



Two students of Sun Tzu become rivals in Langyan Opera Troupe's latest production.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LANGYAN OPERA TROUPE

'Auntie' dearest

The art of revenge

Sun Bin (孫臏), a military strategist who lived during China's Warring States Period, decided to live with pigs, eat their food — and even their feces. It was part of a desperate ploy to convince others that he was crazy and therefore no longer a threat to the king of Wei.

But Sun Bin was a threat and the reasons why he evoked such fear in his countrymen are explored in Langyan Opera Troupe's (蘭陽戲劇團) play *The Second-Greatest Military Strategist* (兵學亞聖), beginning tomorrow night at Taipei City's Zhongshan Hall.

This tale of deceit, directed by popular *gezai* opera (歌仔戲) actor and impresario Tsao Fu-yung (曹復永), begins with Sun Bin and Pang Juan (龐涓) studying under Sun Tzu (孫子), China's most famous military strategist and author of *The Art of War* (孫子兵法). Although the two pupils are close friends, Pang Juan envies his classmate's far superior aptitude in military affairs.

After completing their studies, both students become military advisors to the king of the state of Wei (魏). The king immediately recognizes Sun Bin's strong moral character and remarkable intellect and makes him one of his primary military advisors. But Pang Juan, out of sheer jealousy, hatches a plan to bring disfavor on his friend by telling the king that Sun Bin is conspiring with the state of Qi (齊) against his kingdom. The plan works and the king has Sun Bin stripped of his rank — and kneecaps — and his face tattooed like a common criminal. At the same time, a diplomat from the state of Qi realizes the king's mistake and smuggles Sun Bin out of the kingdom along with Sun Tzu's famous book to serve as military advisor to the king of Qi.

Years later the states of Qi and Wei go to war, and it is on the battlefield that Sun Bin and Pang Juan, military strategists for the two kingdoms, meet again.

The Second-Greatest Military Strategist (兵學亞聖) will be performed at Taipei Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂), 98 Yeping S Rd, Taipei City (台北市延平南路98號), tomorrow at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:30pm. NT\$300 to NT\$1,000 tickets are available through NTCH ticketing.

— NOAH BUCHAN



Renowned *gezai* opera artist and vocalist Pan Li-li plays a tormented mother in *Auntie*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THEATRE COMPANY OF LEEQINGZHAO THE PRIVATE

The Theatre Company of Leeqingzhao the Private's (李清照私人劇團) renderings of the heroine Bai Suzhen (白素貞) from *Tale of the White Snake* (白蛇傳) and Cao Chi-chiao (曹七巧) from Eileen Chang's (張愛玲) *The Golden Cangue* (金鎖記), have established the group's unorthodox approach to revisiting classical and contemporary literature.

For its production *Auntie* (阿姨), the two-year-old troupe teamed up with veteran Taiwanese opera singer Pan Li-li (潘麗麗) and Vietnamese-French composer Ton That An to produce a musical populated by a gay, a transvestite and blow-up dolls.

The story follows Wu Jin Yu, a woman abandoned by her husband. She has two sons; one homosexual, the other a transvestite. Having lived in shame for 20 years, the mother pins her hopes on two blow-up dolls as surrogate daughters-in-law who could bear her grandchildren.

One day, however, the husband returns as a drag queen performer called Auntie. Unable to accept the home truths around her, Wu murders her spouse, but in a fantasy sequence denouement she fulfills her dreams when one of her blow-up doll daughters-in-law produces her a grandson.

With a solid academic training in classical music and years of experience in contemporary dance and theater as well as classical plays and operas, composer An extracts elements from various music genres such as Bollywood film music, jazz and pop, and weaves them together in the treatment for each character. The classical motif of the neurotic mother is a perfect fit for Pan's elegant voice.

