53rd 香港藝術節
HK ARTS FESTIVAL 2025

300 YEARS of Cantonese Opera
The Beginning

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06–08.03.2025/ 7:30pm

Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre

Performed in Guanhua (the official ancient dialect of the Central Plains)
with Chinese and English surtitles

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+Plus

Talk

Tracing the Origin and Development of Cantonese Opera
08.02.2025 (Past event)
Lemna of the alchemist

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Chief Executive's Message

I am pleased to congratulate the Hong Kong Arts Festival on the organisation of its 2025 season—the 53rd edition of one of the world's most celebrated international cultural events.

This year's Festival brings together over 1,300 international and local artists in some 125 performances covering music, dance, theatre, Chinese and Western opera and much more. The Festival-opening performance, by Italy's Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, conducted by Maestro Donato Renzetti, features classic Italian opera arias. Renowned Chinese conductor Lü Jia and the China National Centre for the Performing Arts Orchestra, together with international pianist Zhang Haochen and soprano Song Yuanming, bring the Festival to a close in grand style.

Festival PLUS returns, presenting a wealth of artist-audience events, including masterclasses and workshops, backstage visits, guided cultural tours and more. Besides, the Festival's "Young Friends" programme features school tours, pre-performance talks, arts demonstrations and other special events designed to engage local young people with a world of arts and culture.

The Government is determined to enhance the appeal of Hong Kong's culture. To further solidify Hong Kong's position as a vibrant East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchanges, the Government has launched the Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Development in November 2024, and has been actively working on the 71 measures under four key strategic directions as outlined in the Blueprint.

I am grateful to the Hong Kong Arts Festival and its dedicated team for their unremitting efforts in promoting arts and culture in Hong Kong, throughout the region and around the world. I am grateful, too, to the many sponsors and donors for their generous support for the Festival.

I wish this year's Hong Kong Arts Festival another resplendent season of arts and culture, entertainment and memorable community engagement.

John KC LEE
Chief Executive
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Chairman's Message

A warm welcome to the 53rd Hong Kong Arts Festival. As a leading international performing arts event, the Festival is continuing its mission of enhancing Hong Kong's cultural landscape by showcasing over 1,300 exceptional international and local artists in more than 125 performances of over 45 unique programmes, as well as organising about 300 PLUS and educational activities for the community.

I would like to thank the HKSAR Government, acting through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, for its annual subvention and matching grant which are not only essential to our operations, but also an important recognition of the work we do. I also want to thank The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for its unwavering support during the past 53 years, as well as other corporate sponsors, charitable foundations and donors, whose contributions have enabled us to reach out to different sectors of the community and positively impact society through the performing arts.

My deepest gratitude goes to all participating artists for their dedication and exceptional performances. I also thank all HKAF staff, who worked extremely hard to bring this Festival to life.

Most importantly, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all audience members for your participation and support. May you find joy and inspiration in our programmes and events.

Lo Kingman
Chairman
Hong Kong Arts Festival

香港藝術節
Hong Kong Arts Festival

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Foreword

Promoting international cultural exchange has always been a key objective of the Hong Kong Arts Festival. This year's Festival continues to invite renowned global masters and internationally recognised young pioneers to present a range of world-class programmes, respecting tradition while encouraging new, innovative initiatives. Many of these works are inspired by classic literature or offer rediscoveries of the original, bringing vibrant artistic experiences to the city.

We will also present a series of programmes centred around "fantasy and adventure". These include works that seamlessly blend the arts with VR and AR technology, as well as captivating new creations that draw on traditional puppetry and circus performances. The Festival will also continue to support local artists and encourage exchanges to foster a vibrant and diversified platform for the arts.

We also remain dedicated to advancing arts education and audience building. Our PLUS programmes will present a series of thoughtfully curated masterclasses, backstage visits, post-performance artist talks and an exhibition. And our Young Friends and educational activities will continue to offer multi-dimensional arts experiences to students.

We hope that you will enjoy this year's arts extravaganza prepared by the Hong Kong Arts Festival team.

