

AROUND TOWN 13

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2009

Legend Lin Dance Theatre's productions
are like nothing audiences
will see in Taiwan — or anywhere else

BY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER

Great expectations

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: Legend Lin Dance Theatre, *Song of Pensive Beholding*
WHEN: Dec. 18 and Dec. 19 at 7:30pm, Dec. 19 and Dec. 20 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)
TICKETS: NT\$500 to NT\$1,600, available at NTCH box office or www.artsticket.com.tw.
DETAILS: Saturday (Dec. 19) night and Sunday (Dec. 20) matinee shows are sold out

It has been three years since Legend Lin Dance Theatre (無垢舞蹈劇場) was last seen at the National Theater, performing an extract from *Hymne aux Fleurs Qui Passent* (花神祭春舞). It's been four years since the company's last full-length performance at the theater, in the 2006 revival of *Mirrors de Vie* (鏡). And it has been eight long years since troupe founder and artistic director Lin Li-chen (林麗珍) has presented a new work.

So it is easy to understand the anticipation generated by the National CKS Cultural Center's (Taiwan Performing Arts Center) announcement that Lin was creating a new work as part of its flagship production series, following up on last year's *Mackay* — *The Black Bearded Bible Man* (黑鬍馬偕) and Robert Wilson's *Orlando* this year.

Tickets for Lin's new production, *Song of Pensive Beholding* (Chants de la Destinée, 韻), which will be staged from Dec. 18 to Dec. 20, have been going fast. The Saturday night performance sold out immediately, leading the company and the National Theater to add a fourth show, a matinee on Saturday. Sunday's matinee is now sold out, as are the top seats for the Friday night and Saturday afternoon.

Why all the fuss? Quite simply because Lin's works are like nothing else you will see in Taiwan — or anywhere else. Taiwan has a number of good dance and theater companies, several with strong international reputations, such as Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集), U-Theatre (優人神鼓) and Stan Lai's (賴聲川) Performance Workshop (表演工作坊), that have developed almost cult-like followings. But Lin's productions are in a class of their own. More than just dance, they engage all your senses and transport you into a very earthy, very primitive world.

Lin, a Keelung native, grew up going to Taoist temple ceremonies and Taiwanese festivals, and there are strong

religious and mystical elements to her work. She says the theater is like a palace for paying tribute to the god of nature.

She is quiet, saying more through gestures and her eyes than words. Her choreography is similarly minimalist; it can take minutes for a dancer to move from point A to point B — or shift their center of gravity. But then there will be an explosive burst of energy, an explosion that is as much a relief to the audience it is for the dancers.

She says she prefers to say little about her work because she wants audiences to draw their own conclusions. Asked to sum up *Song of Pensive Beholding*, Lin said the theme was “to see the cruelty that comes from human beings' desire, that through civilization and economic development we have lost the most precious part of us. We dare not think of it, we can't go back, we have to keep going forward, waiting for something to happen.”

Once again, Lin explores the relationship between heaven, earth and mankind that she began with *Mirrors de Vie*. *Song of Pensive Beholding* is the final work in the trilogy. In it, she tells a story about a group of eagles, using the birds as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of humans and nature.

Lin has worked with the same people, her “tribe,” almost from the beginning. In addition to her dancers and musicians, the beautiful costumes, with a strong Miao hill-tribe influence, were designed by Academy Award-winner Tim Yip (葉錦添), while the lighting was done by Cheng Kuo-yang (鄭國揚) and the sets and props by Chang Wang (張忘).

The five elements of life — fire, earth, water, air and metal — are represented in the costumes and the set, which will be, as usual, pretty sparse.

Wang said working with Lin is always a challenge but he is willing to drop whatever else he is doing when she calls. Once you have seen one of Lin's works, it's easy to understand why.

