

CULTURE

M O N D A Y , O C T O B E R 2 6 , 2 0 0 9

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[THE WEEKENDER]

Dance Forum
Taipei mixes
its blessingsBY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER

The Dance Forum Taipei's (舞蹈空間) 20th anniversary program at Novel Hall on Saturday night was a mixed bill, and as it turned out, a mixed achievement.

The program opened with *Grace* by Japanese choreographer Toru Shimazaki, a 20-minute work that was a complete departure from his last piece for the company, *Ran*, which was all pulsating music, loud colors and frenetic energy.

Grace was far quieter, more contemplative and in the end, a far richer work. Shimazaki said he was inspired both by the music, a piano score by fellow Japanese Ryuichi Sakamoto overlaid with electronic crinkles, crackling and pops by German composer Alva Noto, and the art of origami.

Like origami, the movements in *Grace* were all about touching, folding and the occasional outstretched limb. Instead of sharp angles, there were gentle curves: an arm folded over a leg, a hand lifting an extended leg, a head resting lightly on a stomach before a turn, a light lift and an easy sinking to the floor. Instead of a driving beat, the choreography rode along with the score like a swimmer drifting in the gentle swells of the ocean, rising and falling and rolling. The softness extended to the staging: a simple white floor, black backdrop and a diffused spotlight that created a misty area for the dancers to work in.

Shimazaki created a series of duets and pas de trois that finally folded back into the opening image — a male dancer laying outstretched on the floor, a woman resting on top of him with one leg arching

upward. The sheer serenity of the piece masks the craftsmanship and attention to detail that created it.

The second piece on the program, *Eastern Wind, Too* (東風乍現), by Yang Ming-lung (楊銘隆), was a reworking of the first piece in his *Eastern Current* trilogy, *Eastern Wind*, which premiered in 2002. This new work was crisply executed by its nine dancers, but about halfway through the series of tableaux I felt like I had seen everything that Yang had to say, and by the time the first dancer glided across the stage on a pair of black skate shoes, I knew I had.

Clad in simple jumpsuits in muted earth tones, whited faces with a square of light red across their eyes, the blank-faced dancers easily portrayed the stringless puppets Yang envisioned. While there were no strings, some of the women had rope harnesses over their jumpsuits so they could be picked up and moved around.

While Shimazaki's piece was all soft curves, Yang's was all sharp angles. A stiff leg moved another leg, a straight arm lifted another's arm, a "puppet" was lifted or spun, the dancers tiptoed jerkily onto the stage.

Perhaps if I hadn't already seen the puppet/mannequin metaphor played out so brilliantly the week before in Jo Kanamori's *NINA* or seen Bulareyaung Pagarlawa's (布拉瑞揚) *Ode to Joy, Chapter I* last month, I would have been more content.

Eastern Wind, Too would be a stronger piece if it was whittled down, but judging from the applause, I appeared to be about the only one in the audience who thought so.

Dancers perform Yang Ming-lung's *Eastern Wind, Too*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DANCE FORUM TAIPEI

Left: Brian May, left, and Elena Vidal, authors of *A Village Lost and Found*.Top: Thomas Richard Williams' *The Weir*.Above: Thomas Richard Williams' *The Ferry*. PHOTOS: AFP

Queen rocker revives 3D history

Brian May turned sleuth to find an English village pictured in 3D photos taken by Victorian photographer Thomas Richard Williams

BY ROBIN MILLARD
AFP, HINTON WALDRIST, ENGLAND

Brian May, the Queen guitarist and expert astronomer, has ventured into another dimension, bringing the idyllic world of 1850s rural England back to life in vivid color 3D.

The 62-year-old rock star's childhood fascination with three-dimensional pictures set him on a lifetime's quest to find an unknown village captured by the equally mysterious Victorian photographer Thomas Richard Williams.

While penning global hits like *We Will Rock You*, *The Show Must Go On* and *Flash*, Freddie Mercury's band mate was also on a mission to rescue Williams' stereo images of joyful country life, which leap out at the viewer in 3D.

