

Young companies, growing visions

There are two dance performances in Taipei this weekend that are worth spending a couple of hours on a sunny day inside for. Both are by small companies that are often overlooked except by dance aficionados, which is too bad because they feature some of the best dancers and creative minds working in Taiwan today.

The Wind Dance Theatre (風之舞形舞團) is putting on a show featuring co-founder and artistic director Wu I-fang (吳義芳) 45 Solo, Wu I-Fang (吳義芳45獨舞) at the Wenshan branch of the Taipei Cultural Center. The title says it all, and yet doesn't begin to encompass what a performance by Wu can be, as anyone who remembers him from his almost two decades with the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) can attest.

Now 46, Wu remains a powerful and charismatic performer, as anyone who was lucky enough to see the company's previous shows or his guest performances with Cloud Gate last fall and in 2006, when he performed The God of the Clouds segment from Lin Hwai-min's (林懷民) *Nine Songs*, (九歌), can attest. The piece was created for Wu, and it is a testament to his strength and agility — and nerves of steel — that he was still able to do it in his mid-40s.

The second production this weekend is *20.30.40's Dream Fantasy* by the eight-year-old Century Contemporary Dance Company (世紀當代舞團) at the Experimental Theater. Founder and chief choreographer Yao Shu-fen (姚淑芬) draws her inspiration from daily life — everything from English football to modern romance — and this latest production looks at how our dreams and realities change as we grow older.

Yao uses dance and poetry to convey the search for one's dreams in our 20s, the struggle between the subconscious and conscious as we try to achieve our goals in our 30s and how in our 40s we have gained command (hopefully) over our bodies and our language.

Both companies focus on mixing dance, theater and multi-media elements to create visually arresting as well as emotional challenging productions. Their track records bode well for this weekend.

— DIANE BAKER



Wu I-fang, the Peter Pan of dance.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIND DANCE THEATRE



Welcome the nostalgia all-stars

The days of the veterans' village are now numbered, with the majority having fallen to slum clearances or urban redevelopment. They may be gone, but they are certainly not forgotten, not least because there is a significant group of creative people in Taiwan who trace their roots back to these communities. One of these is Wang Wei-chung (王偉忠), a prolific television producer and the man behind a slew of hugely popular programs from *Everybody Speaks Nonsense* (全民亂講) in 2001 to *One Million Star* (超級星光大道).

Wang has been active in preserving and recording the vanishing culture of the veterans' villages. His most recent effort is *The Village* (寶島一村), directed by Stan Lai (賴聲川) of the Performance Workshop and featuring a veritable Who's Who of talent from stage, screen and television. Tickets for the 10-day Taipei run sold out a month ago, a rare feat for a stage drama, and a testament both to the production's star draw, but probably more importantly, to the lingering nostalgia for the dilapidated yet vibrant communities that did so much to shape modern Taiwan.

"Why has the box office been so good?" Wang asked rhetorically during a press conference yesterday. "Well, we have the disappearance of the veterans' villages to thank for that," he replied half jokingly.

The play tells the story of three families living in the Formosa No. 1 Village in Chiayi County and is very much a laughter-and-tears melodrama, a remarkably traditional format for a director of Lai's stature and reputation. It is strait-up proscenium stuff with elaborate sets and costumes, plenty of characters and three scenes that depict "the village" first from 1949 to 1950, then between 1968 and

1975 and bringing the story up to the present day, covering the period between 1987 and 2007. Wang will act as narrator for as many of the performances as his busy schedule will permit, underscoring the very personal nature of this production.

With such figures as Wang and Lai at the helm, it is not surprising that the performance stars some of the biggest names in Taiwanese television and theater, many of whom, like cross-talk artist Feng Yi-gang (馮翊綱), grew up in veterans' villages.

