

FEATURES

PAGE 16

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2009

Pomp and circumstance

Kaohsiung's shiny new sports stadium opens on Wednesday to 200-year-old European tunes played by an international ensemble. But why was nonclassical music overlooked and local performers not given more prominence at the ultra-modern building's inauguration?

BY **BRADLEY WINTERTON**
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER



Though international acts and European music got the nod to open Kaohsiung's World Games Main Stadium, above, Taiwan's National Experimental Chorus, below, is included on the inauguration concert's program.

PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

Kaohsiung hosts the World Games in July, a huge gathering featuring sports not included in the Olympics. And just in time for the arrival of the world's sports journalists and camera crews, Taiwan's second city has completed its vast new World Games Stadium, which is capable of seating 40,000 and boasts 8,844 solar panels.

The Opening Ceremony of the games (on July 16) will be much like an Olympic opening ceremony. But the Inaugural Concert that opens the stadium on Wednesday will be an all-classical affair. It features the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna State Opera Choir and Taiwan's National Experimental Chorus (國立實驗合唱團) performing Beethoven's Seventh and Ninth symphonies and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, which ends with the firing of guns.

But why should an ultra-modern, eco-friendly building, constructed in Asia, celebrate its inauguration with acoustic music written 200 years ago in distant Europe? Why not a massive pop concert with some of the region's top bands? Or, if classical music is to be favored, why not something contemporary featuring living composers, including Taiwan's composers?

There are arguments on both sides, of course. This, I imagine, might be the case for the prosecution: In Asia, classical music is often associated with status. Well-heeled audiences arrive in large cars and pay handsomely to watch famous names. Classical music represents affluence, and it's not surprising that Kaohsiung's city fathers should pick it to open their extremely expensive new building.

They've predictably opted for tried and tested items with a guaranteed social cachet. Beethoven seems about right — his Ninth Symphony, after all, ends with a massive, if strident, vocal number with four roaring soloists and a chorus that can be as big as you want. (It's routinely performed in Taipei's Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館) with seven hundred or eight hundred singers).

In addition, because foreign things are often thought in Taiwan to be better than their local equivalents, no one will be surprised to see an American orchestra and a European chorus. Both will have been flown in and housed at immense cost, but then conspicuous consumption, especially in these difficult times, is very much the name of the game.

Finally, why choose labor-intensive old-style acoustic music when it will have to be electronically amplified (using those solar panels) to fill such a vast space anyway? So, what is the case for the defense?

Essentially, that this aging foreign music has world standing. The last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the celebrated (if sometimes decried) *Ode to Joy*, is, after all, the EU's transnational anthem, and was also closely associated with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. In that context it was a hymn to liberty too, and Kaohsiung may also be making a veiled point in selecting it.

Then there is the consideration that Taiwan is preeminent in Asia in all aspects of classical music performance. But, this being the case, why not employ all Taiwanese musicians? This is an argument that will be kept carefully hidden by the defense attorneys.

So, let the party begin. It would certainly have been a more riotous one with other kinds of music. But it will be a great day for Taiwan anyway, and the less musically inclined, plus those for whom Beethoven and Tchaikovsky would never have been first choice, will simply have to sit back and endure.

The Main Stadium Inauguration Concert — The World Games Concert 2009 (2009迎接世運之夜 — 世運主場館落成音樂會) is at the World Games Main Stadium, Kaohsiung (高雄世運主場館) located at the junction of Jhunghai and Junsiao roads (中海路與軍校路口), beginning on Wednesday at 7:30pm. Tickets are NT\$290 to NT\$3,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw.

[TECHNOLOGY]

Windows 7: small improvements make a big splash

Microsoft has all but admitted that Windows Vista was a flop. So why not start using its successor right now? You can, simply by downloading the free release candidate of Windows 7 (www.microsoft.com/Windows/Windows-7/download.aspx). Fully functioning, robust and stable, Windows 7 RC (release candidate) has been available for a week now, and its usage has already jumped 22 percent, according to Microsoft.

The headline features of Windows 7 — greater compatibility, speed, interface enhancements and less annoyance from user account control — are really designed to say to users: "We know Vista disappointed you; this version will not." But Microsoft has done more than just make amends with the forthcoming Windows. It has also slipped in a lot of useful enhancements and features. Here are a few.

• Sticky notes

You work all day at the computer, and you need somewhere to place sticky notes to remind yourself to pick up some milk, make a doctor's appointment, or call the plumber, right? In the past, you probably stuck such notes on your computer monitor — or put them on scraps of paper scattered around your desk. Thanks to the new Windows 7 applet called Sticky Notes, you can get rid of all of those annoying pieces of paper.

Sticky Notes are just what they sound like: little virtual notes that resemble real-world sticky notes. These, however,

you can place anywhere on your Windows desktop. And they stay stuck to the desktop for as long you want — even after rebooting.

The default sticky note is yellow — but you can change the color simply by right-clicking your sticky note.