The guitar wizard tracked down the tiny Oxfordshire village of Hinton Waldrist, deep in the southern English countryside, and scoured the world for the 59 images that give a unique glimpse into rustic life 150 years ago.

A *Village Lost and Found*, which May co-wrote with Spanish photo historian Elena Vidal, is an annotated book of Williams' series, *Scenes in Our Village*.

"I got enraptured with stereo very early on," May said as he launched his comprehensive work in Hinton Waldrist.

"To me, it was magic. I thought 'why doesn't everybody do this all the time, why do people take mono pictures?'"

"I started collecting stereo cards, I realized you could get stereo cards right back to the dawn of photography."

Two pictures taken eye-width apart, when laid side by side and seen through a viewer, produce a 3D image.

Williams photographed the village where he spent treasured childhood days, capturing a disappearing way of life in 3D and in color. However, he kept the name of Hinton Waldrist secret.

Hooked, rock god May determined to solve the riddle of the lost world of Williams.

"I kept driving around for 30 years wondering where this village was, looking for the church spire," he said. An Internet appeal and the promise of Queen goodies eventually identified Hinton Waldrist.

"It's really a labor of love," May said. "I've always been fascinated with people who could tread the line between art for its own sake and art for an audience."

"We feel these photographs speak to us just as strongly in the 21st century. It's a potent reminder that perhaps the essence of life can be found in simple things."

May's work is a timely reminder of how 3D magic was created long before today's high-tech wizardry.

Fujifilm's 3D cameras are fresh on the market, *Titanic* director James Cameron's three-dimensional science-fiction movie *Avatar* is due out in December and 3D television is on the horizon.

"It's a pure coincidence but this does seem to be the time of renaissance of 3D," May said.

However, he added: "You can get good stereo effects in the cinema, but there is nothing quite equal to the Victorian experience of a proper stereoscope."

Vidal, who first teamed up with May in 1997, said

Williams' masterpiece stood the test of time in the new 3D age.

"People are still very, very surprised when they see what the effect is," the art conservator said.

"You really feel as if you could just walk into the image and meet all these people."

"Williams was a pioneer photographer. His photographs are so beautiful and also technically so perfect," she said.

"It's a timeless message that in spite of the difference in time, we all have the same questions, worries and things that make us happy."

The multi-talented May designed the patent-pending OWL viewer, which comes with the US\$60 book — the latest string to his bow.

Not only did he build his unique Red Special guitar with his father, May is a doctor of astrophysics, co-author of *Bang! The Complete History of the Universe*, a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the co-creator of hit rock theatrical *We Will Rock You* and the chancellor of Liverpool John Moores University.

Accustomed to playing giant stadiums, May was equally at home in a country barn presenting his work to the villagers.

"This, for us, is the fulfillment of a dream: to bring what we think is a priceless work of art home to its birthplace and to a new audience in the 21st century," he said.

"This isn't the biggest gig I've ever done, but it's one of the more exciting ones."

TOP FIVE
MANDARIN ALBUMS

OCT. 16 TO OCT. 22



1 Elva Hsiao (蕭亞軒) and *Diamond Candy* (鑽石糖) with **19.14** percent of sales

2 Delia, aka Ring (丁噐) and *Night Cat* (夜貓) with **8.26%**

3 Kuo Shu-yao (郭書瑤), aka Yao-Yao (瑤瑤) and *Hug of Love: Farewell to 18* (愛的抱抱: 告別18歲) with **6.24%**

4 Khalil Fong (方大同) and *Timeless* (可啦思刻) with **5.3%**

5 Joseph Cheng (鄭元暢) and *Chang a Song* (變一首歌) with **4.49%**

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



Noriko Sakai's husband has spilled the beans on the pair's drug use.

PHOTO: AFP

The husband of disgraced Japanese pop star **Noriko Sakai** on Wednesday told a court of their drug use, fueling a media frenzy that has gripped the nation since their arrests in August.

Yuichi Takaso, 41, told the Tokyo District Court that he was carrying illegal "stimulants" at the time of his arrest on Aug. 3 because he was planning to use them later with his wife.

Takaso and Sakai reportedly used methamphetamines on a regular basis.

"If I left it at home, I thought that my wife Noriko might use it alone without me watching," he told the court, adding that he was concerned about the dangers posed by Sakai's unsupervised drug use.

"I was thinking that we could meet up later and do it together," he said.

Takaso's arrest eventually resulted in drug charges against 38-year-old Sakai, shocking the Japanese public which has seen her grow from a teenage pop idol to become an actress in high-rating television shows and films.

Further adding to the drama of the case, Sakai, who is also well known in China, Taiwan and South Korea, went on the run for about a week before turning herself in to police on Aug. 8 and admitting to habitual drug use.

More than 1,500 people queued for hours in front of the courthouse to join a lottery for 42 gallery seats to see Takaso, a self-described professional surfer who was unknown to the public before his arrest, testify.

Sakai will have her first court hearing this week, which is likely to attract even more local media interest.

Her enduring fame and girl-next-door image have won her advertising contracts with carmaker Toyota, government public awareness campaigns and a role in a 1993

celebrity-studded commercial against youth drug abuse.

Michael Jackson fans will get a tantalizing glimpse of what might have been tomorrow as the movie charting the tragic singer's final concert rehearsals

makes its long-awaited premiere.

More than 100 hours of behind-the-scenes footage for Jackson's aborted comeback have been distilled into a two-hour film being hyped by organizers as the last ever performance by the *King of Pop*.

Jackson family members and stars are expected to descend on a red carpet at Los Angeles' Nokia Theater, one of more than 15 simultaneous premieres being held in across five continents.

The movie — *This Is It* — will go on a limited two-week release in theaters worldwide from Wednesday, with advance tickets in several countries selling out within days of going on sale last month.

"It's a movie about rehearsing for a concert that never happened," Sony Pictures co-chairman **Amy Pascal** told *Entertainment Weekly*. "It's heartbreaking and inspiring all at the same time."

Jackson, who died on June 25 aged 50, had spent the previous four months rehearsing in Los Angeles for a grueling series of 50 concerts scheduled to begin at London's O2 Arena in July.

More than 800,000 tickets for the concerts had been sold, with organizers promising one of the "most expensive and technically advanced"



Rome Film Festival winners, from left: Italian actor Sergio Castellitto; Helen Mirren; Italian filmmaker Giorgio Diritti; director Nicolò Donato.

PHOTO: AFP

live shows ever.

Jackson was putting the finishing touches to the show at the time of his death, which authorities in Los Angeles have ruled a homicide.

Film director **Roman Polanski** could face two years in prison if extradited to the US after fleeing sentencing in California on child sex charges in 1978, the Swiss justice ministry said. "The US want him to be extradited for sexual intercourse with a minor. This carries a maximum sentence of two years under US law," justice ministry spokesman Folco Galli said on Friday.

A Bahamian lawmaker who caused a judge to order the retrial of two people accused of trying to extort US\$25 million from actor **John Travolta**

was just repeating a "rumor" when he prematurely announced an acquittal verdict, his lawyer said on Thursday. Supreme Court Senior Justice

Anita Allen ordered a retrial late on Wednesday after the politician, **Picewell Forbes**, announced in a live TV and radio broadcast at a party convention that the accused had been cleared. But he did so before the jury in the five-week-old high-profile trial had formally issued any verdict.

Brotherhood, Danish director **Nicolò Donato's** tale of a homosexual love affair within a neo-Nazi gang that targets gays and Arabs, took top honors on Friday at the Rome international film festival.

"We've been working hard for this movie for four years," Donato said as he accepted the Golden Marc' Aurelio award from jury president **Milos Forman**. "This is a dream come true."

Oscar-winning British actress **Helen Mirren** won best actress for her role as the wife of 19th-century Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy in **Michael Hoffman's** *The Last Station*.

Best actor went to Italy's **Sergio Castellitto** for *Alza la Testa* by **Alessandro Angelini**, in which he portrayed a father whose sole dream is to see his son become a prize fighter.

— AGENCIES