

Classic plays in civil and martial traditions to demonstrate local inheritance of Cantonese opera in October

Under the theme of "Cantonese Opera in the Civil and Martial Traditions", the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has invited the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong to perform two full-length classic Cantonese operas, "The Legend of Purple Hairpin" from the civil category and "Thunderous Battle Drums" from the martial category, in October. The cast of the "six pillars" will feature veteran Cantonese opera artists alternating with young actors to demonstrate the successful passing of the baton from the older to the younger generation. This programme is one of the "Expo Programmes" of the inaugural Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo.

The "six pillars" refers to the six major roles in Cantonese opera, which include wenwusheng (the male leading civil and military role), xiaosheng (second male lead), zhengyin huadan (female lead) erbang huadan (second female lead), chousheng (comic male role) and wusheng (military male). In this programme, famous veterans such as Loong Koon-tin, Sun Kim-long, Leung Siu-ming, Wai Chun-fai, Song Hong-bo, Nam Fung and Tang Mi-ling will lead a group of young performers, including To Wing-sum Christie, Vong Seng-pan, Lam Wai-ting, Chan Kei-ting and more, to perform in a flexible "six-pillar" alternating style to inject new vitality into the traditional regional performing arts genre, showcasing the spirit of passing on the local Cantonese opera heritage to new generations.

The programme consists of classic works created by local playwrights. The literary play "The Legend of Purple Hairpin", premiered by Yam Kim-fai and Pat Suet-sin, is a Cantonese opera treasure written by Tong Tik-sang in 1956 with exquisite lyrics and melodies. The "Thunderous Battle Drums", a martial arts drama by Tsui Tsi-long in 1962 that was tailor-made for Cantonese opera virtuoso Lam Kar-sing, emphasises the interpretation of inner emotions. The two plays remain popular over the years, and younger generations in Cantonese opera are eager to take part in the performances. Through this valuable performance experience, young actors will be able to recreate the civil and martial masterpieces of contemporary Cantonese opera and demonstrate the abilities of the new generation of local Cantonese opera.

Details of the two performances are as follows:

"The Legend of Purple Hairpin"

Date and time: October 16 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Cast: Loong Koon-tin, Cheng Wing-mui, Tang Mi-ling, Wai Chun-fai, Lau Wai-ming, Pui Jun-hin, Sun Kim-long, Vong Seng-pan, Roger Chan, Chan Wai-see, Chan Kei-ting, Chan Wing-yee, Chong Yuen-sin, Leung Siu-ming, Leung Sum-yee

Angel, Lam Wai-ting, To Wing-sum Christie, Song Hong-bo, Lui Hung-kwong, Chin Shan

Synopsis: During the Tang dynasty, Li Yi, a talented scholar, and Huo Xiaoyu, a daughter of the late Marquis of Huo, are originally engaged with a purple jade hairpin. After overcoming obstacles and tribulations, the lovers are finally reunited.

"Thunderous Battle Drums"

Date and time: October 17 (Thursday), 7.30pm

Cast: Loong Koon-tin, Cheng Wing-mui, Tang Mi-ling, Wai Chun-fai, Wai Tong, Vong Seng-pan, Roger Chan, Chan Kei-ting, Chan Wing-yee, Leung Siu-ming, Ko Lai, Nam Fung, Lam Wai-ting, Song Hong-bo, Lui Hung-kwong

Synopsis: The State of Zhao is invaded by the State of Qi. Princess Cuibi of Zhao appoints a commoner, Xia Qingyun, as the senior general to lead the resistance against Qi. They agree that upon his triumphant return, they will get married. The King of Qin State assists Zhao in its fight against Qi, but also forces the princess to agree to marry him. Xia Qingyun misinterprets the princess's intentions. Later, he learns the truth and confronts the King of Qin in battle, ultimately winning both in war and in love.

€€€€The two performances will be held at the Auditorium of Sha Tin Town Hall. Lyrics and dialogues are with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets priced at \$200, \$300, \$400 and \$500 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1771.html.