RESTAURANTS

Looks aren't everything,

which isn't good news for

Butterfly.

# Puppets think outside of the box

n every country that has ever had a puppetry tradition, puppeteers have carried their puppets around in a box. It is from this box, which holds the tools of their trade, the instruments of their art, their means of expression and their source of subsistence, that La Boite (The Box), a collaboration between Taiwan's Taiyuan Puppet Theater Company (台 原偶戲團) and the Compagnie des Zonzons, takes its name. Having premiered in Lyon, France, Zonzons' hometown, in April, the show has its first Taiwan performance at Taipei's Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂) this weekend.

"It is a much bigger performance than we've ever put on," said Wu Shan-shan (伍姗姗), manager of the Taiyuan Puppet Theater Company, of a show that brings together both French and Taiwanese puppets and puppeteers. "Given that we are two troupes, we have double the resources of money and talent. It also required double the courage ... This production has taken Taiyuan to the next level.

La Boite tells the story of two puppet troupes who mistakenly take the puppet box of the other troupe and then try to find ways of performing using the unfamiliar puppets. The puppets themselves are endowed with life and long to return to their rightful masters. Both the European and Taiwanese puppets used are very traditional, though the presentation is anything but. Wu emphasized that the troupes' aim was to explore and give new dimensions to a shared aspiration to create a modern puppet theater grounded in tradition, one that is able to draw on a rich cultural heritage without being constrained by it.

The ability to perform at a venue the size of Taipei's Zhongshan Hall is largely due to the highly innovative use of a multifunctional box designed by Robin Ruizendaal, director of the Lin Liu-hsin Puppet Theater Museum (林柳新紀念偶戲博 物館) and artistic director of Taiyuan. The device, which stands more than 4m high and serves as a multilevel puppet stage, is also a prop for human actors and a screen against which images can be projected or through which shadow puppets can enter into the action. The contraption also rotates and can open to reveal its internal workings.

"Puppet theater in Taiwan tends to appeal only to the very old and the very young. It does

In keeping with the Olympic spirit, Vinyl Word takes a look at which

of this weekend's events are likely

Tonight, Luxy turns back the

which would have been 10 years old

The 2nd Floor Remix night in

Luxy's Onyx Room features an all-

Taiwanese deejay lineup of Daryl,

Vertigo, J-Six, Joe Ho and Reason.

who'll put an electro/techno/house

The Vinyl Word, which well

remembers when the end of an era

came in early January 2004 as 2nd

trip down memory lane for those

that played their part in this scene-

clock to the time of 2nd Floor,

gold-medal contenders.

this weekend.

defining club.

spin on proceedings.

not register with the general theater-going public. We were looking for ways so that actors, puppets and music can occupy the stage together," said Wu, who has extensive experience pushing the boundaries of puppet theater with Taiyuan, most recently in the highly successful production of The Second Goodbye last November at the Experimental Theater in Taipei. Performing at the Zhongshan Hall, which has seating for 600, imposed significant challenges on Taiyuan and forced the company to develop new techniques to meet the demands of the larger space. Success will depend very much on what they can pull out of their bag, or box, of tricks.

"A production such as La Boite gives us a chance to show off some very traditional performances, both of European and Taiwanese puppetry, as part of a bigger and more diverse show. It is not like trying to watch the whole Three Kingdoms saga," Wu said, referring to the interminable tale that forms part of the Taiwanese repertoire, "but you get to see some really outstanding segments." This technique of repackaging material previously regarded as inaccessible or unpalatable has a proven track record, an early example being Milos Forman's Amadeus (1984), which turned many people on to classical music who would never have thought of sitting through Mozart's Requiem in its entirety.

Wu said some aspects of the production directly reflect the experience Zonzons and Taiyuan had during the many months of cooperation in design and rehearsal. The show is, after all, two puppet companies making a show about two puppet companies that meet through their puppets. "Two companies meet, they develop feelings for each other, and these feelings are reflected in their performance ... their individual traditions are given clearer expression through their relationship," said Wu, talking both of the story of La Boite and her experience working with Zonzons.

