

Press Release

Opera Hong Kong presents  
**Puccini's *La Bohème***  
A heart-tugging Parisian love story  
turns into a contemporary poem of love with local relevance



(6 December 2022, Hong Kong) Opera Hong Kong's first full-scale production for 2023 will be Puccini's *La Bohème*, to be staged in the Grand theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2023. *La Bohème* is one of the most staged operas across the world. This production will inaugurate collaboration between Opera Hong Kong and well-known director and theatre educator Mr Tang Shu-wing, which see this opera classic set in 19th century-Paris is transposed to Hong Kong in a contemporary setting.

Originally set in the Latin Quarter in Paris, *La Bohème* tells the story of young people in the process of self-discovery between feckless youth and adult responsibility. The main storyline revolves around the tragic love between Rodolfo the poet and Mimi the seamstress. Earning only a pittance, the two meet in a humble abode. Later, owing to Rudolfo's jealousy, they part ways only to make up just before Mimi's death. Marcello the artist is the most appealing character in the opera – everyone would welcome and love such a true and helpful friend as him. The other soprano is the coquettish and sassy Musetta. Although she is always giving Marcello a hard time, she is certainly not “unworthy of forgiveness” as self-indicted in her last prayer for Mimi. Puccini makes us believe that as long as there is hope, life will change for the better. Everyone who has loved, or yearned for love, will not be untouched after watching this opera. *La Bohème* is, despite its heart-breaking denouement, a celebration of what it means to be alive.

Premiered in 1896, this opera's exquisite music and rigorous four-act structure have made it one of the most popular Italian operas of all time. Its close-knit string of arias, duets, trios and quartets, with Rodolfo's *Che gelida manina* (*What a cold little hand*) and Mimi's *Sì, mi chiamano Mimi* (*Yes, they call me Mimi*) being the most well-known examples, are familiar tunes for opera aficionados. Director Tang Shu-wing will adopt a unique approach to swap the outward features of this opera for a Hong Kong setting. Apart from its fresh appeal, the audience will also be more ready to resonate with the music and story. Opera Hong Kong has rising stars emerging talents from Hong Kong, mainland China and across the world to portray these characters from every day, making the dramatis personae even more relatable to us for convincing characterization.

### Conductor

Currently music director of the Istanbul Opera and Ballet Theatre where he achieved enormous success in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* in 2015, **Roberto Gianola** has conducted most orchestras across the continents, appearing on prestigious stages of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall of New York, Musikverein Golden Hall of Vienna, Teatro Regio di Parma, Arena di Verona and Seoul Arts Center. He was also on stage with Plácido Domingo in *Nabucco* at the National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing. Recent highlights included *La Bohème* at Kitakyushu Opera in Japan, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at Ljubljana Opera, *Don Pasquale* at Teatro Verdi Trieste and *Elisir d'amore* at Teatro Lirico di Cagliari. He is also the artistic director of Lake Como Philharmonic Orchestra and Lake Como Music Academy.

### Director

Founder and Artistic Director of Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio and former Dean of the School of Drama of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), **Tang Shu-wing** is regarded as one of the most influential theatre directors in Hong Kong. He is a highly respected artist and educator who has served the theatre industry for more than 30 years, working in drama, dance and opera. His works are more than 60. "Minimalist aesthetics and the Body" that Tang advocated has become a brand of contemporary theatre in Hong Kong. His major local and international awards include the Medal of Honour by the HKSAR, the Award for Outstanding Contribution in Arts by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Honorary Doctorate by the HKAPA, Honorary Fellows of Lingnan University and Hong Kong Arts Centre, Three times Best Director in the Hong Kong Drama Awards and l'Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.

### Rodolfo

Australian-Chinese tenor **Kang Wang** is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after young lyric tenors in the opera world. He is a former member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program of the Metropolitan Opera and a finalist in the 2017 Cardiff Singer of the World competition. Highlights of the past season include a return to the Metropolitan Opera for Edmondo in *Manon Lescaut* opposite Sonya Yoncheva and Marcelo Álvarez, Opera Australia and Welsh National Opera as Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Opera North as Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Pittsburgh Opera as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Opera Austin as the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. He was on the concert stage for Tan Dun's *Buddha Passion* with the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. He has just taken the role of Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Opera Hong Kong again in October 2022 to critical acclaim.

### Mimi

Born in Treviso, **Francesca Dotto** was the first prize winner at the National Prize of the Arts in 2011. Since her debut at Teatro La Fenice in 2012 singing Musetta in *La Bohème*, she has been invited by the theatre singing the same role and the role of Mimi thereafter, as well as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Liu in *Turandot*, Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and Violetta in *La Traviata*, a signature role that she has reprised over three productions. In addition she appeared as Violetta in her debut at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and in cities including Sassari, Florence, Berlin, Geneva, Naples, Tokyo and Lima. She also performed *La Bohème* regularly on the stage of Wiener Staatsoper, Teatro di San Carlo, Fondazione Petruzzelli and many others.

**Louise Kwong** was a soprano at the Young Artist Programme of Rome Opera House in Italy from 2018-2019 and an awardee of the Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Young Persons in 2019. Kwong is a graduate of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Dutch National Opera Academy, the Conservatory of Amsterdam and the Royal College of Music of London. She was Mimi in *La Bohème*,

Cio-cio-san in *Madama Butterfly*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Liù in *Turandot*, Anna in *Anna Bolena*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and many others. Kwong won the 2nd prize, Audience prize and the Best Soprano prize in the 18th International Singing Competition Ferruccio Tagliavini in Austria. She was awarded with the Young Artist Award in Music by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 2014 and in the Commendatory Scheme of the Secretary of Home Affairs in 2015.

