

Felines and flamenco



Neo-Classic Dance Company's *Land of Clouded Leopard* draws on the dances and music of the Amis.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEO-CLASSIC DANCE COMPANY AND THE NATIONAL THEATER

This weekend dance lovers have the chance to sample two very different types of "indigenous dance," both of which have a symbiotic relationship to the music used in the performances.

The first is the Neo-Classic Dance Company's *Land of the Clouded Leopard* at the National Theater, which draws on the dances and music of the Amis. The second is *New Flamenco Generation* at Novel Hall, which features the precocious Miguel Fernandez — El Yiyo — who despite being just 13 years old has been hailed as the future of Spain's flamenco culture.

The Neo-Classic Dance Company was founded 33 years ago by artistic director Liu Feng-shueh (劉鳳學), who is a legend in Taiwan's dance world. She was one of the first to introduce modern dance to Taiwan, and beginning with her studio in 1967 and continuing on at universities, trained many of the nation's top dancers, choreographers and teachers.

Her work has combined Western techniques, especially that of movement theorist Rudolf Laban, with Chinese classical dance and, in recent years, with the cultures of Taiwan's Aboriginal tribes.

Liu's career now spans 60 years, and to mark the anniversary she created a new work, *Land of Clouded Leopard* (雲豹之鄉), which tells the story of two young Aboriginal baseball players who try to pursue their dreams

in the face of adversity. Joining the dance company are nine Amis singers and 50 Aboriginal youngsters from three east coast junior high schools.

Liu also recruited composer Gerald Shih (史顯詠) and award-winning cinematographer Deng Wen-bing (鄧文斌) to join her creative team for this production.

While the songs of the Amis — and other Aboriginals — are becoming a trademark of Taiwan, flamenco music and dance are synonymous with Spain for many people, though Andalusian and Gypsy in origin.

Fernandez, nicknamed "El Yiyo," comes from a Gypsy family and has been groomed it seems almost from birth to be a flamenco dancer. However, his formal training began six years ago in Barcelona with Bartolo (Manuel Jimenez), one of city's most famous dancers. The youngster began performing publicly just a year later around Barcelona and began touring with his own group of musicians and singers in 2005.

This weekend's performances at Novel Hall as part of its Dance Series 2009 are his first abroad. Joining him on stage will be his teacher Bartolo and dancers Yolanda Cortes and Jose Andres Cortes, along with musician/singers Joaquin Gomez (El Duende), Manuel (El Zambullo) and Juan Manzano (El Coco) — all of whom are famous flamenco artists in their own right.

While flamenco dancers study and rehearse, and there

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Neo-Classic Dance Company, Land of Clouded Leopard (雲豹之鄉)
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: National Theater (國家戲劇院), 21-1, Zhongshan S Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路21-1號)
ADMISSION: NT\$800 to NT\$1,500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw. NT\$400 seats and Sunday matinee are sold out

WHAT: El Yiyo, New Flamenco Generation
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 8pm and Sunday at 3pm
WHERE: Novel Hall (新舞臺), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號)
ADMISSION: NT\$500 to NT\$2,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw
ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES: Monday at 7:30pm at Pingtung County Art Center (屏東縣藝術館), 427, Heping Rd, Pingtung City (屏東市和平路427號), tickets NT\$200 to NT\$800; Tuesday at 7:30pm at Chiayi Performing Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心演藝廳), 265, Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minsyung Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號), tickets NT\$400 to NT\$1,500

WHAT: Sun-Shier Dance Company (三十舞踏劇場), The Reflection
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm and tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: Experimental Theater (國家戲劇院實驗劇場), 21-1, Zhongshan S Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路21-1號)
ADMISSION: NT\$450, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw. Tonight and Sunday matinee are sold out

are well-known choreographers, at the heart of each performance is improvisation, and it is in this area that El Yiyo excels.

