the media to stop bothering her

family, and got decidedly tetchy

when accused of lacking proper

what constitutes respect," she is

In romance-related news,

Sammi Cheng (鄭秀文) has,

according to NOWnews.com,

become the touch-paper of a

Yu (余德琳), his girlfriend of

successful personal and

Hui and Cheng enjoyed a high-profile and commercially

professional relationship in the

Cheng said in a statement

that her relationship with Hui had changed over the past

that there was no basis for the

lay off the three principals of this

drama, but in a slow news week,

TV personality He Yi-hang

first half of the last decade.

10 years "from romance to friendship" (愛情變成了情誼), and

pair getting back together. Cheng begged the media to

her wish fell on deaf ears.

focus of news after police

(賀一航) has become a major

busted a prostitution and drug

shown to have been a regular

accused of having trafficked

cocaine and ketamine, which is

that he engaged in threesomes

Despite the lurid details

the tabloids, He's fiancee,

referred to in the Chinese-

that have been splashed across

language media simply as Judy,

is standing by her man, for the

the end of the year, is still on

Their wedding, scheduled for

track. According to a report in the

United Daily News, police said

that He had been "very unlucky"

(很衰), since their investigations

had not been targeting him at all.

He was just in the wrong place at

PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

The party's over for He Yi-hang.

with hookers.

moment at least.

the wrong time.

likely to get him into much more

trouble than the titillating reports

ring midweek. Apart from being

client of the syndicate, He stands

breakup between Chinese singer Andy Hui (許志安) and Michelle

respect for family elders. "It's

not up to the media to define

quoted as saying.

three years.

t's often said that the entertainment industry is built on foundations of fantasy and hype, but some old-time entertainers understand the importance of putting their money into something that lasts.

In the case of **Fei Yu-ching** (費玉清), the younger brother of popular entertainer **Chang Fei** (張菲), that's bricks and mortar.

This week, the media was awash with news that the singer and TV host had spent NT\$330 million on purchasing a property on Dunhua North Road (敦化北路).

According to the *Apple Daily*, Fei Yu-ching bought the property outright, paying cash up front for the 600-plus square meter commercial property.

Fei Yu-ching certainly has the money to spend, having grossed, according to the paper, a total of NT\$186 million for concerts so far this year.

According to the *Apple Daily*, the singer, known for his mellifluous voice, low-key lifestyle and financial acumen, is careful with his money.

Another entertainer who is being careful with money is **Lin Chi-ling** (林志玲), who has decided to fight a tax claim of NT\$8.19 million on her earnings from last year. The conflict centers on whether some of her earnings are regarded as income earned through her association with modeling agency Catwalk (凱羅) or personal income.

According to the tax agency, Lin failed to report NT\$170 million in personal income between 2003 and 2005, which is the basis of its present claim.

Meanwhile, **Jolin Tsai** (蔡依 林) is promoting a new album, which once again sees her flaunting her many physical assets in the media.

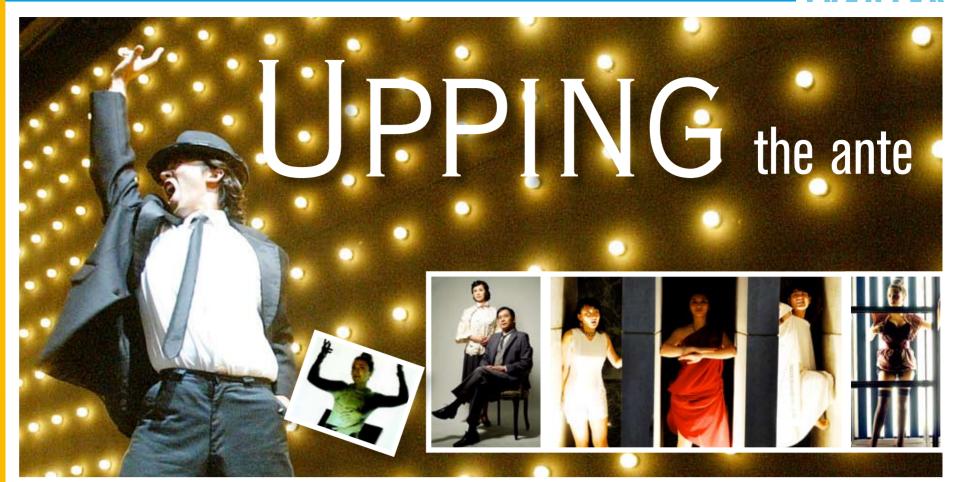
The album, titled *Myself*, has already generated much hype with rumors of steamy music videos.

The most recently released music video, *Love's Pupil* (玩愛之徒), for which Tsai served as artistic director, is rumored to push the boundaries, showing off vast areas of Tsai's welltoned body.

