

STEALER

Off His Perch

By Jane Fitz-Gerald

Who's the bird man?, you might have wondered if you've been out at night recently and spotted a rather tall thin gentlemen walking around dressed head-to-toe in white feathers. It's Hans Langner, if you didn't know, Hong Kong's favorite uber-bird and starling of the art world, currently donning the down to promote his latest art and performance spectacular *Birds*.

"I've been getting a very good reaction," says Langner about his recent costumed outings. "People have been calling me HK bird or birdman. I've only been doing it for a few weeks and already people know about [the show]. People even recognize me when I'm not dressed up."

Birds is a difficult to classify addition to the local arts program, combining elements of dance, live music, experimental theater, song, installation and live sculpture on the same stage. In *Birds*, Langner will be both performing, and installing a sculpture during the show. Asked whether that makes him an artist or a performer, Langner chuckles. "I'm a combination," he says. "When I first came to Hong Kong two years ago I was a sculptor. But my background is in acting." But he started dancing when he constructed a stage on his roof, and then needed something to put on it. "Now I'm dancing with art," he says.

The be-plumed renaissance man will be joined in the production by seven performers from DanceArt and five dance students from the Academy of Performing Arts, plus a small brown caged bird, which Langner will free after the performance.

The main theme of the production is reincarna-



tion, and in the story the dancers will enact the birds dying and then, phoenix-like, being re-born. "Reincarnation is something I believe in," says Langner. "It's a big theme of my life. I wanted to show that when the bird soul dies, it can be transformed."

Langner admits that it is birds though, and not reincarnation, that have played a bigger role in his creations to date. "I seem to be doing every art work as a bird now. People tell me that maybe I should stop, but I can't promise anything," he says.

The feathered fascination began back in March, when Langner staged a private performance in his Chung Hom Kok home wearing nothing but honey and feathers. "It was an improvisation and I only had one or two days planning and I didn't know what to wear. So I used an old cushion, and I had honey in the fridge, so I covered my body in feathers." In *Birds* he'll be wearing slightly more than just soft furnishings.

Birds plays on Dec 13 and 14 at the Academy for Performing arts. See Dance, p.35 for details.

