

53<sup>rd</sup>



香港藝術節  
HK ARTS FESTIVAL  
2025



上海越劇院  
Shanghai Yue Opera House



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27.02 – 01.03.2025

Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre  
With Chinese and English surtitles

Members of Shanghai Yue Opera House flew to and from Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific Airways, the Official Airline of the 53rd Hong Kong Arts Festival

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- ※ The English versions of the house rules on the [HKAF website](#) and front-of-house announcements will prevail in the event of any dispute.



### Backstage Tour

27-28.02.2025 (4:45PM-5:30PM)

Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

[Click to join](#)

### Talk

The Art of Yue Opera: Programme Highlights and Stylistic Schools of the Performers

25.02.2025 (Past event)

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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



Supporting  
Organisation:



## 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:



140  
年 YEARS



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53<sup>rd</sup>



香港藝術節  
HK ARTS FESTIVAL  
2025

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# Programme



## *Family*

27.02.2025 / 7:30pm

Approximately two hours and 50 minutes including one interval

## *The Butterfly Lovers (Yuan & Fan Version)*

28.02.2025 / 7:30pm

Approximately two hours and 55 minutes including one interval

## *The Jade Hairpin*

01.03.2025 / 2:30pm

Approximately three hours including one interval

## Selected Excerpts

“Storming into the Palace”,  
from *Hitting the Princess*

“Reunion at the Garden”,  
from *Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife*

“Visiting His Aunt”,  
from *The Pearl Pagoda*

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INTERVAL

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“Fortune-Telling”,  
from *He Wenxiu*

“Daiyu Burns Her Manuscripts”,  
from *Dream of the Red Chamber*

“Farewell at Chongtai”,  
from *The Soul of the Plum Blossom*

01.03.2025 / 7:30pm

Approximately three hours and 10 minutes including one interval

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[Creatives and  
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## Creatives and Production Team

### Production

Chief Producer

Wu Wei

Producer

Xia Tian

Executive Producers

Chai Liangjie, Lu Xiang

Co-ordinators

Fang Yafen, Ding Lin, Xu Biaoxin

### Main Creatives

#### *Family*

Adapted from Ba Jin's novel of the same title

Literary Consultant

Chen Sihe

Playwright

Wu Zhaofen

Director

Yang Xiaoqing

Revival Directors

Hu Xiaoping, Xu Jie

Composer

Lan Tian

Vocal Designer

Chen Jun

Orchestration

Zhuang Deyi

Movement Designer

Xin Honghai

Set Designer

Han Sheng

Lighting Designers

Yi Tianfu, Wang Wenqi

Costume Designer

Wang Lijun

Make-up & Character Designer

Hu Yali

Music Arrangement

Huo Yonggang, He Xianyun

#### *The Butterfly Lovers*

(Yuan & Fan Version)

According to the script of the film *The Butterfly Lovers* written by Xu Jin and Sang Hu, with reference to the oral narration of the stage play by Yuan Xuefen and Fan Ruijuan; adapted by Xu Jin, Cheng Rong, Chen Yu, Song Zhiyou and Hong Ying

Editor-in-chief

Huang Yan

Director

Sun Hongjiang

Deputy Director

Liu Yongzhen

Original Music Arrangements

Chen Jie, Xue Yan, Liu Ruzeng,

Gu Zhenya, Xiang Guansen

Vocal Arrangements

Chen Jun

Orchestration

Luo Jiliang

Set Designer

Wu Huiguo

Lighting Designer

Wang Wenqi

Costume Designer

Zhou Yating

Costume Design Assistant

Xu Jinmei

Make-up & Character Designer

Liu Xinhui

Production Assistant

Ding Lin

Log Keeper

Gui Haiping

#### *The Jade Hairpin*

Adaptation

Huang Sha, Hong Ying

Director

Huang Sha

Artistic Director

Jin Caifeng

Music Arrangements

Li Zichuan, Wang Linsong

Orchestration

Zhuang Deyi, Hou Xuening

### Scenography

Stage Manager

Zhang Jianyao

Stage Crew

Yang Fei, Zhang Lizhong, Xu Tao,

Fu Junjun, Fu Yong, Wang Yicheng,

Chu Ya

Lighting

Wang Dewei, Li Hailin, Ma Jinlong,

Li Lidong, Ji Yiming, Yang Ji

Make-up

Sun Yiyao, Ma Yue, Shi Chengyi,

Liu Xinhui, Wang Mingte

Costumes

Jin Zhongyang, Liu Chengcheng,

Xu Jinmei

Props

Jin Lixin, Xu Hua

Sound

Shi Lei, Zhang Ying

Surtitles for *Family*

Jin Ye

Surtitles for *The Butterfly Lovers*

(Yuan & Fan Version), *The Jade*

*Hairpin* and Selected Excerpts

Yu Jiana

## *Family* Synopsis



This production won the 10th China Art Festival's Wenhua New Repertoire Award, the Wenhua Performing Arts Award, the Wenhua Music Award, and the Shanghai Magnolia Best New Supporting Artist Award. It was also recognised as an outstanding work of Shanghai Literary and Artistic Creation.

The Yue opera *Family* is adapted from Ba Jin's famous work with the same title. It tells the tragic love stories of several young couples in a declining feudal family full of conflicts: the love between childhood sweethearts Juexin and Meifen is destroyed by the authoritarian and absurd "drawing lots" arranged marriage system; Juexin and Ruijue's relationship, which is borne out of understanding and mutual support, is destroyed by feudal superstition; and the pure romance between Juehui and his maid, Mingfeng, is extinguished when Mingfeng is forced to throw herself into a lake.

These three tragic love stories revolve around Juexin, the eldest grandson of the Gao family. Although feudal pressure distorts Juexin's character, it also compels him to bravely help his younger brother, Juehui, escape.

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# **Family Scenes**

- Scene 1 “Plum Grove in the Spring Snow”
- Scene 2 “Candle Tears in the Bridal Chamber”
- Scene 3 “The Elegant Lotus in a Pond”
- Scene 4 “The Plum Grove in Deep Autumn”

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Interval

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- Scene 5 “Clear Water, Turbid Water”
- Scene 6 “Eternal Love”

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[Cast and Characters](#)

## ***Family***

### **Cast and Characters**

Zhao Zhigang (Special Appearance)  
as Juexin

Shan Yangping  
as Meifen

Deng Huawei  
as Ruijue

Xu Jie  
as Juehui

Chen Shi (Special Appearance)  
as Mingfeng

Xu Lai  
as Madam Chen

Huang Ying  
as Madam Zhou

Zhang Aijia  
as Feng Leshan

Ye Yuanbei  
as Fourth Madam

Zhu Yang  
as Fifth Madam

Zhou Yaner  
as Huang Ma

Yu Jiana  
as Shuzhen

Gui Haiping  
as Waner

Shi Tingting, Yu Jinglan,  
Guo Qianyun, Wang Zirui  
as Maids

Gu Aijun, Jin Tao, Yao Lei  
as Plum Blossom Hill

Lead Singer  
Huang Ying

Chorus  
The Troupe's Actors

## ***Family***

### **Musicians**

Drums

Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin

Ma Lichao

Pipa

Zhu Xiaowen

Solo Erhu, Gaohu

Shen Qi

Erhu

Sun Xiuwen, Zhuang Zhenyu

Zhonghu, Banhu

Wu Baiwei

First Violin

Hu Jiayi

Second Violin

Yao Lina

Cello

Weng Nirui

Double Bass

Guan Xian

Zhongruan, Sanxian

Zhang Xu

Yangqin

Song Xuan

Guzheng

Huang Zhuoqun

Electronic Organ

Hou Xuening

Flute

Ling Jing

Bamboo Flute

Gu Qiuping

Suona, Oboe

Zhang Ting

Soprano Sheng

Hu Jie

Percussion

Hong Jinlang, Huang Hong,

Qian Xiaocong

## *Family*

### Appreciation Note



*Family* is the first episode of an epic novel by the great author Ba Jin (巴金). Together with *Spring* and *Autumn*, they make up the “Trilogy of the Irrepressible Tides” which depicts the downfall and ultimate disintegration of a dysfunctional family, reflecting the changes in cultural values, ideology and society in China after the end of imperial rule in the early 20th century. Yue opera artists picked up this unusual theme and turned the novel into an opera, using traditional musical forms and singing, but wearing contemporary clothing instead of the usual traditional costumes. Yue opera was the first regional opera to tackle this new form of staging with success, but it was also known for its beauty, lyricism and intimate acting, which helped it to realistically depict this momentous era in modern Chinese history.

Text: Tam Wing-pong



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*The Butterfly Lovers*  
(Yuan & Fan Version)

# *The Butterfly Lovers* *(Yuan & Fan Version)* Synopsis



Zhu Yingtai, a woman from Shangyu, Zhejiang, disguises herself as a man to travel to Hangzhou for her studies. There she meets Liang Shanbo, a scholar from Huiji. They become sworn brothers and study together for three years. Before returning to Shangyu, Zhu Yingtai confesses to her school master's wife and invites Liang Shanbo to propose to her in the Zhu family village.

To her dismay, Zhu Yingtai's father has already betrothed her to the son of the governor. Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai meet on a balcony and, when they part, they vow to live and die together. Liang Shanbo is devastated and falls ill, passing away soon after. Zhu Yingtai visits Liang Shanbo's funeral to mourn him. On her wedding day, she jumps into Liang Shanbo's tomb. After their deaths, the couple are transformed into butterflies and take flight together in harmony.

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# *The Butterfly Lovers* *(Yuan & Fan Version)*

## Scenes



Scene 1 “Brotherhood Oath at  
Cao Bridge”

Scene 2 “Yingtai Finds a  
Matchmaker”

Scene 3 “Shanbo Sends Yingtai  
Off on a Homeward  
Journey”

Scene 4 “Thinking of Yingtai”,  
“In Memory of His  
Farewell to Yingtai”

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Interval

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Scene 5 “Engagement”,  
“Meeting the Brother”

Scene 6 “Reunion on the  
Terrace”

Scene 7 “Shanbo on His  
Deathbed”

Scene 8 “Yingtai Mourning”

Scene 9 “Transforming into  
Butterflies”

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[Cast and Characters](#)

# ***The Butterfly Lovers*** ***(Yuan & Fan Version)***

## **Cast and Characters**

Zhang Ruihong  
as Liang Shanbo

Fang Yafen  
as Zhu Yingtai

Cai Yan  
as Zhu Gongyuan

Guo Qianyun  
as Sijiu

Ye Yuanbei  
as Yinxin

Tang Lihua  
as School Master's Wife

Zhou Yaner  
as Mrs Liang

Mao Chunmei  
as Zhu's Servant

Ding Lin, Gui Haiping, Jin Ye,  
Mao Chunmei

as Servants

Xu Lai, Yu Jinglan, Shi Tingting,  
Wang Zirui

as Maids

Chorus

The Troupe's Actors

# ***The Butterfly Lovers*** ***(Yuan & Fan Version)***

## **Musicians**

Drums

Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin

Wu Baiwei

Pipa

Zhu Xiaowen

Gaohu

Shen Qi

Erhu

Sun Xiuwen, Zhuang Zhenyu

Violin

Hu Jiayi, Yao Lina

Viola

Feng Sixin

Cello

Weng Nirui

Double Bass

Guan Xian

Electronic Organ

Hou Xuening

Zhongruan

Zhang Xu

Yangqin

Song Xuan

Guzheng

Huang Zhuoqun

Flute, Bamboo Flute

Ling Jing, Gu Qiuping

Oboe, Suona

Zhang Ting

Soprano Sheng

Hu Jie

Percussion

Hong Jinlang, Huang Hong,

Qian Xiaocong

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# ***The Butterfly Lovers*** **(Yuan & Fan Version)** **Appreciation Note**

In the 1940s, the Xue Sheng Yue Opera Troupe, led by Yuan Xuefen and Fan Ruijuan, arranged and compiled several early versions of *The Butterfly Lovers*, presenting the Yue opera *The Sad Story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* and establishing the thematic structure of *The Butterfly Lovers*. While performing *The Sad Story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, Fan Ruijuan, the founder of the School of Fan, created one of the two essential tunes of Yue opera, known as the *xianxia* tune, in the scene “Shanbo on His Deathbed”. Yuan Xuefen, the founder of the School of Yuan, created “Yingtai Mourning”, which, along with “The Crying” from *Fragrant Concubine* and “Crying for Her Husband” from *A Length of Hemp String*, is collectively referred to as the “Three Cries of the School of Yuan”.

In 1953, *The Butterfly Lovers* was filmed as the first colour film of the New China, starring Yuan Xuefen and Fan Ruijuan. In 1954, the film won the Musical Film Award at the 8th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in Czechoslovakia.

After more than 60 years, Shanghai Yue Opera House restaged the Yuan & Fan Version of *The Butterfly Lovers*, focusing on restoring such traditional excerpts as “Sending Big Brother Off” and “Yingtai Mourning”. In “Sending Big Brother Off” following “Reunion on the Terrace”, Zhu Yingtai expresses her feelings through imagery, embedding the four seasons and the language of flowers in her lyrics, poetically conveying the emotions of their parting. This corresponds with the earlier hopeful farewell in “Shanbo Accompanies Yingtai on a Homeward Journey”. Similarly, the nearly lost staging of “Yingtai Mourning” is a masterpiece of the School of Yuan. The Yuan & Fan Version of *The Butterfly Lovers* fully re-creates this Yuan-style classic.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House



# *The Jade Hairpin*

## Synopsis



The Minister of Personnel, Li Tingpu, arranges for his daughter, Li Xiuying, to marry local scholar Wang Yulin. Li Xiuying's cousin, Gu Wenyou, holds a grudge because his marriage proposal to his cousin failed. On Li Xiuying's wedding day, he colludes with a matchmaker to steal her jade hairpin, forges a love letter and secretly slips it into the newlyweds' room. Wang Yulin, finding the letter, is deceived and suspects that Li Xiuying is unfaithful. He leaves angrily without saying a word.

