

POP STOP

The frenzy over **Faye Wong's** (王菲) reported miscarriage continues unabated. According to the *Liberty Times* [the *Taipei Times*' sister paper], the media wildfire has spread from Hong Kong and Taiwan to China, where showbiz gossip Web sites speculate that Wong's husband, **Li Yapeng** (李亞鵬), was having an affair with Chinese actress **Miao Pu** (苗圃), which Miao angrily denied.

Rumormongers then speculated that Wong, 39, and Li, who turns 37 tomorrow, were to divorce because the Mando-pop diva did not want to try for another child because of her age. Li's manager, **Ma Jia** (馬葭), angrily denied the scuttlebutt as "crazy," the *Liberty Times* reports. Wong's friend, actress **Carina Lau** (劉嘉玲), echoed Ma's denial, saying, "I think it's better for Faye Wong to talk about her matters herself."

Breathing a collective sigh of relief are the members of girl band S.H.E. and boy band Fahrenheit (飛輪海), who found out that the yogurt drinks they endorse in China were not tainted with melamine, said the product's manufacturer Mengniu (蒙牛).

The two groups, which star in commercials for Mengniu, will carry on as planned with a six-concert tour of China, but their record company says whether the groups will continue with product endorsements in the future remains up in the air.

All this talk of tainted milk has got **Chang Fei** (張菲) thinking — about himself. A *Liberty Times* report reveals the TV show host's musings on current events.

On a recent taping of his show *Variety Big Brother* (綜藝大哥哥), Chang declared that he has stopped drinking pearl milk tea (珍珠奶茶), and no longer takes milk in his coffee. Speaking of coffee gave Chang reason to pay tribute to his friend, the deceased comedian **Ni Min-jan** (倪敏然), best known for his uncanny

impersonations of former vice president **Annette Lu** (呂秀蓮). Chang says Ni was ahead of his time, being the first in Taiwan to come up with the idea of canned coffee over 30 years ago. Milk, mortality, coffee — it all makes perfect sense.

But at least Chang knows his job is to take people's minds off things like food scares and cross-strait relations. He gave a nod to Taiwan's homegrown, surprise box office hit, *Cape No. 7* (海角七號), noting the "progress of Taiwan's film industry." He laughed, he cried and fancied appearing in a blockbuster himself. He praised director **Wei Te-sheng** (魏德勝), and said, "You could come and ask me to play in your next film."

It's no wonder Chang is looking Wei's way. *Cape No. 7* has broken the NT\$100 million mark in box office takings, and the movie's stars are the center of attention. The male lead, Amis pop singer **Van Fan** (范逸臣), celebrated the movie's success by fulfilling a promise he made earlier to swim naked at a beach in Kenting (墾丁) if the film grossed more than NT\$30 million.

As with many a big screen hit, there has been conjecture of romance among the cast. A *Liberty Times* report speculates that Fan and the film's female lead, Japanese actress **Tanaka Chie**, had engaged in some offscreen method acting.

At a celebration party at Fan's pub in the eastern district of Taipei, all eyes were on the pair for outward signs of inward stirrings. But they didn't leave the party together. After all, Fan does have a girlfriend, the report said before mentioning the rumor that Chie was slated to star in Fan's latest music video, but was nixed because of objections from Fan's girlfriend.

And finally, **Wang Lee-hom** (王力宏) says he isn't gay. The Mando-pop superstar, who played to 12,000 fans at his *Music Man* concert in Taipei City last weekend, told the *Apple Daily* that his mom even asked him once if he were gay, implying that it would be "OK" if he were.

— DAVID CHEN



Cuban diva looks back on 60 years



Omara Portuondo is celebrating 60 years in music, from the early days of Cuban jazz to a career revival as part of the Buena Vista Social Club, with a newly released album and tour of Europe and Asia. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DADA ARTS

From her days as a pioneer of Cuban jazz music in the 1940s to her legendary appearances with the Buena Vista Social Club in the late 1990s and her following artistic revival, singer Omara Portuondo has good reason to celebrate.

