

戲曲中心

Xiqu Centre

Xiqu Centre,
West Kowloon Cultural District

**TEA HOUSE
THEATRE
EXPERIENCE**

TEA HOUSE THEATRE

The Tea House Theatre is a performance space designed to echo the environment of early 20th century tea houses. With table and chair seating, it offers audiences an authentic way to experience Chinese opera (xiqu), and to learn about this heritage art while enjoying tea and dim sum.

The *Tea House Theatre Experience* is our flagship introduction to Cantonese opera, the xiqu genre popular in Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau. Presented by the talented young artists of the Xiqu Centre's Tea House Rising Stars Troupe under the guidance of renowned Cantonese opera artist and Artistic Curator and Director Law Ka-ying, the programme presents a selection of excerpts illustrating a range of vocal, musical and performance styles.

“With our expert moderator guiding the audience through the show, the 90-minute programme offers a glimpse into Cantonese opera that everyone can enjoy,” says producer Naomi Chung.

In addition, the Tea House Theatre also hosts a variety of traditional and experimental productions by visiting troupes showcasing xiqu genres from around the region.

Programme >

I **Nanyin**

II **Paiziqu**

Wind and Percussion Music

Wind in the Pines

Wind and Percussion Sung Piece

Pomegranate Blossom / Melancholy

*Performance includes one sung piece

III **Cantonese Opera Excerpt**

“Meeting in a Dream” from

Goddess of the Luo River

INTERMISSION

IV **Music Ensemble Performance**

Birds Returning to the Forest

Dabbling in the Water

V **Cantonese Opera Song**

Romance of the Phoenix Tower /

“Memorial Speech” from

The Moon Pavilion /

Seeking a Beauty / Strengthening Resolve /

Vermilion Phoenix /

Lady Zhaojun Going Beyond the

Great Wall /

Dream Reunion /

Wandering the Lakes

*Performance includes one song

VI **Cantonese Opera Excerpt**

“A Duel of Immortal Snakes” from

The Legend of the White Snake

NANYIN

The first performance is a nanyin piece about the unique features of the Xiqu Centre and the Tea House Theatre written by renowned Cantonese opera artist Wan Yok-yu.

Nanyin (*naamyam* in Cantonese) is a form of musical storytelling or narrative ballad singing that combines spoken words with instrumental accompaniment. It is also a singing style that has been integrated into Cantonese opera.

Popular in the Pearl River Delta since the early 20th century, nanyin was historically performed by blind artists in tea houses, bars and sing-song halls. Singing about the lives of ordinary people, artists would be accompanied by musicians playing zither and *yehu* (a two-stringed instrument with a soundbox made from a coconut shell), and using clappers to mark out the beat. A large number of traditional nanyin songs are still performed today.



Paiziqu is a type of fixed melody that can be sung with different lyrics or performed on wind and percussion instruments such as *suona* (double-reeded horn) and drums. Popular *paiziqu* can appear across different productions, or be strung together to create whole sequences.

Wind and Percussion Music Performance *Wind in the Pines*

Commonly performed in pre-battle scenes, the tight rhythm of this tune depicts the high spirits of the troops before they are sent to action.

Wind and Percussion Sung Piece *Pomegranate Blossom*

Familiar from *The Imperial Emperor of Heaven Holding Court*, a traditional set piece staged before festival performances, this song describes a heavenly decree to save mortals from suffering.

Wind and Percussion Sung Piece *Melancholy*

Professing her sorrow, Wang Zhaojun, one of the Four Beauties of Ancient China, leaves her homeland for a political marriage agreed by the Emperor.



CANTONESE OPERA EXCERPTS

Cantonese opera is marked by a minimalist aesthetic that relies on stagecraft and symbolism rather than props. Performances take place on a pared-down stage, and performers, whose faces are painted with exaggerated expressions to convey heightened emotions and character type, tell the story through their gestures and mastery of the four skills fundamental to Chinese opera – singing, acting, recitation and martial arts.

The excerpts you will see showcase exciting and technically demanding parts of well-known works that demonstrate particular skills and techniques.

“Meeting in a Dream” from *Goddess of the Luo River*

Before his death, the powerful warlord Cao Cao arranges for his scholarly son Zhi to become his successor and marry the daughter of a government official. Zhi, however, is deeply in love with Zhen Fu, a woman his brother Pi also covets. When Cao arranges a marriage between Zhen Fu and Pi, a complicated power struggle begins to play out and Zhen Fu drowns herself in despair. One night, Zhi encounters Zhen Fu in a dream, transformed into the Goddess of the Luo River. Written in the 1980s by playwright Yip Siu-tak, the work is partly based on the poetry of Cao’s son Zhi.

