

POP STOP  
COMPILED BY HO YI



Kao Kuo-hua's *buxi-bang* continues to make headlines.

**K**ao Kuo-hua (高國華), Chen Tzu-hsuan (陳子璇), Tsai Yu-hsuan (蔡郁璇). If you don't know who these three people are, congratulations! You're one of a select few who have yet to be tainted by the media frenzy surrounding cram-school mogul Kao, his lover Chen, and his estranged wife/news anchor Tsai. The hullabaloo started a month ago when the then-not-so-famous Kao was papped playing an away game with cram-school teacher Chen in his Mercedes-Benz. Since then, media outlets have been tripping over themselves to scoop each other, television talk shows have fought to be the first to interview the concerned parties, and the *Apple Daily* has made not one but 15 News-In-Motion (動新聞) (<http://zfb.bz/eKRR6>) videos on the affair.

This, obviously, is an issue of great national importance. Thus, in the interest of the public good, Pop Stop has combed through the gossip media's archives and provides the following highlights of this ongoing real-life soap opera.

**Aug. 23**  
Eighteen days after news of the affair broke, Tsai breaks her silence and threatens to sue Chen for wrecking her marriage. Kao counterattacks — well, sort of — by noting that Tsai was “the other woman” who broke up his first marriage.

**Aug. 25**  
The 54-year-old lothario changes his mind and says he is still deeply in love with his 31-year-old wife.

**Aug. 27**  
During a television interview, Tsai says her daughter's elementary schoolmates called Chen an “ugly cow.”

**Aug. 28**  
A text message Kao sent to Tsai earlier this month is made public. It sees the wayward husband begging for forgiveness and describing his 37-year-old lover as “old and ugly.” After showing the message to the paparazzi, Tsai says she will take care of Kao even if he ends up penniless. Huh?

**Aug. 29**  
Tsai tells the paparazzi that, in addition to popping sleeping pills and antidepressants, she tried to commit suicide when she found out about her husband's extracurricular activities in July.

**Aug. 30**  
Kao and Tsai are officially divorced. Kao calls Chen his “true love.”

The *Apple Daily* devotes an entire News-In-Motion episode to **Liu Yi** (劉毅), revered as a doyen in Taiwan's cram-school, or *buxiban* (補習班), industry and said to be a business rival of Kao. Liu was also Chen's mentor and employer for eight years before she left his school to work for Kao. An infuriated Liu calls Kao a shameless liar, but promises to extend a warm welcome to Chen — who he says is currently “possessed” — when she returns to her senses.

Hopefully, after the media circus subsides, some journals will also come to their senses and question why they should care so much as to whether or not Tsai lost her virginity to her college sweetheart, or if Kao is bald and wears a wig, and why they should present these findings as “news” to a national audience.

In other news, rumor has it that director **Ang Lee** (李安) will make a business trip back to the country this month for the Fox-financed US adaptation of *Life of Pi*, a fantasy adventure penned by Canadian writer Yann Martel about a boy who survives a shipwreck and spends 227 days on a lifeboat with a tiger, a hyena and a zebra.

Media speculation points to Taichung's Shuinan Airport (水湳機場) as a possible location chosen by the director to shoot the 3D movie, which reportedly has a budget of more than NT\$2.2 billion (US\$70 million).

Though Ang Lee's brother **Khan Lee** (李崗) is staying tight-lipped about the director's new project, actors including **Wang Lee-hom** (王力宏), **Guey Lun-mei** (桂綸鎂) and **Mark Chao** (趙又廷) have already expressed keen interest in participating in the Hollywood flick.

BY DIANE BAKER

DANCE

# Expect the unexpected



Ku Ming-shen and her dancers perform the improvisational piece *Decode 2010* this weekend at the Experimental Theater in Taipei and next weekend at the Wei Wu Ying Center of the Arts in Fengshan, Kaohsiung County.

**C**horeographer and dance professor Ku Ming-shen (古名伸) wants people to come see her new show, *Decode 2010* (亂碼 2010) more than once. It's the only way they will really understand what her company, Ku & Dancers (古舞團) is trying to do.

“Every evening has its own story,” she said in a telephone interview on Monday. “If you come to one, you say ‘Ah, that's what it means, but when you see a second show, you will get the ‘juice’ of the show.”

There will be nine dancers, including Ku, and Claudia Queen, a US instrumentalist and composer for dance, who is in Taiwan thanks to a junior faculty summer research fellowship from the University of North Texas.

Each show will be different because they will be improvising each time. Although the 17-year-old company does perform set pieces, it is known for its

improvisational work, which should be no surprise since Ku is the major proponent of Contact Improvisation in the country. Contact improvisation focuses on the physics of motion and contact between bodies.

This time, Ku says, audiences should expect the unexpected.

“We are going to try to communicate with each other. There are no ground rules,” she said. “In rehearsals, we had to break down, use some rules. In performances, we open up all the options. On stage our destiny will be created by each other.”

So what does that mean exactly? “Everyone will play their own roles. I start to move, others will see me, respond, then they react,” she said.

“For the audience, participation is very important. To look at this kind of performance, you have to be

PERFORMANCE NOTES

**WHAT:** Ku & Dancers, *Decode 2010*  
**WHERE:** Experimental Theater (國家戲劇院實驗劇場), 21-1, Zhongshan S Rd., Taipei City (台北市中山南路21-1號)  
**WHEN:** Tonight and tomorrow at 7:45pm, tomorrow and Sunday at 2:45pm  
**ADMISSION:** NT\$500, available at the NTCH box office or through [www.artsticket.com.tw](http://www.artsticket.com.tw). Tonight's and Sunday's shows are already sold out  
**ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE:** Sept. 11 at 7:45 and Sept. 12 at 2:45pm at Wei Wu Ying Center of the Arts (高雄縣衛武營藝術文化中心), 449-1 Nanjing Rd., Fengshan, Kaohsiung County (高雄縣鳳山市南京路449-1號). Admission is NT\$300

open to see [new things]. The audience will have their expectations, but then they will be surprised as well,” she said. “Being real, that's one of our principles. I want people to see real, we don't want to pretend to be someone else; the present time is what's important.”

It's all about communication, she said, and trying to understand one another, which is where the show's title came from.

“Working on computers, sending e-mails, when something goes wrong, you see all that code that you cannot read. So when we say ‘Body language,’ a lot of the time people say they don't understand what we mean,” Ku said. “Movement has its own language — action and reaction. But when we try to use our logical minds [to decipher it], we don't understand. It's like trying to communicate from French to Chinese or English to German.”

It's all about *moqi* (默契), she said, developing a common understanding, a common culture through dance.

“Some times in improvisation, people are disappointed that everything isn't perfect. But that's life,” Ku said.

Tickets for 70-minute-long *Decode 2010* at the Experimental Theater this weekend are going fast; the only ones left are for tomorrow's two shows. The company will also be performing for two shows next weekend in Fengshan in Kaohsiung County.

MUSIC

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON

## Call him Yundi

**Y**undi Li (李雲迪), “Prince of the Piano” in his native China, at 18 the youngest ever winner of the International Chopin Competition in 2000, from henceforth will officially be known simply as “Yundi.” He will appear in Taipei's National Concert Hall for one performance on Oct. 28, in an all-Chopin program.

So, why Yundi? Is it a marketing ploy, an ambition to sound like a pop star or simply a desire to shake off what is, in the Chinese world, the rather unremarkable “Li”? Basically it doesn't matter. There are classical precedents anyway — the British pianist of the 1940s Solomon Cutner called himself simply Solomon, as if he were an Old Testament patriarch, and Yundi has every right to call himself whatever he wants. Maybe he just wants to preserve his youth. To hear “Yundi!” shouted out at airports in excited recognition will probably, over the years, be increasingly gratifying.

Now 27, and resident rather surprisingly in Hong Kong, Yundi is already one of the

great Chopin interpreters. Just about every top-ranking classical pianist has recorded Chopin's *21 Nocturnes* and Yundi issued the set on two CDs from EMI in April. It's part of a project to record all of Chopin's piano music with his new recording company (previously he'd been with Deutsche Grammophon), and he will play five of them in Taipei in October.

Some critics thought his take on the *Nocturnes* could have done with a little more maturity, a little more brooding in these ruminative, nighttime pieces. None doubted his technical dexterity or his quicksilver fluidity, however. But the essential point is that he's already among the all-time greats, and no one thinks for a moment before comparing him with the most celebrated interpreters of the last 100 years. If he can achieve that in his mid-20s, what will he be doing, you wonder, by the time he's 40?

Anyway, an artist who can play New York's Carnegie Hall is coming to Taipei, and tickets, though by no means cheap,



The “Li” is superfluous.

will probably sell out. If you want to give your family a treat, and have the money, then to be able to say “We saw the great Yundi when he was still only 25. He came to Taiwan, and even signed our CDs for us!” would seem too good

an opportunity to miss. Yundi plays at Taipei's National Concert Hall on Oct. 28 at 7:30pm. Tickets are NT\$1,200 to NT\$4,800, NT\$800 for students, and are available at the NTCH box office or online at [www.ticket.com.tw](http://www.ticket.com.tw).

RESTAURANTS

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

BY DAVID CHEN

### Hua Cai Gan – Tongan Street Branch 花菜干一舜子同安店

**Address:** 84 Tongan St., Taipei City (台北市同安街84號) **Telephone:** (02) 2369-0868  
**Open:** 11:30am to 2pm and 5:30pm to 9:30pm **Average meal:** NT\$400  
**Details:** Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted



Simple fare that manages to provide plenty of surprises.

are served up steamed in the traditional Chinese fashion, with the aim of highlighting their freshness.

Hua Cai Gan staff members are knowledgeable about what is on offer, which makes the job of settling on a suitable choice from among the unfamiliar menu items much easier.

The restaurant also has some surprises in the dessert department — the unusual dish of deep fried rice noodles topped with a sweet soy and sesame oil sauce (煎麵, NT\$200) was a revelation. A reasonable selection of western and Chinese spirits and beers is available.

It's always a pleasure to find something new on the food front, and Hua Cai Gan (花菜干) does just this with its menu, which is drawn from the Penghu archipelago's traditional cuisine. The food of these windswept outer islands, with their extensive use of preserves and pickles, is quite distinct from that usually found on Taiwan's main island.

Hua Cai Gan is a branch of a Penghu restaurant that has a reputation for serving an authentic presentation of the locale's cuisine. Its Taipei branch, which opened last month, exudes rustic chic with colored tiles and low-fired hand-painted crockery. The dining area aims for the look of a well-maintained traditional home; customers sit on backless wood benches while they eat.

The menu comprises many unfamiliar dishes, but staff members are more than ready to help. For larger parties, an array of nicely balanced set menus are available starting at NT\$1,250 for a six-course meal (enough for a table of four to six), going up to a full 10-course banquet for NT\$3,000.

The restaurant takes its name from an unusual preparation of pickled dried cauliflower, which is served fried (炒花菜干, NT\$300). Despite being the restaurant's signature dish, it was interesting rather than toothsome, the vegetable neither vibrant nor crunchy enough to delight.

Fortunately, it was the only dud out of the nine dishes I tasted. Some of these were unusual, such as the pork with pickled gourd (酸瓜炒肉, NT\$300), which paired well-marinated meat with

the crisp, sharp preserved gourd to excellent effect. Another revelation was the cabbage fried with chopped peanuts (高麗菜炒土豆美, NT\$180). Sweet cabbage leaves sitting in a nutty broth and topped with finely chopped peanuts made for an unusual combination, which despite its unfamiliarity, was instantly recognizable as soul food.

Not all the dishes are so exotic; a simple preparation of stewed sardines (鰵魚醬, NT\$250) went down a treat, the flesh firm and flavorsome, unadorned by complex garnishes. The flavors of most of the dishes are powerful, with salt and vinegar predominating, which is not surprising given the heavy use of preserved ingredients. According to bloggers familiar with the restaurant's Penghu outlet, these have nevertheless already been much toned down to cater to the blander preferences of Taipei residents.

An unexpected pleasure at Hua Cai Gan is the rice, served in three varieties — millet rice, sorghum rice and sweet potato rice (NT\$20, one kind available daily) — which harks back to the days before Taiwan's economic miracle, when rice, then a luxury, was often eked out with these cheaper staples. Now that we don't have to rely on them to ward off hunger, they taste remarkably good, giving flavor and texture to the highly refined white rice we eat every day.

