

# Chinese Culture Festival 2025 to stage Henan Yuediao opera plays for first time in Hong Kong in June (with photos)

The Chinese Culture Festival (CCF) 2025, organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will stage Henan Yuediao opera, a regional operatic genre rarely seen by Hong Kong audiences, for the first time in late June. Shen Xiaomei, currently the leading exponent of the Yuediao opera, will lead a group of outstanding artists from the Henan Provincial Yue Diao Art Protection and Inheritance Center to Hong Kong to perform the classic plays "Jiang Wei Surrenders" and "Li Tianbao Gets Married", showcasing the unique and traditional artistic charm of Yuediao opera with the best line-up of the troupe. This programme is also one of the 13th Chinese Opera Festival (COF) and the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Month 2025 events.

Henan Yuediao is one of the three major Chinese opera genres in Henan Province. With a history of more than 300 years, it was inscribed onto the First National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006. Known for its distinctive vocal styles and intricate musicality, Yuediao opera is celebrated for possessing the rich artistic charm of "nine vocal tones, 18 variations, and 72 ending utterances". The Shen School of Henan Yuediao has gained acclaim for its "Three Kingdoms" repertory, and Shen Fengmei, the founder of the Shen School, was famous for her unique portrayal of Zhuge Liang in female "xusheng" (bearded male) roles.

Details of the two performances are as follows:

"Jiang Wei Surrenders"

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Date and time: June 27 (Friday), 7.30pm

The "Jiang Wei Surrenders" represents the pinnacle of the Shen School. Set beyond Tianshui Pass, the play unfolds as young general Jiang Wei of the Wei dynasty outwits Zhuge Liang, causing the experienced warrior Zhao Yun to retreat in defeat, which prompts Zhuge Liang to recruit and subdue this exceptional talent. Shen Xiaomei, the heritage bearer of the Shen School and the first Yuediao performer to receive the China Theatre Plum Blossom Award, excels in portraying Zhuge Liang, the legendary strategist known for his composure in adversity, capturing his intellectual essence through nuanced singing and expressive interpretation. In this performance, Shen, together with her disciples Hu Hongbo and Wenwu Xiaosheng (young civil and military male) Nie Lai dynamically portraying the far-sighted leadership of old Zhuge Liang and Jiang Wei's martial prowess and inner turmoil respectively, will let audiences immerse in the "Three Kingdoms" tales.

## "Li Tianbao Gets Married"

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Date and time: June 28 (Saturday), 7.30pm

"Li Tianbao Gets Married" is an enduring classic of Henan Yuediao comedy that delivers a light-hearted and witty story. Zhang Zhongshi, a wealthy man who falsely claims his daughter has died to escape an arranged marriage with the impoverished Li Tianbao. When Li arrives to mourn her supposed passing, an unexpected series of comedic mishaps ensues. Shen Xiaomei and her disciple Zhao Yanlin bring Li Tianbao to life on stage with their exquisite vocal artistry, perfectly capturing the character of a passionate lover. Liu Zhiyou, playing the comedic role of Zhang Zhongshi, uses exaggerated and humorous movements along with a constant stream of witty dialogue to vividly portray the greedy and selfish image of a rich man. The absurd yet fantastical plot twists in the play mirror the myriad facets of human life.

Originally established as the Henan Yue Opera Troupe in 1949, the Henan Provincial Yue Diao Art Protection and Inheritance Center is recognised as one of the Protection Works Units among the first batch of Intangible Cultural Heritage at National Level. Under the guidance of the late master of Yuediao opera, Shen Fengmei, the troupe has garnered national recognition, particularly for its distinguished interpretations of works from the Three Kingdoms repertoire. The Center carries the vital mission of safeguarding and perpetuating Yuediao opera's intangible heritage through traditional and contemporary performances.

The two performances will be held at the Theatre of Hong Kong City Hall. Lyrics and dialogue are with Chinese and English surtitles. Tickets priced at \$190, \$290 and \$390 are now available at URB TIX ([www.urbtix.hk](http://www.urbtix.hk)). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. Group booking discount and package booking discount are available for purchasing selected CCF stage programmes, the "Chinese Opera Film Shows" of the COF 2025 and the "Legacy and Vision: Conversations with Chinese Cultural Masters" lecture. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit [www.ccf.gov.hk/en/programme/henan-provincial-yue-diao-art-protection-and-inheritance-center/](http://www.ccf.gov.hk/en/programme/henan-provincial-yue-diao-art-protection-and-inheritance-center/).

A meet-the-artists session entitled "The Signature Singing Style and Vocal Techniques of the Shen School in Henan Yuediao" (in Putonghua and Cantonese) will be held at 7.30pm on June 26 (Thursday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The speakers include Shen Xiaomei, Liu Zhiyou, Hu Hongbo, Zhao Yanlin and Nie Lei, 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\\_1839.html#tab\\_13\\_0](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_1839.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 10.30am on June 27 (Friday) at the Theatre of Hong Kong City Hall, with free admission specially for local primary and secondary school students. Artists of the troupe will perform

selected excerpts from "Jiang Wei Surrenders" and "Li Tianbao Gets Married", accompanied by easy-to-follow demonstrations and guided appreciation, allowing students to closely experience the profound artistry of the Shen School's female "xusheng" (bearded male) roles and their distinctive interpretations of "Three Kingdoms" repertoire. Interested schools can call 2268 7325 for details. This session is sponsored by the Chamber of Young Snow.

The CCF, presented by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and organised by the Chinese Culture Promotion Office under the LCSD, aims to promote Chinese culture and enhance the public's national identity and cultural confidence. It also aims to attract top-notch artists and arts groups from the Mainland and other parts of the world for exchanges in Chinese arts and culture. The CCF 2025 will be held from June to September. Through different performing arts programmes in various forms and related extension activities, including selected programmes of the COF, "Tan Dun WE-Festival", film screenings, exhibitions, as well as community and school activities and more, the festival provides members of the public and visitors with more opportunities to enjoy distinctive programmes that showcase fine traditional Chinese culture, thereby facilitating patriotic education and contributing to the inheritance, transformation and development of traditional Chinese culture in Hong Kong. For more information about programmes and activities of the CCF 2025, please visit [www.ccf.gov.hk](http://www.ccf.gov.hk).



