

26 & 27 Apr 2024, Fri & Sat, 8pm 🥢 **Esplanade** Theatre Studio

2024年4月26与27日, 星期五与六, 晚上8时 滨海艺术中心小剧场

Lead Actor 领衔主演: Christopher Choo 朱振邦

Cast 演员: Philip Chan 陈福鸿, May Choong 钟丽容

Accompaniment 伴奏: Tung On Opera Orchestra 东安戏曲大乐队

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It hosts a year-round line-up of about 3,500 live performances and activities presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are free for all to enjoy.

Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on Esplanade Offstage, an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, guizzes and resources.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Governance Award - Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016 and 2022, and the Charity Transparency Award from 2016 - 2023. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a guide/assistance dog friendly centre.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

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1 Esplanade Drive, Singapore 038981 Tel: 6828 8222 Fax: 6337 3633 Customer Service Hotline: 6828 8377 SISTIC Hotline: 6348 5555

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Director's Message



Tracing Origins was first conceived in October 2020 when Mimi Yee, Head of Community (Cultural Programmes) at Esplanade, had a phone call with me, I was invited to create a programme spotlighting the *laosheng* (elderly male role) of Cantonese opera, which is both an honour and a responsibility not to be taken lightly. After discussion, the programme was much named Tracing Origins - The Life and Times of Cantonese Opera's Laosheng.

This *laosheng* showcase traces the evolution of the *laosheng* role, adaptations of scripts,

as well as the relationship with my late master, Leng Chi Pak, In terms of artistic vision, it is of a smaller scale yet maintaining an exquisite presentation, using a simple set that includes a table, two chairs and calligraphic art projection. The contemporary lighting effect created by lighting designer Clement Cheong and the intermission videos by multimedia designer Ric Low injected new elements into the performance. While the three excerpts are traditional plays, they are refreshed with novel directing techniques. For example, Song Jiang Kills Yan Xijiao contains metaphors that allude to current events: Xiao He Pursues Han Xin is serious vet humorous; and in General Yang's Sacrifice, the golden glaive in Yang Jiye's hand is used to highlight the heroic sacrifice of the Yang family's sons. Together with other scenes, such as Yang Jiye tossing a lock of white beard into the air to depict the departure of his loyal soul from his body at his death, more layers of nuance have been added to the overall performance.

We spent the whole year planning for the initial exploration in October 2020 to the planned performance in October 2021. This period was met with twists and turns due to the pandemic. Intensive rehearsals were arranged to begin from 27 September 2021 up till the performance in late October, Regretfully, the worsening of the pandemic led to tightened prevention measures effective from 27 September to 24 October, directly impacting our rehearsals and performances. After an urgent meeting with Esplanade, both sides agreed that the safety of the team and the audience are of upmost importance, and eventually announced the cancellation of the performance despite ticket sales being underway. Fortunately, with the firm support of Mimi Yee and the dedicated coordination of the Programmer, Lee Pee Hua, the programme was finally set for showing in late April 2022, in conjunction with the 30th death anniversary of my late master and celebrated wusheng actor, Leng Chi Pak. However, it was still not to be. I accidentally fractured my foot during the rehearsal and the performance was put on hold. After two years, I can finally return to the stage, and owing to Esplanade's perseverance, *Tracing Origins* now has the opportunity to be brought to you.

I am immensely grateful to Esplanade for presenting *Tracing Origins*. I would also like to thank acclaimed local *wenwusheng* (scholar/warrior male role) Philip Chan and new-generation *huadan* (female role) May Choong for their participation and enriching insights to the show. Additionally, my gratitude goes to renowned musician Chen Xiaorui for his efforts in leading the Tung On Opera Orchestra; Executive Producer (volunteer) Yow Wei Meng, and Production and Stage Manager Yow Wei Chui for their valuable inputs; the passionate participation of our lighting designer Clement Cheong and multimedia designer Ric Low, along with the full dedication of staff members both front and backstage.

The success of a performance rests on the audience's recognition. It is a privilege to have the enthusiastic attendance and support of audiences. We will do our best to present you with a sincere presentation of *Tracing Origins*. Our heartfelt thanks and wishes for good health go out to all of you.

Christopher Choo

Tracing Origins – The Life and Times of Cantonese Opera's Laosheng

In a fit of fury, a mistress is murdered

Under the moon and stars, a man pursues a rare talent

To show his loyalty, a general sacrifice himself

These scenes tell the story of the laosheng's artistry

Song Jiang Kills Yan Xijiao is startling and suspenseful; Xiao He Pursues Han Xin is full of earnest vigour; General Yang's Sacrifice is tragic in its desolation. These three opera excerpts of different plots are all showcases for the *laosheng* (elderly male role). *Tracing Origins* is an opportunity to explore and appreciate the particular artistry of this character type.

There will be live music accompaniment by Tung On Opera Orchestra.

(2hrs, with 20mins intermission.) Performed in Cantonese, with English and Chinese surtitles.

About the Excerpts

Song Jiang Kills Yan Xijiao

Song Jiang - Christopher Choo | Yan Xijiao - May Choong

This is a story set in the northern Song dynasty (1100–1125). Song Jiang is a clerk working for the magistrate, nicknamed "Timely Rain". Out of chivalry, he helps songstress Yan Xijiao with her father's funeral. In gratitude, Yan Xijiao's mother marries her to Song Jiang with the help of a matchmaker.