There are two other dance performances to note this weekend. The Sun-Shier Dance Company (三十舞踏劇場) will be performing *The Reflection* (重返空思) in the Experimental Theater, starting tonight. The all-woman company was founded by former Cloud Gate dancer Wu Pi-jung (吳碧蓉) and Chang Hsiu-ping (張秀萍) in 1997. *The Reflection* deals with the inner lives and thoughts of young women today and the images they project to the outside world. Given the name of the piece, it should come as no surprise that mirrors figure heavily in the staging.

Speaking of images and young women, the Pussycat Dolls are stopping in Taipei as part of their world tour. Their concert on Sunday night will be at the Taipei World Trade Center Hall 2, with tickets going from NT\$1,200 to NT\$3,600 (through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw). Why mention this concert here? It's troupe founder Robin Antin's choreography and the women's bodies that attract Pussycat audiences more than their singing.

— DIANE BAKER

RESTAURANTS



Come On! Italy specializes in thin-crust pizza and pasta. PHOTO: NOAH BUCHAN, TAIPEI TIMES

Come on! Italy (來吧！義大利)

Address: 21-1, Ln 107, Fuxing S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市復興南路一段107巷21-1號)
Telephone: (02) 2775-4543 **Average meal:** NT\$440
Open: Daily from 11:30am to 10pm; kitchen closes at 9pm
Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards accepted
On the Net: www.comeonitaly.com.tw

Come On! Italy is a mid-range Italian-style eatery located in the web of alleys behind the Sogo department store on Zhongxiao East Road (忠孝東路) that specializes in thin-crust pizza and pasta dishes.

The restaurant's decor veers towards the simple — unadorned white walls — with cozy flourishes. Its large and honey plush sofas upholstered in gray and emerald and large cushioned chairs are ideal for whiling away a few hours with friends.

We ordered the spinach and cheese pizza (NT\$220) and spaghetti with chicken and four cheeses sauce (NT\$300).

I picked the set meal (add NT\$80), which includes soup or salad, bread roll, drink and dessert, with the pasta because the kitchen didn't have the ingredients to make the caprese salad (NT\$120) I originally wanted. The extra expenditure wasn't worth it.

The pumpkin soup was a bland concoction sprinkled with dried parsley. Adding some apple or ginger might have given it depth. The disappointing first course was offset, but only slightly, by the whole wheat bread that had just come from the oven. I left it on the plate until the pasta arrived.

The creamy sauce was an ambrosial mix of Parmesan, mozzarella, Gorgonzola and ricotta. Its lack of oiliness and robust flavor suggested that the chef emphasized the cheese rather than cream or butter as the sauce's primary ingredients.

Topped with ricotta, garlic and a slightly spicy pepperoni that I ordered as an extra (NT\$50), and a rich and piquant tomato sauce, the thin-crust spinach and cheese pizza was significantly larger than expected.

This dining experience ended, however, as it had begun, with a blunder — this time in the shape of dry and crumbly chocolate sponge cake that had been in the cooler a little too long.

For the price, Come On! Italy is worth a visit. But avoid the set meal as it only detracts from what the restaurant does right: pizza and pasta.

In a strange omission, no wines are to be found on the menu. My server said, however, that customers would not be charged corkage if they brought their own.

Note: Some menu prices on Come On! Italy's Web site have not been updated.

— NOAH BUCHAN



The Peak's shrimp and squid with XO sauce.

PHOTO: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES

The Peak Restaurant Cafe (山頂)

Address: 124 Gezhi Rd, Taipei City (台北市格致路124號)
Telephone: (02) 2862-2358 **Average meal:** NT\$1,200 for two
Open: Daily from 11am to midnight; closes at 1am on weekends and holidays
Details: Chinese and English menu; credit cards not accepted
On the Net: www.thepeak.com.tw

The Peak Restaurant Cafe sits alluringly at the edge of the winding way on the route to Yangmingshan National Park not far from Chinese Culture University (中國文化大學). It sports a stylishly rustic exterior, a pleasant garden and a formal interior dining area, but years of dining at so-called "scenic restaurants" had disillusioned me, and I didn't embark on this culinary journey with particularly high expectations. I was pleasantly surprised. Despite the Western decor, the menu is made up predominantly of Cantonese-style Chinese food, and there was a nice balance between innovation and good old-fashioned fundamentals. Sweets are Western in style and generally quite elaborate, ideal for topping off a romantic afternoon enjoying the beauty of nature. The chef formerly officiated at the banquet kitchen of the Westin Taipei, and the five-star hotel flair can be seen in the elegant presentation.

If the weather is fine, outdoor dining at The Peak is highly recommended. The garden furnishings are of very high quality, and the seats wonderfully comfortable. There is the added bonus of a reclining function so that you can put your feet up and relax over tea after your meal. While the traffic on Gezhi Road (格致路) is invisible, hidden by a high hedge, it is sadly not inaudible.

Even for outside dining, The Peak uses an attractive matte black dinner service ornamented with cherry blossoms, and a wide range of elegant glazed ware that nicely complements the presentation. The fried rice with Chinese toon sprouts (香椿芽炒飯, NT\$220) looked unusual, and its presentation in a pyramid flecked with brightly colored vegetables had an element of flamboyance. It was also flavorful and light.

The shrimp and squid with XO sauce (XO醬燻雙脆, NT\$320), a more traditional dish, was lavish and richly flavored, impressing with the size and crispness of the shrimps. The green of the sugar snaps, with the lustrous red sheen of the XO sauce veiling the lighter colors of the seafood, gave the dish, a simple enough stir-fry, a boisterous energy that made it worth the price tag.

The lavishness of the shrimp contrasted rather poorly with the stinginess of the lamb cutlets (生抽羊小排, NT\$480), which were perfectly tasty but just insufficiently generous in quantity. The Peak is not a particularly cheap eat, but for most of the dishes the food presented more or less justifies the price tag. The lamb unfortunately disappointed on this count.

Service is friendly if not particularly well informed, and on weekends the inexperience of staff shows through as crowds jostle for tables. There is also plenty of action on the afternoon tea front, and for those unwilling to splash out on a full meal, the dessert menu provides plentiful proof of the chef's skill. The most widely touted item is the baked ice cream (脆皮冰心, NT\$280), a hot pastry shell filled with ice cream. Tea and cake sets are NT\$270, and for those who want something stronger, there is a very respectable wine and spirits menu, which is notable for its good range of single malt whiskeys.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW



Tonight at The Wall (這牆), Sounds of Science returns to Taipei for another night of Spanish-style electro with world-class deejay **Impulse** supported by local Taiwanese boys **A-Tao** and **D7**, and with amazing visuals from Delacrew member **VJ Bruno**.

Managing both local and international artists, such as Impulse, SOS is building its community through "a wide range of music projects, from music production to training DJs of the future," says Elisenda Rasero, SOS manager for Taiwan. "[We are] always looking for new talents and new ways of collaborating in art and music."

SOS helps its acts produce and hone unique sounds. Formed in 2007, "Science of sounds explores the newest audio-visual trends while sharing all their knowledge with the rest of the world," says Rasero. "SOS artists experiment with the newest technologies and make reality all the artists' trendy and crazy ideas, with brains and machines."

"We have a professional audio studio in Huantie Arts City, Beijing," said Rasero, "where we are preparing some workshops and classes about sound; how to make a record label or distribution."

SOS focuses "on gaining greater exposure for international DJs in the burgeoning electronic music industry in China and the rest of Asia," said Rasero.

The outfit has promoted parties in Hong Kong, Manila, Shanghai, Beijing and Macau.

Taiwan is an important market for SOS as it has a "more difficult to impress and demanding Taiwanese crowd," said Rasero, "which is rapidly evolving a modern style, with a very urban and cosmopolitan style, that places Taipei as one of the important stops for musicians' tours around the world."

