



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

A Southern Breeze 《闽南乡韵》

City Chinese Orchestra Tells the Story of Chinese Singaporeans

18 August 2013 (Sunday) ♦ 5:00pm ♦ Esplanade Concert Hall

SINGAPORE—Tapping into its unique role and identity as a Singaporean Chinese Orchestra, City Chinese Orchestra (CCO) presents the experience of Chinese Singaporeans in *A Southern Breeze: Music of the Min Nan Chinese*—and it promises to resonate strongly with Singapore audiences.

A Southern Breeze will feature musical works that tell the story of the Min Nan (or Hokkien) Chinese, from its origins to the present day. Works like *The Fog Obscures the Southern Seas* 《雾锁南洋》 and *Longing for Reunion* 《乡音寄怀》 are modern classics that capture the courage and spirit of early emigrants from China, while the newly commissioned piece by Lu Liang-hui, *Celebrating in the Lion City* 《欢乐的狮城》, describes the colourful diversity and character that is Singapore today. Adding texture to the concert are popular ditties familiar to Hokkien-speakers like *Dark Skies* 《天乌乌》, as well as pieces that speak to the enduring spirit of the Chinese, like *erhu* concerto *Song of the Li Tune* 《丽歌行》.

“A sizable portion of Singapore’s Chinese population are of Hokkien descent, and today, Singaporeans from all walks of life and from all races have some association with Min Nan language and culture. In this concert, CCO is not only paying tribute to the Min Nan culture, but to also to Singapore, whose language and culture have been indelibly influenced by our ancestors from Southern China,” said Dr. Tay Teow Kiat, CCO’s founding music director and conductor for the concert. Dr. Tay, a Cultural Medallion recipient, is himself the descendent of early immigrants from Fujian.

Besides Lu Liang-hui’s piece, CCO will also be premiering another new composition by resident composer Li Chong Wang. *Min Nan: A Musical Portrait* 《闽南音画》 is a description of the sights and sounds of harvest in the Southern Chinese countryside. “When I lived in Singapore some years ago and interacted with Singaporeans, I found myself drawn to your qualities of hard work and industriousness. In describing scenes of joyous harvest in rural Southern China, this piece is a tribute to these valuable traits of Singaporean Chinese and your ancestors from China,” said Li from his home in Tianjin.



新加坡南洋艺术学院狮城华乐团 CITY CHINESE ORCHESTRA (SINGAPORE) LTD

A Southern Breeze is also an opportune celebration of City Chinese Orchestra's unique role as a Chinese Orchestra by Singaporeans, for Singaporeans. The concert will pay tribute to the distinctive history and identity of Chinese Singaporeans not only through its programme, but also its line-up of performers. *A Southern Breeze* will feature popular evergreen local singers Professor Koh Khee Meng and Ms Seah Geok Lan, who will sing both in Mandarin and in Hokkien. In addition, guest performers from the highly regarded Siong Leng Musical Association will showcase their musical specialties. "CCO is especially excited by our collaboration with Siong Leng Musical Association. Our musicians are looking forward to deepening our appreciation of the Southern Chinese operatic genres that these accomplished musicians bring with them," said CCO concertmaster Tay Soon Dee.

CCO's collaboration with local artistes and a community-based musical group in *A Southern Breeze* reflects yet another milestone on the orchestra's journey of being an "amateur orchestra with professional standards." Formed in 1974 as the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Chinese Orchestra, CCO has gone from strength to strength in its pursuit of musical excellence and programmatic innovation. The orchestra has collaborated with major names in the traditional Chinese music scene and performed to acclaim in China, Taiwan, and throughout Southeast Asia, all the while retaining its distinct identity as a Singaporean Chinese Orchestra. "When audiences hear the music at this concert, they will not only hear themselves and their history; they will also see how CCO has grown up with Singapore over the years," added Dr. Tay.

Tickets for *A Southern Breeze* are now on sale at all SISTIC outlets. For more information, please log on to www.cityco.com.sg.

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CONCERT INFORMATION

About the Programme

A Southern Breeze: Music of the Min Nan Chinese is a musical celebration of the culture of the Min Nan people. From traditional *nanyin* music, to popular folk songs and orchestral works inspired by the Hokkien diaspora in Taiwan, Southeast Asia and beyond, this concert pays tribute to a heritage that many Singaporeans call their own.

Joining the orchestra in this concert will be *nanyin* musicians from the Siong Leng Musical Association, *dizi* (flute) maestro Zhan Yong Ming, *erhu* (fiddle) soloist Wang Gui Ying and evergreen vocalists Professor Koh Khee Meng and Seah Geok Lan. The concert will be led by conductor and Cultural Medallion recipient, Dr. Tay Teow Kiat.

