

Chinese Opera Festival to stage Xinchang Diaoqiang and Ninghai Pingdiao operas

The Chinese Opera Festival in June will stage Xinchang Diaoqiang and Ninghai Pingdiao operas, both of which originate from China's "Four Major Ancient Singing Styles" and were inscribed onto the first national list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Audiences will be able to witness the charm and uniqueness of these ancient genres of Chinese opera. The Festival is presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

The Xinchang Diaoqiang Heritage Protection and Development Centre of Zhejiang won great acclaim when it debuted in Hong Kong during the Chinese Opera Festival of 2013. On its return in June the troupe will perform the traditional Xinchang Diaoqiang opera "The Battle at Jiujiang". With national class performers, the troupe proudly presents this classic of the genre. With its vivid enactment of the ingenious Zhang Dingbian and the eloquent Hua Yunlong, along with its stratagems and plots, this production is presented in the style of northern opera sang but sung in the southern style. The production includes the light-hearted "The Old Water-carrier", which tells the story of an underprivileged old water-carrier who has no fear of the law and insists on pursuing justice, eventually proving the innocence of a misjudged murderer.

Pingdiao opera involves countless unique stunts, one of the best known being the shuaya or tusk stunt, in which the performers hold buckteeth in their mouths while simultaneously singing, reading or dancing as the plot progresses. Shuaya is regarded as having the same standing as bian lian, Sichuan opera's face-changing stunt. Featuring shuaya maestro Xue Qiaoping, the Pingdiao Art Heritage Centre of Ninghai will unveil for local audiences the rough and delicate yet wild and refined acuity of national-class artistry.

Details of the performances are as follows:

June 22 (Friday) 7.30pm
Xinchang Diaoqiang Opera "The Battle at Jiujiang"

June 23 (Saturday) 7.30pm
Ninghai Pingdiao Opera Excerpt "Meeting the Judge from Li Huiniang"
Xinchang Diaoqiang Opera "The Old Water-carrier"

June 24 (Sunday) 2.30pm
Excerpts: Ninghai Pingdiao Opera "Jinlian Killing the Bandit Lijiao" and Xinchang Diaoqiang Opera "The Farewell on the Bridge" from "Autumn in the Han Palace", "Catching Sanlang Alive" from "The Water Margin", "Autumn River" from "The Story of the Jade Hairpin", "Ghost of a Woman who Hangs Herself"

from Mulian Opera, and "Taking the Robe with His Spear on the Bridge" from "Guan Yu Travelling Alone for Thousands of Miles"

All performances will be staged at the Auditorium, Ko Shan Theatre New Wing. Tickets priced at \$150, \$250 and \$320 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk).

For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.cof.gov.hk.

Meet-the-Artists sessions (in Putonghua) on "The Ancient Provenance of Diaoqiang opera of the Eastern Zhejiang Region and the Intangible Cultural Heritage 'Shuaya' and the Art of Pingdiao Opera" featuring Wang Ying, Tian Min, Zhang Zhanghai, Wang Jiayu, Xue Qiaoping, Tang Jiefei will be held at 7.30pm on June 21 (Thursday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Admission is free. Limited seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.