

POPSTOP



Last week Carina Lau (劉嘉玲) and Tony Leung Chiu Wai (梁朝偉) exchanged marriage vows in Bhutan. A wedding on the following day, which one might have expected to upstage an event taking place thousands of kilometers away, didn't.

Terry Gou's (郭台銘) marriage to dancer Delia Tseng (曾馨瑩) managed to totally underwhelm the media. Perhaps that was intentional, for the event at the Grand Hyatt Taipei was billed as "environmentally friendly and of the common people."

Unfortunately, Gou simply comes across as being a tad cheap, which reflects badly on him after his unsuccessful pursuit of A-listers like Lau. But the most notable aspect of Gou's wedding was not the guests, who included local celebrities Chang Fei (張菲), Chang Hsiao-yen (張小燕) and Kevin Tsai (蔡康永), but those who were not invited.

First among the omissions was supermodel and former Gou inamorata Lin Chih-lin (林志玲), who is regarded by many as the matchmaker behind the Tel and Delia pairing. Gou, it seems, does not like to be reminded of his failures — another mark against someone who tries to come across as debonair.

And all may not be rosy in the house of Gou. The tycoon's younger brother Gou Tai-chiang (郭台強) missed his sibling's wedding, preferring to holiday in Kyoto instead.

Meanwhile, Jolin Tsai (蔡依林) is without a clearly designated

Burn, baby, burn.

Song Hsin-ni is taking a route well-traveled from page to screen. "friend," and, according to her favorite fortune-teller, this has everything to do with the color of her hair, Next Magazine reports. Tsai's tresses recently went from brown to black, and while this hasn't done anything for her love life, it may, or may not, have helped bag her a lucrative contract for promoting hair care products, reportedly worth NT\$24 million.

Lower down on the celebrity food chain, model Song Hsin-ni (宋新妮) has found that the most effective way of moving from page to screen is to get her kit off, and has achieved a victory of sorts in squeezing out rival Lee Yan-jin (李妍瑾) as the celebrity spokesperson for Ankh Clinic Beauty Therapy (安蔻美容醫學中心), where she had become a regular client.

Still further down the food chain, Sung Chien-chang (宋健彰), better known as band Nanchuan Mama's (南拳媽媽) Tantou (彈頭), may be faced with a shotgun wedding as girlfriend Pipi (皮皮) has, reportedly, got a little Tantou in her tummy. The pretty boy's rather short career as a man about town seems to be drawing rapidly to a close.

And so as Pop Stop bottoms out, the only way to go is up. Well, perhaps not. Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰), whose self-titled debut album remains unremittingly at the top of the music charts despite no evidence of originality or talent, is hereby formally admitted into Pop Stop's Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame after he was charged with burning a piano in a conservation area. Alas, this is no Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival during the Summer of Love, and without any regard for the saccharine music video that resulted from this publicity stunt, the Taichung County Environmental Protection Agency slapped a NT\$100,000 fine on Hsiao's production company for, first and foremost, transporting the piano to the Kaomei Wildlife Conservation Area (高美野

生動物保護區) and, quite literally, frightening the animals, and then for burning it in an area in which fires are prohibited.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



Janelle Chang, who plays the violin and the satar, joins jazz ensemble Sizhukong for several shows as a special guest.



Left: Saxophonist Jeff Chang of the US.



Above: Jazz ensemble Sizhukong brings a uniquely Chinese sound to its jazz music. From left to right: Alex Wu, Chen Chih-ling, Toshi Fujii, Huang Chih-ping, Martijn Vanbuel, and Peng Yu-wen. Left: Mogaowane Mahloelo of South Africa plays the djembe and sings with Sizhukong as a special guest each weekend.

Take the beauty and grace of traditional Chinese melodies, put them to jazz grooves, and you have the music of Sizhukong (絲竹空). The group, whose name reads "silk, bamboo and emptiness," is a six-piece jazz ensemble formed by pianist and composer Peng Yu-wen (彭郁雯) who aims to create "a new kind of Chinese music" with "a soul of jazz."

Sizhukong will present new material in a run of shows this month, starting tomorrow night at Witch House and on Sunday at Da-an Forest Park (大安森林公園) in Taipei.

The performances are billed as Samba Paradise, and audiences can expect to hear Latin jazz rhythms backing the distinctive voices of traditional Chinese instruments such as the liuqin (柳琴), a four-stringed lute, and dizi (笛子), a kind of Chinese flute.

"I want to bring the dance and groove [elements of jazz] to Chinese music," said Peng. "Chinese music doesn't always have to be calm or elegant."