After their marriage, Wang Yulin's suspicions remain. Li Xiuying suffers from unjust accusations and eventually falls ill from distress. It is only after Li Tingpu investigates and interrogates the matchmaker that the truth is revealed. During the imperial examination year, Wang Yulin is named the top scholar and seeks Li Xiuying's forgiveness by offering her a phoenix headdress. The couple reconciles and restores their relationship.

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# *The Jade Hairpin*

## Scenes



- Scene 1 “Celebrating Longevity, Betrothal”
- Scene 2 “Plotting”
- Scene 3 “In the Bridal Chamber”
- Scene 4 “Inquiring with the Maid”
- Scene 5 “Second Time in the Bridal Chamber”
- Scene 6 “Invitation to a Banquet”
- Scene 7 “Returning Home”

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Interval

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- Scene 8 “Three Times Covering the Husband with a Robe”
- Scene 9 “Returning at Night”
- Scene 10 “Elucidating the Misunderstanding Through the Handwriting”
- Scene 11 “Presenting the Phoenix Headdress”

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[Cast and Characters](#)

## ***The Jade Hairpin*** **Cast and Characters**

Fan Tingting  
as Li Xiuying

Xu Biaoxin  
as Wang Yulin

Zhou Yaner  
as Madam Lu

Gu Aijun  
as Li Tingpu

Huang Ying  
as Mrs Li

Zhang Aijia  
as Wang Yu

Si Yulin  
as Gu Wenyou

Gui Haiping  
as Chunxiang

Yu Jinglan  
as Qiuqui

Zhu Yang  
as Matchmaker

Yao Lei  
as Li Xing

Guo Qianyun, Wang Zirui  
as Maids

Qiu Long, Cai Xiuhui, Jin Tao,  
Si Yulin, Yu Jinglan, Guo Qianyun,  
Wang Zirui, Xu Lai  
as Constables

## ***The Jade Hairpin*** **Musicians**

Drums  
Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin  
Wu Baiwei

Pipa  
Zhu Xiaowen

Erhu  
Shen Qi, Zhuang Zhenyu

Zhonghu  
Sun Xiuwen

Cello  
Weng Nirui

Double Bass  
Guan Xian

Liuqin, Sanxian  
Zhang Xu

Yangqin  
Song Xuan

Zhongruan, Guzheng  
Huang Zhuoqun

Electronic Organ  
Hou Xuening

Bamboo Flute  
Gu Qiuping

Flute  
Ling Jing

Suona  
Zhang Ting

Soprano Sheng  
Hu Jie

Percussion  
Hong Jinlang, Huang Hong, Qian  
Xiaocong, Ma Lichao

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## *The Jade Hairpin* Appreciation Note

This is undoubtedly one of the most popular works in the Yue opera repertoire. With a relatively mundane comedic plot involving a jealous husband and his wronged wife, *The Jade Hairpin* is an *opera gracioso*, featuring scene after scene of refined singing, elegant acting and dance-like movements. Its highlights include a scene showing the wife trying to keep her husband warm with her fur cape, only to get in return an ungrateful and humiliating slap on the face. But, of course, she will get her satisfaction and her dignity restored in the end! The kind, understanding and humorous mother-in-law, a character long adored by audiences, analyses the young couple's marital problems in a comic aria that is loved and sung by all Yue opera fans. Everyone is sure to feel the charm and enjoy each performance of *The Jade Hairpin*.

Text: Tam Wing-pong



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## Selected Excerpts

### “Storming into the Palace”, from *Hitting the Princess* Synopsis



This excerpt is part of the Shanghai Yue Opera House’s cherished repertoire. Emperor Tang arranges for his daughter, Princess Junrui, to marry Guo Ai, the sixth son of the Prince of Fenyang, Guo Ziyi. During the prince’s birthday, his sons and ministers gather to pay their respects. But the princess refuses to attend, citing that a ruler does not bow to a subject. An angry Guo Ai returns to the palace and beats the princess.

## Cast and Characters

Si Yulin  
as Guo Ai

Deng Huawei  
as Princess

Guo Qianyun, Wang Zirui Xu Lai,  
Yu Jinglan  
as Palace Maids

Drums  
Hong Jinlang

Lead Huqin  
Ma Lichao

## Appreciation Note

*Hitting the Princess* is a classic Yue opera piece created through a collaboration between Lu Ruiying, the founder of the School of Lu, and Fan Ruijuan, the founder of the School of Fan. In the excerpt “Storming into the Palace”, one of the most captivating moments is when Princess Junrui makes her entrance, looking quite pleased with herself. Her pride and sweetness are vividly highlighted when she sings, “My crown of pearls presses against my temples. I am the Princess, my husband the Prince Consort”.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

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["Reunion at the Garden"](#)

# “Reunion at the Garden”, from *Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife* Synopsis



The young lord of the Prime Minister, Liang Yushu, and the noble lady Xie Yunxia fall in love and become husband and wife. However, they cannot get along due to the hatred between their fathers. On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, Liang Yushu hosts a banquet in his garden, subtly expressing his affection and tenderness towards his wife. Xie Yunxia is momentarily moved, but ultimately struggles to reconcile her feelings. Thinking of avenging her father, she decides to return to her room and leaves Liang Yushu behind, feeling bewildered and lost.

## Cast and Characters

Wang Qing

as Liang Yushu

Xu Xiaofei

as Xie Yunxia

Shi Tingting

as Hexiang

Drums

Huang Hong

Lead Huqin

Shen Qi

## Appreciation Note

*Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife* is another classic piece from the Yin (Guifang) School of Yue opera. The excerpt “Reunion at the Garden” fully demonstrates the distinctive features of the Yin School vocal techniques, such as *jiaoban* (rhythmising the end of a spoken part), *qidiao* (opening tunes), *yunqiang* (controlling the flow of vocals), *luodiao* (lowering vocal pitch at the end of a phrase) and *qingban* (clear and steady rhythm). But the scene also showcases exquisite water sleeves and fan skills, among other movement techniques. This delicately portrays the image of a gentle and affectionate noble person and reflects the unique charms and aesthetics of the art of a female *xiaosheng* (young male roles) in Yue opera.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

## “Visiting His Aunt”, from *The Pearl Pagoda* Synopsis



Fang Qing, the son of an official from Henan, finds his family in decline. He arrives in Xiangyang to seek refuge with his aunt, Fang Duohua, hoping to borrow money to travel to the capital and take the imperial examination. Coincidentally, it is also his uncle's birthday. Fang Qing arrives without a gift and embarrasses his aunt in front of other guests. His aunt ridicules and mocks her ragged but aloof nephew in every possible way. Fang Qing, filled with shame and anger, vows that he will never return to Xiangyang until he passes the imperial examination.

## Cast and Characters

Xu Biaoxin  
as Fang Qing

Zhou Yaner  
as Fang Duohua

Gui Haiping  
as Hongyun

Xie Lin  
as Sankuai

Zhang Aijia  
as Fang Ben

Chorus  
The Troupe's Actors

Drums  
Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin  
Wu Baiwei

## Appreciation Note

During the creation of *The Pearl Pagoda*, Lu Jinhua, the founder of the School of Lu, inherited her performing techniques from veteran artist Hua Bilian. In all aspects of the hand, eye and body techniques, methods and footwork, Lu demonstrated the norms of the *qiongsheng* (poor male scholar, also known as *xiepi sheng*) role. In this performance, Xu Biaoxin, a disciple of Lu Jinhua, plays the role of Fang Qing.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

## “Fortune-Telling”, from *He Wenxiu*

### Synopsis



During the Jiaping period in the Ming Dynasty, scholar He Wenxiu and his wife, Wang Lanying, travel to the capital for the imperial examination. Along the way, they are persecuted by bullies using deceitful tactics and are forced to separate. Three years later, He Wenxiu becomes the top scholar in the imperial examination and becomes a provincial governor, where he reunites with his wife. However, fearing that their secret may be exposed, He Wenxiu disguises himself as a fortune teller, comforts his wife and writes a petition for her.

## Cast and Characters

Zhao Zhigang (Special Appearance)  
as He Wenxiu

Chen Shi (Special Appearance)  
as Wang Lanying

Zhou Yaner  
as Matron Yang

Gui Haiping  
as Yang Dingjin

Drums  
Hong Jinlang

Lead Huqin  
Ma Lichao

## Appreciation Note

*He Wenxiu* is a classic Yue opera that has been frequently staged since the art form was performed exclusively by male performers, with “Fortune-Telling” being one of the most exciting *rouzi* plays among them. In 1950s, Yin Guifang rearranged and re-staged the play and adapted tunes from *pingtan* into Yue opera. This resulted in the unique version of “Fortune-Telling” we see today.

Yin Guifang’s outstanding disciple, Zhao Zhigang, will play He Wenxiu, presenting the audience with the authentic charm of the Yin School’s artistic style.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

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["Daiyu Burns Her Manuscripts"](#)

# “Daiyu Burns Her Manuscripts”, from *Dream of the Red Chamber* Synopsis



The sickly Lin Daiyu lives alone in the Jia residence, where she shares mutual affection with her cousin, Jia Baoyu. However, to benefit the Jia family, Grandmother Jia and others in the family trick Baoyu into taking Xue Baochai as his wife. Lin Daiyu is shocked, and, in her illness, she burns her poems and vows to end her relationship with Jia Baoyu. Heartbroken, she dies in despair.

## Cast and Characters

Shan Yangping  
as Lin Daiyu

Sheng Shuyang  
as Zijuan

Lead Singer  
Huang Ying

Chorus  
The Troupe’s Actors

Drums  
Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin  
Wu Baiwei

## Appreciation Note

“Daiyu Burns Her Manuscripts” is a classic segment from the Yue opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* and highlights the distinctive vocal features of the School of Wang (Wenjuan). Wang Wenjuan’s direct disciple, Shan Yangping, has been praised by critics as “the best contemporary Lin Daiyu”, having mastered the true artistic essence of her mentor. In this segment of *xianxia* tunes, the character’s evolving emotions are reflected in the melodies of *zhengdiao liushui* and Shao opera styles. This conveys Daiyu’s feelings of melancholy and sorrow when she realises her soulmate is lost, creating a vivid and relatable musical portrayal of the character.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

# “Farewell at Chongtai”, from *The Soul of the Plum Blossom* Synopsis



Based on the traditional repertoire *The Plum Blossom in Full Bloom Again*, this adaptation premiered in 1945 and featured Yuan Xuefen, Fan Ruijuan and other veteran Yue opera artists. To commemorate the 80th anniversary of Yue opera reform and the 100th birthday of Yuan Xuefen in 2022, the Shanghai Yue Opera House released a revival version of *The Soul of the Plum Blossom*.

The country is invaded by foreigners. Chen Xingyuan is bestowed the title of Imperial Sister and married off to a foreign prince to ensure peace at the border, separating her from her lover, Mei Liangyu. When the peace envoy arrives at Chongtai, Chen Xingyuan is reluctant to part ways, while Mei Liangyu endures his pain in silence. They both make a vow, revealing their unwavering love and loyalty, as well as their determination to sacrifice their personal happiness for the stability and peace of their country.

## Cast and Characters

Fang Yafen  
as Chen Xingyuan

Zhang Ruihong  
as Mei Liangyu

Qiu Long, Cai Xiuhui, Jin Tao,  
Yao Lei, Zhang Aijia, Gu Aijun,  
Jin Ye, Mao Chunmei  
as Military Officers

Xu Lai, Yu Jinglan, Shi Tingting,  
Ye Yuanbei, Xie Lin, Wang Zirui,  
Guo Qianyun, Zhu Yang  
as Palace Maids

Chorus  
The Troupe’s Actors

Drums  
Jin Zhiliang

Lead Huqin  
Wu Baiwei

## Appreciation Note

“Farewell at Chongtai” is the emotional climax of *The Soul of the Plum Blossom*, where romantic feelings and loyalty to one’s country intertwine, rendering lingering and profound the emotions of the lovers’ separation. The play features several duets between *sheng* (male) and *dan* (female) roles, demonstrating the distinctive characteristics of Yue opera schools.

Text: Shanghai Yue Opera House

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[Musicians for Selected Excerpts](#)

## Musicians for Selected Excerpts



Pipa

Zhu Xiaowen

Erhu

Shen Qi, Zhuang Zhenyu

Zhonghu

Sun Xiuwen

Violin

Hu Jiayi, Yao Lina

Viola

Feng Sixin

Cello

Weng Nirui

Double Bass

Guan Xian

Electronic Organ

Hou Xuening

Zhongruan, Sanxian

Zhang Xu

Yangqin

Song Xuan

Guzheng

Huang Zhuoqun

Flute, Bamboo Flute

Ling Jing, Gu Qiuping

Oboe, Suona

Zhang Ting

Soprano Sheng

Hu Jie

Percussion

Hong Jinlang, Huang Hong,

Qian Xiaocong

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## Interview

### A Thousand Shades of Tenderness: Yue Opera as a Female Emotional Outlet

Yue opera has captivated audiences with its all-female productions since the 1930s, touching hearts with countless tales of romantic love. In an interview, the director of the Shanghai Yue Opera House, Fang Yafen, reveals how the themes of pursuing love and independence in Yue opera resonate with female audiences, offering them an emotional outlet.



The Shanghai Yue Opera House will present several classic Yue opera works and excerpts at the 2025 Hong Kong Arts Festival. Fang Yafen will play Zhu Yingtai in *The Butterfly Lovers* (Yuan & Fan Version), portraying Zhu as spirited and intelligent in female attire, and as bold and heroic when disguised as a man. Liang Shanbo, played by Zhang Ruihong, differs from traditional male protagonists, as he is not only handsome but also tender. In the renowned “Reunion on the Terrace”, after their long-awaited reunion following “Shanbo Accompanies Yingtai on a Homeward Journey”, Liang's joy turns to sorrow and anger upon learning that Zhu has been betrothed to another man.

Fang explains that this role, which resonates with popular sentiment, presents a great challenge: “The difficulty lies in breaking through established styles while maintaining my own unique interpretation, bringing forth a performance full of raw emotion. It’s physically and mentally exhausting.”

The Yuan & Fan Version of *The Butterfly Lovers* originated from a 1954 colour Yue opera film starring Yuan Xuefen and Fan Ruijuan. Yuan Xuefen, a founding member of the Shanghai Yue Opera House and Fang Yafen’s mentor, never performed this play on stage after the release of the film, keeping it out of theatres for more than 60 years. In 2012, to commemorate the first anniversary of her teacher’s passing, Fang restaged the production, bringing back one of Yuan's three most iconic crying scenes, “Yingtai Mourning”, stirring poignant emotions among the audience. As Fang had never seen Yuan perform this piece on stage, she could only refer to Yuan’s acting in the film version. Combining this with her own strengths, she made every effort to preserve Yuan’s vocal style while integrating elements like the original film music.

Fang explains that Yue opera, originally known as Shaoxing opera, developed its unique language by incorporating the Zhongzhou dialect and ancient Mandarin phonetics into its Shengzhou dialect. Yue opera has a history of just more than 110 years. Initially performed by all-male troupes, women were prohibited from participating until the 1930s and 40s when all-female Yue opera troupes started to emerge.

“In the 1930s, the introduction of female performers, especially actresses playing male roles, satisfied the desire for women to create idealised male characters—dashing, charming, respectful of women, gentle and considerate—a projection of women's emotional aspirations,” says Fang. She points to the male protagonists of the excerpts “Reunion at the Garden”, from *Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife*, and “Fortune-telling”, from *He Wenxiu*, as perfect examples of the “sweet, caring guy” image.

Fang believes that Yue opera's appeal to women lies in stories that allow female characters to pursue love freely. In *The Butterfly Lovers*, for example, the plot is emotionally rich with bold expressions of love. “In areas like autonomy in marriage, mutual respect and reciprocal love, women were historically repressed. Through the emotions in the opera, they found an outlet for their feelings. It was said that you couldn’t watch Yue opera without bringing a handkerchief to wipe away tears.” She cites *The Jade Hairpin* as an example: “The heroine, Li Xiuying, is mistreated by her husband, and while the social constraints of the time prevent her from rebelling, she ultimately compels him to kneel and apologise in the scene ‘Presenting the Phoenix Headdress’. For women, this provides a sense of satisfaction after releasing their grievances.”

However, Yue opera is not only about the tender romances of ordinary women, but also encompasses themes of loyalty and national duty. In “Farewell at Chongtai”, from *The Soul of the Plum Blossom*, the heroine Chen Xingyuan is married off to a foreign prince to secure peace for the kingdom, even though it means leaving her true love behind. “These female characters may appear delicate, but they carry immense inner strength.”

In the 1940s and 1950s, Yuan spearheaded reforms in Yue opera, expanding its repertoire and music, and enhancing its production scale, eventually raising its international profile. Over time, the troupe began admitting male actors, and since 1959, it has been performing both all-female and mixed-gender productions, making this a unique feature of the troupe. This approach maintains a balance between modern sensibilities and traditional characteristics, though male Yue opera actors remain relatively rare.

Now the troupe is bringing a range of performances to Hong Kong that showcase both all-female and mixed-gender productions. Among them is *Family*, adapted from Ba Jin’s novel of the same name, which features a male and female cast, with Zhao Zhigang, known as the “Prince of Yue Opera”, in the lead role. The production is filled with rich tales of love and family. “While different schools and styles are important tools, what truly touches the audience is the emotional expression of the performers—it has to reach deep into the heart. Whether it's a mixed-gender or an all-female production, Yue opera always stands out because of the way we convey emotions through the story,” Fang concludes.

Text: Eugene Chan  
English translation: Stanley Leung

This article was originally published on the HKAF's News & Features website in January 2025

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[About the Shanghai Yue Opera House](#)



## About the Shanghai Yue Opera House

The Shanghai Yue Opera House was established in March 1955 and is a renowned opera troupe both at home and abroad. It is a protected organisation on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, a key institution for creating and performing local operas, and a base for the inheritance and development of Yue opera, boasting many accomplished artists.

The troupe has created, adapted and reinterpreted more than 450 productions. *The Butterfly Lovers*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Romance of the West Chamber* and *Aunt Xianglin* are recognised as the “Four Classics” of Yue opera. Additionally, it has produced a series of high-quality works that integrate intelligence, artistry and entertainment. These include *Stage Sisters*, *Family*, *Meilong Town*, *Jade Love*, *Zhen Huan*, *Double Flying Wings* and *Deep Affection Across Mountains and Seas*.

With a comprehensive artistic practice involving many influential artists and works, the troupe has consistently maintained a leading position among professional Yue opera troupes in the country. It has long received attention and support from leaders at all levels, from the Central Government to local authorities. Furthermore, it has performed at various prestigious events, including the bilateral meeting between the heads of state of China and France, and the WLA Forum featuring top international scientists, exhibiting the unique charm of Yue opera.



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[Cast Profiles](#)

