

With 'Butterfly,' the twain meets



the current lean economic times, the performing arts have been struggling to fill auditoriums, so it is very gratifying to report that the most recent new production by the Tang Mei Yun Taiwanese Opera Company (唐美雲歌仔戲 團), Lost Butterfly (蝶谷殘夢), managed to sell all its tickets for four performances a week before the show opened yesterday at the National Theater in Taipei. This is all the more amazing as this production is an experimental cooperation with the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra (NTSO, 國立台灣交響樂 團), which is providing a Western classical music score to the *gezai* opera (歌仔戲).

Fusions of Chinese opera with Western classical music orchestration are all the rage these days, but they have been something of a hit-and-miss affair, arguably reaching a nadir with the fantastically ambitious The Firmiana Rain (梧桐雨) in October last year. Lost Butterfly is less ambitious, with a clear point of departure within the traditions of gezai opera. The use of a small number of Western orchestral instruments to enrich the sound of Chinese opera is not new, but this is the first time that Tang Mei Yun has cooperated with a full Western orchestra, which performs in addition to the traditional Chinese string and percussion ensemble.

small musical ensemble, with clapper boards marking the beat and a string instrument sketching in a melody, which is filled out and articulated by the singer. The presence of the NTSO means that the music — an original score written by composer Chung Yiu-Kwong (鍾耀光), currently the director of the Taipei Chinese Orchestra (台北市立國樂 團), and Liu Wen-liang (劉文亮), a specialist in theater music — shares the limelight with the singers, rather than playing a purely auxiliary role. The effect, as when French horns come in to lend their resonance to the expression of deep emotions, or when trombones and kettle drums

bring complex and

Tang Mei-yun, left and above left, and costar Hung Rui-hsiang, above right. Tang plays the lead role in the

melodramatic revelations to a resounding and climatic denouement, has a cinematic quality that is not unappealing; in a more naturalistic style of performance, it might have been bombastic, but responding to the high emotions and stylization of gezai, the Romanticism of the score works rather well.

Within the rich texture of the orchestra score, the traditional ensemble occasionally emerges, sometimes in the strains of traditional instruments such as the *erhu* (= 胡), sketching in the basic melodic line, or the taps of the clapper that give emphasis to the movements of the performers. At a rehearsal on Monday, there were clearly still some hiccups in establishing the rapport between musicians and performers (one of the crucial differences between Chinese and Western opera is that in the former, the musicians watch the performers and take their cue from them, whereas in Western opera, the singers follow the music), but overall, the solid grounding in the conventions of gezai meant that things could not go too far off the rails.

Tang Mei-yun (唐美雲), who takes the leading male role, is a powerful presence on stage, but more than that, has also taken an important role in pushing operatic conventions. In one scene, she goes so far as to partly undress one of her leading ladies with the clear intention of taking her to bed. This sort of thing is as far outside the conventions of gezai staging as the orchestra music that is part of Lost Butterfly, and Tang underlined these new developments by saying: "I would not do this with an established opera, but this is an entirely new opera."

Tang's reputation for putting on solid performances that don't tax audiences in too many ways at once has clearly paid off, ensuring that she retains the support of traditional fans while appealing to younger audiences with her bolder ways of telling a story. Her success seems to indicate that reports of the death of traditional opera have been greatly exaggerated.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Lost Butterfly by the Tang Mei Yun Taiwanese Opera Company WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm; Sunday at 2:30pm

WHERE: National Concert Hall, Taipei City TICKETS: NT\$500 to NT\$2,000 (sold out)



Five years ago, one of Taipei's most popular electronic dance clubs — 2nd Floor — shut down after years of intense scrutiny from law enforcement agencies. But it didn't stop 2nd Floor directors David (夏天浩) and Alan **Hsia** (夏天倫) from continuing their careers. The brothers rallied their forces at Luxy, transforming it into the heavyweight venue that's now synonymous with "fashion" among the hipsters of Taipei. To mark Luxy's fifth anniversary this month, we asked David, Luxy's current director, to reflect on past successes and spill the beans on what's yet to come.

Taipei Times: Could you tell us a bit about yourself? How did you get into the

David Hsia: I was born in Taiwan and grew up in the States. After graduating from the school of business at USC [University of Southern California] and a few years of work, I moved back to Taiwan to pursue a career.

I got into the nightclub business

because of my love for electronic music, and it's always been a dream for me and my brother to have a club of our own. I was fortunate to have a dedicated, likeminded team [the LOOP production crew]. We believed electronic music and party culture wasn't just about drugs and *yao tou* (搖頭) [head-shaking] as the mainstream media perceived. To us, it's about music, dance and people sharing positive vibes.

Since then, we've been dedicated in transforming Taipei's club scene and party culture into a more positive social atmosphere and taking the scene to a global level — it's now been nearly eight years.