However, the young Yan Xijiao is unhappy being the mistress to the middle-aged Song Jiang. She grows promiscuous, and her indiscretions are almost discovered. The spoilt and self-indulgent Yan Xijiao picks a quarrel with Song Jiang, and he leaves in anger. In his haste, he leaves behind a secret letter that reveals how he and the Liangshan outlaws oppose the imperial court. Yan Xijiao finds the letter. When Song Jiang returns, she uses it as leverage to ask for an end to their marriage. Desperate to get the letter back, he agrees. However, upon obtaining the divorce document she asked for, Yan Xijiao changes her mind and threatens to expose Song Jiang's association with the outlaws. Under duress, he kills her with a knife.

Song Jiang Kills Yan Xijiao is based on a plot point in Water Margin. This excerpt is a signature showcase for a *laosheng* and a feisty *huadan* in Cantonese opera. Choo takes the stage as the middle-aged Song Jiang sporting a black beard. Before he kills Yan Xijiao, his agitated emotions are expressed through his technique of wielding the artificial beard, and the results are transfixing. As the female lead, Choong portrays a subversive and fiery character and conveys her love-hate relationship with Song Jiang with refreshing intensity. This excerpt borrows Peking opera's *Siping* tune and is a great test of the performers' skills.



Xiao He Pursues Han Xin

Xiao He – Christopher Choo | Han Xin – Philip Chan

Towards the end of the Qin dynasty (207–202 B.C.), the Chu and Han kingdoms are at war. Han Xin, a brilliant military strategist from the Han kingdom, seeks a place with Chu lord Xiang Yu, but the latter sees him as low-born and does not want to take him in. Angered, Han Xin departs.

Zhang Liang, strategic adviser to the Han ruler Liu Bang, knows that Han Xin is a talented general, and writes him a letter recommending him to Liu Bang. To test Liu Bang, Han Xin chooses not to submit this letter when he meets him. As a result, he is treated coldly by Liu Bang and once again leaves disappointed.

Xiao He, a senior minister, regrets Han Xin's departure. Eager to retain talent, he rides through the night to catch up with Han Xin, and is able to persuade him to stay. Xiao He gives Zhang Liang's letter of recommendation to Liu Bang. From then on, the three help Liu Bang to forge the Han dynasty.

Also known as *Xiao He Pursues Han Xin by Moonlight*, this work is a showcase for Cantonese opera's *laosheng* and *wenwusheng*, with many wonderful moments of singing. Choo plays Xiao He and Chan plays Han Xin. Together, they share a scene where they spur on their horses to swifter speeds. Choo has a key moment where he falls off his horse, showcasing his striking "shoe-flinging" technique.



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General Yang's Sacrifice

Yang Jiye – Christopher Choo

During the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, renowned general Yang Jiye was favoured by Liu Jun, the ruler of the Northern Han kingdom (951–979 A.D.). However, Liu Jun is taken in by slanderous gossip, and comes to believe that Yang Jiye is disloyal. As a result, he ceases to rely on Yang Jiye, who is forced to leave his home and country. Yang Jiye seeks refuge with Song emperor Zhao Kuangyin, who appreciates his talent. The wives and children of the Yang clan are all brave warriors, and they have come to be known as the Yang family generals.

When conflict erupts between the Song and Liao kingdoms, the Song court sends Yang Jiye to head the military campaign. After the Yang clan suffers grave losses from a great battle, he leads his troops into battle once again. However, evil ministers work against him by refusing to send military rations to the soldiers. His men and their horses starve in the cold, withering away. Trapped in Two Wolves Mountain, Yang Jiye dispatches troops to break through enemy lines and seek help but no reinforcements arrive. Refusing to be captured by the Liao army, he hits his head against a monument dedicated to Han dynasty general Li Ling (circa 100 B.C.) and ends his own life.

Known as one of the "Four Kings of Cantonese Opera", Leng Chi Pak was famous for his performance in *General Yang's Sacrifice*. This excerpt follows the southern style of Cantonese opera, including signature techniques such as "*tiao da jia*"¹, "*shui bo lang*"², and using the tune of "*yan er luo*"³ to set a tragic and desolate mood. Choo uses a full-throated and melodious singing style modelled after his master. He sings of Yang Jiye's despair as he is trapped in Two Wolves Mountain; surrounded by enemies, he ultimately chooses to kill himself by smashing his head against a monument.

¹*tiao da jia*: sets of stylised movements in the southern style of Cantonese opera that are used to depict different scenarios.

²*shui bo lang*: a series of footwork that conveys intense emotions.

³yan er luo: a specific tune usually accompanied by the suona as the lead musical instrument.

About the Laosheng in Cantonese opera

The *laosheng* role did not exist in early documentation of Cantonese opera. During the Yongzheng reign (around 1730), famous Peking opera performer Zhang Qian listed the following as the 10 types of roles in Cantonese opera: mo - the elderly male character; *jing* – the male character denoted by a colourful painted face; *sheng* – the male lead; *dan* – the virtuous female lead; *chou* – the clown role that can be played by either a male or female; *wai* – the villain, also denoted by a fully painted face; *xiao* – the younger male character who is either scholarly or martial; *tie* – the supporting female character; *fu* – the older female character; and *za* – the minor ensemble role.