A three-hour premiere party will take place at Nanhai Gallery (南海藝廊) on Sunday afternoon with DJ Mitch spinning deep house. The production will move to Tainan for a two-day run in October. For more information, visit the troupe's bilingual Web site at www.leeqingzhao.com.tw. — HO YI

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Auntie — a Hyperbody Musical (阿姨)

WHEN: Tonight at 7:30pm; tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm; Sunday at 2:30pm

WHERE: Nanhai Theater (南海劇場), 47 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路47號)

TICKETS: NT\$600; NT\$400 for students and people aged 70 and above, available through NTCH ticket outlets or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: www.leeqingzhao.com.tw



While last week's long electronica lineup promised diversity, it posed a problem for those seeking the standard partying prerequisite: attendees.

Although established venues such as Roxy 99, which offers punters four free drinks and no cover on Wednesdays, and Luxy continue to thrive, the independent music nights are crying out for attention.

Is all this choice is too much of a good thing?

"It really is getting hard to choose where to go with a smorgasbord of decent parties being promoted to death every week," said Gregory Dion Russell, 30, from New Zealand, who promotes for Roxy Vibe Live (see story on Page 14 of today's *Taipei Times*), VU Livehouse, Center Stage, Bliss and drum 'n' bass night Konkrete Jungle at Ageha. "There seems to be an influx of new venues ... That means more parties being put on ... People are being split up. Simple as that."

A case in point was Saturday's Summer Clash at Tonghsiao Beach Resort (通霄海洋渡假村) in Miaoli, which

featured two deejay rigs, a stunning location and top deejays such as **Saucey**, **Paul Energy** and **Michael Ohlsson** of Shanghai Antidote fame, who dropped a splendid rock-based set.

Competing with Summer Swank's pool party and The Freak Show in Taipei, plus Rising at Liquid Lounge in Taichung, Clash's attendance fell in the low hundreds. This wasn't the case a few years ago when thousands regularly cut loose at all-night beach raves.

After featuring in the Vinyl Word two weeks ago lauding the proliferation of parties, **Marcus Aurelius**, who recently returned from Shanghai, has modified his opinion. "I do agree



that there is an over-saturation of events happening at the moment ...," he said. "Most weekends have two or three things happening and not enough time to check them out."

In a marketplace where competition for predominance prevails, if the big players are doing a roaring trade but independent nights struggle to survive, the pendulum could swing in the opposite direction.

"I think it is important that there is a large underbelly of people [who are] discontent with the usual stuff you will hear in a lot of clubs," said Russell. "To 95 percent of club owners, the attraction of earning wads of cash far exceeds the drive to introduce people to more alternative yet musically rewarding genres such as drum and bass, dub, funk, or 2-step ... Competing with the big clubs is tricky though, so smaller clubs should try for a different niche if possible."

Promotion is key. In the age of viral marketing, Facebook and other Web sites have superseded flyers as the media of choice for party promoters. But social networking sites often target people who already know about

Gregory Dion Russell drums up promotion.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGORY DION RUSSELL

a particular venue and event, or are already members of a related group.

Although the Internet appears to be a wonderful tool for proclaiming the party message, there is a danger that it preaches only to the converted. New blood is arriving all the time in Taiwan and dance music fans want to feel connected to the scene, not just be a name on a members' list.

Although Swank deejay couple **3b** and **Kriz** are leaving next week for a new life in Prague after 15 years and eight years, respectively, in Taiwan, and the Vinyl Word is sure that thanks and love go out from the many who know them as gold medalist partiers, promoters and dance music fans want to feel connected to the scene, not just be a name on a members' list.

The Internet's impact on party promoting could spawn numerous high-brow explanations, but Aurelius may have a point when he says that ... "a majority of people goes out looking for one thing: the opposite sex. If your party doesn't have that, no matter how great the music is, then you are a dead fish in the water."

The Vinyl Word: See you at Vibe.