TT: 2nd Floor mainly focused on electronic dance music and had hip-hop in the smaller, side-room, but with Luxy it's the other way around. Why is that?

DH: We actually didn't set which room played what type of music when we first opened Luxy. But due to the geographical location of the club and the market trend. we try to accommodate the best we can according to the demand. If there's a bigger audience for the artist, we'd usually have them in the Galleria. The difference in size between the Galleria and Onyx rooms is actually not much, just different in table counts.



Flo-Rida packed the house at Luxy this summer. Opened five years ago, the club helped take dance music mainstream.

TT: How do you see the nightclub scene's progression in Taipei over the years?

DH: I'm glad to see that now clubbing is no longer considered as something negative by the mainstream. And I'm also glad to see that through competition in the industry, Taipei's club scene has surpassed many other countries on a global scale. I have visited many countries in Asia, Europe and [the] Americas, and I'm proud to see that Taipei has some of the best nightlife in the world. We were told by many reputable, well-traveled artists that they are very surprised and amazed by the

great scene and audiences in Taiwan. TT: For you, what are some of the most memorable events at Luxy?

DH: The best events for me personally were when we hosted Paul van Dyke, Armin van Buuren, Grand Master Flash, and the latest being Flo-Rida. Being able to host the best artists in their respective genres and having the best crowds to enjoy them is most memorable to me.

TT: Are you content with how Luxy is

DH: Many have concerns over the bad economy and the market down trend in the past year or so. But I'm thankful to all our supporters who are still making Luxy one of the hottest clubs in Taiwan.

TT: What are some upcoming events we should look forward to?

DH: On the 31st, it's one of our most anticipated parties of the year: Halloween Massive at TWTC II [Taipei World Trade Center Hall 2 (台北展演二館)]. This year, it features Above and Beyond [currently ranked No. 7 in the DJ Mag top 100 poll from 2008] and Zoe. On Nov. 11, Judge **Jules** will make his first appearance in Taipei, and this New Years Eve party will have [Academy Award-winning rappers] Three 6 Mafia.

CRESTAURANTS

Zhongyang Shichang

(中央市場生猛海鮮) Address: 52, Changan E Rd Sec 1, Taipei City

(台北市長安東路一段52號) Telephone: (02) 2523-2017

Open: 11am to 2pm; 4pm to 2am Average meal: NT\$300 to NT\$600 Details: Chinese menu; credit cards not accepted

Zhongyang Shichang (中央市場生猛海鮮) is one of several fresh seafood restaurants, or haixian dian (海鮮店), on Changan East Road that attract brisk business even on weeknights. Neon signs blast the price point of most dishes on the menu — NT\$100. For our meal, however, we decided to forgo the extensive a la carte menu and indulge in the restaurant's specialty: fresh fish and crab from the tanks and boxes of ice out front.

Live and freshly caught seafood costs more, but the

difference in quality and taste is worth it. We selected a greater amberjack fish

(紅甘魚, NT\$790), and one small crab with a mottled pattern on its shell, which the restaurant referred to as "cauliflower crab" in Chinese, (花菜螃蟹, NT\$280) From the menu, we picked a serving of Hakka stir-fry (客 家小炒, NT\$100).

The restaurant was filled with boisterous groups of diners on the Monday night that we went, many of who were sharing large bottles of Taiwan Beer (NT\$80) or



Enchantment from under the sea — and straight into your belly.

whiskey (Zhongyang Shichang offers a large selection ranging from NT\$350 to NT\$1,350 per bottle). We got a large bottle of Blue Girl (NT\$100) out of pity for the young woman who had to shill the beer from table to table while wearing a polyester blue sateen outfit with furry white trimmings.

The richer taste of Taiwan Beer, however, would have been a better fit for the salty Hakka stir-fry, which featured QQ pieces of calamari and bean curd stir-fried with chili peppers and green onions. It was very flavorful, but certainly made us quite thirsty. Our greater amberjack fish, or kanpachi, as it is referred to in Japanese, yielded more than nearly three-dozen pieces of fresh sashimi, which the two of us dutifully plowed through. The fish was fresh and delicate, but after 34 slices of nothing but light pink greater amberjack flesh, I really wished that we had ordered the sashimi combination plate (綜合花壽司, NT\$100) from the sushi bar instead.

We had yet another round of greater amberjack to get through when our fish head soup was brought to us in a large tureen. The savory miso broth base complemented the slices of fish very well. We spooned through the soup until we got to the segments of meat from front of the fish's head where the eye sockets are located. That is supposedly the most nutritious portion of the fish, and the texture of the flesh was melt-in-your-mouth tender.