The *laosheng*, also known as a bearded role, is derived from Hubei's Han opera. The earliest Cantonese opera performers who took on *laosheng* roles were referred to as *wusheng*. With time, the 10 types of roles in Cantonese opera evolved. During the Tongzhi reign of the Qing dynasty, the *wusheng* became the top-ranked role type in Cantonese opera. This remained the case towards the end of the Qing dynasty and into the early Republican era. Even after the 1930s, when opera troupes gradually started the six-pillar system^{*}, the *wusheng*'s status remained important and respected. In its continuous evolvement, Cantonese opera came to have roles that were not present in other types of Chinese opera which include the *wenwusheng*, a male character adept in both literary scenes and martial skills.

The *laosheng* characters are usually righteous and have either experienced many tribulations or are generals who have waged and survived many battles. Whether the *laosheng* actor is playing a scholarly or martial character, he needs to learn how to express himself through manipulations of his artificial beard. Mastering this beard means being able to raise it, flick it, bite it, push it, turn it and fling it. Combined with the delivery of his lines, his singing and his expressions—this can communicate a character's personality, and even his life experiences and social status.

*The six-pillar system comprises the *wusheng*, the *wenwusheng* (also known as xiaowu), the *xiaosheng* (second male lead), the *zhengyin huadan* (female lead), the *erbang huadan* (second female lead), and the *chousheng* (comic character).

A *laosheng*'s artificial beard can be black, white or grey, and each colour indicating a different age. White beards are worn by an esteemed elder or an aged man of low social status, who sings in a sorrowful but vigorous style and was originally placed in the category of mo – the elderly male character. A grey beard is worn by a male character of middle to late age, while a black beard is worn by a middle-aged male character, usually a scholarly type.



The posture and movement of a *laosheng* needs to reinforce this positive character's maturity and steadfast nature. When singing, *laosheng* actors use their true voices, typically in the baritone or bass range. Their enunciation is clear and precise, and their emotions are rich and vividly expressed. These elements are all necessary for the perfect interpretation of such characters.

Thus, most opera performers must undergo long periods of training, accumulate enough stage experience, and refine their command of performance before they can take on *laosheng* roles and bring such characters to a full and vivid life.

On the opera stage, the way various roles complement one another lays the foundation for a great production. The young male and female leads alone cannot make an opera come alive. *Laosheng* characters may not have as much time on stage as compared to other roles, but they often propel the plot forward. There are also many iconic *laosheng* roles and lauded performances by *laosheng* actors.

These include Ma Si-tsang's transfixing performances in *Searching the Academy* (playing Xie Bao), *Guan Hanqing* and *Qu Yuan* (playing the title roles); Yau Sing-po, whose performance of the title role in *The Poet Li Bai*, staged as part of the Hong Kong Arts Festival, was described as gorgeous and desolate. Legendary master Leng Chi Pak has been highly acclaimed for his performances in *Sacrifice at the Monument* (playing Yang Jiye), and *The Patriotic Princess* (playing the Chongzhen Emperor and Qing emperor). Master Leng is most notably known for his portrayal of Gong Sun Yan in *Prime Minister of Six States.* The role included a demonstration of his prowess in the carriage-sitting technique, which was unrivalled for 70 years.

Leng Chi Pak – a lifelong devotion to Cantonese opera (1904–6 Feb 1992)



One of the "Four Kings of Cantonese Opera", opera master Leng Chi Pak (birth name Lai Song Pak) hails from a family of opera artists. His second and third older brothers were Cantonese opera actors as well. Born fourth among his siblings, he was affectionately known as the Fourth Uncle in the operatic circle. Leng began his opera training with famed male martial actor, Leng Dai Fong and thereafter with another famed male martial actor Chu Chi Pak alongside fellow student actor Sit Kok Sin. In honour of his two masters. Leng combined their names to form his own stage name. Leng continued to draw inspiration from various famous actors to perfect his interpretation of the laosheng character and even exchanged acting notes with Peking opera masters Ma Lian Liang and Zhou Xin Fang.

After stepping into the limelight at age 16, Leng rose to prominence and became a household name pre-World War II. Blessed with a natural bass voice, he imbued raspiness and power to his voice to create a unique singing voice. Leng, familiar with the *nanyin* and *gu qiang* operatic styles, was able to perform elderly female roles as well. His legendary technique of 'riding a chariot' in *Prime Minister of Six States* was an insurmountable achievement in the operatic circle. Leng's best known characters and performances in opera include Gong Sun Yan in *Prime Minister of Six States*, Grand Preceptor Wen in *Grand Duke Jiang Ziya*, Chongzhen Emperor in *The Patriotic Princess* and Matron Jia and Jia Zheng in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. In film, he is best known as Xue Bao in *Sanniang Teaches Her Son*, as Kou Zhun in *The Generals of the Yang Family*, as Wu Zi Xu in *Xi Shi*, as Jin Wu Zhu in *Double Spear Warrior Lu Wen Long*.

Leng has also shared the stage with Sit Kok Sin, Ma Si Tsang, Pak Kui Wing, Chin Lei Kui, Sun Ma Sze Tsang, Lam Kar Sing, Yam Kim Fai, Bak Sheut Sin, Hung Sin Nui, Loong Kim Sang, Mui Suet Sze and others.

Leng witnessed three generations of prosperity in the Cantonese Opera scene over his 70-year career, from his stage debut to his long-standing partnership with the Yam Bak Sin Fung Ming Opera Troupe and his mentoring collaboration with the Chor Fung Ming Opera Troupe in the '70s and '80s. Evidently, Leng left an indelible mark in the annals of the art form.

On the morning of the third day of the Lunar New Year in 1992, after finishing some sticky rice cake, Leng put on some music and rested in bed. He never woke up. He was 88 years old. The King of Cantonese Opera peacefully departed his life on stage, one of which he devoted all his passion and energy to.

