

BY ALITA RICKARDS CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

New (and improved) Hong Kong Hair City



A few days at any Taiwan-based music festival reveals a disconcerting absence on the scene. While there are plenty of male-fronted bands, both Taiwanese and expatriate, and a thriving Taiwanese girl band ethos, finding a foreign band with a female lead is like finding a four-leaf clover — a rare instance of luck.

When New Hong Kong Hair City appeared in 2006, lead vocalist and keyboardist Danielle Sanger's raw lyrics, powerful yet shaky vocals, and female presence (hidden though it was behind a curtain of flaming red locks) were a welcome change from the standard boys in bands fare.

Add to that the unexpected appearance of a saxophone taking the place of a lead guitar with Macgregor Wooley blowing out rocking riffs and adding his own lyrics and vocals, original bassist Tom McCann, and the final original member, Kyle Bajcer, pounding out funky beats on drums, and New Hong Kong Hair City was born.

When McCann had to leave Taiwan unexpectedly, the band teamed up with talented bassist Mike Tennant and added guitarist

Tristan Newman, from Wooley's other band, Doublewide. This, combined with Sanger's coming into her own as both a vocalist and a performer, has amped up the band from a funky fun time outfit to a force to be reckoned with.

"I cringe when I think of myself performing back when we started," said Sanger. "I would shake until my fingers couldn't hit the right keys. I hated performing and being the singer." Though she credits her "professional improvement" over the years to the guys in the band, she also shows a rare candor in admitting that though she always loved music and singing it took her until recently to "really find my voice and a niche."

"Practicing regularly has let me get to know my abilities and the limits that they have," she said, while "performing lets me know whether or not I can do it under pressure."

She has gone from a shy, sometimes strident singer to a powerful, smoky vocalist with a gritty edginess to her sound that can transform into a smooth and sexy growling reminiscent of a young PJ Harvey. She may be the best female

vocalist in the Taiwan expat scene, and could hold her own anywhere. On stage she can range from humble to absolutely electrifying.

When the group performs, the audience's reaction speaks for itself. The crowd dances and cheers along to the music, irresistibly drawn to bust a move, while fans of the band sing along to the choruses of their favorite songs.

"My two favorite parts of playing in NHKHC are writing new songs with the boys and jumping about on stage watching all the people in the audience do the same," said Sanger. "I feel like it is a dream to be able to walk onto a stage and instead of dreading the possibility of failing, I get to have a huge grin on my face exchanged between myself and four awesome musicians and performers."

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: New Hong Kong Hair City

WHEN: Nov. 28 at 9:30pm

WHERE: Roxy Roots, 90 Songren Rd, Taipei City (台北市松仁路90號)

ADMISSION: Free

Good hair day.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRISTAN VALENTINE

EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Theater and dance

Dancer/choreographer Lin Wen-chung (林文中) and his WCdance troupe bring their traveling production of **Small** to the Wenshan Branch of the Taipei Cultural Center this weekend. The former Bill T. Jones/Aimée Zane Dance Company member created the piece for the premiere of his own company last year. Lin confines his dancers to a plexiglass cube, yet creates a wide world of possibilities within that small space.

- Tonight at 7:30pm, tomorrow and Sunday 22 at 2:30pm at the Children's Educational Center Theater of the Taipei Cultural Center, Wenshan Branch (台北市社會教化文山分館兒童劇場), B2, 32 Jingwen St, Taipei City (台北市景文街32號B2); Dec. 4 at 7:30pm and Dec. 5 at 2:30pm and 7:30pm at the Experimental Theater at No. 20 Warehouse, Taichung (台中市二十號倉庫實驗劇場), 6-1, Ln 37, Fuxing Rd Sec 4, Taichung City (台中市復興路四段37巷6-1號)
- Tickets are NT\$500 for this weekend, NT\$350 for the Taichung shows, available through www.artstickets.com.tw or NTCH outlets.

The legendary I Wan Jan Puppet Theater (亦宛然掌中劇團) presents one of its masterpieces, **300 Years of Ching Dynasty — Keng Yao (清宮三百年之羹堯)**. Premiered in 1948 under the direction of late troupe founder and puppet master Li Tien-lu (李天祿), the show toured across the country for the following 13 years and has come to be known as the forerunner of Taiwan's golden light puppetry (金光戲). The puppet show is divided into two parts, which are performed tomorrow and Sunday respectively.

- Central II Hall at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914中二館) (formerly known as Huashan Culture Park, 華山文化園區), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)
- Tomorrow and Sunday at 7:30pm
- Tickets are NT\$100 to NT\$500, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

The Village (寶島一村) takes a nostalgic look at Taiwan's veterans' villages, or **juan cun (眷村)**, through the lives of three families, from 1949 to the present day. Television producer Wang Wei-chung (王偉忠) teams up with respected director Stan Lai (賴聲川) to produce a dramatic and humorous work about the communities that did much to shape modern Taiwan.