The crab came to us pre-cracked, making it easy to dig the tender meat from out of its claws. The top shell had been neatly separated so we could enjoy the crab's hepatopancreas, or the mustard yellow substance with a strong, rich taste that is considered a delicacy by crab connoisseurs.

Our meal left us stuffed to the gills, but if we had been able to, we would have ordered the shrimp handrolls (蝦手捲, NT\$100 for three) we had enjoyed on a previous visit. They are made-to-order at the sushi bar and come with generous pieces of fresh-cooked shrimp, crunchy shredded lettuce and a large, thick dollop of mayonnaise. — CATHERINE SHU

Mama Tu's Puli Restaurant

(塗姆埔里小吃)

Address: 65, Ln 8, Tianmu E Rd, Taipei City

(台北市士林區天母東路8巷65號) **Telephone:** (02) 2875-6552

Open: Daily, from 11:30am to 2pm and 5pm to 9pm; closed on

the last Tuesday and Wednesday of each month Average meal: NT\$300 to NT\$500

Details: Chinese menu

The food at Mama Tu's Puli Restaurant makes you feel at home, or at least like a welcome guest. This modest family restaurant in Tianmu was started 18 years ago by proprietor "Mama Tu" (Tu A-ai, 塗阿愛) a native of Puli Township (埔里), the mountain town in central Taiwan that was hard hit by the 921 Earthquake of 1999.

Tu shows there's more to Taiwanese cuisine than dan zi mian (擔仔麵), oyster omelets (蚵仔煎) and stewed minced pork and

rice (魯肉飯). The restaurant's hearty recipes feature garlic and pork-based sauces and rich and pungent flavors. Its stir-fried green bamboo shoots and salted egg (鹹 蛋綠竹筍, NT\$240) deserves special mention. The egg's sharp taste and garlic's piquancy nicely complement the thick and crispy chunks of bamboo (which weren't actually green, but light yellowish), all of which paired nicely a bowl of white rice topped lightly with pork lard sauce (特製豬油拌飯, NT\$30), a



The stir-fried wild boar and celery is a must-try at Mama Tu's Puli Restaurant in Tianmu. PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

house specialty. We chose a few selections from a list of the month's mostordered dishes, and none disappointed. The unusual but tasty water lotus vegetable (野蓮水菜, NT\$200), which is stir-fried with thin slices of pork and small chunks of stewed taro, is stringy and looks similar to seaweed, but is greener and has a firmer consistency.

Typical dishes are given atypical twists at Mama Tu's, where kongxincai (空心菜) is stir-fried with pickled bamboo (酸筍空心菜, NT\$160), and the homemade sesame oil noodles (麻油蒜泥麵線, NT\$100) comes with a side of garlic mash. Yet, like Mama Tu's cold country chicken (白斬土雞, NT\$290), which is similar to drunken chicken (醉雞), but with less Shaohsing wine (紹興酒), some classics are let be.

While meat lovers can't go wrong with wild boar and celery (芹菜山豬肉, NT\$240), which marries the pork's hint of sweetness and melt-in-the-mouth texture with the celery's crunchiness, for piscivores there's oysters and garlic mash (蒜 泥蚵仔, NT\$290), which arrives bubbling in a heated clay pot, fragrant with the aromas of basil and chili.

With plain wooden chairs, tables just comfortable enough for an extended meal with friends and a large faded tourist map of Puli hanging in the corner, the interior design at Mama Tu's is simple, fairly clean and faux rustic. Much of the restaurant's wall space is devoted to the proprietor's calligraphy, which is written on brown corkboard.

Oolong tea from Nantou County is served in earthen pots. But what ultimately conjures up a feeling of home is the food, best enjoyed in the company of three or more people, which enables customers to order a wider range of dishes.

— DAVID CHEN

I EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT 1

Witch House (女巫店) hosts this week's segment of the Taiwan Band Festival, which takes place at a different live music venue every week until Nov.1 (See Page 14 of the Oct. 10. 2008 edition of the *Taipei Times* for details). Tonight's lineup: folkpop band Natural Q (自然捲) and Aboriginal folk chanteuse **Panai's** (巴 奈) new band, **Message**. Tomorrow the venue hosts **Ding Ding and** Xi Xi (丁丁與西西), and Panai who returns for another show.

- ▶ 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 ▶ Tonight is free, with a one-drink
- minimum; NT\$300 admission tomorrow includes one drink Tonight at Riverside Cafe (河岸留言) it's jazz standards by **Real Collective** (河岸留言精選爵士四重奏), the band composed of Riverside's owner and

guitar maestro Geddy Lin (林正如), with Eric Soong (宋輔仁) on drums, keyboardist Uno (烏野薰) and Kinya (池田欣彌). Tomorrow evening We Save Strawberries (草莓救星) fills the venue with post-rock and folk sounds. On Sunday it's an evening of rising stars on the Mando-pop track when Raymond Hu (胡恩瑞), who goes by the stage name **N-RAY**, takes to the stage,

followed by **Hsiao Hung-ren** (蕭閎仁).

