

Ou opera performances to close Chinese Opera Festival 2019

Performances by the Wenzhou Opera Research Institute will be presented in August to mark the closing of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Chinese Opera Festival 2019. Three full-length productions, "The Legend of the White Snake", "Killing a Dog to Admonish Her Husband" and "Gao Ji and Wu Sanchun", will be staged, and the performers will include two leading lights in Ou opera today, Fang Rujiang, a winner of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre, and Cai Xiaoqiu, a winner of the Lead Actor Award in the Shanghai Magnolia Performing Arts Award.

Ou opera, originally known as "Wenzhou luantan", is one of the regional theatrical genres. It was inscribed onto the second list of National Intangible Cultural Heritage of China in 2008. The vocal styles are diverse, and the works consist of both civil and martial repertoire, with the former distinguished by delicate singing and the latter having uniquely devised stunts.

"The Legend of the White Snake" is a classic in Ou opera known for a balanced focus on both singing and acting. Fang Rujiang won the first Plum Blossom Award in the history of Ou opera with his portrayal of the male protagonist, Xu Xian, in "The Broken Bridge" from this classic. "Killing a Dog to Admonish Her Husband" is one of the four major "nanxi" (Southern opera) plays of China. Sharing its origin with the "nanxi" of the Song and Yuan periods, Ou opera of Wenzhou retains age-old elements but gives them new adaptations. The staging is also modelled on the old "nanxi" and has impressive effects. "Gao Ji and Wu Sanchun" tells the story of a pair of lovers who, despite social class differences, dare to challenge feudal inhibitions. Their tragic love story has been a folk tale popularly told in the Zhejiang area. Since becoming part of the Ou opera repertoire, the work has won rave responses from audiences all over China.

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

August 16 (Friday), 7.30pm
"The Legend of the White Snake"

August 17 (Saturday), 7:30pm
"Killing a Dog to Admonish Her Husband"

August 18 (Sunday), 3pm
"Gao Ji and Wu Sanchun"

All performances will be staged at the Auditorium of the Ko Shan Theatre New Wing. Tickets priced at \$160, \$260 and \$340 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/ou.html.

A Meet-the-Artists Session: A Close Encounter of Southern Opera and Ou Opera – On the Traditional Opera of Wenzhou (In Putonghua), with free admission on a first-come, first-served basis will be held. Details are as follows:

August 15 (Thursday), 7.30pm

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

Speakers: Fang Rujiang and Cai Xiaoqiu

Moderator: Elbe Lau