

## CULTURE

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[ THE WEEKENDER ]

## Cloud Gate under the stars — a perfect summer night

BY DIANE BAKER  
STAFF REPORTER

Sitting on the grass, a gentle breeze cooling off the day's heat, a few stars visible in the night's sky and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) on stage and on the big screen for free. Summer nights don't get much better than this.

The crowd at the Taipei County Sports Stadium in Banciao on Saturday night was eclectic — everyone from babes in arms to a few 70-plusers and quite a few foreigners — some who had obviously planned ahead by bringing folding chairs and blankets and some who just happened to be wandering by, like the nurse sitting near me who said she lives near the stadium and usually walks the track in the evenings but stayed to watch the show.

The program provided a good opportunity to see the development of company founder and artistic director Lin Hwai-min's (林懷民) style and choreographic ability.

The program opened with *Tale of the White Serpent* (白蛇傳), first performed in 1975, when Lin was drawing heavily from traditional Chinese folklore and performing arts for his inspiration. The lead roles on Saturday were danced by three veterans: Tsai Ming-yuan (蔡銘元) as the young scholar, Chou Chang-ning (周章俊) as the woman he is obsessed with and Chiu Yi-wen (邱怡文) as the snake. All three are terrific dancers who are fun to watch whatever they are doing. Chiu was especially good as she coiled and slithered her way through her role.

The influence of both Beijing opera and Martha Graham on Lin in this piece was evident in the staging and the choreography, but it's clear that even in Cloud Gate's early years Lin had a sure, deft touch.

Next up was an excerpt from *Wild Cursive* (狂草) for two men and two women, led by Lin Chia-liang (林佳良), whose spiraling energy epitomized the imagery of ink drops come to life.

The selection from the classic 1998 *Moon Water* (水月) was a solo by Huang Pei-hua (黃珮華), who was liquid grace as she curved up and down and around herself — the living embodiment of both water and Mischa Maisky's cello. The great benefit of an outdoor performance is the big screens that flank the stage; you could see every nuance, the ripple and flow of each muscle and limb and the concentration on Huang's face, instead of the blur of motion she usually appears on the National Theater stage.

Both the excerpt from *Cursive 2* (行草貳) and the program's finale, the first half of 2008's *Whisper of Flowers* (花語), show Lin's skill in group pieces, though very different in style and execution. The opening segment of *Whisper* appears likely to prove as big an audience favorite as *Moon Water* has become over the years.

For those who waited patiently after the show there was the fun of seeing "kids" of all ages dancing, sliding, jumping or just walking around picking up armfuls of petals from *Whisper* and throwing them in the air. This year the company gave more people the chance to play than last year, but cut the stage time. A total of 360 people, in groups of 45, were allowed on stage for a minute-and-a-half to play around in the petals. With the Cloud Gate's usual precision, all 360 were quickly sorted out and lined up and the petal-play time went off with almost military timing.

My only complaint with the evening — as in previous years — is that the camera operators often focus on just two or three of the dancers, not the whole stage. This is fine for solos or duets, but if there is a lot of space between dancers or groups of dancers, those who are sitting far to the sides — and therefore dependent on the big screens to follow the action — lose out on the big picture.

The company will perform on Saturday night at the Changhua Municipal Stadium. To get a good seat (in the middle and down in front), Cloud Gate fans should get to the stadium early.



More than 300 people had the chance to play with thousands of flower petals after Saturday night's performance by the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre at the Taipei County Sports Stadium in Banciao.

PHOTO: DIANE BAKER, TAIPEI TIMES



PHOTO: EPA

## Pioneers of surfing get their own museum

*Before bikinis and the Beach Boys, surfing was just for the adventurous. A museum in San Clemente is now documenting its wild past*

BY PAUL HARRIS  
THE OBSERVER, SAN CLEMENTE, CALIFORNIA

IT is almost 50 years since the Beach Boys sang about surfing and California girls, and began to take a once outlawed sport into mainstream culture. With surfing now a global industry and a hobby for millions, an ambitious plan has been launched to document the first days of the sport.