Sizhukong embraces the ethos of jazz fusion: its music takes established forms — jazz and classical Chinese styles — and gives them a new twist. In songs like Bathing in the Stream, the ensemble plays a joyful melody originating from Guangdong Province, but adds a modern groove with upright bass and drums. Soon enough, the song expands into more abstract territory, with extended improvisations on piano, liuqin and erhu (二胡). As the song returns to the melodic theme, the jazz and Chinese "voices" intermingle to create a sound both familiar and new.

Sizhukong creates new Chinese music with a jazzy soul

Peng took an indirect path to conceiving this uniquely Chinese form of jazz. She studied Western classical music at a young age, but grew bored with it and eventually gave up. But after hearing swing jazz for the first time during university, Peng was inspired to return to music and earned a degree in jazz composition at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

After returning to Taipei, Peng helped form a small jazz combo, Metamorphosis, which is known for recasting Taiwanese folk songs in modern jazz styles, including Latin jazz, be-bop and post-bop.

Seeking new directions in her music, Peng studied nanguan (南管) and beiguan (北管), two traditional music forms with roots in southern China and Taiwan. Her collaboration with renowned liuqin player Chen Yi-chien (陳怡僊) set the stage for Sizhukong's formation.

With Chen in mind, Peng created a samba jazz arrangement of Fengyang (鳳陽), a folk song from China's Anhui

Province. Chen's performance skills left a deep impression: "I never thought that Chinese music could be this beautiful," Peng said. And Chen turned out to be a natural with jazz. "The rhythm and syncopation — she caught on easily." The pair built on their collaboration, and recorded Sizhukong's first album, which was released last year.

Just as Peng has expanded her notion of jazz music by bringing in Chinese elements, she finds that the same has been true for classical Chinese musicians. Peng cites the example of one of her past students, a guzheng (古筝, Chinese zither) player who studied the instrument for 20 years but didn't enjoy it until she started playing jazz.

And she has opened doors for jazz musicians as well. Saxophonist Jeff Chang (張哲嘉) of the US, who is playing with the group as a special guest this weekend, said that Peng's music was something he had "always been looking for" as a musician with Taiwanese roots. Ultimately, for Peng the jazz spirit lies

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS JULY 18 TO JULY 24

- 1 Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰) and Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰) with 16.61 percent of sales
2 Wilber Pan (潘瑋柏) and Future Tense (未來式) with 11.4% percent
3 Fan Wei-chi (范瑋琪) and Faces of FanFan with 6.38%
4 Ring (丁噐) and Decisively Loved (我愛上的) with 4.44%
5 Yoga Lin (林宥嘉) and Mystery Guest (神秘嘉嘉) with 3.68%



Theater

Windmill Fantasia (紙風車幻想曲) is an entertaining children's performance by Paper Windmill Theater (紙風車劇團) that uses float-sized puppets, black lighting, music and acting to enthrall and delight audiences.

Heart of Ocean (海洋之心) is a diablo dance production by Diabolo Dance Theater (舞鈴劇場) that portrays life underwater.

Every Breath You Take (你的每一次呼吸...) is a dance performance by Big Knowledge Tree Theater (大知識樹劇場) that uses breathing as a key element to explore the eternal themes of dreams, jealousy and love.

Visionary director Robert Wilson returns to Taiwan with I La Galigo, a performance based on an Indonesian creation myth, Sureq Galigo, that fuses theater, dance, music and poetry.

story of forbidden love between a brother and sister.
National Theater, Taipei City
Thursday, Aug. 8, and Aug. 9, at 7:30pm; Aug. 10, at 2:30pm
Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$2,400, available through NTCH ticketing

Classical music

8th Taipei International Choral Festival (2008第八屆台北國際合唱音樂節) ends tomorrow with a Final Concert that includes sets by The Chanters Group of the Church of St Panteleimon the Healer, Georgia, St John's College Choir, South Africa, The Idea of North, Australia, in addition to a performance of Handel's Israel in Egypt by the Festival Choir (節慶合唱團), the Taipei Philharmonic Chorus (台北愛樂合唱團), and the Taipei Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (台北愛樂青年管弦樂團) with Gabor Hollerung conducting.

Double Bass Works of 20th Century Vienna (維也納二十世紀低音提琴作品) is a concert that will see cellist Chou Chun-hsiang (周春祥) and pianist Lin Hui-yung (林慧英) in a number of works composed as a dedication to bassist Ludwig Streicher. The program includes Rudolf Jettel's Sonata fur Kontrabas und Klavier, Paul Furst's Ars Bassi fur Kontrabas und Klavier Op.41, Fritz Leitermeyer's 12 Essays fur Kontrabas und Klavier Op.33 and Paul Angerer's Quicquam fur Streichers Kontrabas und Streicher.