"For every four or five people in Taiwan," at least one has had some association with veterans' villages," Wang said. Even Hu Ting-ting (胡婷婷), who has returned from an acting career in the UK and US, said that while being too young to experience the life of the veterans' villages, she had close associations with the communities through her father, Taichung Mayor Jason Hu (胡志強). Hu, who has a solid background as a stage actress, is perhaps, somewhat unfortunately, best-known to Western audiences from her performance as a Thai prostitute who has a run-in with Hugh Grant in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*.

There are plenty of other famous names gracing the billboard, and it is to see them perform in a re-creation of communities that represented many of the conflicts and, more importantly, the ambitions and camaraderie that these communities created, that has brought out the theater-going public in such force. Performance Workshop announced yesterday that such has been the demand for tickets that the show will return to Taiwan for additional performances at the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in February of next year.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW

RESTAURANTS

Tanaka (田中洋麵屋)

Address: B1, 245, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段245號B1)
Telephone: (02) 8773-9363
Open: 11am to 10pm; the kitchen begins closing at around 9pm
Average meal: NT\$380
Details: Chinese, English and Japanese menu; credit cards accepted



Tanaka offers plenty of novel flavor combinations with its Japanese-style Italian pasta dishes. PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

If you have ever watched commercials for Kewpie Tarako spaghetti sauce, which have become a minor YouTube sensation, then you probably have an approximate idea of how creative Japanese-style Italian pasta dishes can be. Mentaiko/kewpie doll hybrids are nowhere to be seen at Tanaka in the newly renovated EsLite (誠品) building on Dunhua South Road (敦化南路), but plenty of novel flavor combinations are.

Tanaka's pasta menu (each one is adorably pasted into what appears to be a Muji file folder) is split into three main sections: Wafu Pasta (和風義大利麵), or Japanese-style Italian pasta; Basic Pasta (傳統經典義大利麵), which includes classic meat sauce pasta (經典肉醬義大利麵, NT\$160) for traditionalists; and Asian Fantasy (亞洲風味義大利麵), which features Korean and Thai-inspired dishes.

Our helpful waitress told us that Tanaka's signature dishes are the salmon roe and cod roe pasta (明太子鮭魚卵天使麵, NT\$200) and the davola chili seafood pasta (小惡魔辣味海鮮義大利麵, NT\$240), but I opted to order the mixed raw fish with basil (綜合刺身羅勒義大利麵式冷麵, NT\$240), in part because I was entranced by the lovingly-lit photos of the dish used to advertise the restaurant on EsLite's directories. My plate arrived at the table looking somewhat less photogenic, however, because the pasta was heavily coated in an olive oil and sweet basil sauce. Other ingredients included a generous sprinkling of raw fish cubes and salmon roe on the pasta, which was piled on top of a drizzle of squid ink and garnished with small pimento olive slices. Despite the incongruous combination of ingredients, the dish was quite good. The sauce was a just slightly too oily for my taste but the slight hint of sweet basil complemented the sashimi and roe surprisingly well, and the squid sauce provided an unexpected and welcome hint of saltiness.

My dining companion opted for the country-style fried chicken with mushroom pasta (田舍炸雞蘑菇義大利麵, NT\$160). The chicken meat was juicy and very tender inside its crunchy breaded coating and the pasta suitably al dente, but the portion of pasta he received was disappointing. The two of us ordered our meals in a set (套餐組合). I choose option A for an additional NT\$100, which comes with a salad with a choice of yogurt or ginger dressing (and a sprinkling of cornflakes on top), a sweet dinner roll and a drink. My friend paid NT\$130 for set B, which comes with everything in set A plus a bowl of soup, which on the day we went was a cream of mushroom that thankfully emphasized the flavorful mushroom puree and went easy on the cream. The two of us also ordered a glass each of Tanaka's house red and white wines (NT\$180). The white wine, which our waitress said she preferred, was not particularly memorable but went well with my seafood pasta. The red wine was chilled, which masked its sweet and somewhat fruity flavor.