## Cast Profiles

### Shan Yangping

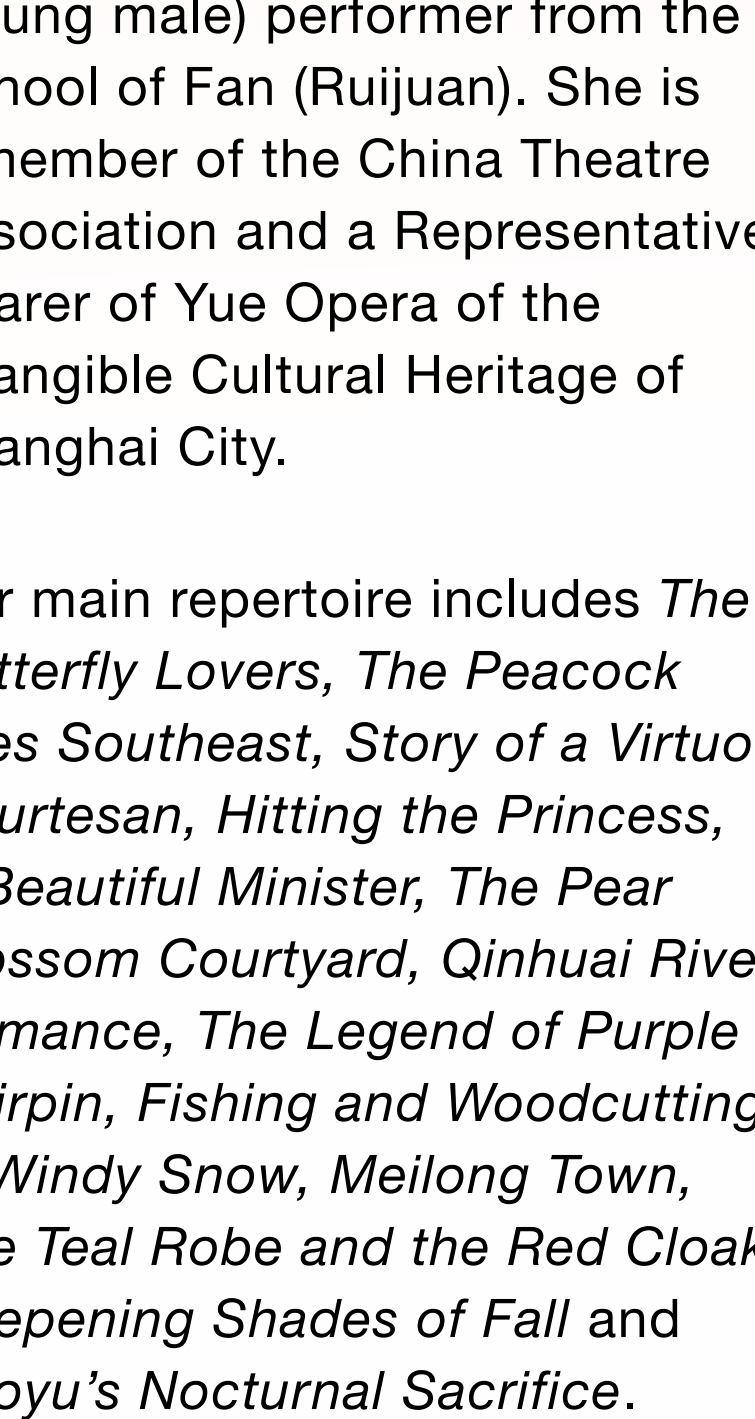


Shan Yangping is a First-Class Performer, contemporary Yue opera artist and renowned *huadan* (young female) performer from the School of Wang (Wenjuan). She is a member of the China Theatre Association and a Representative Bearer of Yue Opera of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Shanghai City.

Her main repertoire includes *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Legend of the Embroidering Girl*, *Tears of the Paulownia Blossom*, *The Legend of Purple Hairpin*, *Shixi Returns to Yue*, *Regrets of Luoshan*, *A Beautiful Minister*, *The Jade Hairpin*, *Cao Zhi and Zhen Luo*, *Stage Sisters*, *Spring in Isolation*, *Family* and *Beauty Yu*.

She has received the 17th Chinese Theatre Plum Blossom Award, the ninth Wenhua Performing Arts Award, the Outstanding Performance Award at the 10th Chinese Theatre Festival, the Best Actor Award at the 11th China Population Culture Award and the Outstanding Female Star Award for Chinese Opera on National Television. She was also named one of the top 10 actors for outstanding Chinese opera television and is known as “the star of Yue opera”.

### Zhang Ruihong



Zhang Ruihong is a First-Class Performer, contemporary Yue opera artist and renowned *xiaosheng* (young male) performer from the School of Fan (Ruijuan). She is a member of the China Theatre Association and a Representative Bearer of Yue Opera of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Shanghai City.

Her main repertoire includes *The Butterfly Lovers*, *The Peacock Flies Southeast*, *Story of a Virtuous Courtesan*, *Hitting the Princess*, *A Beautiful Minister*, *The Pear Blossom Courtyard*, *Qinhuai River Romance*, *The Legend of Purple Hairpin*, *Fishing and Woodcutting in Windy Snow*, *Meilong Town*, *The Teal Robe and the Red Cloak*, *Deepening Shades of Fall* and *Baoyu's Nocturnal Sacrifice*.

She has received the 19th Chinese Theatre Plum Blossom Award, the Outstanding Performance Award at the seventh and 12th Chinese Theatre Festival, the Performing Arts Award at the fifth Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards, the Shanghai Municipal Major Initiatives 2011 Shanghai Literary Artist Honourary Award and the first prize at the National Chinese Opera Radio Singing Individual Theme Competition.

### Fang Yafen



Fan Yafen is a First-Class Performer, a contemporary Yue opera artist, a leading talent in Shanghai and a renowned *huadan* (young female) performer from the School of Yuan (Xuefen). She is a member of the China Theatre Association and a Representative Bearer of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage item. She is currently the Company Director of the First Troupe of Shanghai Yue Opera House.

Her main repertoire includes *The Butterfly Lovers*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Romance of the West Chamber*, *Aunt Xianglin*, *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, *Double Pearl Phoenix Hairpin*, *The Early Spring of February*, *Red Cotton Tree*, *Timeless Love and Heartache*, *Jade Love* and *Deep Affection Across Mountains and Seas*.

She was the top winner at the 23rd China Theatre Plum Blossom Award, a two-time winner of the Lead Actor Award at the Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards, the Best Female Actor Award at the fifth Paris Chinese Opera Festival, the “Top 10” Performer Award at the China Yue Opera Festival and the Shanghai Municipal Major Initiatives Shanghai Literary Artist Honourary Award. She has been twice named a Shanghai Municipal Model Worker.

### Zhao Zhigang (Special Appearance)



Zhao Zhigang is a First-Class Performer and a contemporary Yue opera artist. He is also a distinguished professor of the “Qiantang Scholar” programme at Hangzhou Normal University. He is an apprentice of the Yin (Guifang) School and has been named the “Prince of Yue Opera”.

He is an outstanding expert in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China and was once a committee member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in Shanghai Municipality and Zhejiang Province, a director of the China Theatre Association, the Vice-Chairman of the Dramatist Association of Zhejiang Province, the Vice-Chairman of the Hangzhou Province Federation of Literature and Art, the Chairman of the Hangzhou Theatre Association, the Vice-President of the Shanghai Yue Opera House and Artistic Director of Zhao's Workshop.

Over the years, he has starred in various productions, such as *He Wenxiu*, *The Wayward Son*, *The Prince of the Desert*, *Family*, *The Orphan of the Zhao Family*, *Butterfly Lovers Across the Sea* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, as well as the films *Face-Changing* and *Awakening in a Dream*.

