

Diminishing degrees of separation

Derek Tsung-yu Wu (吳宗祐) stumbled upon a cozy little bookstore in Reykjavik while attending a literature festival there three years ago. On the ground floor he found a tiny studio crammed with mixers, old record players and musical instruments of different vintages. He later heard that Sigur Ros had practiced there.

The studio in Iceland inspired Wu, now general manager of the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra (台北愛樂管弦樂團), to open Reykjavik Lab, a basement practice and performance space that welcomes musicians playing all sorts of music.

Tomorrow and on Sunday, the lab will host the first edition of the Reykjavik Music Fest (雷克雅維克音樂節), a crossover festival with rock and classical performances.

Four ensembles including Verve Quartet (Verve四重奏) and String and Art Chamber Orchestra (絃琴藝室室內樂團) will present classical music in chronological order from baroque to romantic to contemporary.

On the other end of the spectrum, Oli and her band will play folksy tunes including a rendition of Alanis Morissette's *Ironic*, NyLas will present electro-rock sounds, and 88 Balaz (八十八顆芭樂籽) has been recruited for its high-energy punk rock.

"This is a space where the boundaries between musical communities get loosened up a bit. People with a classical background will get a chance to learn more about the rock kids, and rock bands can be inspired by, say, the music of Mozart," Wu said. "We hope that maybe someday Taiwan's musicians will describe their music not as Brit-pop or European electronica, but as our own music."

The studio, which is owned by Taipei Philharmonic, has been presenting live Sunday chamber music concerts for the last couple of years before its reincarnation as Reykjavik Lab this past January. In celebration of Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's 30th year as an author, a series of matinee concerts is planned for this month and next and will feature the classical music in Murakami's novels, with artists playing works by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin.

A small cafe next to the studio serves snacks, coffee, tea and alcoholic beverages. Visitors are welcome to hang out and spend a weekend afternoon listening to music.

For aspiring musicians and rockers who are not quite ready to play at a club like The Wall (這牆), Wu and his staff are planning to hold concerts every Friday or Saturday with bands who practice at the studio at least 10 times within a period of two months. For more information, go to tspo.pixnet.net/blog.

— HO YI



88 Balaz pose for a publicity photo, above, and play at Underworld last weekend, below. PHOTOS: RON BROWN/LOW, TAIPEI TIMES AND COURTESY OF TAIPEI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Reykjavik Music Fest (雷克雅維克音樂節)
WHEN: Tomorrow and Sunday from 2pm to 9pm
WHERE: Reykjavik Lab (雷克雅維克實驗室), B1, 7, Jinan Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市濟南路一段7號B1)
ADMISSION: Advance purchase tickets are NT\$250 per performance or NT\$400 for one classical and one rock performance, available through NTCH ticketing outlets or online at www.artsticket.com.tw. NT\$300 per performance at the door, including one drink
ON THE NET: tspo.pixnet.net/blog

THE VINYL WORD

Happy International Workers' Day, comrades. As global capitalism teeters on the brink and swine flu threatens to thin the herd by mutating into an "Armageddon" virus, this weekend is as good as any to live it large. Apocalypse or not, who needs an excuse anyway? Here are the Vinyl Word's selections:

I.A.S. — FLUORESCENT TECHNO PARTY

Part of National Taiwan University's Art Festival, this outdoor event welcomes electronic dance music fans and early-bird partygoers with the sound of minimal techno in a "UV LED forest." DJs: **BB** and **DataBass**. Today from 6pm to 10pm at National Taiwan University Building 2 (台大二號館正門口). From the main gate on the corner of Roosevelt (羅斯福) and Xinsheng South (新生南) roads, walk down the university's palm tree-lined road and it's the second block on the right. Admission is free and there are complimentary drinks. To join in, register at www.csie.ntu.edu.tw/~b92705040/



Vorsprung durch Technics. PHOTO COURTESY OF LUXY

NTUArtSeason/ticket.ph.

MARKUS SCHULZ AT LUXY

Luxy is going full-on electronica tonight with German progressive trance DJ/producer **Markus Schulz** in the main room and a party called ASOS in the Onyx Room. As one of the most popular DJs in the world who's ranked eighth on *DJ Mag's* top 100 DJs poll, Schulz is renowned for his weekly radio show *Global DJ Broadcast* and his unique brand of dark, moody, melodic trance. The lineup for the Onyx Room is **Saucy, Hooker, Jimmy Chen, Burn Electric** and **006**. Tonight from 10pm to 4am at Luxy, 5F, 201, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段201號5樓). Admission is NT\$800 before 11pm and NT\$1,000 after.