Christopher Choo

Christopher Choo is the only disciple of the legendary master Leng Chi Pak, who adorned Choo with his stage name, Zhen Bang. During his career, Choo also studied under the late Ren Da Xun, a famous master of the Northern operatic style in Hong Kong, and the well-known Cantonese opera actor and Singapore Cultural Medallion recipient, Joanna Wong Quee Heng.

Since starting his operatic pursuit in 1976, Choo has been on a mission to revive Cantonese opera and other operatic art forms in Singapore. It is his dream that the plethora of operatic art forms be passed on to future generations.

Choo specialises in the *laosheng* (elderly male) role, and also takes on the clown, painted faces, elderly female role, scholarly and warrior male roles. He is an all-rounded Chinese opera performer and has graced many stages in China, United Kingdom, United States, Japan and Egypt on various occasions. As a pioneer graduate of LASALLE College of the Arts in Directing, Choo has accumulated close to 50 years of experience in the performing arts scene. He is also one of the few opera artists who is capable of both acting and directing. Choo is a familiar face at various Chinese opera arts festivals and seminars in Singapore. Besides the operatic arts, Choo is also involved with directing and acting in the local Chinese and English theatre scene.

Choo is an incumbent member of the arts assessment panel with the Singapore National Arts Council. He was also on the adjudicators' panel for many arts awards. In 2012, he received a special contributions award conferred by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts and in 2014, he was recognised as a "Friend of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth".

Choo's recent works include: Prime Minister of Six States, The Patriotic Princess, The Purple Hairpin, The Reincarnation of the Red Plum, The Peony Pavilion, The Red Pear Blossom, Pun Long Orders, Fragrant Concubine, White Dragon Pass, Liu Jinding Crashes Four Gates, The Sounds of Battle, Lin Chong, Generals of the Yang Family, Choosing a Son-in-law, Guan Yu and Diao Chan, Qin Shi Huang, Goddess of the Luo River, Lady Magistrate Xie Yao Huan, The Execution of Chen Shimei, Three Generals Trapped at the Mount Yao, Xiao He Pursues Han Xin, General Yang Destroys the Tombstone, Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers and Liu Bei Crosses the River to Meet his Bride, Grabbing the Flute, Rage over a Courtesan.

Choo has also worked with many renowned local and overseas Cantonese opera directors and actors.



Philip Chan Performer

Chan is well-known amongst the aficionados of Cantonese opera in Singapore. He studied under famous Cantonese opera actress Chee Kin Foon and received guidance from other masters of Chinese operas, including He Jia Yao and Bing Yong (Cantonese opera), Lin Lai Xi and Rong Da Jun (Peking opera), as well as Chen Jia Bao (Hokkien *gaojiaxi* opera). Throughout his three decades in the industry, Chan honed his skills through tireless studies and countless hours of practice.

Blessed with handsome features and a powerful voice, Chan has been able to demonstrate versatility in portraying roles ranging from scholars to chivalrous warriors with ease. A regular at the annual Yang Cheng International Cantonese Opera Festival held in Guangzhou, Chan showcases the vitality of Singapore's Cantonese opera scene to the world. Chan is the only *wenwusheng* representative from Singapore at the festival every year.

At a solo performance in 2015, Chan took on the role of Xiao Qing, a traditional gingvi (young female role) instead of his usual male role in The Flooding of Jinshan Temple from The Legend of the White Snake. He would frequently employ cinematic techniques in his opera performances, such as making Jia Bao Yu in Dream of the Red Chamber "time-travel" to different stages of his life to reunite with his true love, Lin Dai Yu. This revolutionary treatment of the famous love story was well received bv Cantonese opera audiences.

May Choong Performer

Choong began performing in Cantonese operas in 1999 and studied under various famous actors, including the late Foo Yew Fai, Tham Foong Meng, Lou Mee Wah and Huang Ping. In recent years, Choong has been under the tutelage of Joanna Wong and Ling Dongming, as well as Christopher Choo.

Choong is passionate about Cantonese opera and invests time and effort into improving her performing skills. In 2022, she was also awarded the Singapore Chinese Opera Orchid Award for Outstanding Artist, organised by the Singapore Chinese Opera Institute. She hopes to undertake the mission to promote the traditional art form to the younger generation in future

Choong's performances include *Wang Xi Feng, Emperor Shun Zhi, Love's Trials, Tears Shed at Lake Mo Chou, The Dainty Gallant, The Peony Pavilion, White Dragon Pass, Tearful Farewell, Princess Shuang Yang, Guan Yu Spares Diao Chan, Ballad of the Lute, Illusive Dreams, Grabbing the Flute and others.*



Creative & Production team

Artistic Director & Director Christopher Choo

Executive Producer Yow Wei Meng

Production & Stage Manager Yow Wei Chui

Performers Christopher Choo, Philip Chan & May Choong

Orchestra Tung On Opera Orchestra

Orchestra Leader Chen Xiaorui

Musicians Chen Haizhou, Xu Hongwei, Nicolas Ng, Quek Mong Chai, Lee Khiok Hua, Zhou Kairui, Ho Shui Weng & Ho Poh Lian

Lighting Designer Clement Cheong

Multimedia Designer Ric Low

Set Designers Christopher Choo, Yow Wei Meng and Angie Ng

Props / Costumes Focus Stage Productions, Choy Brothers Opera Troupe & Yue Meng Fong

