

# Othello loses himself in Taiwan



Li Li-qun, left, puts on a minstrel look for his performance of *Othello*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GODOT THEATER COMPANY

It's another week before the long-anticipated production of *Othello* (針鋒對決) by the Godot Theater Company (果陀劇場) premieres in Kaohsiung, but with headliners Li Li-qun (李立群) and Chin Shih-jie (金士傑), two of Taiwan's most accomplished stage actors, ticket sales are likely to be brisk. The show will open at Taipei's Metropolitan Hall (城市舞台) on Sept. 18.

Godot is an old hand at adapting Western classics into Chinese (including two works by Shakespeare), but even a long-time collaborator such as Li, who is now based in China, said that "I haven't been to a performance of Shakespeare in Chinese in which I haven't fallen asleep. As a performer, if a member of the audience falls asleep (because of the performance), then it's my problem. My responsibility in performing in this play is to make sure that nobody falls asleep," he said half jokingly in a meeting with the press earlier this month.

Shakespeare has been adapted into many languages, and a number of non-English productions have received the very highest accolades, but Li accepts that linguistic and cultural differences presented an insuperable challenge.

"Put the play into Chinese, and all those beautiful words become one of the play's biggest obstacles," he said. He told the audience at the media event that when he started reading the original play for this production, he thought it shouldn't even be attempted. How can modern Chinese people put on a play that was written in English blank verse of 400 years ago, in which the rhythms of the language are such an evocative part of the performance? "We simply have to accept going into a production like this that we would be abandoning the language of Shakespeare from the get go," Li said.

Coming from the mouth of one of Taiwan's great comic actors, this was not greatly encouraging, but Li had confidence that the production could preserve the spirit of the play despite a script in the modern Chinese vernacular. "We want to make the language understandable for the audience, but

we certainly want to preserve the Shakespearean spirit. If we don't, all that would be left would be the bare bones of the story, and that's no good to anyone," he said.

That will be the great challenge for this production, but the fact that it has been found necessary to put Li, who plays the title role, into a tight perm and blacken him up like a black-and-white minstrel, and give Chin (who plays Iago) a hooked prosthetic nose, makes this reviewer despair. Shades of vaudeville seem to linger about the rehearsals, and this can only be the kiss of death for any real sense of tragedy.

Li and Chin got together six years ago to put on the enormously successful play *ART*, an adaptation from a work by the emerging French playwright Yasmina Reza. But even then, while the box office for that adaptation must have been gratifying, Godot's version failed to achieve the feather-light sparkle that relies on the kind of shorthand of visual and spoken cues — body language, costume, turns of phrase, accents.

This adaptation of *Othello* may face similar problems of being neither English nor Chinese, but an uncomfortable mixture of the two. But to see if the production team, and its big-ticket cast, is able to bridge the gap between Elizabethan England and 21st century Taipei should prove extremely interesting to watch.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW

## PERFORMANCE NOTES:

**WHAT:** *Othello* by Godot Theater Company

**WHEN AND WHERE:** Aug. 30 to Aug. 31 (Kaohsiung), Sept. 6 to Sept. 7 (Hsinchu), Sept. 13 (Tainan), Sept. 18 to Sept. 28 (Taipei), Nov. 8 to Nov. 9 (Taichung)

**TICKETS:** NT\$1,000 to NT\$4,000 (Taipei); NT\$500 to NT\$4,000 at all other venues. Tickets are available through TRCH ticketing or from Godot Theater Company at [www.godot.org.tw](http://www.godot.org.tw)

**部),** 1 Qingyun Rd, Taipei City (台北市青雲街1號)  
**WHEN:** Tomorrow 1pm to 9pm  
**ENTRY:** NT\$300 (with one drink)  
**ON THE NET:** [www.sexy-girls-of-summer.com](http://www.sexy-girls-of-summer.com)

## AFRO-CARIBBEAN NIGHT

What makes a better soundtrack to the summer than African and Caribbean music? This special event is hosted by Island Jam, a group of Caribbean music ambassadors from Jamaica and Martinique, who have been making these kinds of grooves happen in Taipei for years. Their parties are the mecca of Taipei's reggae, dub, ska and Afro-Caribbean music enthusiasts. Come and experience the exotic flavor this weekend and groove to the beats by Pan Africana, Taili and Katzu.

**WHERE:** VU Livehouse, B1, 77 Wu Chang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1)  
**WHEN:** Tomorrow, Saturday 10pm to 4am  
**ENTRY:** NT\$350 (with one drink)  
**ON THE NET:** [www.myspace.com/taili9](http://www.myspace.com/taili9)

— QUEEN BEE

## OASIS POOL PARTY

Summertime should be all about getting out of the house and having fun in the water. Boasting great music, hot babes, yummy food, cheap booze, an intimate private-party vibe and an amazing pool, Oasis, a bi-weekly event, is the summer paradise for Taipei's party animals. The music is diverse but promises to be appropriate for the pool. Expect to hear everything from deep house and hip-hop to reggae. The venue is situated on the side of a hill overlooking Taipei City and it's about a 10-minute drive from the Taipei 101. Nature-lovers can enjoy its mountain-spring pool and beautiful surroundings while others go crazy about the sexy girls and the bikini contest. So if you are stuck in the city of Taipei again



There are pool-side pleasures aplenty at the Oasis Pool Party.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DOMINIK TYLISZCZAK

this weekend, make this pool party a special treat for yourself!

**WHERE:** Taipei Country Club (台北鄉村俱樂部)

## [ EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT ]

Tonight at **Riverside Cafe** (河岸留聲) it's the **Timeless Fusion Project**, a new jazz fusion band led by pianist Fred Lu (呂聖斐) and Tony Tung (董舜文). Indie-rock group **Relax One** (輕鬆玩樂團) plays an acoustic set tomorrow night, while alt-pop band **13** (拾參) appears on Sunday. On Tuesday night up-and-coming electro-rock band **Salamander** (沙羅曼蛇) hits the stage along with **Kou Chou Ching** (拷秋勤), a roots hip-hop band that samples traditional Taiwanese music and raps in Hoklo and Hakka.

► B1, 22, 44, 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](http://www.riverside.com.tw) for more information  
► Shows start at 9:30pm  
► NT\$350 tonight and NT\$400 tomorrow, NT\$350 on Sunday and Tuesday. Admission includes one free drink. There is a one-drink minimum on Monday

Weekends at **VU Live House** feature two sets of shows. The first round of shows tomorrow night features alt-rock band **KZ**, jazz-fusion group **Milestone** (里程碑), hard rock group **Giz** (桔子樂團) and **Slow Motion**, a band that attempts a mix of hard rock and French disco thump a la Daft Punk. Later on, DJs take over with **VU From the Darkside**. Tomorrow night's first set includes metal and glam bands **Alavice**, **Chant the Dirge** (禱樂團), **Naila** (奈落), **Living Force** (存活勢力) and **Men Sao Huo** (悶騷貨). The second set features **Pan Africana**, a drum ensemble of African and Caribbean expats.

► B1, 77 Wuchang St, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1). Call (02) 2314-1868  
► Two sets of shows tonight and tomorrow, from 7pm to 10pm, and then 10pm till late

► NT\$400 for tonight's first set of bands, NT\$300 for the second set; NT\$300 for each set tomorrow. Wednesday night is ladies' night, with free admission and one drink for women; cover for guys is NT\$200 and includes one drink

Appearing tomorrow night at **Center Stage** (formerly the Living Room, now under new management) is post-rock group **To a God Unknown**. On Tuesday it's jazz trio **Tall Boy**.  
► 3F, 8, Nanjing E Rd Sec 5, Taipei City (台北市南京東路五段8號3樓). Call (02) 8787-4154 or visit [www.myspace.com/taipeicenterstage](http://www.myspace.com/taipeicenterstage) for more information  
► Shows start at 10pm  
► Entrance fee is NT\$200 for music shows, but Tuesday's show is free

Tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**, a new restaurant on the corner of Fuxing North and Minquan East roads, is the **Rubber Band**, who play 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 see a regular rotation of bands, with the **Revue Band** playing blues, rock and reggae this week.  
► 1F, 56, Minquan E Rd Sec 3, 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 Minquan East Road (民權東路)  
► Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30pm tonight and tomorrow, 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](http://www.cosmo.com.tw) for more information  
► 8pm to 11pm every Wednesday  
► Free admission