- ▶ 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 9pm tonight and tomorrow; 8:30pm Sunday
- ▶ NT\$400 tonight, tomorrow, and

It's Jazz Your Mind tonight at Sappho de Base, Taipei's favorite late-night venue for impromptu jazz sessions. Appearing tomorrow is **Kenyatta Trio**, playing New Orleans funk and blues. On Tuesday night the **Grace Jazz Trio** plays a set, with an open jam afterwards, and on Wednesday it's the Chris Stiles Trio. On Thursday night the **Double J Band** takes to the stage, playing funk,

- disco and hard rock. ▶ 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
- ▶ Performances begin at 10:30pm on weekends; 10pm on weekdays

▶ No admission fee

Tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**, **Soma** plays rock and pop covers. Tomorrow it's house band **Loaded**, which plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits." Every Sunday features a regular rotation of groups: this week it's the Dana Wylie Band.

▶ 1F, 56, Minguan 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 (復興 北) and Minquan East (民權東) roads.

- Call (02) 2517-3869 for more details ▶ Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30am tonight and tomorrow;
- 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays ▶ No admission 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

▶ 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 information

instruments and sit in on guitar, bass

▶8pm to 11pm every Wednesday ▶ No admission fee

The Taichung Jazz Festival concludes this weekend with performances by trumpeter Tomonao Hara and his quartet and 77-year-old trombonist and composer **Slide Hampton**, who is known for his work with Dizzy Gillespie and Art Blakey. Hampton gives a master class tomorrow at the Windsor Hotel (裕元花園酒店) at 1pm and plays in the concert finale with Hara on Sunday. Also appearing is the Taichung R 'n' B and funk outfit The Money Shot Horns, which performs tomorrow at the festival's J2 stage. For details, see Page 14 of last Friday's Taipei Times (Oct. 17, 2008) or visit www.jazzfestival.com.tw for the

▶ Civil Plaza (市民廣場) and the J1 and J2 Stages on Jingguo Boulevard Parkway (經國綠園道) in Taichung City

full schedule.

▶ Performances begin at 3pm

tomorrow and Sunday Admission is free

Exhibitions

I Have a Dream — 2008 Kuandu Biennale (夢-2008關渡雙年展).

Featuring works by 10 artists from China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and India, the festival aims to show different ways of viewing Asian societies. ► Taipei National University of Arts — Kuandu Museum of Arts (台北藝術大學 關渡美術館), 1, Xuenyuan Rd, Beitou Dist, Taipei City (台北市北投區學園路1號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2896-1000 X2432

2008 Digital Art Exhi-perietion (2008 D聚頭-數位藝術體驗聚作展).

► Until Nov. 30

To explore and reflect on digital art, 15 pieces of painting, video installation, sound art and multimedia art are on display at the former meat market in Shilin that has been converted into an art center. Participating artists include famed poet and writer Lei Hsiang (雷驤), documentary director Lin Yu-hsien (林育 賢) and Pega Design (和碩設計) group. ▶ Digital Art Center, Taipei (台北數位藝 術中心), 180 Fuhua Rd, Taipei City (台北 市福華路180號). Open Fridays through Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2778-9268 ► Until Nov. 2

Yulan Magnolia Flowers — The Photo Exhibition of Shen Chaoliang (玉蘭一沈昭良攝影展). This exhibition of black-and-white photos

is the result of veteran Liberty Times photojournalist Shen's long study of Taiwan's unique magnolia flower industry. Traveling across the country while on holiday, Shen uses his camera to tell the stories of the flower growers, wholesalers and the people who sell the flowers to drivers in the middle of traffic.

► 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. Tel: (02)

From tomorrow through Nov. 19

Inner Light (曖曖内含光—創造, **源自内在的光)**. The exhibition puts together selected early works by 10 noted artists including Lin Hsin-yueh (林惺嶽), Po Ying-ping (薄茵萍) and Hung Ke-shen (洪根深)

▶ Jia Art Gallery (家畫廊), 1F-1, 30, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台 北市中山北路三段30號1樓之1). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2591-4302 Until Nov. 2

Cinema in the 1950s Taiwan (前 塵影事-50年代老電影本事、集刊、

歌本特展). The exhibition features the gallery owner's private collection - 150 flyers, advertisements, handouts and music sheets for old movies from the 1950s

▶ Lan Tai Gallery (蘭臺藝廊), 265, Linung Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市立 農街二段265號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 12pm to 9pm. Tel: 0928-457-706

▶ Until Oct. 31