- National Theater, Taipei City
- Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, Sunday at 2:30pm
- Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$3,000, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Part of the Young Stars, New Vision 2009 series of dance and theater performances initiated by the National Theater and Concert Hall to showcase emerging talents, **Theatre II (戲劇—穿梭虛與實)** consists of two shows: **The Small of ... (小丑記)** is director Wang Ke yao's (王柯瑤) experiment that incorporates the sense of smell in theater, while **Encounters in Space (與我—相逢在宇宙盡頭)** by Aimée Liu (劉岱萱) plays out as a fantasy where high school student Harry has an encounter with three other Harrys who all claim to be him.

- Experimental Theater, Taipei City
- Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, Sunday at 2:30pm

■ Tickets are NT\$300, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Contemporary

As part of the 14th Crown Arts Festival (第14屆皇冠藝術節), **The Two of Us (我們)** by Comedians Workshop II (可以演戲劇團) sees experienced performers Huang Shi-wei (黃士偉) and Hsieh Yiching (謝宜靜) play twins, a brother and sister who decide to be cruelly honest with each other on their 40th birthday.

- Crown Theater (皇冠藝術中心小劇場), 50, Ln 120, Dunhua N Rd, Taipei City (台北市敦化北路120巷50號). On the Net: www.ntat.org/14caf
- Tonight at 7:30pm, tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm, Sunday at 2:30pm
- Tickets are NT\$450, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Man Gang — The Unarmed Men (男人幫—霸王卸甲) is a play by Taiwan Drama Performance (台灣戲劇表演家) that tells a story about five middle-aged men, their memories, yearnings and lost loves.

■ Chiayi Performing Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心演藝團), 265, Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minhsiu Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號)

■ Tomorrow at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

■ Tickets are NT\$250 to NT\$1,200, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.ticket.com.tw

Mercedes-Benz Classical Music Festival — Yo-Yo Ma Cello Recital (世紀古典音樂年2009 — 馬友友大提琴獨奏會) sees one of the world's most renowned cellists performing a program that includes Brahms' *Sonata No. 1 in E Minor* and Franck's *Sonata in A Major*, as well as a number of popular works such as Ennio Morricone's theme music from *The Mission*, Gershwin's *Prelude No. 2* and Piazzolla's *Soledad*. Ma will be accompanied on piano by Kathryn Stott.

■ Tomorrow at 7:30pm

■ National Concert Hall, Taipei City

■ Tickets are NT\$1,800 to NT\$6,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.tickets.com.tw

A Night of Cellos — Ou-Yang Ling-yi and Her Cello Orchestra (大提夢重奏音樂會之夜 — by 歐陽伶宜大提夢重奏團) presents a group of cello students from Soochow University (東吳大學) led by mentor Ou-Yang Ling-yi (歐陽伶宜) in a program of music arranged for an orchestra of cellos. The program includes Handel's *Allegro Maestoso From Water Music*, Corelli's *Concerto Grossi in G Minor*, Telemann's *Concerto for Cello Quartet in G Major*, and Erik Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 1*.

■ Today at 7:30pm

■ Forum Auditorium (十方樂集音樂劇場)

■ Tickets are NT\$250, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Grass Mountain Yearly Concert (2009草山風雲樂會) brings together young Chinese musicians to perform a mix of popular folk favorites and classics from the Chinese orchestral tradition.

■ Monday at 7:30pm

■ National Recital Hall, Taipei City

■ Tickets are NT\$500 to NT\$1,000, available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Classical music

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■ Tomorrow at 2:30pm

■ National Concert Hall, Taipei City

■ Tickets are NT\$1,800 to NT\$6,000, available through ERA ticketing or online at www.tickets.com.tw

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Backing group, the **Bad Jokes Band (冷笑話樂團)**.

- 177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號). Tel: (02) 2370-8805. On the Net: www.riverside.com.tw
- Shows start at 8pm tonight, 8:30pm tomorrow, 7:30pm on Sunday, 8:30pm on Thursday
- Entrance fee is NT\$500 tonight, NT\$450 tomorrow, NT\$250 on Sunday and NT\$400 on Thursday. Tickets can be purchased online through www.riverside.com.tw/livehouse or tickets.books.com.tw

Japanese punk bands **Teenation**, **V/acation** and **Devcornelius** appear tonight at **Underworld (地下社會)**. [See Highlight below.] Tomorrow metal band **RJ45 (石頭果醬)** takes the stage. **Oh!Serena** and **Smells Good** split the bill on Wednesday.

■ B1, 200, Roosevelt Rd Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市羅斯福路四段200號B1). Tel: (02) 2930-0162. On the Net: www.thewall.com.tw

■ Music shows start at 8pm tomorrow, 7pm on Sunday, 8pm on Wednesday and Thursday

■ Entrance fee is NT\$400 tomorrow, NT\$1,200 on Sunday (NT\$800 in advance), NT\$300 on Wednesday and NT\$300 Thursday. Tickets can be purchased online through www.upsaid.com/underworld

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