— TOM LEEMING

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Witch House (女巫店) hosts indie singer Huang Pei-yu (黃培育) tonight and harmonica trio Sirius Sharp (天狼星口琴樂團) tomorrow. Singer Huang Jie (黃玠) appears on Thursday, with a backing band of two acoustic guitarists and an accordionist. ▶ 7, Ln 56, Xinsheng S Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市新生南路三段56巷7號). For more information, call (02) 2362-5494 or visit www.witchhouse.org

▶ Performances start at 9:30pm. Restaurant/bar with queer/feminist bookstore and large collection of board games open 11am to midnight Sundays through Wednesdays; 11am to 1am Thursdays through Saturdays ▶ NT\$3000 entrance includes one drink

Tonight at **Riverside Cafe (河岸留聲)** it's acoustic and jazz standards by **Real Collective (河岸留聲精選爵士四重奏)**, the band composed of Riverside's owner and guitar maestro Geddy Lin (林正如), with Toshi Fujii (藤井俊充) on drums, keyboardist Uno (烏野薰) and Kinya (池田欣彌) on double and electric bass. Pop singer **Shino (林曉瑋)** performs tomorrow. On Sunday it's punk band **White Eyes (白目)** and disco-rockers **Cosmic Man (宇宙人)**. ▶ B1, 2, Ln 244, Roosevelt Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路三段244巷2號B1), next to Taipower Building (台電大樓). Call (02) 2368-7310 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for more information ▶ Shows start at 9:30pm ▶ NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow, NT\$350 on Sunday. Admission includes one free drink. There is a one-drink cover on Monday

Tonight a group of bands takes to the stage at **89k: The Endless Trip, Budduh**, Taiwanese rockers **88 Balaz (八十八顆芭樂籽)** and Taichung punks **Damn Kidz. Pan Africanana**, a drum ensemble of expats from Africa and the Caribbean, plays tomorrow. ▶ 25 Daguang Rd, Taichung City (台中市大觀路25號). Call (04) 2381-8240 for more information ▶ Shows start at 10:30pm ▶ Entrance fee NT\$300; includes one drink

Every Wednesday night at **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's a blues open mic, held by the Blues Society on Taiwan and hosted by Torch Pratt. All are welcome to bring their instruments and sit in on guitar, bass, or drums.

▶ 1F, 218 Changchun Rd, Taipei City (台北市長春路218號1樓). Call 2508-0304 or visit www.cosmo.com.tw for more information ▶ 8pm to 11pm every Wednesday ▶ Free admission

The Diner's (樂子) new branch on Dunhua Road hosts The Diner Jam, an open mic session every Thursday.

▶ 6, Ln 103, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段103巷6號), just off Anhe Road (安和路), in the lane adjacent to Carnegie's. Call (02) 2700-1680 or visit www.thediner.com.tw for more information ▶ 9:30pm to midnight every Thursday ▶ Free admission

Exhibition

Oversized Hanging and Hand Scrolls (巨幅畫卷). The National Palace

Museum has selected seven famed large works of Chinese brush painting from the Sung and Qing dynasties for its latest exhibition. The ensemble includes Tung Chi-chang's (董其昌, 1555 to 1636) *Shady Trees in a Summer Landscape* and Giuseppe Castiglione's (1688 to 1766) *The Imperial Rites of Sericulture*. ▶ National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院), 221, Zhishan Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段221號). Open Mondays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm; Saturdays until 8:30pm. Call (02) 2881-2021 ▶ Until Sept. 25

Totem and Taboo: Solo Exhibition by J.C. Kuo (國騰與禁忌: 郭振昌個展).

A celebrated member of the first generation of contemporary artists of post-World War II Taiwan, Kuo is known for his visually and emotionally expressive style that reflects the hybridity of Taiwanese culture. The exhibition features works by Kuo from the 1990s onwards, when the artist explored the blending of folk beliefs, traditional Chinese myths and Eastern and Western religions in Taiwanese society.

