

New Cantonese Opera "Princess Wencheng" to be staged in Hong Kong in October (with photos)

The New Cantonese Opera "Princess Wencheng" by Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre Company will be staged at the Sha Tin Town Hall in Hong Kong in October. Featuring a star-studded lineup of virtuosi, the opera reshapes the legendary life of this iconic woman to praise her commitment to values and her love for her family and country, demonstrating the unity and solidarity of the country's ethnic groups and the inheritance of national spirit through generations. The programme is part of the 4th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival and the Guangzhou Culture Week.

The New Cantonese Opera "Princess Wencheng" is an epic opera based on the history of Princess Wencheng's marriage to the King of Ancient Tibet in the Tang dynasty. Unlike the traditional melancholic image of a princess in a political marriage, the play portrays Princess Wencheng as an intelligent, playful, courageous and responsible woman. It also captures the unwavering commitment to her values, relentless pursuit of ideals, and chosen path in life, paving the way for establishing a new era in Han-Tibetan relations.

On the basis of inheriting and promoting Cantonese opera, the music of the play integrates the melodies from the Tang dynasty, and with Tibetan, Buddhist and modern elements. Through spectacular and elegant stage design, lighting, and costumes reflecting both Han and Tibetan styles, the audience will be able to experience the prosperous atmosphere of ancient Tang and the beauty of national harmony from a thousand years ago.

The production will also feature an impressive lineup of outstanding artists. Among them, Li Jiayi, who portrays Princess Wencheng from the age of 15 to 55 and with roles ranging from xiaosheng (young male), huadan (female lead), daomadan (female warrior), qingyi (virtuous female) to laodan (old woman), has won the China Theatre Plum Blossom Award for this play. Other performers include two-time recipient of the Plum Blossom Award Ou Kaiming, who plays the role of Songtsen Gampo, and Plum Blossom Award winners Li Junsheng and Chen Yunhong, who portray Tang Hao and Madam Li respectively. More than 100 performers and backstage staff from the Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre Company will participate in the performances.

The play tells the story of Li Xueyan, who is designated as Princess Wencheng and sent to marry in the distant land of TÇ" fÄÖn (or Great Tibet). Though torn by internal turmoil, she accepts her fate, viewing it as her duty to serve her country, and sets off for her new home far away without qualms. On her journey, she has an accident near a cliff but is saved by the King of Ancient Tibet Songtsen Gampo, who has come to welcome his bride. It is love at first sight. Despite facing numerous trials and enduring severe challenges to her familial ties, love, loyalty to her country and even her own life,

Princess Wencheng overcomes them all with a benevolent heart, wisdom, and courage. She devotes 40 years of her life to assisting her husband in governing the country. She also becomes a close friend of Ancient Tibet's Tang Hao, fostering cultural exchange and integration between the peoples of Han and Ancient Tibet.

The Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre Company was established as the Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Workshop in 1953 through the merger of the Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Troupe and the Guangzhou Hongdou Cantonese Opera Troupe. The troupe's notable productions include "Guan Hanqing", "The Crafty Princess and Her Reckless Husband", and "Revolution Comes to the Mountain Villages". Upholding the principles of "Preservation, Reform, Innovation, and Development", the troupe is dedicated to grooming talents and staging outstanding productions as its core mission. With these principles, it steadfastly moves along the path of sustainable development for the Chinese opera art form, exploring scientific and modern practices, and strives to promote this rich art of South China.

The New Cantonese Opera "Princess Wencheng" by Guangzhou Cantonese Opera Theatre Company will be held at 7.30pm on October 22 (Tuesday) and 23 (Wednesday) at the Auditorium of Sha Tin Town Hall. Lyrics and dialogues are with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets priced at \$180, \$260, \$340 and \$420 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. Discount schemes are available for the programmes under the Guangzhou Culture Week (including Grand Chinese Dance Drama "Awakening Lion" by Guangzhou Song and Dance Theatre on October 26 and 27), including "Guangzhou Culture Week" package discount, group booking discount and concessionary tickets. 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 7325 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1770.html.

The programme will feature a creative sharing session and a post-performance talk. Both sessions will be conducted in Cantonese. The creative sharing session will be held at 7.30pm on October 20 (Sunday) at AC1, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Speakers include Li Jiayi, Ou Kaiming, Li Junsheng, Chen Yunhong and renowned local Cantonese opera artist Lau Wai-ming, while local young Chinese opera performer Lam Wai-ting will be the moderator. Admission is free and online registration is required (www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1770.html#tab_5_0). Limited seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The post-performance talk will be held after the performance on October 22 (Tuesday). The speakers include Li Jiayi, Ou Kaiming, Li Junsheng and Chen Yunhong. Members of the audience are welcome to stay behind to join.

In addition, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSO) 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 organised by the LCSD and the Guangzhou Municipal Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau.

Hong Kong is hosting 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 exchange and co-operation among the cities. For detailed information about the festival, please visit www.gbaxlo.gov.hk.

