

Fujian Fanghua Yue Opera Troupe to perform beautiful Yue opera at inaugural Chinese Culture Festival in July (with photos)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has invited the Fujian Fanghua Yue Opera Troupe to come to Hong Kong to perform three Yue opera performances in the Yin style at the inaugural Chinese Culture Festival (CCF). Wang Junan, the fifth-generation disciple of great master Yin Guifang, will collaborate with China Theatre Plum Blossom Award (Plum Blossom Award) winners Zheng Quan and Li Min to stage "the most beautiful Yue opera", "Liu Yong" and classic work "The Jade Dragonfly", respectively. Artists of different generations from the troupe will also gather in Hong Kong to bring opera fans a number of classic excerpts, showcasing the elegant and expressive acting style of the xiaosheng (young male) roles of the Yin School while celebrating the legacy of Yin. This programme is co-presented by the LCSD and the West Kowloon Cultural District Xiqu Centre, and is one of the highlights of the 12th Chinese Opera Festival.

Yue opera, also known as Shaoxing opera, originated from the local dialect and folk music in Shengxian County of Zhejiang Province. It is mainly characterised by the Banqiang style (accompanied by small drum and wood clappers) and various schools of vocal styles. Its performance is similar to that of a song-and-dance drama. Over the past century, Yue opera assimilated the merits of Shaoxing opera, Peking opera, Kunqu opera and drama, fostering the development of performing art in this opera genre.

The first performance will feature "Liu Yong", a play tailor made by the late renowned playwright Wang Renjie for Wang Junan, for which the latter won the Plum Blossom Award. Interweaving six poems penned by the Northern Song poet Liu Yong, the work is filled with an arts and cultural spirit, and is known as "the most beautiful Yue opera ever". Wang Junan meticulously interprets Liu Yong's youthful frivolity and unappreciated talent and skilfully portrays the laosheng (elderly male lead) role in the final act, breaking away from her usual gentlemanly image. Zheng Quan plays the role of Liu Yong's confidante, Chongniang, who is with Liu Yong for a lifetime.

"The Jade Dragonfly", a classic work tailor made for Wang Junan by Yin Guifang, will be staged in the second performance. Wang Junan portrays two different roles in the play, Shen Guisheng and his son, showcasing the difference in maturity as a husband and a son. Li Min, who plays Shen Guisheng's lover, highlights her character's transformation from a girl to a mother. A unique vocal style nicknamed "the deep, deep waves of the Eastern Sea" was specially created for the character Xu Yanzai, Shen Guisheng's son. Opera fans should not miss the climax of the entire play, the scene "Persuading the Three Mothers".

The final performance will be the "Showcase of Yue Opera Excerpt Classics of the Yin Guifang Style", featuring a number of classic excerpts of the Yin School of Yue opera that are rarely performed in Hong Kong. The starring roles of Wang Junan and Li Min in the play "The Lotus Pavilion" from "Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife" have many eagerly anticipating the performance. Artists of different generations from the troupe will come together to perform, showcasing the beauty of inheritance.

Details of the three performances are as follows:

"Liu Yong"

Date and time: July 12 (Friday), 7.30pm

Main cast: Wang Junan, Zheng Quan, Chen Cuihong, Zou Meiyong, Mao Xiaoge, Shen Min, Xing Lihua

Synopsis: Ever since failing the civil service examination, Liu Yong has been dallying in the brothels until a letter from home shakes him up. He heads to the capital to take the examination again, but the emperor considers his talent only adequate enough for plebeian tastes and refuses to offer him an official appointment. Upon recommendation by a Jiangnan songstress, Liu Yong is offered a post, but fails again owing to his lack of savoir-faire in the world of officialdom. He finally gets through the examination at an advanced age.

"The Jade Dragonfly"

Date and time: July 13 (Saturday), 7.30pm

Main cast: Wang Junan, Li Min, Chen Cuihong, Wu Minfei, Xing Lihua, Shen Min

Synopsis: Shen Guisheng comes from a prominent family in Suzhou, and has a poor relationship with his wife. One day, he encounters Wang Zhizhen at the Fahua Nunnery, and they fall in love. Zhizhen soon bears Guisheng's child, and on the verge of childbirth, Guisheng falls critically ill. Before he dies, he gives Zhizhen the jade dragonfly, which is a family heirloom. Zhizhen has no choice but to abandon the newborn. The baby is found by chance by Lady Yang, the wife of Minister Xu, who named it Yanzai. After many twists and turns for years, the mother and son are finally reunited.

"Showcase of Yue Opera Excerpt Classics of the Yin Guifang Style"

Date and time: July 14 (Sunday), 2.30pm

Excerpt "Seeking out His Wife at the Mulberry Orchard" from "He Wenxiu"

Main cast: Qiu Jie, Luan Xiaojie, Xing Bier, Mao Xiaoge, Wang Siying

Synopsis: During the Jiajing era of the Ming dynasty, He Wenxiu and his wife are separated after being framed by the malicious Zhang Tang. Three years later, he becomes an imperial inspector, and finds out the whereabouts of his wife during an incognito visit.

