

Chinese Opera Festival to screen eight selected classic opera films in August and September (with photos)

To keep up the excitement of this year's Chinese Opera Festival (COF), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will launch the "Chinese Opera Film Shows" in August and September. The screening programme features eight selected Chinese opera films of various genres, such as Cantonese opera, Peking opera, Yue opera, Sichuan opera, and Huaibei Bangzi, allowing opera lovers to continue to experience the unique cultural charm of different regional opera styles. Tickets for some of the film shows are almost sold out. Those who are interested are reminded to buy tickets as early as possible.

Details of the screenings are as follows:

Cantonese opera film "The Impartial and Incorruptible Judge Bao" (1967)

Date and time: August 12 (Saturday), 7.45pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Starring: Lam Kar-sing, Ng Kwan-lai, Leung Sing-por, Lan Chi Pak

Synopsis: A merchant called Li Hao seeks shelter at a pottery shop for the night. The shop owner Ding Wan and his wife kill Li for money, and dispose of his body in clay, casting it into a black basin. Ding then gives the black basin to the poor scholar Chen Qing, who comes to borrow a container. Li's soul from the black basin tells Chen about his devastating fate and begs him to take the case to Judge Bao. Judge Bao finally exacts justice for Li's wrongful death with the execution of Ding and his wife.

Peking opera film "The River View Pavilion" (1958)

Date and time: August 16 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Venue: Cinema, Hong Kong Film Archive

Starring: Zhang Junqiu, Liu Xuetao, Lu Changfu

Synopsis: To escape the amorous advances of Master Yang, widow Tan Ji'er retreats to Qing'an Temple to copy scriptures. One day, the abbess's nephew, Bai Shizhong, comes to bid farewell before leaving. The two young people fall for each other and soon tie the knot. Master Yang fabricates false charges in a fit of jealousy to break up the couple and he intends to kill Bai. When Ji'er gets wind of Master Yang's evil plans, she disguises herself as a fisherwoman and steals an imperial decree and judicial sword from him. Bai then turns the tables on Master Yang and imprisons him for impersonating an imperial envoy and molesting civilians.

Yue opera film "Mermaid Legend" (1959)

Date and time: August 23 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Venue: Cinema, Hong Kong Film Archive

Starring: Xu Yulan, Wang Wenjuan

Synopsis: Poor scholar Zhang Zhen is betrothed to Mudan, the daughter of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is awaiting a chance to break the engagement. Often lamenting his plight on the lake shore, Zhang moves the Carp Spirit in the lake. The spirit assumes the physical form of Mudan to meet with Zhang, and they fall in love. One day, the Prime Minister seizes an opportunity to send Zhang away. The Carp Spirit appears at the Prime Minister's residence. Unable to differentiate between the real Mudan and the imposter, the Prime Minister invites Judge Bao to assist. Judge Bao discerns the truth and helps them escape. The Carp Spirit confesses her real identity to Zhang, and is confronted with the choice of immortality or life as a human.

Sichuan opera film "Du Shiniang" (1957)

Date and time: August 30 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Venue: Cinema, Hong Kong Film Archive

Starring: Liao Jingqiu, Yuan Yukun, Zhou Qihe

Synopsis: Du Shiniang, the capital's famed courtesan, and Li Jia, a student at the Imperial College, are in love. After redeeming Shiniang's freedom from a brothel, the two lovers head back to Li's hometown. Shiniang gathers all her valuables and life savings into a small casket as her dowry. Li worries that his union with a prostitute will cause his family to lose face. Li meets a salt merchant Sun Fu, who entices Li with a thousand pieces of silver to sell Shiniang to him. Shiniang is heartbroken. After berating the two men, Shiniang ends her own life by throwing herself and her little chest of treasures into the river.