MASAGO BEACH JAM

Spunite kicks off the beach-party season with this hip-hop bash tomorrow in Tainan, which looks like it'll be a biggie, weather permitting. From the usual Top 40 hip-hop music everyone is familiar with to the usual sexy gimmicks your favorite hip-hop club employs, this party has it all, including bikinis and bling. Live acts and MCs include **Da Mouth, Alan**

Kuo, Dog G, Melody, GaWeed, Monster and Ndreu, with **Jin, Rao, Woody, Ugly, Bug and Dakar** on the ones and twos. Tomorrow from 4pm to 4am at the Masago Recreation Area (馬沙溝濱海遊樂區), 140 Pingsha Village, Jiangjun Township, Tainan County (台南縣將軍鄉平沙村140號). Admission is NT\$700 at the door.

THE BEATDOWN AT COPA

Join this fresh party crew of pro-breakbeat DJs **Mixer T** and **Anti Hero** if you feel like shaking it to some freestyle funky rhythms. Tomorrow from 10pm to 3am at Copa, B1, 2, Ln 137, Yanji St, Taipei City (台北市延吉街137巷2號地下室). No cover charge.

CHAKI FROM THE LOWBROWS AT THE WALL (這牆)

In the mood for something fresh from Japan? Check out **Chaki**, the brains behind one of the country's most sought-after new-wave production duos, The Lowbrows. Find out what's hot in Tokyo's indie-electro scene right now. Supporting DJs: **F Dragon** and **Spykee Fat**. From 11:30pm to 6am at The Wall (這牆), B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號地下室). Admission is NT\$700 at the door.

— QUEEN BEE

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

The Duet of Life: The Hou Ching-lang Memorial Exhibition (生命二重奏—旅法畫家侯錦郎紀念展)

The features Hou's numerous paintings in the cubist and fauvist styles. Hou also worked in ceramics and sculpture, some of which are on display. Although his earlier works show a clear influence from modern art traditions, as he grew older Hou became increasingly fascinated with Buddhism and Taoism, elements of which can be seen in his later paintings.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270. On the Net: www.nmh.gov.tw
 ► Until May 17

MOCA, Taipei is currently running an installation for the 14 performance art companies and visual artists who were nominated for the **Seventh Taishin Art Awards (台新藝術獎)**. Winners in each category will be announced by an international jury at a ceremony tonight.

► Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Chang'an W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3721. On the Net: www.mocataipei.org.tw
 ► Until May 24

Arcadie features 83 original works by 42 masters, including Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and Joan Miro. The exhibition is co-organized by TFAM and France's Centre Pompidou.

► Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), galleries 1A and 1B, 181, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, closes at 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656. On the Net: www.tfam.museum
 ► Until July 12

Life, Illusion of Bodies (空身幻影) is a solo exhibition by Taiwanese artist Lee Kuang-yu (李光裕). Lee's abstract sculptures investigate themes such as the shifting line between the real and unreal, movement and stillness and the visible and the invisible.

► Taipei National University of Arts — Guandu Museum of Arts (台北藝術大學關渡美術館), 1 Xueyuan Rd, Beitou Dist, Taipei City (台北市北投區學園路1號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 5pm. Tel: (02) 2896-1000 X2432. On the Net: kdmofa.tnu.edu.tw
 ► Until June 14

Chang Dai-chien: Memorial Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition (張大千110—書畫紀念特展) displays 96 works by one of the 20th century's most revered painters working in Chinese art. From his early output, which was firmly rooted in tradition, to his later paintings, which were influenced by modernism, this exhibit provides insight into the painter's evolution as an artist and the different schools of thought that influenced him.

► National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270.

Upcoming

This weekend is the 10th Annual Tainan May Jam

A laid-back affair with a slew of bands held at The Water Bird Living Room outdoor restaurant near Tainan. It's the "most independent, not pretentious" event organizer Axel Schunn said. "Nobody gets famous at this festival." Usually the Jam is free, but this year there will be a charge of NT\$250 to cover the cost of the equipment as Schunn, who does vocals, composes, and plays guitar and blues harp for his band **Charlie Swiggs**, has teenage children and can't afford to foot the bill. Though the festival features super funk group **The Money Shot Horns**, the rest of the artists are relatively unheard of.

"Tainan is a very unique place," said Schunn. "People from here going to a festival don't ask which bands are playing... they ask if there is going to be food." There will be food at the event, provided by the restaurant, which also has outdoor fishing.

WHEN: From tomorrow at noon to 9pm on Sunday, at Water Bird Living Room Restaurant (四草水鳥客廳), 38, Ln 69, Beishanwei 1st Rd, Annan Dist, Tainan City (台南市安南區北汕尾一路69巷38號), with an after party to follow from 9pm to 3am at the Red Wolf Tavern, 229 Gongyuan Rd, Tainan City (台南市公園路229號). tel: (06) 227-2929
GETTING THERE: The Water Bird Living Room Restaurant's Web site has an excellent map: waterbird2005.myweb.hinet.net/_transport.htm. Directions can also



Axel Schunn's idea of a good old knees up is low key. PHOTO COURTESY OF AXEL SCHUNN

be found on Axel Schunn's Web site: www.2eecs.stud.edu.tw/~charlie. Alternatively contact: Schunn at aki_schunn@yahoo.com
ADMISSION: NT\$250

TOMORROW'S LINEUP:

12:50 ~ 13:30 Sun of Morning
 13:40 ~ 14:20 Song is Good
 14:30 ~ 15:10 Mr Dirty
 15:20 ~ 16:00 Mister Landing
 16:10 ~ 16:50 Mist Green and Highway 9
 17:00 ~ 17:40 Monkey Banana
 17:50 ~ 18:30 Ferries Wheel Band
 18:40 ~ 19:20 Electrocut
 19:30 ~ 20:10 Charlie Swiggs
 20:20 ~ 21:00 Half Mile Radius
 21:10 ~ 22:00 Monkey Shot Horns
SUNDAY'S LINEUP:
 12:00 ~ 12:40 Guitar Slingers
 12:50 ~ 13:30 Unfinished
 13:40 ~ 14:20 The Cotton Field
 14:30 ~ 15:10 Guisele
 15:20 ~ 16:00 Drum Circle
 16:00 ~ 16:30 The Chanting Nones and Monks
 16:30 ~ 17:10 Gruveballs
 17:20 ~ 18:00 Metal Fon
 18:10 ~ 18:50 Adams Apple
 19:00 ~ 19:40 Star 69
 19:50 ~ 20:30 Blue DoDo

On the Net: www.nmh.gov.tw
 ► Until June 14

Cuba: The Island Garden

is an exhibit by US photographer Keith Brown that sympathetically documents the people and architecture of the last bastion of communism in Latin America.

► Pethany Larsen Gallery (Pethany Larsen 藝坊), 30, Ln 45 Liaoning St, Taipei City (台北市遼寧街45巷30號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 8pm. Tel: (02) 8772-5005. On the Net: www.pethanylarsen.com
 ► Until May 17

Collision Between Taboo and Desire: Hou Chun-ming Works of Print, 1992-2008 (六翻侯氏—衝撞在慾望與禁忌之間的版畫創作1992-2008)

displays 13 sets of the artist's printmaking. Bearing titles such as *Erotic Paradise* and *Paradise Lost for the Heterosexuals*, the prints unflinchingly explore religion, sexual desire and the artist's own life experiences.

► National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung (國立台灣美術館), 2, Wucyuan W Rd Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市五權西路一段2號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Tel: (04) 2372-3552
 ► Until May 24

The God of Earth in Tainan (台灣土地公特展) explains the origins of the Earth God (土地公) and why it continues to play an important role in folk worship throughout the country.

► National Museum of Natural Science (國立自然科學博物館), 1, Guancian Rd, Taichung City (台中市館前路1號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm. On the Net: www.nmns.edu.tw
 ► Until May 31

RESTAURANTS



Some like it hot at Hui Guan.

PHOTO: HO YI, TAIPEI TIMES

Hui Guan (回館)

Address: 15, Ln 265, Xinyi Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市信義路四段265巷15號)
Telephone: (02) 2754-9924 **Open:** Monday to Friday 5:30pm to 11pm, Saturday and Sunday 11:30am to 2pm and 5:30pm to 11pm; closed on the first and third Sunday of every month
Average meal: NT\$400
Details: Chinese menu; credit cards not accepted

Close to the Tonghua Street (通化街) night market, Hui Guan (回館) occupies a rare niche in the city's dietary landscape by serving cuisine from Ningxia, a Hui autonomous region in China. Li Hai-jung (李海蓉), who is Muslim, opened the restaurant a few years ago primarily to observe her religion's dietary code and satisfy her craving for a taste of home.

A red lantern hanging at the entrance makes Hui Guan hard to miss. The interior is simple and understated, spiced up with wood furnishings and the signatures of celebrity patrons written on the walls.

Though the meat is halal, alcoholic beverages are served. Hui Guan offers ice-cold Taiwan beer in tin mugs, which go well with the richly flavored dishes.

From a menu featuring a selection of meals made from nearly every sheep part, the cumin-flavored mutton with bread (孜然羊羔烙餅, NT\$280), a type of street food in Ningxia, is a friendly choice for first timers. Stir-fried with cumin, celery, onion and other vegetables, the mutton cubes are paired with slightly salted breads made in accordance to a recipe from Li's mother.

Meticulous effort goes into preparing Hui Guan's Ningxia braised mutton (寧夏手抓羊肉, NT\$260). It requires a process of boiling, braising and marinating, which is repeated. The cooked meat is surprisingly tender and is meant to be eaten with bare hands. The salty and slightly spicy soy-cheese sauce on the side helps neutralize the mutton's gaminess.

For those with a low tolerance for spicy food, it is recommended to inform the chef while ordering as he doesn't skimp on the red chili oil or peppercorn (花椒), which are found throughout the menu. The sour and spicy lentil noodles (酸辣扁豆粉, NT\$120) are a good example. The deceptively mild looking plate of cold noodles had one of my dining partners, who has been known to eat spicy hot pot for breakfast, proclaiming his admiration for the dish while gulping down cold beer.

On the other end of the flavor spectrum, mother's salad (母親手拌菜, N\$8180) mixes onions, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes and pea sprouts seasoned with a sweet-and-sour dressing. The ginger-flavored thousand-year eggs (薑汁松花蛋, NT\$140) give the staple snack a refreshing update. One must try appetizer not to be found on the menu is the preserved garlic sprouts (蒜苔), which pack a vinegary punch.

The restaurant also serves mutton and beef brochettes (NT\$100 per plate). The meat has the right amount of fat to render it alluringly juicy, though the unpleasant smell of grill smoke lingers long after the meal.

— HO YI



Gourmet food in a storybook setting.

PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Story Tea House (故事茶坊)

Address: 181-1, Zhongshan N Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市中山北路三段181-1號)
Telephone: (02) 2596-1898
Open: Tuesday to Friday 10:30am to 7pm and Saturday and Sunday 10:30am to 9:30pm
Average meal: NT\$650 for lunch and dinner; NT\$300 for afternoon tea
Details: English and Chinese menu; credit cards accepted

After spending a few hours at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) one day, I decided to get a sandwich at Story Tea House, located below the plaza across from the museum. A friend couldn't stop raving about the place.

"Sorry sir, but sandwiches are only served as afternoon tea, which is from 2pm to 5pm," my server told me. My disappointment was visible. I could wait two hours or order off, what I perceived to be, the dinner menu: Dinner for lunch was not the storybook repast that I was seeking.

Thankfully, the well-maintained lawns and beautiful gardens of Story Book House, which are pleasantly visible through the restaurant's large picture windows, managed to calm me enough to decide to stay and order. I'm very glad I did.

I chose the set meal of poached pork knuckle (NT\$580, NT\$400 for a la carte) that came with salad, a beverage and dessert. As I sat there thinking of all the previous set menu disasters I've sat through, I tried to predict how pedestrian the meal would be.

Then the bread came. Large chunks of whole wheat bread, evidently just cut from a large loaf, arrived at my table warm and served with butter. It was fresh, homemade and the best bread I've ever had at a restaurant in Taipei. When I started babbling to the server about its excellent quality, she offered more. Things were beginning to look up.

Then came the Story Tea House salad. It was an inspiration. A foundation of unusual lettuce leaves shared the plate with radicchio. White turkey breast, smoked salmon and shrimp made up the protein. Three whole green beans and a wedge of porcini mushroom — both slightly boiled or steamed — added a nice touch. The whole was topped with shaved red onions and sprinkled with a light and creamy vinaigrette dressing. It ranks as one of most creative salads I've eaten in Taipei.

The creativity didn't end with the first course. The poached pork knuckle arrived simmering on a bed of mild sauerkraut and was accompanied with two sausages, potato wedges and a thick slice of bacon. Removing the layer of skin covering the knuckle exposed moist and luscious meat that separated easily from the bone and melted in my mouth. It went well with the Dijon (medium hot) mustard that it was served with.

The authentic cheeseecake topped with whipped cream and a mint leaf was a wonderful end to a satisfying meal. Though I didn't get my sandwich (NT\$280), this tale has a happy ending.

— NOAH BUCHAN