Flora Yu
Executive Director
Hong Kong Arts Festival

The Hong Kong Arts Festival is made possible with the funding support of:

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Programme

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Programme

Formulaic Plays Excerpts

Fan Lihua Punishing Her Son

Sworn Brother and Sister

INTERVAL

Making a Scene at the Green Bamboo Temple

Retrieving the Head at Gao Ping Guan

06.03.2025/ 7:30pm

Approximately three hours and 15 minutes with one interval

Wu Song (in the ancient singing style)

07.03.2025/ 7:30pm

Approximately three hours and 30 minutes with one interval

Executing the Duke's Second Brother (in the ancient singing style)

08.03.2025/ 7:30pm

Approximately three hours and 30 minutes with one interval

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Artistic Director's Notes

Artistic Director's Notes

The history of Chinese opera is a notoriously difficult subject for scholars to research and document. Chinese opera was traditionally considered the "lower ranks" of professions. In Guangdong province, joining the Chinese opera world, especially as a performer, often led to people being ostracised by their families or even having their names removed from the family genealogy. Although many literati and scholars in the past admired Chinese opera and contributed scripts and librettos, very few were willing to document its history, viewing it as unworthy of their efforts. As opera professionals, it's hard for us to justify dedicating our lives to this art form while we remain unaware of its origins. However, our search for concrete evidence and trustworthy sources have proven to be a relentless struggle, leaving us to work with limited fragments.

Yuen Siu-fai, Artistic Director

This year, the Hong Kong Arts Festival has committed to a three-year Cantonese opera initiative. My team and I are dedicated to presenting the rich history of Cantonese opera in three stages, where we aim to share our knowledge with all enthusiasts and supporters of Cantonese opera. In the first year, we will focus on the "Beginning". Of course, this refers to what we understand and can perform as the "beginning", ancient operas that our teachers deemed essential to our training. These pieces, with their melodies and soliloquies rendered in the Zhongzhou dialect, often referred to as "ancient Mandarin", are foundational to our tradition. But let me be clear: we acknowledge that our understanding may only cover a small portion of the whole history. However, we will never claim to know more than we do, guided by the principle of honesty—true wisdom is understanding what you know and admitting what you don't. While modern constraints limit our ability to replicate historical make-up and costumes, we strive to recreate authentic lyrics, dramatic structures, gestures and performance styles, percussion and music. We look forward to receiving constructive feedback and corrections for any shortcomings in our efforts.

Text: Yuen Siu-fai

Formulaic Plays Excerpts:
Fan Lihua Punishing Her Son

Cast and Characters

Wyborn Leung Wai-hong
as Xue Dingshan

Wang Kit-ching
as Fan Lihua

Edgar Ng Lap-hei
as Xue Yinglong

Shum Pak-chuen
as Qin Han

Roy Cheung Siu-lun
as Dou Yihu

Synopsis

Fan Lihua sends her adopted son, Xue Yinglong, to gather military intelligence. But he ends up seeking a marriage proposal instead. In a fit of anger, she sentenced him to await execution at the gate. The generals Qin and Dou, along with Lady Dou, plead for mercy, but are rejected. Xue Dingshan returns to the camp to defend Yinglong and threatens to die if necessary. In the end, Lihua relents and agrees to let Yinglong go to war and allow him to atone for his actions.

Formulaic Plays Excerpts: *Sworn Brother and Sister*

Cast and Characters

Lam Tin-yau
as Zhao Kuangyin

Cheng Nga-ki
as Zhao Jingniang

Synopsis

Zhao Kuangyin is wanted for a murder he committed when he was young. He flees to his uncle's Taoist temple and encounters a young girl in distress, Zhao Jingniang, in a cave. They become sworn sibilings in honour of their shared family ties. He escorts her back home, allowing her to ride on horseback while he walks alongside to protect her.

Formulaic Plays Excerpts: *Making a Scene at the Green Bamboo Temple*

Guest Artistic Director

Jacky Man Chin-shui

Cast and Characters

Keith Lai
as Zhang Fengxian

Edgar Ng Lap-hei
as The Monk

Siu Wing-yee
as Yue'e

Roy Cheung Siu-lun
as Zhao Ru

Ng Sin-hang
as Little Monk

Synopsis

At the Green Bamboo Temple, the Flower Monk has no desire to embrace the Buddha. Instead, he spends his time drinking and abducting women by force. When Zhang Fengxian returns to the temple after gathering herbs, he encounters Zhao Yu and learns that his wife Yue'e has been kidnapped. To save his wife, Zhang Fengxian turns against his brothers, attacks the violent monks with indignation and kills the Flower Monk.

Formulaic Plays Excerpts: *Retrieving the Head at Gao Ping Guan*

Cast and Characters

Lee Lung (Special Appearance)
as Zhao Kuangyin

Yuen Siu-fai
as Gao Xingzhou

Shum Pak-chuen
as Gao Huaide

Chu Siu-yat
as Gao Huailiang

Synopsis

To save his parents from imprisonment, Zhao Kuangyin sneaks into Gao Ping Guan to “borrow” his uncle's head. Gao Xingzhou realises Kuangyin’s destiny and, feeling bound by fate, forcibly enters a contract with Kuangyin for the sake of future generations. He then takes his own life and lends his head to Kuangyin.

