

Press Release

**Opera Hong Kong announces to stage
 Hong Kong Premiere
 Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*
 A Story of *Romeo & Juliet*
 A Semi-staged Opera in Two Acts**



(16 Jul 2021, Hong Kong) This summer, **Opera Hong Kong** brings the audience a new production, **Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi***, directed by **Nancy Yuen** and under the baton of renowned Italian Conductor **Francesco Di Mauro**. The coming production is a Hong Kong premiere on 27 & 29 August, 2021, at Concert Hall, Hong Kong City Hall.

Adapted from Luigi Scevola's play with the same name, **Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*** is different from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This Italian version does not detail the arising affection of the lovers, but centres on the last 24 hours in the lives of Romeo and Giulietta (Juliet), and sets the story within the very real political violence between the Guelphs and Ghibellines that roiled medieval Italian cities. When the opera opens, the die is already cast: Giulietta is betrothed to Tebaldo (Tybalt), but has already fallen in love with Romeo who has earned the eternal enmity of her family by having inadvertently killed Giulietta's brother in battle. Audiences will fall into the poignant atmosphere of love with its powerful dramatic scenes and intense emotions.

This semi-staged opera in two acts is directed by **Nancy Yuen**, Head of Vocal Studies with The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and the Honorary Artistic Director of Singapore Lyric Opera. As a director, Nancy has collaborated with Opera Hong Kong in a few productions last year, including *The Marriage of Figaro* in November and *Così fan tutte x The Magic Flute: Abridged Versions of Operas by Mozart* in December. A distinguished soprano herself who has received critical acclaims in Europe, Singapore and Hong Kong, Nancy was elected Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2014 and was appointed as Professor by the HKAPA in 2018.

Francesco di Mauro, one of the most accomplished and well-known Italian conductors, will be conducting his first time in Hong Kong. He is the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana in Palermo and Music Director of the Helycon Symphony Orchestra and Guest Conductor of the Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra. He is currently Music Director Honorary Life of Odessa Opera. He has collaborated with many famous soloists including Pavel Berman, David Geringas and Dezsó Ranki. In recognition of his interpretation of the classical and contemporary music, he was awarded the prestigious Giordano Bruno Prize, to Benefactors of Art, Science, Culture and Solidarity in 2013.

Bellini was a consummate composer for soprano and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* is arguably the masterpiece of his opera works. His Romeo is performed by a mezzo-soprano, which makes the duets between the lovers exquisitely lyrical. In this new production, mezzo-soprano **Bobbie Zhang** will take up this challenge to perform Romeo. Bobbie is a former member of Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development Programme. She worked at the Shanghai Opera House and has appeared as a soloist in the China premiere of Shostakovich's *Jewish Folk Poetry* and Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*. In addition, she has sung several roles with Opera Hong Kong which include Bertha in *The Barber of Seville*, Mercédès in *Carmen*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto* and Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The celebrated soprano, **Louise Kwong** will take on the leading role as Giulietta. Louise was a soprano at the Young Artist Programme of Rome Opera House in Italy from 2018-19 and an awardee of the Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Young Persons in 2019. In recent years, Louise has worked closely with Opera Hong Kong taking key roles in many productions, including Cio-Cio-san in *Madama Butterfly*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Sister Angelica in *Suor Angelica*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and Nedda in *Pagliacci*. Her recent outstanding performance in *Carmen* as Micaëla was highly praised by the audience and art critics. She promised to give the audience another delightful performance this summer.

Other cast members include tenor **Chen Chen** (27 Aug) and tenor **Chen Yong** (Aug 29) who share the role of Tebaldo, baritone **Sammy Chien** and **Alexander Chen** will sing the role of Capellio and Lorenzo respectively.

Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* is staged with generous support from Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Leisure and Cultural Services Department and Gold Patron by Muses Foundation for Culture & Education.

Programme Details

Date and time: 27 & 29 August (Fri & Sun) 7:30 pm

Venue: Concert Hall, Hong Kong City Hall

Ticket price: \$480, \$380, \$280, \$100

Tickets available at Klook and Urbitx from 16 July 2021

Performed in Italian with Chinese and English Surtitles.

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

Production team

Producer Warren Mok, BBS, MH

Conductor Francesco di Mauro

Director Nancy Yuen

Chorus Director Alex Tam

Orchestra Executive Anders Hui

Performers

Romeo Bobbie Zhang

Giulietta Louise Kwong

Tebaldo Chen Chen (27 Aug) / Chen Yong (29 Aug)

Capellio Sammy Chien

Lorenzo Alexander Chen

Opera Hong Kong Orchestra

Opera Hong Kong Chorus

High resolution photos can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/3fTSF3g>

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Media Enquiry

This release is published by **Dynamic Network Alliances PR**. For media enquiry, please contact:

Kiwi Fong Tel: (852) 3792-0944 / 9663-6077

Email: kiwi.fong@dnahk.net

Tracy Chan Tel: (852) 3792-0943 / 9735-2215

Email: tracy.chan@dnahk.net

About Opera Hong Kong

Founded in 2003 Opera Hong Kong (OHK) is Hong Kong's first professional opera company. Over the years, the company has gone from strength to strength under the Artistic Director Warren Mok, the internationally acclaimed Hong Kong tenor. OHK has elevated opera in the Asia's world city, with many world-class productions covering all major works in the operatic canon and has collaborated with opera houses and festivals including Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Taormina Opera Festival, Theater Erfurt, Opéra de Nice, National Centre for the Performing Arts and Shanghai Opera House.

In 2019, OHK was 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 a boost to further the company's development.

OHK is committed to promoting the city's brightest, young opera singers. In 2015, OHK launched the Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development and Education Programme (the Programme), a three-year opera training programme designed to nurture ten young local artists. The success of the Programme led to its renewal by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for another three years from 2019 to 2022, providing intensive training to 12 local artists.

OHK also places a strong emphasis on its education and community activities. Opera school tours, summer schools and master classes are held regularly to reach young audiences. The music centre in Wanchai provides a wide range of courses for early age children to adult in addition to Children Chorus classes. The OHK Chorus and the OHK Children Chorus were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognised contributors on the local choral scene.

The recent development of the Greater Bay Area has created an environment for OHK to initiate more collaborations and bring the art of opera to a wider audience.

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