

Inaugural Chinese Culture Festival to screen Chinese opera film classics in August and September (with photos)

The inaugural Chinese Culture Festival (CCF), organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will launch the screening programme "Chinese Opera Film Shows" in August and September. Ten selected opera films will be presented, allowing Chinese opera enthusiasts to relive the classic movies and revisit the craft and charms of the opera greats on the big screen. This programme is also one of the extension activities of the 12th Chinese Opera Festival.

To align with the fusion of Eastern and Western elements in the CCF programme "Cyrano de Bergerac" – A Cantonese Opera Interpretation, the "Chinese Opera Film Shows" will feature five Cantonese operatic song films adapted from Western films or classics, allowing Chinese opera fans to appreciate the new audio-visual experiences created by Cantonese cinema's incorporation of Western elements. Details are as follows:

"Bitter Phoenix, Sorrowful Oriole" (1947)

Date: August 10 (Saturday)

Starring: Ma Si-tsang, Cheung Yuet-yee, Lam Mui-mui, Lau Hark-suen

Synopsis: A famous detective is framed for murder when he investigates the disappearance of a millionaire.

"Prince of Thieves" (1958)

Date: August 24 (Saturday)

Starring: Ho Fei-fan, Mui Yee, Lam Kau, Lee Bo-ying

Synopsis: When Princess Coral seeks suitors, a nefarious prince assassinates the strongest contender. The assassinated suitor is then impersonated by a heroic outlaw, who competes for the princess's heart.

"The White Gold Dragon, Part Two" (1937)

Date: August 31 (Saturday)

Starring: Tong Suet-hing, Wong Man-lei, Lam Mui-mui, Fan Kok-fei

Synopsis: The rich young man Pak Kam-lung accompanies his fiancée Cheung Yuk-neong to Singapore to manage the rubber plantation of his future father-in-law. Socialite Ng Ma-li is sent to poach Pak and seduce him. Luckily, Cheung's cousin Yuk-sim thwarts the scheme and saves the relationship between Pak and Cheung.

"My Kingdom for a Husband" (1957)

Date: September 7 (Saturday)

Starring: Tam Lan-hing, Cheung Ying, Leung Sing-por, Ning Meng

Synopsis: A wandering musician meets the Queen of Snow Kingdom and settles down in marriage. However, the luxurious married life he gains comes at a cost, as he soon finds that he is losing his freedom and personal dignity under the Queen's power, and decides to run away. In the end, the Queen gives up her throne to reconcile with the love of her life.

"Madam Butterfly" (1954)

Date: September 14 (Saturday)

Starring: Sun Ma Si-tsang, Chow Kwun-ling, Yee Chau-sui, Wong Cho-san

Synopsis: The sailor Ma Yuanxiang travels to Japan and meets a geisha named Butterfly, whom he marries. Shortly after, when his ship sets sail for Hong Kong, Yuanxiang bids farewell to the pregnant Butterfly. Once back home, Yuanxiang marries Lucy, the manager's daughter. Three years later, Butterfly is still waiting day and night for Yuanxiang's return, with her son by her side.

In addition, the "Chinese Opera Film Shows" will present five Chinese opera films. Apart from films on the Shanghai-style and Qi School of Peking opera, those about Wukong the Monkey King, Bony Demon and Mu Guiying will also be featured, making an interesting contrast between the stage performances and film screenings for similar repertoires at the festival. Details are as follows:

"Wu Song" (1963)

Date: August 7 (Wednesday)

Starring: Gai Jiaotian, Zhang Youfu, Ai Shiju

Synopsis: On his way to visit his elder brother Wu Dalang, Wu Song passes by Jingyang Knoll in Yanggu County and kills a fierce tiger, thus ridding the area of a menace. Dalang's wife, Pan Jinlian, has an affair with the local bully, Ximen Qing, and they conspire to poison Dalang to death. Upon discovering the truth, Wu Song avenges his brother by killing the two adulterers.