Wu Song (in the ancient singing style)

Cast and Characters

Lam Tin-yau
as Wu Song

Cheng Nga-ki (Scene 3, 4)
Leung Fei-tung (Scene 5–7, 9)
as Pan Jinlian

Alan Tam Wing-lun (Scene 5, 6)
Keith Lai (Scene 8)
as Ximen Qing

Yuen Siu-fai
as Wang Xiang

Fu Shuwang
as Wu Dalang

Wyborn Leung Wai-hong
as Granny Wang

Edgar Ng Lap-hei
as Uncle He Jiu

Ng Sin-hang
as Brother Yun

Wu Song (in the ancient singing style)

Synopsis

After drinking strong liquor, Wu Song kills a tiger on Jingyang Ridge. He is rewarded with the title of *dutou* (constable). While parading through the streets, he encounters his older brother, Wu Dalang. Pan Jinlian, who is unhappily married to the short and unattractive Wu Dalang, finds herself attracted to her handsome brother-in-law, Wu Song. However, he remains unmoved.

One day, when Jinlian was lowering down the bamboo curtain outside her window, the stick she used slipped off her hand and hit the head of Ximen Qing. He was stunned by Jinlian's beauty and seeks Granny Wang's help to win her over. Granny Wang visited Jinlian's home with Ximen Qing under the pretext of tailoring clothes to facilitate the affair.

Having heard rumours of Jinlian's infidelity, Dalang returns home early and catches them in the act, but Ximen Qing severely injures him. Jinlian seizes the opportunity to poison her husband. When Wu Song returns home, he is shocked to find his brother dead. After Dalang visits Wu Song in a dream, his investigation leads him to learn about Jinlian's affair from his neighbours. He tries to get justice through official channels but ends up being assaulted. In a fit of rage, he storms into the Lion Pavilion, kills Ximen Qing and returns home with his head. He then kills Jinlian to avenge his brother's death and surrenders himself.

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Wu Song Scenes

Wu Song (in the ancient singing style)

Scenes

Scene 1: Roadside Tavern

Having fled from trouble in his hometown, Wu Song passes by Jingyang Ridge, where he stops at a drinking hut for a few drinks. Wu Song, who is fond of drinking, continues to drink heartily, although the hut keeper boasts that “three cups of wine will stop people from passing the ridge”. Feeling intoxicated, he continues along the ridge.

Scene 2: Fighting the Tiger

Rumour has it that there is a man-eating tiger on Jingyang Ridge. Confident in his martial arts skills, the drunken Wu Song continues on his journey up the ridge. To his surprise, the tiger appears and pounces on him. Wu Song uses all his strength and skills to kill the tiger.

Scene 3: Parading Through the Street

The county Governor of Yanggu County learns that Wu Song has killed a tiger, saving the townspeople from this menace. He awards Wu Song with the title of *dutou* (constable), dresses him in triumphant attire and accessories and honours him in a three-day parade. During the parade, Wu Song encounters his brother, Wu Dalang, who announces his recent marriage. Deeply moved by their brotherly bond, Wu Song promises to visit his new sister-in-law.

Scene 4: Flirting with the brother-in-law

Wu Dalang’s new wife, Pan Jinlian, is disappointed with her husband’s looks and feels restless about her marriage. Jinlian’s desires are aroused when she meets the handsome and muscular Wu Song. She tries to seduce him, but Wu Song remains unmoved and leaves in a huff.

INTERVAL

Scene 5: Liaison

Pan Jinlian drops a bamboo pole while hanging her clothes and accidentally injures Ximen Qing. This sparks a flirtatious rendezvous and, with Granny Wang’s help, the two begin a secret affair.

Scene 6: Murder

The hawker Brother Yun witnesses Ximen Qing’s affair with Pan Jinlian and informs Wu Dalang. Wu Dalang catches the adulterers in the act. Ximen Qing, who owns a herbal shop, kills Wu Dalang with poison.

Scene 7: Funeral

Wu Song returns home from his mission and is shocked to find his brother dead. He mourns in despair at the funeral hall. His colleague Wang Xiang also comes to pay tribute, and Wu Dalang’s spirit appears, lamenting how he was murdered. The next morning, Wu Song uses the excuse of thanking the neighbours for handling Wu Dalang’s funeral arrangements to gather everyone. He interrogates the undertaker Uncle He Jiu about his brother’s cause of death. Wu Song then locks the neighbours in the house and instructs them to keep an eye on Pan Jinlian, while he goes to confront Ximen Qing.