With La Boite, Taiyuan hopes to pull a new lease of life for Taiwan puppetry out of the box, and much will depend on whether the cachet provided by the participation of Zonzons will draw Taiwanese audiences, who are notoriously shy of performances that smack too much of narrowly localized culture. \_\_ IAN BARTHOLOMEW





**PERFORMANCE NOTES:** 

WHEN: Today and tomorrow

at 7:30pm; Sunday at 2:30pm

WHERE: Zhongshan Hall (台

北市中山堂), 98 Yenping S Rd,

Taipei City (台北市延平南路

NT\$1,200, available through

TICKETS: NT\$400 to

NTCH ticketing

WHAT: La Boite (戲箱)

La Boite, a collaboration between Taiyuan Puppet Theater Company and France's Compagnie des Zonzons, is a show about two puppet companies that meet through their puppets.

## Butterfly(蝴蝶)

Address: 53, Ln 161, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段161巷53號) Telephone: (02) 2751-5067

**Open:** Daily from 6pm to 1am; closes at 2am on Fridays and Saturdays Average meal: NT\$600

Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted

Following on the successes of Sofa, Fifi and Khaki, haute couture doyen Isabelle Wen (溫慶珠) has opened another place at which to see and be seen.

Located across the road from her popular nightspot Sofa, Wen's latest culinary project opened about a month ago and is a lounge bar that sports a look that is the designer's signature chic incarnate. As, apparently, is the food. Butterfly serves hot and spicy Sichuan cuisine said to come directly from the Wen family's recipes.

As a lounge bar, Butterfly excels in mood-setting. The visual motif is a fusion of East and West, with a palette of unconventional indigo-blue and umber colors that exudes a sense of mystique and luxury. Chinese antiques rest comfortably among the vintagelooking sofa and chairs. A bar in the front offers a passable selection of cocktails, beer, and red and white wines. Oil paintings and illustrations on the walls lend an almost fairy-tale feel, while seemingly casually placed vintage screens and gauzy curtains hint at femininity. All in all, the interior is an amalgamation of Wen-esque fashion with a meticulous attention to detail.

As a restaurant, Butterfly is a chic version of Fifi, as the menus are almost identical and modernized to cater to contemporary diners. The food itself is, however, a disappointment. It lacks the pungent punch of the dishes served at Fifi, as well as the nuanced differences in flavors and spiciness.

My dining partners and I ordered several dishes off the recommendation list on the table. The chicken with red hot pepper (大千愛雞, NT\$320) was appetizing, but an easy comparison could be made between the plate and fried chicken nuggets hawked by street food vendors. The Sichuan-style fried bamboo shoots (川味炒筍, NT\$220) tasted exactly like its name suggests: fried bamboo shoots with chili.

Not so appetizing were the fried silver rolls (炸銀絲捲, NT\$80), which were inexcusably dry. But the shredded beef in spicy sauce (毛澤東煮牛, NT\$360) generated the most frowns. The oil-laden broth looked as if it came directly from a spicy hot pot and it failed to impress diners with a tolerance for spicy food, such as myself. Sad-looking slices of beef floated in the pot along with other elements that added no flavor to the dish. "The ingredients seem to have no relation to each other," said one of my dining partners.

Some might say we were a picky bunch, because this establishment is more of a trendy lounge where fashionistas come to people-watch. On the Sunday night we visited, the young and chic patrons at Butterfly included a group of starlets and their escorts sitting in the back. In the corner, there was a trendy tribe of slender young women in short skits and tanned men who wore sunglasses in spite of the dim lighting.

Butterfly makes a glittery spot for trendoids in the city's fashion hub. But its menu needs improvement before it becomes a must-visit restaurant for foodies.