And this is what the 77-year-old Cuban diva has done with her new album, *Gracias*, which was officially released yesterday. Portuondo visits Taipei International Convention Center tomorrow as part of a tour of Asia and Europe. "At this time, I am celebrating 60 years of an artistic career and that is an important reason for making this new album," said Portuondo in an e-mail interview last week with the *Taipei Times*, translated from Spanish.

"I believe that the repertoire is going to touch many hearts, and for me the disc is very personal and special," she said. In *Gracias*, Portuondo pays tribute to performers and songwriters that she has admired over the years, recording what she considers "important" songs: the album begins with *Yo vi*, a Spanish-language adaptation of a song by the French crooner Henri Salvador, which she says "speaks of our island [Cuba]." The album includes a rendition of Cuban composer Ela O'Farrill's *Adios Felicidad*, which Portuondo says has "lyrics that make me very excited. The music is very intense, just like me." She also sings a duet with Chico Buarque, the renowned Brazilian songwriter-turned-novelist.

The new album features fresh talent as well. Portuondo says she was pleased to work with the Uruguayan pop composer Jorger Drexler, who wrote the album's title track. She sings duets with her granddaughter Rossio Jimenez and son Ariel Jimenez on several tracks; flirts with more modern jazz sensibilities in collaboration with bassist Avashai Cohen; and salutes African music with Cameroonian musician Richard Bona, a vocalist and bassist perhaps best known for his work with Pat Metheny.

The album also sees Portuondo's continuing collaboration with two Brazilians, producer Ale Siquiera and guitarist and musical director Swami Jr, both of whom brought a subtle, contemporary touch to her 2004 release *Flor de Amor*.

As Portuondo looks back at a long and accomplished career, it's hard not to notice that a decade has passed since Buena Vista Social Club became a worldwide sensation and propelled her to international stardom.

She still fondly recalls the ensemble's legendary concert in 1998 at New York's Carnegie Hall, which will be released on

CD next month.

"For me Carnegie Hall is a very special place ... It was very exciting for everyone who was there ... at that moment no one saw it as an opportunity or the beginning of anything," she said.

"When I got on the stage and encountered the audience applauding, shouting, waving the Cuban flag, I quickly went back inside ... I was afraid at that moment to feel so many emotions. Juan de Marcos [Gonzalez, the band's musical director] had to tell me to get [back on stage]. I cried several times during the concert ... Many people cried during that magical night."

When she last appeared in Taipei in 2005, Portuondo impressed audiences

with her grace and an onstage verve that defied her advancing years and tough touring schedule. What keeps her going?

"I love my work deeply. Every concert I do fills me with energy and, moreover, I try to take care of myself as much as possible: I don't drink; I don't smoke; I eat healthily; and I exercise. I like to walk a lot and to get to know the cities I visit. Music is my inspiration and being able to give myself to my public in every concert is something that makes me feel very lucky," she said.

Joining Portuondo on stage tomorrow night are guitarist Swami Jr, bassist Felipe Cabrera, pianist Harold Lopez-Nussa and percussionists Rodney Barreto and Andres Coayo. — DAVID CHEN

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS SEPT. 12 TO SEPT. 18

- Ronald Cheng (鄭中基) and *The Best of Ronald* (怪胎) with 10.42 percent of sales
- Fish Leong (梁靜茹) and *Today Is Valentine's Day* (今天情人節) with 9.6%

- Aska Yang (楊宗緯) and *Star! Start! Live Concert* (星空傳奇) with 7.4%

- Van Fan (范逸臣) and *Wu Le Bu Tsuo* (無樂不作) with 4.57%

- Y2J and *Live for You* (為你而活) with 3.77%

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES



[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Theater

A mad scientist threatens to launch nuclear missiles against China to ensure Taiwan's independence in The Party Theater Group's (同業劇團) newest play **The Sky Crisis** (飛天行動). Live comic projections accompany the onstage action. In the play, two actors together play six characters who lend a comic tilt to the weighty political subject.

