

POP STOP
COMPILED BY CATHERINE SHU



Kao Kuo-hua puts a new spin on teacher appreciation.

Kao Kuo-hua (高國華), the owner of one of the country's largest cram school chains, set gossip rags afire when he was snapped giving some decidedly unscholarly attention to one of his teachers.

Photographed sharing a very slimy open-mouthed kiss with his paramour **Chen Tzu-hsuan** (陳子璇), Kao went on the warpath this week when his estranged wife, former newscaster **Tsai Yu-hsuan** (蔡淑媛), accused Chen of wrecking their marriage.

Kao enlisted the help of *Apple Daily* and the newspaper's (in)famous animation department to make his soon-to-be ex literally look like a fire-spewing dragon lady. The *Apple Daily* reported that during a meeting at a lawyer's office, Kao brought along his elderly mother, two grown children from his first marriage and his first wife. When Tsai arrived with her parents in tow, she allegedly freaked out.

"Who asked you to come?" she screamed at Kao's children. At that point, according to the animation, flames burst forth from Tsai's mouth and erupted from her eyebrows as she bellowed, "Already splitting up your inheritance?"

"I'm not dead yet!" Kao said. "If she hadn't have said that, I would have run out to the street and gotten myself hit by a car," he told a reporter, adding that since Tsai had broken up his first marriage, she had no business calling the kettle black by accusing Chen of being a home-wrecker.

Chen was just a good friend before the marriage broke down, Kao said. He added that his eight year union to Tsai had been mostly a "financial agreement," with Kao handing her a NT\$200,000 allowance every month and paying her credit card bills.

Tsai called a news conference to respond to Kao's allegations, but canceled at the last minute. "It's gotten too messy, so I don't want to have a press conference. I don't want our marital issues to be fought out in public," she explained to *Apple Daily* before breaking down over her husband's statements: "These are all false accusations. Why is he willing to make me look so bad just for someone else's sake?"

In response, Kao said, seemingly without a trace of irony, "Everyone thinks she's so honorable just because she didn't talk today and they are all sympathetic, but as soon as she talks, she'll tell the whole world every single bad thing that's happened in our family."

The only person Kao had anything nice to say about was his tongue-wrestling partner, who has been laying low since the scandal broke. "Teacher Chen's plight is really pitiable," Kao sighed, his voice thick with emotion.

While the break up of Kao and Tsai's marriage is sad indeed, **Rainie Yang** (楊丞琳) had bigger things to worry about this week: uneven breasts.

The difference between Yang's fraternal twins is harder to spot now that she's gained 5kg. She wailed on her blog: "49.2[kg], that's my weight, if you want to be a female performer, you should never see that number!" But there is one good thing about being plumper — Yang's breasts are now the same size, noted the *Liberty Times*.

Currently filming TV series *Sunshine Angel* (陽光天使), Yang confessed that she had once topped the scales at 52kg. After half a year of dieting she managed to wrestle her weight down to 40kg, but it came at the cost of her rack.

"Every woman has uneven breasts," Yang mused philosophically. "It's obvious when you are skinnier. Left side is bigger, right side is flatter." Yang also let fans know about her other imperfection — pimples. Once, a particularly bad bout of acne became so painful that she was reduced to rolling around on the floor at home.

"It hurt so much that I thought I was going into childbirth!" Yang said.

Yang blamed her most recent weight gain on her friend and co-star **Wu Chun** (吳尊). "Wherever he is, there is food. He always brings three, four bags of snacks with him," wrote Yang, who once accused the heartthrob of being prettier than her. The two visited a teppanyaki restaurant together, where Yang said she made Wu envious by proving she could gobble up more food than him in a single sitting.

"I bet he was jealously thinking 'damn fat pig!'" Yang gloated.

BY NOAH BUCHAN

A mother lode of trouble

Richard Chua (蔡兩俊) proudly displays a censored copy of his script for *Generations* (同輩), a play that makes its Taipei debut on Sunday as part of the Taipei Fringe Festival (臺北藝穗節).

"[Singapore] has tough censorship laws ... But it's really good for commercial theater because you throw a couple of stones at the government and audiences love it. They say, 'oh great, you are criticizing the government for us,'" the Singapore-based director said in an interview on Wednesday night. "But our fringe theater hasn't been too active in doing this."