Make-up Artiste Ng KarYing

Dressers Yue Meng Fong & Jaron Leong

Surtitles Production & Translation Yow Wei Meng

Sound / Stage Crew Foo Kok Wah & Ng Wee Kiat

Backstage Assistant Janet Wong & Khin Khin Maw

Publicity Photographer Ken Cheong

演出暨创作团队

艺术总监暨导演 朱振邦

执行监制 邱慧明

制作经理暨舞台监督 邱慧珠

<mark>演员</mark> 朱振邦、陈福鸿、钟丽容

音乐伴奏 东安戏曲大乐队

音乐领导 陈小锐

乐师 陈海州、徐洪伟、黄庚丞、郭茂才、 李克华、周凯瑞、何树荣、何宝莲

灯光设计 张庆福

多媒体设计师 刘晋旭

布景设计 朱振邦、邱慧明、黄子芹

<mark>道具、服装</mark> 黄海、徐家班戏曲艺术团、 饶鸣凤

化妆师 吴嘉燕

服装师 饶鸣凤、梁锦辉

字幕制作和翻译 邱慧明

舞台队 符国华、黄伟杰

后台助理 黄雯英、金金茉莉

宣传摄影师 张学权





《溯源》的诞生始于2020年10月滨海艺术中心文化社区 节目策划主管余登凤小姐与我的一通电话。得悉来意欲 邀请我为其打造一项粤剧老生专场,荣幸之余更觉任重 道远。经过多番商讨最终把专场定名为《溯源》粤剧 老生 – 戏剧人生。

专场回顾了粤剧老生行当的变迁、剧本元素的廻异以及 先师靓次伯与我的一段师徒缘。在艺术创作方面以小剧 场形式呈献,简约为基调运用一桌二椅及书画投影为布 景。由专业灯光设计师张庆福先生所设计的现代剧场灯 光效应,多媒体设计师刘晋旭先生的间场视频则为演出 注入了新元素。三场戏码虽然是传统剧目却加入了新颖 的导演手法。例如在《坐楼杀惜》里语带双关地暗喻时 事;《月下追贤》中荘谐并重以及《碰碑殉节》中利用 杨继业手上的金刀烘托出杨家众子壮烈牺牲的场景,又 如碰碑时杨继业把一缕白髯弹上空中代表其忠魂烈魄冲 出躯壳等,务求整体演出更富层次感。

从2020年10月的初探到2021年10月的公演我们整整用了1年的时间去策划。期间因 疫情影响,一波三折。本来打算从2021年9月27日开始密集排练,一直到10月下旬 的演出。无奈疫情再度严峻,政府公布从9月27日到10月24日收紧防疫措施,不偏 不倚地影响我们的排练及演出。经过与滨海艺术中心的紧急会议后,双方一致认为 应以团队和观众的安全为重,最后在已售票的情况下毅然宣布取消演出。所幸者得 到余登凤主管的坚定支持,在节目策划员李碧华小姐的努力协调下,最后敲定在 2022年4月下旬公演,并作为先师一代武生王靓次伯辞世30周年纪念的献礼。无 奈事与愿违,在彩排时我意外受伤导致脚部骨折,演出只得搁浅。两年后的今天当 我能重上舞台时,难得滨海艺术中心不离不弃,《溯源》终于能与各位观众见面。

《溯源》粤剧老生 – 戏剧人生最终能面世首先感谢滨海艺术中心的鼎立支持。再 者感激我国著名粤剧文武生陈福鸿先生以及新一代花旦钟丽容小姐的参与令节目增 色良多。此外由音乐名家陈小锐先生领导东安戏曲大乐队的落力拍和,执行监制 (义务)邱慧明女士和制作经理暨舞台监督邱慧珠小姐的出谋献策;灯光师张庆福 先生与多媒体设计师刘晋旭先生的热情参与以及台前幕后工作人员的全情投入,谨 在此向各位致上万二分的谢意!

一场演出的圆满最重要的是得到观众的认同。难得各位嘉宾观众热心支持出 席观赏,我们自当竭尽所能为大家呈献一场充满诚意的《溯源》 粤剧老生 – 戏剧人生。衷心感谢并祝安康。

朱振邦

《溯源》

粤剧老生-戏剧人生

一场悲凉无奈的杀妾风暴

一段披星戴月的惜才追逐

一表尽忠家国的高风亮节

一台记述老生的艺术人生

《坐楼杀惜》步步惊心、《月下追贤》拳拳盛意、《碰碑殉节》苍凉悲壮, 这三出折子戏,尽管剧情类别各异,却是聚焦老生艺术,《溯源》将一次过 让大家领略个中的美学内涵。

演出将由东安戏曲大乐队伴奏。

(2小时,包括20分钟中场休息) 以粤语演出,附中英文字幕。

剧目介绍

坐楼杀惜

宋江 - 朱振邦 | 阎惜娇 - 钟丽容

北宋徽宗(1100–1125年)时期。衙门书吏宋江,人称"及时雨",因仗义周济歌女 阎惜娇葬其父,阎母感恩,在媒婆撮合下将女许给宋江纳为妾。

正值花样年华的阎惜娇不满嫁给年已半百的宋江,另觅新欢还差点事机败露,娇惯 放纵的她借故与宋江起争吵,宋江一怒离去,不料在匆忙间竟落下了与梁山义士同 反朝廷的密函。阎惜娇拾得密函,并以它要挟返回寻找密函的宋江写下休书一封。 为换回密函,宋江惟有依从;岂料,阎惜娇取得休书后反悔,还恫言要向衙门告发 宋江和梁山"勾结"之事,宋江被迫手起刀落,阎惜娇一命呜呼。