He was the top winner at the 21st China Theatre Plum Blossom Award, the 11th Wenhua Performing Arts Award, the Outstanding Performance Award at the ninth Chinese Theatre Festival, the second China Gold Record Award, the second China-Japan Theatre Goodwill Award, the Leading Actor Award at the third Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards. He was also a recipient of the Top 10 Actors Award at the first China Yue Opera Festival.

## Cast Profiles (con't)

### Xu Jie



Xu Jie is a First-Class Performer specialising in *xiaosheng* (young male) roles of the Lu (Jinhua) School. He is a member of the China Theatre Association, a director of the Shanghai Dramatists' Association and a Representative Bearer of Yue Opera of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Shanghai City. His main repertoire includes *The Early Spring of February* and *Aunt Xianglin*.

He was nominated for the Supporting Actor Award at the 25th Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards and won the Supporting Actor Award at the 29th Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards.

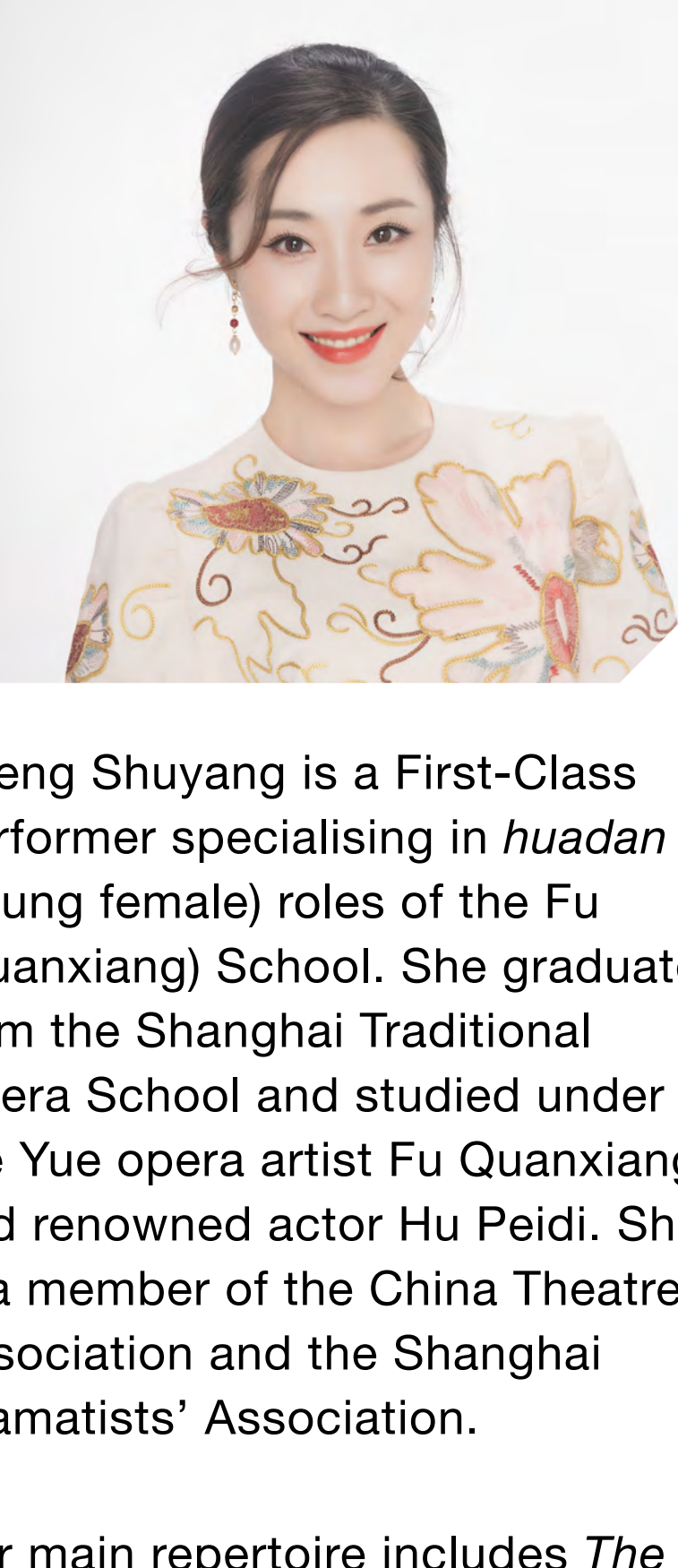
### Xu Biaoxin



Xu Biaoxin is a First-Class Performer specialising in *wenwuxiaosheng* (young civil and military male) roles of the Lu (Jinhua) School. He is an apprentice of Yue opera artist Lu Jinhua. He is a member of the China Theatre Association, the Shanghai Dramatists' Association, the Shanghai New Art Workers Association and the Shanghai Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy. He is currently the Deputy Company Director of the First Troupe of Shanghai Yue Opera House.

His main repertoire includes *The Pearl Pagoda*, *Double Pearl Phoenix Hairpin* and *An Incident at Tongque Tower*.

### Deng Huawei



Deng Huawei is a First-Class Performer specialising in *huadan* (young female) roles of the Lu (Ruiying) School. She studied under Yue opera artist Lu Ruiying. She is a member of the China Theatre Association, the Shanghai Dramatists' Association and the Shanghai New Art Workers Association.

Her main repertoire includes *Three Glimpses of the Princess*, *Gentleman Among Flowers*, *Tao Li Mei*, *Family*, *Hitting the Princess* and *The Desolate Moon in the Lonesome Palace of Liao*.

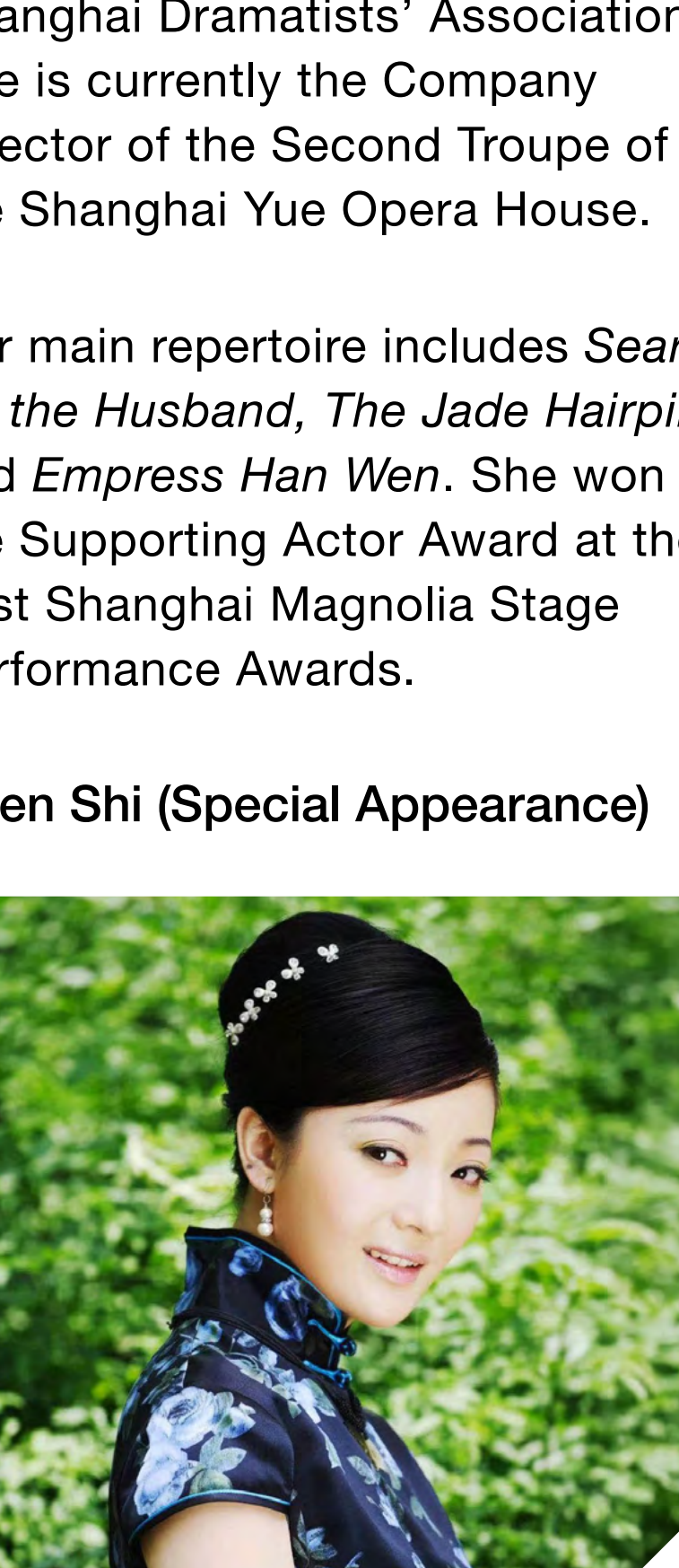
### Wang Qing



Wang Qing is a First-Class Performer specialising in *xiaosheng* (young male) roles of the Yin (Guifang) School. She graduated from the Shanghai Traditional Opera School and studied under Yue opera artist Yin Guifang and contemporary Yue opera artist Zhao Zhigang. She is a member of the China Theatre Association, the Chinese Opera Performance Society and the Shanghai Dramatists' Association.

Her main repertoire includes *He Wenxiu*, *Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife*, *Gentleman Among Flowers* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

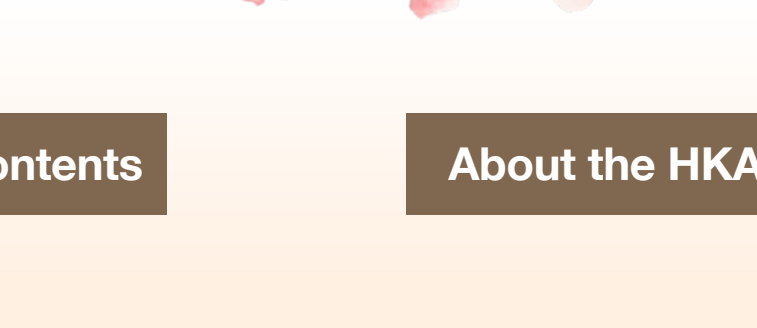
### Sheng Shuyang



Sheng Shuyang is a First-Class Performer specialising in *huadan* (young female) roles of the Fu (Quanxiang) School. She graduated from the Shanghai Traditional Opera School and studied under the Yue opera artist Fu Quanxiang and renowned actor Hu Peidi. She is a member of the China Theatre Association and the Shanghai Dramatists' Association.

Her main repertoire includes *The Butterfly Lovers*, *Story of a Virtuous Courtesan*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Romance of the West Chamber* and *The Story of Jade Hairpin*.

### Xu Xiaofei



Xu Xiaofei is a First-Class Performer specialising in *huadan* (young female) roles of the Yuan (Xuefen) School. She joined the Shanghai Yue Opera House in 2022 and studied under contemporary Yue opera artist Fang Yafen. She is a member of the China Theatre Association and a committee member of the Zhejiang Youth Delegation and the Shanghai Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy.

Her main repertoire includes *The Butterfly Lovers* and *Questioning His Wife and Demanding to Find His Wife*.

She was nominated for the Lead Actor Award at the 24th Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards.

### Si Yulin



Si Yulin is a First-Class Performer specialising in the *xiaosheng* (young male) roles of the Fan (Ruijuan) School. She studied under Yue opera artist Fan Ruijuan. She primarily specialises in the School of Fan, with additional training from the School of Bi. She is a member of the China Theatre Association, the Shanghai Dramatists' Association and the Shanghai New Art Workers Association.

Her main repertoire includes *The Butterfly Lovers*, *Tao Li Mei* and *Story of a Virtuous Courtesan*.

### Fan Tingting



Fan Tingting is a First-Class Performer specialising in *qingyi* (young and middle-aged female) roles of the Jin (Caifeng) School. She graduated from the Shanghai Traditional Opera School and studied under Yue opera artist Jin Caifeng. She is a member of the China Theatre Association and the Shanghai Dramatists' Association. She is currently the Company Director of the Second Troupe of the Shanghai Yue Opera House.

Her main repertoire includes *Search for the Husband*, *The Jade Hairpin* and *Empress Han Wen*. She won the Supporting Actor Award at the 31st Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards.

### Chen Shi (Special Appearance)



Chen Shi is a contemporary Yue opera artist, a First-Class Performer and winner of the Lead Actor Award at the Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards. She specialises in the School of Fu (Quanxiang) and the School of Lu (Ruiying). She is also a producer at Zhao's Workshop.

Over the years, she has starred in various Yue opera productions, including *The First Intimate Encounter*, *Family*, *Three Glimpses of the Princess*, *Written on Skin*, *Butterfly Lovers Across the Sea*, *A Chinese Ghost Story*, *He Wenxiu*, *The Red Detachment of Women* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

She has received the Zhejiang Theatre Festival Outstanding Performer Award, the Outstanding Contribution Award from the Shanghai Dramatists' Association and "The Colourful Years" Star of the Year Award. She has also won the New Artist Award and Lead Actor Award at the Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Awards.



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## Details and Online Application

## 加料節目

# PLUS programmes +

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# PLUS

## Details and Online Application

## About the Hong Kong Arts Festival

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.

Completed Profile:

<https://www.hk.artsfestival.org/en/about-us/index.html?>



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# Committee and Staff List



ADDRESS Room 1205, 12/F, 2 Harbour Road,  
Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
TEL (852) 2824 3555  
FAX (852) 2824 3798 · (852) 2824 3722  
Email afgn@hkaf.org  
Programme Enquiry Hotline (852) 2824 2430

**PATRON** The Hon. John KC Lee, GBM SBS PDSM PMSM

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