Really? After taking one look at the heavily marked-up script, it's difficult not to think that this is precisely what Chua had in mind when he wrote it. Indeed, Chua has earned a reputation for breaking the boundaries of what the conservative city-state deems acceptable. A play that he wrote in 2004, for example, was banned outright for trying to "change people's metaphors," Chua's euphemism for morals.

So what's the hullabaloo about? *Generations*, which premiered in Singapore in 2008, starts out innocuously enough: A gay son lives with his single mother, who is estranged from a husband whose mentality is "feudal Chinese conservative." In other words, he is a serial womanizer, Chua said.

As the story proceeds, the extremely lonely mother pressures her son to take on the father's role as companion, in and out of the bedroom.

"I think it's humanly possible. But it doesn't make it morally OK. And the son, as a gay man, would he give in to his mom even though, in his metaphor, the female body will

never arouse him?" Chua said.

In addition to taking aim at conservative Singaporean mores, the play is also a jab at that city-state's insular gay community, which Chua portrays as populated by preening whiners who aren't radical enough for his tastes.

"Singapore's gay community is pretty much bourgeois ... Saying how everyone looks down on us and gay rights and blah-blah-blah. You have all the ... beautiful stuff, [and they] end up in this posh coffee shop drinking tea and having fun. So who is suffering? Here you have clever, educated people who can justify their positions and write statements in the newspaper. They say they are being discriminated against, that they are victims, but they are such a glamorous bunch of victims," he said.

By presenting a working-class gay man from a broken home willing to sacrifice his sexuality for his mother, Chua hopes that the gay community will become more inclusive.

As Taiwanese society is considerably more liberal than Singapore's, Chua is freer to draw upon the original script, including, possibly, an on-stage depiction of incest.

"We struggled with the last scene. Should the son just give it to the mother? And how would he give it? And if we just do it like that, is this really morally wrong?" Chua said.

As rehearsals began after press time, this preview cannot comment on the production's aesthetic qualities. However, *Generations* tackles many of society's biggest taboos, so the writing and acting had better be convincing as the play is in danger of coming across as a headline-grabbing stunt.



Generations examines incest through the relationship of a lonely mother and her gay son.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LITTLE RED SHOP

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: *Generations* (同輩)
WHEN: Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:30pm
WHERE: Representation Theatre's Arts Factory (再現劇團藝術工場), B1, 43, Nanchang Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市南昌路一段43號B1)
ADMISSION: NT\$300 tickets are available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw
ON THE NET: www.taipeifringe.org

BY NOAH BUCHAN

LECTURE

Lesson plans

Philippe Peycam believes Taiwan's democracy society could serve as a valuable example to other countries in Southeast Asia, especially Cambodia.

"[Taiwan] has a vibrant democracy ... Within East Asian society it serves as an alternative to ideas [espoused by] Lee Kuan Yew (李光耀) and others who fundamentally believe that East Asians have different ideals that are not compatible with democratic and pluralistic values," the School of Oriental and African Studies-trained historian told the *Taipei Times* by telephone earlier this week.

The founding director of the Center for Khmer Studies in Siem Reap, an organization set up in 1999 to promote academic exchanges and the study of Cambodian traditions, arts and literature, will draw upon his extensive experience of living and working in the country to deliver a lecture, Cambodia After the Conflict: A Personal Account, as part of the Lung Yingtai Cultural Foundation's (龍應台文化基金會) MediaTek lecture series, titled Taipei Salon (台北沙龍).

The talk, moderated by Kuo Cheng-lung (郭崇倫), editor-in-chief of the *China*

LECTURE NOTES

WHAT: The Taipei Salon: Cambodia After the Conflict: A Personal Account
WHEN: Tomorrow from 2pm to 4pm
WHERE: Yue-han Hall (月涵堂), 110 Jinhua St, Taipei City (台北市中華街110號)
DETAILS: The lecture will be conducted in English. Admission is free, but those attending must pre-register online at www.civictaipei.org or by calling (02) 3322-4907



Historian Philippe Peycam will draw on his considerable experience of working and living in Cambodia to discuss the country's recent history and future prospects.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Times Weekly, will examine the broader issues that led up to the emergence of the Khmer Rouge, and Cambodia's future. The lecture will be conducted in English.

"Current regimes in countries like Cambodia are taking advantage of models like Singapore — and by extension countries like China — to claim that they are following another path," he said. "As Taiwan embarks on a complex game with China, it needs to strengthen democratic values in other countries of the region."

It's almost impossible to grasp the depth of the trauma that the Khmer Rouge inflicted on the Cambodian people during its four-year reign of terror. The regime butchered more than 1.7 million of its own people, devastating much of the country's heritage and turning symbols

of culture — such as monasteries and theaters — into pigpens.

Peycam said that since a peace settlement was signed in 1991, international aid organizations have focused almost exclusively on technical and legal development. And though the growth of these systems is necessary to the creation and maintenance of a functioning state, they don't necessarily teach "critical knowledge and critical thinking within society," he said.

"People assume that these societies can learn the technical tricks and then they will move on from there," he said. "But if you look at the rich/poor gap, it hasn't evolved. The countryside is as poor as it was in the mid 1990s. It's a very dire situation."

Nor has Cambodia's political elites offered much help. "They are not so much interested in running the country as running their own businesses ... Everything is for sale in Cambodia. There is no sense of collective responsibility and accountability. It is very crude in many ways," he said.

Peycam said that Taiwan should use its experience of developing a democracy and civil society at home to exert a positive influence on other countries in the region. "Taiwan needs to ... reap the dividends of its economic strength in Southeast Asia. Taiwan is very present [economically] in countries like Cambodia and Vietnam. But it's not followed by more cultural or humanistic initiatives," he said.

RESTAURANTS

BY CATHERINE SHU

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW

Guangsheng Food Shop 爾雅書馨一庭廣生食品行

Address: 25, Ln 38, Taishun St, Taipei City (台北市泰順街38巷25號)
Telephone: (02) 2363-3414 **Average meal:** Most set meals are NT\$350
Open: Lunch 11:30am to 2:30pm, afternoon tea 2:30 to 5:30pm, dinner 5:30pm to 10pm. Closed every other Tuesday **On the Net:** eelyea.idv.tw
Details: Chinese and English menu, credit cards not accepted



Guangsheng Food Shop serves Shanghai cuisine in a retro-chic setting.

PHOTOS: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Walking into Guangsheng Food Shop (爾雅書馨一庭廣生食品行) is like entering a time warp back to 1940s Shanghai. A sitting area with plush red sofas, hardwood mantelpiece, lace-topped piano, Tiffany-style lamp and two extremely fat cats (Guangsheng's pets are neighborhood celebrities) greet visitors as they enter the restaurant just off Shida night market. The rest of Guangsheng, including its basement seating area, is decorated with vintage furniture and knick-knacks, as well as several military posters and photos of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石).

Retro chic and political kitsch aside, Guangsheng's Shanghai cuisine, served in individually sized set meals, is very good. Even the side dishes included with each set, which vary from day to day, are thoughtfully prepared. On separate visits, I had tender stewed melon topped with a single clam, soup made from sweet corn and Job's tears, and bean curd garnished with thinly sliced scallions. You get a choice between plain white rice and caifan (菜飯), or lightly seasoned rice mixed with diced vegetables. The latter is delicious and pairs



wonderfully with Guangsheng's menu of classic dishes.

These include lion head meat balls (listed as braised pork balls, 砂鍋獅子頭, NT\$350). Served in a ceramic pot with broth, tender bok choy and glass noodles, the juicy mound of braised ground pork is very rich without being greasy. The lion head meatball is one of the heartiest of Guangsheng's dishes and ideal for sharing. The drunken chicken (江浙醉雞, NT\$350), served cold, is a good bet for hot and humid weather. The poultry, marinated in Shaoxing rice wine (紹興酒), is plated simply without any accompaniments and the taste of the wine is deep and heady. I also liked the steamed fish (三絲蒸魚, NT\$350), but thought that the small tilfish (馬頭魚) was overwhelmed by a mound of nonetheless tasty toppings that

included slivers of slightly salty pork, mushroom, bamboo shoot and a huge heap of scallions.

For soup dumplings (上海小湯包, NT\$90), you have to wait until Guangsheng's afternoon tea. The dumplings are served four to a steamer and while tasty, they certainly aren't mind-blowing. Neither were the crumbly, delicate red bean cakes (紅豆糕, NT\$80). But Guangsheng's afternoon teas are less about the snacks and more about hot or cold drinks brewed from Chinese teas and taking in Guangsheng's old-fashioned atmosphere. The restaurant is busy even on weekday evenings, but usually quiet during the afternoons, which makes it a pleasant stop for a snack and cat watching. Guangsheng's gigantic felines certainly look like they've indulged in plenty of Shanghai-style treats.

Really good traditional Taiwanese street food can be quite hard to find in Taipei, and it is no surprise that in many instances, it has migrated to up-market restaurants that charge a premium for their classy surroundings. But, as often as not, these modern temples of culinary professionalism don't get these simple dishes right either, even if it is just a question of atmosphere. Street food always tastes better curbside, and in this regard, Black Spot Chicken (黑點雞肉) hits the right spot.

Black Spot Chicken is something of a blast from the past, and it has street cred in buckets. Tucked away on a small street off Changan West Road (長安西路), it does little to advertise itself and is easily missed. It is really nothing more than a wooden counter set in front of a grubby shop space, with chairs and tables scattered higgledy-piggledy across the sidewalk. Its main form of storage is plastic buckets. Some staff wear plastic boots, which seems a little excessive, for although the floor is far from clean, it is not quite necessary to wade through the detritus.

One look from the outside and you are likely either to embrace the establishment as a piece of

Taipei's heritage, or run a mile to find a food court where at least you can't see what they are doing in the kitchen. It doesn't help that the counter display case is piled high with glistening organ meats from pigs and chickens and that dishes are washed in a rickety aluminum basin under a streetside faucet.

Black Spot Chicken serves, as its name suggests, boiled chicken with soy (白斬雞), which is sold by weight (minimum order of NT\$50), and is a perfectly fine example of this dish, but nothing to write home about. The real appeal, for this reviewer at least, was in the soup noodles (切仔麵, NT\$30), which I had heard rivaled the best in town. This is a dish I usually avoid, since at many street stalls it tastes of dishwater spiked

with MSG holding in suspension some limp yellow noodles and bean sprouts. At Black Spot, I was not disappointed. The soup was richly flavored, the noodles firm, the scallions bold, and the overall sensation was of a dish that was thoroughly robust. The trick, I believe, was in the generous use of schmaltz (chicken oil). This might



It doesn't always look pretty, but Black Spot Chicken wins on flavor.

PHOTOS: IAN BARTHOLOMEW, TAIPEI TIMES

Black Spot Chicken 黑點雞肉

Address: 2 Huating St, Taipei City (台北市華寧街2號)
Open: 8:30am to 9pm
Details: No menu, credit cards not accepted
Telephone: (02) 2558-0754
Average meal: NT\$100

not be to everybody's taste, for no concessions were made to modern worries about the consumption of saturated fats. Indeed, Black Spot positively rejoices in the satiny textures that animal fat provides. This passion is amply displayed in its other signature dish, rice with chicken oil (雞油飯, NT\$10), which is exactly that: warm rice with a generous drizzle of rendered chicken fat on top. Stir the oil into the rice and you are in chicken heaven, and for less than the price of a newspaper.

Many kinds of organ meat are available, including different sections of intestine, stomach, liver, heart and tongue. Pig's fallopian tubes (生腸), which can be tough, proved particularly memorable, being crisp and light. The big chunks of pig's tongue (豬舌) and the chicken livers were both mouthwateringly tender. The only thing missing was some good chili sauce; unfortunately, only some salty mass-market stuff was on offer. Not everything is uniformly good, and the sweetheart egg (酥心蛋) — a hard-boiled egg with a soft center — for which the establishment is justly famous, can vary in quality from day to day. On a good day, it is totally awesome.

You will search in vain for anything resembling a menu, but the two middle-aged women who run the establishment are extremely friendly in a rough and ready sort of way. For the adventurous eater, just point and order. Apart from the good food, a visit to Black Spot will also provide a slice of life from old Taipei, at no additional charge.