

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2009 • TAIPEI TIMES

POP STOP



This past week saw floods of tears shed — some heartbroken, others heartfelt, and all on the account of show business.

Canto-pop star Eason Chan (陳奕迅) blubbered his way through a concert in Guangzhou last weekend, in the midst of swirling rumors of personal troubles.

While singing the song Shall We Talk, a tune about family relationships, Chan lost his composure and burst into tears, and never quite snapped out it for the rest of the gig.

The Oriental Sunday offered a rumor to explain the Chan's onstage breakdown: the singer may be under financial strain because of his ill father's high medical bills.

Meanwhile, comeback comedian Chu Ko Liang (豬哥亮) cried buckets through a recent episode of his new, highly anticipated variety show on FTV (民視), Chu Ko Hui She (豬哥會社).

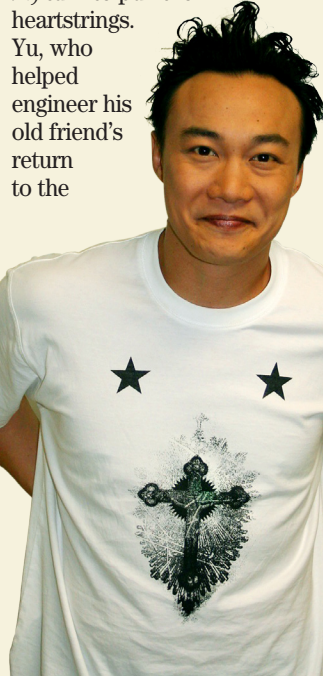
Then it was comedian-turned-legislator Yu Tian's (余天) turn to pull the heartstrings. Yu, who helped engineer his old friend's return to the

Guey Lun-mei, above, and Jay Chou are everyone's favorite on-screen couple. Eason Chan, below, is feeling the heat.

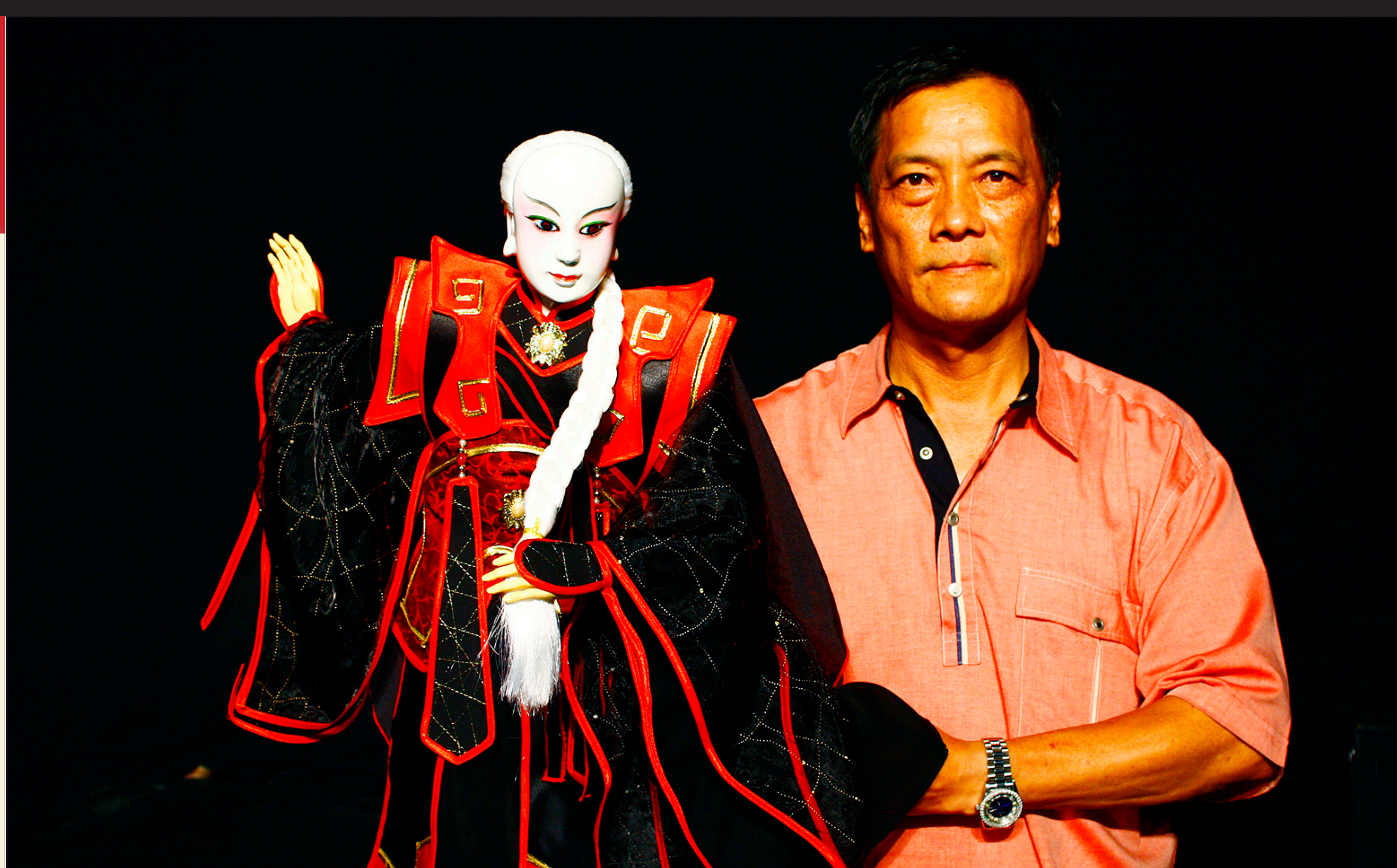
entertainment business, sang Judy Chiang's (江蕙) classic song Wife (家後) as a tribute to Chu Ko Liang's wife. A visibly moved Chu Ko Liang managed to joke afterwards, "you did that just to make me cry."

She described rushing to Taipei's Songshan Airport upon hearing that her father was in critical condition, only to find that all flights had been delayed because of thunderstorms. She tearfully pleaded airport personnel to let a flight go to her hometown of Taitung, but to no avail.

In less tear-jerking news, pop heartthrob Jay Chou (周杰倫) and actress Guey Lun-mei (桂綸鎂) won a poll for the top couple in Chinese-language movies, reports the Apple Daily.



Looking for a break into showbiz? Janet Hsieh (謝怡芬) is searching for a co-host for the next season of her hit show Fun Taiwan, reports the Liberty Times.



Puppets conquer all

“We’re keeping tradition alive by keeping up with the times,” said Huang Wen-lang (黃文郎), manager of the Wu Zhou Yuan Puppet Theater Troupe (五洲團掌中劇團).

Referring to the 10 performances he and his troupe will be giving at the Red House Theater over the next three weeks.

Having built on a tradition developed by Huang's grandfather, puppet master and national treasure Huang Hai-tai (黃海岱), that saw the emergence of one of the country's most distinctive art forms, the Taichung-based group remains one of the biggest names in Taiwanese glove puppet theater.

Huang leads what is generally billed as the Second Troupe (第二團) of Wu Zhou Yuan, which since its formation under Huang's father Huang Chun-ching (黃俊卿) in 1975 has been acclaimed as the “king of theater puppetry.”

“There are two main kinds of puppet theater,” Huang said, explaining the inspiration for the current program. “There are free outdoor performances, mostly at temples, and theater performances, where you have to buy a ticket to get in.

The shows at the Red House Theater are being touted as a return to the golden age of theater-based puppet shows, and will show off the eclectic nature of Taiwanese puppetry.

Huang said the show Conquering All Under Heaven (爭霸天下) series布袋戲 is drawn from his father's repertoire, though he has rewritten and condensed it for a contemporary audience.

“We keep the tradition, but now this troupe is in its third generation. Changes have been made. We have sped up the pacing of the story and added all kinds of special effects,” Huang said.

The puppets too have taken on a more contemporary appearance, with styles that have fed into the contemporary cosplay fashion trend.



Huang's troupe shares many similarities with the Pili (霹靂布袋戲) television puppet shows, run by another branch of the Huang family.

“We have stuck to stage shows,” Huang said, “carrying on a family tradition that goes back nearly a century. We want to keep stage puppets alive, and this is part of the reason for these performances.”

Huang believes the vitality of Taiwanese puppetry lies in its ability to absorb all kinds of influences. “In China, they have tried to maintain traditional styles, but here [in Taiwan], puppetry has shown incredible imagination, with all kinds of weird stuff like three-headed monsters and such making an appearance on stage ... Some of the characters even have neon

lights worked into their costumes.” The martial arts trilogy Conquering All Under Heaven tells the tale of a war between good and evil forces, which battle to obtain a sutra that contains the secret to conquering the whole world.

“The kind of language used in these shows is not the sort of Taiwanese you can learn at school,” Huang said. “It's getting really popular with kids down south, though it's a bit more difficult up here [in Taipei].”

