

LCSD to present "Seven Filial Kin" from "The Eighteen Libretti" by The Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District will jointly present the Cantonese opera "Seven Filial Kin" from "The Eighteen Libretti" in June and July. The programme, an adapted version of a repertory about filial piety, is produced by The Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong for celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) as well as the 35th anniversary of the Tuen Mun Town Hall. It is under the exclusive sponsorship of The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC), and is one of the many initiatives supported by HKJC's approved donation of HK\$630 million to the Government of the HKSAR to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR.

"The Eighteen Libretti" refers to a repertory of popular Cantonese operas during Emperor Qianlong's reign of the Qing dynasty. Being the seventh of the sets, the "Seven Filial Kin" is written in the format of "tigangxi" which does not have a pre-written script with libretto, and the performances are freely improvised by actors with only outlines of the scene-by-scene synopsis, the dramatis personae and points to note in the musical accompaniment. The present production is revived by a famous actor in Cantonese opera, Sun Kim-long, who had performed this play in the 1970s and 1980s. Based on the content of the production outline, Sun Kim-long adds various formulaic plays delivered in the format of "guanhua", an ancient official dialect of the Central Plains, enriching this restaged production.

The story of "Seven Filial Kin" begins when Madam Yao engages a killer to kill Liu Quanding, who is the son from her husband's previous marriage, so that her own son, Liu Quanyi, can inherit the family fortune. Saved by a loyal servant, Quanding narrowly escapes from being killed. Meanwhile, Quanding's wife, Madam Wang, accompanied by Quanyi, goes to pay respects to Quanding, but Quanyi is dragged away by a beast. Madam Wang is accused of, and caned into admitting, the offence by Madam Yao of murdering Quanyi. Madam Wang's son intends to serve the sentence on behalf of his mother, and is sent into exile as punishment. On the way to the frontier, he bumps into his father, Quanding, and his uncle Quanyi, who have scored the highest honours in the imperial exams, and finally reunite with the family. Celebrating the traditional moral values of filial piety and justice, the story touches the hearts of many with its emphasis on human relationships and ethics.

As the co-artistic directors and lead actors, Law Ka-ying and Sun Kim-long will be joined by an impressive line-up of virtuosi, including Wan Fai-yin, Wong Chiu-kwan, Ng Chin-fung, Loong Koon-tin, Leung Siu-ming, Wan Yuk-

yu, and others in this performance. The programme also marks the start of this year's "Cantonese Operas Across Time" series. Details of the programme are as follows:

Times and dates: 7.30pm on June 2 (Thursday) and 2pm on June 3 (Friday)
Venue: Grand Theatre, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District
Tickets: \$180, \$280, \$380 and \$480

Time and date: 2pm on July 23 (Saturday)
Venue: Auditorium, Tuen Mun Town Hall
Tickets: \$180, \$240, \$300 and \$360

The programme, running about three hours and 30 minutes including an intermission of 15 minutes, will be performed in Cantonese and "guanhua" with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets are now available at URB TIX (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.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1294.html.

A pre-performance talk and a post-performance talk in Cantonese will be held. The pre-performance talk will be held at 7.30pm on May 26 (Thursday) at AC2, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Speakers include Law Ka-ying and Dr Poon Po-chiu. Admission is free. Telephone registration is required and please call 2268 7267 from 10am on May 19 (Thursday). Limited seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Details can be found on the above website. The post-performance talk will be held on June 3 (Friday). Speakers for this talk include Sun Kim-long, Loong Koon-tin and Leung Sum-ye. Members of the audience are welcome to stay behind to join.

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