miracle.² Making possible the storage and preservation of sounds across time and distance, which previously could only be dreamed of, this invention contributed significantly to the developing entertainment world. Thomas Alva Edison first realized this dream in 1877 when he invented the tin-foil phonograph, which then inspired other scientists to perfect and develop his invention. During the last two decades of the 1800s sound recording machines were exhibited outside the United States of America, first in Europe and then in Australia and Asia. In Europe the machine was first demonstrated at the Academy of Science in Paris on 11 March 1878, where a French professor named Bonjour accused Edison of cheating. He stated that Edison was a ventriloquist.³

¹ Thomas Alva Edison; quoted from http://www.thomasedison.com/edquote.htm (accessed 14-9-2004).
² Financial support for this research was provided by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), which funded my short visit to the British Library in London in January 2004. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Fourth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS4), 20-24 August 2005, Shanghai. I gratefully acknowledge Matthew Isaac Cohen, Wim van Zanten, Krishna Sen, David T. Hill, Margarita Winkel, Ben Arps and two anonymous BKI reviewers for their valuable comments. Any mistakes, of course, are mine alone. I also thank Prof. Isabel Margaret de Madariaga for sending me the picture of her grandfather used as an illustration in this article.
³ Pedoman Masjarakat, 12-1-1938, p. 36.

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The adoption of sound recording technology in Asia seems to have gone through three phases, which applies to other modern media invented in the nineteenth century as well. The first phase was a period of exhibition in which a recording machine was demonstrated to the public in venues such as theatres and clubs, in the form of shows for which people had to buy tickets. In the second phase, people purchased sound recording machines and records, which became objects of prestige and status. In the third phase, European and USA recording companies appointed local agents in Asian cities and then established local recording facilities, usually in collaboration with local entrepreneurs.

Focusing on the period of exhibition (phase one), this article investigates the first experiences of the people of the Dutch East Indies with the recording machine, which in Malay, the lingua franca of the colony, was called mesin bitjara (the talking machine). The time covered is the last two decades of the nineteenth century. I describe important aspects of the exhibition of the ‘talking machine’ in the Indies: the ways demonstrations were carried out, the pioneer exhibitors and their motivations, the towns and places of exhibitions, the repertoires that were first recorded and presented to audiences, and the audiences’ response. I aim to identify the cultural implications of ‘talking machine’ exhibition within the colonial environment, and especially within the urban entertainment world that was emerging in the nineteenth-century Dutch East Indies.

Socio-cultural implications of sound replication

Since the mid nineteenth century, modernity had echoed throughout the Indies, especially in Java. For economic reasons and in order to strengthen and perpetuate its colonial power, and based on the notion that the Natives needed development and enlightenment, but should not become more like Europeans (Moon 2005:192-3), the Dutch brought Western technologies to the country, which were applied to the development of roads and railways, electricity, telegraph lines, sugar factories, ‘modern’ (international) ports, and irrigation.

In urban areas, the invasion of Western culture appeared most clearly in architecture, transportation, print culture, clothing and fashion (Schulte Nordholt 1997; Mrázek 2002:129-59), optical technologies (Mrázek 2002:85-127), and the appearance of new performing art genres — in local, ‘Foreign Oriental’, and European communities. Human relationships and social structure concurrently changed, which brought about in people a new spirit and attitude. The phonograph arrived at the time that such changes in all aspects of life began to multiply. It is hard, however, to unravel the cultural and aesthetic significance of the ‘talking machine’ in the colony in the short period of its exhibition, prior to its consumption. Regional media coverage was sparse (especially in the vernacular media), and the technology itself was still in an immature phase. Nevertheless, the early encounters with sound recording
technology in the Indies must have had socio-cultural implications.

Through the invention of the phonograph, the human voice for the first time gained a measure of immortality. With its capability to separate sounds from their sources, the ‘talking machine’ changed the way people listened to sound. ‘Nothing excites the memory more strongly than the human voice, maybe because nothing is forgotten as quickly as a voice. Our memory of it, however, does not die — its timbre and character sink into our subconscious where they await their revival.’ (Rudolph Lothar in Weidman 2003:453.) With the invention of the phonograph, sound was no longer a quickly vanishing phenomenon. With its potential to preserve and reproduce sound, the phonograph allowed people to hear the voices of the dead. It is not an exaggeration to say that the phonograph fundamentally changed the human reception and perception of sound, especially of the voice. As a consequence of the advent of the ‘talking machine’, ‘sound became a problem: an object to be contemplated, reconstructed, and manipulated, something that can be fragmented, industrialized, and bought and sold’ (Sterne 2003:9). Actually, we are discussing here the cultural meanings of sound replication.

Psychologically, the invention of the phonograph also affected human perception of what is real. The ‘talking machine’ enabled one to store data other than writing and images. At issue was not simply that new technology expanded the possibilities of storage; what was stored through this new technology was thought of as fundamentally different from what was stored by writing. Amanda Weidman (2003:462, 464) mentions that ‘the new stored material’ preserved in the recording machine ‘came to be experienced as “real”. The phonograph offered a new kind of real in which the purity of hearing alone was distilled.’ This article will look at the confrontation of notions of the real with notions of the illusory which emerged at the phonograph demonstrations in the Dutch East Indies within the context of the contemporary urban entertainment world.

**First demonstration of Edison’s tin-foil phonograph in Java**

Although there is little information on the introduction of the recording machine in the Indies, it is known that a Dutchman named De Greef was the first to demonstrate it to the public. This name was mentioned in 1892 by Pieter Brooshooft in an article about the phonograph in the Semarang Dutch daily *De Locomotief*.4 Brooshooft mentions in this article that Mr. de Greef ten years earlier, around 1882, first exhibited Edison’s phonograph across Java. Unfortunately, Brooshooft does not say where De Greef gave his demonstra-

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4 P.B. [Pieter Brooshooft], ‘De nieuwere phonograaf’ (*De Locomotief*, 3-6-1892) as headline. Brooshooft (as the chief editor of *De Locomotief*) wrote this article to welcome Professor Douglas Archibald, who visited Java to demonstrate the more recent phonograph perfected by Edison.
Figure 1. Douglas Archibald with an unknown woman. This picture was made between 1881 and 1889, when Archibald was living in Tunbridge Wells. (Courtesy of Isabel Margaret de Madariaga’s family in London).
tions, although it was probably in prominent towns like Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya. There is also no information on the audience’s response to those early demonstrations. However, Brooshooft does explain that voices could not be differentiated on the machine. The phonograph demonstrated by De Greef was evidently Edison’s tin-foil phonograph, which as a prototype was not perfect and had a poor recording quality.5

By 1889 Edison and his engineers had succeeded in designing a new and better phonograph, which employed wax as its recording material. He had worked hard and put much money into his experiment, and hoped that the new phonograph would reach a world market.6 Wax was first used as a recording material by Charles Summer Tainter and was then adopted by Edison. To pay for this patent, the Edison Phonograph Company had to pay $25 to Tainter for every one of the new-style phonographs it sold (Brooshooft 1892). And again, on 25 April 1889, the new Edison Company phonograph was exhibited at the Academy of Science in Paris.7

In the same year, a British professor, Douglas Archibald, who claimed to be Edison’s ‘classmate and intimate friend’ — a fact that would have enhanced his credibility — travelled around the world in order to introduce and exhibit the new Edison phonograph.8 In the middle of May 1892, he arrived in Java, where most people at that time regarded the recording of sounds as impossible.

**Demonstration of the new Edison phonograph in Java**

On 16 April 1892, the steamer *Nerbudda* left Calcutta and sailed for Singapore via Rangoon. Among its passengers were Douglas Archibald and his wife, with a new ‘miracle’ machine in their luggage.9 Archibald claimed he was a representative of Thomas Alva Edison’s National Phonograph Company from the United States, which was established in 1888. The Indies was the last leg of Archibald’s world trip, which had begun in 1889.

In early April 1892 the couple seem to have appeared in Calcutta, at that time a prominent city under British colonial control, which had become an important gateway in Asia for white travellers sailing from Europe.

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5 In his essay, Brooshooft mentions a book entitled *De natuurkunde in onzen tijd* by B.C. Goudsmit (Zutphen: Thieme, Batavia: Kolff, [1896]) which describes the technical workings of Edison’s first phonograph. Originally this book was published as *Physique populaire*, Paris: Marpon et Flammarion, 1891, by Émile Desbeaux; see also *De Locomotief*, 31-5-1892, column titled [short news from] Semarang.

6 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 21-5-1892, column titled ‘Een gesprek met Edison’; *De Locomotief*, 23-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.

7 Brooshooft 1892. For more about how Europe welcomed the ‘talking machine’, see Gelatt 1956:69-79.

8 *De Locomotief*, 6-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.

9 *The Straits Times*, 4-5-1892, column titled ‘Shipping [Trading Vessels] & Passenger List’, p. 265.
Apparently, Archibald had already visited some European cities and Australia before he arrived in India. He was one of many nineteenth-century European travellers with new technology departing from London, Amsterdam, or Paris — which at that time was well-known for its exhibits and promotion of all the new technologies — heading for the Orient to seek luck and fortune. In Calcutta Archibald also demonstrated the new phonograph.

Apparently, Archibald had visited Asia previously. Born at Hampstead, England, in 1850, Douglas Edmund Archibald was the son of a judge, Sir Thomas Dickson Archibald, and Sarah Smith. He attended St John’s College, Oxford University, and graduated with a BA in 1874, and an MA in 1879. He then went to India, and taught mathematics at Patna College in Bengal from 1877 to 1881. Returning to England, Archibald was principal of Grosvenor House, a private school at Tunbridge Wells (see Figure 1). Archibald also claimed to have been a visiting professor at the University of Calcutta for three years.

In early May 1892 the Archibalds arrived in Singapore, where they remained for approximately one week and gave phonograph demonstrations. The first was held on the evening of 8 May 1892 at the Singapore Town Hall. *The Straits Times*, the prominent Singapore weekly, reported:

Last night, in the Town Hall, Professor Douglas Archibald gave the first public exhibition in Singapore of the large Edison phonograph with which he is, and has been for the past two or three years, travelling round the world. The exhibition of the instrument was preceded by a lecture, terse and to the point, in which Mr. Archibald dealt with the various efforts that have been made in the recording history of the world to catch and mechanically preserve sound. He related how Chinese folk-lore contains a legend asserting that once there lived a woman, so remarkable in her day and generation, that at one time, she spoke into a piece of bamboo.

10 This information was obtained from Prof. Allan Marble of Halifax, Canada, who is writing a book on the Archibald family, to which his grandmother belonged. Marble was unaware of Archibald’s association with Edison’s phonograph exhibitions in Southeast Asia. Marble mentioned that Archibald had married twice and had four children. One of his granddaughters, Prof. Isabel de Madariaga, aged 86, now lives in London (Marble, email, 18-9, 21-9, 20-10-2005). Madariaga presented me with some additional information about her grandfather (Madariaga, email, 24-10-2005). She mentioned that her grandmother (Archibald’s first wife), Janet Helen Finlay, was the daughter of a wealthy cloth manufacturer in Glasgow. She was very badly treated by Archibald (he had other women) and she left him taking her four children soon after they settled in Grosvenor House, and went to live near her family in Glasgow. Archibald married again to a lady whose first name was Effie, probably short for Euphemia, a typical Scottish name, but she left him almost at once because of the same problem Finlay had had. It is uncertain whether it was Effie or another woman who travelled with Archibald to Asia in 1892, but it certainly was not Finlay. Madariaga does not think her grandmother went with her grandfather to Asia, because her mother (Finlay’s daughter), who only met Archibald (her father) once after their separation, never told her anything about it. According to Madariaga, Finlay died in 1912.

11 Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 14-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’. See also De Locomotief, 31-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ and 2-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
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which was then tightly corked and preserved for future reference. It is told how a thousand years afterwards the bamboo was uncorked and there proceeded from it a word declared to be the identical utterance spoken by the woman a thousand years before. After the brief reference to the frozen notes of Baron Munchausen’s post horn, and to the more than half-mythical history which ascribes to the ancient Egyptians some knowledge of phonographic science, Mr. Archibald proceeded to enumerate the practical uses of the phonograph, and closed with a brief recital of Edison’s past achievements and present ambitions. [...] Following the lecture came a number of phonographic recitals (if they may be so styled). Edison’s Phonograph is a small instrument, regarded in connection with the volume of sound which it produces, and it may be noted that all genuine Edison phonographs are of similar size and pattern, that they are not on the market, and that this is the first phonograph that has been in the East, all other alleged phonographs being of the phonautograph class, and as inferior to the phonograph as the German concertina is to a grand organ. The selection last night comprised a cornet solo, by Levy (played in 1891); a masterly banjo solo, by Vane (1890); a remarkable bassoon solo, played in London in 1891 by E.F. James, of the Royal Italian Opera; a tin-whistle solo by an amateur, with various amateurisms fully accentuated; comic and sentimental songs; a Parsee song, which was remarkable for clearness; orchestral and brass-band selections; a typical specimen of Salvation Army ‘worship’, a speech by Sir John Forrest (premier of Western Australia); and an extremely pretty xylophone and piano duet. Mr. Archibald also spoke into the instrument, which reproduced his utterances with wonderful fidelity immediately afterwards. A gentleman from the audience also sang into the funnel, but as he occasionally threw his voice outside the orifice of the instrument, the reproduction was not so clear. The entertainment was of reasonable length, and was thoroughly interesting in character. Professor Archibald’s exhibitions are under the patronage of H.E. the Governor, who is expected to attend to-night; last night the Hou’ble W.E. Maxwell was present.12

The second demonstration was held on 9 May in the same building. A number of new selections were presented, and the entertainment was again very satisfactory. The third and last exhibition would be the following evening. It was also reported that Archibald would proceed shortly to Java, where he would be represented by Allan Hamilton as his manager.13

In the second week of May 1892, Archibald and his wife made preparations to leave Singapore; their next destination was Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies. However, they had to delay their departure, probably due to lack of transportation, because only two vessels weekly served the Surabaya-Singapore route at that time. As a result, Archibald gave two additional demonstrations in Singapore on 10 and 11 May.14 These were held at the

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12 The Straits Times, 10-5-1892, column titled ‘The Phonograph’, p. 274. This report was quoted in De Locomotief, 13-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ and Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 16-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.

13 The Straits Times, 10-5-1892, column titled ‘The Phonograph’, p. 274.

14 The Straits Times, 10-5-1892, column titled ‘Saturday, 7th May’, p. 276.
Regimental theatre, Tanglin, the elite European compound and the British soldiers’ base camp in Singapore (near the current Orchard Road) (Makepeace, Brooke and Braddell 1921, I:489). Apparently, Archibald’s demonstrations in the Regimental theatre were mainly intended for government officials, soldiers, and their families. The media released no reports about them.

Archibald’s phonograph demonstrations in Singapore, primarily attended by and intended for the white ruling class in this colony, support Jonathan Sterne’s notion (2003:9) that ‘sound-reproduction technologies represented the promise of science, rationality, and industry and the power of the white man to co-opt and supersede domains of life that were previously considered to be magical’. There was no indication in *The Straits Times* reports that these demonstrations were attended by Native spectators; as Michael Adas (1989) has shown, Europeans in colonial settings viewed technical differences as evidence of the superiority of Western over indigenous cultures, thus reflecting racist ideologies.

The Archibalds left Singapore after the second phonograph demonstration in Tanglin and sailed for Batavia on the *SS Godavery*, arriving there on 17 May. They soon continued their trip by steamer to the capital of East Java, Surabaya, on Wednesday morning, 18 May, arriving in the afternoon.\(^{15}\)

As *The Straits Times* reported, Archibald’s phonograph show during his trip to Java was organized by Allan Hamilton, a professional manager from Surabaya.\(^{16}\) Hamilton, who sometimes appeared in newspapers with the title ‘Professor’ attached to his name, apparently was a freelance manager who was often contracted by foreign entertainment troupes to arrange their performances during their tours of the Indies.\(^{17}\) Archibald needed a professional like Hamilton: the machine was absolutely novel and just beginning to be incorporated into the urban entertainment world and it was unfamiliar to the public of Java. With Hamilton’s assistance, Archibald could hope that many spectators would attend his demonstrations.

\(^{15}\) *Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken*, 18-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.

\(^{16}\) *Soerabaijisich-Handelsblad*, 19-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’. The professional manager who could be contracted to organize art performances seems to have emerged together with the rise of urban entertainments in the main Javanese towns in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For the emergence of urban culture in colonial Indonesia and Malaysia, see Milone 1966 and Wan Abdul Kadir 1988.

\(^{17}\) *De Locomotief*, 31-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’. In the weeks before he signed the contract with Archibald, Hamilton organized a tour of the European operetta troupe Ada Maven’s Folly Company owned by Frank Maven. The troupe travelled to the Orient, including Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, to perform dances, songs and comedy acts. On 6 May, Hamilton completed his contract with this group and announced that he would organize Archibald’s phonograph demonstrations upon his arrival from Singapore. See *De Locomotief* 6-5 and 23-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; *Soerabaijisich-Handelsblad*, 9-5-1892, column titled ‘Indisch nieuws’.
Archibald probably chose Surabaya for his first phonograph demonstration in the Indies because it was the largest and most prominent city of the colony at the time and because urban entertainment was increasingly evident there. In fact, urban entertainment blossomed in Surabaya more than in other cities of Java. In the late nineteenth century, it was ‘a major theatre city. Surabaya theatre, located at Komediaplein, hosted touring English music-hall companies, Italian opera, French troupes performing opéra comique and opéra bouffe, and Dutch ensembles enacting farces and melodramas.’ (Cohen 2001:325.) Opera and chamber music was enjoyed regularly by military and society clubs. Military music was often presented in the town square for public entertainment. Many European, Chinese, and Native performance groups, such as wayang potehi, wayang kulit, and komedi peranakan, performed in Surabaya frequently. Bangsawan theatre — an adaptation of the Parsi theatre of South Asia — travelled from the Malay Peninsula (Penang, Johor, Singapore) to Java, Borneo, and Sumatra (Cohen 2002a). Likewise, other Asian performance groups, such as Komedia India and Komedi Jepang, performed in Surabaya on their tours around the Indies. The musical box or orgel, which was developed in Switzerland before the phonograph (Mosoriak 1943; Clark 1979), had also been demonstrated to the European upper classes in Surabaya and other main towns in Java. Western circus groups in their tours to the Orient always stopped in Surabaya. Often there were two entertainment groups conducting performances in the city at the same time. The first Komedie Stamboel group, a popular urban drama in the Indies, was established in Surabaya in 1891 (Cohen 2001:331-6), one year before Archibald’s arrival. Undoubtedly, Surabaya could be receptive to the promotion of new media technology like Edison’s phonograph.

Archibald’s demonstrations in Surabaya were announced in promotional wording in local newspapers two days before he arrived: ‘in the week ahead the “nieuwte” (novelty) and “laatste uitvinding” (latest invention) the phonograph will be demonstrated in Surabaya’. In advertisements in the Surabaya and Semarang press, Archibald stated that he had been directly assigned by Edison to introduce his phonograph around the world. Archibald also claimed to be the one who first introduced the machine to the public in England, Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon and India. In the last three years he claimed his demonstrations had been attended by some 500,000 spectators. Archibald’s world tour aimed to make the wonderful invention better

18 Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 9-5-1892, column titled ‘Indisch nieuws’, 11-5 and 14-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië.
19 Archibald visited Australia in 1890: his phonograph demonstrations at the Athenaeum theatre in Melbourne, just six months after its American debut, were attended by many spectators and were enthusiastically received by the local press (http://www.exero.com/mastergate/secured/collectibles/edison.htm (accessed 28-10-2004)).
known and to inform the Edison Company about how it was received in the press. The announcements referred to his collection of clippings from 150 English, Irish, Scottish, Australian, New Zealand, British-Indian and Ceylonese newspapers which, almost without exception, expressed their admiration for the instrument.\(^{20}\)

To Archibald himself Java was not unfamiliar, because he had been a member of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society of London, for which he had conducted extensive research on the impact of the Krakatau eruption in the Sunda Strait in 1883. In fact, he is on record as one of 13 members of this committee, which published a report on the impact of the eruption;\(^{21}\) chapter 4 (313 pages) of this thick book was mostly written by Archibald. He also wrote other scholarly works, published in London and Calcutta.\(^{22}\) Actually, his expertise was in meteorological science, and he was a fellow of the British Royal Meteorological Society. In this connection he conducted observations in 1885 and 1886, for example, on the aerometer, and in 1888 he succeeded in an experiment with a kite which ‘will have an important bearing on the future of [...] the science of military ballooning’\(^{23}\) Archibald also claimed to be a member of other scientific organizations. His book *The story of the earth’s atmosphere* (published in 1897), for example, was reprinted several times between 1898 and 1918. In view of his academic works, it is clear that Archibald was not just a white adventurer promoting magical new European technology in the Orient in order to seek his fortune, as was common in the nineteenth century. Rather he seems to have been a scientist. Archibald’s advertisements in the press stressed his academic credentials, and this was apparently meant to create the impression that the instrument he would demonstrate was a sophisticated technological product and, therefore, most appropriate to be appreciated by rational minds belonging to the educated classes.

\(^{20}\) See, for example, *De Locomotief*, 1-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ and 2-6-1892, column titled ‘Advertentien’.

\(^{21}\) Symons 1888. See *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 14-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; *De Locomotief*, 31-5-1892, column titled ‘Advertentien’; *Java-Bode*, 12-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’. Symons (1888) wrote Archibald’s name — as ‘Douglas E[dmund] Archibald’ — without ‘professor’. As I describe below, his professorial title became a subject of debate in the local press following his confrontation with H.E. Eijssell, the chief editor of *Soerabaija-Courant*.

\(^{22}\) I want to express my thanks to archivists Joanna Corden and Clara Anderson of the Royal Society and Graham Barlett, library information manager of the British National Meteorological Library and Archive, for their useful information about Archibald’s scholarly career in England and his scholarly publications (Corden, email, 13-9-2004; Anderson, email, 24-9-2004; Barlett, email, 15-9 and 20-9-2004). For Archibald’s scholarly publications available in the British National Meteorological Library and Archive, see record numbers 801391, 787570, 801394, 801390, 801393, 801392 and 801395 of the Library’s collections.

\(^{23}\) See *Kent and Sussex Courier* (18-5-1888, column titled ‘Aerostatic experiment in Tunbridge Wells’) in which Archibald was called Professor. Thanks to Isabel de Madariaga for sending me a copy of this newspaper.
The press in Surabaya and Semarang wrote enthusiastically of the new instrument that would be demonstrated by Archibald. ‘For the first time people in Java can hear the recordings of Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, the famous singers Adelina Patti\textsuperscript{24} and Stanley.’\textsuperscript{25} Following the practice of foreign entertainment troupes at that time, which often went along the railways, shipping lines, and main roads connecting the main Javanese towns, Archibald prepared a roadshow. His next destinations would be Pasuruan, Probolinggo and Semarang, other important towns on the north coast of Java. The editor of the daily \textit{De Locomotief} in Semarang, Brooshooft, wrote a long article entitled ‘De nieuwere phonograaf’ (The newer phonograph) in which he described in detail the characteristics of the instrument that Archibald was to demonstrate. Brooshooft encouraged the public to see the exhibition in the following weeks at the Semarang Schouwburg. He also described the distinguishing features of the new type of phonograph and compared it with the one that had been demonstrated in Java previously by De Greef. He mentioned that the earlier instrument had had a lot of shortcomings; it was a parody of the real voice (Brooshooft 1892).

The first advertisement of Archibald’s phonograph demonstration was in \textit{Soerabaiaisch-Handelsblad} on 11 May 1892, less than one week before his arrival, and it was published continually throughout the week (\textit{Soerabaiaisch-Handelsblad}, 11 to 21-05-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’; see Figure 2). The daily \textit{Soerabaija-Courant} and Thieme’s \textit{Nieuw Advertentieblad} also published the same half-page advertisement in their issues from 11 to 20 May (see Figure 3). In these advertisements Hamilton mentioned that the newest phonograph of Edison’s Company, ‘the miracle of the nineteenth century’ (\textit{wonder der 19e eeuw}) would be demonstrated by Professor Archibald in Surabaya on Friday 20 May and Sunday 22 May. Hamilton stated that the instrument was appearing ‘for the first time in Java’ (\textit{voor het eerst op Java}). The demonstrations would begin at 9.30 p.m. in Surabaya’s theatre. Admission would be between one and three guilders depending on the kind of ticket. The Surabaya public were reminded that Archibald would give only two demonstrations in their town and that he would be travelling in Java for only one month. In the middle of June he was to sail for the United States to participate in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The recordings to be presented were described as ‘reproductions of every conceivable kind of sound from all parts of the world’, including, as in Singapore previously, instrumental and vocal music as well as speeches by prominent politicians and religious leaders, especially British ones.

\textsuperscript{24} The Italian Adelina Patti was a famous singer in the late nineteenth century, particularly in England and the United States (Moore 1976:97-102). Patti, who studied with Rossini, was a favourite of Queen Victoria (Gaisberg 1946:90-1).

