

POP STOP

While the New Year might mean new beginnings for many of us, this is certainly not the case for **Cecilia Cheung** (張柏芝), who seems to have won a Pyrrhic victory in saving her marriage to **Nicholas Tse** (謝霆鋒) following her star turn in the **Edison Chen** (陳冠希) sex photo scandal. The engagement, understandably perhaps, almost came undone after pictures of Cheung, among others, were posted on the Internet performing various sex acts with the aforementioned Chen.

She managed to salvage the relationship, but according to *Next Magazine*, the price extracted by Tse's family for her transgression has been a high one. The magazine reports that her contact with her mother, with whom she had previously been very close, has been heavily curtailed, nor is she allowed to provide any financial support to her own family. This is purportedly at the insistence of Tse's mother, who clearly has some trust issues to resolve in relation with her daughter-in-law. Cheung, who back in 2003 was regarded as one of the most desirable women in the Chinese-language entertainment industry, might have been better advised to cut her losses and find herself more tolerant in-laws.

While some go down, others come up, and **Joe Chen** (陳喬恩), one of the stars of the hit TV soap opera *To Love You Is My Destiny* (命中注定我愛你), has successfully scaled the slippery slopes of the lingerie industry and has been recognizing as having a pair of the most valuable jugs in the country — she has just signed a NT\$5 million deal to use her G-cup prowess as an endorsement for Ladies (蕾黛絲) lingerie. These are the big guns that aim to displace Modern Girl (曼登瑪朵), a rival lingerie label whose spokesperson **Bianca Pai** (白歆惠), who as luck would have it, also stars in *To Love You Is My Destiny* as Chen's rival for the love of super stud **Ethan Ruan** (阮經天). While Chen may have some way to go before displacing the established position of Pai, she is clearly a rising star, who at 29, according to calculations made by *Next Magazine*, is already pulling in an annual income of NT\$30 million.

While Chen is clearly looking forward to a happy New Year, **Hu Ying-cheng** (胡盈禎), entertainer **Hu Gua's** (胡瓜) daughter, does not seem to be having much luck



Cecilia Cheung's mother-in-law is keeping her on a tight leash.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

reining in wayward husband **Lee Chin-liang** (李晉良). The recent birth of a little girl has done little to curb Lee's appetite for sweet young things, and as his father-in-law has just recently set the plastic surgeon up in his own clinic, his opportunities for checking out the action have skyrocketed. *Next* claims to prove that Lee and **Yang Chiao-ning** (楊巧寧), former girlfriend of singer **Kan Kan** (康康), spent three hours in Yang's penthouse apartment with the lights out on Dec. 26. At least the poor schmuck waiting outside taking the photos didn't have to do it in the rain. Hu is hanging tough and standing by her man, but watch this space.

In other celebrity troubles, ex-LA Boy **Jeff Huang** (黃立成), who is now managing a number of artists, found himself the subject of retribution for a fracas in July between artists associated with his Machi (麻吉) group and proteges of **Chang Chen-yue** (張震嶽). Walking out of Luxy on Christmas morning after showing support for brother **Stanley Huang** (黃立行), who performed there on Christmas Eve, Chang was set upon by thugs, purportedly of the Bamboo Union Gang (竹聯幫). He did not sustain any serious injuries, nor did he report the incident to the police, taking the attitude that shit happens. For an agent who is known for looking after his people, his cool is likely to go down well.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



Joe Chen will be cashing in this year.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES



From left: Huang Shih-hsun, Wang Hong-yuan and Chang Chia-chen star in Renshin Theater's production of *The Pillowman*.

PHOTO: SHIH YUN-YU, COURTESY OF RENSHIN THEATRE

Honey, I killed the kids

A writer of gruesome short stories is arrested and interrogated by two policemen in connection with a series of grizzly child murders that closely resemble the plots of his works.

Adapted from Martin McDonagh's Laurence Olivier Award-winning play of the same name, *The Pillowman* is a Kafkaesque black comedy.

"There is a clear class division between the policemen and the prisoner in the interrogation room," said Fan Tsung-chi (樊宗錡), the play's director. "We aim to establish a terrifying tension that builds from their unequal power relationship."

Living in a totalitarian state, detectives Tupolski (Chang Chia-chen, 張家禎) and Ariel (Huang Shih-hsun, 黃士勳) are free

to use torture to get the "truth" out of Katurian (Wang Hong-yuan, 王宏元) and his mentally impaired brother Michal (Hsu Wei-ting, 徐維廷).

Beneath all the violence and depravity, the play poses a number of questions, including how much responsibility a writer has for his works, and on what basis trust is built.

"An intriguing thing about the play is how the division between good and evil, in mind as in deed, seems completely blurred," Fan said.

In one of Katurian's stories that is interwoven with the play's storyline, a character named Pillowman travels back in time to urge children to kill themselves to avoid leading lives that are full of suffering. The job proves too painful for the man, who desperately seeks a way out.

The mission of Renshin Theater (仁信

合作社劇團), established in 2007 by eight students who graduated from the fifth class of the Department of Drama and Theater at the National Taiwan University, is to "search for the reasons and answers to being a 'human.'" Group members are mostly alumni and current students of the university and are dedicated to introducing works by contemporary playwrights to local audiences.