For dessert, our waitress encouraged us to try the white sesame pudding (胡麻布丁, NT\$65), which is a new dish and was not yet listed on Tanaka's dessert menu when we visited last weekend. We also ordered the Japanese-style cheesecake (和風鮮起士蛋糕, NT\$65), which resembled a creme brulee without the crunchy burnt-sugar crust and was very, very sweet. The white sesame pudding was extremely rich but the flavor was lighter and less nutty than desserts made from black sesame. Both are worth ordering, but I felt that the white sesame pudding works better as a palate cleanser than the cheesecake.

— CATHERINE SHU



Cute meets chic at VVG Bon Bon. PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

VVG Bon Bon (好樣棒棒)

Address: 13, Ln 161, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段161巷13號)
Telephone: (02) 2711-4505
Open: Weekdays from 12pm to 9pm; weekends 11am to 9pm
Average meal: NT\$660
Details: Credit cards accepted
On the Net: www.vvgbbb.com.tw

Camp isn't an aesthetic approach I often associate with restaurants, but it's difficult to avoid the conclusion that this establishment's exaggerated style is precisely what the owners of VVG Bistro (好樣) had in mind when they designed the recently opened VVG Bon Bon (好樣棒棒).

Cherub figures in bas-relief watch over customers as they enter the front door into a confectioner's area that contains stacks of bubble gum, Gummi bears, jellybeans and wrapped chocolate and hard candy in variously sized glass jars — all for sale by weight.

Moving past shelves and tables topped with cute bric-a-brac, is the restaurant proper with its large gilded mirrors, baroque chairs done in green with rose-patterned backs and walls painted in faded pinks, blues and grays. Facing the dining area is a white bar, behind which servers decorate cupcakes (NT\$100) in a rainbow of colors and flower patterns and package madeleines (NT\$90) both of which are then placed in large glass cases.

Bon Bon features four set menu items (NT\$580): Bon (棒, rosemary pork and couscous), Bon Bon (棒棒, chicken lasagna with mushrooms), Bon Bon Bon (棒棒棒, raspberry vinaigrette salad with sliced bacon) and Bon Bon Bon Bon (棒棒棒棒, homemade French toast with syrup and balsamic vinegar). Each set consists of an appetizer, soup, strawberry soda or tea and cupcake. I ordered the Bon Bon.

In contrast to the decadent decor, the meal was presented on a tray resembling what you would expect in economy class on an airplane. But this is no airplane food. The Gascony tomato soup was made of red wine, garlic, onions and a variety of mushrooms with two stewed tomato balls that had a slight hint of rosemary. The soup's rosemary-wine flavor contrasted well the accompanying baked vegetable dish that came topped with an anchovy and capsicum sauce.

Dieters can order the lasagna guilt-free because it has no cheese and the portion is small. The two-layer pasta dish contained generous chunks of chicken breast and mushrooms with sprigs of fresh rosemary, the latter adding a rich though not overwhelming flavor. The homemade bread, served as an appetizer, should be saved to sop up the remnants.

Disappointingly, Bon Bon doesn't give you a choice of cupcake or soda with the set meal. I would have preferred to pair mint soda and chocolate truffle cupcake with my food rather than the strawberry soda and cinnamon fig cupcake that was brought.

Bon Bon's limited a-la-carte menu has salads (NT\$300 to NT\$340), pastas (NT\$360 to NT\$380), sandwiches (NT\$220 to NT\$280) and plates of cheese (NT\$340) and olives (NT\$150).

Though expensive, eating at Bon Bon is an interesting experience if not for the great food than at least for the campy atmosphere of cute beaux-arts ostentation.

— NOAH BUCHAN

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Wind Dance Theatre, *45 Solo, Wu I-Fang* (吳義芳45獨舞)
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 8pm, tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: Taipei Cultural Center, Wenshan Branch, Children's Theater (台北市社教館文山分館兒童劇場), 32 Jingwen St, Taipei (台北市景文街32號)
TICKETS: NT\$500; available through www.artsticket.com.tw or the NTCH box office; tonight's show is sold out

WHAT: Century Contemporary Dance Company, *20.30.40's Dream Fantasy* (20.30.40之夢的進行曲)
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: Experimental Theater
TICKETS: NT\$500; available through www.artsticket.com.tw or the NTCH box office; tomorrow night and the Sunday matinee are sold out



Ever feel that clubbing, partying, and dance music is getting boring? Does it all feel the same wherever you go? Well, here's something that seems interesting: a group of fashion enthusiasts called "Deeplay" have been plotting a new innovation in club culture that will be hitting Taipei tonight.

