

Press Release

**Opera Hong Kong presents
 Jockey Club Community Sustainability Fund –
 “Bel Canto” Inclusive Virtual Opera Project**

Promotes the value of diversity and inclusion through opera



(4 August, 2021 · Hong Kong) The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted the daily activities, emotion and social life of people with disabilities in the community due to the continuous social distancing measures. In view of this, **Opera Hong Kong** has initiated the **Jockey Club Community Sustainability Fund – “Bel Canto” Inclusive Virtual Opera Project**, an online opera training programme, for people with visual impairment to promote the value of diversity and inclusion through opera singing. Funded by **The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust**, the programme recruited participants from the Ebenezer School, Ebenezer New Hope School, Hong Kong Blind Sports Federation, Hong Kong Federation of the Blind, and The Hong Kong Society for the Blind to receive in-person or online vocal training by professional opera coaches. In addition to learning the Bel Canto singing technique and knowledge about the art form, the programme hopes to empower them to face adversity through artistic achievement.

The programme received overwhelming response, with participants ranging from the age of 6 to 70. **Ms Chiu**, the eldest participant explained the reason for her enrolment, “I like the art form of opera but I do not have any knowledge on music or singing technique. I wish to learn some singing techniques through this programme. I love the song *Carmen* very much, but I have never sung it before. I am thrilled by this opportunity to learn and sing this song during the class.”

A 25-year-old participant, **Mr. Lau** shared, “I was very delighted to be complimented by my coach when we sang *Do Re Mi* and *Under the Lion Rock* for the online concert recording. I look forward to participating in the workshop about body language in opera in the future to explore the different aspects of the art form.”

Starting from mid-February of 2021, **80** participants were divided into 3 groups according to their learning

ability to receive 15 to 20 weeks (5 months) of training to learn the Bel Canto singing technique. By receiving online vocal training every week, participants were able to maintain their social lives even when they were staying at home. The programme hopes to empower them to face adversity through artistic achievement. The teaching materials were all prepared according to the accessibility handbook for the visually impaired, including audio description. On the other hand, the selection of songs is broad, from traditional opera piece like *Carmen* to Canton pop *Under the Lion Rock*, so participants can learn Bel Canto singing technique in a more relaxing way. Opera coaches will also record different versions of music demo for participants' reference and self-practicing at home.

Ms. Florence Cheng, one of the opera coaches, expressed this was a memorable teaching experience. She said, "Firstly, we need to study and figure out how to teach visually impaired students singing or opera related knowledge "verbally". This is the biggest difference compared with other music-related works as we need to consider how to translate visual materials like music sheet and shape of the mouth, etc into words or audio, and then pass the message to our participants. Considering the participants may not know braille music notation, we decided to go back to basic – let the participants learn to sing by listening."

After the training, the participants performed a series of choral works like *Over the Rainbow*, *Under the Lion Rock*, *Choeur des Gamins from Carmen* (humming version) and *Ode of Joy*, under the baton of Music Director and Conductor, **Mr. Chi-Chung Ho** and with the accompaniment of a chamber orchestra of eight musicians. The performance was filmed and produced as a short concert video. The performance video is launched online on 2 August 2021 through Opera Hong Kong's social media platforms, where participants can share their talent and achievement with the public and promote the value of diversity and inclusion at the same time.

Virtual Opera Concert Details

Date and time: from 12:00nn on 2 August, 2021 (Monday)

Online Platform: YouTube, Facebook and Instagram

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

Production team

Music Director and Conductor **Chi-Chung Ho**

Performers

"Bel Canto" Inclusive Virtual Opera Chamber Orchestra

Chorus of "Bel Canto" Inclusive virtual Opera Chorus

Funded by

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

Supporting organisations

Ebenezer School
Ebenezer New Hope School
Hong Kong Blind Sports Federation
Hong Kong Federation of the Blind
The Hong Kong Society for the Blind

Acknowledgment

The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups

High resolution photos can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/3BO4mBC>

-END-

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 with funding support from 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.

Present :



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.

Official website: www.operahongkong.org

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited

Instagram: www.instagram.com/operahongkong

YouTube: www.youtube.com/operahongkong