

New Cantonese opera "Phoenix of the Red Chamber" to be staged in October

A new Cantonese opera, "Phoenix of the Red Chamber", will be presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in October. The main performers are Lung Koon-tin, Nam Fung, Tang Mi-ling, Liu Kwok-sum, Song Hongbo and Lam Tsz-ching. The playwright is Chow Kit-ping and the director is Geng Tianyuan.

Geng Tianyuan explained that "Chinese operas using stories from 'The Dream of the Red Chamber' are a popular choice for the stage. Whether traditional or newly adapted, both exude their respective charm. But very few have focused on Wang Xifeng. The present repertoire revolves around Wang's three unique attributes of capability, flirtatious charm and ruthlessness. When faced with a problem, she retains her calm and envisages a well thought-out plan, exercising caution and applying proven tactics to achieve her goals. This repertoire also attempts to analyse her character and personality from various perspectives, offering a different and unconventional approach."

The story follows Wang, whose pet name is "Fengjie". She is the wife of Jia Lian, the eldest son of the Rongguo branch. Fengjie runs the Rongguo household. Qin Keding, the wife of the eldest grandchild of the Ningguo house, dies young, and her bosom friend, Fengjie, goes to mourn her. At Jia Lian's first cousin Jia Zhen's request, Fengjie agrees to run the Ningguo household during the funerary period. She presides over the Ningguo house and takes charge of everything. The Ningguo house is put in order and she amply proves herself.

Jia Rui is the grandchild of Jia Dairu who is the schoolmaster of the family school. Seeing Fengjie's attractive mien, Jia Rui lusts after her and accosts her repeatedly. Fengjie sets up a clever but nasty love trap to trick him. Jia Rui falls for the hoax and falls ill afterwards. A lame Taoist monk comes by to offer him an erotic mirror. At first, Jia Rui does as told, and looks in the back of the mirror only, which shows a skeleton. Then he looks in the reflective side of the mirror and sees Fengjie beckoning him with inviting looks. He calls out to her and ultimately dies.

Meanwhile, Jia Lian is smitten by You Erjie's beauty and unbeknownst to Fengjie, sets up a second home with You Erjie as his second wife. Not long after, Master She rewards him with the handmaid Qiutong as a concubine. Fengjie becomes wildly jealous and comes up with a murderous plan – she will make Qiutong kill You Erjie first and later she will kill Qiutong.

Details of the performances are as follows:

October 18 and 19 (Sunday and Monday), 7.30pm
Theatre, Ko Shan Theatre
Tickets: \$140, \$200, \$280 and \$380

October 25 (Sunday), 2.30pm
Auditorium, Tuen Mun Town Hall
Tickets: \$140, \$180, \$240 and \$300

Tickets are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_982.html.

A pre-performance talk and a post-performance talk in Cantonese will be held. The pre-performance talk will be held at 7.30pm on October 13 (Tuesday) at AC2, 4/F, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC). Speakers include Lung Koon-tin, Tang Mi-ling and To Wing-sum. The post-performance talk will be held at 7.30pm on October 26 (Monday) at AC1, 4/F, Administration Building, HKCC. Speakers for this talk include Lung Koon-tin, Nam Fung and Chow Kit-ping. Admission is free. Telephone registration is required and please call 2268 7267 from 10am on October 6 (Tuesday). Limited seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Details can be found on the above website. The two talks will be broadcast online on October 16 (Friday) and November 2 (Monday) respectively on the above website.

Regarding the epidemic situation, the number of audience members will be limited to half of the original capacity of the LCSD's performance venues. Please note that there are special seating arrangements.