

# Catch the next wave



COMPILED BY HO YI

Attletale flames old and "new" have been spewing up grist for the rumor mill over the past week.

Pop idol-turned-B-list actor **Wing Fan** (范植偉) climbed into bed with the *China Times Weekly* (時報周刊) for a pillow talk session, the results of which were published two weeks ago, and got more than he bargained for — or maybe not.

Fan reminisced about his past romance with pop idol **Cyndi Wang** (王心凌), which ended five years ago, and gave her dirty laundry a thorough public airing.

With unusual candor, Fan confessed to subjecting Wang to domestic violence on two occasions. And if that weren't enough to persuade his most ardent of fans that the man's a complete cad, when the interviewing journal asked if the two had lost their virginity to one another, seeing as they married young (Fan was 19, Wang 17), Fan replied: "I had two girlfriends before her so it was not my first time. I thought it would be her first time, but it wasn't. I was a bit disappointed and surprised, because after all she was only 17."

Wang, acknowledged as the founder of Mando-pop's Cult of Sweetness (甜心教主), reportedly cried for two days and went into hiding.

In the face of snowballing criticism, Fan cut off contact with the media. But before making a French exit, he publicly apologized to Wang and said that he was gravely mistaken in trusting a reporter during a "casual chat."

Far be it from Pop Stop to suggest that, with a new album coming out, Fan's disclosure could be yet another Mando-pop attempt at creating a *succes de scandale*.

Amid the brouhaha, Wang's first love, C-list actor **Ou Ting-hsing** (歐定興), reaped some media exposure. When interviewed by the *Liberty Times* (the *Taipei Times*' sister newspaper), Ou said

Sweet dreams are made of him.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

he had only got to first base with Wang when they dated. And since Wang started seeing her former husband after they broke up, Ou speculated that Wang lost her virginity to Fan.

Meanwhile, starlet **Hu Jia-ai** (胡嘉愛), who quickly rose from the D-list to gossip rag headline material because of her rumored romantic involvement with pop star **Stanley Huang** (黃立行) — though he dismissed her as a mere acquaintance — continues to fuel speculation about the pair's true status.

After Hu claimed on popular television show *Here Comes Kang and Xi* (康熙來了) that she hangs out at Huang's house watching movies and playing with his "bird" — not a euphemism, but a real one, apparently — *Next Magazine* recently published English-language text messages sent between Hu and a guy, alleged to be Huang, on March 1.

Judge for yourself:  
Hu: Take shower already  
Huang: Hehe Can I see?  
Hu: No  
Huang: Okok ... Can I touch?  
Hu: Yes next time take shower with u haha  
Huang: Don't have too much dirty of a dream! save it for later haha

When asked about how the messages could have ended up in the media, Hu said she had lost her cellphone, rather conveniently, a few days previously.

As for whether or not the message sender is the star in question, Hu said she has many friends named Stanley.

Marry Wing Fan in haste, and repent at leisure.

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES



## RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

### Ton Sushi 同壽司

Address: 1F, 22 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路22號1樓) Telephone: (02) 2345-6879  
Average meal: NT\$1,000 to NT\$1,500 plus 10 percent service charge  
Open: 10am to 2pm and 5:30pm to 10pm Details: Chinese and English menu

Tucked into a corner of Neo19's first floor, Ton Sushi (同壽司) features a thoughtful and interesting menu with delicacies like foie gras sushi, while the restaurant's decor, replete with ambient lighting, orchid arrangements and tiny curtained private dining areas, makes the most of its relatively small space.

Ton Sushi's service is friendly and efficient (though we had some trouble flagging down a waitress from our back table). Dishes were brought out in the prescribed order from appetizer to main course, one after the other. Our first dish was Ton's version of the rainbow roll (NT\$420). Despite its name, the roll was topped only with salmon sashimi and thin slices of avocado; the inside was stuffed with tempura flakes, crabmeat mixed with mayonnaise and ikura roe.

The sushi was surprisingly light in taste, despite the mayo, but I could have done without the very sweet teriyaki sauce dabbed on top of each roll.

Our toro (NT\$700 for two pieces) and salmon stomach nigiri sushi (NT\$240 for two), both lightly grilled with a butane torch, were served next with instructions from our waitress to eat the salmon before the more flavorsome toro. Our waitress also explained that grilling made each slice of fatty fish juicier, which was true. The final dish of the night was broiled sea bream (price depends on season), which had been roasted with heap of salt, but the melt-in-your-mouth meat's flavor was nonetheless delicate (if a little bit oily).

On a previous visit, we ordered the soft-shell crab roll (NT\$300), which distinguished itself by having a higher



Ton Sushi's thoughtful menu features delicacies like toro and foie gras sushi.

PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

crabmeat to tempura batter ratio than variants of the dish we've tried in other sushi restaurants. We also ordered oysters on the half shell (prices vary), which were also good but pricey (we paid NT\$250 per oyster). Ton Sushi has an ever-revolving off-menu selection of fresh seafood; if you are feeling adventurous, make sure to sit at the sushi bar and give one of the chefs there free reign over your order. On one visit, the couple next to us did just that and were served a sashimi platter that included two different fish heads, which they seemed to enjoy.

### Mushroom God Scenic Restaurant 菇神新社觀景餐廳

Address: 287 Siejhong St, Siecheng Village, Sinshe Township, Taichung County (台中縣新社鄉協成村中街287號) Telephone: (04) 2582-2548 Average meal: NT\$400  
Open: 10am to 11pm on weekdays, 10am to midnight on weekends  
Details: Chinese menu with pictures, credit cards accepted On the Net: 0425822585.tai-chung.com.tw

Located along what is affectionately called Mushroom Street (香菇街) in Siecheng Village (協成村), Taichung County, Mushroom God (菇神新社觀景餐廳) is just one of many establishments offering visitors a chance to sample the area's most famous product — mushrooms. Since it opened in 2001, it has established a strong reputation for putting good food on the table fast.

Mushroom God can seat around 400, and on the busy lunchtime when I visited, it was packed almost to overflowing, customers constantly replenished by the coach-load. Fortunately, designed as a partially open wooden pavilion on a steep hillside overlooking a wide valley, the restaurant manages to effectively minimize the impact of big crowds, and for such a busy place, the atmosphere is surprisingly relaxed.

The menu is relatively simple, as everyone is there to eat one thing: mushrooms. Siecheng is famous for mushrooms, producing a wide variety, many of which feature in the restaurant's two main offerings: mushroom hot pot (火鍋) and mushroom stew in a jar (罈罐).

What differentiates the hot pot here from elsewhere is the quality of the broth, made using local mushrooms. It captures the fragrance of the dried fungi and is then given further depth and complexity as a variety of fresh mushrooms are added by diners at the table. The mushrooms on offer

include chestnut mushroom (柳松菇), lion's mane mushroom (獅頭菇), golden oyster mushroom (珊瑚菇), and abalone mushroom (鮑魚菇), and these are complemented by various meats and other vegetables. For a table of four, the price ranges from NT\$1,400 to NT\$2,320. Individual hot pots with pork, beef or lamb are available for NT\$380. The quantity of meat provided is not large, but is of good quality and not deep-frozen. The broth makes a delicious soup after the meal. As with most hot pot restaurants, additional ingredients can be obtained and for a more hearty meal, extra servings of pork (NT\$140) or beef (NT\$160) and the mushroom platter (NT\$180) are recommended.

The mushroom stew in a jar (NT\$380 for set; NT\$160 alone) is self-explanatory and is available with meat or as a vegetarian option. The broth is highly flavored with dried chestnut mushrooms, and the meat is steamed

inside the jar until it falls off the bone. The stew has a much more pronounced mushroom flavor than the hot pot, and may be a little overpowering for some. In the case of the pork option, the flavor of the meat was pretty much obliterated by the earthy mushrooms and provided little more than texture.

The service is surprisingly efficient with young people wired up to tables at great speed, but who were also generally helpful and pleasant. A choice of open air and indoor spaces provides seating options depending on the weather, but if possible, a window seat overlooking the valley is the thing to go for.

If you are not keen on mushrooms but you still want to enjoy the view, Mushroom God also offers a range of afternoon tea items and cold drinks, including waffles (NT\$120), fruit platters and finger foods, as well as a long list of teas, ices and mixed drinks. Until the end of the year, guests dining between 2pm and 5pm will get a complimentary non-alcoholic drink worth NT\$120.