Partygoers who like dirty electro house could do no better than check out VU Livehouse in Ximending

For the new bloods in town, the

bash is a good chance to see and

hear what things were like back in

the day. There will be trance in the

looking DJ dudes for those that think

main room with some European-

this genre still has merit.

tomorrow night, which is allowing seven-year veteran of the Taiwan scene and after-party king Shawn Kidd, aka vDub, to throw his birthday party there. Vancouverite Kidd (who refuses to reveal his age but who sources say is in his mid-30s) plays an extensive variety of vicious electro after recently moving

moment, Serrato. He has also employed **Scotty** Baller, who has buffed up his groove Floor closed down, recommends this to a more electro and breaks sound.

up to the MP3 deejaying tool of the

Polishing off this gold-medal medley in Taipei is Vinyl Word favorite Sona. Although the DJ



Not so much a Kidd anymore!

rarely plays big rooms these days, preferring to concentrate on producing, he is lauded by many who see him as one of the most accomplished deep house DJs on the island. Tomorrow's attendees will receive free guest list for two months to all VU events and there is free tequila for people born under the

fifth sign of the zodiac, Leo. Tomorrow in Taichung, it's all

things old and new with Summer Sessions at Liquid Lounge. Chi Funk, **Ripper** and **Dao** take to the podium and promise a night of the newest house and electro tunes currently playing out in Ibiza, and a selection of old-school anthems. For house aficionados, this should be an attractive night of music both past and present.

2nd Floor Remix is tonight at Luxy, 5F, 201, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段201號 5樓). Entrance is NT\$500 before 11pm, NT\$800 after. Call (02) 2772-1000, or 0955-904-600 for reservations (English service available).

Tomorrow's party at VU Livehouse, B1, 77, Wuchang St, Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1) runs from 10pm to 5pm. Free entry.

Tomorrow's Summer Sessions at Liquid Lounge, 98 Chungming S Rd, Taichung City (台中市忠明南路98號) runs from 10pm to 6am. Entrance is NT\$300 and includes one drink. On the Net: www.revevolution.net.

— TOM LEEMING



with a rich tomato cream sauce mixed with slices of Italian sausage, chopped sun-dried tomato, paprika, and your choice of penne, spaghetti, or

#### [ EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT ]

#### Pop-rock band Music Plant (留聲機工廠) and Essential **Trip** hit the stage tonight at Underworld(地下室).

Tomorrow night, it's emo act Hindsight (光景消逝), poppunk outfit Fire Ex (滅火器) and grunge band Kook

▶ B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北 市師大路45號B1). Call (02) 2369-0103 or visit www.upsaid.com/

underworld for more information Live shows go from 9:30pm to 11:30pm. The bar is open from 8pm daily; closed Mondays

▶ Entrance is NT\$400 tonight and NT\$300 tomorrow and includes one drink; NT\$100 admission on Wednesdays

Tonight **Witch House (女巫 店)** presents the quiet, intimate acoustic sounds of **Ding Ding** and Xi Xi (丁丁與西西). Indie-rock group **Relax One** (輕鬆玩) takes to the stage tomorrow night.

▶ 7, Ln 56, Xinsheng S Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市新生南路三段 56巷7號). 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\$300 entrance includes

one drink

Appearing tonight at **Riverside** Cafe (河岸留言) is jazz/Latin percussion virtuoso **Rich Huang** . (黃瑞豐) and friends. Longestablished metal band **Assassin** (刺客) appears tomorrow. Hakka rock band **Zenkwun** (神棍樂團) performs on Sunday with hip-hop

outfit Da Xi Men (大囍門). ▶ 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

# Highlight

In terms of music, Pingtung County is probably bestknown for the annual Spring Scream by the sea in Kenting. Pingtung is also home to Taiwan's "country music" tradition, and the county now has aspirations to become the country's Nashville. To further these hopes, this year sees the first incarnation of the Wind and Tide International Folk Music Festival (風與潮:國際唱 遊節). This event, which will feature well-known names such as Lin Sheng-xiang (林 生祥), Chen Ming-chang (陳 明章) and Kimbo Hu (胡德夫), in addition to a host of lesserknown folk groups, in concerts around Pingtung. Detailed that begin tomorrow and run until Aug. 25. International guests include Samovar



Pingtung County has designs on becoming the country's Nashville.

from Russia, Inka Marka, a South American group now based in Australia, Khac Chi from Vietnam, A First Light from Ireland and **Sundiata** from Uganda. Concerts will take place at various venues information can be obtained at www.cultural.pthg.gov. tw/folkmusic/activity.html.

