

Award-winning grand dance drama “Mulan” to be staged at Hong Kong’s inaugural Chinese Culture Festival in September (with photos)

The inaugural Chinese Culture Festival (CCF), organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will present the dance drama "Mulan" by Ningbo Performance & Arts Group, which is a winning production of the Lotus Award, China's highest award for dance in mid-September. With an ingenious blend of dance, martial arts and theatre elements together with exquisite modern stage technology, the dance drama reshapes the story of well-known legendary heroine Hua Mulan, and celebrates the Mid-Autumn Festival with Hong Kong audiences with a symbol of reunion. This is one of the programmes of the "Chinese Performing Arts Hong Kong Season" Series, and is also a celebratory programme of the 35th anniversary of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

The storyline of dance drama "Mulan" focuses on the virtues of filial piety, loyalty and love, highlighting the love for the homeland and the glory of humanity. It tells the story of how young and beautiful Hua Mulan embarks on a heroine's journey in the Northern Wei dynasty. From disguising herself as a man to take her father's place in the army, fulfilling her missions, pursuing love, and ultimately returning to peace and freedom, Mulan sets off on a journey of self-discovery and self-identity.

The programme consists of 21 scenes, including the delicate "Serenade" and "Brass Mirror", as well as the grandiose "To the Battlefield" and "The Last Battle". The blend of the dance and martial arts is one of the main features of this programme, in which forms of martial arts movements are reconstructed through modern dance techniques, and the richness of the characters' emotions and tension are illustrated through their vigorous body movements on stage. Meanwhile, "circle" is an important symbol throughout the story narration and stage design. Apart from symbolising reunion and perfection, the revolving circular stage also breaks the limitations of time and space to create more scenes and possibilities for the stage setting. The music of the work is a contemporary arrangement of traditional Chinese folk tunes, blended with a variety of styles and types of musical instruments. Together with the heart-rending interpretation by the dancers, the production interprets the rich heritage of a traditional Chinese story with innovative dance vocabulary and stage aesthetics of the new era.

The dance drama "Mulan" is directed by Zhou Liya and Han Zhen, known as the "twin stars" of the dance scene on the Mainland. It is starred by Hao Ruoqi (as Mulan), one of the highly sought-after young dancers on the Mainland and a Gold Award winner of the Lotus Award, and Xia Tian (as General Wei), the principal dancer of Ningbo Song and Dance Theater. Since its

premiere in 2017, the dance drama has been performed over a hundred times in different Mainland provinces and cities. It won the 11th China Dance Lotus Award for Dance Drama and the Orchid Award of the 14th Zhejiang Provincial Drama Festival, and was invited to participate in the 20th China Shanghai International Arts Festival and the 50th Festival Internacional Cervantino in Mexico. Last year, the production toured the United States and won critical acclaim.

Ningbo Performance & Arts Group is the only municipal state-owned performing arts troupe in Ningbo. It has produced approximately 90 repertoires, such as dance dramas "Mulan", "Xian Xinghai" and "The Great Harbour in the East". Its productions have been awarded the China Dance Lotus Awards, and were selected to be funded by the China National Arts Fund. The group's performances have been staged on the Mainland and overseas such as France, the United States and Germany, presenting Ningbo's splendid and long-lasting regional culture to audiences at home and abroad.

City Under the Moon – Dance Drama: "Mulan" by Ningbo Performance & Arts Group will be held at 7.30pm on September 14 (Saturday) and at 2.30pm on September 15 (Sunday) at the Grand Theatre of Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Tickets priced at \$200, \$260, \$340 and \$420 are available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk) and 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 7323 or visit www.ccf.gov.hk/en/programme/city-under-the-moon-%e2%94%80-dance-drama-mulan/.

"Mulan" will also feature a session under the "Chinese Culture for All: A Special Performance Series". An open rehearsal of the dance drama will be held at 2.15pm on September 13 at the Grand Theatre of Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Local primary and secondary school students have been invited to join for free so as to encourage them to participate in cultural activities and experience the wonders of Chinese culture and arts.

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 among 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.



