

Chinese Opera Festival 2023 kicks off today (with photos)

Presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Chinese Opera Festival (COF) 2023 opens today (June 16) at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. After a three-year hiatus, this year's COF will bring together nine quality operatic programmes from June to October to showcase the splendour of Chinese operatic arts in the city.

The opening programme of COF 2023 consists of performances by the Peking Opera Theatre of Beijing, highlighting the artistic legacy of Peking opera master Zhang Junqiu who was famed for his "qingyi" (virtuous female) roles and lauded as one of the four best performers of "dan" (female) roles. The first performance of tonight's opening programme is the classic play, "Top Scholar as Matchmaker", which premiered in 1960 and is celebrated as one of Zhang's iconic works. This time, his disciple Wang Rongrong, currently the leading exponent of the Zhang style and a winner of the China Theatre Plum Blossom Award, starred in the role of Princess Chai and led the Theatre cast to deliver a splendid performance, receiving warm applause from the audience.

The COF 2023 has invited an excellent line-up of Chinese opera troupes to stage stunning performances. Apart from the Peking Opera Theatre of Beijing, there are the Centre for the Safeguarding of Qu Opera of Henan, the Sichuan Opera Troupe, the Wuhan Han Opera Theatre, the Zhejiang Wu Opera Research Centre and the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theatre of Jiangsu. Moreover, veteran local Cantonese opera artists as well as renowned Yue opera performances will stage "The Art of Wusheng Roles in Cantonese Opera" and "A Stellar Meet featuring Plum Blossom Award Winners in Yue Opera" respectively. The grand finale of the COF, "Bless This Land – Cantonese Opera Showcase under the Bamboo Theatre at Victoria Park", will be held outdoors at a large makeshift bamboo theatre erected at Victoria Park. A series of extension activities, including talks, meet-the-artists sessions, exhibitions and Chinese opera film screenings, will be held throughout the festival period to promote the artistry and culture of Chinese traditional opera.

Since its inception in 2010, the COF has curated quality operatic programmes with the aim of promoting the artistry and culture of Chinese traditional opera. For more information on other fascinating programmes of the COF 2023, please visit www.cof.gov.hk.