The Surfing Heritage Foundation, based in the southern Californian town of San Clemente, is seeking to collect the oral history of the sport by talking to its oldest living practitioners. It wants to find people who remember a time when waves were still uncrowded and surfing was seen as the preserve of a few crazy, dangerous wild men and women.

It will look at the sport before it became popular in the 1950s and 1960s, when it inspired California's beach culture of girls in bikinis and the music scene that went with it.

The foundation is interviewing surfers in their 70s, 80s and 90s to preserve the story of the sport's beginnings and its early culture. It is also sending out oral history kits to surfing groups across America and the world, asking anyone interested in the sport to join the effort.

"We need to capture these stories while these guys are still here. When they are gone, these stories will go with them and that would be a huge loss," said Barry Haun, the foundation's curator, as he stood barefoot in a museum that holds a stunning collection of surfboards, some of which are more than a century old.

Those stories are a link to a world that is fading fast. Surfing was once a very different sport from its current incarnation, dominated by professional athletes on tiny,

super-lightweight boards taking part in a never-ending series of competitions all over the world. Older surfers remember boards made of heavy wood, weighing as much as 45kg. They remember the strange looks from people spotting them at the beach. They remember the endless summers of chasing waves and enjoying the thrills of a sport that had not yet gone mainstream or commercial.

It could be a race against time. The foundation recently interviewed one surfer in his 90s, E J Oshier, a few days before he died. Oshier had spoken vividly of surfing in the 1920s and 1930s. "He described a different world. If he got hungry while surfing, he just dived in the ocean to catch abalone and lobster," said Haun. Others have described a literally different landscape, recalling surfing spots of the past that have since been lost to rampant coastal development and harbor-building. One old surfer even told of using his mother's ironing board to ride waves. Another described taking an axe to the beach to carve out a board on the spot from some lumber.

## OLD-TIMERS

Mickey Munoz, 73, has been a surfer for more than six decades. Looking as fit as someone 20 years younger and a celebrated surfing figure, he still rides the waves at every chance he gets.

He considers the oral history project as being his chance to pass on his knowledge of the sport to which he has devoted his life. "A lot of the history gets lost. But the older you get, the more precious it is," he said.

Munoz remembers many of surfing's early figures in southern California, including Robert Simmons, known

as the "father of the modern surfboard," who died while surfing in 1954. "I want to preserve the memories of men like Simmons. They were like gurus to me," Munoz said.

The foundation has already uncovered surprising new details of the sport's early history, when it was starting to grow in California after being introduced from Hawaii early in the 20th century.

Some of the strangest items in the foundation's collection are several ancient surfboards with prominent swastikas on them. Nazi surfers? In fact, the huge, heavy wooden boards hark back to a time when the swastika was better known as an ancient eastern symbol. They were even marketed under the brand name of Swastika.

For modern professional surfers, such as three-times longboard world champion Colin McPhillips, the effort to preserve the early history of surfing is important — perhaps ever more so as the sport spreads yet further and becomes even more commercial. "I think that it is great to preserve it. It is what started the sport. They were inventing it all back then," McPhillips said.

But while the sport may have changed beyond all recognition, Munoz says most surfers are still the same kind of people. They still love to talk about the minute details of board size and tell stories of waves they caught and ones that got away. They still worship that moment of power when surfer and wave unite.

"We are so lucky to be surfers and they don't change that much. A surfer is a surfer and a wave is still a wave," Munoz said as he prepared to hit the beach and take to the waters last week. "I love it. I first stood up on a board in 1947 and I just never lost the thrill."

## TOP FIVE MANDARIN ALBUMS

JULY 9 TO JULY 15



**1** Jing Chang (張芸京) and *The Opposite Me* (相反的我) with **33.03 percent** of sales

**2** Daphne, aka Ring (丁噐) and *Dream Girl* (下一站天后) with **12.9%**

**3** D.C.W. (東城衛) and self-titled album with **8.84%**

**4** Bibi Zhou (周筆暢) and *i, fish, light, mirror* (i · 魚 · 光 · 鏡) with **4.87%**

**5** Nan Quan Mama (南拳媽媽) and *Jue Dou Bach* (決鬥巴哈) with **3.4%**

ALBUM CHART COMPILED FROM G-MUSIC (WWW.G-MUSIC.COM.TW), BASED ON RETAIL SALES

## PLANET POP

the troubled actress will go to prison as recently ordered by the judge overseeing her probation. Last week, California Superior Court Judge Marsha Revel ordered Lohan to begin serving a 90-day jail sentence tomorrow for violating the terms of her probation on drunk driving charges because Lohan had missed alcohol education classes.

Lohan has moved to a substance abuse facility and signed legal papers hiring celebrity lawyer Shapiro to represent her as she prepares to head to jail for violating probation in a 2007 drug case.

Shapiro, a key figure on *O.J. Simpson's* legal "dream team" in 1995, confirmed Lohan was staying at Pickford Lofts, a treatment center Shapiro founded after



his son died of a drug overdose.

He said he would help the actress get treatment to accomplish long-term recovery and sobriety.

"Lohan is suffering from a disease that I am all too familiar with," said Shapiro, whose son Brent died in 2005.

"Hopefully I can be of assistance."

The 24-year-old actress was sentenced to 90 days in jail earlier this month after a judge determined she violated her probation by missing seven weekly alcohol education classes since December.

The judge also ordered Lohan to spend three months in rehab after serving her sentence and continue to undergo random drug testing until her probation expires.

Lohan pleaded guilty in August 2007 to two misdemeanor counts of being under the influence of cocaine; no contest to two counts of driving with a blood-alcohol level above 0.08 percent; and one count of reckless driving. She was sentenced to three years probation.

The plea came after a pair of high-profile arrests earlier that year.

Lohan has spent 84 minutes in jail and performed mandatory service at the

Lindsay Lohan listens as she is sentenced to 90 days in jail by judge Marsha Revel during her hearing at the Beverly Hills Courthouse on July 6.

PHOTO: AFP

county morgue.

Hollywood observers believe **Mel Gibson's** temper may have landed him in more than just hot water amid a furor over alleged rants against his ex-girlfriend. This time it may cost his career.

The latest scandal stems from profane and rage-filled comments posted on the celebrity gossip website RadarOnline.com which were culled from audio tapes, allegedly of Gibson threatening and cursing his ex-girlfriend, Russian musician **Oksana Grigorieva**.

The tapes have only further tarnished the reputation of devout Catholic Gibson, already known for his scathing comments against blacks and Jews.

While the tapes have yet to be authenticated, neither Gibson nor his lawyers have issued any denial since they first surfaced a week ago.

And with horrendous details of his private life in full view — the culmination of an ugly breakup between Grigorieva, 40, and Gibson, 54, following a January beating in which he allegedly knocked out some of her teeth — agents and fellow actors were quick to turn their backs on the star.

Among the first was the William Morris Endeavor agency headed by powerful agent **Ari Emanuel**, who



US actor Wesley Snipes is set to kiss good-bye to freedom.

PHOTO: REUTERS

has made no secret in the past of his disdain for the *Mad Max* star after an alcohol-fueled anti-Semitic outburst became public in 2006.

"Stars have come back from scandals before, but the number of times Mel Gibson has been in the news for aggressive and abusive behavior, along with racist and sexist remarks, makes him a poor bet for being one of those who manage to rebuild their careers," University of Southern California professor Leo Braudy said.

"Now that he has been dropped by his agent, and denounced by a number of fellow stars, it seems like a real uphill battle, which would make even investors who have some faith in his talent very wary."

— AGENCIES