《坐楼杀惜》取材自《水浒传》,是粤剧武生及泼辣旦的应工戏。朱振邦以黑须形象出场,代表中年宋江,杀妾前表现情绪波动的一段须功表演,甚是传神。擅演花 旦青衣的钟丽容则以颠覆性的泼辣形象,把阎惜娇对宋江的爱与恨细致诠释, 令人耳目一新。这出折子戏既有借用京剧的"四平调"演绎,又有粤剧《杀奸妻》的 排场,很考演员演技。

月下追贤

萧何 - 朱振邦 | 韩信 - 陈福鸿

秦朝末年(公元前207–202年),楚汉相争。西汉军事奇才韩信,投奔楚霸王 项羽,但项羽鄙视他出身低微,未重用他,韩信愤然离去。

谋臣张良深知韩信是一将才,为他写下荐书推举给汉王刘邦。为试探刘邦,韩信特 意在觐见汉王时不呈上荐书,果然,受到刘邦冷待,再度失望而返。

丞相萧何为韩信的离去深感惋惜,求才若渴的他,于是披星戴月,策马加鞭追上韩 信,对他晓以大义,百般挽留,最终说服韩信,并取得张良写的荐书呈给刘邦,自 此,三人辅佐刘邦建立汉朝。

《月下追贤》就是《萧何月下追韩信》,是粤剧老生与文武生的应工戏, 还有大段十分悦耳的唱段。饰演萧何的朱振邦除了与饰演韩信的陈福鸿分别有一段 策马飞奔的"马荡子"表演外,他还有一段狼狈坠马的"甩鞋"功架表演,可说是本折 子戏的另一看点。

碰碑殉节

杨继业 - 朱振邦

五代十国之北汉(951–979年)时期,威震八方名将杨继业原是北汉王刘钧的爱 将,无奈刘钧听信谗言,误以为杨继业不忠,不予重用。杨继业被迫离开家国,归 降宋太祖赵匡胤,且深得太祖赏识。杨家妻女儿子个个骁勇善战,被尊为杨家将。

宋辽失和,大宋派杨继业领军出征,杨家将继金沙滩大战伤亡惨重后,杨继业再一次统军出战,不幸为朝中奸臣所害,特意扣下军粮不发,致使杨家将人马冻饿,粮 尽兵枯。杨继业被困两狼山中,尽管遣将突围求援,但迟迟不见救兵,为了不愿为 辽军所虏,宁在纪念西汉名将李陵的碑前碰碑殉节。

《碰碑殉节》是武生王靓次伯的名剧。此剧以粤剧南派程式如"跳大架"¹、 "水波浪"²以及采用曲牌"雁儿落"³来烘托碰碑的悲壮意境。既是恩师的唯一入室弟 子,朱振邦用了仿如恩师浑厚悠扬的唱腔,唱出杨继业四面楚歌陷两狼山的绝望 心境,最终惟有碰碑殉节。

¹跳大架:"大架"是粤剧南派艺术的一组动作,用在不同场合可以代表不同情景。 ²水波浪:演员以半弧形的脚步动作走且停且走来表现情绪的起伏。 ³雁儿落:是一曲牌,音乐伴奏通常用以唢呐吹奏为主。



粤剧老生行当

老生这行当,在早期粤剧文献中并不存在。雍正年间(1730年左右),北京名伶张 骞最早确立的粤剧十大行当制中就清楚列明:末(总生、公脚)、净(花面)、 生(正生、武生)、旦(端庄女性如青衣)、丑(男丑、女丑)、外(大花面)、 小(小生、小武)、贴(青年女性如活泼花旦)、夫(老旦)、杂(龙套演员)。

老生(也称须生)是从湖北汉剧传入,早期演出老生的粤剧行当称为"武生"。 随后,因时代的变迁,粤剧十大行当也有所发展,在清同治年间,"武生"跃居十大 行当之首,直到清末民初时,按照戏班论位的惯例,"武生"依旧挂头牌,甚而到30 年代后,戏班剧团逐渐实行"六柱制"*时,"武生"在演出中的地位仍然重要而 尊贵。在不断变革的进程中,粤剧还孕育出中国其他戏曲剧种所没有的行当:兼擅 文戏、武功的"文武生"。(*六柱制排序为,武生、正印文武生(小武)、二帮文 武生(小生)、正印花旦、二帮花旦、丑角)。

说及老生,多是戏里的正面人物,或许是经历沧桑变化的人物,还是征战沙场的大 将。无论是文是武,老生演员都必须熟用"髯口功",也就是要能驾驭胡子:是挑是 弹,是咬是推,又或是转还是甩,辅以说白唱腔和神情的变化,大致可分辨出人物 角色的性格,甚至人生阅历,社会地位。至于"髯"(颊须),大致可从其黑、白、 苍(即灰)三色区分角色的年龄;白色代表年迈老人,多为德高望重者或是身份卑 微的老人,唱腔悲凉苍劲,原属"末"行;灰色代表中老年男性;而黑色则代表中年 男性,重唱与做,多扮演文人。



