

Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe of Shaoxing to perform classic repertoire

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Chinese Opera Festival will present performances by the Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe of Shaoxing in July. The programme will feature the grand production "Qu Yuan" and the classic titles "How a Dead Cat was Substituted for a New-born Prince", "The Lady General Mu Guiying Leads Her Army to War" and "Three Glimpses of the Princess".

Yue opera, also known as Shaoxing opera, originated from Shengzhou in Shaoxing city of Zhejiang Province. Yue opera is usually performed by an all-female cast. It is characterised by its lyrical singing and the subtlety and tenderness of the melodies, while the make-up style of the actors is graceful and glamorous.

All four full-length plays will feature Wu Fenghua, a "xiaosheng" (young male) role performer of the Fan (Ruijuan) school. Wu is a two-time Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre winner and a National Class One Performer. She will be joined by three other winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre and National Class One Performers, namely Wu Suying from the Lu (Ruiying) school, Chen Fei from the Fu (Quanxiang) school and Zhang Lin from the Yin (Guifang) school. The performances will offer audiences a great opportunity to see such a strong cast of virtuosos gathered on the same stage.

"Qu Yuan" is a distinguished Yue opera play of virtuoso Yin Guifang in her later years. The play expanded the artistic aspects of Yue opera to present the solemn and tragic story of the historic figure Qu Yuan. It requires a high-level of singing and acting skills. Wu Fenghua has made breakthroughs in the role of "xiaosheng" in her powerful interpretation of the patriotic and noble poet, and the audience will be able to experience intense drama tension. "How a Dead Cat was Substituted for a New-born Prince" was the play that won Wu her second Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre. It is also one of the most popular productions of the Troupe in recent years. "The Lady General Mu Guiying Leads Her Army to War" is a civil and martial play characterised by complicated singing and gesturing. Wu plays the role of Yang Zongbao and demonstrates her marvellous civil and martial skills. Famed for her handsome look and elegant demeanour, Wu stands out from fellow female actors in the "xiaosheng" role. "Three Glimpses of the Princess", on the other hand, is a timeless classic comedy.

Details of performances are as follows:

Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre; 7.30pm

July 19 (Thursday): "Qu Yuan"

July 20 (Friday): "How a Dead Cat was Substituted for a New-born Prince"

July 21 (Saturday): "The Lady General Mu Guiying Leads Her Army to War"

Auditorium, Tuen Mun Town Hall; 7.30pm
July 22 (Sunday): "Three Glimpses of the Princess"

Tickets with prices ranging from \$150 to \$450 are now available at URBTIX (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.

A meet-the-artists session entitled "The Inheritance and Development of Yue Opera" (in Putonghua) featuring Wu Fenghua, Wu Suying and Chen Fei will be held at 7.30pm on July 18 (Wednesday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The moderator will be Chinese opera researcher Chan Chun-miu. Admission is free with seats available on a first come, first served basis.

