

AROUND TOWN

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13

A mile
a minute

The 2010 Taiwan International Festival is shaping up to be a cultural milestone for Taipei, with theater and dance troupes from five countries and six world premieres

BY **DIANE BAKER**
STAFF REPORTER



Above: *Violet*, *Lila*, *PurPur*, choreographed by Ilan County-born Lin Mei-hong, will be performed at the National Theater from March 12 to March 14. Far left: The Xin Xin Nanguan Ensemble will perform *Forlorn — a Rhyming Song for Lovers* at the Recital Hall on March 13 and March 14. Left: *Sirena a la Plancha*, by the Sol Pico Dance Company from Spain, will be performed at the outdoor plaza on Feb. 19.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TAIWAN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Left: *Snow White*, by the Ballet Preljocaj from France, will be performed from March 4 to March 6 at the National Theater. Above: *Salt*, by the Odin Teatret from Denmark, will be performed in the Experimental Theater from March 18 to March 21.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TAIWAN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Politicians are always promising to turn Taiwan into a “Silicon Valley of the Pacific,” a regional transshipment hub, a regional financial center, an ornamental fish aquaculture center ... the list is endless.

The people at the National Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Center — or as they now want it to be known, the Taiwan Performing Arts Center (TPAC) — have an equally lofty ambition. They want to establish their National Theater and Concert Hall (NTCH) complex as one of the pre-eminent art centers in Asia, with an annual arts festival that will rival the more established ones in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Unlike the politicians, however, the staff at TPAC appear to have a clear vision of the future and what it will take to achieve their goal. They began laying the groundwork for it with their festival last spring. Next year's program is even more ambitious.

The 2010 International Festival was put together under the theme of “Diversity and Sustainability,” with the twin aims of promoting a variety of cultures and focusing on the environment. For five weeks, beginning on Feb. 19 and ending on March 28, the NTCH complex will be filled with performances most weekends in the main theater and concert hall, the smaller theaters and the outdoor plaza, by companies and artists from Spain, Colombia, Denmark and Germany, France and Taiwan. There will be six world premieres, including two flagship productions sponsored by TPAC, and six Asian premieres.

There is plenty to choose from, whether you enjoy music, dance or the theater. The fun starts with two free outdoor performances, the first by the Sol Pico Dance Company on Feb. 19 and the second, on the following day, by The Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe. The Spaniards will perform

their mermaid-on-a-mission tale, *Sirena a la Plancha*, which is a multimedia mixture of theater, dance and puppetry.

Famed American director Robert Wilson will be back in late February — a little over a year to the day that his *Orlando* with Wei Hai-min (魏海敏) opened at the National Theater — with a new production/collaboration with U-Theatre (優人神鼓) titled *1433 — The Grand Voyage*. Lin Hwai-min (林懷民) has created a new work for his Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) called *Listening to the River*.

Academy Award-winner Tan Dun (譚盾) will conduct the National Symphony Orchestra and the Taiwan National Chinese Orchestra in a performance of his score for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (臥虎藏龍). British composer George Fenton will conduct the National Symphony Orchestra on an exploration of the world with his score from *The Blue Planet* documentary series, for which he won an Emmy and a BAFTA.

The festival has a strong feminine streak, at least for its theater and dance productions. Ilan County-born dancer-choreographer Lin Mei-hong (林美虹) returns to Taiwan with the Tanztheater des Staatstheaters Darmstadt, at which she has been director since 2005. The company will perform Lin's *Violet*, *Lila*, *PurPur*, which combines Taiwanese music and literature. Angelin Preljocaj is bringing her eponymous company, Ballet Preljocaj, and their production of *Snow White*. Several of the theater pieces are collaborations between the Magdalena Project — which was formed in 1986 by 38 artists from 15 countries to promote female artists and theater — and theater companies, including the Odin Teatret from Denmark, Germany's Theater Unikate and Teatro la Candelaria from Colombia.

In addition to the performances, there will be

pre-show talks in the National Theater lobby a half-hour before each performance of *1433 — The Grand Voyage*, *Hamlet*, *Snow White* and *Violet*, *Lila*, *PurPur*, while over in the Concert Hall lobby there will be a talk half-hour before *On the Road*, *Drum Beat*, *Heart Beat!* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

There will also be after-performance talks by Angelin Preljocaj, the choreographer of *Snow White*, on March 6, Patricia Ariza, the director of *Emily Dickinson*, on March 14, Roberta Carreri and Eugenio Barba, the performers in *Salt*, on March 21, Gilla Cremer, the actress in *M.E.D.E.A.*, on March 28, and Thomas Ostermeier, director of *Hamlet*, on March 28.

Tickets for the festival went on sale last month and there are several discount and subscription offers available. Friends of the NTCH can get the usual 10 percent discount, while students are entitled to 20 percent off. When buying subscription tickets, you must purchase the same number of tickets for each of the shows you choose. However, if you buy tickets to more than five shows, there is a 25 percent discount, and for more than eight shows, the discount is 34 percent. There is a limited subscription offer (100) of a 50 percent discount if you buy tickets to more than 10 of the shows.

Tickets can be purchased at the NTCH box office, online at www.artstickets.com.tw, by phone at (02) 3393-9888, at 7-Eleven iBon kiosks or through Hi-Life's (萊爾富) Life-ET ticketing service.

While the festival is still more two months away, and given that there will be just one performance of some of the music productions, while on some weekends, especially in March, there will be three productions, it's worth planning ahead, whether you are interested in just one or two companies or want to see more.

Spins like
teen spirit

BY **DAVID CHEN**
STAFF REPORTER

Former patrons of Spin, the now defunct basement disco on Heping East Road (和平東路), can relive the late night glory of the 1990s once again at Back to Spin, a dance party at Legacy Taipei (傳音樂展演空間) tonight.

Back to Spin has been a hit from the get-go. Organizers had to turn away 200 people last year at Taipei's Paris Night Club (夜巴黎舞廳) after the venue was filled to capacity. Earlier this year, the second party was held at a former warehouse at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), where Legacy is now located, and attracted approximately 1,600 people.

The event was born out of nostalgia among a group of 30-somethings for 90s rock. Despite Spin's reputation as a haunt for drunken revelers, the club was a place for music lovers to discover the latest bands in Western rock, said Arthur Chen (陳彥豪), a former patron and one of Back to Spin's organizers. DJs would play groups of the day, such as The Cure, Pulp, Suede, Rage Against the Machine and Nirvana.

Those attending tonight's party will hear these bands and the latest in rock and electronica spun by familiar faces: Fish, Alex 36 and Randy, all former Spin DJs. Expect improved sound and lighting this time around, says Chen, who also serves as the director of Legacy Taipei rock club, which opened last week.

Both Back to Spin parties have attracted a surprisingly large crowd of younger folks. Chen says one reason for this is that “Taiwan doesn't have many [nightspots] where you can dance to rock music.”

This was also part of Spin's appeal, he said. “There weren't many underground clubs like this — they were all fancy, like Luxy.”

Spin's come-as-you-are atmosphere also attracted people who weren't exactly “the clubbing type.” Chen recalls one club regular, a university professor who carried a copy of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* to recommend to unsuspecting patrons. Another regular would dance ballet while others moshed and head-banged.

But no matter what you read or how you dance, everyone who attends tonight partakes in a Back to Spin “ceremony” before entering: downing a complimentary shot of tequila. And for those who miss the party, don't fret: Chen intends to hold Back to Spin at least once a year.

PARTY NOTES:

WHAT: Back to Spin Winter Party

WHEN: Tonight from 10pm to 5am

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: NT\$800 at the door



PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES