

BY DIANE BAKER

DANCE

POP STOP
COMPILED BY DAVID CHEN

Marital strife was top of the pops this week on the gossip pages, and we begin with a tale of two CEOs, their glamorous wives and a pending divorce.

"Your wife is having an affair with my husband," former supermodel **Lei Hung** (洪曉蕾) was reported to have said in a tearful, late night phone call to businessman **Tung Chien-san** (董建三).

Tung, the CEO of a raw materials company, regaled the *Apple Daily* with details of how he found out his wife **Carol Chien** (錢德月) was carrying on an affair with Huang's husband **Wang Shih-chun** (王世均), the CEO of a jewelry company.

As Tung tells it, Huang discovered the infidelity earlier this year after hearing his mobile phone ring in the middle of night. Since Wang was passed out cold after a night of drinking, she looked through his text messages and stumbled upon some incriminating conversations with Chien, in which they referred to each other as "husband" (老公) and "wife" (老婆).

This appears to be yet another dent in what began as a fairytale marriage between Wang and Huang, who gave up the catwalk to be a housewife. Over the years, rumors of domestic violence have dogged the couple — on more than one occasion Huang has been spotted in public with bruises and scars, which she has always dismissed as having resulted from accidents.

Tung has been alone in airing everyone's dirty laundry. When asked to respond to his story, Huang insisted that she and Wang had no plans to get divorced, saying that "Things are good now, and I am very satisfied with this stage of our marriage."

That's not the case for Tung and Chien, who are currently negotiating a divorce settlement. Tung took the opportunity to complain to *Apple* about Chien, who is asking for a settlement amounting to NT\$200 million.

For her part, Chien refused to discuss the divorce and denied having an affair with Wang. "He's paranoid," Chien said of her husband. "If I just talk to another man, he gets upset — it's a misunderstanding."

And then there's the story that refuses to go away: The cram school teacher soap opera involving school owner **Kao Kuo-hua** (高國華), his employee and new flame **Chen Tzu-hsuan** (陳子璇) and his ex-wife, news anchor **Tsai Yu-hsuan** (蔡郁璇).

By all accounts, the drama should be over — Kao officially divorced Tsai and has proclaimed Chen as his "true love." But Tsai remained in the spotlight earlier this week with several talk show appearances. On one show, she admitted that her parents were right about their misgivings about



Out of the frying pan and into the fire. PHOTO: TAIPEI TIMES

Kao when they married eight years ago.

On *Who Has the Last Word Tonight?* (今晚誰當家), Tsai told her interviewer that she tried to commit suicide by cutting her wrists on two different occasions since discovering her then-husband had fallen for Chen Tzu-hsuan.

Tsai was accompanied by her twin sister Tsai Yu-chieh (蔡郁潔), who lobbed some verbal abuse Chen's way, referring to her as a "black mountain witch" and a "transvestite," reported our sister paper, *The Liberty Times*.

And in a strange and cruel twist, Tsai received flowers on the set of the show from Kao, who had been contacted by a journalist who told him about her wrist-slashing attempts. The flowers came with a message from Kao: "A thousand faults, 10 thousand faults, all of this has been my fault ... it is like my heart has been cut with a knife, too."

Tsai responded in tears: "This is the last set of flowers [I'll ever receive from him]."

And here's a marriage that almost didn't begin. The day before his wedding last Friday, comedian **Ma Kuo-pi** (馬國華) was discovered standing in a daze in front of his burning car on a road near Yangmingshan in Taipei, after a botched suicide attempt.

The 35-year-old pulled his car over to the side of the road, lit a charcoal grill in the backseat and then loaded up on sleeping pills, according to the *Apple Daily*. What saved Ma's life wasn't the police, who arrived shortly after receiving calls from the scene, but his bladder.

Apparently nature called at just the right time, prompting Ma to step out to take a leak just before his car burst into flames.

The Liberty Times reported that Ma often fought with his fiancée **Hsieh Yi-chun** (謝依純) and the two had just gotten into an argument before he tried to barbecue himself.

Hsieh, who arrived at the police station to pick him up, seemed unfazed. She told reporters that the wedding would go on the next day, and it did. The next day saw the couple presiding over a star-studded banquet that included guests such as comedy bigwigs **Jacky Wu** (吳宗憲) and **Hu Gua** (胡瓜).

Dressed in a white tuxedo, a beaming Ma told reporters that their tiff had been resolved and that he wouldn't be touching sleeping pills anymore.

The god of small things



WCdance members begin a nationwide tour of their newest production, *Small Puzzles*, at the Experimental Theater in Taipei on Thursday. PHOTO COURTESY OF WCDANCE

Choreographer Lin Wen-chung's (林文中) first two productions for his company WCdance (林文中舞團), he made a virtue out of necessity, creating finely honed works set on a small number of dancers to be performed in small venues. When you are just starting out, you can't afford to hire a lot of dancers or big venues and your sets have to be portable.

No longer the new kid on the block, Lin has expanded his vision, yet kept to his minimalist approach with his newest work, *Small Puzzles* (拼), which opens at the Experimental Theater in Taipei on Thursday for five

shows before going on the road next month.

Other choreographers may love computer imagery and multimedia magic, but not Lin.

"My works are anti-technology," Lin said with a laugh during an interview on Saturday last week. "The most high-tech we get is putting a light in one of the small pillars to make it look like a flashlight."

His original idea had been to recycle the white platform he used for a stage in last year's *Small Songs* (情歌) by cutting it into pieces that the dancers could play with them. Stage designer Yao Jui-Chung (姚瑞中)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: WCdance, *Small Puzzles* (拼)
WHERE: Experimental Theater of the National Theater (國家戲劇院實驗劇場)
WHEN: Thursday to Sept. 25 at 7:30pm, Sept. 25 and Sept. 26 at 2:30pm
ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$500, available at NTCH box office or through www.artsticket.com.tw
ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES: Oct. 23 at 7:30pm at Yilan Performance Hall (宜蘭演藝廳), 482, Chungshan Rd Sec 2, Yilan City (宜蘭市精武路二段482號); Oct. 30 at 7:30pm at National Taichung Library Chungshing Concert Hall (台中市中興堂), 291-3 Jingwu Rd, Taichung City (台中市精武路291之3號); Nov. 17 at 7:30pm at Experimental Theater of Chiayi Performance Arts Center (嘉義縣表演藝術中心實驗劇場), 265, Jianguo Rd Sec 2, Minsyong Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣民雄鄉建國路二段265號); and Dec. 10 at 7:30pm at Kaohsiung Weiwuying Metropolitan Park (高雄衛武營藝術文化中心281棟). Admission is NT\$300 for Yilan and Chiayi shows, NT\$350 for Taichung and Kaohsiung

suggested enlarging children's blocks instead.

You can see how the simplicity of the blocks' shapes would appeal to Yao, whose background is in photography and installation, not stage design. However, the pieces are so big that the dancers resemble ants, Lin said, which is apropos since his first piece for WCdance, *Small* (小), confined the dancers to a Plexiglas cube that resembled an ant farm.

Lin is so low-tech that to work out the choreography for *Small Puzzles* he bought a wooden puzzle set from Toys"R"Us and painted it white.

"Everyday I would go home, play with the blocks and then the next day we would go into the studio to try out the moves," he said. "Since we don't have the space to be able to look down from above, and the set pieces are so heavy, it would just be a waste of energy to move them without planning ahead."

The music was suggested by Lin's mentor and former boss, Bill T. Jones: Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

"Two years ago I was choreographing a piece using Tchaikovsky. Bill wrote a letter to say that when he was driving he was listening to Bach and thought it was well suited for me. I thought 'OK,' but didn't know when I would use it. I'm afraid the audience will fall asleep since the music is only one piano [and pianist Chen Hui-yu (陳慧宇)], but I think the music can be enough," Lin said. "Keep the music simple, the stage simple, the costumes simple. I haven't used one-piece leotards since I was in college."

The 70-minute performance (no intermission) is divided into four sections: *The Window*, *The Figures and Shadows*, *The Loop* and *The River of Time*.

Lin uses the blocks and lighting to establish the area for each section.

"*The Window* is a game of negative space. We just use the interior space suggested by the form of a box, like the windows of a building. In *The Figures and Shadows*, the dancers hold the blocks so they become figures, like ants or workers on the street," he said.

"*The Loop* is like a broken CD player; it's the only section where the music is repeated three times. The movement is circle, swing and repeat," he said. "I think *The River of Time* is the one that people will find the easiest to understand — we build a boat, there's a river, a storm that washes away the people, 12 blocks laid out like a clock face."

"I'm still trying to use musicality as a way to connect with regular people," Lin said. "People in Taiwan like dance, but they won't pay to see it. Modern dance is too abstract for them, they don't get it."

RESTAURANTS

Home's Thai 香米泰國料理

Address: 36-6, Fuxing 5 Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市復興南路一段36-6號)
Telephone: (02) 2731-7309 **Average meal:** NT\$700 to NT\$1,000
Open: Daily from 11:30am to 2:30pm and 5:30pm to 9:30pm
Details: Chinese and English menu, credit cards accepted

Located across from Breeze Center (微風廣場), the interior of Home's Thai (香米泰國料理) is as trendy as you'd expect from a popular restaurant in this neighborhood. It's dimly lit and appointed with sleek tables and chairs. A glimmering ceiling-to-floor crystal curtain sets off the staircase to the restaurant's second floor.

But despite its coolly modern interior, Home's offers comfortingly familiar and piquant Thai classics.

The restaurant's menu is extensive — almost overwhelmingly so. Appetizers are divided into two sections, one that features exclusively fried items like shrimp cakes and battered and deep-fried

frogs legs. For a healthier option, try the Thai-style raw shrimp (NT\$350). The dish is a Thai restaurant staple, but the version at Home's Thai is notable for the freshness of its firm, plump shrimp, which are butterflied and covered in a big heap of diced garlic and chili peppers.

As with any menu the size of Home's, there are bound to be a few lackluster dishes. The Thai tapo (NT\$280) is ground chicken, beef or pork (we chose pork) stir-fried with chili peppers and sauce. The dish is served with lettuce leaves for wrapping, but the oil made it somewhat difficult to get the meat successfully inside. The Thai spicy fried crab with lemon grass had a good balance of flavors, but like the

Thai tapo was also distractingly greasy. At NT\$680, it was also one of the most expensive items on the menu.

Home's Thai's version of another classic, chicken satay (NT\$280), is much better, with big, juicy pieces of meat on skewers and two delicious dipping sauces, a thick peanut butter sauce and a lighter sweet-and-sour option. For something more unusual, order the Thai-style grilled lamb chop with spicy sauce (NT\$460), which is cooked just as skillfully as the chicken satay and more robust in taste.

Two seafood dishes, the spicy fried seafood (NT\$300) and Thai sauce squid blend (NT\$300), are both excellent, flavored with just enough chili and garlic. The spicy fried seafood, which is actually stir-fried, is especially good, with plump mussels, shrimp, squid and crab leg meat. The squid blend is served cold as a salad and topped with thin stalks of crunchy celery that complement the firm but tender slices of seafood.

The piquant dishes at Home's Thai contrast with its cool interior.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES



BY CATHERINE SHU

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TIDBITS

BY CATHERINE SHU

Two Agnes B. cafes opened in Taipei last week, one in Esile's (誠品) Xinyi District (信義) shopping center and the other in Breeze Center (微風廣場) in the East District (東區).

As a clothing label, Agnes B. is known for chic, slim clothing designs for men and women. Its cafes, however, seem designed to fatten you up with pastries, chocolates, quiches, creamy lattes and sandwiches filled with cheese (for calorie watchers, boxes of salad and bottles of Perrier are available). Many of the delicate, miniature pastries are embellished with a tiny chocolate disk that has the Agnes B. logo printed on it, in case you forget where you are eating. Prices are surprisingly reasonable, however, ranging from NT\$90 for a quiche to NT\$120 for a sandwich or pastry. At NT\$75 for a small piece, the chocolates are the priciest items.

The rampant use of logos and the fact that the Breeze Center cafe is located right next to an Agnes B. clothing store might make dessert lovers wonder if this is a case of style over substance. But the pastries (NT\$100 each) are actually quite good. The Charlene is a chocolate-covered dome filled with chestnut mousse between flaky layers of light and crunchy feuilletine. Cream liquor gives a grown-up touch to the fluffy chocolate sponge cake in the Danielle. The quiches and sandwiches, while not mind-blowing, offer the lunch crowd a satisfying alternative to food court fare.

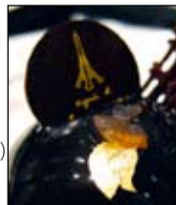
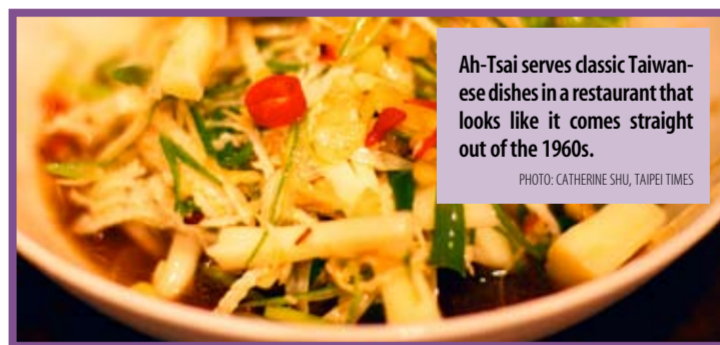


PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Decorated with enough vintage posters and knick-knacks to stock a flea market, Ah-Tsai's Restaurant (阿才的店) gets precariously close to theme restaurant territory. But a fiery, garlic-heavy menu of classic Taiwanese dishes proves the restaurant's culinary chops.

Ah-Tsai's is housed behind a picturesquely dilapidated-looking storefront on Jinsan South Road (金山南路), with overgrown planters and a vintage scooter parked out in front for good measure. The interior is carefully decorated to look untouched since the 1960s (a thick layer of dust on a row of Tatung electric fans and Bakelite telephones helps the overall effect). Scruffy white walls are festooned with colorful movie posters, yellowing calendars and black-and-white photographs of dreamy looking women in qipaos. Waiters grab dishware from cupboards topped with old tin toys and coin banks.

Every vintage item is probably twice as old as Ah-Tsai's clientele, which on weekdays appears to consist mostly of young professionals celebrating the end of a workday by knocking down bottles of Taiwan Beer. Ah-Tsai's strong flavors certainly seemed designed to induce thirstiness for a cold brew.



Ah-Tsai serves classic Taiwanese dishes in a restaurant that looks like it comes straight out of the 1960s.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Take, for example, the stir-fried betel nut flowers (檳榔花, NT\$100 or NT\$200 depending on portion size), a white plant that resembles and tastes like a slightly sweeter version of bamboo. Ah-Tsai's version tosses in a heap of cilantro, chili peppers and diced scallions, as well as a luxurious dose of garlic. After my taste buds got over the initial shock, I enjoyed the dish, even though all the spicy flavors threatened to compete with the mild taste of the crunchy betel nut flowers.

Also searingly hot was the kongpao shrimp (宮保蝦仁, NT\$190 or NT\$280), which was stir-fried with lots of chili peppers. Unlike kongpao chicken, this dish did not feature roasted peanuts, which were replaced with chunky slices of juicy zucchini. The vegetable was a welcome contrast to the shrimp, which had absorbed plenty of chili oil.

We didn't get a respite from the spiciness with the Hakka stir-fry (客家小炒, NT\$180 or NT\$250), or strips of pork, bean curd and squid tossed with scallions, celery and yet more chili peppers. The stir-fry was good,

but the meat and bean curd were slightly overcooked and tough.

Surprisingly, the shacha lamb stir-fry (沙茶羊肉, NT\$130 to NT\$200) tasted tame in comparison to the other dishes, probably because it was only lightly sprinkled with a few tiny bits of chili. The slices of meat were cooked with water spinach, basil and lots of shacha sauce, a thick condiment made of chopped fish and dried shrimp marinated in a mixture of soybean oil, garlic, chilis and shallots. The amount of lamb seemed skimpy but went very well with the basil and crunchy water spinach, whose hollow roots soaked up the shacha sauce.

At NT\$380 or NT\$480 depending on your order size, sanbeiji, or three cup chicken (三杯雞), is one of the priciest dishes on Ah-Tsai's menu. It takes about 20 minutes to prepare, which gives the meat time to simmer slowly in a mixture of soy sauce, sesame oil and rice wine. Topped with cloves of garlic that had been cooked until tender, the chunks of chicken were heavy on bone and relatively short on meat, but nonetheless delicious and worth the wait.

Ah-Tsai's Restaurant 阿才的店

Address: 17, Ln 41, Renai Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路二段41巷17號). The entrance faces Jinsan South Road (金山南路)
Telephone: (02) 2356-9109
Open: Mondays to Saturdays from 11:30am to 2pm and 5:30pm to 2am
Average meal: Most dishes range from NT\$100 to NT\$250
Details: Chinese menu, credit cards not accepted