While Tsai revels in opening up on screen, she has said that she has had enough of unwelcome attention from the media, which has recently taken to shining the spotlight on her family life.



BY NOAH BUCHAN



This year's Taipei Arts Festival is all about experimentation.

he 12th Taipei Arts Festival (第十二屆台北藝術節) began yesterday with *Hey Girl!*, a visually stunning performance by Romeo Castellucci. The avant-garde play and its celebrated Italian director embody the direction in which the festival has been headed since the Taipei Culture Foundation (台北市文化基金會) took control of it three years ago.

"We want people to see that [the Taipei Arts Festival] is doing some serious art instead of community art," said Victoria Wang (王文儀), executive director of the Taipei Culture Foundation. "This [means] giving audiences a new format, new techniques and new styles to show where contemporary theater is going."

In 2008, the first year of the festival's reorganization, the Taipei Culture Foundation spent a wad of cash on bringing Robert Wilson to Taiwan, which significantly increased the festival's profile, said Wang. Last year's theme, Shakespeare, relied on the Bard's good name to present a number of avant-garde pieces. It proved a successful pairing with many shows selling out soon after tickets went on sale.

This year's festival features unconventional theater by some of the world's top practitioners and more mainstream theatrical performances and musicals by local troupes.

But are Taipei audiences ready to pay big bucks for what is generally considered experimental theater? As of Wednesday, only *Waiting for What?* (等待窩窩頭之團團 圓圓越獻風雲), a play by Four Chairs Theater (四把椅子劇團) about pandas Yuan Yuan (圓圓) and Tuan Tuan (團團) plotting to escape from the Taipei Zoo, had sold out.

Wang lamented the difficulty the festival had in promoting some of the more demanding of its top-billed performances. "In Taiwan, audiences tend to want all the answers ... They want to know exactly what [an artist] is trying to [say]," she said. "So it's more like an educational kind of experience for them — not an artistic or relaxing or even entertaining kind of experience." This is unfortunate, because this year's lineup features the work of directors who rarely, if ever, come to Taiwan.

But perhaps it's understandable, as many of the performances require the viewer's complete attention. *Hey Girl!*, with its sparse dialogue and emphasis on multimedia visuals, is a difficult work to penetrate. One must get inside the body and mind of the play's protagonist, a young woman coming to terms with her own life experiences, to fully appreciate its

themes of violence and the oppression of women.
Yet if reviews are anything to go by, it is more
than worth the effort. The *Guardian* called

Castellucci "a towering visual genius" who created a "mesmerizing show."

Even more unconventional, perhaps, is *Stifters Dinge*, a genre-bending piece that opens on Wednesday by internationally celebrated German director and composer Heiner Goebbels. Equal parts music, theater and art installation, it is described in the festival catalogue as "a composition for five pianos with no pianists, a play with no actors, a performance without performers — one might say a no-man show." Wang said it was chosen because it illustrates the endless possibilities that contemporary theater professionals are bringing to the stage.

While some plays might stretch the limits of the viewer's understanding, others may test their ability to concentrate. *Lipsynch* by Robert Lepage, the French-Canadian pioneer of mixed-media theater, is an almost nine-hour "marathon" performance (including four short intermissions and a 45-minute dinner break). It begins on Aug. 21 and tells the story of an orphaned boy who is adopted by an opera singer, and playfully touches on the heavy themes of family, language and identity.

But Taipei Arts Festival is not just about unconventional theater. It also offers a lineup of more conventional fare that revolves around this year's theme of "mystery and affection." Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group (莎士比亞的妹妹們的劇團) revives its 2005 musical *Michael Jackson*, a hagiography about the life of this troubled star. *Thriller*, *Bad* and *Dangerous* are among the numbers that will be performed.

Mint, Rosemary and the Flower With No Name (薄荷、迷迭香和不知名的花) by Slow Island Theater (慢島劇團) offers the troupe's take on the enigma of intimacy with a love story between two women. All Music Theater (音樂時代劇場) broadens the festival's theme with The Impossible Times (渭水春風), a story that examines issues of national identity through the life of Chiang Wei-shui (蔣渭水), a formative figure in Taiwan's colonial resistance movement — a subject that is certain to resonate because his legacy remains the stuff of considerable debate in all sides of Taiwan's political spectrum.

There is much more on offer for this year's festival. In addition to pre-performance talks and after-performance discussions, which provide context and insight into the creation and staging of these productions, there is also a film screening, lectures and a public art installation. English-language subtitles will be used on the opening night of the Taiwanese performances.

"Our job is to give the audience the best theatrical experiences they've ever had in Taipei," said Wang.