"We mainly choose foreign classics that have created a stir in the theatrical field," said Liao Hwei-li (廖慧麗), the group's technical director and graphic designer. "Like *The Pillowman*, our first work *The Goat: or, Who Is Sylvia?* was first adapted and performed in Taiwan by us."

"In July next year we will be running the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *I Am My Own Wife*," Liao said.

— DEREK YIU PUI-YUNG

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: The Pillowman by Renshin Theater

WHEN: Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm; tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

WHERE: Tainan Human Theater Factory (台南人戲工場), 3F, Baida Education and Cultural Center (百達文教中心3樓), 85 Shengli Rd, Tainan City (台南市勝利路85號)

TICKETS: Tickets for Sunday are sold-out; NT\$350 seats are available for the other performances through NTCH or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: blog.yam.com/renshin

Solutions for resolutions

Those who have made New Year's resolutions aimed towards a healthier, more wholesome lifestyle may find themselves a bit lost this first weekend of 2009. If you are used to partying until late on Friday night and sleeping in most of the next day, what do you do when you wake up bright-eyed on Sunday morning?

For ideas on wholesome and fun activities, one need look no further than 10-year Taiwan resident, Brian "Funshine" Alexander. Best known as a children's performer, Alexander — whose business cards carry his moniker Brian Funshine — is expanding his social network. "When I do non-children's stuff I'm getting tired of being called 'Funshine,'" he says of the recent decision to go by his real surname.

He produces and performs original children's music, does birthday parties, kids' shows, educational workshops and teacher training across the country, is a vocalist and lyricist, plays guitar and double bass, and is also involved with the Rainbow Gathering, a hippy festival group that has recently formed a Taiwan chapter. "I was turned on by the Rainbow Gathering people and the Rainbow family had potlucks in America,

so I started my own potluck in my house," Alexander said.

Now he's organizing a vegetarian potluck and music/drum jam in Taipei's Da-an Forest Park (大安森林公園) on the first Sunday of every month. "It's vegetarian, not to preach, but because it's convenient," he said. "It means everyone can eat." People are encouraged to bring cooked dishes but "if you don't have time or energy to cook then go to 7-Eleven and buy a bag of chips, some drinks or snacks — you can still come!"

He is looking to build a sense of community. "The concept of people of all ages getting together. It's about food and music. We'd like a drum circle, a singing circle, and don't feel if you can't speak English you're not welcome — we want people from all over to come."

Everyone meets on Sunday from 2pm to 6pm in the southeast portion of the park, at two covered pavilions along the Jianguo South Road (建國南路) side. If it rains the event will be postponed until the next weekend. There are bathrooms nearby, and plenty of room for kids, musicians, jugglers and drummers. "Bring your creative talents and creative energy," Alexander said.

Despite his peace and love leanings,



From left to right: Ethan Kegley, Peter Brown, Brian Alexander and Doug Thiele jam at the Taipei Potluck and Music Circle.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FIONA CHANG TING-CHIH

Alexander is no Luddite. He uses a Facebook group (Taipei Potluck & Music Circle) to inform members of cancellations or rescheduling. "I'm a neo-hippy," he said, "someone who accepts

technology and [what is] modern. I accept this is our world but relinquish the need to dress fashionably, wear the right labels, or have a regular full-time job."

— ALITA RICKARDS

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Theater

Wonderwork (誰是聖誕老公公)

staged by If Kids Theater (如果兒童劇團) for the second time in four years, tells the story of an old man who is inexplicably chosen to be of one of the world's 500 Santa Clauses. As he helps deliver presents to children, it dawns on him that people see him as a greedy, stingy and inconsiderate person.

► The 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; tomorrow and Sunday at 10:30am, ► NT\$300 and NT\$350 tickets are sold out, NT\$450 to NT\$1,000 still available through NTCH ticketing outlets or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

In **Han Zi Hsiao Yu Shuo Xiang Sheng/Comic Cross Talk on Chinese Characters** (漢字笑語說相聲) Chinese cross-talk (相聲) master Wu Jau-nan (吳兆南) teams up with performers from the Taipei Quyi Troupe (台北曲藝團) in a performance that analyzes Chinese characters, phrases and poems.

► Plum Wine Factory (梅梅酒廠) at Huashan Culture Park (華山創意文化園區), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)

► Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets are NT\$300, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

Human Condition (人間條件)

Green Ray Theater's (綠光劇團) newest play, centers on the life of a 17-year-old girl who rebels against her dysfunctional family's listless existence. One day, the grandmother's spirit returns and possesses her teenage granddaughter.

► Tainan Municipal Cultural Center (台南市立文化中心), 332, Zhonghua E Rd Sec 3, Tainan City (台南市中華東路三段332號)

► Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm ► Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$2,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

Based on the Laurence Olivier Award-winning play by British playwright Martin McDonagh, the **Pillowman** (黑色童話—枕頭人) tells the tale of Katurian, a fiction writer, who, together with his mentally challenged brother, is interrogated about the gruesome content of his short stories and their similarities to a number of bizarre child murders occurring in his town. [See story above.]