▶ Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館), 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm; Saturdays until 8:30pm. Call (02) 2595-7656 ▶ Until Sept. 21

Beyond 20 Degrees Celsius — Exhibition of Room Temperature Luminescence From Taiwan's Contemporary Imaging Art

(非20度C — 台灣當代藝術的常溫影像). The exhibition brings together works by 14 local artists to explore the fusion of photography, conceptual and installation art in the 1990s. ▶ National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (國立台灣美術館), 2, Wuchuan W Rd Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市五權西路一段2號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Call (04) 2372-3552 ▶ Until July 27

Who's Dongguri? (誰是Dongguri?)

Dongguri is a character created by South Korean artist Kwon Ki-soo. It appears in many of the artist's works made in various media, including painting, sculpture and video art. Warm, innocent and childlike, Dongguri is a simple creature that lives in never-never land and doesn't like to ponder philosophical questions.

▶ Metaphysical Art Gallery (形而上畫廊), 7F, 219, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段219號7樓) Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6:30pm. Call (02) 2771-3236 ▶ Until Aug. 5

You to Be — Chen Song-jei Solo Exhibition (你在 — 陳松志個展)

Features four of Chen's newest works that utilize glass and mirrors to use the "viewer" as a framework.

▶ Museum of Contemporary Art (台北當代藝術館), 39 Chang'an W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Call (02) 2552-3720 ▶ Until Aug. 24

RESTAURANTS



Noodles, seafood, and hot-and-sour sorbet at Shuiguibo.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Shuiguibo (水龜伯古早味)

Address: 6, Ln 75, Shipai Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市石牌路二段75巷6號)

Telephone: (02) 2820-1468

Open: 11:30am to 2:30 pm and 4:30pm to 10:30pm; the restaurant's shaved ice shop nextdoor is open from 11am to midnight

Average meal: NT\$88

Details: Chinese menu; credit cards not accepted

A hearty bowl of udon noodles might not seem like the best lunch for a hot summer afternoon, but Shuiguibo is betting that a scoop of sorbet can change that. The menu at the Shipai (石牌) restaurant takes the concept of cold noodles, which is exemplified by the Japanese dish *soba*, to a new level by serving bowls of udon noodles and seafood with a giant scoop of savory sherbet in one of three different flavors.

I ordered the Thai-style hot-and-sour cold noodles (泰式酸辣冰麵, NT\$88), which is the most popular of Shuiguibo's cold noodle flavors. A large scoop of hot-and-sour sorbet sat chillin' on a bed of noodles, sliced cucumbers and carrots, ham, prawns and calamari. My order came with a side of miso soup, which my waiter told me to drizzle on top of the sorbet to hasten it to its brothy demise.

The hot-and-sour sorbet was surprisingly spicy — the sourness of the sorbet was liberally peppered with piquant little bits of red chili. Despite its strong, somewhat overwhelming flavor, the novelty was irresistible and I couldn't help but eat some of the sorbet by itself. This was perhaps just as well, because once I started ladling the miso soup into the bowl and mixing the hot-and-sour sherbet in with the noodles, the dish became just a bowl of, well, cold soup. The noodles were satisfyingly chewy, but the rest of the dish wasn't particularly unique or, for that matter, suited to being served cold. You might have better luck with the Western-style tuna (西式鮭魚冰麵, NT\$88) or the Taiwan-style basil (台式九層塔冰麵, NT\$88) cold noodles, which comes with a scoop of oolong tea-flavored ice cream.

After finishing my noodles, I headed to Shuiguibo's bustling shaved-ice shop next door and joined the long line. The restaurant's summer dessert special, *shuangxian naonai* (雙仙孃奶, NT\$50), is a smorgasbord of shaved ice with grass jelly, tofu pudding (豆花), red beans, several different types of multi-colored glutinous rice balls (湯圓) and evaporated milk. The confection explodes in your mouth, literally — the whole thing is topped off with a sprinkling of Pop Rocks candy.

My bowl of *shuangxian naonai* was delicious, but the generous helping of glutinous rice balls was too much after eating the bowl of udon noodles. More refreshing desserts on Shuiguibo's menu include the mango-topped shaved ice (半糖芒果, NT\$90) and the lemon jelly ice (檸檬愛玉冰, NT\$35). — CATHERINE SHU



Japanese-style hamburger with cream sauce is comfort food par excellence.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

Petit Park (小公園)

Address: 30, Ln 621, Bei-an Rd, Dazhi, Taipei City (台北市大直北安路621巷30號)

Telephone: (02) 8509-2779

Open: 12pm to 2:30pm; 6pm to 9:30pm

Average meal: NT\$300 to NT\$600

Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted

Located in a surprisingly charming neighborhood in Dazhi (大直), Petit Park serves French-inspired cuisine at reasonable prices. The restaurant boasts an ambitiously large menu, with a wide selection of salads, pastas and sandwiches, presumably aimed at budget-minded diners (NT\$150 to NT\$380). The main courses are not especially imaginative, but they suit the atmosphere of the restaurant: stylish, yet down-to-earth.

There are hits and misses, but fortunately more hits.

The emphasis is on fresh foods and ingredients, and homemade bread features prominently in the sandwich and appetizer selections. The bread and pesto spread (also made fresh, NT\$100) didn't disappoint, although they skimped a bit on the pesto.

An outstanding appetizer is the grilled duck with feta cheese and potato with a vinaigrette sauce (NT\$160). The thin slices of duck melted in the mouth and married well the sashimi-sized chunks of peeled potato with zucchini slices layered beneath. The feta cheese cubes added a touch of savory richness, while a sprinkling of tarragon and red peppercorns gave the dish a subtle, spicy zest. Other appetizers include organic rocket with Parma ham and fresh bread (NT\$160) and grilled scallop with pesto and organic tomato (NT\$180).

Petit Park plays it safe with its main course offerings, but skip the grilled lamb (NT\$320). The meat was too chewy and its strong flavor could not be tamed by the delicate, fresh mint sauce that accompanied the dish. It came with a side of stringy mushrooms cooked in butter and garlic sauce that was too salty. The restaurant's specialty, Japanese-style hamburger with French-style cream sauce (NT\$280), however, was satisfying, much like a favorite comfort food. The pork meat party had a firm consistency, but tasted tender. The side of potatoes and fresh vegetables (eggplant, broccoli, zucchini, and yellow and red peppers) blended nicely with the cream and garlic sauce.

Other main course choices include grilled chicken leg served with capellini (NT\$340), salmon with cream mushroom sauce (NT\$360) and New Zealand Grade A tenderloin steak (NT\$420).

Petit Park sports a modern-looking, minimalist decor — plain white walls, a black ceiling and large windows, but it's refreshingly unpretentious and feels homey with warm lighting and comfortable seating. The kitchen overlooks an open and spacious dining area; between the cooling racks that hold fresh-baked bread, diners can spot the cooks hustling about.

The two desserts on offer — mango with coconut pudding (NT\$80) and tiramisu (NT\$70) — are both pleasing because they are made of fresh ingredients. The tiramisu was delicious, but its consistency was too much like custard and not fluffy enough. Like the desserts, the drink selection is sparse — Coke, coffee, ice tea and wine by the bottle only (NT\$700).

As for the service, the wait staff was polite and attentive but forgot to serve our drinks before dinner as requested. However, this minor shortcoming didn't overshadow the overall experience: an evening of good, inexpensive food (dinner for two, including appetizers, dessert, and coffee, was NT\$1,000) in a relaxed and comfortable setting.

Dazhi might sound far away to those living in Taipei City, but Petit Park is just a 15-minute bus ride from Yuanshan MRT Station. The No. 72 and No. 208 buses run frequently: get off at Dazhi Station (大直站), just past the yet-to-open Dazhi MRT Station. Petit Park is on Lane 620 and, as its name implies, is located next to a park. This residential lane is also home to a handful of other mid-priced and upscale restaurants, and its clean, tree-lined sidewalks make for a pleasant after-dinner stroll. — DAVID CHEN