Classical Lounge Bar — A Summer Fantasy (夏日綺想曲—古典Lounge Bar) has the chamber quartet of Hung Yun-yao (洪韻堯) and Hung Ju-chiang (洪如薇) on violin, Chen Yung-chan (陳永展) on viola and cellist Tseng Chia-yi (曾加宜) performing Mozart's String Quartet in C Major, K.465, "Dissonance", Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 59, No. 1 "Razumovsky" in F Major and Borodin's String Quartet in D Major Op. 77, No. 2.

Contemporary

Tomorrow night the Cosmopolitan Grill hosts David Chen and the Muddy Basin Ramblers, who play vintage blues, swing jazz and jug band music. They will be joined by country act 2 Acres Plowed. Every Wednesday night at the 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.

Taiwan Beer bash

The Money Shot Horns can make even grandma dance. That's why they've been chosen as one of the headliners for tomorrow's 2008 Taiwan Beer Festival (2008台灣啤酒節) in Wujih (烏日), Taichung County.

The event kicks off at 10:30am and features an appearance by the Taiwan Beer basketball team, food stalls, DJs, bartender shows, professional dancers, two Golden Melody Award-winning singers, and a massive graffiti installation that took two artists weeks to complete. The festival has already made stops in Tainan and Zhunan and will hit Taipei on Aug. 19, but the Taichung event is the largest and most heavily promoted.

Hard-rock band Reload plays on the main stage at 6:30pm, while funk supergroup the Money Shot Horns takes to the stage at 7:45pm. Then it's a triple bill of talented singers: Golden Melody Award-winning Puyuma songstress Jiajia (家家); Alin, who was recently discovered by an agent at the EZ5 club in Taitung; and, finally, Jeannie Hsieh (謝金燕), winner of the 2007 Golden Melody Awards.

The Taiwan Beer Factory in Wujih (烏日啤酒廠行政大樓前廣場) is located at 1 Guanghua Rd, Wujih, Taichung County (台中縣烏日鄉光華街一號). The festival runs from 10:30am to 9:30pm.



A-lin, 23, looks like Jolin Tsai and has the voice of A-mei, according to her agent.



Highlight

The Wall (這牆) hosts an evening of live reggae and dub tomorrow night with Roots Dub Session, a late-night party featuring two bands and two DJs. Organized by DJ Taii, the party is dedicated to promoting live reggae and dub music in Taipei.

High Tide plays at the Wall as part of the late-night Roots Dub Session party.

foremost homegrown reggae and dub outfits. The group prides itself on representing a diversity of musical dance styles; its nine members play electronic instruments and the standard guitar, bass and drum kit. After the bands, DJs Taii and Katzu of the Jamaican sound system Black Reign International will keep people dancing the rest of the evening, spinning classic and modern roots.

Random (隨性) appear tonight at VU Live House. Tomorrow it's Japanese new wave punk band Six O'Minus and indie-electronica outfit The Shine and Shine and Shine (閃閃閃閃).

Appearing tomorrow night at Center Stage (formerly the Living Room) are Abandoned Machines, punk band Angry Young Men (生氣的年輕人) and Nevermore.

Tonight Dafu Jazz Trio takes to the stage at Sappho de Base. There is no show scheduled for tomorrow. On Tuesday night the Grace Jazz Trio plays a set, with an open jam afterwards. The Accidentals appear on Wednesday, and on Thursday it's the Phase-in Jazz Quartet, featuring original compositions by group leader Michael Haack.

Amis Aboriginal pop singer Van Fan (范逸臣) performs at The Wall (這牆) tonight. Tomorrow it's noise band Black Faith With Sonic Pace (黑色信念跟隨著音速腳步) and acoustic rockers All Become F, followed by a late night reggae show, Roots Dub Session.

Peppermint (薄荷葉) and Japanese bands Tonic, Six O'Minus and Ground Cover appear tonight at Underworld (地下室). Indie-electronica band Telephone Booth (電話亭) and low-key indie-rock duo Zag Lope (柴可洛漢) take to the stage tomorrow. US DJ Jeff Stott mans the decks on Sunday. [See highlight on Page 15.] On Wednesday it's Space Cake (太空蛋糕), which recently played at the Formoz Rock Festival and the Shine and Shine and Shine and Shine (閃閃閃閃).

Tonight Witch House (女巫店) hosts Bai Ronghe (白融合), a group playing jazzy compositions led by singer Jyotsna Peng (彭嬌惠). Tango Negro takes to the stage afterwards, playing accordion music inspired by Argentinean tango composer Astor Piazzolla. Tomorrow night it's the Chinese jazz fusion band Sizhukong (絲竹空). [See story above.]