

Xinqin opera and traditional Cantonese opera to tell tale of two genres

The Chinese Opera Festival, presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will stage "A Tale of Two Genres – Xiqin Opera and Traditional Cantonese Opera" in August. Featuring Lu Weiping, a Representative Bearer of Xiqin Opera as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Cantonese opera virtuosi Law Ka-ying, Wan Fai-yin, Cheng Wing-mui, the performances will highlight interrelated aspects of the two genres while revealing elements of their shared origin.

Xiqin opera is a regional genre that originated from the Xiqin singing style of the Ming dynasty (i.e. qinqiang and Gansu singing styles). It spread to the Hai (Lu) Feng area of Shanwei and evolved along with local folk arts and customs. The genre gradually developed its own form during the early Qing dynasty. It was inscribed in the first listing of National Intangible Cultural Heritage in China in 2006. The Haifeng County Xiqin Opera Heritage Centre (formerly Haifeng Xiqin Operatic Troupe) is at present the only professional group specialising in Xiqin opera. Its Director, Lu Weiping, will lead the troupe's performance in Hong Kong.

In this programme, shared aspects of classic plays of Xiqin opera and traditional Cantonese opera will be performed on stage. "Executing Own Son at the Gate", a "pihuang" play of Xiqin opera, shares similar content with "Liulang Executing His Son", a Cantonese opera play in the classic singing style. The former is also a representative play of the "laosheng" (old male) role, while the latter has its own distinctive singing styles, including the reprimanding tone of Yang Liulang and the singing style of Mu Gua. "Executing Zheng En", which is sung in "xipi", resembles the Cantonese opera play "Executing the Duke's Second Brother", which is sung in the classic singing style. "Executing the Duke's Second Brother" is one of the "Eighteen Plays of Cantonese Opera" of the Qing dynasty, as well as one of the earliest great Cantonese opera plays in the classic singing style of Guangdong. Traditional skilful routines will be demonstrated in excerpts of Xiqin opera. In "Liu Xi Chastising His Sons", for example, Liu Xi performs the traditional chair stunt, using only his waist, hips and legs to move and turn the chair.

Details of the programme are as follow:

August 3 (Friday) 7.30pm

Cantonese opera in classic singing style "Liulang Executing His Son" and Xiqin opera "Executing Zheng En"

August 4 (Saturday) 7.30pm

Xiqin opera "Executing Own Son at the Gate" and Cantonese opera in classic singing style "Executing the Duke's Second Brother"

August 5 (Sunday) 2.30pm

Xiqin opera Excerpts: "Beating Hands", "Grasping the Vanity Case", "Returning to Xiqi", "Liu Xi Chastising His Sons" and
Cantonese opera in classic singing style "A Blood Oath Sworn in Grotto"

All performances will be staged at Theatre, Ko Shan Theatre. Tickets priced at \$150, \$220, \$280 and \$340 are now available at URBTIX (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).

A Meet-the-Artists session on "Xinqin opera and Cantonese opera with Analogous Repertories" featuring Law Ka-ying and Lu Weiping will be held at 7.30pm on August 2 (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.