

Dance drama "Awakening Lion" to showcase charm of Lingnan culture in Hong Kong in October (with photos)

¶¶¶¶¶The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has invited the Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre to perform in October its grand Chinese dance drama "Awakening Lion", a production that won the Lotus Award, China's highest award for dance. Set against the backdrop of the Sanyuanli Anti-British Uprising in Guangzhou during the Opium War, the lion dancers of the day look back at their predecessors and retrace the history of a century ago, showcasing the inheritance of national spirit that has been passed down through generations, and allowing the audience to experience the charm of Lingnan culture. The programme is part of the 4th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival and the Guangzhou Culture Week.

¶¶¶¶¶The "Awakening Lion" is the first dance drama on the Mainland featuring Guangdong lion dancing, a representative item of the national intangible cultural heritage. With "awakening" as its spirit and "lion" as its form, the production reflects the awakening of Chinese national identity. It depicts two teenage lion dancers who achieve self-awakening and growth while making various life decisions involving the emotional dynamics and the righteous cause of the nation. In terms of artistic style, the dance drama shows strong characteristics of South China and indigenous features of old Canton. By integrating innovative elements and multimedia technology, together with music and costumes rich in regional characteristics, the staging exudes both modern appeal and visual impact.

¶¶¶¶¶In terms of choreography, "Awakening Lion" is a fusion of Chinese dance and traditional lion dance. It incorporates the stances of Nanquan (southern-style boxing) and the difficult movements of southern lion dance, such as falling forward, tumbling, leaping and "picking the greens", into its dance vocabulary. It also blends various southern Guangdong intangible cultural heritages elements, such as Nanquan, Choy Li Fut-style martial arts, wooden fish songs, Yingge dance and big head buddha, to fully realise the creative transformation and innovative inheritance of outstanding traditional culture, and to demonstrate the culture of Lingnan and the spirit of the Bay Area. The production has won the 11th China Dance Lotus Award for Dance Drama and the 11th Five One Project Award. Since its premiere in 2018, it has toured the Mainland, giving over 250 performances, and has been well received by audiences. This time, principal dancers of the Theatre, Iliwan Umar, Pang Guanyu, Liang Qiqi, Li Ao and more, will participate in the Hong Kong performances.

¶¶¶¶¶The story is about an impoverished boy, Xing, and a wealthy young man, Long, who are preparing for a lion dance competition in the Sanyuanli village of Guangzhou. One day, they have a fight in a teahouse. Xing wins by a narrow margin, and Long is not convinced. Long's sister, Feng'er, is secretly in

love with Xing, while Xing's mother is against her son's participation in the lion dance competition. On the day of the competition, the invaders attack the Guangzhou city. Putting aside their grudges, Xing and Long join together with the villagers to fight against the foreign enemies.

¶¶¶¶¶The Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre, formerly known as the Guangzhou Song and Dance Troupe, was founded in 1965. The Theatre upholds the development philosophy of "repertoire as basics, talent as drive, and market as booster", and has created a number of masterpieces, including the dance drama "Awakening Lion", "Loong", "Yingge", "Xinghai's Yellow River" and dance epic "Guangzhou in the Old Days", etc. It has won numerous top awards, and has received attention and praise from all walks of life.

¶¶¶¶¶Guangzhou Culture Week: Dance Drama "Awakening Lion" by Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre will be held at 8pm on October 26 (Saturday) and at 3pm on October 27 (Sunday) at the Auditorium of Sha Tin Town Hall. Tickets priced at \$200, \$260, \$340 and \$420 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. Discount schemes including a Guangzhou Culture Week package discount, group booking discount and concessionary tickets are available for the programmes under the Guangzhou Culture Week (including A New Cantonese Opera "Princess Wencheng" by Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre Company on October 22 and 23). An additional early bird discount is available until September 26 for purchasing the above-mentioned programmes through any of the discount schemes. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7323 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/tc/dance/programs_1768.html.

¶¶¶¶¶The programme will feature a dance workshop (conducted in Putonghua) in which participants will get a taste of the dance and martial arts elements of the performance by learning selected scenes guided by the theatre's dancers. The workshop will be held at 7.30pm on October 25 (Friday) at the Podium Workshop of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Tickets priced at \$200 are now available at URB TIX. For details, please refer to the above-mentioned website.

¶¶¶¶¶A number of free extension activities will be organised for this programme. A pre-performance talk entitled "From lion dance to 'Awakening Lion' – A sharing on innovation and integration of intangible cultural heritage elements in the creation of dance drama" (in Putonghua) will be held at 7.30pm on October 24 (Thursday) at AC1, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The speakers include chief choreographers Qian Xin and Wang Sisi, as well as the main cast. In addition, a backstage tour (in Putonghua) will be held at 4.30pm on October 26 (Saturday) at the Auditorium of Sha Tin Town Hall, with free admission for ticket holders of the performance of "Awakening Lion". Participants will be able to enjoy an exclusive pre-performance access to the backstage of "Awakening Lion" to take photos and explore the stage with sets and props with Lingnan characteristics. Online registration is required (www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/tc/dance/programs_1768.html#tab_7_0) for both the pre-performance talk and backstage tour on a first-come, first-served basis.

ã€€ã€€The LCSD will hold the "Guangzhou Culture Week" Programme Exhibition from October 8 to 27 at the Foyer of Sha Tin Town Hall. The exhibition will feature the costumes and props of the Cantonese opera "Princess Wencheng" and dance drama "Awakening Lion". Admission is free. Members of the public are welcome to join on the spot. The Guangzhou Culture Week is jointly presented by the LCSD and the Guangzhou Municipal Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau.

ã€€ã€€Hong Kong is the host city of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival for the first time. It organises and co-ordinates over 260 performances and exchange activities to be held across the "9+2" cities of the Greater Bay Area. The festival aims to showcase the vibrant and diverse cultural richness of the region and foster cultural exchanges and co-operation among the cities. For detailed information about the festival, please visit www.gbaxlo.gov.hk.