"The party is created under the concept of a 'showroom,'" says Wayne909, the organizer of Deeplay, whose enthusiasm was greatly inspired after seeing Steve Aoki in October.

"We'd like to invent a new Taiwanese clubbing phenomenon by combining our two biggest passions — electronic dance music and fashion," he says.

With backup from a professional stage designer, along with fashion designers artists, and stylists, the

production of this party sounds huge. The stage has been transformed into an oversize closet adorned with cutting-edge installation art to showcase the works of three of Taiwan's up-and-coming avant-garde fashion designers — T.Y. Chou, Tzuyu and Kevin. In place of go-go dancers will be action artists (like those you may have seen posing like statues in the street) performing on stage while the DJs spin.

One more thing, it's a fashion party, so dress to impress.
DJs: **Kaoru, KJK, Wayne909, JU**
On the Net: www.deeplay.blogspot.com
Admission: NT\$600

The Last JAM at Luxy (Onyx Room), tomorrow:

Junior and Megan, the dynamic Canadian DJ couple, are having their farewell party tomorrow night before heading home next week. The hard-working duo have been organizing and promoting parties in Taipei for the last four years



Wayne909: His name is not as stylish as his parties. PHOTO COURTESY OF ZHAO YU-TING

and are known and loved among Taipei's party animals for their funky house sets.

"We can't believe that we are actually leaving Taiwan. It's been an amazing four years here. We want to say thanks to all of those who supported us and we are sad leaving all the amazing people we have met throughout the years. Thanks to Taiwan for letting us do our thing in this beautiful country," says Megan Murphy.

"We are proud of what we have accomplished and we plan to continue the JAMs in Toronto."

The party will have an open bar from 10pm to midnight for those dressed in suits. Note that it's an invitation-only event. Send an e-mail to junior.and.megan@gmail.com to get yours.

DJs: **Junior and Megan, Saucey, Hooker**

Neon at Liquid Lounge, tomorrow:

The dance music scene in Taichung may have been rough over the last couple of years with all the electronic music nights getting shut down one after another, but four-to-the-floor beat lovers have managed to find new meeting points at one-off events such as the popular Latex party by Swank. Currently run by DJs **Matty D** and **Gareth Jones**, their sixth anniversary party will be held at Liquid Lounge this weekend.

Liquid Lounge: 98 Chungming S Rd, Taichung City (台中市忠明南路98號)
Admission: NT\$300 — QUEEN BEE

EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Prog-rock band **Microcosmos** (小宇宙) takes to the stage tonight at **Witch House (女巫店)**, followed by indie group **Toy Camera** (玩具相機), which consists of a keyboardist, guitar player, and vocalist. Hoklo-language musician **Chen Ming-chang** (陳明章) appears tomorrow night. Get there early as the folk icon usually attracts a large crowd. **Deserts Chang** (張懸), who once worked as the sound engineer at the venue but now plays to sell-out crowds on the alt-rock circuit, is scheduled to perform on Thursday night.

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
Entrance fee for music shows is NT\$300, includes one drink

The **Riverside Cafe (河岸留言)** presents two world-renowned acoustic fingerstyle guitarists: **Jacques Stotzem** of Belgium and **Masaaki Kishibe** of Japan. Audiences can expect intricate melodies, orchestration and virtuosity from these guitarists. Aboriginal folk singer **Panal** (巴奈), who recently released a new album, *A Piece of Blue* (那片藍), appears tomorrow night.