"And this year, we intentionally emphasized avantgarde work for audiences because coming to the third year, our audience should be ready for a greater challenge," she said.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAIPEI ARTS FESTIVAL, ERICK LABBE AND FRANCESCO RAFFAELLI

FESTIVAL NOTES

WHAT: Taipei Arts Festival (第十二屆台北藝術節)
WHERE: National Experimental Theater; National
Theater; Zhongshan Hall (台北市中山堂), 98 Yanping
S Rd, Taipei City (台北市延平南路98號); Metropolitan
Hall (城市舞台), 25, Bade Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市八德路三段25號); Taipei Brewery (台北啤酒文化園區), 85, Bade Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市八德路二段85號); Nanhai Gallery (南海藝廊), 3, Ln 19, Chongqing
S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市重慶南路二段19巷3號)
WHEN: Through Sept. 12

ON THE NET: www.taipeifestival.org (Chinese and English)

DETAILS: Tickets available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

HEY GIRL!, today, tomorrow and Sunday at the Taipei Brewery (tickets are NT\$1,200)
STIFTERS DINGE, Wednesday to Aug. 15 at the Taipei Brewery (tickets are NT\$1,200)
WAITING FOR WHAT!, Thursday to Aug. 15 at

Nanhai Gallery (sold out)

MICHAEL JACKSON, Aug. 19 to Aug. 22 at
Zhongshan Hall (tickets are NT\$400 to NT\$1,600)

LIPSYNCH, Aug. 21 to Aug. 28 at Metropolitan Hall
(tickets are NT\$1,200 to NT\$4,200)

MINT, ROSEMARY AND THE FLOWER WITH NO NAME, Aug. 27 to Aug. 29 at Zhongshan Hall (tickets are NT\$500)

(tickets are NT\$500)

TIMELESS LOVE. Sept. 3 to Sept. 5 at Zhongshar

TIMELESS LOVE, Sept. 3 to Sept. 5 at Zhongshan Hall (tickets: NT\$1,000) **THE CUTTER OF HAPPINESS**, Sept. 9 to Sept. 12 at

THE CUTTER OF HAPPINESS, Sept. 9 to Sept. 12 at National Experimental Theater (tickets are NT\$600)
THE IMPOSSIBLE TIMES — TAIWAN MUSICAL
TRILOGY, Sept. 10 to Sept. 12 at the National
Theater (tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$3,000)

FSTAIIRANTS BY HOYI BY STEVE PRICE

Comida Ligera 西班牙市場

Address: 27, Alley 25, Ln 113, Minsheng E Rd Sec 3, Taipei City (台北市民生東路三段113巷25弄27號) Telephone: (02) 2717-5628 Open: Daily from noon to 2:30pm and 6pm to 10pm Average meal: NT\$600 Details: Chinese and English menu, credit cards accepted On the Net: tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jackies-kitchen

omida Ligera (西班牙市場) is a curious establishment. While it offers diners a perfectly respectable menu of Spanish appetizers, the interior decoration does not bear the slightest resemblance to a sunny cantina in Madrid, or a dimly lit tapas bar in Taipei. First-time patrons are likely to be surprised by the restaurant's homely appearance and subdued ambiance.

But this less-than-appetizing environment hasn't deterred food bloggers from putting in good words for the tapas bar, which was set up by seasoned chef Jackie Chou (周維德), who led the kitchen of the Hestia Tapas Bar's (西班牙小酒館) a year ago and previously served as the executive chef at the Spring Park Urai Spa and Resort (春秋阜來)

(香秋鳥來).
Comida Ligera exudes the casualness of a local diner. The restaurant's blog promises a display case full of the fresh tapas on offer, but on the Monday I visited, it was empty. There was only one young waitress serving three tables of diners, including us, a party of three, for the whole evening. She was helpful, but the hip-hop music she chose to play in the background didn't mesh with my concept of a tapas bar.

Thankfully, the fare did not disappoint. I ordered eight dishes, which were more than enough.

One of my favorites was the dried coconut and dates with cream cheese (NT\$120). Some would say stuffing

cream cheese into dates doesn't require any special culinary skill, but the snack was simply delicious.

The corn and minced chicken balls (NT\$60) won unanimous approval with its fragrant sauce made of garlic, saffron and mayonnaise, while the squid salad with tomato and olives (NT\$150) just passed muster.

The menu also features a section of stews that includes vegetable and lamb shank (NT\$230) and red wine, cherry and bacon (NT\$230) versions. The meats on both plates were succulent and bursting with flavor.

Other dishes range from squid and ink paella with grilled squid (NT\$320), coca bread (NT\$150), shellfish with herbs au gratin (NT\$80) and assorted ham and chorizo (NT\$380) to fried squid with aioli (NT\$150) and potato and chorizo stew (NT\$150).