That's not to say Hua Cai Gan can't manage finesse — the Taipei branch also offers a catch of the day menu featuring a variety of fish flown in daily from Penghu. All the fish on the menu

**S**panish home cooking is now just an MRT and bus ride away. El Patio de Mi Casa, located in an alley near Nanjing East (南京東) and Songjiang (松江) roads, is run by Luis Miguel Hernando and Ramses del Cura Nogal, two thirtysomething Spanish expats.

Before moving to their current locale last December, the pair had operated out of a residential apartment on Jilin Road (吉林路) for two years, serving dinners by reservation for around a dozen people five nights a week.

Word spread quickly about Hernando's culinary skills and his family recipes, as well as the after-meal entertainment — both Hernando and Nogal are musicians. The two often found themselves turning down customers, and after getting sick of dealing with neighbors complaining about the noise, they finally decided to open a proper restaurant.

Step into their cozy cafe, which seats around 25 people, and the first thing that hits you is a savory aroma from the kitchen.

My dining companions thought it was freshly baked bread, which the restaurant doesn't serve, but the smell could have been the costillas a la miel (香料白酒蜂蜜肋排, NT\$350) — spare ribs with a honey glaze topped with stewed onions and tomatoes.

Hernando says the ribs are marinated ahead of time and slow-roasted for several hours. Aside from the borderline-overwhelming sweetness, this dish was heavenly for its succulent meat, which slid right off the bone.

One basic characteristic of Spanish food is that it's “cooked slow,” says Hernando. But this probably doesn't apply to another must-try dish, *sepia de la plancha* (香煎花枝, NT\$200), or pan-seared calamari slices, which were perfectly tender and not in the least bit chewy. And as if its buttery texture weren't enough, the calamari gets coated with garlic mayonnaise, which is made fresh every day.

For something simple and wholly satisfying, go for the *revuelto jardinero*

(花園炒蛋, NT\$220), Spanish-style fried eggs with mushrooms and asparagus. Despite the familiar ingredients, this concoction is a pleasing discovery. The eggs are constantly mixed while in the pan, according to Hernando, which produces a soft and creamy texture.

Hernando describes the *tortilla espanola* (NT\$120 for one serving or NT\$600 for a whole pie) as a staple food made of staple ingredients: eggs, potatoes and olive oil. We didn't order this, but the cake-shaped dish appeared to be a popular choice, judging by a glance at neighboring tables.

The menu, which is in Spanish and Chinese, also lists tapas-style dishes such as *datil con jamon iberico* (伊比利火腿椰菜, Iberian cured ham with dates, NT\$100). We enjoyed both the *setas y champis a la plancha* (乾煎蘑菇香菇, pan-fried shitake and white button mushrooms cooked with white wine, NT\$180) and *tomato asado* (鐵烤番茄, roasted tomatoes stuffed with pork, NT\$100).

The restaurant also honors off-menu requests made in advance, including *gazpacho* and *cocido madrilenio*, a traditional Spanish stew.

Smaller parties are at a disadvantage, only because they can sample fewer dishes. And they might miss out on trying the seafood *paella* (NT\$1,000 per serving), which is only served for at least four persons. *Sangria* is available by the pot for NT\$800, as well as Spanish wines (NT\$200 to NT\$300 per glass, NT\$1,000 to NT\$2,500 per bottle).

The wait staff seemed hurried, but the service was very efficient. Our food arrived quickly and with little lag time between dishes.

Hernando and Nogal say their loyal customers have followed them to their new locale. But they admit they can't help but miss the intimacy of working out of a private apartment, where guests could mingle in the kitchen and watch them cook.

### El Patio de Mi Casa 小路的陽台

**Address:** 1F, 12, Ln 97, Songjiang Rd., Taipei City (台北市松江路97巷12號1樓) **Telephone:** (070) 1023-4649  
**Open:** 11:30am to 2pm and 6pm to 10pm, closed on Mondays **Average meal:** NT\$400 to NT\$600  
**Details:** Spanish and Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted, reservations best made sending an e-mail to [taipei.elpatio@gmail.com](mailto:taipei.elpatio@gmail.com) **On the Net:** [tw.myblog.yahoo.com/snovchido](http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/snovchido) (Chinese only)

The spare ribs at El Patio de Mi Casa are slow-cooked perfection.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES