

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 2010

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Tomorrow is the last chance to catch the Taiwan leg of A-mei's (張惠妹) world tour as her alter-ego A-mit (阿密特).

Subverting her ballad queen image, Mando-pop's reigning diva has reinvented herself as a high-octane rock goddess under her Aboriginal name.

Performing as A-mit, the star has forsaken the frequent costume changes, elaborate stage effects and flashy dance routines that characterized her past concerts. Instead, she presents an unadulterated rock concert and lets the music speak for itself. Image-wise, an A-mit concert displays A-mei at her edgiest. Last weekend at Taipei Arena (台北小巨蛋), she made her entrance in a black-and-white warrior outfit with a skeleton design and ravishing feather wings for a three-hour, 31-song concert.

She changed costumes only twice during the entire show: to that of a seductress (in a leopard-print dress under a black leather jacket), then a dominatrix (in black lingerie with a red leather jacket complete with whip in hand).

To open the concert A-mei sang the song *A-mit* (阿密特) in the Bunun Aboriginal language.

In her seductress dress, she purred the lyrics of her song *Victoria's Secret* (維多利亞的秘密) while posing provocatively.

In the dominatrix outfit, she flicked the whip and railed, "Your lies are my after-meal recreation. It's bullshit!" lyrics from the song *Dog Eats Dog* (黑吃黑).

A-mei's transformation has not been limited to fashion. Gone are household hits such as *Listen to the Sea* (聽海) and *Captive* (人質). In their place she sings less well-known songs that fit the A-mit tour's rebellious theme, each one rearranged with a rock tinge.

An early highlight at last weekend's concert came when A-mei donned a cape and showed off her vocal range singing Puccini's aria *Nessun Dorma*, complete with every turning melisma and swirling high note.

Another high point was a guest appearance by Little S (小S), otherwise known as Dee Hsu (徐熙娣). The popular TV hostess hopped on stage at A-mei's insistence and tried to bust a few moves of her own.

"My poor sister doesn't understand the difference between rock and pornography (色情)!" A-mei quipped.

Little S grabbed A-mei's half-exposed bosom and retorted, "And what is this?! My husband was watching the show and he suddenly said, 'What's that? A bust!'"

In addition to playing a warrior, a modern woman asserting her own sexuality and an angst-ridden lover, A-mei also broke new ground with political commentary. Before delivering a heart-felt rendition of the new ballad *Rainbow* (彩虹), she remarked, "We should all appreciate love, whether it's between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. We should all appreciate a world full of love."

Rebel with a cause

A-mei heads to Kaohsiung for the last Taiwan leg of her world tour as alter-ego A-mit

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: A-mei (張惠妹), A-mit Premiere World Tour (阿密特首次世界巡迴演唱會)

WHEN: Tomorrow at 7:30pm

WHERE: Kaohsiung Stadium (高雄巨蛋), 2 Boai 3rd Rd, Zuoying Dist, Kaohsiung City (高雄市左營區博愛三路2號)

ADMISSION: NT\$400 to NT\$3,200, available through ERA ticketing outlets or online at www.ticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: starmei.com

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

[OPERA]

Pukka Puccini

BY HO YI
STAFF REPORTER

Zhang Yimou (張藝謀) has gone from filmmaker of sober social dramas to China's cultural ambassador and event manager. His recent state-commissioned works were grand and opulent. Think of the Beijing Olympics opening and closing ceremonies and the fireworks display and colossal parade that marked 60 years of Communist rule in the country.

Then there is his *Turandot*. First staged at the Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium in Beijing last year, Zhang's updated version of Giacomo Puccini's opera about a conceited and ruthless princess is being staged at the Taichung Intercontinental Baseball Stadium (台中洲際棒球場) tomorrow and Sunday, the first leg of a world tour.

Zhang's *Turandot* is an operatic spectacle on a massive scale. Employing a palette of red and gold, and with the cast clad in Ming Dynasty-style costumes, the two performances take place on what is touted as the largest outdoor stage the country has ever seen. The imposing construction is 22m-by-90m

and took a team of Chinese and Taiwanese technicians 20 days to build. Thirty-two state-of-the-art projectors will screen scenes onto a giant backdrop.

The cost of moving the production from Beijing to Taichung totaled NT\$180 million, according to the event's organizer, Bros Sports Marketing (悍創).

The baseball stadium was chosen because other venues are unable to accommodate such a large a performance, Bros Sports Marketing said.

Both executive director Chen Weiya (陳維亞) and Liu Zhenming (劉振明), the Chinese production team's general manager, said that the production's lighting and sound and visual effects work better at the fan-shaped, 20,000-seat field than at the vast Bird's Nest Stadium.

Though all the leading roles are performed by Chinese artists, Taiwanese performers and musicians also play a visible part in the shows, including members of the Evergreen Symphony Orchestra (長榮交響樂團) and National Taiwan Symphony

Orchestra (國立台灣交響樂團), as well as 250 young performers from the sports and dance department at the National Taiwan University of Physical Education (國立台灣體育大學) in Taichung.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: *Turandot*

WHEN: Tomorrow and Sunday at 7pm

WHERE: Taichung Intercontinental Baseball Stadium (台中洲際棒球場), 835, Chongde Rd Sec 3, Taichung City (台中市崇德路三段835號)

GETTING THERE: Free shuttle buses are being organized for high-speed rail, bus and TRA passengers. For more information, go to www.turandot.tw/info-3.html

ADMISSION: NT\$1,200 to NT\$12,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

ON THE NET: www.turandot.tw



Zhang Yimou's updated version of Puccini's opera *Turandot* kicks off its world tour this weekend in Taichung.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES