

AROUND TOWN

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All it's cracked up to be

Cloud Gate 2's Spring Riot annual series this year sees the troupe's resident guest choreographers take the helm

BY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER

Cloud Gate 2 (雲門2) has been very busy in recent weeks, getting ready for its four-city Spring Riot tour, which begins April 21 at Taipei's Novel Hall.

The 11-year old troupe has been staging a Spring Riot almost as long as it has existed. The series, now in its 10th year, has been a showcase for emerging choreographers such as Bulareyaung Pagarlava (布拉瑞揚), Wu Kuo-chu (伍國柱), Cheng Tsung-lung (鄭宗龍), Huang Yi (黃翊) and Hong Kong's Yuri Ng (伍宇烈), as well as more established ones such as Cloud Gate Dance Theatre founder Lin Hwai-min (林懷民), Lo Man-fei (羅曼菲) and Ku Ming-shen (古名伸).

For the first time in several years, there will not be a piece by either Lin or Lo on the program, leaving the focus on the troupe's resident guest choreographers Cheng and Huang. The older generation will be represented by Ku, a professor at National Taipei University of the Arts (國立臺北藝術大學) and founder of Ku & Dancers (古名伸舞團). All three had works in last year's program, but this edition's creations promise to be very different.

The 34-year-old Cheng is now in his fourth year with Cloud Gate 2. His new 30-minute performance is entitled *Crack* (裂), not after the drug but after the lines that split a sidewalk, fracture a relationship, change a life.

In the program notes, Cheng quotes a line from Leonard Cohen's *Anthem*: "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." He says the nine-dancer piece is "a little strange."

"I want to use all different styles, take all different styles and try to say something about my whole life,"

he said in a telephone interview last month, adding that the score by Pan Rong-sheng (潘榮昇) encompasses Chinese opera, classical, rock and electronica music.

"When you look back at your life you try to look into the situations that made a 'crack,' for example my mother and father fighting when I was a child — that was a crack — when someone leaves my life, that moment is a crack," Cheng said. "In doing this piece, I looked back but it also helped me look forward."

All that introspection, combined with the usual mental anguish that Cheng goes through when he creates, led him to take up running.

"I'm running every day, between 3km and 4km. You have got to challenge yourself and then you believe you can do it. Every day I try to run a little more," he said, although he admitted with a laugh that he would have to run a lot more before he would stop smoking.

Dancer-choreographer Huang, 26, is moving so fast that everyone else has to run to catch up with him. The Cloud Gate 2 show comes on the heels of two successes: His *Spin 2010* show at the Experimental Theater in February was a sellout and critical success, and his 2007 pas de deux *Whisper* (低語) won him second place at the third Cross Connection Ballet International Choreography Competition in Copenhagen, Denmark, on April 2. Given his schedule, the only way to catch up with Huang was with an e-mail interview.

Floating Domain (浮動的房間), set to Johann Sebastian Bach's *Concerto in D Minor* arranged for piano, is an

intensely personal piece, one inspired by Huang's use of books, the Internet and his imagination to escape his family's cramped home when he was growing up by creating a "floating room" in his mind.

"I want to share some stories of my life experience with the audience, especially when people feel alone," he wrote. "We are living in our imaginations ... but we are all alone."

The emotions of the characters are echoed in the mood — and colors — of the room, a room that can shift in size and space, just as the characters shift from human into a dog, table, chair or wall. The lead dancer falls into a wall made up of other dancers and "the wall catches her softly, like family, like a mother's arms," Huang wrote. "That's what I think about 'home,' especially when you feel tired."

While Cheng and Huang's works explore interior landscapes, Ku's 20-minute *Endless Shore* (碎浪海岸) was inspired by the coastline between Hualien and Taitung.

The interaction of the water and the shore and the ebb and flow of the waves appear a perfect fit for Ku's choreography because she is the prime exponent in this country of what is known as Contact Improvisation. Ku's piece builds layer upon layer, as the dancers crisscross the stage, running, jumping, chasing, touching or just standing still as others move around them.

They come together only to separate.

Cloud Gate 2's six performances at Novel Hall will be followed by stops in Hsinchu, Kaohsiung and Chiayi next month.





Right: Cloud Gate 2 dancers rehearse Cheng Tsung-lung's *Crack*.
Above: Cloud Gate 2 dancers rehearse Huang Yi's *Floating Domain*.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIU CHENG-HSIANG



PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Cloud Gate 2, Spring Riot 2010

WHEN: April 21 to April 24 at 7:30pm and April 24 and April 25 at 2:30pm

WHERE: Novel Hall (新舞臺), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號)

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$300 to NT\$1,200, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw or www.cloudgate.org.tw/cg/ticket

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES: May 1 at 7:30pm and May 2 at 2:30pm at National Chiao Tung University Arts Center (交通大學藝文中心), 1001 Tahsueh Rd, Hsinchu City (新竹市大學路1001號); May 8 at 7:30pm and May 9 at 2:30pm Chih-teh Hall (高雄市文化中心至德堂), 67 Wufu 1st Rd, Kaohsiung City (高雄市五福一路67號); May 15 at 7:30pm and May 16 at 2:30pm at Chiayi Performing Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心演藝廳), 265, Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minsyong Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號)