► Guling Street Theater (牯嶺街小劇場), 2, Ln 5, Guling St, Taipei City (台北市牯嶺街5巷2號)

► Today, tomorrow and Sunday at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$400, available through NTCH ticketing

Blessed with a beautiful singing voice, a country girl moves to the city in search of her dreams in **Lil' Flora** (小花) by If Kid's Theater (如果兒童劇團). While working at a flower shop, Flora is "discovered" by a music industry executive who encourages her to be the ghost singer for an untalented but beautiful star. After accepting the offer, Flora finds it increasingly galling that the person receiving all the accolades is less talented than herself — a reality that gradually alters her idealistic personality.

► Novel Hall (新舞台), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 10:30am and 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$1,000, available through NTCH ticketing

returns to the stage with its adaptation of William Shakespeare's **Othello**.

The cast includes Lee Li-chun (李立群) and Chin Shih-chieh (金士傑), two of Taiwan's most accomplished stage performers, who perform from a script that attempts but largely fails to translate the Shakespearean English of the original text into vernacular Chinese. The play features crude stereotypes of Iago and Othello.

► Metropolitan Hall (城市舞台), 25, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$1,000 to NT\$4,000, available through NTCH ticketing

Tellus Theater continues its tradition of adapting classical Western theater to the local stage with Euripides' **Medea**, the story of a woman who takes revenge on her perfidious husband. The production is in English.

► Lien Te Vegetarian Restaurant (蓮德品素天地), B1, 82 Ningpo W St, Taipei City (台北市寧波西街82號B1)

► Tomorrow at 3pm and 7pm and Sunday at 3pm

► Tickets are NT\$350, available through NTCH ticketing

Classical music

Chen Chung-shen Hsiao Recital (蕭聲震武林—陳中申蕭獨奏會) sees Chen Chung-shen (陳中申), a specialist in the Chinese bamboo vertical flute, known as the *hsiao* (簫), perform a program of pieces by modern Chinese composers, including five of his own compositions. He performs with the Little Giant Chinese Chamber

Highlight

The **Mercedes Amateur Jazz Competition** takes place at Taipei American School this Sunday afternoon. Six Taiwanese groups will compete in the event, with onstage critiques given by Gene Aitken, a renowned jazz teacher and recipient of the 2007 Jazz Educator of the Year Award from the American jazz magazine *Down Beat*.

The event will be presented by ICRT Morning Show hosts Bill Thissen and Rick Monday, who has billed the event as a search for the "next Wang Chien-ming (王建民) of jazz."

The groups competing in this Sunday's event were selected by several jazz professionals in Taiwan: Tung Shuen-wen (董舜文), a saxophonist for Rich Huang Jazz Band (黃瑞豐爵士樂團), and veteran jazz guitarist Gedy Lin (林正知), who also runs the Riverside Music Cafe in Taipei. The Taipei American School jazz band will give a non-competition performance.

► Mercedes-Benz Amateur Jazz



Gene Aitken, a renowned music educator and recipient of *Down Beat* magazine's Jazz Educator of the Year Award in 2007, will be in Taipei this weekend as a judge for the Mercedes Amateur Jazz Competition at Taipei American School.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GENE AITKEN

Competition, hosted by the ICRT Morning Show with Rick Monday and Bill Thissen

► Sunday, from 1:30pm to 6pm

► Taipei American School, 800, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 6, Taipei City (台北市中山北路六段 800號)

► Admission is Free

available through NTCH ticketing

The Baroque and Now (巴洛克與現代), features the Hotshot Cello Choir (名加大提琴合奏團), which returns to the performance circuit with a program that includes Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 BWV1015*, Vivaldi's *Concerto Grosso Op. 3*, Michael Kibbe's *Dark Moon Op. 135*, Isaac Albeniz's *3 Stucke fur vier Violoncelli* and Mariano Mores' *Drei Argentinische tangos*.

► Tomorrow at 7:30pm

► National Taichung Library Chungshing Concert Hall (台中中興堂), 291-3 Jingwu Rd, Taichung City (台中市精武路291-3號)

► Tickets are NT\$200 to NT\$500, available through ERA ticketing

Joel Fan and the Academy of Taiwan Strings — Musical Record of a Floating Life (台灣絃樂團2008中興保全音樂會—浮生樂記) brings Joel Fan, the New York-based pianist renowned for his collaboration with Yo-yo Ma (馬友友) and the Silk Road Project, to Taipei to perform with the Academy of Taiwan Strings (台灣絃樂團). He performs a program that includes Telemann's *"Don Quixote" Suite*, Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11* and Tchaikovsky's *String Sextet in D Minor, Op. 70 "Souvenir de Florence."*

► Monday at 7:30pm

► National Concert Hall, Taipei City

► Tickets are NT\$400, available through ERA ticketing

Film

The Urban Nomad Film Program at the 2008 Taipei Biennial, which runs

until Oct 18, continues tomorrow night with **The Campaign**, a Japanese documentary about a local city council election and the old boy club mentality that prevails in Japanese politics.

► Taipei Brewery (台北啤酒文化園區), also known as the Taipei Beer Factory, 85, Bade Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市八德路二段85號)

► Starts at 7:30pm

► Free admission

Contemporary

Dafu Jazz Trio takes the stage tonight at **Sappho de Base**, Taipei's favorite late-night venue for impromptu jazz sessions. Tomorrow night is rockin' electric blues from **BoPoMoFo** (ㄅㄛㄇㄛㄝ). On Tuesday night, the **Grace Jazz Trio** plays a set, with an open jam afterwards.

► B1, 1, Ln 102, Anhe Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市安和路一段102巷1號B1). Call (02) 2700-5411 (after 9pm) or visit www.sappho102.biz for more information

► Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends, 10pm on weekdays

► No entrance fee

Tonight at **The Wall** (通牆), a repeat live performance of the first annual "Olympick" Games with **Natural Q** (自然捲), whose sound includes vocals, acoustic guitar, violin and hand drums, and another acoustic duo, **Lao Die** (老鄧). Alternative folk-rocker **Deserts Chang** (張懸) and her band appear tomorrow night. Sunday features metal bands **EFTC**, **Desecration**, **Nevermore** and **Hekate**.

► B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號B1). Call

(02) 2930-0162 or log on at www.thewall.com.tw for more information

► 8pm tonight and tomorrow; 7:30pm on Sunday

► NT\$450 tonight and tomorrow; NT\$350 on Sunday

Appearing at **Underworld** (地下社會) tonight is **Celluloid** (賽璐珞), an offshoot of the hugely popular all female ex-combo Ladybug (瓢蟲). Tomorrow features post-rock band **Mosquilephant** (蚊子大象) and indie duo **La Petite Nurse** (小護士樂團).

► B1, 45 Shida Rd, Taipei City (台北市師大路45號B1). Call (02) 2362-0103 or visit www.upsaid.com/underworld for more information

► Live shows go from 9:30pm to 11:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays. The bar is open from 8pm daily, closed Mondays

► Entrance tonight and tomorrow is NT\$300 and includes one drink

Wenhui and Friends (雯慧與朋友們) play jazz music with vocal accompaniment tomorrow night at **Witch House** (女巫店). Chinese jazz fusion band **Sizhukong** (絲竹空) appears tomorrow night, and next Thursday features Amis folk-rock musician Chawal and his band **Passiwali** (巴西瓦里).

► 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\$300 entrance includes one drink