

Latvian opera diva Elāna Garanāa to make Hong Kong debut with excerpts from Bizet's "Carmen" in October (with photos)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has invited Latvian mezzo-soprano Elāna Garanāa to make her Hong Kong debut in October. Accompanied by renowned conductor Karel Mark Chichon and the Macao Orchestra, the world-famous opera diva will perform some of the best-loved pieces from Bizet's "Carmen" as well as a number of opera arias, providing music fans with the finest musical feast. This programme is part of the second Asia+ Festival and the Great Music 2024.

In the first half of the concert, Garanāa will perform Tchaikovsky's 'Aria of Johanna' (from "The Maid of Orleans"), Saint-Saēns's 'Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix' (from "Samson et Dalila") and Gounod's 'Plus grand, dans son obscurité' (from "La Reine de Saba"). The second half of the concert features excerpts from Bizet's famous opera "Carmen", including 'L'amour est un enfant de Bohème (Act I-First version)', 'Habanera', 'Seguidilla', 'En vain pour éviter' (Act III) and 'Chanson bohème (Act II)'. Orchestral interludes, such as Glinka's "Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila", Massenet's 'Meditation' (from "Thaïs"), three Spanish pasodoble pieces (Marquina's "España Cañi", Lope's "Gerona" and Penella's "El Gato Montes"), and a prélude and entr'acte pieces from "Carmen", will be performed in between the arias by the Macao Orchestra under the baton of Chichon.

Garanāa has established herself as a major star through her highly acclaimed performances around the world. She is particularly famed for her portrayal of Bizet's Carmen and was described by the New York Times as "the finest Carmen in 25 years" following her appearance at New York's Metropolitan Opera in a production that was one of the most viewed and successful broadcasts in "The Met: Live in HD". She also performed "Carmen" at the Royal Opera House, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Teatro alla Scala and Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía, all to critical acclaim. Garanāa has released many albums and received numerous awards, including the ECHO Klassik Awards, "Musical America"'s Vocalist of the Year, MIDEM Classical Awards' Singer of the Year and a Grammy nomination. Garanāa was honoured with the title of "Kammersängerin" by the Vienna State Opera in 2013.

Chichon is the Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of Philharmonic Orchestra of Gran Canaria, a post he has held since the 2017/18 season. He has appeared as guest conductor with many orchestras and opera companies over the years, including the Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, and more. Chichon was elected a Fellow of the UK's Royal

Academy of Music in recognition of his achievements within the profession.

The Macao Orchestra is Macao's professional orchestra comprising of outstanding young musicians from more than 10 countries and regions. Starting from 2023/24 concert season, Lio Kuokman serves as the music director and principal conductor of the Orchestra. Over the years, the Orchestra has collaborated with numerous internationally renowned musicians, conductors and arts groups, and has been invited to perform in Mainland China and overseas, leaving its footprints in at least 30 cities across Mainland China as well as overseas, such as Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, the United States and Japan.

The "Elä«na GaranÄa Gala Concert" will be held at 8pm on October 29 (Tuesday) at the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Tickets priced at \$280, \$480, \$680, \$980 and \$1,280 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. Discount schemes are available for the programmes under the second Asia+ Festival and the Great Music 2024. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7321 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/music/programs_1756.html. This programme is one of the celebratory programmes of the 35th anniversary of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

A pre-concert talk entitled "The Operatic Mezzo-soprano" (in Cantonese) will be held at 6.45pm on October 29 (Tuesday) at Level 4 Foyer, Auditoria Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The speaker will be voice pedagogue Chan Siu-kwan. Admission is free, with limited seats available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The second Asia+ Festival is running from September to November, highlighting the arts and culture of nearly 30 countries from Asia, the Middle East and Belt and Road regions. Apart from stage programmes, there are also thematic exhibitions, an outdoor carnival, film screenings, outreach activities and more, numbering over 100 in total. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2370 1044 or visit asiaplus.gov.hk/2024/en/.

The LCSD's Great Music 2024 will continue to bring spectacular performances to Hong Kong in this October and November, featuring five world-class musicians. The programme enables audiences to feel the city's arts and cultural buzz through music, showcasing the unique charm of Hong Kong as a cultural hub. For more details, please visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/music/groups_1682.html.

