

RESTAURANTS

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

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

trimmings.

The richer taste of Taiwan

Beer, however, would have been

a better fit for the salty Hakka

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 *kampachi*, 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

fish, 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.



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

PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

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In 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.

Chinese opera is notable for its relatively 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

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* (二胡), 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)

Tang Mei-yun, left and above left, and costar Hung Rui-hsiang, above right. Tang plays the lead role in the new opera *Lost Butterfly*.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TANG MEI YUN TAIWANESE OPERA COMPANY

With 'Butterfly,' the twain meets



Tang Mei-yun, left and above left, and costar Hung Rui-hsiang, above right. Tang plays the lead role in the new opera *Lost Butterfly*.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TANG MEI YUN TAIWANESE OPERA COMPANY

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, like-minded 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.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DAVID BARKER

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 right now?

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. — QUEEN BEE

EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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: folk-pop 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, Xinseng 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 (河岸留聲)** it's jazz standards by **Real Collective** (河岸留聲精選爵士四重奏), 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** (高野薰) 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-RAV**, takes to the stage, followed by **Hsiao Hung-neng** (蕭鵬仁).

► 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 Sunday

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 information

► 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, 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 (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

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 information

► 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

full schedule.

► Civil Plaza (市民廣場) and the J1 and

J2 Stages on Jingguo Boulevard

Parkway (經國綠園道) in Taichung City

► Performances begin at 3pm

tomorrow and Sunday

► Admission is free