



Above: For the *Apple Daily*, two plus two makes five when it comes to Elva Hsiao. Below: Mayday has usurped the king of Mando-pop. PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

Fresh from being crowned the "king" of the Mando-pop charts, **Jay Chou** (周杰倫) was unceremoniously usurped last week by Mayday (五月天). The pretty-boy rockers announced that sales of their latest release *Poetry of the Day After* (後青春期的詩) totaled over 1.3 million copies, and noted that they edged past the Chairman's *Capricorn* (魔杰座), which just broke the 1 million mark.

Chou's record company JVR Music (杰威爾音樂) took the announcement as a dig. Instead of congratulating the competition, the company issued a long-winded, huffy response that ended with, "there's no need to brag," reports the *Liberty Times* [the *Taipei Times*' sister paper].

The hoopla left Mayday's lead singer, **A-hsin** (阿信), exasperated. "[Chou] is using Rubik's Cubes [to sell records], we're doing concerts — it's a lot more tiring," said A-hsin, referring to the Rubik's Cubes plastered with Chou's face that are being offered as a freebie with his new album. But he quickly composed himself. "Whoever's number one is not important. The most important thing is for everyone to have good sales." That is, just as long as Jay isn't number one ...

Only the *Apple Daily* can turn a pop idol's mundane shopping trip into a lost-love-drove-her-to-drink-narrative. One of the paper's ace reporters spotted **Elva Hsiao** (蕭亞軒) at the Breeze Center's (微風廣場) supermarket, where the 28-year-old singer was looking for a bottle of wine. Since Hsiao appeared "melancholic" and was lingering in the alcohol section, she obviously intended to drown her sorrows over male heartthrob model **Leandro** (李安卓), who got "snatched" out of her arms by model **Liu Zhen** (劉真).

Hsiao's agent insists that Leandro is "just a friend" and Hsiao has plenty of prospective beaux lined up at the door — she just "hasn't made her decision" yet. As for the wine, Hsiao and her mother regularly enjoy a nightcap. And who doesn't? The photos accompanying the *Apple Daily* article are worthy of mention for the play-by-play captions that would make any stalker proud.

8:43pm: The store manager shows Hsiao a bottle of wine. 8:45pm: Hsiao is pictured with her brother, and she's using a credit card to buy a bottle of red wine, which costs NT\$2,100. 8:52pm: She's in the Fendi store. She's been looking at bags for what seems like an eternity. But in the end, she didn't buy one.

German film director **Wim Wenders** was seen wandering the streets of Taipei earlier this week, on a visit with young filmmaker **Arvin Chen** (陳駿霖) [see Highlight on Page 14]; The director of *Paris, Texas* and *Buena Vista Social Club* is serving as executive producer for Chen's upcoming film *First Page Taipei* (一頁台北). The *Liberty Times* reports that Wenders' hosts took him to the Shida night market (師大夜市), where they frequently lost sight of the auteur, only to find him photographing scenes that caught his eye: a hardware store; an NT\$10 discount store; and elderly shopkeepers.

A night market is an unlikely place to spot Japanese singer **Ayumi Hamasaki**, who performs tomorrow and Sunday at Taipei Arena. But if the demanding pop diva makes any public appearances, her assistants will have to be ready for anything — and that could mean having a toilet brush at hand.

A *China Times* article earlier this month relayed this past tale: on an outdoor photo shoot, Hamasaki told a male assistant she had to go to the bathroom. His immediate response was to find the nearest public toilet, scrub it clean, and make sure the coast was clear so the pop princess could have the facilities to herself.

— COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS OCT. 17 TO OCT. 23

- 1 Mayday (五月天) and *Poetry of the Day After* (後青春期的詩) with 42.37 percent of sales
- 2 Jay Chou (周杰倫) and *Capricorn — Deluxe Package* (魔杰座) with 27%
- 3 Shin (信) and *Planet Music* (集樂星球) with 5%
- 4 JJ Lin (林俊傑) and *Sixology* (JJ 陸) with 4.03%
- 5 Jam Hsiao (蕭敬騰) and *Jam Hsiao* (蕭敬騰) with 2.48%