"The Stage Craft of Zhou Xinfang" (1961)

Date: August 14 (Wednesday)

Starring: Zhou Xinfang, Wang Zhikui, Zhao Xiaolan, Wang Zhengping

Synopsis: This film documents two renowned works of Zhou Xinfang (stage name Qilintong), "Xu Ce Running across the City" and "Delivering the Letter and Killing Yan Xijiao". "Xu Ce Running across the City" is a production that Zhou meticulously honed over decades to portray a righteous character who is willing to lay down his life for a just cause. "Delivering the Letter and Killing Yan Xijiao" originally consisted of two acts from "The House of Wulong", but Zhou rewrote it to give it a better structure. Through cinematic techniques, the film captures the maestro's consummate performance and striking stage presence, thus preserving the stylistic legacy of the Qi School.

"Murder in the Oratory" (1937)

Date: August 21 (Wednesday)

Starring: Zhou Xinfang, Yuan Meiyun

Synopsis: Wang Mang usurps the Han throne and issues an edict to apprehend Liu Xiu. When Liu Xiu is captured at Tongguan Pass by General Wu Han, Wu Han's mother is furious and reveals to her son how Wang Mang has murdered the emperor and killed Wu Han's father. She orders Wu Han to release Liu Xiu, leave his official post and kill his own wife, who is Wang Mang's daughter.

"Mu Guiying Routing Hongzhou" (1963)

Date: August 28 (Wednesday)

Starring: Liu Xiurong, Zhang Chunxiao

Synopsis: General Bai Tianzuo of Liao is invading the northern border, and the Song army's commander, Yang Yanzhao, is besieged. Yang Zongbao rides alone to the capital to seek reinforcements. However, none of the available generals are capable of undertaking the rescue mission. Consequently, Mu Guiying, the wife of Zongbao, despite being pregnant, takes command and leads the troops into battle.

"Sun Wu Kong Thrice Beat the Bony Demon" (1960)

Date: September 4 (Wednesday)

Starring: Liu Lingtong, Xiao Changshun, Qi Lingtong, Fu Machao, Xiao Yanqiu

Synopsis: Monk Tripitaka and his three disciples are on their pilgrimage to bring back the sacred scrolls to China. On reaching the foot of White Tiger Mountain, the adept shapeshifting Skeleton Demon disguises itself as a village girl, an old woman, and an old man in turn to fulfil its desire to eat Tripitaka's flesh. Its antics are seen through by Wukong the Monkey King who breaks its spells with his magic staff every time. However, Tripitaka sees Wukong's acts as repeated manslaughter and angrily banishes him back to Flower Fruit Mountain. Tripitaka then falls into the clutches of the demon once again.

Traditional Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics of the Cantonese operatic song films "Prince of Thieves", "My Kingdom for a Husband" and "Madam Butterfly". Simplified Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics of the Chinese opera films "Wu Song", "Mu Guiying Routing Hongzhou" and "Sun Wu Kong Thrice Beat the Bony Demon", while simplified Chinese subtitles will be provided for lyrics and dialogues of "The Stage Craft of Zhou Xinfang" and "Murder in the Oratory".

The above-mentioned Cantonese operatic song films will be screened at the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Space Museum at 7.45pm, and the Chinese opera films will be screened at the Cinema of the Hong Kong Film Archive at 7.30pm. Tickets priced at \$70 per screening 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/chinese-opera-festival-2024-chinese-opera-film-shows/.

The programme will also feature two sessions under the "Chinese Culture for All: A Special Performance Series" on September 9 (Monday) at the Cinema of the Hong Kong Film Archive, with free admission specially for primary and secondary school students. Featuring the film of Shao opera "Sun Wu Kong Thrice Beat the Bony Demon" (1960), students will have a chance to learn more about and appreciate the artistic style of Chinese regional opera through the big screen and to 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.





