

Inaugural Chinese Culture Festival to present two North Road Bangzi opera classics from Shanxi (with photos)

¶¶¶The inaugural Chinese Culture Festival (CCF), organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will present two North Road Bangzi opera plays set in Tang dynasty, "Sobering Up after Being Drunk" and "Dotting the Eye of a Painted Dragon", by the Academy of Xinzhou Studies, in June. The two plays will be performed by the China Theatre Plum Blossom Award (Plum Blossom Award) winner and bearer of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage of North Road Bangzi opera, Yang Zhongyi, as well as the winner of the Plum Blossom Award and Wenhua Award, Cheng Fengying, respectively. It is also the first time for the Academy to perform in Hong Kong. This programme is one of the highlights of the 12th Chinese Opera Festival.

¶¶¶Bangzi is one of the four major vocal styles in Chinese opera and the North Road Bangzi opera is one of the four Bangzi opera genres of Shanxi with a history spanning more than 300 years. The regional genre was inscribed on the first list of Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National Level in 2006, and is well known for its sonorous and impassioned vocals. The plays in its repertory are often inspired by historic epic tales and classical novels, and are rich in folk colours. The language is accessible, fully reflecting local characteristics.

¶¶¶The first performance is "Sobering Up after Being Drunk", which marks a breakthrough in North Road Bangzi opera as it moves away from the usually serious style to become comedic. The imperial family of Emperor Tang Taizong and the Prime Minister, Fang Xuanling, in the play express their quick wit as they engage in their interactions. During the performance, Yang, who acts as Prime Minister Fang, will showcase the contrast between Fang's submissive obedience to imperial authority when sober and his transformation into an articulate and forceful Prime Minister when drunk, through stunts such as "kicking of the robes" and "turning of the headgear". He will also demonstrate his solid physical training and robust singing style, a perfect showcase of what makes the laosheng (old male) role in North Road Bangzi opera exceptional.

¶¶¶The second performance, "Dotting the Eye of a Painted Dragon", is a Plum Blossom Award-winning work performed by Cheng, who plays the young and talented Emperor Taizong of Tang. She incorporates martial arts skills when performing the stunt of "dragging feet" on a bridge, showing how the Emperor maintains his regal bearing despite his troubling circumstances. There are also comedic scenes with the local tyrant, accompanied by string and percussion music, showcasing the charm of North Road Bangzi opera.

¶¶¶Details of the two performances are as follows:

"Sobering Up after Being Drunk"

Date and time: June 21 (Friday), 7.30pm

Main cast: Yang Zhongyi, Jia Fentao, Zhang Yuping, Feng Huiling, Zhang Zhiqiang, Du Rui

Synopsis: The Emperor Taizong of Tang agrees to restore the dilapidated Luoyang Palace as the princess's dowry, but the Empress opposes such extravagance. She gifts the submissive and timid Prime Minister Fang Xuanling a bottle of wine, asking him to advise the Emperor against the dowry issue. Fang is emboldened by the wine and delivers his admonishment, passionately criticising the Emperor, and is detained in the palace for introspection. The Empress lies to the Emperor that Fang has died. Shocked and remorseful at this news, the Emperor bestows imperial wine in an attempt to encourage Fang to continue advising him after he learns the truth.

"Dotting the Eye of a Painted Dragon"

Date and time: June 22 (Saturday), 7.30pm

Main cast: Cheng Fengying, Jia Fentao, Guo Jing, Wang Maolin, Li Ruixing, Liu Hongliang, Du Rui, Kang Runquan

Synopsis: The Emperor Taizong of Tang, who is diligent in governing the country, orders officials to write proposals for governance. A scholar named Ma Zhou takes this opportunity to present the Emperor with a painting of a dragon with no pupils to criticise the flaws of the time. He then travels to Xinfeng, where he meets again Si Niang, his puppy love. Impressed by Ma's proposal, the Emperor thus travels incognito to search for Ma, during which he is taken advantage of by the corrupt county magistrate Zhao Yuankai. In the end, the Emperor punishes Zhao and recruits Ma successfully, but Si Niang dies with a grudge after dotting the dragon's eyes with her own blood to protect her love.

€€€The Academy of Xinzhou Studies is an enterprise under the direct administration of the Xinzhou Municipal Government. It was established in 2020 as part of cultural system reform in Xinzhou. The Academy is responsible for theoretical research on the city's drama, music and more. It carries research and creation, holds exhibitions and showcases, as well as promotes, safeguards and ensures the transmission of the legacies of North Road Bangzi opera, folk songs and other folk-cultural arts.

€€€The two performances will be held at the Theatre of Hong Kong City Hall. Each performance will run for about two hours and 30 minutes, including an intermission of 15 minutes. Lyrics and dialogue are with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets priced at \$180, \$280 and \$380 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). 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/academy-of-xinzhou-studies/.

€€€A meet-the-artists session entitled "The Artistic Features of North Road Bangzi Opera" (in Putonghua) will be held at 7.30pm on June 20 (Thursday) at AC2, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The speakers include performers of the Academy Yang Zhongyi, Cheng Fengying,

Jia Fentao, Zhang Yuping, Feng Huiling and Li Ruixing, while Chinese opera researcher Chan Chun-miu will be the moderator. Admission is free and online registration is required (www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1716.html#tab_13_0). Limited seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The programme will also feature a session under the "Chinese Culture for All: A Special Performance Series" at 2.30pm on June 23 (Sunday) at the Theatre of Hong Kong City Hall, with free admission specially for local primary and secondary school students. Performed by artists from the Academy of Xinzhou Studies, the traditional play "Father and Son Both Received Appointment" will give students a chance to learn more about and appreciate the artistic style of Chinese regional opera so as to experience the wonders of Chinese culture and arts. Interested schools can call 2268 7325 for details.

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 will be 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.





[Designated webpage for Secondary Six students with updated information for release of HKDSE exam results](#)

The results of the 2024 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination will be released on July 17. To assist Secondary Six (S6) students to prepare for the release of the results, the Education Bureau (EDB) has specially updated the "Designated Webpage for S6 Students" (s6.edb.edcity.hk/en) to provide students, parents and schools with the latest information on multiple pathways and important information on various support and counselling services.

Students can input their predicted or actual HKDSE Examination results to the mobile application "e-Navigator" (enavigator.edb.hkedcity.net/main/index.php?lang=en) to search for programmes including degrees, sub-degrees and the Diploma of Applied Education from local institutions for which they meet the minimum entrance requirements. Thus, they can work out appropriate further studies plans.

The webpage also provides timely updates on "Reminders for 2024 HKDSE Exam and Exam Results Release" infographics (s6.edb.edcity.hk/en/infographic.php) and other related information, including the latest information and support measures from the EDB, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), the Joint University Programmes Admissions System Office and other non-governmental organisations. This can help S6 students plan their future studies and career pathways.

Moreover, the EDB has launched "Cheer Up Videos – HKDSE Examination Preparation and Results Release" to instil positive energy in S6 students. The videos have been uploaded in batches to the Cheer Up Zone on the webpage (s6.edb.edcity.hk/en/cheerup.php).

The EDB will continue to maintain close communication with schools and other stakeholders to help students plan for their future pathways. For the arrangements of the HKDSE Examination results release, please refer to the latest announcements on the website of the HKEAA (www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/).

Missing woman in Kwai Chung located

A woman who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Lau Leung-ching, aged 56, went missing after she left a rehabilitation centre on Wo Tong Tsui Street on May 10 morning. Staff of the rehabilitation centre made a report to Police on the same day.

The woman was located at a hospital on Gascoigne Road in Yau Ma Tei this morning (May 21). No suspicious circumstances were detected.

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (May 21):

Reporter: Good morning. Some English questions. Over the weekend, the head of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Henry Tang hoped that the Government can reply to the authority's financial proposals promptly. What is the progress at the moment? Secondly, several days ago, YouTube announced that it has taken off dozens of videos of the "2019 protest song" since the injunction order came into effect. Does the Government have any plans to request other online platforms to do the same? Thank you.

Chief Executive: The West Kowloon Cultural District is designed to self-finance after some big government endowments. It is supposed to be a self-financing and self-running institution. That is the KPI set by the Government for the West Kowloon Cultural District. We appreciate that it is facing some difficulties in financing its day-to-day operation in the long run. Yes, the Government is in communication with the governing body of the West Kowloon Cultural District. We will discuss possible options, but whatever is eventually decided, one important point, I think, for everybody to note, is that government money must be spent very carefully. Whatever option is

eventually agreed, it is important that there will be KPIs set for some of the development and operation of the West Kowloon Cultural District. We have high expectations of the successful operation of the West Kowloon Cultural District, and it has been creating value for Hong Kong. In many areas, it has been doing a job which satisfies the expectations and wishes of the community and the Government, but we want to ensure that there will be a long-term viable financing plan with good KPIs, and we will be in communication with the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority to achieve that purpose. A decision will be made very soon.

In regard to the song in question, which you have asked, the court order is an injunction against four specified acts in relation to the song in question. We have noted that there is no link (as specified in the injunction) shown on any local platform relating to the song, and also Google search (in Hong Kong) doesn't show any link to the song in question (as specified in the injunction) either. We will continue to monitor the situation to see whether there is any non-compliance with the court order. If we notice such instances, then we will notify the platform of the contents of the court order. I believe that operators in general operate within the law. We will continue to monitor the situation.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

SCST to visit Xi'an

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, will depart for Xi'an in Shaanxi Province today (May 21) in the afternoon. He will attend a high-level meeting related to tourism.

Mr Yeung will return to Hong Kong on May 22 (Wednesday) in the evening. During his absence, the Under Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, will be the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism.