



COMPILED BY HO YI

Unless you've been living underneath a rock inside a cave on a lonely desert island in the middle of the ocean, you've probably heard of Lin Yu-chun (林育群). Hailed by the world's media as the next Susan Boyle, the portly, bow tie-wearing 24-year-old with a bowl haircut became a YouTube sensation overnight after he performed a Whitney Houston-like rendition of *I Will Always Love You* on *One Million Star* (超級星光大道) earlier this month.

Since then "Little Fatty" (小胖), as he calls himself, has been covered by CNN, the BBC, the *Daily Mail*, the *USA Today*, the *New York Times* and Agence France-Presse, just to name a few.

Even though Lin was eliminated from the competition on last week's show, he has been courted by several record companies and will reportedly release his first album by the end of this year.

Lin's newfound fame may have already gone to his head. According to *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister newspaper), his agent cancelled a press interview a few hours before the scheduled time last Friday only to call reporters back to take photographs of Lin at the musical instrument shop where he works. This behavior irked the papers' gossip jorneys, who say Lin is a neophyte with the attitude of an A-lister.

It's time again for another round of Celebrity Drug Bust. Disgraced entertainer Da Bing (大炳) has been arrested on drug-related charges for the third time, this time for alleged possession of amphetamines and heroin at his apartment in Sijhih, Taipei County, on Monday. Local papers said when police broke into the room, the cross-dressing performer, whose real name is Yu Bing-hsian (余炳賢), knelt on the floor and cried, "I'm screwed!" Also at the scene, according to the reports, were his boyfriend



Want to buy at T-shirt? PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

He will always love you. PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

Li Kuang-chih (李光智), alleged drug dealer Liu Chang-chih (劉昌志) and Liu's girlfriend Wu Chih-hsiang (吳芝香).

The erstwhile funnyman was collared for using amphetamines in 2007 and 2009 and took indefinite leave from local showbiz after his second arrest.

Da Bing reportedly denied using the heroin found at his place, but in front of a media scrum late Monday night he burst into tears and said, "Please don't have faith in me anymore. I don't deserve this attention."

Why are the police always busting celebs like Da Bing and Suzanne Hsiao (蕭淑慎) when there are plenty of other people using drugs at any given moment all over Taipei? One theory is that celebrity caners are too dumb to take measures to avoid getting caught. The other is that they are easy targets and a guaranteed source of good publicity for law enforcement.

Police say they were chasing Liu and Wu, not Da Bing.

Also crying on TV this week was basketball player Chen Jian-chow (陳建州), better known as Blackie (黑人), accused by *Next Magazine* of pocketing money from his Love Life charity drive. The report claimed that the charity was hawking T-shirts for NT\$580, of which only NT\$100 per shirt went to terminally ill children with cancer and the rest to Blackie.

Blackie broke down in front of media on Wednesday and explained tearfully that the extra money was used to cover costs for the event.

BY DIANE BAKER

Choreographer Jade Hua's (華碧玉) productions last year — *Vipashayana* (觀·自在) and *Crystal Tun-Hwang* (水晶瓶中的敦煌) — focused respectively on the search for meaning in modern society and the path to self-discovery with a nod to Buddhist cave murals in China's Gansu Province. Those shows encapsulated Hua's ambition to combine modern and traditional Chinese dance techniques, while training the members of her 13-year-old company, Jade & Artists Dance Troupe (肢體音符舞團) to dance "from the inside out."

The company's latest production, *An Untold Secret* (藏心), which premieres tonight at Taipei's Zhongshan Hall, once again has the company shining a spotlight on the internal life of humans, only this time it is the search for, and the meaning of, love.

Working with choreographer Hsu Wei-ling (許瑋玲), stage designer Choo Yean Wong (黃祖延) and composer and singer Kevin Lin (林隆璇), Hua has crafted a production that refined both her dancers and her production team.