So after waxing lyrical, lets get to the nitty-gritty: the music. Impulse, from Spain, will play a mix of techno dub, tech house and micro tech funk. He has been deejaying for 14 years in places such as France, Israel and Austria. From 2000 to 2001 he was resident of La Terrazza in Barcelona, which at the time UK electronica magazine *Mix Mag* named the world's best club.

Following this, he worked for Ibiza-based Amnesia, one of the biggest nights and attractions on the party island. From 2006 onwards he has concentrated on his own project, Retronouveau, with Javier Orduña, which has seen a vinyl and digital output of 13 releases.

Check out Impulse and his pet project at www.retronouveau.net or www.myspace.com/impulseland.

Delacrew is a collective of digital wizard VJs from Spain who show off a wide range of styles, often leaning toward the trippy and freaky. Only Bruno from the crew will be throwing light this time.

Check out Delacrew's experimental movies at delacrew.net/www2/art-projects and to see their visuals, search for Delacrew in YouTube. For a quick glimpse



DJ Impulse brings the amigos together at The Wall tonight.

PHOTO COURTESY OF XEPO

of an SOS party at White Rabbit in Beijing, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=41PhnEckRtIs. SOS can be found at scienceofsounds.com.

Taiwanese duo A-Tao of Species Records will be spinning minimal tech and D7 brings up the rear with some groove tech before the Impulse takes over.

Science of Sound: Round 2 at The Wall, B1, 200, Roosevelt Road Sec 4, Taipei City (北市羅斯福路四段200號B1), tonight from 11:30pm until 4:30am. Admission is NT\$600 at the door. Advance tickets cost NT\$400 and can be purchased today from Species Records, 2F, 20, Ln 96, Kunming Street (台北市昆明街96巷20號2F), tel: (02) 2375-5518. On the Net: www.the-wall.com.tw.

— TOM LEEMING

[EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT]

Every Wednesday night at the **Cosmopolitan Grill** there's an open mic hosted by Jake Stanley of the acoustic duo **Stoked Pokey**. All are welcome to participate, and participants receive 20 percent off drinks.
 ▶ 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
 ▶ 8:30pm to 11pm every Wednesday
 ▶ No admission fee

EZ5 Live House hosts Mando-pop singers backed by a live band every night. Highlights this week include male crooner **Huang Chung-yuan** (黃中源), performing tonight. **Julia Peng** (彭佳慧), one of the venue's major draws, appears every Tuesday.
 ▶ 211, Anhe Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市安和路二段211號). Call (02) 2738-3995 or visit www.ez5.com.tw for more information
 ▶ Music shows run from 9:45pm to 12:30am
 ▶ Entrance (including two drinks) ranges from NT\$600 to NT\$850, depending on the performer. Call venue for exact fees

Veteran underground rockers **Celluloid** (賽路路), one of the best straight-up rock bands on Taipei's pub circuit, play a rare show tonight at **Underworld** (地下社). Brit-pop act **Tube** (地下鐵) opens. Taking to the stage tomorrow are noise band **Shebang-a** (死蚊子) and **Baimi Zhadan** (白米炸彈), or "white rice bomb," a new band formed by a former member of anarchist punk

band **LTK** (瀟水溪公社). On Wednesday it's new bands **Few Months Ago** and **Happy Rocker**.

▶ 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
 ▶ Shows are from 9:30pm to 11:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays and 9pm to 11pm on Wednesdays
 ▶ Entrance is NT\$300 tonight and tomorrow and includes one drink, NT\$100 on Wednesday

Franz and Friends (城市舞台藝文沙龍), an upscale restaurant and performance space in Taipei's east district, hosts music shows every night. The music tends to play it safe, ranging from wistful love songs and opera to lounge jazz. Weekly highlights include **Denise Juan** (阮丹菁), a former pop singer turned piano teacher, television presenter and traveler, and her band **Sunshine Costa**. Take your night. Tomorrow it's **Buona Sera**, a group featuring soprano **Chang Hsiao-ni** (張曉倪).
 ▶ 25, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號B1). Call (02) 2579-0558 for reservations, or visit www.franzandfriends.com.tw for more information.
 ▶ Minimum charge of NT\$300 on Fridays and Saturdays, one-drink minimum on other nights

Exhibition

Ravenel will hold its spring auction this weekend. On the block are works

by more than 130 of Asia's top modern and contemporary artists in 175 lots.