## Exhibition

**Look Out! Korean Art Contemporary (Look Out!韓國當代新秀展).** The exhibition features works by four South Korean contemporary artists. While Park Sung Tae contemplates the thesis of life and death through his sculptures/installations, Lee Jung Hee, Yoon Young Hye and Im Ju Ri dwell on the world through their feminine gazes.  
► Mot Arts, 3F, 22 Fuxing S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市復興南路一段22號3樓). Open Mondays through Sundays from 11am to 9pm. Call (02) 2751-8088 for more information  
► Until Sept. 8

**Good Morning, Mr Click — Solo Exhibition by Lai Chiu-chen (早安克立先生 — 賴九峯個展).** The artist, Lai, once said, "when you put modern paintings and comics and animations together, the former will look like a joke." Lai's works are where the fine art and the anime worlds meet and wed, and hybrids are born out of imitation, copying and re-editing.  
► Main Trend Gallery (大趨勢畫廊), 209-1, Chengde Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市承德路三段209-1號). Open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11am to 7pm. Call (02) 2587-3412 for more information  
► From tomorrow through Sept. 20

**Light Spa — Feeling the Temperature — At Paper Space (光的Spa — 手感溫度 — At Paper Space).** The participating artists bring the element of paper into the green lifestyle by jointly designing a space for earth-friendly living.

► Suho Memorial Paper Museum (樹火紀念紙博物館), 68, Changan E Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市長安東路二段68號). Open Mondays through Saturdays from 9:30am to 4:30pm. Call (02) 2507-5539 for more information  
► Until Aug. 30

**Chihoi's Solo Exhibition (智海個展).** The exhibition features illustration works, comics, paintings and sketches by the young artist from Hong Kong. It should be appreciated as a display of personal whimsy.  
► Have a Boody Shop, 18-1, Ln 25, Nanjing W Rd, Taipei City (台北市南京西路25巷18-1號). Open Mondays through Sundays from 12pm to 9pm. Call (02) 2552-5552 X 11 for more information  
► Until August 31

**Indelibly Marked: Woodblock Printing in Taiwan 1945 - 2005 (世紀刻痕 — 台灣木版畫展).** Featuring 90 works of woodblock printing by local artists, the exhibition aims to examine the development of Taiwan's woodblock printing over the past 60 years. The works on display are divided into seven themes that include humanitarian concerns and social criticism and the growth of abstract styles and contemporary issues.  
► National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung (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 through Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Call (04) 2372-3552 for more information  
► Until Oct. 12

## RESTAURANTS



A-Plus Dining Sake Bar gets high marks for more than just its drinks.

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

## A-Plus Dining Sake Bar

**Address:** 33, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段33號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2731-9266

**Open:** Noon to 2:30pm; 6pm to 2am  
**Average meal:** NT\$700

**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted

A-Plus Dining Sake Bar's selling points are an encyclopedic menu of premium sake and its swanky lounge atmosphere. But before you get too carried away with the sake martinis or carafes of infused sake, make sure to take some time to savor A-Plus' neo-style sushi.

A-Plus' menu ranges from sashimi to grilled meats, but the standouts are its appetizers. We ordered DIY spicy tuna sided with homemade chips (辣鮪魚DIY, NT\$280) and rare beef sided with citrus sauce (柚香生牛肉, NT\$320).

The thin slices of rare beef dunked in the citrus sauce (the flavor is a bit more savory and less tart and fruity than the description suggests) were delicious, but I think even red-meat lovers will agree that it is blown away by the sheer addictiveness of the DIY spicy tuna with chips. The dish consists of tuna tartar served on a bed of lettuce and tomatoes with a side of spicy sauce and small pile of fresh waffle fries. Your server ceremoniously pours the light orange-colored sauce onto the tuna tartar and then carefully mixes it with two dainty silver spoons before spreading the mixture onto each waffle chip. The high-low pairing of tuna sashimi and French fries presents a satisfying combination of flavors and textures: the freshness of the tartar, creamy bite of the spicy sauce and crispiness of the chip. The lettuce leaves are not just for garnish — our waitress suggested that we finish off the last bits of tartar by eating the salad.

Our appetizers were followed by a serving each of pan-fried salmon roll (香煎鮭魚卷, NT\$240) and rainbow roll (彩虹卷, NT\$280). The latter is the usual California roll wrapped in a variety of sashimi slices, but the right balance of crabmeat filling and avocado and the freshness of the fish make this sushi staple worth ordering. We were simultaneously over- and underwhelmed with the salmon roll, which consists of grilled salmon wrapped in a roll of rice that is lightly seared on the side, topped with ikura roe and served with a light dipping sauce. The dish is heartier than other sushi rolls, but we felt that the simplicity of the flavor combinations makes it pale in comparison.

On the other hand, the salmon roll girded us for the two artisan-glass carafes (NT\$360 each) of sake we ordered. Our first round, the chrysanthemum-infused sake (雛菊), has a slight floral hint that compliments the sweetness of the liquor. After downing half the carafe, I felt as if I were drinking a handful of chrysanthemum petals floating down a clear spring in the middle of winter. At the end of the evening, we skipped dessert and ordered a sake cocktail, the intriguingly named Sob of Swallows (春啼). I felt the mixture of fruit juice it was made with was cloyingly sweet and overwhelmed the sake, but my dining companion thought it was a refreshing end to our meal.

— CATHERINE SHU



PS Tapas offers an uninspired tapas selection in a lounge setting.

PHOTO: HO YI, TAIPEI TIMES

## PS Tapas

**Address:** 181, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段181號)  
**Telephone:** (02) 2740-9090

**Open:** Mondays through Fridays from 4pm to 2am; Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 2am

**Average meal:** NT\$800, including drinks

**Details:** Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted

The PS design group is revered for introducing high fashion from Japan to Taiwan. PS made its first sally into the hospitality industry a few years back with an Italian restaurant in the basement of its East District (東區) headquarters. Now, the group is consolidating its move into the market for trendy dining by jumping on the bandwagon of the Spanish tapas trend. The result is PS Tapas, which opened three months ago.

PS Tapas has proved enormously popular, with long lines at its candle-lit outdoor seats on weekend evenings illustrating the necessity of booking in advance. If you haven't booked, it's best to put yourself on the waiting list and come back later for dinner.

The interior has a lounge feel with dim lighting and easy-listening lounge music. A black leather sofa serves as the focal point of the space, standing in marked contrast with the white ceiling and floor.

Having heard that portions were small, my dining companions and I ordered a range of dishes. We didn't have a problem with the quantity that was served, but, unfortunately, many of the dishes simply did not pass muster.

First up was the beef carpaccio (NT\$160), which was a huge disappointment. The slices of raw beef had the taste of the refrigerator about them, as though they'd been defrosted. The beef souvlaki with yogurt dressing (NT\$160) also failed to impress, the supposedly Greek-style beef brochettes having no character other than being excessively greasy.

Other disappointments included the deep-fried seafood plate (NT\$180) of fish, shrimp and squid topped with a "salsa" that seemed to be little more than olive oil with a trace of chili. The dish that was supposed to be the highpoint of the PS Tapas experience, the Spanish seafood paella (NT\$360), totally failed to bring out the flavors of its ingredients.

It wasn't an unmitigated disaster, though. Simple dishes like the Spanish platter (NT\$230), eight pieces of French bread with two dips (a choice of creamy chickpea, sun-dried tomato, and guacamole), salami and cheese, was adequate. The garlic butter shrimp (NT\$140) was savory and nicely balanced between buttery lushness and garlicky tang. The Spanish omelet (NT\$180), with potatoes, bacon and bell peppers, was the one dish that really hit the spot and was as good as an omelet gets.

Sangria (NT\$260 for a glass, NT\$750 for a pot) was the drink of choice, and the way it was mixed at PS Tapas earned plenty of praise from our table. But good sangria is not enough, and PS Tapas is going to have to sharpen its act if it is going to live up to its hype.

— HO YI