Scene 8: Lion Pavilion

Knowing that Wu Song has returned, Ximen tries to ease his anxiety with wine at the Lion Pavilion. When Wu Song arrives, both men engage in a fierce fight. In the end, Wu Song gets his revenge.

Scene 9: Killing the Sister-in-law

Wu Song returns home, kills Granny Wang and Pan Jinlian and surrenders himself at the *yamen*.

Contents

Executing the Duke’s Second Brother
Cast and Characters

Executing the Duke's Second Brother (in the ancient singing style)

Cast and Characters

Lam Tin-yau (Scene 1, 2, 4–7, 11)
Alan Tam Wing-lun (Scene 3, 9)
as Zhang Zhong

Wang Kit-ching (Scene 1, 4–6)
Cheng Nga-ki (Scene 10, 11)
as Lady Zhang

Keith Lai
as Kuang Ruilong

Yuen Siu-fai (Scene 9, first half of 11)
Wyborn Leung Wai-hong (Scene 2, 7, second half of 11)
as Sima Yang

Leung Fei-tung
as Concubine Li

Chan Hei-yu
as Wet Nurse

Edgar Ng Lap-hei
as Uncle Zhong, Li Long

Roy Cheung Siu-lun
as The Old Emperor, Eunuch

Shum Pak-chuen
as Miao Xin

Executing the Duke's Second Brother (in the ancient singing style)

Synopsis

Kuang Ruilong and his wife are separated. In her despair, Lady Zhang attempts to hang herself, but Zhang Zhong rescues her. They become sworn siblings and decide to join the military together. Zhang Zhong is ordered to suppress bandits at Erlong Mountain. There, he forms a bond with Ruilong, persuades him to surrender, and they become sworn brothers.

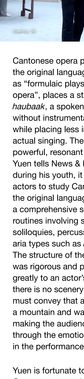
When Ruilong enters the camp, he misunderstands Lady Zhang. With Zhang Zhong and Uncle Zhong's mediation, the couple reconciles. Sima Yang, along with Zhang Zhong and Ruilong, become sworn brothers and fight together to establish the empire. After becoming emperor, Sima Yang crowns them as dukes.

The Emperor's brother-in-law, Li Long, flaunts his power through the streets, but he is confronted and defeated by Ruilong. Concubine Li from the West Palace takes the Emperor's drunkenness as an opportunity and falsely issues an order to kill Kuang Ruilong. Zhang wanted to save him, but it was too late. He confronts Li Long and kills him. Meanwhile, the strategist Miao Xin, who has the Emperor's protection, abandons his position and escapes. As Lady Zhang's forces approach the city for revenge, Sima Yang is left with no choice but to kill Concubine Li to end the conflict.

Interview

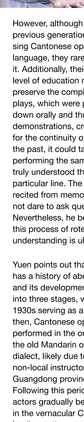
Rediscovering an Opera Legacy: A Three-Century Retrospective of Cantonese Opera

In Cantonese opera, one often hears the phrase “可怒也 ” (pronounced like “call lau yeah”), which is articulated in the Zhongyuan dialect, also known as “old Mandarin” or the “official language”. Historically, before the late Qing dynasty and the early Republican era, Cantonese opera was performed in such dialects, rather than in Cantonese itself. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that performances gradually shifted to the use of vernacular Cantonese. As a result, Cantonese opera sung in the original dialects slowly faded from the stage. However, renowned Cantonese opera master Yuen Siu-fai believes that learning Cantonese opera performed in the original language is essential for refining a performer’s skills. Motivated by this belief, he made great efforts to preserve and revive this lost operatic legacy.



Cantonese opera performed in the original language, also known as “formulaic plays” or “ancient opera”, places a strong emphasis on *hautaak*, a spoken soliloquy delivered without instrumental accompaniment, while placing less importance on actual singing. The style requires a powerful, resonant vocal delivery. Yuen tells News & Features that during his youth, it was mandatory for actors to study Cantonese opera in the original language, as this involved a comprehensive set of prescribed routines involving set pieces, spoken soliloquies, percussion and specific aria types such as *bongji* and *yiwong*. The structure of these performances was rigorous and precise, contributing greatly to an actor’s training. “When there is no scenery on stage, the actor must convey that a mountain is truly a mountain and water is truly water, making the audience believe it solely through the emotions and expressions in the performance,” Yuen says.