Some of the challenges she faced came from trying to create the right atmosphere for a production about love (luckily Zhongshan Hall has a balcony, as balcony scenes figure so often in love stories) and the search for images to project onto the two



Labors of love

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Jade & Artists Dance Troupe, *An Untold Secret*
WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, tomorrow and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: Taipei Zhongshan Hall (台北中山堂), 98 Yanping S Rd, Taipei City (台北市延平南路98號)
ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$800, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw
ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE: June 18 at 7:30pm at the Experimental Theater of Chiayi Performance Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心實驗劇場), 265, Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minsyong Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號)

MUSIC

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON

Smooth as silk

Sometimes it seems that Yo-yo Ma (馬友友) has all the virtues. He's an outstandingly fine classical instrumentalist yet routinely plays with musicians from other traditions. He supports many charities, has appeared on innumerable TV shows and has a happy family life. He projects a relaxed, sunny and benevolent personality. Lastly, he promotes cross-cultural harmony across Central Asia via his Silk Road Project, thereby, in a time of much religion-based dissension, uniting mainly Muslim peoples with Christians, Confucians, Buddhists and non-believers.

And he really is willing to try anything. He'll play in an avant-garde style, welcome James Taylor onto his stage and laugh at his jokes, and jam with folk instrumentalists from just about anywhere on the planet, while remaining rooted in the great cello classics of Bach, Dvorak and Shostakovich.

Next week he's in Taiwan again with his Silk Road Ensemble, this time for three concerts starting in Taipei on Thursday. It's part of an Asian tour that will have already seen them in Seoul and Macau, and will take them to Bangkok (all being well) and Singapore.

There'll be 13 performers for the

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-yo Ma (馬友友·絲路之旅在台灣)
WHERE: National Concert Hall, Taipei City and Kaohsiung's 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)
WHEN: Thursday (Taipei) and April 25 (Kaohsiung) at 7:30pm
ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$800 (for students) and NT\$1,800 to NT\$6,000, available through Era ticketing, online at www.ticket.com.tw or by calling (02) 2341-9898
ON THE NET: www.silkroadproject.org

Taipei concert, including players of the *shakuhachi*, *pipa* (琵琶), *sheng* (笙) and *kamanchek*. The program concludes with a performance of US composer Osvaldo Golijov's *Air to Air* (featured on the Ensemble's 2009 CD *Off the Map* on Harmonia Mundi's World Village label). Given that Golijov has Eastern European Jewish ancestry, this is yet another key ingredient in Ma's "world music" project. In Taichung and Kaohsiung there



Yo-yo Ma and his Silk Road Ensemble return to Taiwan for concerts in Taipei and Kaohsiung. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

will be even more performers, with the original group joined by adepts of the tabla, *ney* and *ruan* (阮), plus special guest artist Vesal Arbzadeh on the Iranian *setar*. How typical of Ma to go out of his way to make sure that Iran (as Persia was a major state along the old Silk Road route) is central to his comprehensive and inclusive undertaking.

In the face of ongoing political problems in Central Asia, Yo-yo Ma's project testifies to the natural inclination of musicians everywhere to perform alongside one another, and happily make music together. He's giving more concerts in Taiwan than anywhere else, and he's sure to be given a very warm welcome at all of them.

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

Kitchen Pucci 葡吉小廚

Address: 1 Nanjing W Rd, Taipei City (台北市南京西路1號) **Telephone:** (02) 2563-2787
Open: Mondays to Fridays 11am to 9:30pm, Saturdays and Sundays 11am to 10pm
Average meal: NT\$200 to NT\$300 **On the Net:** www.new-puen.tw/KTtop.htm
Details: Chinese, English and Japanese menu. Credit cards accepted

Kitchen Pucci (葡吉小廚) is a tapas bar with Shanghai-style food. The interior of the restaurant is clean and modern, with floor-to-ceiling windows in the back that show off a row of live bamboo against a red brick wall. The petite portions of Shanghai classics, including xiaolongbao, or soup dumplings, are adorable, as are the restaurant's extremely reasonable prices and quick, friendly service.

There are two versions of xiaolongbao, one filled with fragrant broth and one without. The best version is, not surprisingly, the former, which are called steamed Shanghai juicy dumplings (上海小籠包, NT\$180 for 12) on the menu. Rich, savory and indeed juicy, they are served on a bed of pine needles, which, without altering the flavor, prevent the thin wrapper from sticking to the bamboo steamer. The other steamed dumplings (小籠包, NT\$50 for three or NT\$100 for six) are acceptable but lack the oomph that the broth provides.