此外,老生的身段表演也得符合正面人物的沉着稳重。在唱腔方面,老生演员多运 用真嗓音,且音色在沉稳的中低域,清晰准确的吐字,饱满到位的情绪,都是完美 诠释人物角色的必要。因此,多数的戏曲演员都必须经过长期的历练,同时积累足 够的舞台经验,加上舞台艺术的加工,才能演绎老生行当,也才能使老生角色更显 生动而丰富。

在戏曲舞台上,行当间的配搭相宜很重要,光靠花旦青衣和小生,总是才子佳人, 不能撑起整台戏,老生或是老旦或是丑角戏份虽然如今通常不比其他生旦角多,但 他们的存在就像"小人物显大智慧"般,往往都具有推动剧情发展的作用。事实上, 老生老旦丑角当主角的经典戏本也不是没有,老旦佘太君(《杨门女将》)、丑角 余侠魂(《苦凤莺怜》)都是主角,而老生当主角的甚至还更多,多位著名老生演 员的演绎就十分有口碑,叫人印象深刻。

像马师曾在《搜书院》(饰演谢宝)、《关汉卿》(关汉卿)、《屈原》(屈原) 等剧的表演,被形容为"非常传神";尤声普在香港艺术节的《李太白》中诠释的诗 仙李白,获得"尽显诗仙华丽和苍凉的身影"的赞誉;而武生王靓次伯在《杨继业闯 碑》中饰演的杨继业、《帝女花》中的崇祯皇帝和清帝"演技精湛",尤其在《六国 大封相》中饰演公孙衍,表演坐车功架,独步梨园七十年"几成绝响"。



靓次伯——与粤剧舞台一生厮守



(1904年-1992年2月6日)

武生王靓次伯,原名黎松柏。在家中排行 第四,二哥和三哥也是粤剧演员,行内人尊称 他为"四叔"。靓次伯师从著名武生靓大方,后 与另一粤剧名伶薛觉先一同拜师于名小武生朱 次伯门下,艺名"靓次伯"就是两位师父名字的 合称。从艺路上,他不断汲取名家艺术养分, 尤其在须生的表演上,还特别同京剧名角马连 良和周信芳相互交流,彼此借鉴。

靓次伯16岁起踏足舞台,在战前已是戏台 名角。他先天嗓音低沉,沙哑的声线,沉浑苍 凉,自成一格。靓次伯还擅长南音和古腔,反 串老旦,在《六国大封相》中的"坐车"功架, 更是独步梨园,无人能及。靓次伯的代表 作有,戏曲:《六国大封相》(公孙衍)、 《龙虎渡姜公》(闻太师)、《帝女花》 (崇祯皇帝)、《红楼梦》(贾太君/贾政) 等;电影:《三娘教子》(薛保)、《无敌杨 家将》(寇准)、《西施》(伍子胥)、 《双枪陆文龙》(金兀术)等;与他结过戏缘 的演员则有薛觉先、马师曾、白驹荣、 千里驹、新马师曾、林家声、任剑辉、 白雪仙、红线女、龙剑笙、梅雪诗等。

从艺70余年,他以武生行当见证了三代粤剧的 繁荣,从自己入行的年代到与任白仙凤鸣的合 作无间,再到七八十年代本着提携后辈的心意 与雏凤鸣的同台演出,尽可窥见他耕耘粤剧艺 术的足迹与成就。

1992年大年初三的早上, 靓次伯吃过年糕, 听着 心 爱 的 音 乐 , 斜 靠 着 床 头 无 疾 而终, 享年88。一代武生王, 从此离开了他倾 注无比热情和努力的舞台。

朱振邦 导演、演员

朱振邦是已故武生王靓次伯唯一的入室弟子,艺名"振邦"也是师父为他所取。在学艺的路上,他还曾先后师从香港著名北派大师任大勲(已故), 以及粤剧名伶、新加坡文化奖得主胡桂馨。

自1976年从艺至今,朱振邦以振兴新加坡粤剧艺术为使命,并同样关注其他戏曲类 别,期许百花齐放的戏曲天地可以薪火传递。

专攻老生兼演丑、净(花脸)、老旦、文武生的朱振邦,可说是行当颇为全面的戏 曲演员,多次出访中英美日和埃及等地演出。他还持有拉萨尔艺术学院的专业演艺 导演文凭,是少数能导能演的戏曲工作者;另外,在新加坡历届戏曲艺术节及戏曲 研讨会中也常见着他的身影。戏曲之外,他也参与我国中英语剧场导和演的工作。

朱振邦是新加坡国家艺术理事会艺术评估委员会现任委员,曾任多届文化奖评委。 2012年和2014年则曾先后获新闻通讯及艺术部颁授特别贡献奖和文化、社区及青 年部之友奖。

这些年来,他参与演出的剧目有:《六国大封相》《帝女花》《紫钗记》 《再世红梅记》《牡丹亭惊梦》《蝶影红梨记》《蟠龙令》 《盖世双雄霸楚城》《香妃》《白龙关》《刘金定斩四门》 《雷鸣金鼓战笳声》《林冲》《杨家将》《选女婿》《关公月下释貂蝉》 《秦始皇》《洛神》《谢瑶环》《包公怒铡陈世美》《三帅困崤山》 《萧何月下追韩信》《杨令公闯碑》《百花亭赠剑》《刘备过江招亲》 《抢笛》《冲冠 - 怒为红颜》等。