In conjunction with the performances, an exhibition of items from the heyday of glove puppetry will be held at the Red House Theater, including antique puppets used by puppet master Huang Hai-tai, posters, vinyl records of sound tracks and stage props.

— IAN BARTHOLOMEW
Huang Wen-lang, above, manager of the Wu Zhou Yuan Puppet Theater Troupe.

TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

JULY 17 TO JULY 23

- 1 Jam Hsiao (謙敬騰) and Princess (王妃) with 33.1 percent of sales
- 2 Compilation album Faith Map with 13.65%

- 3 Jerry Yan (言承旭) and Freedom, Secret (多出來的自由: 秘密自選) with 10.03%
- 4 Nylon Chen (陳乃榮) and Paradise with 9.56%
- 5 Ariel Lin (林依晨) and Meeting Happiness (幸福遇見) with 6.05%

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES



Theater

Taipei Children's Art Festival (台北兒童藝術節) ends this weekend with a series of performances that include A Good Time at Antique Le-Le's Music Box (古董店的幸福時光-樂樂的音樂盒) by Shiny Shoes Children's Theatre (鞋子兒童實驗劇團).

Venues include Family Theater at Taipei City Hall (台北市政府親子劇場), Da-an Forest Park (大安森林公園) and Kuandu Nature Park Auditorium (關渡自然公園多媒體演講廳).

available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

The latest musical by Tafel Musical Theater (大風劇團), It's a Wonderful Life (美好的人生), is a light-hearted comedy about four young thespians pursuing their dreams while struggling to make ends meet in Taipei.

Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$3,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe (河洛歌子戲) gives Taiwanese opera a feminist touch in Love and Hatred in Mountain Fortress (山寨情仇), which tells the tale of a woman's struggle against patriarchal society.

Le Sacred du Printemps (春之祭), Stravinsky's celebrated ballet, is Chamber Ballet Taipei's (台北市內芭蕾) latest production.

Classical music Paganini Festival in Taiwan (帕格尼尼大賽四位首獎得主聯合大師班暨系列音樂會) includes concerts and master classes that feature emerging local violinists Lu Siqing (呂思清), Huang Bin (黃濱), Huang Mengla (黃蒙拉) and Ning Feng (寧峰).

Concerts today and Wednesday at 7:30pm; daily master classes start tomorrow and end on Aug. 7 Today at the International Convention Center of the Chang Yung-fa Foundation Building (財團法人張榮發基金會國際會議中心), 11 Zhongshan S Rd, Taipei City

Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$1,500 for today's recital, NT\$800 to NT\$2,000 for Wednesday's concert, and NT\$250 for master class audience tickets, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

HIGHLIGHT

Danish band Mew brings its grandiose art rock to Taipei this Wednesday for a show at Nangang 101 (南港101). The trio has enjoyed wide acclaim from major indie music publications such as Web site Pitchfork.com, which praised its 2006 release And the Glass Handed Kites as “cutting-edge elegant.”



Tickets are NT\$1,600 and NT\$2,600 in advance, available at The Wall (這牆), B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City

part in the festival, including Club of Five, The University of North Texas A Cappella and Fred Sjøberg leading the Taipei Philharmonic Choir with mezzo soprano Shih I-chiao (石易巧) and tenor Mu Fu-chun (穆福淳) in a performance of Argentine composer Luis Enriquez Bacalov's Misa Tango.

Lost in Wonderland — Guess Who I Am (兒童樂園 — 猜猜我是誰) sees the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra (台北市愛樂管弦樂團) continue its series of children's concerts with a quartet composed of violin, cello, piano and flute performing music from cartoon and movie favorites, including the theme from ET and The Mickey Mouse March.

The Other Side, a new nightclub opened by Ling Wei (凌麗), owner of the capital's long-standing Roxy venues, has its grand opening tonight. The new club is a “party-until-the-sun-comes-up” spot like one of

Ling's old ventures, the recently closed Roxy Vibe. But The Other Side promises a classier atmosphere, with sofa seating and a modern lounge interior befitting of its locale in Taipei's East District (東區). House DJs will spin classic dance and rock from bands like Nirvana, The Ting Tings, Oasis, the Cure and Michael Jackson. Entrance is free tonight.

Tonight at The Wall (這牆) it's io, a group of Chinese-Canadians from Vancouver, and a set of new rockers on the scene, The Little. Tomorrow post-rock group Aphasia shares the bill with folk rocker Europa Huang (黃建喬). On Sunday pop singer Fan Fan (范瑋琪), who launched her new album F One at the venue several weeks ago, returns for an encore performance.

Contemporary

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