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 9pm tomorrow
NT\$400 tonight and tomorrow

Dafu Jazz Trio takes to the stage tonight at **Sappho de Base** while **Sukhena** plays

Indian and European fusion music tomorrow. The **Sappho Jazz Band** performs Tuesday, with an open jam afterwards. Appearing on Wednesday are acoustic duo **T-Bone and Yasu** and a rock duo **Stoked Pokey**. The **T and T Jazz Trio** plays on Thursday.

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

Pop and dance band **Spider** appears tonight at **Tone 56 Live Bar**. Tomorrow it's house band **Loaded**, which plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits." Talking to the stage on Sunday is the **Dana Wylie Band**, which performs original material on piano and acoustic guitar, and **David Chen** and **Conor Prunty**, who plays acoustic blues and roots music.

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 information
Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30am tonight and tomorrow, and from 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sunday
No admission fee

Taking to the stage tonight at **Bliss** are emopop band **Emotion Gate** (情緒出口) and emopunk group **Full Count**. Pop-punk band **Abandoned Machines** and punk band **Random** (隨性) play tomorrow night.
148, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段148號), one block east of Dunhua South Road (敦化南路). Call Bliss at (02) 2702-1855 or log on at www.bliss-taipei.com. For more information on live performances at Bliss, visit www.myspace.com/blisslivehouse
Tonight at 10pm and tomorrow at 8pm.

Bar/kitchen open from 7pm daily. Ladies night Fridays; women get one free cocktail of their choice

Entrance to the bar is free; NT\$200 tonight and tomorrow for the music shows upstairs

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
Wednesday from 8pm to 11pm
No admission fee

Exhibitions

XFuns Gala '08 X=Secret (放肆大聚 X=Secret創作密碼). For the latest installment of the My Xfuns, the museum has invited China's Daniel Lee (李小鏡), Nick Veasey, a leading art photographer from England, and Huang Hsin-chien (黃心健), who excels at digital sculpture. Also on display are toy figures created by a troupe of well-known Taiwanese and international designers.
Museum of Contemporary Art (台北當代藝術館), 39 Chang'an W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3720
Until Jan. 18, 2009

Visions — Gabriel Barredo Solo Exhibition (幻象 — 羅伯瑞伯瑞多德展). Expressionistic and foreboding, the Philippine artist's sculptures are collected and refurbished from the detritus of the industrial life cycle.
Soka Art Center (索卡藝術中心), 2F, 57, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段57號2樓). Open Tuesdays through

Sundays from 11am to 9pm. Tel: (02) 2570-0390
Until Dec. 14

All About Love — The World of Ting Shao Kuang (理想主義 — 丁紹光訪台作品集展) features the latest paintings by the world-renowned Chinese painter as well as two large-scale bronzes and dozens of block prints
Shin Kong Mitsukoshi Xinyi A9 Building (新光三越信義店A9館), 9F, 9 Songshou Rd, Taipei (台北市松壽路9號9樓). Open Sundays through Thursdays from 11am to 9:30pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 10pm. Tel: (02) 8780-5959
Until Sunday

Sweeties: Celebrating 20 Years of IT Park (小甜心 — 伊通公園二十周年慶). IT Park is one of Taipei's pioneering art venues and has long been a place where artists of different generations come to exchange ideas. In celebration of its 20th birthday, the gallery has invited more than 150 artists to present their works.
IT Park Gallery (伊通公園), 2F, 41 Yitong St, Taipei City (台北市伊通街41號2樓). Open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 1pm to 10pm. Tel: (02) 2507-7243
Until tomorrow

20th Anniversary Exhibition (回顧與前瞻 — 二十周年慶特展). Also celebrating its 20th birthday, the art center at National Tsing Hua University revisits the work of past featured artists including photographer Liu Chen-hsiang (劉振祥), painter Yang Ren-ming (楊仁明) and ceramicist Li Liang-yi (李亮一).
Arts Center, National Tsing Hua University (清華大學藝術中心), 101, Guangfu S Rd Sec 2, Hsinchu City (新竹市光復南路2101號). Open Mondays through Fridays from 10am to 7pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 12pm to 5pm. Tel: (03) 516-2222
Until Thursday