Other pleasing picks on Kitchen Pucci's menu include its small serving of "Szechuan-style" steamed spararibs (川味粉蒸排骨, NT\$80), which are covered in ground rice flavored with spices, lots of pepper and served on top of steamed yam chunks. The tender meat slipped off the bone

upon contact with our chopsticks. My dining companions and I also enjoyed the fried scallion roll with beef (大餅捲牛肉, NT\$110). The crispy exterior of the wrapping gave way to a chewy center and the scallions landed just the right amount of kick (though the roll could have done with a little more beef).

Kitchen Pucci's noodle dishes come with "thin noodles" or chunky knife-shaved noodles (刀削麵), which are sliced directly from the dough into thick strips before being boiled. The knife-shaved noodles have a satisfyingly al dente texture without any unpleasant graininess on the inside. We liked them best in the Shanghai-style scallion mixed noodles (上海蔥油拌麵, NT\$80) because the scallions, cooked several different ways (the green leaves fried until crispy, the white stalks boiled until soft) offered an unexpected melange of textures. The mixed noodles with spicy sauce (辣醬乾拌麵, NT\$80) were also good, though not as fiery as the chili pepper symbol next to the menu entry suggests. The stir-fried knife-shaved noodles with Judas' ear fungus (木須炒麵, NT\$120), however, were too greasy and bland.

For dessert, consider the steamed bean paste buns (豆沙小籠包, NT\$60 for six) — very



Kitchen Pucci stands out with its tapas-sized servings of Shanghai-style classics and knife-shaved noodles.

PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

thin flour wrappers stuffed with sweet red bean paste. Simple, but a suitable complement to the stronger flavored main dishes.

Hangzhou Soup Dumplings 杭州小籠湯包

Address: 17, Hangzhou S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市杭州南路二段17號)
Telephone: (02) 2393-1757 **Open:** 11:30am to 9:30pm
Average meal: NT\$300 **Details:** Chinese menu. Credit cards not accepted

Hangzhou Soup Dumplings (杭州小籠湯包) boasts that its dumplings are of Din Tai Fung (鼎泰豐) quality at hawker prices. Neither claim is true, but the restaurant has acquired a reputation for tasty and reasonably priced steamed dumplings, along with a range of other small dishes served in a casual and relatively clean environment.

The regular soup dumplings (小籠湯包, NT\$90) suffer a little given that they are more widely available. Yet Hangzhou's soup dumplings manage to hold it

The new location has spruced up its image, with a proper storefront, tiled floor and wooden tables that are not slick with grease. Prices have crept up a bit, but they are still a long way below the giddy heights that Din Tai Fung charges. The top seller on the restaurant's menu are its Qianlong soup dumplings (乾隆灌湯餃, NT\$90), purportedly derived from a favorite snack of a powerful

Hangzhou Soup Dumplings has gone upmarket, slightly.

PHOTOS: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

TIDBITS

BY DAVID CHEN

Pak Kababish is a rarity when it comes to street food in Ximending. This outdoor stand, located at 49 Emei St, Taipei City (台北市峨嵋街49號), has been serving Pakistani-style chapati wraps, kebabs and Indian milk tea for nearly seven years.

Unfortunately for loyal customers, the Pakistani owners, Raja Akhtar and his wife Mariam, are closing shop at the end of next month.

Their grilled beef, lamb and chicken tikka kebabs (NT\$50 each) just don't appeal to the Taiwanese, Mariam lamented in a conversation earlier this week.

The Akhtars are closing because they can no longer afford the rent (NT\$38,000 a month) for this 1-ping (3.3m²) space. Raja, who regular customers will remember as the bearded man behind the counter that tosses fresh chapati dough into the air like pizza, has taken on construction work to pay the bills.

I'll miss the chicken tikka chapati (NT\$60), which is a tasty, light alternative to typical night market fare. You have to wait a little longer than you would at a fried dumpling stand, but it's worth it — the chicken is marinated in a curry sauce before grilling and the chapati is hot and fresh. The chapati (NT\$30) is even good by itself, or you can have it with peanut butter or chocolate sauce for an extra NT\$10. All of the food is halal.

Raja says he hopes to find a more affordable location to serve chapatis and kebabs again. For now, Mariam plans to return to her native Karachi, where she says it will be easier to find work. The 48-year-old says she is "so sad" to leave as she came to Taipei to be closer with her Taiwanese mother, who lives in Banciao. But making a living here has been tough. "Only work, so tired, no money," she said.

Pak Kababish (巴基斯坦印度串燒) is open from 4pm to 10pm.