

AROUND TOWN

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Kenny G

has sax appeal

The smooth saxophone maestro returns to Taiwan for two concerts this weekend

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

For more than two decades, saxophonist Kenny G has warmed the hearts of countless fans with his velvety smooth delivery of romantic jazz tunes.

The king of smooth jazz visits Taipei tomorrow and Taichung on Sunday for concerts that will see him play a few classics and preview a new tune from his upcoming album *Heart & Soul*, which will be released worldwide at the end of next month. He will also appear tonight in the season finale of the TV talent show *One Million Star* (超級星光大道), when he will share the stage with Taiwanese singing sensation Lin Yu-chun (林育群).

A prodigy who started his career by playing as a sideman in Barry White's Love Unlimited Orchestra when he was only 17, Kenny G (last name Gorelick), has moved on to a career as the most successful instrumentalist of his time by selling more than 75 million albums worldwide.

He has collaborated with the likes of Andrea Bocelli, Whitney Houston, Natalie Cole, Celine Dion and Aretha Franklin, and his 1994 album *Miracles* is the best-selling Christmas album ever.

"I consider good music to come from an artist who has spent a long time perfecting his art and accomplishing his style," the 54-year-old star in a phone interview last week.

Of his compositions, Kenny G considers his breakthrough hit *Songbird* and *Coming Home* as two of his favorites.

Asked why he thinks he has managed to build such a successful career, he said, "I'm glad audiences around the world responded to these melodies. I'm just glad my music communicates with people."

Kenny G will perform two Chinese tunes for his Taiwan concerts, the folk song *Jasmine Flower* (茉莉花) and Teresa Teng's (鄧麗君) classic *The Moon Represents My Heart* (月亮代表我的心).

"I'm glad to have the chance to play these two songs

because I don't normally have the chance to perform them in the US," he said.

Asked who he would like to perform a duet with, Kenny G replied, "Jackie Chan (成龍). I have performed on stage with him before. It would be great to record a duet with him." The two met in the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and became friends.

To establish a closer connection with his fans during concerts, Kenny G makes it a routine to roam through audiences while performing.

Kenny G is often criticized by purists for crafting easy-listening background music, but he jazzes up his tunes during concerts by improvising — which he considers to be "visually entertaining."

"There won't be any stage effects in this concert. It will just be my music," he said.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Kenny G 2010 Live in Taiwan
WHEN AND WHERE: Tomorrow at 7:30pm, NTU Sports Center 1F (台大綜合體育館1樓) at the intersection of Xinhai and Xinsheng South roads (台北市辛亥路與新生南路交叉口), and Sunday at 7:30pm, Chung Hsing University Huisun Auditorium (台中中興大學惠孫堂), 250 Guoguang Rd, Taichung City (台中市國光路250號)
ADMISSION: NT\$800 to NT\$6,000, available through 7-Eleven ibon kiosks or online at www.tickets.com.tw
ON THE NET: www.kennyg.com



PHOTO: COURTESY OF YUKUANG MUSIC

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: International Chopin Festival 2010: Ivo Pogorelich in concert (20X10蕭邦-波哥雷里奇鋼琴獨奏會)

WHEN: Tomorrow at 7pm, doors open at 6pm (Taichung), Sunday at 7:30pm (Taipei) and Tuesday at 7:30pm (Kaohsiung)

WHERE: National Concert Hall, Taipei, 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) and Taichung Arena (台中戶外體育館), also known as Taichung City Fulfillment Amphitheater (圓滿戶外劇場), in Wenhsin Park (文心森林公園) at the intersection of Wenhsin Road Section 1 (文心路一段) and Siangshang Road Section 2 (向上路二段) in Taichung City's Nantun District (台中市南屯區)

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$1,500 to NT\$4,500 for the Taipei concert and NT\$750 to NT\$3,600 for Kaohsiung. Taichung's performance is free. Tickets can be purchased through ERA ticketing, at www.ticket.com.tw or by calling (02) 2341-9898

ON THE NET: blog.yam.com/CHOPIN2010

WHAT: Jose Carreras and Kiri Te Kanawa in concert (麥卡倫極致享宴-卡拉拉斯vs卡娜娃-世紀演唱會)

WHEN: May 21 at 7:30pm (Kaohsiung) and May 22 at 7:30pm (Taipei)

WHERE: Kaohsiung Stadium (高雄巨蛋), 200, Jhonghai Rd, Zuoying Dist, Kaohsiung City (博愛三路2號高雄市左營區), and Taipei Arena (台北小巨蛋), 2, Nanjing E Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市南京東路四段2號)

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$2,100 to NT\$6,800 (Taipei) and NT\$1,800 to NT\$5,800 (Kaohsiung), available from KHAM ticketing, at www.kham.com.tw or by calling (07) 780-9900, 7-Eleven ibon kiosks, FamilyMart (全家) FamiPort kiosks and Hi-Life (萊爾富) Life-ET kiosks

Spoiled for choice

With upcoming concerts by Jose Carreras and Kiri Te Kanawa and Ivo Pogorelich, the smart money's on the latter

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

It sometimes seems as if there's nothing Taiwan's classical music audiences love so much as paying good money to see international celebrities in the flesh.

The next 10 days will witness the Croatian pianist Ivo Pogorelich giving concerts in Taipei and Kaohsiung, with Jose Carreras and Kiri Te Kanawa hard on his heels in joint recitals in the same cities. While Pogorelich will play in concert halls (the National Concert Hall in Taipei and the Chih-teh Hall in Kaohsiung), the two singers, accompanied by Taiwan's Evergreen Symphony Orchestra under David Gimenez, are likely to all but fill the two cities' giant arenas. What, then, is going on?

Pogorelich, a hugely talented artist at the height of his powers, will play a program of serious items chosen, one imagines, to please himself rather than to conform with any perceived taste out there in the stalls. Carreras and Te Kanawa, by contrast, appear to be doing everything in their power to attract mass audiences. The second half of their program consists of unchallenging items (Gershwin, *Man of La Mancha*), and they will wind up proceedings by singing together a Chinese folk song, *A Place Far, Far Away* (在那遙遠的地方).

It is always nice to hear the Evergreen Symphony Orchestra, but it's nevertheless tempting to say that when once-powerful vocalists are in the twilight years of their

careers, they routinely embark on tours of Asia. This is perfectly legitimate — what is surprising, though, is that audiences appear so willing to pay to go and hear them. There must be a thousand better working singers in the operatic field, youthfully vibrant and lacking only celebrity names. But here in the far-flung corners of Asia we seem to prefer to pay to hear the celebrities, whatever their age, in far-too-large auditoriums in which generous amplification is of course a necessity.

But the huge arenas are justified because the ticket-buying demand is there. It's only possible to conclude that what people really want is to be seen to be connected to some kudos-bearing name. They don't want a musical experience but a status-enhancing one.

Pogorelich is another matter. He's part of the ongoing, if rather drawn-out, Chopin International Festival (this year being the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth) and he'll play, among other things, Chopin's *Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58*, not greatly popular but something serious pianists love to get their teeth into. Good luck to him! He's not one for throwing sops to the masses, and if you judge any of these three visitors to our shores to be worthy of your support, then Pogorelich is undoubtedly the one to go for.

The fact that he's also giving a free concert in Taichung tomorrow night testifies again to his good, and strictly non-commercial, intentions. The contrast with what's happening in the Kaohsiung stadium and Taipei arena could hardly be more marked.

Kiri Te Kanawa joins Jose Carreras on stage next week in Taipei and Kaohsiung.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