► Tainan Human Theater Factory (台南人戲工場), 3F, Baida Education and Cultural Center (百達文教中心3樓), 85 Shengli Rd, Tainan City (台南市勝利路85號)

► Today and tomorrow at 7:30pm;

tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm

► Tickets for Sunday are sold out; NT\$350 seats are available for the other performances through NTCH or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

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** (六義幫), which has extended its run due to popular acclaim. Written and directed by Hugh Lee (李國修), the story tells of three love stories set between 1904 and 1991 and touches on themes such as loyalty, baseball and clan spirit. The performance features 28 actors playing 115 characters in 50 scenes.

► National Theater, Taipei City ► Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm; tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30

► NT\$500 tickets are sold out, NT\$800 to NT\$3,500 seats are available through NTCH outlets or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Classical music

Leonard Slatkin & Ein Heldenleben

(史拉特金與英雄的生運) brings renowned US conductor Leonard Slatkin, who is widely known for his association with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, to Taiwan to conduct the National Symphony Orchestra in a program that features Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*

and works by Hayden and Hindemith.

► Sunday at 7:30pm

► National Concert Hall, Taipei City

► Tickets are NT\$400 to NT\$2,000, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Sound of Kaohsiung Wind Ensemble 2009 New Year Concert (高雄之音管樂團2009新年音樂會)

presents the orchestra, made up primarily of alumni from Kaohsiung Municipal Girls' Senior High School (高雄女中) and National Kaohsiung Marine University (高雄海洋學院), performing a mixed program that includes Philip Sparke's *Tameside Overture*, Jacob de Haan's *Oregon* and the theme music from *Howl's Moving Castle*.

► Today at 7:30pm

► Kaohsiung City Concert Hall (高雄市音樂館演奏廳), 99 Hesi Rd, Kaohsiung City (高雄市河西路99號)

► Tickets are NT\$150, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

YU Flute Choir Magic Carnival (游雅慧長笛藝術音樂精選系列—魔法·童話·嘉年華)

performs flute music for the whole family. The all-female group is one of the largest ensembles of flautists in Taiwan and has been hugely innovative in presenting flute music in a way that can be enjoyed by children.

► Tomorrow at 7:30pm

► Ilan Performing Arts Center (宜蘭縣文化局演藝廳), 482, Zhongshan Rd Sec 2, Ilan City (宜蘭市中山路二段482號)

► Tickets are NT\$100 and NT\$200, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Contemporary

Tonight **The Wall** hosts indie-pop rockers **Tizzy Bac** tonight. [See story on Page 13]. Tomorrow is Kaohsiung-A-Palooza, with grunge band **KoOk** (庫克), indie-electronica band **Orange Doll** (橘娃娃), punk rockers **Fire Ex** (滅火器) and ska group **Shy Kick Apple** (害羞踢蘋果), all of which hail from Taiwan's second city.

► 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 visit www.the-wall.com.tw for more information

► Starts at 8pm and 7pm tomorrow ► Admission is NT\$500 tonight and NT\$400 tomorrow and includes one drink

Tonight at **Witch House (女巫店)** comedic indie-rockers **Won Fu** (旺福樂

團) take to the stage. [See story on Page 13]. Playing tomorrow is **GreenEyes** (綠色眼瞼), which describes its music as having a "flavor of guitar pop and a bit of country." Jazzy/bluesy act **Kukao** (鼓號大樂隊) appears on Thursday.

► 7, Ln 56, Xinsheg 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 is NT\$400 tonight and NT\$300 tomorrow and includes one drink

Metamorphosis (變形蟲爵士樂團), one of the first groups in Taiwan to perform and record original jazz music, plays tonight at **Riverside Cafe (河岸留言)**. Veteran Hakka musician **Ayu Huang** (黃連煜) appears tomorrow.

► 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 ► Cover is NT\$350 tonight and NT\$450 tomorrow and includes one drink

On Sunday **Riverside Live House (西門紅樓展演館)**, a new venue located in Ximending's historic Red House Theater (西門紅樓), hosts hip-hop acts

Tripoets (參翳) and **MJ116 (頑童)**, alt-rockers **Monkey Pilot** (猴子飛行員) and Taiwan's top rapper, **MC Hot Dog**.

► 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號). Call (02) 2370-8805 or visit www.riverside.com.tw for

more information

► Show starts at 8:30pm

► NT\$600 entrance includes one drink

Dafu Jazz Project appears tonight at **Sappho de Base**. The **Sappho House Band** hosts the venue's weekly open jam on Tuesday. On Wednesday **The Chris Stiles Jazz Trio** takes to the stage to perform original compositions and arrangements.

► 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 Rubber Band** plays rock, pop and dance music. **Loaded**, the house band, plays everything from "rock classics to today's hits" tomorrow. On Sunday, **Blues Vibrations** perform their fun combination of surf-rock, blues and jam-band 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 Tel: (02) 2517-3869

► Music shows go from 9:30pm to 12:30am tonight and tomorrow; 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Sundays ► No admission fee