

Highly esteemed Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theatre artists to perform in Hong Kong

The Chinese Opera Festival will offer Hong Kong audiences a rare opportunity to enjoy Kunqu opera performed by highly esteemed artists from Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theatre in July. The three-day programme, to be jointly presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District, includes Qing period writer Li Yu's work "The Mistake Caused by a Kite" and excerpts performances.

As an exponent of the performing style of "Nankun" (Kunqu of the Southern school), the troupe will showcase the charm of this stylistic school to the Hong Kong audience through the consummate artistry of its cast, which includes renowned veteran artists Shi Xiaomei, Hu Jinfang and Zhang Jidie, who are Representative Bearers of Kunqu Opera as National Intangible Cultural Heritage and winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre. The three highly regarded artists have reached the age of 70, so this is a rare opportunity to have them grace a stage in Hong Kong. Also in the cast are two more winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre – Kong Aiping and Li Hongliang – as well as National Class One Performers Zhao Jian, Gong Yinlei and Qian Zhenrong. The presence of a stellar cast of five winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre spanning three generations of actors in the troupe makes this an unmissable event for those interested in Kunqu opera.

The theatre company is bringing to Hong Kong a full version of "The Mistake Caused by a Kite". It tells the story of how a kite breaking off from its string leads to two marriages, with interesting twists and turns along the way. Peppered with humour and fun, the plot is an attraction in itself for theatre-goers. The full version of the play will be performed by veteran artists of the middle-age generation, led by the President of Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theatre and renowned actor in "chou" (comic) roles, Li Hongliang. The show promises to be a refreshing and delightful experience. Also prepared for the Hong Kong audience are two excerpts from classics in Kunqu opera, which reflect an emotional spectrum that is typical of the genre.

Details of the performances (with Chinese and English surtitles) are as follows:

July 19 (Friday); 7.30pm
"The Mistake Caused by a Kite"

July 20 (Saturday); 7.30pm
Excerpts: "Pursuing Eternal Life" from "The Story of Two Pearls", "Catching Sanlang Alive" from "The Water Margin", "The Obsessive Dream" from "Lanke Mountain", "The Drunken Lu Zhishen Wreaking Havoc at the Monastery" from

"Braving Torture to File a Petition" and "The Soul Departs" from "The Peony Pavilion"

July 21 (Sunday); 2.30pm

Excerpts: "Chance Encounter on a Boat" from "The Peach Blossom Fan", "The Mansion on the Lake" from "Winning the Hand of the Beauty Nonpareil", "Pursuing the Dream" from "The Peony Pavilion", "Selling His Page" from "The Legend of the Embroidered Coat" and "Looking at the Predictions of the Dynastic Fate of Ming" from "The Iron Headgear"

All performances will be staged at the Grand Theatre of the Xiqu Centre in the West Kowloon Cultural District. Tickets priced at \$180, \$280, \$380 and \$480 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk) and the Xiqu Centre Ticket Office. 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/2019/en/kun.html.

A meet-the-artists session will be held with free admission. Limited seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Details are as follows:

Meet-the-artists session: The Inheritance and Development of Kunqu opera

July 18 (Thursday); 7.30pm

AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Speakers: Shi Xiaomei, Hu Jinfang, Zhang Jidie, Zhao Jian, Kong Aiping, Li Hongliang, Gong Yinlei, Qian Zhenrong

Moderator: Elbe Lau (Chinese opera researcher)