

Puxian opera performances to showcase musical heritage in June

The Chinese Opera Festival presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will showcase the ancient Puxian opera genre in June.

Initially known as Xinghua opera, Puxian opera originated from the region of Putian and Xianyou and became one of the five major opera genres of Fujian. Puxian opera has a long history and a traditional stock repertoire of more than 5 000 titles, with about 80 of the works retaining all of the elements of the original Southern opera as the cultural provenance. Therefore, the genre is known as the "living fossil" of Southern opera from the Song and Yuan dynasties. The genre was inscribed onto the first national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Puxian opera is influenced by puppetry, and much of the gesturing reminds the audience of the style of marionettes. In terms of music, the genre features a rich repertoire of set tunes and unique vocal styles. It is sung in the dialect of Puxian and has preserved much of the musical heritage of Southern opera from the Song and Yuan dynasties, full of local style and colour.

Fujian Puxian Theatre will come to Hong Kong to perform traditional repertoire of Puxian opera. Winner of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre and National Class One Performer Wang Shaoyuan will join Wu Qinghua and Huang Yanyan, the director and vice director respectively of Fujian Puxian Theatre, and lead a fine cast to perform "The Imperial Scholar and the Beggar", "Thrice Begging Fan Lihua" and an excerpt performance. In these performances, the unique nuance of Puxian opera will be demonstrated through the special body movements of the genre, such as "sedan chair carrying", the "chair routine", "floor-sweeping skirt", "the three-legged cane" and the "hoe routine".

Details of the performances are as follows:

June 29 (Friday), 7.30pm

"The Imperial Scholar and the Beggar"

Main cast: Huang Yanyan, Wu Qinghua, Ma Yanyu, Yang Junsheng, Zheng Rensen

June 30 (Saturday), 7.30pm

"Thrice Begging Fan Lihua"

Main cast: Wang Shaoyuan, Wu Qinghua, Zheng Rensen, Yu Lixiang, Lin Chunhong, Zheng Chaofan

July 1 (Sunday), 2.30pm

Excerpts: "Gualao Grows Gourds", "'Mourning' from 'The Butterfly Lovers'",

"'Bearing the Sedan Chair' from 'Chuncao Barging into the Court Room'",

"'Cosmetics Shop' from 'Guo Hua'", "'Rescuing Brother-in-law' from 'Li

Yangui'", "'Great News from the Capital City' from 'Lu Mengzheng'"

Main cast: Wang Shaoyuan, Wu Qinghua, Huang Yanyan, Zheng Rensen, Yu Zhi, Yu Lixiang

All performances will be staged at the Theatre of Hong Kong City Hall. Tickets priced at \$150, \$250 and \$320 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.cof.gov.hk.

Meet-the-Artists sessions (in Putonghua) entitled "'Living Fossil' of Song and Yuan Southern Opera – Artistic Charm and Heritage Development of Puxian Opera" and featuring Wu Qinghua, Huang Yanyan and Wang Shaoyuan will be held at 7.30pm on June 28 (Thursday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The moderator will be Chinese opera researcher Chan Chun-miu. Admission is free. Limited seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.