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

Highlight

"We touch upon the whole erection, and not just the Bush," reads the promotional flyer for **Kurt Penney's** show at the Comedy Club in Taipei tomorrow night. The Canadian expat, who has performed as a stand-up comic in Taiwan for more than five years, hails from Bishop's Falls, Newfoundland, where he says "everyone knows everyone else ... and the phone digits only have four numbers." If the flyer and his YouTube video (tw.youtube.com/watch?v=qDpdMEbnN8 or search "Bush and the Republican Hillbillies") are any indication, Penney's material will cover US President George W. Bush, the Republican Party and the Iraq War. He will be joined by the **Taichung Improv Group** and fellow comics **Barry Hanley**, **Brian Funshine**,



Matt Bronsil performs tomorrow night at the Comedy Club with headliner Kurt Penney. PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT BRONSIL

Torch Pratt and **Matt Bronsil**, who uses puppets in his act. ▶ **Kurt Penney**, **Matt Bronsil** and friends at the Comedy Club, B1, 24 Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街24號B1). Visit english.comedy.com.tw for more information. Space is limited. For reservations, call (02) 2369-3730 or send an e-mail to social@comedyclub.tw ▶ Tomorrow night at 10pm ▶ NT\$350 entrance includes one drink; NT\$80 beer specials throughout the evening

Love in the time of politics

The Plum Blossom Fan (桃花扇) is recognized as one of the two greatest Chinese operatic love stories dramatized during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Unlike *The Pavilion of Eternal Youth* (長生殿), with which it shares top honors, it is rarely performed on stage, though the libretto is widely read and appreciated for its poetic excellence. This year, the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts (國立臺灣戲曲學院) revived the opera with a completely new score written for symphony orchestra, which premieres at the National Theater in Taipei tonight.

With over 44 acts with over 30 major characters, the original opera by Kong Shangren (孔尚任) is a love story set against political upheaval and the fall of a dynasty. Tseng Yong-yi (曾永義), a professor of literature at National Taiwan University, condensed the story to a two-and-a-half hour format, cutting out many of the sub-plots and focusing on the central love story, while retaining something of the social and political backdrop, which are central to the original work's appeal. Composer Yu Chang-fa (游昌發) wrote a new score for the opera to be performed by the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra (台北愛樂管弦樂團). The aim of this collaboration between librettist and composer is to create a "modern Chinese musical." Tseng said that in the past, Chinese musicals had often used Western music in a manner

that disregarded the sound and rhythms of Chinese speech. "The sounds of the words and the music must fit together if we are to create something that is not overshadowed by the conventions of the Western musical," he said. Yu, a Western-trained musician with an interest in traditional Chinese opera dating back 30 years, said that he has long nurtured an ambition to create orchestral music that is a logical extension of Beijing opera. "My aim is not to lead a revolution in Beijing opera. All I want to do is take it one step further ... In the same way that Beijing opera was an extension of the *kun* (崑) style. ... I want to give it a new potential. Though it might be a single step, it is a step that is very difficult to take," he said. Speaking at a press conference earlier this month, Yu said he was struggling to integrate the complex physical movements of Beijing opera with an orchestral score. "The orchestra does not have the same kind of rapport with the actors that is possible with a traditional percussion and string ensemble," he said. "The performers have had to adapt to a totally new musical environment."

This sort of experimentation is relatively new and takes many different forms. Even as the Taipei Philharmonic is preparing to take the stage with Yu's score, the National Chinese Orchestra (NCO, 台灣國家國樂團) is also in intensive rehearsals for *Death and Love of My Mother — The Reminiscence of the*

Diva Daughter (東水牡丹 — 廖瓊枝與臺灣國家國樂團), in which it provides orchestral music to *geza* (歌仔戲) in a semi-staged production at the National Concert Hall on Sunday. "My music for this production incorporates the musical language of many kinds of regional opera into a complete orchestral score," Yu said, distinguishing it from other projects that he described as simply an orchestral arrangement of established Beijing opera melodies. "This is not about any inadequacies in traditional opera. It is simply that culture lives by moving forward. We can cherish the past, but we also need to add to it."

The *Plum Blossom Fan* in its own way

was a groundbreaking work for its time, incorporating intricately researched details about the political background against which the central love story between a high-ranking official and a courtesan is played out. It is this broad canvas of political rivalry, corruption and betrayal that has made this opera so popular as a work of literature. Whether this new collaboration will revive its fortunes in the theater remains to be seen.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL TAIWAN COLLEGE OF PERFORMING ARTS

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: The Plum Blossom Fan (桃花扇) by the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts (國立臺灣戲曲學院)
WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: National Theater, Taipei City
TICKETS: NT\$500 to NT\$2,500, available through NTCH ticketing

To be, or not to be the end: that is the question

"If disobedient, beat my kid to death," (孩子不聽你打乎死) was, a decade or more ago when corporal punishment was an accepted part of school life in Taiwan, a common parental aphorism. How times have changed. The development of the country's education system forms the basis of Wei Jun-zhan's (魏俊展) play *Punish* (罰), one of 10 solo performances by local artists beginning this weekend and lasting until Nov. 9, at Guling Street Theater.

"Today it's more like, 'touch my child and you'll get sued,'" said River Lin (林人中), paraphrasing another of the play's central conceits. Lin, MOVE Theatre Group's (動見劇場) producer and the brains behind *Fable To Be or Not To Be* (漢字寓言: 未來系青年觀

點報告), challenged 10 performance artists to come up with a Chinese character that they think best symbolizes Taiwan. "The idea came from online surveys that asked people to choose a particular [Chinese] character to describe a country for that year," Lin said. Citing one of last year's surveys, Lin said respondents chose "rise" (漲) for China, "fake" (偽) for Japan and "disorder" (亂) for Taiwan. The production sees choreographers, theater professionals, poets and multimedia artists coming together under one roof for solo performances — lasting roughly 20 minutes each — to convey their ideas about anything from entertainment to the economy. Each performance features works by five of the artists. This weekend's performers include actress Chou Heng-yin (周姮吟), whose work *Struggle* (掙) investigates gender bias in Taiwan. Huang Si-nong (黃思農) will play the *erhu* (二胡), a traditional Chinese fiddle, in her performance *Forget* (忘), a psychedelic

rock number that looks at the popularity of talent shows such as *One Million Stars* (超級星光大道). Chou Shu-yi's (周書毅) *Yield* (讓) opens next week's five performances. The choreographer combines mime with modern dance to examine how the meaning of the Chinese character has changed over time — from its Confucian roots meaning facing the world with humility, to its contemporary usage (often used by the bodyguards of politicians or celebrities pushing through a media scrum) meaning, "get out of the way." Lin chose "end" (末). "As in the end of the world, or end of the Earth," he said. When I pointed out that this was a rather pessimistic word to pick, he countered by referring back to the title of the performances. "It's the kind of thinking we hope to change through these performances. That's why we called it *Fable To Be or Not To Be* ... because its not the end of the world and it doesn't have to be," he said. — NOAH BUCHAN



In *Fable To Be or Not To Be*, 10 performers each chose a Chinese character to symbolize Taiwanese society. PHOTO COURTESY OF DONGJIANTI THEATRICAL COMPANY

PERFORMANCE NOTES:
WHAT: *Fable To Be or Not To Be* (漢字寓言: 未來系青年觀點報告)
WHERE: 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)
WHEN: Today until Nov. 9
TICKETS: NT\$450, available through NTCH ticketing
ON THE NET: www.wretch.cc/blog/dongjianti

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Theater

Trifles (瑣事) is a one-act play by Susan Glaspell, later turned into a short story called *A Jury of Her Peers*. The work is being revised by Point Theater Workshop (戲點子工作坊) and tells the story of how two characters use their female intuition and understanding of women's psychology to solve a mystery. ▶ Crown Theater (皇冠劇場), 50, Ln 120, Dunhua N Rd, Taipei City (台北市敦化北路120巷50號) ▶ Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm; tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm ▶ Tickets are NT\$450, available through NTCH ticketing

Taiwan's expulsion from the UN in 1971 serves as the background for Ping-Fong Acting Troupe's (屏風表演班) latest work **Stand by Me** (六義勇). Written and directed by Hugh Lee (李國修), the story follows six youths who use an air raid shelter as a meeting place to discuss their roles in history. ▶ Tainan Municipal Cultural Center (台南市立文化中心), 332, Chunghua E Rd Sec 3, Tainan City (台南市中華東路三段332號) ▶ Tomorrow at 7:30pm ▶ Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$2,500, available through NTCH ticketing

The Puppet and Its Double Theater (無獨有偶工作室劇團) revises **The Happy Prince** (快樂王子), a puppet performance based on Oscar Wilde's fairy tale of the same name. ▶ Elite Bookstore, Tainan City (台南誠品書店), B2, 181, Changrong St Sec 1, Tainan City (台南市長榮路一段181號B2) ▶ Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm; tomorrow at 11am and 2:30pm ▶ Tickets are NT\$400, available through NTCH ticketing

On Fire (黃番仔火的小女孩) by Taiyuan Puppet Theater Company (台原偶戲團), tells the story of a greedy grandmother who forces

her granddaughter to work in a factory that makes matches. The girl befriends a little boy and together they discover that the matches are alive. One night, a disaster threatens the lives of both children and their match friends. ▶ Taipei Cultural Center, Wenshan Branch (社教館文山分館), B2, 32, Jingwen St, Taipei City (台北市景文街32號B2) ▶ Tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm ▶ Tickets are NT\$200, available through NTCH ticketing

2008 Ju Percussion Group Children's Concert (2008朱宗慶打擊樂團兒童音樂會 — 擊幻遊樂園) is a family concert with a program designed to appeal to audiences of all ages. ▶ Sunday at 2:30pm ▶ Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂), 98 Yenping S Rd, Taipei City (台北市延平南路98號) ▶ Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$900, available through NTCH ticketing

Contemporary
 Tonight **VU Live House** puts on a Jungle Halloween with **Pan Africana** a percussion group composed of African and Caribbean expats. Death metal fills the venue tomorrow night with **Behemoth** of Poland, and Taiwan's finest, **Chthonic** (閃靈). The bands play earlier in the evening, with an after-party featuring **DJ Ting**. ▶ B1, 77, Wuchang St Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市武昌街二段77號B1). Call (02) 2314-1868 for more information ▶ Shows begin at 10pm ▶ NT\$400 admission ticket includes two drinks; "VIP area" tickets for tomorrow are NT\$1,300 or two for NT\$2,500, and "rock area" tickets are NT\$800 or two for NT\$1,500

Tonight **Underworld** (地下社會) sends indie bands **Pen Sauce** (筆醬) and **Love Manana** (愛的大未來). Afterwards **Back 2 the Future**

(B2TF, 回到未來) hosts a Halloween costume party featuring **DJs Yggiwt, Pomby** and **Keith**. Tomorrow night one-man electro-rockers **Sonic Deadhorse** takes to the stage. ▶ 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 ▶ Bands play tonight from 9:00pm to 11:00pm; the DJs start at midnight. Show starts at 9:30pm tomorrow night ▶ Entrance is NT\$300 for the bands; NT\$200 for the B2TF Halloween party. Admission tomorrow is NT\$300

It's a busy weekend at the **The Wall** (這牆). The Halloween Metal Massacre takes place tonight with post-punk rockers **Blood Orange** and metal bands **Beyond Cure**, **Revilement** and **Chthonic** (閃靈). Tomorrow the venue hosts the final night of the Taiwan Band Festival, which is free to the public and features performances from indie-pop outfit **The Shine and Shine and Shine and Shine** (閃閃閃閃), Hakka folk rockers **The Hohak Band** (好客樂隊), alt-rockers **Tizzy Bac**, and protest folk group **Black Hand Nakasi** (黑手那卡西工人樂隊). On Sunday it's electro rock group **Plus Minus** from the US and Japanese bands **Bloodthirsty Butchers**, **nhhbase** and **moools**. ▶ 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 go to www.the-wall.com.tw for more information ▶ 8pm tonight; 7pm tomorrow and Sunday ▶ Admission is NT\$600 tonight (NT\$500 in advance), free tomorrow and NT\$1,200 on Sunday (NT\$1,000 per person for groups of 10 or more people)

Jazz group **Melodies for Memories** takes to the stage tonight at **Witch House** (女巫店), playing jazz interpretations of contemporary pop tunes, while folk pop singer **Europa Huang** (黃建為) performs tomorrow night.

▶ 7, Ln 56, Xinhsheng 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 ▶ Entrance fee for music shows is NT\$300, includes one drink

Tonight at **Riverside Cafe** (河岸留言) it's funk, Latin and acid jazz from the **TFP Trio**. Tomorrow evening Taiwan's beloved indie rockers **1976** make an appearance. The group, who cultivated a die-hard fan base in Taiwan for its Brit-pop sound, has just released a new CD entitled *Asteroid* (這個星球). ▶ 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 9:30pm tonight and at 9pm tomorrow ▶ NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow

Expat singer-songwriter **David Foster** and friends appear tonight at **Sappho de Base**. Appearing tomorrow night is **Gross Fugue**, a duo that combines video, electric guitar, double bass and electronic sampling. On Tuesday night the **Grace Jazz Trio** plays a set, with an open jam afterwards, while the **Chris Stiles Jazz Trio** takes to the stage on Wednesday. On Thursday night Sappho welcomes for the first time the **Sea Journey Jazz Combo** (海洋知音爵士樂團). ▶ 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