

AROUND TOWN

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Migration Music Festival goes south this year

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

Migration puts the ‘world’ in world music

The eighth Migration Music Festival (流浪之歌音樂節) gears up this weekend with a series of lectures and workshops to lay the groundwork for its big opening concert at Bitan (碧潭) in Taipei County next Friday, which will be followed by two days of concerts at Taipei City's Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂).

This year, the theme of the festival is “South.” According to project coordinator Alice Lin (林怡瑄), this theme evolved from the development of *Growing Up Wild* (野生), the most recent album by Golden Melody winner Lin Sheng-xiang (林生祥) published by Trees Music & Art (大大樹音樂圖像).

Lin is an artist based in Meinung (美濃), Kaohsiung County, and got his start with the creation of the protest band Labor Exchange (交工樂隊). The cover art for his new album features wood-block prints by Cantonese artist Wang Liang (王亮), whose work will also feature in an exhibition associated with the festival (tomorrow until Thursday at Taipei Artist Village).

“Both these artists are from the geographic south of their countries ... In many countries the south tends to be more culturally diverse and have more complex ethnic interactions. In Taiwan, we in the north often talk about ‘southerners’ and see them as somewhat different ... so we wanted to explore this idea of a southern perspective,” Lin said.

One of the international groups that will be visiting is Filipino band Nityalila, which blends together classical Indian music with Filipino folk music and the environmental concerns of sing-songwriter Nityalila Saulo. Lo Cor de la Plana comes from Marseilles and seeks to revive Occitan culture and language, which was once widely spoken in parts of southern France. Also from Marseilles is Sam Karpenia, who brings together *rebetiko* (a kind of Greek urban folk), flamenco and Provençal musical traditions. Kol Oud Tof draws on the musical traditions of Israel, Morocco and memories of the Arab expansion into the Iberian peninsula to create its own unique sound, while Habib Koite from Mali is noted for a “pan-Malian” musical sound. Along with Lin Sheng-xiang, these artists will perform at the Grand Opening on Oct. 2, and give individual concerts at Zhongshan Hall on Oct. 3 and Oct. 4.

Another part of the festival that will take place in Chiayi has been titled Project South (南計畫). It includes a collaborative project between Taiwanese artists in the *beiguan* (北管) group Qing He Xuan (慶和軒) and *pipa* (琵琶) specialist Chung Yu-feng (鍾玉鳳), with Japanese guitarist Ken Othake and Finnish folk musician Pekko Kappi, who have all been living in the town of Budai (布袋), Chiayi County, for the last month working on a musical fusion that will be presented at the concert in Chiayi on Sunday and at the final

concert in Taipei on Oct. 4.

Migration Music Festival is largely the result of the efforts of Trees Music & Art founder Chung She-fong (鍾適芳) to promote world music in Taiwan. It achieved significant success with free concerts in Da-an Park.

After the 2007 festival was catastrophically disrupted by bad weather, the festival has been struggling to recreate its earlier success in a more reliable indoor environment. This has necessitated replacing the hugely popular free outdoor concerts with indoor performances. “It has been difficult to overcome the expectation that the shows should be free,” Lin said, but through the use of preliminary lectures and demonstrations, as well as the sale of cheap one- and two-day concert passes, she hopes that this hurdle can be overcome.

Lin said that the Migration Music Festival, while primarily designed as a way of introducing the rich variety of non-mainstream music to Taiwan, also takes an active part in promoting greater multi-cultural awareness in Taiwan. “This is particularly the case with the increasing presence of foreign brides and domestic help,” Lin said. Nityalila’s performance has been scheduled for the afternoon of Oct. 4, when organizers hope that Filipino domestic workers might be best able to attend. Special ticket prices of NT\$150 for Filipino nationals will be available for that concert.



FESTIVAL NOTES:

WHAT: Migration Music Festival (流浪之歌音樂節)
WHEN: Tomorrow until Oct. 4
ON THE NET: www.treesmusic.com/festival/2009mmf



Migration Music Festival participants include, clockwise from left, Sam Karpenia, Nityalila, Lo Cor de la Plana, Lin Sheng-xiang and Habib Koite.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TREES MUSIC & ART

EVENTS:

WHAT: Traveler's Tales/Dialogue/Poetry South (旅者說故事・對話・南詩・市民工作坊)
WHEN: Tomorrow and Sunday
WHERE: The Bamboo Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村・幽竹廳), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號)
DETAILS: Subjects include *The Development of New Folk Music in Southern China* by Chiu Dali (邱大立), *The Independent Music Scene of the Philippines* by Nityalila Saulo and *An Overview of Vietnamese Poetry and Song* by La Thi Y Van
ADMISSION: Free