We ordered the highly recommended sweet flan (NT\$100), a vanilla egg custard topped with caramel sauce, to wrap up our satisfying meal.

By the time we had polished off a few glasses of sangria (NT\$130 each), the restaurant didn't look so shabby after all.

The drinks menu includes a limited selection of white, red and sparkling wines (NT\$1,000 and NT\$1,200 per bottle) as well as a decent variety of cocktails (NT\$150 to NT\$250).

For those who fancy a more formal dining experience, Chou recently



Dining at Comida Ligera is a casual affair.PHOTO: HO YI, TAIPEI

opened Cocina de Jackie (傑克廚房), located opposite to Comida Ligera. The new establishment serves a more "creative" menu of Spanish cuisine, according to the restaurant's blog.

Comida Ligera offers delicious food at wallet-friendly prices, and, luckily, appearances aren't everything. Be prepared to spend some time locating the restaurant as it is hidden in a maze of alleys near Zhongshan Junior High School MRT Station (中山國中捷運站), where addresses aren't easy to find. ith lofty aspirations of blending history, culture and intellectuality, the Palais de Chine's La Rotisserie wears its pretensions well.

From the glittering chandeliers, swathes of royal purple, blue and crimson velvet and mirrored ceilings to the blue and white porcelain, tapestries and function rooms named after Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau and Pascal, not to mention the food, the old East-meets-West trope is here creatively revisited, elevating a well-trodden concept through tastefully flamboyant decor and innovative cooking.

While a French classical theme dominates the interior design — antique rocking horse, dark wood paneling, brass taps and basins, carved wood eagle lectern, parquet de Versailles flooring — the menu melds Asian and European influences together in dishes that are more than the sum of their parts.

If last month's Bastille Day five-course menu (NT\$2,500 per person) is anything to go by, the chefs at La Rotisserie are adept at concocting unusual flavor combinations using fine ingredients, yet know when to exercise self-restraint.

The glace of king crab with mango and coriander could have been a recipe for disaster. But the fruit, just the right side of ripe, added a delicate tartness to the sweet crabmeat.

Unlike many restaurants that

emphasize luxurious ingredients at the expense of balance, the ballotine of guinea fowl with foie gras and truffle potatoes played down the rich butteriness of the liver and pungency of the fungi so neither stood head and shouldors above the other ingredients

shoulders above the other ingredients.

One of the kitchen's three ovens is heated by an acacia wood fire that imparts a delicate, almost imperceptible smoky flavor to grilled meats, such as the rib eye steak. Attention to detail runs to the condiments, which include black lava salt from Hawaii, a combination of sea salt and volcanic charcoal that is not only a stunning color, but packs a complex flavor that

adds depth to the meat's smoky notes. For dessert, the grapefruit terrine with macadamia crumble and vanilla ice cream, a bright and cheery way to finish, comes highly recommended.

The restaurant also serves an all-you-can-eat buffet, which, compared with its peers, is good value for money. The usual selection of cheeses, cold cuts, sandwiches, sashimi, Movenpick ice cream, creme brulee and cheesecake is NT\$680 for lunch and NT\$880 for dinner, excluding 10 percent service charge.

An indication of the thought that goes into the buffet is the fresh Taiwangrown wasabi served with the sashimi, which is much milder and more subtle

than the paint-stripper variety commonly found in sushi franchises. Owned by L'Hotel de Chine Group

(雲朗觀光), which operates four other hotel brands — Maison de Chine (兆品酒店), Chateau de Chine (翰品酒店), Fleur de Chine (雲品酒店) and Chinatrust Hotels (中信旅館系統) — Palais de Chine Hotel (君品酒店) has 286 guest rooms and suites, which run from NT\$11,000 to NT\$150,000 per night.

From today through Sunday, La Rotisserie is serving a Father's Day menu. The lunch semi-buffet edition is NT\$1,380 plus 10 percent service charge, which includes salad bar, oxtail soup with summer vegetables, butter baked half lobster with creamed spinach and dessert from the buffet. The dinner semi-buffet menu is NT\$1,880 plus 10 percent service charge and includes roast sea bream fillet with clam sauce, rib eye steak and Maine lobster.



La Rotisserie's menu melds Asian and Western influences together in dishes that are more than the sum of their parts. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALANS DE CHINE

Palais de Chine 君品酒店 La Rotisserie

Address: 3, Chengde Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市承德路一段3號)

Open: Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 10am, 11:30am to 2:30pm and 6pm to 10pm, with brunch on weekends from 10:30am to 2:30pm

Average meal: NT\$1,000 to NT\$2,500

Details: Chinese and English menu, credit cards accepted

On the Net: www.palaisdechinehotel.com