Building (台電大樓). Call (02) 2368-7310 or visit www.riverside. com.tw for more information ► Shows start at 9:30pm 路). Call (02) 2517-3869

▶ NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow; NT\$350 on Sunday. Admission includes one free drink

Tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**, a new restaurant and live house on the corner of Fuxing North and Minquan East roads, is the Rubber Band, which plays rock, pop and dance music. The group plays every Friday. Tomorrow it's house band **Loaded**, which plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits." Sundays feature a regular rotation of bands, with **Dafu Trio** playing jazz and blues this week.

▶ 1F, 56, Minquan E Rd Sec 3, information Taipei City (台北市民權東路三段

56號1樓), near the corner of Fuxing North Road (復興北路) and Minguan East Road (民權東

► Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays, and 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays

▶ No entrance fee

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. ▶ 1F, 218 Changchun Rd, Taipei City (台北市長春路218號1樓). Call (02) 2508-0304 or visit www. cosmo.com.tw for more

▶ 9pm to 11pm tomorrow; 8pm

to 11pm every Wednesday ▶ Free admission

### **Exhibition**

Very Fun Park (粉樂町). Five artists from Taiwan and China

show their colorful yet contemplative artworks as part of the annual festival. Pieces on display include Yao Chung-han's (姚仲 涵) Scattered Coordinates, which is made from florescent lights, and Chou Meng-yeh's (周孟曄) paper sculpture, which tells the story of numbers

▶ B2 Art Space at Eslite Bookstore Dunnan B2 Art Space (誠品敦南 B2藝文空間), B2, 245, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化 南路一段245號B2). Open Mondays through Sundays from 11am to 9pm. Call (02) 2775-5977 Until Aug. 31

**Group Exhibition by Wang** Hsiu-ru, Yang Tzu-hung and Kao Shu-pang (王秀茹、 **楊子弘、高樹邦創作展)**, a show

presents new styles created by the younger generation of artists in Taiwan. This trio looks into the individual's relation to the world and other people through photo installations and sculpture. ▶ Shin Leh Yuan Art Space (新樂

園藝術空間), 15-2, Ln 11, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市中山北路二段11巷15-2號). Open Wednesdays through Sundays from 1pm to 8pm. Tel: (02) 2561-1548 ► Until Aug. 24

**The Permanent Moment:** NYC (波蒙内特的瞬間:紐約). This exhibition of Albert Tang's (湯 承勳) photography features 40 black-and-white images of New

York City street life.

▶FNAC Xinyi Branch (法雅客信義 店), B2, 9 Songshou Rd, Taipei (台 北市松壽路9號B2). Open weekdays from 11am to 9pm; weekends from 11am to 10pm. Call (02) 8789-8780 X146 Until Aug. 31

#### Deconstructing

Architecture (解構建築). On display is work by five local artists who look past the functions of buildings and into their historical and cultural contexts.

▶ Taiwan International Visual Arts Center (台灣國際視覺藝術中心), 29, Ln 45 Liaoning St, Taipei City (台北市遼寧街45巷29號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 12pm to 6pm. Call (02) 2773-3347

► Until Aug. 27

#### The Forest of Hearts (心森 **林)** is series of paintings by Malis,

a street artist from Kaohsiung. ▶ Pethany Larsen Gallery (Pethany Larsen藝坊), 2F, 30, Ln 45 Liaoning St, Taipei City (台北 市遼寧街45巷30號2樓). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11am to 7pm. Call (02) 8772-5005

► Until Aug. 31

#### **Event**

**New Productions of Emerging Taiwanese** 

Choreographers, The second half of the production features the works of Wei Kuang-ching (魏光慶), Su Shih-jian (蘇詩堅) and Huang Huai-de (黃懷德). ▶ Experimental Theater, Taipei City ▶ Tonight and tomorrow at

at 2:30pm ► Tickets are NT\$500, available through the NTCH ticketing

7:30pm; tomorrow and Sunday



fettuccine.