“A Duel of Immortal Snakes” from *The Legend of the White Snake*

Written by emerging playwright Lee Ting-fung, this martial arts piece is a new adaptation of a popular segment from *The Legend of the White Snake*. With choreography by Peking opera performer Han Yanming, it features stylised northern gestures and elements such as the double sword fight.

Leaving the celestial realm in search of her banished lover, Lady White Snake, Bai Suzhen, encounters a green snake spirit. After she rejects his advances a battle ensues and the green snake is defeated. Taking on female form, the green snake pledges to accompany Bai as a loyal servant on her travels.



MUSIC ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE

Birds Returning to the Forest

Composed by Cantonese music virtuoso Yi Jianquan, this piece uses the high-pitched two-stringed *gaohu* to conjure up the lively chirping of birds as they return to roost at dusk.

Dabbling in the Water

Also known as *Heroes on Pacing Horses*, this brisk, lively piece evokes the sure-footed high spirits of horses and riders galloping through wet grasslands.



Cantonese Opera Song >

CANTONESE OPERA SONG

Romance of the Phoenix Tower

Written for a production that premiered in 1962, this song describes a Song-dynasty princess's tearful farewell to her lover, a general tasked with escorting her to her homeland.

“Memorial Speech” from *The Moon Pavilion*

Composed in 1958 by acclaimed playwright Tong Tik-sang, this poignant eulogy depicts a man mourning the death of his beloved wife.

Seeking a Beauty

First performed in the late 1930s, this melancholy song tells of a minister's anxious attempt to devise a honey trap to rescue his king from enemy hands.

Strengthening Resolve

Defeated, captured, and forced to serve the Wu King, Goujian the King of Yue withstands the humiliation by plotting a perfect revenge. This short song showcases an array of different Cantonese opera music styles.

Vermilion Phoenix

Written for the 1957 Cantonese opera of the same name, this aria sung by the heroine Liu Hongluan describes how troubled life has deepened her understanding of love.

Lady Zhaojun Going Beyond the Great Wall

To help her country avoid a diplomatic disaster, Wang Zhaojun accepts a political marriage in a foreign state. Before leaving her homeland, she sings a song of respect for the Emperor.

Dream Reunion

Written in the 1960s, and based on a chapter from the classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, this song depicts Jia Baoyu mourning the untimely death of his lover Lin Daiyu and being visited by her spirit.

Wandering the Lakes

After successfully restoring their kingdom through a honey-trap scheme, minister Fan Li and concubine Xi Shi decide to withdraw from politics in a struggle between state and personal loyalties.



ARTISTIC TEAM

ARTISTIC CURATOR
AND DIRECTOR **Law Ka-ying**

PRODUCER **Naomi Chung**

REHEARSAL CURATOR **Cheng Wing-mui**

ACTION CHOREOGRAPHER **Han Yanming**

MUSIC ARRANGER **Janet Wong**

ENSEMBLE LEADER **Lee Tik-lun**

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
LEADER **Mai Jiawei**

PERFORMERS **Wong Hai-wing**
Man Shuet-kau
Christie To Wing-sum
Chan Kei-ting
Chan Hei-yu
Mo Huamin
Wong Ho-yau
Vong Seng-pan
Xiaoyu
King Fa-lui
Alan Tam Wing-lun

MUSICIANS **Szeto Wai-suet**
John Ho Chun-hei
Yue Kin-long
Yuen Ka-yi
Liu Chun-hei



Production Team >

PRODUCTION TEAM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **Au Yick-ho**

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR **Rae Wu**

PRODUCTION MANAGER **Katrina Chan**

STAGE MANAGER **Leung Nga-chi**

PRODUCER'S ASSISTANT **Barry Ling**

DEPUTY STAGE
MANAGERS **Chan Chi-nok**
Lai Kam-shan
Chak Wing-kiu
Mak Hoi-yan

LIGHTING DESIGNER **Fong Ka-yin**
Leo Siu

VIDEO DESIGNER **Dan Fong**

EDITORS **Kitty Ho**
Vikki Weston
Cindy Chan
Loretta Tsang

ENGLISH TRANSLATORS **Penelope Zhou**
Nathan Woolley
Zhu Yayun

MARKETING AND
PROMOTION **Nick Chan**
Vanessa Yu
Sherlock Lam



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