Excerpt "Delivering a Message" from "For the Love of the Country"

Main cast: Zhao Ye, Tang Wanying

Synopsis: Lady Mian Jiang of Cao is abducted and made the queen by Lord Xu

Xigong. Palace maid Dai Ying, through the help of maid Ji Di, manages to convince the military officers Zhong Si and Shen Xi to rescue Mian Jiang.

Excerpt "The Cold Moon over the Mountain Pass" from "Prince Xinling"

Main cast: Xing Lihua, Zhu Hongbo

Synopsis: The King of Qin has besieged Handan, and Lord Xingling would like to save Zhao. His follower Hou Ying advises him to first obtain the Tiger Talisman and seize military power in order to defeat the Qin army. Lord Xingling then pleads with Lady Ru Ji to steal the Tiger Talisman.

Excerpt "Wedding Night" from "Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife"

Main cast: Wang Siying, Zhang Qianqian

Synopsis: On the wedding night, Liang Yushu showers Xie Yunxia with great affection and tenderness. Despite being moved by Liang's gestures, Xie has to reject him owing to their families' feud.

Excerpt "The Cold Crescent Moon" from "The Desolate Moon in the Lonesome Palace of Liao"

Main cast: Chen Cuihong, Chang Jing, Tang Liyun

Synopsis: Xiao Guanyin, the imperial consort of Emperor Daozong of the Liao State, learns to play an impressive piece titled "Pains of Separation", expressing the wish for the emperor to be sympathetic to the tribulations of these subjects. However, Emperor Daozong falsely accuses Empress Xiao of having an affair with the musician, leading to an unjust verdict.

Excerpt "Fortune-Telling" from "The Prince of the Desert"

Main cast: Mao Lexiao, Zhao Yang

Synopsis: Prince Luolan, after reclaiming his kingdom, misses his beloved Princess Yili. He disguises himself as a fortune-teller carrying a qin (a musical instrument) and searches for her everywhere. One day, Yili hears the melody of the qin and summons Luolan into her tent. Recognising the prince, they are finally reunited.

Excerpt "Reading Romance of the Western Chamber" from "The Dream of the Red Chamber"

Main cast: Qiu Jie, Yu Aili

Synopsis: After reading the "Romance of the Western Chamber" together, Baoyu expresses his admiration for Daiyu through the texts in the novel. Daiyu accepts his love, and the two no longer need to conceal their feelings towards each other.

Excerpt "Judge Bao Begs for Forgiveness" from "Chisang Town"

Main cast: Shen Min, Fang Xiaoying, Liu Qiuchun, Xing Yujing

Synopsis: After Judge Bao sentences his nephew Bao Mian to death, his sister-in-law, Wu Miaozen, blames him for not considering their family relationship. Bao explains to her the need to adhere to a righteous principle. Wu eventually forgives him.

Excerpt "Fortune-Telling" from "He Wenxiu"

Main cast: Mao Xiaoge, Wu Bingyao, Zhang Haiyan, Zhao Si

Synopsis: He Wenxiu, reaching his official position as an imperial inspector, visits Haining in disguise to privately investigate the whereabouts of his wife. Since Zhang Tang is still at large, he must hide his real identity. Instead, he disguises himself as a fortune teller and writes a plea for justice on his wife's behalf.

Excerpt "The Lotus Pavilion" from "Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife"

Main cast: Wang Junan, Li Min

Synopsis: After their marriage, Xie Yunxia grew increasingly distant from Liang Yushu, leaving him puzzled. On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, Liang questions his wife subtly. Though Xie is touched by his sincerity, she still cannot overcome her grievances over her parents' murder. Eventually, she retires to her room in silence.

The Fujian Fanghua Yue Opera Troupe was founded by Yue opera master Yin Guifang in Shanghai in 1946 and subsequently relocated to Fujian. Over the years, the troupe has groomed numerous young talent, and among them, Li Min, Wang Junan, Chen Liyu and Zheng Quan have won Plum Blossom Awards. It has also performed in New Zealand, South Africa, Hungary, Indonesia and other places, and received wide acclaim.

The three performances will be held at the Grand Theatre of Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District. Lyrics and dialogues are with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets priced at \$200, \$300, \$400 and \$500 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk) and at the Xiqu Centre Ticket Office, West Kowloon Cultural District. For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.ccf.gov.hk/en/programme/fujian-fanghua-yue-opera-troupe/.

The CCF, presented by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and organised by the LCSD's Chinese Culture Promotion Office, aims to enhance the public's appreciation of Chinese culture and cultivate citizens' national identity and cultural confidence. The inaugural CCF is held from June to September. Through different performing arts programmes in various forms and related extension activities, including selected programmes of the Chinese Opera Festival, exemplary local arts projects recognised by the China National Arts Fund, performing arts programmes from arts and cultural organisations, film screenings, exhibitions, talks and more, the festival allows members of the public and visitors to experience the broad and profound Chinese culture with a view to promoting Chinese culture and patriotic education as well as enhancing national identity amongst the people of Hong Kong, making contributions to the steadfast and successful implementation of "one country, two systems". For details, please visit the CCF website www.ccf.gov.hk.

The LCSD has long been promoting Chinese history and culture through organising an array of programmes and activities to enable the public to learn more about the broad and profound Chinese culture. For more information, please visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ccpo/index.html.



[Hong Kong rose to rank fifth in World Competitiveness Yearbook 2024](#)

In the latest World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) 2024 published by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD), Hong Kong's ranking improved by two places to fifth globally.

Among the four competitiveness factors in the WCY 2024, Hong Kong's rankings in "Business efficiency" and "Infrastructure" rose notably and came within the top 10 globally. Our ranking in "Government efficiency" also stayed high among the top three. Our ranking in "Economic performance" also saw significant improvement, reflecting the economic recovery in 2023. As regards the sub-factors, Hong Kong topped the rankings in "International trade" and "Business legislation", and was among the global top five in "Tax policy", "International investment", "Basic infrastructure", "Finance" and "Education".

A Government spokesperson said today (June 18), "Having taken into account a host of factors including objective data and business opinions, the IMD's WCY 2024 continued to recognise Hong Kong as one of the most competitive economies in the world. With staunch support from the Central Government, the Hong Kong economy has continued to recover after the epidemic. The HKSAR Government has launched an array of measures to bolster market confidence and has organised mega events to bolster tourism and consumption, with a view to consolidating the momentum of economic recovery. At the same time, we are vigorously attracting enterprises, capital and talent from around the world to come to Hong Kong, proactively driving the development of areas including financial services, innovation and technology, and trading where Hong Kong enjoys an edge, and embracing green transformation and digital economy development, so as to expedite the formation of new quality productive forces and spearhead the high-quality development of our economy in the medium to long run. Work in these areas is being implemented steadily and has made good progress, as widely recognised."

The spokesperson added, "Under 'one country, two systems', Hong Kong enjoys the strong support of the motherland while being closely connected to the world, and is the only city that combines Chinese advantages and international advantages. Looking forward, Hong Kong will continue to perform our roles and functions as a 'super-connector' and a 'super value-adder', and proactively integrate into the overall national development and align with national development strategies. We will continue to expand our economic capacity, cultivate new growth areas and enhance competitiveness, so as to bring our economic development to a higher level, creating more and better development opportunities for the people and enterprises."

[Three property owners fined over \\$370,000 in total for not complying with removal orders](#)

Three property owners were convicted and fined over \$370,000 in total at

the Tuen Mun and Fanling Magistrates' Courts last month and earlier this month for failing to comply with removal orders issued under the Buildings Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 123).

The first case involved three unauthorised structures with a total area of about 900 square meters on the roof of an industrial building on Kin Tai Street, Tuen Mun. As the unauthorised building works (UBWs) were carried out without prior approval and consent from the Buildings Department (BD), three removal orders were served on the owner under section 24(1) of the BO.

Failing to comply with the removal orders, the owner was prosecuted by the BD and was fined a total of \$193,500, of which over \$103,500 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on May 31.

The second case involved several UBWs with a total area of about 32 square metres at the balcony and the roof of a village house in San Uk Ka, Tai Po. The subject premises is co-owned by two owners. Since the Lands Department would not issue a certificate of exemption for the structure and the UBWs were carried out without prior approval and consent from the BD, a removal order was served on the owners under section 24(1) of the BO.

Failing to comply with the removal order, the two owners were prosecuted by the BD and were fined a total of \$179,400, of which \$149,400 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts on May 28 and June 4 respectively.

A spokesman for the BD said today (June 18). "UBWs may lead to serious consequences. Owners must comply with removal orders without delay. The BD will continue to take enforcement action against owners who have failed to comply with removal orders, including instigation of prosecution, so as to ensure building safety."

Failure to comply with a removal order without reasonable excuse is a serious offence under the BO. The maximum penalty upon conviction is one year's imprisonment and a fine of \$200,000, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence continues.

Temporary closure of Tung Cheong Street Swimming Pool

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (June 18) that Tung Cheong Street Swimming Pool in Tai Po District will be temporarily closed from July 2 for repair works, which are expected to be completed in late October. During the closure period, the public may use swimming

facilities at Tai Po Swimming Pool and Tai Po Lung Mei Beach in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venue or contact venue staff at 2691 2428.

SCST expresses sorrow over passing of renowned composer Dr Yip Wai-hong

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, was saddened today (June 18) over the passing of renowned composer and music educator Dr Yip Wai-hong, and extended deepest condolences to his family.

Mr Yeung said, "Dr Yip devoted his life to musical composition and made significant contributions to children's music education in particular, nurturing many music talents. The Hong Kong Children's Choir and Pan Asia Symphony Orchestra, founded by Dr Yip, have made remarkable achievements. Dr Yip is an exemplar among Hong Kong artists. His passing is our loss and we will fondly remember him."