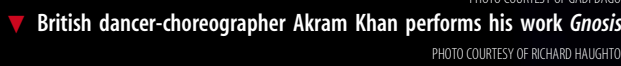
Locally grown produce features in Mushroom God's two specialties: mushroom hot pot, above, and mushroom stew in a jar, left.

PHOTOS: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES



▲ Emanuel Gat Dance members perform Gat's *Rite of Spring*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GADI DAGAN



▼ British dancer-choreographer Akram Khan performs his work *Gnosis*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD HAUGHTON

Bausch festival, and Cloud Gate was there too," she said in a telephone interview on Tuesday. "Mr Lin saw the company and wanted them for the Novel series."

Both *Winter Voyage* and *The Rite of Spring* premiered in the company's first year and helped solidify Gat's reputation as an innovative choreographer.

Igor Stravinsky's 33-minute score has inspired and confounded dozens of choreographers since the 1918 premiere of Vaslav Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Just last year Taipei audiences saw multimedia artist and musician Klaus Obermaier's 3D version. However, few choreographers have tried to pair Stravinsky with salsa and ballroom, as Gat has done in his creation for five dancers, which has won plaudits for its combination of physicality and intelligence.

The 14-minute long *Winter Voyage* is a duet by Gat and Roy Assaf to the lieder cycle of the same name by Franz Schubert.

*Silent Dances*, which premiered in July 2008, is silent in the sense that there is no music. Instead, Gat has orchestrated movements for the nine dancers that both emphasize the silence and to create a sound environment. It is dance stripped to the basics.

Khan, who last appeared in Taipei in September 2007 with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui in the mesmerizing *Zero Point*, has also pared down his latest work to just five musicians and himself.

Huang said the Novel Hall staff couldn't wait to see Khan's show.

"I think most of the people at Novel are looking forward to seeing the pure, authentic Kathak pieces; it's all in his [Khan's] body. *Gnosis* is actually the second half of the show; the first half is two classic Kathak pieces. His previous three shows have been fusion pieces and so we all

love to see him do classic pieces," she said.

"He's bringing five musicians: Japanese *taiko* drummer Yoshi [Sunahata], one cellist, a singer of traditional Indian music, a tabla player and a *sarod* [a stringed instrument] player," she said.

*Gnosis* follows Khan's trend in recent years to collaborate with artists both inside and out of the dance world: Cherkaoui, prima ballerina Sylvie Guillem, actress Juliette Binoche. This time it's drummer-singer-dancer Sunahata.

The production was to have premiered last fall at Sadler's Wells in London, but an accident in Paris a few weeks before left Khan with a hairline fracture in an arm and forced him to limit his dancing. Instead, the first full showing was in Abu Dhabi in February, and judging by Khan's travel schedule for this month alone (Copenhagen, Macau, Birmingham, Paris, Beijing, Taipei and Sydney), he is back in full form.

*Gnosis* is based on one of the tales from the great Sanskrit epic poem the *Mahabharata* — the story of Queen Gandari, who blindfolds herself for life to follow her blind husband before dying in a forest fire. Sunahata portrays the queen.

Khan is an amazing performer, fluidly supple yet geometrically precise, often moving so fast he is just a blur, then breaking off to catch his breath and talk a bit to the audience.

For the past five years the Novel Hall Dance series has used a slogan that Lin came up with —

"For your eyes, for your soul."

Both Gat and Khan's shows promise to make good on that pledge.

#### PERFORMANCE NOTES:

**WHAT:** Novel Dance Series 2010  
**WHEN:** Emanuel Gat Dance on May 14 and May 21 at 8pm, and May 16 at 3pm; Akram Khan on May 21 and May 22 at 8pm, and May 23 at 3pm  
**WHERE:** Novel Hall (新舞廳), 3-1 Songshou Rd, Taipei City (台北市松壽路3-1號)  
**ADMISSION:** Tickets are NT\$800 to NT\$2,000, available at the NTC box office or www.artsticket.com.tw as well as ERA's ticketing system www.ticket.com.tw. Novel Hall's ticket enquiry hotline is (02) 2723-7953  
**ADDITIONAL DETAILS:** There will be post-show talks after the Saturday evening performances by Gat and Khan