

Speech by CE at official opening ceremony of Le French May Arts Festival 2019 (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the official opening ceremony of Le French May Arts Festival 2019 today (May 4):

Consul General (Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau, Mr Alexandre Giorgini), Andrew (Chairman of the Board of Le French May, Dr Andrew Yuen), Anthony (Chairman of the Hong Kong Jockey Club; Mr Anthony Chow), ladies and gentlemen,

Bonsoir. It gives me great pleasure to join you tonight for the opening ceremony of Le French May Arts Festival, one of Hong Kong's largest and most anticipated annual events, and certainly the most ambitious international showcase of arts and culture in our creative calendar.

Nothing underlines that more than the exhibition featuring the works of the late Niki de Saint Phalle, one of the highlights of this year's Festival. As the first female Chief Executive of Hong Kong, I naturally admire Niki, one of the most significant female and feminist artists of the 20th century. Opening here at the Exhibition Gallery alongside the Festival itself, I am happy that the exhibition features nearly 100 works of art, including some of the artist's monumental "Nanas" sculptures – as famously flamboyant, original and utterly unforgettable as the artist herself.

The same might be said of the Festival as a whole, which turns 27 this year. Despite its "May" title, it actually runs through the month of June, showcasing everything French from film and animation to theatre and music, including a spotlight on Hector Berlioz by the Paris Mozart Orchestra in honour of the 150th anniversary of the great French composer's death. There's the usual avant-garde French music, fashion and food in this edition, even an exhibition of French-inspired cheongsams. And speaking of fashionable food, Le French GourMay returns this year with an appetite and a thirst for the blessed bounty of the Loire Valley.

In all, more than 120 events will be staged by the talent and artistry of some 350 performers and artists under the theme of "Voyage". It will, I have no doubt, prove a remarkable, and remarkably creative journey, once again enabling the people of Hong Kong and our many tourists and visitors to experience and indulge in authentic French culture.

I'm equally grateful for Le French May's commitment to education and outreach. With the support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Outreach and Arts Education Programme, the Festival offers internships and

apprenticeships, while presenting guided tours, workshops, master classes, public rehearsals and post-performance events. It will provide participants with an invaluable opportunity to see, hear and learn from world-class artists.

I should just add that my Government places a high priority on arts and culture as well, on creating here in Hong Kong an international cultural hub, a city that embraces art and culture, East and West, at every level, for every sector of our community. I'd say we're getting there thanks to exciting recent developments, including the opening last May of Tai Kwun – Centre for Heritage and Arts and the Xiqu Centre in January this year, as well as the continuing progress of the West Kowloon Cultural District and the face-lifting of the Hong Kong Museum of Art. Thanks, too, to such major events as Le French May, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the International Film Festival, the World Cultures Festival and a great deal more.

Finally, I wish Le French May Arts Festival 2019 another memorable year full of drama and delight, insight, entertainment and joy. Thank you very much.