Cantonese opera film "Mirror of Revenge" (1966)

Date and time: September 2 (Saturday), 7.45pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Starring: Lam Kar-sing, Ng Kwan-lai, Leung Sing-por, Lan Chi Pak

Synopsis: Tang Sheng chances upon an orphan girl, Bai Suzhen. He brings her home and marries her. Instigated by others, Tang's mother suspects that her daughter-in-law is a demon. Later, Tang leaves home and his mother commissions a Taoist priest to carry out an exorcism. Upon his return, Tang discovers with dismay that his wife has disappeared. He persuades Judge Bao to assist. By means of a magic pillow, Judge Bao and Tang travel to the netherworld to enquire at the Mirror of Revenge. As it turns out, Tang's lecherous uncle is so taken with Suzhen that he devises a ruse to trick Tang's mother into banishing Suzhen. The couple return home and live happily ever after.

HuaiBei Bangzi opera film "Kou Zhun with His Boots" (1962)

Date and time: September 6 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Venue: Cinema, Hong Kong Film Archive

Starring: Gu Xixuan, Zhang Fulan, Zheng Lianxin, Chen Bingqin, Zheng Lilong, Yang Liangyu

Synopsis: During the Northern Song period, Marshal Yang Yanjing is framed by

a treacherous official. One of Yanjing's close friends saves him by sacrificing himself and taking toxic wine on his behalf. The Yang family then spreads false news that Yanjing has died from illness and arranges a fake funeral. Minister Kou Zhun attends the funeral to convey his condolences. At the funeral, Kou notices that Yanjing's family behaves unusually. Doubts arise in his mind, so he secretly investigates and uncovers the fact that Yang Yanjing has only feigned his death.

Cantonese opera film "The Story of Muk Kwai-ying, Part One" (1959)

Date and time: September 9 (Saturday), 7.45pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Starring: Yam Kim-fai, Yu Lai-zhen, Leung Sing-por, Poon Yat On

Synopsis: To beat the Liao army's Heavenly Gate Formation, Song General Yang Zongbao goes to Muke Fort to ask for a loan of the Dragon Vanquishing Wood. Mu Guiying, leader at the fort, falls in love with the young general at first sight, and proposes to him. As Zongbao's aim is to obtain the Dragon Vanquishing Wood, he agrees to marry her. However, this violates military regulations, and Zongbao's outraged father, Marshal Yang, wants to have his son beheaded in punishment for his action. Fortunately, Zongbao is saved in the nick of time by Guiying. Finally, the animosity is cleared up. Everyone collaborates in battle after the wedding to trounce the enemy, winning a complete victory with the help of the Magical Dragon.

Cantonese opera film "Search in Wintry Day" (1960)

Date and time: September 16 (Saturday), 7.45pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Starring: Law Kim-long, Tang Bik-wan, Fung Wong-nui, Lan Chi Pak, So Siu-tong

Synopsis: Although penniless, scholar Fang Shucheng is both upright in character and talented. Wang Xiuqing loves him and invites him to join her family after they marry. On the day of the wedding, Xiuqing's father passes away unexpectedly. The older sister Xiulan and her husband plan to appropriate the entire inheritance of her father. In a fit of anger, Shucheng leaves for the capital to take the imperial exams. Xiulan then forces Xiuqing and her father-in-law to leave their home, and the two have to live on the streets. Meanwhile, Shucheng passes his final exams and is working as an imperial censor. One day, when Xiuqing and her father-in-law are singing outside the censor's office, they finally reunite with Shucheng. The three of them return to their hometown in glory, and severely reprimand Xiulan and her husband.

Traditional Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics in the Cantonese opera films; simplified Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics and dialogue in the Peking and Yue opera films; traditional Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics and dialogue in the Sichuan opera film while simplified Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics in the Huaibei Bangzi opera film. Tickets priced at \$60 per screening are now available at URBIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.cof.gov.hk/2023/en/extension_activities.html.

Since its inception in 2010, the COF has curated quality operatic programmes with the aim of promoting the artistry and culture of Chinese traditional opera. COF 2023 will once again bring together an excellent line-up of Chinese opera troupes to stage nine quality operatic programmes covering a variety of theatrical genres, including Peking opera, Qu opera, Sichuan opera, Han opera, Cantonese opera, Wu opera, Kunqu opera and Yue opera, from June to October, showcasing the splendour of Chinese operatic art in all its glory. For more details, please visit www.cof.gov.hk.