Address: 1F, 419-6, Wenhua Rd Sec 1, Banciao City, Taipei County (板橋市文化路一段419-6號1樓) **Telephone:** (02) 2255-2861

Open: Monday to Friday, 11:30am to 10:30pm; opens for breakfast at 9am on Saturdays and

Average meal: NT\$250 to NT\$500 per person

**Details:** Chinese and English menus; credit cards accepted; reservations recommended

As the number of Italian restaurants and pizzerias in Taipei continues to grow, Le Rouge is one establishment to keep at the top of your list. Located close to an MRT station in Banciao (板橋), this low-to-mid priced bistro is worth the trip for the distinctive touch it A joint venture between French-Canadian expat Francis Beauvais and Crystal Lo (羅淑芬),

Le Rouge started out as an Internet business: the two foodies sold homemade meatballs and calzone on Yahoo Taiwan's auction Web site. Business was good, which encouraged them to expand to a full-fledged kitchen over a year ago. Le Rouge mainly offers pizza, calzone and pasta, with around 20 varieties of each and

plenty of choices for vegetarians. Beauvais, a Montreal native who grew up working in his family's restaurant, says that everything except the pastas is "made from scratch" and all vegetables are handpicked daily at the market.

My dining companion and I ordered the couple's set menu, which includes the choice of an appetizer, a salad, a pizza, a pasta and two non-alcoholic drinks (NT\$949, not including the 10 percent service charge). The Greek salad (NT\$150), dressed with a subtle lemon vinaigrette, was short on cucumber slices but came with a generous serving of feta cheese. Even more pleasing was the bruschetta (NT\$120) — toasted slices of French bread with chopped tomato, onions, olive oil and freshly grated Parmesan.

There was a noticeable but acceptable wait between our appetizers and main courses, and we appreciated that our waiter came to tell us when our order was almost ready. The service was attentive and well-timed — the staff kept our water glasses full and cleared our plates only when it was apparent that we were finished.

If our main dishes represent the quality of the food at La Rouge, then anything on the menu will be highly fulfilling. The pasta di sole (NT\$250) melted in the mouth with its rich tomato cream sauce; it came with sliced Italian sausage, chopped bits of sun-dried tomatoes and penne (spaghetti and fettuccine are two other pasta options). Served in a charming, oblong-shaped white bowl, the portion appeared a bit small, but the dish's creaminess was satisfying.

Stone-oven baked pizzas are all the rage these days, but Beauvais does without them. Instead he spent a year perfecting his dough recipe, and the result is a tasty pizza crust that is thin yet substantial. Made of white flour, the crust hints at focaccia: it's slightly doughy and seasoned with Italian herbs. The mouton noir pizza (NT\$350), which has sundried tomatoes, goat cheese, mozzarella and black olives, was simple yet pleasingly rich.

Beauvais says the pair's goal is "for everyone to feel at home" at the restaurant, and for the most part they succeed. The interior is painted in bright yellow and pastel reds, with oil paintings, children's drawings and Thai movie posters hanging on the walls.

Diners can sit near the open kitchen and watch the waiters and cooks weave around each other at a mesmerizing pace, silently focused on their tasks. The restaurant has a second floor, which is furnished with large couches and easy chairs.

The only awkward aspect of the space is the noise — with the high ceiling, concrete walls and hard-tiled floors, sounds bounce around the room, which can make it difficult to have a quiet conversation. But the food is good enough to keep you from talking. Le Rouge also serves breakfast on weekends until noon, with set meals of omelets, fresh fruit and homemade yogurt priced between NT\$200 and NT\$280.

Take the MRT's Blue Line to Xinpu Station to get to Le Rouge. Leave the station via exit No. 1, and look out for the neighboring Dante Coffee shop. Beauvais and Lo recommend calling ahead for reservations. — DAVID CHEN