WHAT: Project South (南計畫)
WHEN: Sunday
WHERE: Chiayi Performing Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心), 265 Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minsyong Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號)
ADMISSION: NT\$300 for one concert, NT\$500 for a day pass (total of three concerts)

WHAT: Workshops (市民工作坊)
WHEN: Monday to Thursday
WHERE: Bamboo Room, Taipei Artist Village (台北國際藝術村・幽竹廳), 7 Beiping E Rd, Taipei City (台北市北平東路7號)
DETAILS: Subjects include *The South: The Life and Thoughts of a Young Boy in Southern China* by Wang Liang (王亮) and *What's Cooking? Israeli Music as a Melting Pot* by Dubi Lenz. There will also be musical lectures by Nityalila Saulo, Lo Cor de la Plana, Lin Sheng-xiang and Kol Oud Tof
ADMISSION: Free

WHAT: Grand Opening Concert
WHEN: Oct. 2
WHERE: Bitan, Xindian, Taipei County (台北縣新店碧潭高灘地)
ADMISSION: Free

WHAT: Main Stage Performance (主舞台演出)
WHEN: Oct. 3 and Oct. 4
WHERE: Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂), 98 Yanping S Rd, Taipei City (台北市延平南路98號)
ADMISSION: NT\$500 for one concert, NT\$900 for a one-day pass and NT\$1,500 for a two-day pass (four concerts on Oct. 3 and three concerts on Oct. 4). Tickets for Nityalila's concert on Oct. 4 are NT\$150 for Filipino nationals

The stigmata of Herbie Greenfish

Australian electro band Godswounds is one bassist short of a circus

BY ALITA RICKARDS
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Sometimes a stage gimmick is actually born out of necessity. The frontman for Godswounds, the new Australian electro band currently touring Taiwan, reaches over from his keyboard to strum the bass mounted on a stand in center stage as the guitarist (who was just playing the bass) goes back to playing his guitar. They have no choice — they couldn't find a bassist before going on tour.

“We tried me just playing all the bass lines on the keyboard but it robbed the music of the visceral edge the bass gives it,” said Lachlan Kerr,



God in the Game Boy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GODSWOUNDS

aka Herbie Greenfish, keyboardist, vocalist and sometime bass player. “Apparently this whole dancing car wreck is really fun to watch, so we're going to try to maintain it as long as it seems healthy and not forced.”

Kerr's experience of launching the

Third Eye Theater Company in Australia and writing, directing and producing plays there prior to his first live music performance in May this year (at Candy's Apartment in Sydney) has given him an idea of what works on stage.

He says the dynamics of the three-

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Godswounds with New Hong Kong Hair City and Reider
WHEN: Tomorrow at 10pm
WHERE: Light Lounge, B1, 85, Huamei W St Sec 1, Taichung City (台中市華美西街一段85號)
ADMISSION: NT\$300

piece band are “akin to ballet.” They share duties on what they refer to as Ghost Bass after undergoing a series of “false leads, fall-throughs and confronting responses” while looking for a bassist to come on tour in Taiwan.

“I guess the reality was it was a bit of a scary notion going to a foreign country and taking on an audience and a culture you know very little, if anything, about,” said Kerr. “A lot of musicians also don't seem to have a perception of the middle ground of being in a band. There seems to be a common perception that one day you're fiddling about with samples in Garage Band and a week later you're a millionaire.”

The trio is happy to play the smaller shows that comprise the middle ground, with gigs at pubs and live houses from

Taipei to Kaohsiung and most places in between scheduled from now until mid-December. Their first show was at the Lost Lagoon party in Wulai at the end of last month, and they have gigs scheduled for Bliss, Riverside Cafe, Tone 56 and Underworld in Taipei, Light Lounge and 89K in Taichung, Join Us in Kaohsiung, and at the Red Wolf in Tainan. The music is quite bizarre, with more than a passing nod to video game culture — more of a total physical response, in fact, with Nintendo-infused sound. Kerr, a huge Kaiju fan, said “there is a whole sub-culture of musicians mining this field at the moment.” Called chip-tune artists, they take Nintendo Game Boys and “use specially made software that allows them to turn the world's most successful handheld gaming unit into a

compositional or performance tool.” In Australia he played an actual Game Boy live, but said that melodically, he “gets a lot more freedom from sampling the instrument and stretching its sounds across an 88-note keyboard.”

Nonetheless, the music is composed quite traditionally, with parts given out to the players to be performed after it is written. As inspiration for the music he cites his obsession with the Large Hadron Collider and quantum physics, and “of course, Shigeru Miyamoto [Japanese video game designer] and 80s-90s video game culture.”

“Songs tend to mutate when you play them for [a] while,” Kerr said. “We do a cover of a song by an Australian band called Fage Panique that seems to get stranger every time we play it.”