

PRESS RELEASE

Opera Hong Kong proudly presents
Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci
Two True-to-Life Masterpieces Semi-Staged Opera



(15 Jul 2019, Hong Kong) This summer, Opera Hong Kong is bringing Hong Kong audiences a brand new semi-staged production of the two opera masterpieces, ***Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci***, with the support of Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Hong Kong Arts Development Council. These two very popular operas will be staged on August 24-25, 2019, at the Concert Hall of Hong Kong City Hall. Full of jealous passion and murderous intrigue, this double-bill of Italian opera is most riveting, dramatic and true-to-life.

Cavalleria Rusticana – **Marriage Consists of Betrayal, Curses and Revenge.** Pietro Mascagni's ***Cavalleria Rusticana***, literally "Rustic Chivalry", is set on an Easter morning in Sicily. Santuzza is anxiously looking for her lover Turridu, who she thinks has cheated on her and returned to his former fiancée, Lola who married the wine merchant Alfio when Turiddu was called to war. Santuzza tries in vain to win him back. Now an outcast, and mad with jealousy, she tells Alfio, the cuckolded husband, about Lola. Alfio challenges Turiddu to a fight. Before leaving for fatal duel, Turiddu bids his mother farewell.

Pagliacci – **A Play within a Play Fatally Tears a Travelling Drama Troupe Apart.** ***Pagliacci*** ("Clowns") is a verismo opera composed by Ruggero Leoncavallo who was inspired by ***Cavalleria Rusticana***. The two-act Opera which had its first performance in 1892, is based on a real murder case of the late-19th century, set in a small Italian town. Canio heads a travelling acting troupe. Canio's wife Nedda is secretly having an affair with Silvo, a young man in the town where they are having performances. Fearing Canio's anger, Nedda attempts to break off the relationship but Silvio persuades her to run off with him after the performance. Tonio, one of the troupe's actors, also desires Nedda, but she pushes him away. In revenge, Tonio tells Canio of Nedda's affair. During the performance, Canio loses character and confronts Nedda, pulling a knife: art and life become one.

Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci **Becoming a Double Bill.** ***Cavalleria Rusticana*** and ***Pagliacci*** are said to be undeniable masterpieces of operatic verismo (Italian for "realism"). The two operas both emphasise the lives of common people with themes of unbridled lust and murderous jealousy in order to be "true". ***Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci*** are performed all over the world since they were first presented in 1893. The two operas won the Olivier Award for Best New Opera Production when they were presented in London in 2015. The performance was summarized by the *Financial Times* as "a gripping evening all round".

An Impressive Production Team and Cast. **Enrico Castiglione**, Director of this production, this international acclaimed talent is also the Founder and Artistic Director of Italian festivals such as Taormina Opera Festival; and many of his productions have been broadcasted by Italy's RAI TV worldwide. Under the baton of Maestro **Gianluca Martinenghi**, the Chief Conductor of Macedonian National Theatre, the Opera Hong Kong

Orchestra will perform with a mixture of talented young artists from Hong Kong and mainland China on stage for this enduring classic.

Much-sought after soprano **Louise Kwong** (Nedda in *Pagliacci* on 24 Aug) received the Award for Young Artist (Music) 2014 by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Kwong won the Second Prize, the Best Soprano prize in memory of “Dame Joan Sutherland” and the Audience prize in the 18th International Singing Competition “Ferruccio Tagliavini” 2012. She is now a member of the Young Artist Programme of the Rome Opera House.

Highly versatile Chinese soprano, **Li Yang** (Nedda in *Pagliacci* on 25 Aug) embraces repertoire and operatic roles. Li’s operatic credits include Liù in *Turandot* and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Mezzo-soprano **Dominique Chan** (Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* on 24 Aug), who is also in the coach team of the Opera Hong Kong Summer Camp 2019, received her Postgraduate Diploma in Performance (Voice) from Leeds College of Music.

A voice instructor at HKAPA’s Junior Programme, Mezzo-soprano **Bobbie Zhang** (Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* on 25 Aug) obtained a Master degree at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts under the tutelage of Nancy Yuen.

Chen Chen (Turridu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*), who obtained his two Master degrees from Royal Academy Music London and Welsh International Academy of Voice, is currently studying with the renowned tenor Warren Mok.

Liu Songhu (Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*; Silvio in *Pagliacci*) is a world-famous baritone living in Europe and the first resident soloist at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, singing in most of the NCPA productions and newly commissioned operas.

First prize winner of the Madama Butterfly International Singing Competition in Nagasaki, Japan in 2016, young Chinese tenor **Hao Xingwa** (as Canio in *Pagliacci*) was the only Asian member of the jury which adjudicated the Premier Open International Vocal Competition in New York in 2018.

Programme Details

24-25 Aug 2019 (Sat-Sun) | 7:30pm

Concert Hall, Hong Kong City Hall

\$480, \$380, \$280, \$100 - Tickets available at all URBIX outlets on 12 July 2019.

Performed in Italian with Chinese and English surtitles.

Please visit <http://operahongkong.org/cavpag/> for more details.

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Press information

Full version of press release and high-res photos can be downloaded from the link: <https://bit.ly/32oIV9I>

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About Opera Hong Kong

Established in 2003, Opera Hong Kong is a non-profit making organization committed to the mission of enhancing the appreciation of the art of opera and promoting local musical talents under the direction of Warren Mok, world-renowned Chinese tenor from Hong Kong. In addition to staging operas and concerts,

education and outreach programme are also held regularly to reach the young population. Opera Hong Kong Chorus and Opera Hong Kong Children Chorus (OHKCC) were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognized forces in the local choral scene.

In 2019, OHK has been selected by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council as one of the three recipients of the coveted “Eminent Arts Group Scheme”. The Scheme’s consecutive 5-year funding has become the company’s steady financial support for its development in future.

Riding on the success of the Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development Programme (the Programme) which commenced in 2015, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has renewed the programme with Opera Hong Kong for another 3 years. The programme, accompanied by a series of outreach activities, provides intensive vocal training to 12 local young artists.

The establishment of OHK’s new music centre in Wanchai has marked a milestone for the development of our Education and Outreach endeavour. A wide range of courses are being organized for early age children to adults in addition to the OHKCC classes. The recent national policy of developing the Greater Bay Area, with its anticipated economic and population boom, will create an even better environment for OHK to initiate more collaborations and bring opera to an even bigger audience.

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