

## AROUND TOWN

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Mando-pop's  
poetess lets loose

Tanya Chua, one of Mando-pop's most acclaimed singer-songwriters, celebrates her birthday this week with a concert at Riverside Live House



BY ANDREW C.C. HUANG  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Singaporean songstress Tanya Chua (蔡健雅), Mando-pop's urbane poetess, is a troubadour who delivers lessons on life's romantic encounters.

On Thursday, her birthday, Chua will present a small concert at Riverside Live House (河岸留言西門紅樓展演館) titled Tanya Chua's 128 Lounge (蔡健雅的128包廂), at which she'll sing signature songs from her repertoire, in addition to covers.

One of the most popular and acclaimed singer-songwriters in the pop scene, Chua captivates fans with folksy ballads delivered in her hypnotic and sultry vocals, often set against a sparse guitar backdrop.

"I have spent many birthdays alone abroad during the past decade. This year, I intend to celebrate my birthday with my fans," said Chua in a phone interview with the *Taipei Times* on Tuesday. "I rarely go to KTV, but this year, I intend to break some boundaries and have a sing-along with fans."

A two-time Best Female Singer at the Golden Melody Awards (2006 and 2008), Chua is as much revered by her musical peers as her fans.

Her songs *Bottomless Abyss* (無底洞) and *Reminiscence* (紀念) are favorites for hopeful singers on the TV talent show *One Million Star* (超級星光大道).

Chua is also a hotly pursued songwriter who has composed hits such as *Wrong Call* (打錯了) for Faye Wong (王菲) and *Longing for Love* (對愛渴望) for Aska Yang (楊宗緯).

Because of her image as a modern, cosmopolitan woman delving the vicissitudes of love, Chua has been dubbed the spokeswoman of the "urban ballad" (都會情歌) by the media.

"I am OK with that label, even if I don't feel that's who I am," Chua said. "I think it's fine if people relate to me in ways that I didn't intend because I still build bonds with people."

Chua collaborated with professional lyricists for much of her early career because she had difficulty writing in Chinese. It wasn't until the last two albums that she wrote the majority of her own lyrics.

"There was a period when I felt lost singing those commercial ballads, written by other people. My confidence was low and I didn't know what I was doing standing up there on the stage," Chua said.

After her contract with Warner Music expired in 2006, Chua worked with an independent label and produced her last two albums herself. She found her way when she became a producer. "I got to know my flaws and strengths more," Chua said. "I want to make the best of this second chance and become a bona fide singer-songwriter."

"When I write songs, it's just me sitting at my dinner table with a guitar," Chua said. "The best songs are songs that just flow out of you like a stream and you don't think too much. These are typically composed within five minutes, and they feel natural."

For those unfamiliar with her albums, Chua comes across as an ultra-sensitive goddess of love who lives and breathes romance.

"It's true I am a very sensitive person. I feel a lot, and sometimes that's painful because I can't block out emotions," Chua said. "My sensitivities are such that memories [of my relationships with people] stay with me."

What about her own romantic life? "Just because I write a lot about love doesn't mean I have a busy romantic life," Chua said. "Sometimes, a previous romance inspires me to write a song later on, from a different perspective. You can always recycle."

"I would love to do a world tour someday," Chua says about her future career path. "There's also an English-language album that has been put on hold for years. I would like to get that off the ground this year too."

PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES

## PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Tanya Chua's 128 Lounge (蔡健雅的128包廂)

WHEN: Thursday at 8:30pm

WHERE: Riverside Live House (河岸留言西門紅樓展演館),  
177 Xining S Rd, Taipei City (台北市西寧南路177號)

ADMISSION: NT\$500 at the door.

Tickets can be purchased online at [tickets.books.com.tw/concert](http://tickets.books.com.tw/concert)

ON THE NET: [www.tanyachuamusic.com](http://www.tanyachuamusic.com)

[ CULTURE ]

Books, books  
and more books

French writers and publishers take center stage at this year's Taipei International Book Exhibition, which showcases authors from across the globe

BY HO YI  
STAFF REPORTER

The Taipei International Book Exhibition 2010 opens at the Taipei World Trade Center (台北世貿中心) this Wednesday and will feature representatives from hundreds of publishing houses along with 100 authors and other special guests from 58 countries.

The focus this year is on France, with more than 45 authors and representatives from major French publishing houses including Denoel and Hachette scheduled to participate in professional seminars, open forums and book signings throughout the duration of the fair.

Among the visiting authors is novelist Muriel Barbery, whose best-selling *L'Elegance du Hérisson* (The Elegance of the Hedgehog) has been adapted into a film of the same title that hits local screens today [see Other Releases on Page 16].

Novelist, playwright and film director Philippe Claudel will present his newest work, *Le Rapport de Brodeck*, at the fair. Claudel has 14 published novels under his belt, and his most famous work to date, *Les Ames Grises* (Grey Souls), won the 2003 Prix Renaudot award.

The fair's international section also includes 18 pavilions representing publishers from countries such as Italy and Israel. Though the international section is mainly a venue for copyright negotiations, some of the 2,500 items on display in the French pavilion will be available for purchase on Feb. 1, the last day of the fair.

This year's edition will for the first time feature a section dedicated exclusively to Taiwanese authors, with manuscripts and documents from a dozen literature luminaries including Yeh Shih-tao (葉石濤), Huang Chun-ming (黃春明), Kenneth Pai (白先勇) and Zhu Tian-wen (朱天文).

Fans of Chinese literature are in for a treat, with more than 10 of the world's most celebrated Chinese-language authors from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the UK and the US — including Ha Jin (哈金), Guo Xiaolu (郭小橐), Li Zishu (黎紫書), Liu Zhenyun (劉震雲) and Bi Feiyu (畢飛宇) — scheduled to attend 13 seminars on various topics.

While the pavilions in Exhibition Hall 1 of the Taipei World Trade Center focus on literature, Hall 2 will host a wealth of graphic works such as comics, anime and manga as well as a myriad of activities including book signings, forums, workshops and the annual cosplay competition. Booths in Hall 3 will be devoted to children's publishing.

Guests making an appearance in Hall 2 include Japanese voice actresses Junko Takeuchi and Rie Kugimiya, both of whom have risen to the level of superstardom among anime fans. Internationally known cosplay group 304 from Hangzhou, China, will give a performance inspired by Chinese mythology on Wednesday.

Visitors should note that Hall 1 will only be open to trade representatives and disabled persons on the first day of the fair.

## EVENT NOTES:

WHAT: Taipei International Book Exhibition (台北國際書展)

WHERE: Taipei World Trade Center Exhibition Halls 1, 2 and 3

WHEN: 10am to 6pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Feb. 1, 10am to 10pm on Jan. 29 and Jan. 30, 10am to 8pm on Jan. 31

ADMISSION: NT\$100 for adults, NT\$80 for students and those aged 65 and up, NT\$50 after 6pm on weekends. Children under 125cm tall get in free

ON THE NET: [www.tibe.org.tw/2010](http://www.tibe.org.tw/2010)

The annual cosplay competition is one of the Taipei International Book Exhibition's highlights.

