

# Second Troupe of China National Peking Opera Company to stage "A Showcase of Cheng School Classics"

The Second Troupe of the China National Peking Opera Company will perform in the final highlight of the Chinese Opera Festival, "A Showcase of Cheng School Classics".

The Cheng school was founded by one of the "Four Great Actors in 'Dan' (female) Roles" in Peking opera, Cheng Yanqiu. The singing art of the Cheng school is highly distinctive and is particularly skilful in singing with a tone projected from the back of the head. The singing style fully highlights the contrasts of high and low, and between strong and weak, creating a soulful appeal.

The year 2018 marked the 60th anniversary of the passing of Cheng Yanqiu. In order to commemorate this virtuoso, the Second Troupe of the China National Peking Opera Company is bringing three full-length plays to audiences. All three plays are headlined by Li Haiyan, a renowned "qingyi" (virtuous female) role actress of the Cheng school and a winner of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre. She presents the uniquely stylish vocal style, visual expressions, stylised movements, footwork, hand gestures, sleeve movements and more of the Cheng school fully on stage.

The programme includes the beautifully sung "Consort Mei" created by Cheng in 1925. The work has not been presented on a Hong Kong stage for a long time. Different from the well-known story of Imperial Concubine Yang Yuhuan and Emperor Xuanzong of Tang presented by the Mei school, this repertoire depicts the sad emotions between Consort Mei and the Emperor through the interpretation of the Cheng school. "The Unicorn Pouch" is a classic play of the Cheng school and is characterised by sophisticated singing and a variety of "ban" patterns. It is a classic that demonstrates the vocal style and the art of stylised movements of the Cheng school. "Anecdotes about Empress Wu Zetian" is a grand production written by Li Shiji in the 1990s. Li was a disciple of Cheng and received personal training from the master. Li Haiyan has inherited the art and received personal supervision from the late Li Shiji in her rehearsal of the play, and she is currently the only Cheng school bearer of this repertoire.

Details of the performances are as follows:

August 10 (Friday): "Consort Mei"

August 11 (Saturday): "The Unicorn Pouch"

August 12 (Sunday): "Anecdotes about Empress Wu Zetian"

All performances will be staged at 7.30pm at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Tickets priced at \$150, \$250, \$350 and \$450 are

now available at URB TIX ([www.urbtix.hk](http://www.urbtix.hk)).

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](http://www.cof.gov.hk).

A Meet-the-Artists session entitled "Boundless Ideas of the Cheng School – A Tribute to My Great Mentor Madam Li Shiji" (in Putonghua) featuring Li Haiyan and with Chinese opera researcher Chan Chun-miu as moderator will be held at 7.30pm on August 9 (Thursday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Admission is free. Limited seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.