> 同他合作过的众多海内外著名粤剧导 演和演员有(排名不分先后): 梁建忠(已故)、陈小汉(已故)、 陈少梅、林锦屏、倪惠英、郑咏梅、 梁淑卿、丁凡、彭炽权、胡桂馨、 卢眉桦、朱敬芬、徐应就、 司徒海嫦、欧阳炳文、陈福鸿、 邵振寰、叶柏麟、朱秀英(已故)、 任冰儿、尹飞燕、南凤、李凤、 邓美玲、新剑郎、陈剑锋、龙贯天、 刘惠鸣、艺青云、梁炜康、黎耀威、 裴俊轩等。

Offstage

A Total Theatre – Looking inside Chinese opera Christopher Choo shares his mastery of the *laosheng* role



陈福鸿 演员

陈福鸿,我国粤剧迷熟悉的一个名字,他师从本地粤剧名伶朱敬芬,也得广州何 家耀、福建高甲戏陈家宝、京剧林来喜和荣大钧,以及深圳市粤剧团的邴勇的提 点;三十余年来,他从来就是孜孜不倦地学习,不断的追求自我提升,多少个辛 勤苦练的日与夜,换来了今日成熟的演绎。

他扮相俊朗,声线洪亮,演文戏展温文尔雅,武戏则气宇轩昂。每年在广州举行的"羊城国际粤剧节",是他给国外粤剧名家和观众展现新加坡粤剧 表演水平的一个舞台。陈福鸿是唯一参与每届粤剧 节的新加坡文武生。

他曾经在2015年的一场个人专场演出中,尝试在 《水淹金山寺》折子戏中扮演向来由青衣演绎的小 青一角,此外,他也采用电影常用的技术,让《红 楼梦》里的贾宝玉跨越时空,遇见他人生不同阶段 的林黛玉;他为宝黛情缘做如此创新独特的这番演 绎,深得粤剧前辈和戏迷的赞赏。



钟丽容 _{演员}

钟丽容自1999年开始从艺,曾师从傅耀辉(已故)、谭凤鸣、卢眉桦和黄平等 多位名伶。近年来也得到胡桂馨和凌东明的指导,还获朱振邦的多方提点。

钟丽容醉心粤剧表演,立志努力不懈进修学习,希望以传承戏曲艺 术为使命。她于2022年获颁由新加坡戏曲学院主办的新加坡胡姬花优 秀演员奖。

她曾参演过的剧目有: 长剧《王熙凤大闹宁国府》 (饰演秋桐)、《顺治皇帝》(董鄂妃)和《花染状元红》 (茹明月)和《鸳鸯泪洒莫愁湖》(银凤)等; 折子戏 《俏潘安之店遇》《牡丹亭之游园惊梦/幽媾》《白龙关上/ 下卷》《楼台泣别》《双阳公主之追夫》《春花笑六郎之巧 婢戏主/佳偶天成》《薛丁山之三擒三纵/三跪九叩寒江关》 《摘缨会》《斩经堂》》《搜书院之拾筝结缘》 《天仙配之重逢》《关公月下释貂蝉》《香梦留痕》 《抢笛》等; 戏曲唱段《去国归降》《一枝红艳露凝香》 《琵琶行》和《半塘访小宛》等。

THANK YOU FOR WATCHING

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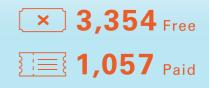
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Esplanade gives our heartfelt thanks

to our Esplanade partner, arts benefactor, donors and sponsors for believing in our vision to be a performing arts centre for everyone. They made all these possible![^]



activities took place at Esplanade.



3,260,515

People attended our activities at the centre.



Free **1,487,680** Paid **287,931**

*Figures for Esplanade's activities from Apr 2022 to Mar 2023.



We believe that everyone should be able to experience the joy of the arts, including children, youth, seniors, migrant workers and individuals with special needs. Our community engagement activities bring the arts to those in need.



Your contribution* will make a difference.

On behalf of the communities we serve, thank you! Find out how you too can make a difference through the arts at Esplanade.

Donate at www.esplanade.com/donate To find out more, email us at donations@esplanade.com or speak with us at 6828 8321.

Esplanade is a charity and an Institution of a Public Character. Your donation to us is matched dollar-for-dollar by the Cultural Matching Fund. Please note that the prevailing tax exemption scheme for donors and sponsors of Arts-Related Businesses will depend on the qualifying criteria imposed by IRAS.

With Gratitude

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is a charity, a not-for-profit organisation and Singapore's national performing arts centre. We seek to entertain, engage, educate and inspire through the arts.

We thank everyone who has helped us bring joy, inspiration and positive impact to Singaporeans from all walks of life by supporting the arts and Esplanade.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes especially to our Donors and Sponsors, for their steadfast belief in our mission and for their generous support.

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The above are donors and sponsors who contributed \$1000 and above from April 2022-March 2023.

Join us in sharing the joy of the arts and help us reach more communities in need.

We believe that an experience with the arts is special and that with your generous support, more people will get a chance to enjoy the arts. Join us in sharing the joy of the arts and help us reach more communities in need.



Esplanade also receives grants from the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, as well as support for our Community Programmes from the Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

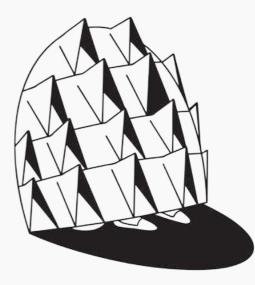


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I could just scroll through IG or TikTok but I thought why should I when I can do the same on Offstage? It makes me feel like I know more things. Great arts content, anytime, anywhere. Highly recommend.

"

Totally Anonymous Person (who is not related to www.esplanade.com/offstage)



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