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{De Locomotief}, 6-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
Figure 2. An advertisement for Archibald’s exhibition in Surabaya
(Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 14-5-1892)
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On Wednesday evening, 18 May 1892, soon after Archibald and his wife arrived in Surabaya, Hamilton arranged for him to meet some twenty persons in the coffee room of the Surabaya Schouwburg in Komedieplein.²⁶ The meeting was to introduce Archibald to a number of distinguished guests, all high European officials and their wives, and journalists, while demonstrating the phonograph for them. The daily Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad reported that:

Mr. D[ouglas] himself spoke into the tube and a few moments later the words came to us clearly. A sample [test] by Mr. H[amilton] from Surabaya failed because the sound of this gentleman was dull. After the end of the official performance a few gentlemen sang a song into the phonograph that was reproduced clearly as well. We confidently, therefore, recommend a visit tomorrow or on Sunday.²⁷

Meanwhile the Soerabaija-Courant article drew attention to national identity by writing that Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the newest phonograph, was of Dutch ancestry. The editor mentioned that the performance of the phonograph was very impressive and wished Archibald success during his trip in the Indies.²⁸ Welcoming Archibald’s first demonstration for the general public, to be held on Friday 20 May, H.E. Eijssell, the chief editor of Soerabaija-Courant (see Termorshuizen 2001:228-33, 329-30) wrote:

Edison’s phonograph. It was written that Mr. Hamilton (of the Phonograph Company Limited as I almost said) would honour my office with a visit this morning, to inform me, and with me my readers, that tonight at ten thirty in the Schouwburg, the first show will be held. A great many seats are already reserved, and therefore it looks like Archibald will have every reason to be happy that he did not bypass our city. The next performance will be given on Sunday and this will certainly be the last public show held here, because of previously made appointments.²⁹

The first public phonograph demonstration by Archibald was attended by Dutch and, not surprisingly, British immigrants of Surabaya. Apparently, they were curious to hear the voice of Gladstone, the leading politician of their country of origin which, according to the newspaper reports they had read, could be heard here in Java through this new ‘miracle’ machine. Apart from that, the fact that the machine was to be demonstrated by a fellow British citizen surely attracted them. Unfortunately, the demonstration was not as successful as that of 19 May because of technical problems. As Archibald had

²⁶ For more about the Surabaya Schouwburg (with interior and exterior pictures), see Faber 1931:333-7.
²⁷ Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 19-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
²⁸ Soerabaija-Courant, 19-5-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’.
²⁹ Soerabaija-Courant, 20-5-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’.
Figure 3. An advertisement for Archibald’s exhibition in Surabaya
(Soorabaija-Courant, 17-5-1892)
only one phonograph with him, it was most unfortunate if it broke down. A member of the audience named F. de Hertog sent a letter to the editor of *Thieme’s Nieuw Advertentieblad* (21-5-1892) in which he expresses his dissatisfaction.

The second public demonstration was held on Sunday evening, 22 May. Alas, the machine was again defective. The audience were very disappointed and Archibald was verbally abused, resulting in a disturbance. Eijssell reported the incident in a sarcastic tone:

‘Professor’ Douglas Archibald M.A. (Oxon), and whatever else his titles might be, from now on has a reason to say that it would be wise for him not to return in the next 25 years, with or without a phonograph or any other miraculous instrument to show.

Because the audience, of a few hundred people, he fooled so cleverly yesterday evening will make sure it won’t happen again. For whatever reason Mr. Professor went so far that even his fellow citizens ran short of words to show their disapproval, and that they don’t hesitate to call him ‘a real swindle’ — I don’t know.

But it is certain that I heard several of them this morning that were angry with him. The show lasted less than an hour and it showed not even one sixth of all the things in the programme. There was also the bad manners to charge one guilder extra on top of the entrance fee of three guilders — none too reasonable in itself — just for presenting Gladstone’s voice and speech which, according to many Englishmen’s feelings, quite literally doesn’t have ‘anything like the Grand Old Man’s voice’ — no, this is really too much of a bad thing.

We are the kind of good-natured people who allow themselves to be cheated regularly year after year and to be taken in, in the worst possible way, by all kinds of exotic showmen, and ‘professors’, swindlers, and jokers, who relieve us of our money, with which they travel on, laughing at us. But there will come a time when it all comes to an end, and that’s what is happening right now. This Mr. ‘Professor’ can pride himself on having spoiled things here for many of those who come after him.

He can be sure that the audience won’t put their trust in the good faith of such ‘learned’ gentlemen before having seen proof of it.

No title of ‘Professor’ or any learned, mysterious-looking letters like M.A. and F.R.S. after a name or on a card or poster will be of any help.

So we gladly call out a well-meant ‘Adieu’ to Mr. Professor, under the explicit condition he won’t take it for an ‘Au revoir’. We also hope that Mr. Allan Hamilton will take care from now on and won’t pledge his word anymore without knowing well the ‘patron’ and having seen good and very trustworthy testimonials. 30

The tumult that took place on the occasion of this gathering of educated people was indeed unusual, and such things rarely occurred. The incident to a certain degree reflects the different characters of the British and other

30 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 23-5-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’, as cited in the Surakarta newspaper *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
(white) groups of spectators in the colonies. But we should go further and consider what triggered this incident: a phonograph — a technology recently invented, which can reproduce sound and preserve it for all time — caused great amazement. To quote the press: it could ‘speak’, it was ‘a miracle’ and ‘unbelievable!’ The unpleasant incident could only happen because the audience’s high expectations were disappointed: the words ‘real swindle’ suggest the audience’s impression that the phonograph was just a conjurer’s tool, and Archibald’s performance was nothing more than an ordinary magic show; the technological and real capabilities of the machine, so strongly emphasized in the advertisements, were undermined by its technical problems.

Reading the Soerabaija-Courant’s negative report on him, Archibald and his wife visited Eijssell in his office at Huis Kali-Asin No. 429. Apparently there was a fracas between Archibald and Eijssell during the visit. Archibald gave Eijssell what was called an ‘Amerikaansche argumentatie’: he hit Eijssell on the head, which resulted in bruising. Archibald’s attack on Eijssell became hot news in the media of Java, and was even reported by the Singapore press. For Archibald himself, the incident disrupted his tour. The demonstration for the Surabaya branch of the Concordia Military Club, which was booked for 25 May, had to be cancelled. As the media reported, Archibald had to cancel because he received information that certain people intended to damage his phonograph during the demonstration:

We called Mr. Hamilton to find out what caused this [cancellation]. The answer was: Prof. Archibald had heard from different sources that there would be riots that night. It seemed that the ‘Chinese church’ has done its duty? Prof. Archibald stayed away because he feared for his instruments.

We assured Professor Archibald that the visitors of Concordia are decent people. Because of the presence of ladies, they would not allow anything to happen. But too bad, it was too late. The instruments were already removed. What a pity for the large number of ladies and gentlemen who showed up.

The cancellation gave Eijssell a further chance to criticize Archibald, and more gruffly than before. Eijssell mentioned the physical injury he received from Archibald. He accused Archibald of swindling the citizens of a Dutch colony, defrauding the public of Surabaya. ‘Collegiality among the servants of the Queen of the World is rare, yet here every other feeling should have been pushed aside to make place for very justified indignation about an insult to the

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31 Soerabaija-Courant, 24-5-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtes’. See also De Nieuwe Vorstenland-en, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië [Aldoende Argumenten]’; The Straits Times, 21-6-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 370.
32 Soerabaija-Courant, 24-5 and 25-5-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
33 Soerabiaansch-Handelsblad, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Opnie; De roeping der pers’.
independent leader of public opinion who warned his fellow citizens of swindling', Eijssell derided Archibald harshly.

The Archibald case led to a polemic in the press. Meanwhile, while scrutinizing the press for news about himself, Archibald continued his trip to two other East Javanese towns, Pasuruan and Probolinggo. His manager had booked demonstrations in these towns: on 26 May and 27 May respectively. Unfortunately, the public there were not so interested in seeing Archibald’s phonograph demonstrations. This seems to have been due to the Soerabaija-Courant’s negative reports of his unsuccessful shows in Surabaya, which were also published in the Probolinggo and Pasuruan newspapers. Consequently, Archibald’s phonograph demonstrations in these towns had a low attendance, resulting in a financial loss for Archibald.

De Locomotief published Archibald’s self-defence against Eijssell’s accusation. Archibald clarified that his title was not false:

Note. The Soerabaija-Courant unjustifiably attacked Prof. Archibald and the merits of the phonograph last May 23. Prof. Archibald thinks that he, being a stranger who displayed one of the greatest inventions of this century, only needs to appeal to the Semarang public in order to obtain an unbiased opinion about the merits of the latest invention of the genius Edison. Looking back at the personal attack by the Soerabaija-Courant, Professor Archibald deems it necessary to state that Lord Salisbury, England’s Prime Minister in 1875, granted him the title ‘professor’, for which he still has evidence.

In De Locomotief Archibald complained that he had suffered losses from the ‘personal attack’ (persoonlijke aanval) by Eijssell and subsequent negative reports in the press. He had lost his credibility, and as a result the public had no interest in attending his demonstrations.

Apparently, Hamilton continued to make efforts to counter the negative publicity about Archibald caused by the Soerabaija-Courant. For example, he mentioned that Archibald had received letters of praise from the board members of the Phoenix Club in Kediri on 31 May, signed by ‘messrs. Schram, Bodemeijer, Noothout, Wijzelaar and Wolvekamp’, which expressed their admiration for the new phonograph demonstrated by Archibald in Pasuruan.

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34 Soerabaija-Courant, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’.
35 See, among others, De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; De Locomotief, 4-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; Soerabaija-Courant, 7-6-1892, column titled ‘Soerabaya’; Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 7-6-1892, column titled ‘Opinie; De roeping der pers’.
36 Archibald’s programmes in Pasuruan and Probolinggo were advertised in Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad for three days, from 23-5 to 25-5-1892 and in Soerabaija-Courant on 24-5 and 25-5-1892.
37 Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken, 25-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch Indië’.
38 De Locomotief, 31-5-1892, column titled ‘Advertenties’.
39 De Locomotief, 4-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
Figure 4. An advertisement for a phonograph exhibition by Archibald in Semarang in which the board members of the Phoenix Club in Kediri express their admiration (*De Locomotief*, 3-6-1892)
and Probolinggo. They were satisfied, mentioned that the machine operated smoothly, and strongly recommended an acquaintance with this wonderful instrument (see Figure 4).

Nevertheless, ridicule caused by the reports about Archibald in the Soerabaija-Courant had spread everywhere, even to Batavia. Eijssell continued to write spicy criticism of Archibald. From his place of recuperation in Malang, he commented that a ‘professor’ from abroad who committed acts of physical violence on someone was disgraceful. ‘Here in the Netherlands Indies’, he wrote, echoing the sensibility of the high-class European in the social structure of the colony, ‘among the common people alone do actions like that occur often.’ Furthermore, Eijssell raised the question ‘whether a dignitary like “Professor” Douglas Archibald could be touched by our law?’ Satirically, he wrote: ‘Poor, poor Yorick, alas! We must be careful! Soon we will get an English squadron here that will demand our professor and shoot us down! To be a boss in one’s own home and to stay this with regards to the stranger who violates our laws, has already become an international crime!’ — a sarcastic comment suggesting national sentiment and rivalry among the colonizers.

Surakarta’s De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden covered the Archibald affair by citing the reports published by the Soerabaija-Courant. The Soerabaisch-Handelsblad attempted to take a more neutral standpoint. It gave a balanced account of the Archibald–Eijssell affair, as reflected in the opinion article issued on 27 May 1892 under the title ‘De roeping der pers (The vocation of the press) written by its chief editor, H.G. Bertelds. He criticized the unfavourable report written by Eijssell and deeply regretted that Archibald had resorted to violence after being represented negatively in a short newspaper column (entrefilet). He also wondered why Archibald did not make use of his right to respond in the press. Furthermore, Bertelds warned that the Soerabaija-Courant reports about Archibald might be coloured by the individual point of view of its chief editor.

The opinions which rolled off the press in Surabaya and other towns caused serious trouble for Archibald. His demonstrations for the Yogyakarta Club on 1 and 2 June and then in Solo on 3 June all had to be cancelled. On Saturday, 4 June 1892, Archibald arrived in Semarang to give phonograph demonstrations in the Schouwburg. But Eijssell’s sharp pen seems to have been effective: just a couple of hours after Archibald arrived in Semarang, the police arrested him. He was detained in prison overnight, and the next morning (Sunday, 5 June) he was taken back to Surabaya under police escort:

40 De Locomotief, 2-6 and 3-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ and ‘Advertentien’.
41 Java-Bode, 23-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
42 Soerabaija-Courant, 7-6-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’.
43 De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 27-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
44 De Locomotief, 28-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; De Locomotief, 30-5-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
Mr. Douglas Archibald was taken by fast train to Surabaya on Sunday morning, under the escort of Wijber, the bailiff [schout], in a second-class carriage. It was the bailiff’s task to treat the prisoner courteously and politely as far as was possible while keeping an eye on him. Mrs. Archibald accompanied her husband, but she had to pay for herself.\footnote{De Locomotief, 7-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; see also Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad 7-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden 8-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken, 11-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch Indië’.}

After being confined to a prison cell at Surabaya, Archibald came to court on 28 June 1892. Archibald was accused of assaulting Eijssell. The British consul in Surabaya, Warren, was drawn into the case. He, with a lawyer named Mounier, assisted the defendant. Two eyewitnesses, who seem to have observed the disturbance between Archibald and the British spectators, were presented at the court. One was a British man named Weber, the other a Javanese individual whose name was not noted. Furthermore, an expert witness who had treated the victim, Dr. Fischer, also gave evidence. There was also a sworn translator (named Versnel) arranged for Archibald because the defendant did not speak Dutch.\footnote{De Locomotief, 29-6-1892, column titled ‘Verspreide Indische berichten’, 30-6-1892, column titled ‘Uit de Indische bladen’; The Straits Times, 21-6-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 370; De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 1-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.

47 Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken, 29-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch Indië’.

48 The Straits Times, 19-7-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 429.}

Consul Warren tried to get the defendant out on bail, but was unsuccessful, as the law of the land did not admit it for such cases. He argued that his client’s action had been unpremeditated. Considering that his client had been detained prior to the trial, Mounier asked the judge to commute the sentence.\footnote{The Straits Times, 19-7-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 429.} Cited in the Indies press, The Straits Times reported the decision of the Surabaya court:

The other day Professor Archibald was arrested at Semarang for having, so it was alleged, assaulted the editor of the Surabaya Courant who had adversely criticized his phonograph show. The case came before the Court of Justice at Soerabaya on the 28th of June and the public prosecutor urged the infliction of the penalty of two months imprisonment and costs. The counsel for the defence pleaded absence of premeditation, and, while acknowledging that the defendant’s conduct called for some punishment, argued in favour of the lightest possible penalty, taking into account the long detention under arrest he had gone through.\footnote{The Straits Times, 19-7-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 429.}

After a heated exchange of arguments and counterarguments during the last session, on 30 June, the court delivered its verdict: ‘The court could not assume that the act was premeditated and considering [that] the defend-
ant had already spent three weeks in prison, the court sentenced Professor Archibald to a fine of f 100'.

Archibald’s trip in West Java

After the court of Surabaya decided his case, Archibald quickly left this town, apparently to continue his tour of Java. First, he wanted to return to Semarang, to give a phonograph demonstration in the Schouwburg, which had originally been advertised for the first week of June, but had now been rescheduled by his manager for Monday, 11 July, at 9.30 a.m.

Both Hamilton and Archibald with their wives travelled by the steamer Van Diemen, which left Surabaya on 9 July for Batavia, passing through Semarang. However, when the vessel transited in Semarang port, Archibald did not stop, and once again the phonograph demonstration by Archibald in Semarang was cancelled. This second cancellation was announced in De Locomotief, and attributed to the professor’s health. It seems that Archibald feared he would be unable to attract spectators after the trouble in Surabaya, which had become widely known through press reports.

So, together with their wives, the two men continued their trip to West Java on 10 July in the same vessel, arriving in Batavia on 11 July. ‘Professor Douglas Archibald, who arrived from Semarang yesterday, will show Edison’s phonograph on Thursday 14 July at Buitenzorg and Tuesday 19 July here, with all the improvements that the famous inventor has applied so far’, the Java-Bode wrote to welcome Archibald to Batavia. The ticket price was decreased. Archibald would also appear in Bandung and Sukabumi.

There are no reports about these demonstrations except the one in Batavia. Possibly, the others were cancelled. Generally, the West Java press was not so enthusiastic about Archibald’s tour of West Java. Apparently, the media’s interest in Batavia was focused on Filli’s Circus from Italy, which gave performances in various parts of this city (including Koningsplein and Glodok) during most of July 1892. Almost every day, the prominent Batavian newspapers reported the circus’s programmes and performances.

50 *The Straits Times*, 19-7-1892, column titled ‘Netherlands India’, p. 429; see also Soerabaija-Courant, 27-6-1892, column titled ‘Onze nieuwtjes’; De Telefoon, 30-6-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
51 *De Locomotief*, 7-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ and ‘Advertentien’. This was the last advertisement of Archibald’s demonstration placed in this newspaper.
52 *De Locomotief*, 8-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
53 *Java-Bode*, 11-7-1892, column titled ‘Aangekomen passagiers’, 12-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’; *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 11-7-1892, column titled ‘Scheepsberichten; Passagiers’.
54 *Java-Bode*, 6-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
55 *Java-Bode*, 12, 13, 15 and 16-7-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
Figure 5. Advertisements for Tesséro's phonograph demonstration in Batavia

(*Java-Bode, 25 and 27-8-1892*)
Archibald’s demonstration in Batavia was postponed: he appeared for the Harmonie Club on 25 July and would appear at the Concordia Military Club Batavia branch on 26 July. The demonstration for the Harmonie Club seems to have gone quite smoothly, although the recording test with the audience was less successful. On the whole, the audience felt satisfied with the amazing recording machine. Regarding this demonstration, the Java-Bode wrote:

Last night, at the ‘Harmonie’, Professor Douglas Archibald demonstrated a phonograph, which spoke [sounded] very clearly, especially when it played music and songs. A number of gentlemen from among those present talked and sang into the instrument, but only ‘Wien Neerlandsch bloed’ [a nationalistic song] came out well: the rest sounded either out of tune or were too short, so they could not be recorded on the cylinder recording. The demonstration was very surprising and enjoyable. We very much recommend that Concordia members visit Mr. Archibald’s demonstration this evening.

The secretary of Concordia, F.C. Proper, noted that ‘the exhibition is prohibited for young members [of the club], as stated in the very last paragraph of article 29 of the Club’s regulation’. There are no reports on the demonstration of 26 July. I suggest that it was cancelled, as had occurred at this club’s Surabaya branch previously. The members of the Batavia branch of the Concordia Military Club may have been preparing for their annual general meeting on 29 August 1892 (three days later), and have been too busy to attend the event.

Apparently, then, the demonstration at the Harmony Club was the only one Archibald gave in Batavia. No information indicates that he gave other demonstrations there. The failure of the only phonograph machine he owned to record the audience’s voice in previous demonstrations had become a joke and may have led to the decision not to give more demonstrations in Batavia. Possibly, due to the long world tour and frequent use, the single phonograph machine he had with him had been irreparably damaged in Java. At the end of August 1892 Archibald disappeared from the Indies newspapers.

A professor with a phonograph from Australia

At the same time, another professor, named G. Tesséro, arrived in Batavia from Melbourne, Australia, again bringing along an Edison phonograph. About one month before his arrival, the press reported his plans to visit the

56 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 25-7-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’; Java-Bode, 26-7-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
57 Java-Bode, 26-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
58 Java-Bode, 26-7-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
59 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 30-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
Dutch East Indies; his complete name was mentioned: Giovanni Tesséro.60
Tesséro’s arrival following the disappearance of Archibald may have been
coincidental ‘moral support’ for the Edison Company. Archibald and the
Edison Company must have worried that the unfavourable criticism by the
East Java press, and the legal trouble he encountered in Surabaya, would
sully the Edison brand in the Indies.

In Batavia, Tesséro’s first demonstration at the Koninklijke Natuurkundige
Vereeniging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Royal Association for Natural Sciences
in the Dutch Indies) was free. He personally asked the Association’s executive
committee for permission to give a phonograph demonstration there (Notulen
1893:335). It was held on Friday, 26 August 1892 (see Figure 5).61 Some high
officials in Batavia, including the director of the National Botanical Garden in
Buitenzorg (now Bogor), Melchior Treub, the first person in the Indies to own
a phonograph privately,62 came to see the demonstration. The Bataviaasch
Nieuwsblad wrote:

After the demonstrations of Edison’s phonograph by Mr. Archibald Douglas [sic]
at this place, Mr. Tesséro, who just arrived here from Melbourne with a similar
instrument, has timed his visit here badly. Immediately upon his arrival he was
told that his shows would not attract many visitors.

So, Mr. Tesséro turned to the Board of the Koninklijke Natuurkundige
Vereeniging to give a demonstration free of charge, with the aim of establishing
a positive opinion of his instrument and the nature of its applications. After Mr.
Figee and Mr. Onnen had written a very positive report on behalf of the Board
about Mr. Tesséro’s activities, the demonstration took place last night. This remark-
able instrument is more fit for demonstrations with a small audience than for larger
audiences. By using the caoutchouc audio-tubes the instrument is able to record
the spoken word, which has a very surprising effect. Especially the declamation by
Sarah Bernhardt,63 which was recorded into the instrument in Melbourne, made a
deep impression upon the audience. Also the nice tones by Very, the famous player
of cornet à piston, came out very clearly and cleanly.

We are of the opinion that the demonstration made a good impression upon all
those present and we hope Mr. Tesséro’s demonstrations at the [Masonic] Lodge,
where he will also describe his instrument by using limelight [kalklicht] images,
will attract large numbers of visitors.64

60 De Telefoon, 1-7-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
61 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 25-8 and 26-8-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’; Java-Bode, 25-8 and
26-8-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
62 Bintang Soerabaia, 27-9-1892, column titled ‘Petikan dari Selompret Melajoe’.
63 Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923); in the nineteenth-century Indies press her name was spelled
‘Sara Bernard’ or ‘Sarah Bernhart’, the pseudonym of Henriette Rosine Bernhardt. She was a
famous Western female entertainer of the late nineteenth century. News about her was often
released in Dutch as well as Native newspapers in the Indies in the 1890s.
64 Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 27-8-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch Indië’.
Tesséro’s next demonstration, organized by his advance agent Ch. de Hart, was held at the Masonic Lodge (Vrijmetselaars Loge) in Batavia (see Figure 5).65 It was very well attended. Tesséro opened with a speech in French about the workings of the instrument, which was accompanied by images using ‘kalklicht’. Furthermore, some musical instruments and orchestral works, the declamation by Sarah Bernhardt, and finally a Dutch speech by Mr. de Vick in Australia were played. All recordings were very understandable and could be heard very clearly.66

After Batavia, Tesséro continued his tour to Central Java, where his manager had scheduled demonstrations in Semarang and Solo. On the SS Van Diemen Tesséro left Batavia on 24 September 1892 for Semarang.67 In Semarang he gave phonograph demonstrations at three local schools during an eight-day school holiday.68 The schools paid for the demonstrations. Tesséro clearly attempted to attract educated people to his demonstrations. The Malay daily Bintang Soerabaia commented:

[...] this machine is not made into a show-like comedy or other spectacle, and hence is not street entertainment. Rather, it should be presented in respectable people’s houses, where one may gather to see and listen to it. In short, if one wishes [to see it], one should discuss this with a number of friends, choose the house of one of them, and get about forty or fifty people to watch it. Of course it is a performance, but not a common performance. Its proper place is a gathering of respectable people in a house.69

Tesséro also conducted a demonstration for the members of the Semarang branch of the Amicitia Club on 28 September (see Figure 6).70 The concert room of Amicitia, however, because of noise from other activities like billiard and traffic, proved unsuitable for the performance.71

Regarding this demonstration, De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden reported that the audience was quite excited by the functioning of the machine.72 The instrument worked well. De Hart showed Tesséro’s testimonials to the audience, bestowed by Buitenzorg National Botanical Garden director Treub, Mr. Figee, director of the Meteorological Observatory, and Dr. Onnen, mathematics and science teacher in Batavia; they all praised the instrument highly. So,

65 Java-Bode, 27-8-1892, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
66 Bataviasch Nieuwsblad, 29-8-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch Indië’.
67 Java Bode, 24-9-1892, column titled ‘Passagiers’; De Locomotief, 24-9-1892, column titled ‘Nieuwsberichten uit het Bataviasche (niet officieel)’.
68 De Locomotief, 28-9-1892, column titled ‘Semarang’.
69 Bintang Soerabaia, 27-9-1892, column titled ‘Petikan dari Selompret Melaja’.
70 De Locomotief, 26-9 and 28-9-1892, column titled ‘Advertentien’, 27-9-1892, column titled ‘Semarang’.
71 De Locomotief, 29-9-1892, column titled ‘Semarang’.
72 De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 30-9-1892, column titled ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’.
SOCIETEIT AMICITIA

Woensdag, 28 September,
des avonds om 9 uur,
zal professor TESSERO EDISONS PHONO-
GRAAF aan de Leden en hunne Dames ver-
toonen, verklaren en doen hooren.
Eene inteekeenlijst ligt in de leeskamer
ter beschikking van de LEDEN en GEIN-
TROUCEERDEN.

3418

HET BESTUUR.

EDISON’S PHONOGRAAF

PROFFSSOR TESSERO,
Dinsdag in den vooravond
van 6½ — 8 uur
en in den na avond ten 9 uren,
in de Societeit „Harmonie.”
Entree f 2 per persoon. (427)

Figure 6. Advertisements for phonograph demonstrations
by Tessero in Semarang and Solo
(De Locomotief, 26-9-1892 and De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 3-10-1892)
like Archibald, Tesséro in his demonstrations emphasized the phonograph’s scientific aspects. For this reason, he chose to hold exhibitions for members of a scientific association, a Masonic Lodge, social clubs, and school students. Tesséro’s lecture was again delivered in French (like Archibald, it seems he could not speak Dutch). The detailed explanation was designed to offer the audience a clear insight into the functioning of the machine.

Tesséro was in Semarang until 30 September 1892. He did not continue to Surabaya, but did go to Solo. No one in Surabaya was willing to invite him, presumably as a result of the Archibald-Eijssell trouble. In Solo, Tesséro gave a demonstration in the Harmonie Club on 2 October with an admission price of two guilders (see Figure 6). The opening lecture by Tesséro was again delivered in French. The spectators attending these demonstrations — just as was the case at Archibald’s demonstrations — were people of the white upper-class minority. They were the type who became members of societies and clubs and usually spent their weekends in club buildings (rumah bola) with billiards, Western music, and alcoholic drinks. Below we will see that other phonograph demonstrations were attended by some noble-class Natives as well. Apparently there were certain spectacles which could be attended by both Europeans and Natives, each group seated in separated areas. Other performances, opera and chamber music for instance, were intended exclusively for Europeans. In the colony, the entertainment world reflected class segregation, which was enforced by colonial authorities.

Like Archibald’s demonstrations in the East Javanese towns Probolinggo and Pasuruan in the hinterland, Tesséro was not successful in Solo. His demonstration at the Harmonie Club, for instance, was attended by only fifteen persons.

On 4 October Tesséro gave a phonograph demonstration at the Masonic Lodge of Solo and at the Palace (Keraton) on 5 October. Unfortunately, I have found no press reports on these demonstrations. He then appeared in

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73 *Bintang Soerabaia*, 30-9-1892, column titled ‘Petikan dari Selompret Melajoe’.
74 *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 30-9 and 3-10-1892, column titled ‘Advertentien’.
75 *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 5-10-1892, column titled ‘Soerakarta’.
76 *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 3-10 and 5-10-1892, column titled ‘Soerakarta’.
77 The media seemed more interested in the Sekaten celebration in Solo, which began the same day (5 October): in the evening Sri Padoeka Kandjeng Goesti Pangeran Adipati Anom and Queen Kandjeng Ratee Anom were pleased to attend the celebration. But bad luck for the queen, she lost a diamond pin worth f 3,000 when the royal chariot crossed the crowd, and the queen was unable to get down from the royal chariot. This scandal was broadly reported in the media (see, for example, *Bintang Soerabaia* 3-10 and 8-10-1892, column titled ‘Petikan dari Djawi Kondo [Soerakarta]’. Regarding Tesséro’s demonstration in the palace at Solo, Nancy K. Florida has suggested to me that it was probably noted in the palace diary entitled ‘Nggrengreng serat babad pemut ing Nagari Surakarta, angka XI, awit cariyos 1 Sura Je 1822 dumugi cariyos 26 Rejeb Je 1822’ [= July 1892 – February 1893] (Florida, email, 25-9-2004). Florida (1993:105) identified this as ‘History of the Keraton Surakarta (July 1892 - February 1893)’. Unfortunately, I have had no access to this source.
Yogyakarta, where he gave demonstrations at the club (sociëteit) on 7 October and at some schools on following days.\textsuperscript{78} Afterwards there were no further press reports about him.

There is some indication that Tesséro wanted to sell his phonograph. When he was in Semarang Tesséro advertised that he would sell his phonograph if the ruler of Solo or Yogyakarta was interested in buying it, as reported by the vernacular newspaper \textit{Selompret Melajoe}:

Because none of this newspaper’s readers here invited him [to give a phonograph demonstration], he [Tesséro] wants to depart for Solo the day after tomorrow. Therefore, it is to be deeply regretted that nobody wants to listen [to the machine], because if one tries to listen just once, one certainly wants to listen again, because the machine is so very strange. Last night we were requested to listen for a short while, and now we must say that this machine is not just an ordinary plaything. We were also presented with music which had been played some months before in America, it sounded as if it was still new. Additionally, Sundanese \textit{tembang}, which was perhaps performed one month earlier, was presented, with audible lyrics. What makes this machine even more useful is that anyone who has been given a demonstration just two or three times should be able to maintain and operate all its components. If the authority in Solo or Yogyakarta wants to buy [this machine], he [Tesséro] will certainly sell it [Hanja djika pembesar di Solo atawa di Djogja hendaq membeli tentoe sadja didjoearnja].\textsuperscript{79}

The article suggests that indigenous locals — \textit{Selompret Melajoe} readers — were not very interested in inviting Tesséro, perhaps due to Archibald’s unsuccessful phonograph tour in East Java and the disgraceful court case he had faced. Besides, the phonograph demonstration, from the outset, had been closely associated with the white upper class of the colony, while the Natives had little access. Nonetheless, like the Europeans, the Natives were astounded by the wonderful machine, as suggested in the comment of the \textit{Selompret Melajoe} journalist quoted above: ‘kerna djika mentjoba sekali sadja, tentoelah ingin mendenger lagi, sebab anehnja ietoe soedah tiada boleeh dikata lagi’ (because if one tries to listen just once, one certainly wants to listen again, because the machine is too strange for words).

The above newspaper article also informs us that Tesséro recorded an Indonesian traditional genre to show the capability of this technology miracle to the public, namely a Sundanese musical genre ‘tembangan pasoenda’ (\textit{tembang Sunda}; see Van Zanten 1989). Sundanese music seems to have been the first Indies local repertoire recorded for the ‘talking machine’.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Mataram}, 10-10-1892, column titled ‘Djokjakarta’.

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Selompret Melajoe}, 27-9-1892, column titled ‘Semarang’.
The famous magician with his phonograph in Java

There is no indication where Tesséro went after his demonstrations in Yogya-karta. In the second week of October 1892 he disappeared from the newspapers. The press instead reported on another European entertainer travelling around Java with Edison’s phonograph, a man named J. Calabressini. The earliest evidence that Calabressini was travelling in Java with a phonograph dates from 3 October 1892. In an article about Tesséro’s demonstration in Surakarta, De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden mentioned that ‘those who expected to see an instrument [Tesséro’s phonograph] exactly the same as Calabressini’s were mistaken’. Clearly, Calabressini with his phonograph (apparently an earlier version) was well known in Central Java at that time. It is unclear where and from whom Calabressini obtained his machine.

It seems that Calabressini had travelled across Java sometime after 1870. It is not known when he first left Europe for Asia, or which Asian countries he visited before his arrival in the Indies. Nor is there evidence that he went on an international tour like Archibald and Tesséro. He seems to have worked only in Java; in his magic shows he combined conjuring tricks with a demonstration of recently invented European technologies. Quoting Surakarta’s De Vorstenlanden, Anthony Day (1982:217, 266) mentions that Calabressini with his electricity, galvanism, and magnetism astounded his colonial audience at a soirée amusante held in the Surakarta Komedie on the evening of 26 December 1870. On 29 June 1883 he held magic shows in Surabaya.80 One month later he again held shows in this town: on 7 and 8 July he played in the Rumah Komedie Besar (theatre) and again between 13 and 16 July in the alon-alon (town square). Admission was one guilder for first class and fifty cents for second class. The highlights were Dutch card playing (permainan kartu Ollanda) and ‘a horrific beheading’.81 Calabressini’s performances in the Rumah Komedie Besar were attended by some 200 to 250 spectators, both Native and Dutch.

Apparently Calabressini, though he had adopted the title ‘professor’ following the trend at the time (Cohen 2000:327), was widely known in the Indies as a magician (gochelaar). Unlike Archibald and Tesséro who, in their phonograph demonstrations, presented themselves as scientists and attempted to cultivate close relations with the white upper class of the colony, Calabressini seems to have been on close terms with local Indies entertainers and often jointly conducted magic shows with them. This must have influenced spectators’ perception of the recent European inventions demonstrated in his shows, including the phonograph. In August 1891, for example, together with Yap Gwan Thay, Calabressini gave a magic show of ‘conjuring, magnetism, and metempsychosis’ in the Kapasan Schouwburg, Surabaya.

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80 Bintang Timor, 9-7-1883, column titled ‘Kabar India Ollanda’.
81 Bintang Timor, 7-7 and 14-7-1883, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
J. CALABRESSINI.
De bekende vriend der Kinderen, alhier gearriveerd, zal op

Dinsdag den 6 den December
in het Sociëteitsgebouw alhier eene goochelvoorstelling geven. Geheel nieuwe kunsten.
Drie bedrijven goochelkunst.

De Phonograaf van Edison
Zeer interessant voor iedereen.

De Sciopticon Voorstelling.
werkende door middel van kalklicht.
Na vooraf ons Vorstelijk Huis te hebben voorgesteld.

De Stanley Expeditie
door de wildernissen van Afrika in 40 tafereelen met een breed-voerige voordracht.

JONG en OUD, RECHT en KROM, MOOI en LEELIJJK, worden zeer beleefd doch dringend verzocht deze voorstelling bij te wonen; zoo iets ziet men niet alle dagen, dus;

Profiteert van deze gelegenheid, al regent het keisteenen!

Gereserveerde plaatsen te bespreken in de toko naast het hotel.

Entrée voor een Heer of Dame ..... f 2.50
» » Kinderen ................ f 1.
» » Bedienden ................ f 0.50

De Directeur,

MOLBVLASINI.

Figure 7. An advertisement for a magic show with phonograph and a picture show by Calabressini in Cirebon (Tjerimai, 3-12-1892)
Figure 8. An advertisement for a magic show with a phonograph and a picture show by Calabressini in Batavia (Java-Bode, 10-1-1901)
He gave a magic lantern show in this Schouwburg in March 1892. In July Calabressini appeared in Surabaya with a sensational night show called ‘Metempsychose of zielsverhuizing’ (exchange of souls), or ‘pengganti jiwa’ in Malay (Cohen 2006:151). There is no indication that he had a phonograph at that time. At the end of that year he was on the scene in Batavia with some technological instruments, like a Sciopticon and Edison’s phonograph, and gave magic shows in various parts of the city.

From Batavia, Calabressini and his manager (directeur), Molbvlasini, sailed on the steamer Speelman to Cirebon. As a prominent urban town on the north coast of West Java, Cirebon was regularly visited in the nineteenth century by local as well as foreign entertainment troupes (Cohen 2002b). Calabressini arrived there on Saturday, 3 December 1892, coinciding with the celebration of the ‘Sint-Nicolaas feest’ (Feast of Saint Nicholas). Calabressini’s first magic show in Cirebon, which welcomed ‘young and old, straight and bent, beautiful and ugly’ and was not exclusive like Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations, was held on Tuesday, 6 December, at the Schouwburg (see Figure 7). He demonstrated the Sciopticon and Edison’s phonograph. The show also presented a magic lantern, portraits of the Dutch royal family, Stanley’s expedition in Africa in 40 colourful images displaying the sophistication and superiority of the white men vis-à-vis wild African tribal groups, some tricks with cards and eggs and quick-fingeredness, and hypnosis. There were only thirteen spectators, including two children. The weekly Tjerimai commented about the phonograph: ‘Then Edison’s truly famous instrument was allowed to speak; she turned out to be in particularly good form (she was a bit hoarse) [...]. It was enjoyable to hear this instrument discourse [redeneeren].’

Calabressini and Molbvlasini’s second show was held on 8 December in the sociëteit (club) of the town from 9 p.m. to midnight. It was visited by more people than the previous show, probably due to the reduced entrance fee (adults paid f 1.50, children f 0.50). Everybody listened attentively to Edison’s phonograph, and it attracted lots of applause. Calabressini also showed sensational images of the beheading, which caused many in the audience to feel sick. The audience loved the dissolving views by Molbvlasini: the ‘kampong’ at the World Exhibition in Paris, Stanley’s journey through Africa’s dark jungles, and the scenes of the Eighty Year War (which were not shown in

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82 Cohen 2006:151. Calabressini’s magic lantern, which was regularly used in magic lantern shows for children in 1892-1893, was purchased by Yap Gwan Thay for 600 guilders (Cohen 2006:34). Apparently urban entertainers bought and sold equipment from each other.

83 Tjerimai, 26-11-1892, column titled ‘Cheribon’.

84 Tjerimai, 3-12-1892, column titled ‘Aangekomen schepen’. In the colonial period, Saint Nicholas Day came to be a public festival celebrated by people in the Dutch Indies, both European and Natives. See Helsloot 1998.

85 Tjerimai, 3-12-1892, column titled ‘Cheribon’.

86 Tjerimai, 7-12-1892, column titled ‘Cheribon’.

87 "..."
chronological order) were viewed eagerly by both young and old.

Unfortunately, I have no evidence on where Calabressini went after the success of his magic shows and phonograph demonstrations in Cirebon. Possibly he left Cirebon and moved on to other towns in Java. Apparently, Calabressini had a long career as a magician in the Indies. This excellent and highly popular magician — as the press mentioned — was still travelling around Java until at least 1901: in January 1901, for instance, he performed a big magic show at the Theater Nationaal at Tana[h]lapang Glodok, Batavia. The show ran from 11 to 12 January, and demonstrated the art of conjuring and some new Western technology including magnetism, the animatograph, live photography, and the phonograph (see Figure 7). 87

Conclusion

Rudolf Mrázek (2002:xv) talks about ‘incessant [European] culture invasions and innumerable combinations of resistance [in Indonesia]’. Exploring the first encounters of the people of the Indies with European recording technology, which a few decades later was to influence their lifestyle and beliefs, this article has focused on the initial phase of the invasion including the public’s reactions. Edison’s tin-foil phonograph, although only a crude model, went to Southeast Asia, to the Dutch East Indies in particular, very early in its history. This article has described the recordings, the figures behind the demonstrations, the audience and their responses, the towns and places of exhibition, and the procedure of the phonograph shows.

The phonograph demonstrations in the Dutch East Indies in the late nineteenth century can be put into two groups: first, those that spotlighted the technological and scientific aspects of the machine; and second, those that accentuated its ability to provide enjoyment and amusement. Each type of demonstration led to certain psychological effects in the audience and influenced how the public perceived the instrument. To the first group belong Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations, which featured the phonograph exclusively, and which consisted of three parts: a lecture on the history of the machine and the technical procedure required to play it, a presentation of recordings, and a test section in which either demonstrators or spectators were given the opportunity to speak and sing into the instrument (often with flawed results). In their exclusivity — admission tickets were quite expensive, the opening lectures were delivered in English or French, languages unfamiliar to most Natives, the exhibitions were held in venues like clubs which were closely associated with upper-class people — Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations were well beyond the reach of the indigenous public. To the

87 Java-Bode, 10-1-1901, column titled ‘Advertentie’.
second group of demonstrations belong Calabressini’s shows, which welcomed Natives as well as Europeans, and common people as well as the elite. Calabressini’s phonograph exhibitions were set up as part of a magic show: there was no opening lecture as in Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations, and the phonograph was exhibited together with other European inventions alongside conjuring tricks. Consequently, spectators would view the machine as a miraculous rather than a scientific entity, as reflected in the Tjerimai comment (7-12-1892) that ‘it was enjoyable to hear this instrument discourse’; as if it had its own soul, emotions, and ideas.

It is likely, furthermore, that the belief systems of the Natives also influenced their acceptance of new European inventions like the phonograph. The same thing applies, of course, to public reception of new inventions in the countries where they were invented. In nineteenth-century urban entertainment, European technologies like the sciopticon and galvanism were more often associated with magic and the supernatural than with rationality and reality. The invention of acoustic technologies like phonography and telephony derived part of its meaning from nineteenth-century European spiritualism. As Connor (2000) remarks, spiritualism attested and contributed to the ghostliness of these technologies, and they were linked with older traditions of the ventriloquial voice.

Summarizing the reception of this new technology during the period of exhibition, it can be said that the Indies’ European public, let alone the Native public, were amazed to see the phonograph — a new ‘miracle’ machine that could reproduce and preserve sounds — because of its bizarre, complicated, and sophisticated technology. It can be said that the arrival of the phonograph in the Indies actually represented ‘the power of the white man’ (in Sterne’s terms) in the colony, and increasingly affirmed European superiority in the construction of colonial society.

Although this historical account is not quite complete due to unobtainable copies of contemporary newspapers, I have attempted to reconstruct the course of events of three European ‘professors’ who pioneered in introducing sound recording technology in the Dutch East Indies. It is expected that further research will expand or fill out what is still lacking in this article: the story of De Greef and his phonograph demonstration in Java in 1882 is far from complete; the disappearance of Archibald and his phonograph at the end of August 1892 is still a riddle. There is no indication that he attended the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago as he claimed he would in the Surabaya press in May 1892; likewise it seems that Tesséro, who appeared in

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88 On the magical and religious manifestations of the application of modern European technological products in Indonesia, media technologies in particular, see, for example, Snouck Hurgronje 1900 on the gramophone (sound recording); see Spyer 2001, Strassler 2003, Pemberton 2003 and also http://hantu.blogdrive.com (accessed 30-5-2005) on the camera (photography).
Batavia at the end of August 1892, disappeared in early October; Calabressini appeared with his phonograph in Batavia around November 1892, but it is not known where he travelled to after his successful shows in Cirebon in early December; he was, however, in Java at least until 1901.

Archibald returned to England for retirement after his voyage around the world with Edison’s phonograph (1889-1892). In fact, journeys like Archibald’s to the Orient were primarily intended to make money, not to settle there permanently. Archibald died in Middlesex, England, on 1 December 1913 aged 63. Regrettably, the ‘storyteller’ does not know what became of De Greef, Tessério, and Calabressini. Possibly they returned to their fatherlands, as every traveller wishes to do, but maybe they chose to live in the colony forever, spending their final hours there, because the colonies had captured their souls for good.

89 Allan Marble, email, 18-9-2005.

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