Yuen is fortunate to have studied Cantonese opera in the original language under the guidance of various masters. For example, he studied the original language for the play *Executing the Duke’s Second Brother* under the tutelage of Tsui Suet-hung (the father of actor Tsui Siu-ming) in the 1970s. This play consists of the most traditional forms and set pieces, while the act of sworn brotherhood alone can be depicted in four distinct styles: “bow and hammer brotherhood”, “sash-cutting brotherhood”, “oath of brotherhood on the battlefield” and “brotherhood at Willow Camp”. Additionally, the play includes other common set pieces such as “The Great Battle” and “Enlistment”.



However, although actors from the previous generation knew how to sing Cantonese opera in the original language, they rarely performed it. Additionally, their generally low level of education made it difficult to preserve the complete scripts of these plays, which were primarily passed down orally and through physical demonstrations, creating challenges for the continuity of the tradition. “In the past, it could take decades of performing the same play before one truly understood the meaning of a particular line. The senior actors often recited from memory, and we did not dare to ask questions,” he says. Nevertheless, he believes that through this process of rote learning, a deeper understanding is ultimately achieved.

Yuen points out that Cantonese opera has a history of about 300 years, and its development can be divided into three stages, with the 1920s and 1930s serving as a watershed. Before then, Cantonese opera was primarily performed in the original language, the old Mandarin or Zhongyuan dialect, likely due to the influence of non-local instructors who came to Guangdong province to teach opera. Following this period, local Cantonese actors gradually began performing in the vernacular Cantonese dialect, leading to the emergence of many new scripts written in Cantonese often incorporating popular tunes and melodies. In recent years, Cantonese opera has increasingly embraced Westernisation and modernisation, with various approaches and styles being explored.

Because prominent Cantonese opera performers in the past rarely performed in the original language, these types of productions have undergone fewer changes and more closely resemble their original form. To prevent them from disappearing, Yuen Siu-fai established the House of Cantonese Opera in 1993, dedicated to teaching this traditional style. In recent years, he has visited places such as Guangxi province and Southeast Asia in search of veteran performers who are still alive, seeking their instruction and documenting their knowledge. And in collaboration with Cantonese opera performers from the younger generation, including Lam Tin-yau, Keith Lai and Wyborn Leung Wai-hong, he has been commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Festival to launch a project titled *300 Years of Cantonese Opera*, aimed at encapsulating the three centuries of Cantonese opera development into a three-year performance series. The first year’s project, titled *The Beginning*, includes the full performance of *Wu Song* (in the ancient singing style), the scripts of which Yuen obtained by searching across Southeast Asia, and *Making a Scene at the Green Bamboo Temple*, which Keith Lai learnt from senior artist, Man Chin-sui, in the United States.

Reflecting on his theatrical career spanning more than seven decades, Yuen further realises that the various Cantonese opera performances all trace their origins back to the formulaic plays he learnt in his youth. “For example, the routine movements for entering and leaving the stage are identical across all opera forms, be it Peking opera, Kunqu opera, or Henan Bangzi.” Mastering such ancient operatic language and preserving traditional routines and staging techniques are crucial for documenting the historical development of Cantonese opera, and ensuring the art form will continue to flourish.

Text: Eugene Chan
English Translation: Stanley Leung

Originally published in the HKAF’s online magazine, News & Features in January 2025

Production Team

Artistic Director

Yuen Siu-fai

Co-ordinators

Lam Tin-yau

Keith Lai

Wyborn Leung Wai-hong

Manager

Yuen Sin-ting

Lighting Designer

Wyborn Leung Wai-hong

Percussion Leader

Ko Yun-kuen

Music Ensemble Leader

Ko Yun-hung

Stage Manager

Ko Man-him

Chan Oi-lin

Set

Kwong Hing Stage Scene Production Company

Costumes

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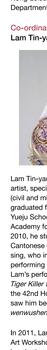
Production Team Profiles

Artistic Director & Performer
Yuen Siu-fai

Yuen is a veteran Cantonese opera performing artist. He has been deeply connected with the art throughout his life, and has been dedicating to the inheritance and promotion of Cantonese opera. He has received numerous awards, including the Artist of the Year by the Hong Kong Arts Development Awards, Badge of Honour, the Award for Arts Achievement and the Award for Outstanding Contribution in Arts. In 2012, he was made an Honorary Fellow of The Education University of Hong Kong. In 2014, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region conferred on him the Bronze Bauhinia Star. In 2024, he was conferred an Honorary Doctorate by The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

He is also currently Visiting Associate Professor of the Department of Music of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Artistic Director of One Table and Two Chairs Charitable Foundation, Director of the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Association and museum adviser to the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department (Cantonese Opera).

Co-ordinator & Performer
Lam Tin-yau



Lam Tin-yau is a Cantonese opera artist, specialising in *wenxusheng* (civil and military male) roles. He graduated from the Guangdong Yueju School and The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. In 2010, he studied under the prominent Cantonese opera artist Lam Kar-sing, who imparted the Lam style of performing Cantonese opera. In 2014, Lam's performances in *Wu Song the Tiger Killer and The Gilded Fan* at the 42nd Hong Kong Arts Festival saw him becoming a rising star of *wenxusheng* performers.

In 2011, Lam established Nan Art Workshop and later produced hundreds of traditional and contemporary Cantonese opera productions through the formation of the Chung Sin Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe, the Tin Ngai Wang Cantonese Opera Troupe and the Hei Tin Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe. In 2023, Lam starred in and coordinated the new Cantonese opera, *Love in the Bamboo Grove*, written by Raymond To, for the 51st Hong Kong Arts Festival. In 2024, the production, supported by the China National Arts Fund and the Hong Kong Arts Festival Foundation, toured across Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Foshan and Zhuhai.

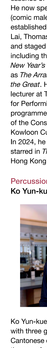
Co-ordinator & Performer
Keith Lai

Keith Lai is an apprentice of Cantonese opera master Man Chin-sui and celebrated musician Poon Sai-lun. In 2011, he won the Hong Kong Arts Development Council's Young Artist Award (Chinese Opera), and in the same year, established Canto Op, hoping to promote the genre with fresh takes on classic productions. In 2016, he collaborated with the West Kowloon Cultural District and created the Experimental Cantonese opera *Farewell My Concubine*, which toured various locations across Asia and won the 2017 Best Experimental Xiqu award in Beijing. In 2018, he received the Best Actor award at Beijing's New Arts and Cultural Outstanding Theatre Showcase for the performance in *Hengyang Explores the Valley*. In recent years, Lai has also served as a part-time lecturer at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Co-ordinator & Performer
Wyborn Leung Wai-hong

Since his youth, Wyborn Leung Wai-hong has been a student at his father Leung Hon-wai's Hon Fung Cantonese Opera Institute. He was also the apprentice of Guo Jinhua for the basics, Jia Juxuiang for *jing* (a role for painted faces such as heroes, generals, villains, gods or demons) movement, Ko Yun-kuen for gongs and drums, and Yuen Siu-fai for the essence of traditional dramatic plays. He now specialises in *chousheng* (comic male) roles. In 2011, Leung established Canto Op with Keith Lai, Thomas Law and Lau Tsz-yan and staged various productions, including the comical series *Lunar New Year's Chatty Women* as well as *The Arrant Revenge* and *Kubiai the Great*. Having worked as a guest lecturer at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts' Chinese Opera programme, Leung is now a member of the Consultation Panel of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority. In 2024, he also wrote, directed and starred in *The Oracle* for the 52nd Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Percussion Leader
Ko Yun-kuen



Ko Yun-kuen hails from a family with three generations of renowned Cantonese opera percussionists. He is the son of prominent Cantonese opera percussion leader Ko Gun. He began his career at the age of seven and by the age of 14, led the percussion section of the Tai Lung Fung Cantonese Opera Troupe. Ko later interned with various troupes under the tutelage of Tam Kwan-yu. In the 1990s, he started performing in large-scale Cantonese opera productions at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, the Asia Arts Festival and the China Arts Festival, including *Execution of the Duke's Second Brother*, *Reunion with My Wife by West River* and *A Fusion of Beijing and Cantonese Opera*—a collaboration between maestro Pei Yanling and Yuen Siu-fai.

Music Ensemble Leader
Ko Yun-hung

Ko Yun-hung is a multi-talented musician from a family with three generations of famous Cantonese opera musicians. In 2014, he founded the Hong Kong Xiqu Troupe with his wife, Tse Hue-jying, and created many original productions. He also launched Xiqu HK, a platform dedicated to researching, preserving and promoting Chinese opera, as well as educating and revitalising traditional Chinese opera culture. In 2014, Ko received the Hong Kong Arts Development Award for Artist of the Year (Xiqu), and in 2014-15, the Secretary for Home Affairs' Commendation Certificate. In 2022, Ko participated in the Hong Kong Xiqu Troupe's production of *Painted Skin*, supported by the China National Arts Fund (General Project).

Cast Profiles

Cast
Lee Lung (Special Appearance)

Lee Lung became an apprentice of renowned Cantonese opera performer Chan Fei-hung at the age of nine. In 1962, he first appeared on stage at the opening performance of the Hong Kong City Hall, earning him the title of "Cantonese Opera Child Prodigy". During the 1970s, he began performing wenxiaweiwu (civil and military wen-style) with the Chuk Wah Nin Troupe, collaborating with numerous outstanding female actors. Known for his handsome appearance and agility, Lee also excelled at performing kao-dong (martial) and kao-wen (civil) roles. In the film *Fist of Legend of Kiet*, in 1994, he performed the role of Zhao Yun in *Three Against Four* to allude to Art Chins Arts Festival to critical acclaim. In 2015, he received the Hong Kong SAR Government Medal of Honour. In 2016, he won the Best Wen Yee award at the Hong Kong Arts Development Awards for his contributions to the development of Cantonese opera.

Cast
Wang Kit-ching

Wang Kit-ching graduated from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in a degree in Social Work. She later obtained an Advanced Diploma in Cantonese Opera from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and joined the Hong Kong Young Talent Cantonese Opera Troupe in 2006, she founded Karen's Meadow Cantonese Opera Troupe and produced *Sai Wan Fish of Wan Po-sai* and *The Immortal Zhang Yuqiao*. She also wrote and performed in such works as *Diao Chan: Rediscovering Truth*, *Hong Kong Style: Heartstrings of the Silk Road* and *Actress Ying's Academy of Cantonese Opera*. In 2010, Wang received the outstanding Young Performer Award at the Chinese Artists Award for Cantonese Opera and in 2011, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council's Award for Young Artist (Xiqu). In 2018, she also took the Cantonese Opera Graduate Bauhinia Award for Outstanding Young Performers.

Cast
Cheng Nga-ki

Cheng Nga-ki has had a passion for Cantonese opera since she was a child. At the age of nine, she began opera skills from veteran artist Pak Suet-sin and received training in Peking opera. In 2006, she graduated from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and majored in Cantonese Opera. In 2011, she established the Nan Art Workshop and the Chung Sin Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe. Cheng has also collaborated with the city's new Cantonese opera productions, including *Princess Pearl and Head Pain*, *The Delicate Love*, and *The Hidden Arrow*.

In 2013, Cheng performed with her master Tsan Kai-tai in *The Moon Pavilion*, and in 2014, she started performing in *The Jade Seabed Fan*, at the Hong Kong Arts Festival. In 2015, she took the lead role in *Legend of the Purple Hairpin*, *The Peony Pavilion*, *The Phoenix and Head Pear Blossom* and *Princess Changping*. In 2016, she performed in *Legend of the Purple Hairpin* at the Hong Kong Arts Festival and performed in *Love in the Bamboo Grove* by Shakespeare. She also took the production's 2024 tour in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Foshan and Zhuhai.

Cast
Edgar Ng Lap-hei

Edgar Ng Lap-hei studied singing under Wong Ching-ho and Wong Yee-wan and underwent with such renowned teachers as Ngan Kwok-wai and Tsi Tsung-hsiang. He graduated from The Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong and became a disciple of Peking opera master Tsi Tsung-hsiang. Ng has also been actively participated in several leading Cantonese opera companies. He has also performed in the lead role in numerous productions as part of the Hong Kong Chinese Opera Festival at the Westin Kay Centre, including *Hengyang Diary*, *Lament for the Imperial Decree*, and *Injured Lotus*. Ng's other performances include *The Last Emperor of Southern Tang*, *Hero's Blood on Mount Pipa*, *Beneath the Sword and A Beauty from the South Meets the Han Emperor*.

Cast
Leung Fat-sung

Cantonese opera actress Leung Fatsung studied opera movement and singing under Wang Huiling. Chow Ka-wah and Ngan Kwok-wai. In the 2022, she performed in the Hong Kong Arts Festival's Hong Kong Chinese Opera Showcase with *Wang Hui-ling*, *Fu Yuet-wah*, *He Mengfeng* and *Wang Yuan-ji*. She also studied singing techniques under Lam Kaimei. In 2023, she graduated from the Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong specialising in *sheng* (male) role. Leung has also become an active participant in the Cantonese Opera Young Talent Showcase held by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong. Since 2019, he has performed in various Cantonese opera roads show on RTHK Radio 5.

Cast
Alan Tam Wing-lun

Alan Tam Wing-lun joined the Hong Kong Children and Juvenile Chinese Opera Troupe at the age of nine. He studied under Ng Cheuk-yung, Cheung Sin-wah, Lui Kwai-sang and Wong Wing-mui. Fu Yuet-wah, Ho Mengfeng and Wang Yuan-ji. Tam also studied singing techniques under Lam Kaimei. In 2023, he graduated from the Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong specialising in *sheng* (male) role. Tam has also become an active participant in the Cantonese Opera Young Talent Showcase held by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong. Since 2019, he has performed in various Cantonese opera roads show on RTHK Radio 5. Tam's repertoire includes *Stopping the Horse*, *Fifteen Strings of Cash*, *The Crossroad*, *Wu Song* and *Catching Sanlang-Ahua*.

Cast
Fu Shuwang

Fu Shuwang began studying Cantonese opera at the age of nine. He graduated from the Chinese Opera Kao Gung Due Cantonese Opera School and later studied under Sharon Kao Kong Due Cantonese Opera Troupe, Kao Gung Due Cantonese Opera Troupe, playing *chousheng* (comic) and *wusheng* (martial male) roles. Fu achieved his studies at the School of Chinese Opera Arts of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and joined the Hong Kong Academy Cantonese Opera Troupe after graduation. Since 2019, he has become an active participant in various Cantonese opera troupes in Hong Kong. Fu's repertoire includes *Stopping the Horse*, *Fifteen Strings of Cash*, *The Crossroad*, *Wu Song* and *Capturing Sanlang-Ahua*.

Cast
Chan Hei-yu

Chan Hei-yu graduated from the University of Hong Kong with a degree in Social Work. She is a passionate fan of Cantonese opera and Chinese dance since childhood. She studied under Man Lai-fung and Chen Ming-ying. Chan currently performs with the Tsui House Rising Stars Troupe of Wenfit. She has also participated in the Young Talent Showcase organised by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong. She is also the host of a Chinese opera radio show on RTHK Radio 5.

Cast
Shum Pak-chuen

Shum Pak-chuen specialises in *sheng* (male) role, particularly xuesheng (young male scholar) and chousheng (comic male) roles. He studied with Pak Suet-sin, Ho Ka-yiu and Wong yee-wan. He is a graduate of the Cantonese Opera Young Talent Showcase held by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong. Since 2019, he has performed with the Tsui House Rising Stars Troupe of Wenfit. Shum has also participated in the Kiu Opera Black Box Festival in Macau and performed original works *Wenguang Explores the Valley* and *The Imperial Decree*.

Cast
Roy Cheung Siu-tat

Roy Cheung Siu-tat graduated in 2019 from the Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong, where he was guided by famous actor Lo Kwok-wah. He also trained at the Hong Kong Children and Juvenile Chinese Opera Troupe and studied with Cheung Sin-wah, Tsang Shishen, Shi Shuo and Zhou Zhenfeng. Cheung specialises in martial movement and frequently participates in plays with Ho Ka-yiu. He currently performs for various opera troupes in Hong Kong.

Cast
Ng Sin-hang

Ng Sin-hang specialises in *sheng* (male) role under the guidance of Leung Sum-yee from a young age and has participated in various productions with Kim Sum Cantonese Opera. Ng graduated from the Cantonese Opera Academy of Hong Kong and currently studies with Kan Yan-ming and Tsai Hsiao-ling. He has participated in the Cantonese Opera Young Talent Showcase held by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong and other professional troupes.

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Launched in 1973, the **Hong Kong Arts Festival** is a major international arts festival committed to enriching the cultural life of the city. In February and March every year, the Festival presents leading local and international artists in all genres of the performing arts, placing equal importance on great traditions and contemporary creations. The Festival also commissions and produces work in Cantonese opera, theatre, music, chamber opera and contemporary dance by Hong Kong's creative talent and emerging artists; many of these works have had successful subsequent runs in Hong Kong and overseas. The Festival also presents "PLUS" and educational activities that bring a diverse range of arts experiences to the community as well as tertiary, secondary and primary school students. In addition, through the "No Limits" project co-presented with The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the Festival strives to create an inclusive space for people with different abilities to share the joys of the arts together.

The HKAF is a **non-profit organisation**. The total estimated income for FY2024/25 (including the 53rd Hong Kong Arts Festival and 2025 "No Limits") is approximately HK$150 million. Current Government annual baseline funding accounts for around 12% of the Festival's total income. Around 23% of the Festival's income needs to come from the box office, and around 45% from sponsorship and donations made by corporations, individuals and charitable foundations. The remaining 20% is expected to come from other revenue sources including the Government's matching grant scheme, which matches income generated through private sector sponsorship and donations.

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