▶ **Fubon Life Building** (富邦人壽), B2, 108, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段108號B2). On the Net: www.ravenelart.com
 ▶ Previews will be held today and tomorrow from 10am to 7pm. The auction takes place Sunday from 2:30pm to 7:30pm

Galaxy Domain (天河戈壁) is a retrospective exhibit celebrating John Way's (魏樂唐) 90th birthday and features a selection of the artist's abstract and expressionist works that are informed by Chinese brush painting.
 ▶ **William Contemporary Art Space** (威廉當代藝術空間), 356, Tiding Blvd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市提頂大道二段356號). Open Mondays to Saturdays from noon to 8pm. Tel: (02) 8502-5570. On the Net: www.williamartspace.com
 ▶ Until June 25

Cultural Insights From Taiwanese Documentary Photography (台灣美術系列—紀錄攝影中的文化觀) explores Taiwan's cultural values and social environment through 152 photographs covering the past century. The images are culled from the museum's permanent collection.
 ▶ **National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts** (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 July 19

A Thousand, Thousand Churning Waves — The Legendary Red Cliff Heritage (捲起千堆雪—赤壁文物特展) is an exhibit on the Battle of Red Cliffs (赤壁之戰), a famous engagement fought at the end of the Han Dynasty. The National Palace Museum revisits this legendary event with historical documents, books, works of art and prints depicting the period and its people.
 ▶ **National Palace Museum** (國立故宮博物院), 221, Zhishan Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段221號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 9am to 5pm; open until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2881-2021. On the Net: www.npm.gov.tw
 ▶ Until August 31

Pan Ping-yu (潘鴻玉) weaves together a variety of media such as fabric, wire, colored beads and spangles into dreamlike sculptures in **Eternal Nature** (永恆是情景的回復).
 ▶ **Taipei Fine Arts Museum** (TFAM), 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; open until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656. On the Net: www.tfam.museum
 ▶ Until June 28

Tu Pei-shih (杜曉詩) investigates the vagaries of human nature in her solo exhibition **Happy Bubble Life** (快樂泡沫生活). Tu uses collage as her primary medium.
 ▶ **Project Fulfill Art Space** (就在藝術空間), 2, Alley 45, Ln 147, Xinyi Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市信義路三段147巷

45弄2號). To arrange a viewing call (02) 2325-0023
 ▶ Until June 21

Group exhibition **Matter and Medium** (物質·中界) features sculpture and installation work by six contemporary Taiwanese artists.
 ▶ **My Humble House Art Gallery**, B1, 12, Zhongxiao E Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路一段12號B1). Call (02) 3322-3833. On the Net: www.myhumblehouse.com
 ▶ Until June 15

Taiwan's plants, animals and folk customs serve as Hsiao Mei's (蕭嫻) visual language in her solo exhibit **Here Is Where We Meet** (飄遊·境遇). The show features more than 30 of her dreamlike oil paintings created between 2003 and this year.
 ▶ **Taipei Fine Arts Museum** (TFAM), 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; open until 8:30pm on Saturdays. Tel: (02) 2595-7656. On the Net: www.tfam.museum
 ▶ Until June 26

Japanese artist Maruyama Junko uses recycled materials such as cooking oil and plastic bags for installations and sculpture in her solo exhibit **Cancam**.
 ▶ **Taipei National University of the Arts—Kuandu Museum of Fine 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) 2893-8871
 ▶ Until June 21