• Snipping Tool

Another nifty little Windows 7 tool that falls into the category of "why didn't they think of this earlier" is called Snipping Tool. Available directly from the Start menu, Snipping Tool allows you to select and capture anything that's displayed on your monitor and either save it as a graphics file or paste it into an e-mail message, document, or graphics program.

To do this previously, you would have had to capture an entire screen or window and then switch to a paint program to crop the image, copy it to the clipboard, and then move it to its destination. Snipping Tool boils all of that down to three clicks: one to open the tool, one to select the region, and another to press Ctrl-C. Capturing part of your screen doesn't get any easier.

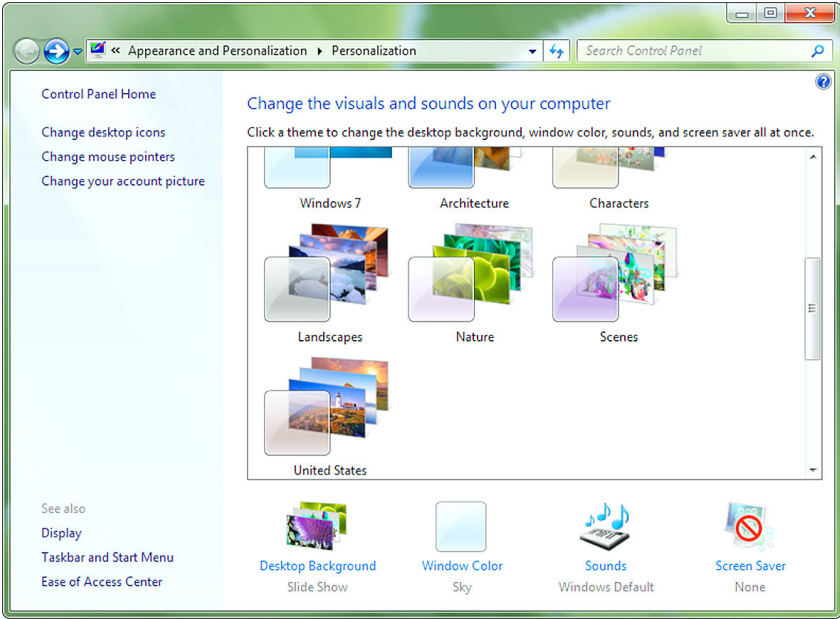
Snipping Tool even comes with a pen tool that allows you to annotate or mark up what you've captured, as well as a highlighter that makes it easy to highlight text in a capture. A one-click e-mail toolbar button moves the captured image and any annotation to your default e-mail program, ready to send off to a friend or colleague.

• Libraries

In previous versions of Windows,

Microsoft learned its lesson the hard way after Vista was released to a chorus of criticism

BY **JAY DOUGHERTY**
DPA, WASHINGTON



Microsoft's Windows 7 was released on May 5. A release candidate version is available for free from the software giant's Web site.

PHOTO: AFP

Microsoft pretty much dictated to you where your files could be stored — under My Documents, My Music, My Videos, and so on. While it's true that you could choose your own locations with individual applications, there were enough areas of the operating system that kept pointing back to those default locations that you probably eventually just gave up and accepted the locations Microsoft chose for you.

The new Libraries feature goes some way to putting you back in control. When you open the Windows Explorer file manager — or click Computer from the Start menu — you'll see the Libraries category listed to the left, with initial libraries called Documents, Music, Pictures, and Videos already created.

Libraries in Windows 7 are actually pointers to one or more locations on your hard drive where documents of a certain type are stored. The Documents library, for example, can contain pointers to the location where you keep your Word documents, your Excel spreadsheets and your PowerPoint presentations. The library concept is quite powerful because with one click you can actually see or search through documents that are in fact stored in many different locations.

Right-clicking a library name and selecting Properties brings up a dialog box that allows you to establish the locations to which that library points. The default library names that Microsoft supplies are fully configurable — or deletable.

• Homegroup

Homegroup is another new concept in Windows 7, and it's designed to make the process of sharing files, music, videos, pictures and printers on a home network much easier than before.

The process is simple. Click the word Homegroup in Windows Explorer — or in Computer from the Start menu — and indicate which resources you'd like to make available to others. Once your homegroup is created, others within your home can access your resources simply by clicking the word 'homegroup' as you did. Homegroup is only available on Windows 7 computers, and it's only available on home networks.

• No nags

If Vista users had one message to deliver to Microsoft, it was probably "stop bugging me!" Vista drove people crazy at almost every turn, alerting them when their antivirus software was out of date or not installed, when a network was found or lost, when a firewall was not configured, when there was something awry with security settings, when a backup had not been configured, and of course whenever a file was to be deleted or a program installed. It's no wonder that most companies still use XP.

With Windows 7, you can get rid of all of those types of nagging messages with a few clicks. Stop in at the new Change Action Center Settings screen, take a look at all of the ways that Windows has to annoy you, and turn everything off. Voila! No more nags.