### **Marcello**

Featured on the cover of Opera News as one of the 'opera's exciting new voices', Chinese baritone **Yunpeng Wang** received his Master of Music in Vocal Performance from The Manhattan School of Music and was a former member of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Programme. His recent performances included Marcello in *La Bohème* at Copenhagen Opera Festival, Wen Tianxiang in Enjott Schneider's *Marco Polo* at Teatro Carlo Felice and Guangzhou Opera House, title role in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at Teatro Municipal de São Paulo and Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Metropolitan Opera and San Diego Opera. He was the recipient of the Second Prize, Zarzuela Prize and Audience Favourite Award at Plácido Domingo's 2012 Operalia Competition, and First Prize in the 2014 Gerda Lissner Foundation International Vocal Competition.

Praised for a voice of "deliciously deep and rich," (Birmingham Post), **Michael Lam** was awarded the Gil Rodriguez Scholarship by Opéra de Baugé for his outstanding contribution to their operatic season in 2019. He studied music and trained at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Hungary. He regularly performed in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany and other European countries. Passionate about opera, he has sung over 30 operatic roles including the title roles of *Macbeth*, *Don Pasquale*, *Giulio Cesare* and *The Barber of Seville* among others. Recently he created the role of Konfuzius in Gustav Mak's *Die Legende von Konfuzius* with the Budapest MÁV Symphony Orchestra in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein.

### **Musetta**

Born in Moscow, **Nina Solodovnikova** is one of the new talents in opera scene. Studied at the Young Artist Programme of the Teatro Comunale of Bologna, she trained specifically for Donizetti repertoire at the Teatro alla Scala Academy and Baroque repertoire at the Philharmonic Academy of Bologna. In the past seasons, she was Violetta in *La Traviata*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Giulietta in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Musetta in *La Bohème*, Aspasia in *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*, Valencienne in *Die lustige Witwe* and Tebaldo in *Don Carlo*. In 2021 a recording was released for her performance in the role of Annetta Mazepa in *Pietro il Grande* from the Donizetti Festival 2019, being the first video produced worldwide for such rare repertoire of Donizetti.

Soprano Anna **Jingdan Zhang** is currently pursuing her master's degree at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts under the tutelage of Professor Nancy Yuen. She has attended masterclasses with world-acclaimed singers including Sumi Jo, Barbara Bonney, Nelly Miricioiu, Warren Mok and Darryl Edwards. As one of the winners of RTHK Young Music Makers 2019, she recorded a series of TV productions and radio broadcasts for RTHK. In 2020, she recorded for *The Sound of Art* which was hosted by the Friends of Hong Kong Museum of Art. Recently she also appeared in RTHK Radio 4's *GBA Concert Hall*. She was Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Ilia in *Idomeneo* and soprano soloist in Bach's *Mass in B minor* with the Hong Kong Bach Choir and Orchestra. She was well received by the audience with her role as Norina in *Don Pasquale* in August 2022.

Special thanks to the continuous support from the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, as well as our hotel sponsor, InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong.

### **Programme Details**

Date and time: 12-15 January (Thur to Sun) 7:45pm  
Venue: Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre  
Ticket price: \$1,080, \$920, \$720, \$620, \$420, \$220  
Tickets available at URBTIX from 5 December 2022  
Performed in Italian with Chinese and English Surtitles.  
Please visit <http://operahongkong.org> for more details.

### **High resolution photos can be downloaded at:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/rjl10or8zygc4esu6f5l1/h?dl=0&rlkey=447z86i6xo7khba9eaddx98e>

### **Production Team**

Producer	Warren Mok
Conductor	Roberto Gianola
Director	Tang Shu-wing
Set Designer	Tsang Man-tung
Costume Designer	Cindy Ho
Lighting Designer	Yeung Tsz Yan
Chorus Director	Alex Tam
Orchestra Executive	Anders Hui

### **Performers**

Rodolfo	Kang Wang
Mimi	Francesca Dotto (12,14 & 15 Jan) Louise Kwong (13 Jan)
Marcello	Yunpeng Wang (12,14 & 15 Jan) Michael Lam (13 Jan)
Musetta	Nina Solodovnikova (12,14 & 15 Jan) Anna Zhang (13 Jan)
Schaunard	Paolo Ciavarelli (12,14 & 15 Jan) Michael Lam (13 Jan)
Colline	Vladimir Sazdovski (12,14 & 15 Jan) Freddie Tong (13 Jan)
Benoit	James Price
Alcindoro	Freddie Tong (12,14 & 15 Jan) Lam Kwok Ho (13 Jan)
Parpignol	Wesley Lam

Opera Hong Kong Orchestra  
Opera Hong Kong Chorus  
Opera Hong Kong Children Chorus

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### **Media Enquiry**

For media enquiry, please contact:

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### **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 direction of 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. The Programme has been completed successfully in March 2022.

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.

Official website: [www.operahongkong.org](http://www.operahongkong.org)

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited](https://www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/operahongkong](https://www.instagram.com/operahongkong)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/operahongkong](https://www.youtube.com/operahongkong)