Aiming for a new legacy

Legacy, a new rock concert venue in Taipei, intends to raise the live music scene up a notch and provide a boost for Taiwanese pop music

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Cui Jian in concert

WHEN: Tonight at 8pm, doors at open at 7pm

WHERE: Legacy Taipei, located at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山 1914) (formerly known as Huashan Culture Park, 華山文化園區), Center Five Hall (中五館), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)

ON THE NET: www.legacy.com.tw

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$1,800 in advance or NT\$2,000 at the door, available through ERA ticketing and online at www.ticket.com.tw

Go big or go home. This is the attitude behind Legacy Taipei (傳音樂展演空間), a new rock venue located at the Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), formerly known as Huashan Culture Park, (華山文化園區). The 1,000-person capacity “live house” opens tonight with Chinese rock legend Cui Jian (崔健).

Cui, who is making his second appearance in Taiwan, launches this month's live music program, which features cream-of-the-crop local performers and several international acts.

Taking to the stage tomorrow are Hakka singer-songwriter Lin Sheng-xiang (林生祥) and Aboriginal chanteuse Panai (巴奈). And the list of hard-hitting performers this month goes on: Wu Bai (伍佰) and China Blue, Japan's Boom Boom Satellites, Sugaki of the J-rock band Luna Sea and US indie-rock group Yo La Tengo.

“I hope this place can become a musical landmark in Taiwan,” said Legacy's director Arthur Chen (陳彥豪), a veteran promoter who has booked major international rock artists for festivals like

Ho-Hai-Yan and Simple Life.

Legacy is poised to rival storied venues like The Wall (這牆), Riverside Cafe (河岸留言) and its sister Riverside Live House (河岸留言西門紅樓展演館), all of which have nurtured Taipei's growing indie scene. Two established bands from that world, 1976 and Tizzy Bac, are scheduled to hold shows at the new venue over the next few months.

But Chen doesn't see Legacy as a competitor to The Wall or Riverside, but as a partner in bringing live music culture to the mainstream. “I feel we are working together because Taiwanese aren't yet accustomed to [seeing live rock shows],” he said. “We don't want people to feel that seeing a live music show is an underground thing. It should be something people do regularly, like going to CashBox KTV or going to a movie.”

Though the Huashan area has seen several rock venues come and go, none of them likely match the investment made by Legacy, also the name of the new business venture running the venue. The company, which is

This month's highlights:

Tomorrow, 8pm
Lin Sheng-xiang and Ken Ohtake
Panai

Dec. 18, 8pm
Wu Bai (伍佰) and China Blue

Dec. 19, 8pm
Yo La Tengo

Dec. 24, 8pm
Boom Boom Satellites

Dec. 25 and Dec. 26, 11pm
Sugizo

part-owned by pop star Harlem Yu (庾澄慶), is spending NT\$15 million alone on a professional-grade sound system that Chen says is standard for international pop performers (unfortunately, the system won't be fully in place for this weekend's shows).

The venue, located in a former warehouse, will keep its original look but has been renovated to achieve quality acoustics, with an array of wood soundproofing panels suspending from the ceiling



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAIWAN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, NATIONAL CKS CULTURAL CENTER

Panai is one of the featured performers for the opening weekend of Legacy Taipei, a new rock venue at Huashan 1914 Creative Park.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEGACY TAIPEI

performer to rock idol height.

Be ready to pay a premium for international acts, with ticket prices topping NT\$2,000 for Cui Jian's show tonight. Tickets for J-rock star Sugizo, who performs Dec. 25 and Dec. 26, are NT\$2,500. At least the drinks will be inexpensive — draft Taiwan beer runs NT\$100 a glass. The venue plans to offer light snacks at all shows.

Legacy's long-term goal is to present more mainstream pop acts on weekends. But it's not just for the sake of business. Chen sees an opportunity to influence the Taiwanese pop scene in a way that “improves Taiwan's overall music environment.” He says CD sales are declining but more people are attending concerts, which might encourage pop artists to focus more on live performances.

Currently, the scene may not be quite mature enough for a venue like Legacy. “But we want to be the ones that make it mature,” Chen said.