

AROUND TOWN

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Summer solace

Cloud Gate's free outdoor performances, an annual rite of passage for thousands of dance lovers, move this year to Banciao and Changhua

BY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLOUD GATE DANCE THEATRE

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Cathay Life Arts Festival
WHEN: Tomorrow at 7:30pm (Banciao) and July 24 (Changhua) at 7:30pm

WHERE: Taipei County Sports Stadium (台北縣板橋體育場), 278 Hansheng E Rd, Banciao City (台北縣板橋市漢生東路278號) and Changhua Municipal Stadium (彰化縣立體育場), 1 Jiansing Rd, Changhua City (彰化市健興路1號)

ADMISSION: Free

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) is keeping its combined fingers crossed for good weather as it prepares for two weekends of outdoor programs, starting tomorrow in Banciao at the Taipei County Sports Stadium.

The company's annual free, open-air performances have become a midsummer ritual for thousands of its fans around the nation. Ever since the company's inception, founder and artistic director Lin Hwai-min (林懷民) has believed that audiences outside of Taipei deserve to see live performances as much as the capital's denizens do and he has made the effort to take his shows on the road.

While Taipei has been lucky for the last three summers to have either the main troupe or Cloud Gate 2 perform at Chiang Kai-shek Memorial square over the summer, this year it is Banciao's turn (for the first time in four years), tomorrow night at 7:30pm. The company will also perform in Changhua the following Saturday evening to make up for a summer show two years ago that was cancelled because of a typhoon.

Like last year, the company will be presenting a mixed program, titled *Unforgettable Moments of Cloud Gate*, comprising *Tale of the White Serpent* (白蛇傳, 1975) and excerpts from *Cursive 2* (行草貳, 2002), *Wild Cursive* (狂草, 2005) and *Moon Water* (水月, 1998). Then, like last year, the troupe will finish the evening by performing the lovely and colorful first half of *Whispers of Flowers* (花語, 2008).

A SNAKE IN DISGUISE

The company revived *Tale of the White Serpent* in 2006. It literally had to start from scratch again for this year's shows because Yilan-born sculptor Yang Ying-feng's (楊英風) deceptively simple props for the snake's nest and bamboo room, as well as the costumes for the piece, were destroyed in a fire that consumed the company's Bali Township (八里) warehouse and studio complex in February 2008. Since Yang wasn't available to recreate his work (he died in 1997), Lin and his technical team had to create a model of the nest based on surviving photographs and video footage. It took weeks to find the right materials, but they found the right kind of rattan in Changhua for the nest and then they had to shape it into the sinuous curves that had made Yang's creation so memorable.

Once again, Chou Chang-ning (周章俊) will star in Lin's interpretation of the Chinese folktale about a scholar who falls in love with a beautiful woman only to discover his love is actually a snake in disguise.

Last year's performance of the incandescent *Whispers of Flowers*, set to a Yo-yo Ma (馬友友) recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's six suites for solo cello, proved a huge hit with audiences as thousands of pink flower petals filled the air and drifted off the stage. A lucky few audience members were able to climb onto the stage afterwards to play with the petals and it was the older "youngsters" — like the nimble gray-haired man who must have been at least 70 — who delighted those who stayed around to watch. The company is offering the same opportunity again this year at both performances.

Cloud Gate's annual summertime performances, like its dance-extension programs, have been sponsored for many years by Cathay Financial Holding Co. Cathay also uses the summertime shows to promote family activities by staging a combination free child health check-up and dance/stretch movement class for children the evening before the outdoor performances. Cathay General Hospital staff provide the check-ups while teachers from Cloud Gate's dance schools lead the exercises. While admission to the Family Health Day is free, families interested in attending the programs are asked to make an online booking through Cathay Financial Holding's Web site (www.cathayholdings.com.tw).

The Family Health Day program tonight in Banciao begins at 7:30pm, the one on July 23 in Changhua starts at 7pm.

You'll love her under the moonlight

BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

After taking time off from showbiz, songstress Maggie Chiang (江美琪) has returned and embraced the digital age with two singles, *Under the Moonlight* (月光下) and *You Do Love Me* (你是愛我的).

Chiang, now 29, achieved fame in 2000 with her touching rendition of *How I Envy You* (我多麼羨慕你), the theme song to the blockbuster TV period drama *April Rhapsody* (人間四月天), establishing herself as one of Mando-pop's top ballad singers and earning the sobriquet "therapeutic singer" (療傷系歌手) from the media.

To celebrate 10 years in the business, Chiang will perform in a concert titled *Under the Moonlight You Do Love Me* (月光下你是愛我的演唱會) tonight at Legacy Taipei.

She's signed to a new label, Xing Yu Music (星娛音樂), and is diving into the world of Internet publishing by releasing new songs exclusively as singles online,

with two more already in the pipeline.

"It's time to take advantage of Internet publishing. My fans around the world can access my new songs immediately," Chiang said in an interview in Taipei earlier this week.

Chiang is now testing her talents as a songwriter and has penned her latest two songs all by herself.

She wrote *Under the Moonlight* in one night as tribute to a past romance.

"I tend to remember the good times and leave the bad memories behind," she said. "For me, if a relationship doesn't work out, it's not because it's your fault. It just wasn't meant to be."

With *You Do Love Me*, she muses on the desire to be pampered. "We all get into small arguments over trivial things," she said. "This song describes that feeling of loving each other despite the arguments and the confusion."

PHOTO COURTESY OF XING YU MUSIC



Besides singing, Chiang has starred in two musicals, *Running Angels* (跑路天使) and *Thanks for the Music* (我要成名). "In the beginning I was very awkward. I just stood still and sang," she said. "Then I learned to use my body and facial expression to express emotions as well." Chiang has moved far away from the androgynous

image she projected at the beginning of her career and has metamorphosed into a glamorous and feminine woman.

"In addition to makeup and fashion, I think constant study is the way to make oneself beautiful," she said. "A confident person is always beautiful."

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Maggie Chiang, *Under the Moonlight You Do Love Me* concert (江美琪【月光下你是愛我的】演唱會)

WHEN: Tonight at 7:30pm

WHERE: Legacy Taipei, located at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), Center Five Hall (中五館), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)

ADMISSION: NT\$500 in advance or NT\$700 at the door, available through 7-Eleven ibon kiosks, ERA ticketing outlets or online at www.ticket.com.tw

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