Presented by City Chinese Orchestra in collaboration with Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Select Repertoire

Celebration in the Lion City 《欢乐的狮城》*
Min Nan: A Musical Portrait 《闽南音画》*
Longing for Reunion 《乡音寄怀》
Spring Breeze 《望春风》
Dark Skies 《天乌乌》
Reminiscence 《思想起》
Song of the Li Tune 《丽歌行》
Lamenting Our Separation by the Jetty 《港边惜别》
The Fog Obscures the Southern Seas 《雾锁南洋》
* Premiere

Concert Details

Date: 18 August 2013 (Sunday)
Time: 5.00pm
Duration: 1 hour 50 minutes, including 20-minute intermission
Venue: Esplanade Concert Hall
Tickets: \$15, \$25, \$35^

Concessions for Students, NSF and Senior Citizens: \$12, \$20, \$28

^ Enjoy 20% savings with a purchase of 3 or more Cat 1 tickets.

Schools may use the Tote Board Arts Grant to subsidize up to 50% (excluding GST) of the ticket price.

Tickets may be purchased at the Esplanade Box Office, at SISTIC authorised agents, or at www.sistic.com.sg and SISTIC hotline 6348 5555.

General Enquiries

For more information, please contact us at 9839 4031 (Ms Ng Wan Gui), email at info@cityco.com.sg or visit us on FaceBook at www.facebook.com/cityco.sg.



Lead Performers and Creatives

Siong Leng Musical Association 湘灵音乐社



Established in 1941, Siong Leng Musical Association was set up to preserve, develop and promote *nanyin*, one of the treasures of traditional Chinese music arts, and Li Yuan Opera. Instrumental in the revival of *nanyin* in the 1970s, Siong Leng Musical Association is the leading authority of Nan Yin and Li Yuan Opera in Singapore, placing this unique art form on the international stage through performance tours.

Zhan Yong Ming 詹永明 (Dizi soloist)



Zhan Yong Ming is a renowned *dizi* performer and educator, and currently holds teaching and leadership positions in several of the leading Chinese music associations in China and in Singapore. He frequently travels around the world for performances and lectures, and has been described as a “Magic Flute”. Maestro Zhan has won numerous awards for his performances and recordings, and some of his representative works include *Ting Quan* and *West Lake in Early Spring*.

Professor Koh Khee Meng 许其明 (Solo vocalist)



Koh Khee Meng is Professor of Mathematics at the National University of Singapore. Enjoying singing since young, Koh was a student of the late renowned composer and music educator Lee Hao. Koh has frequently performed as a soloist and lead singer in Singapore and overseas. His singing has been praised for being delicate and passionate, with a bright yet soft tone, showing versatility and musicality.



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Seah Geok Lan 谢玉兰 (Solo vocalist)



Ms Seah Geok Lan has won numerous awards in various Karaoke competitions internationally. She specializes in singing in the Min Nan language. She was crowned champion in the Golden Age Talentime in 2011.

Wang Gui Ying 王桂英 (Erhu soloist)



Wang Gui Ying is the *Erhu* Principal and chief instructor of the Strings section of City Chinese Orchestra. Graduating from the Tianjin Conservatory of Music in 1990, Wang has studied under many eminent *erhu* performers such as Ju Wen Yu, Min Hui Fen and Liu Chang Fu. Her playing has been commended by famous Chinese music critic Liu Zai Sheng as “full of passion, yet elegantly measured, reflecting a thorough grasp of the music.” Wang holds a Masters degree in Musicology from Beijing Normal University.

Dr. Tay Teow Kiat 郑朝吉 博士 (Conductor and Music Director)



Dr. Tay is an accomplished Chinese Orchestra conductor and educator, and has been active in the Chinese music circles in Singapore, China and Asia for over forty years. He is currently the President of the Singapore Chinese Instrumental Music Association, Music Director of City Chinese Orchestra and Dingyi Music Company, and Resident Conductor of the Dunman High School Chinese Orchestra. For his accomplishments and contributions, Dr. Tay was awarded the Cultural Medallion by the National Arts Council in 1993. He holds a PhD from Beijing Normal University.



ABOUT CITY CHINESE ORCHESTRA

Formerly the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Chinese Orchestra, City Chinese Orchestra was formed in 1974 and has been a steadfast presence in the Singapore and international traditional Chinese music scene. The orchestra now has a repertoire of more than 1,000 compositions. City Chinese Orchestra is known for commissioning new works from accomplished composers, as well as its programmatic innovation and depth. Recent programming firsts include the Singapore premiere of popular Chinese musical *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* in August 2012, a concert introducing the Pingtan genre from Suzhou in March 2012, a Manhan Opera feature in collaboration with Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay as part of Moonfest 2010, as well as a concert of theme songs from China's Four Classics (四大名著) in 2009.

The orchestra presently comprises 150 members - mostly young professionals and students - across five musical sections. Many have garnered prizes in Chinese traditional music competitions in Singapore and overseas. From the nurturing grounds of the orchestra, several have gone on to become influential figures in the traditional Chinese music scene in Singapore and have contributed greatly to the development of traditional Chinese music in Singapore.

The orchestra's music director is Dr. Tay Teow Kiat, who has led the orchestra since its inception. With Dr. Tay, City Chinese Orchestra toured Beijing and Tianjin in 1996, Zhengzhou in 2002, and Changchun and Beijing in 2007. These performance tours were highly successful and well received. In 1998, Dr Tay was elected as the first ever president of the Singapore Chinese Instrumental Music Association, a position which he holds till today.

The orchestra has as its resident composers the renowned Li Chong Wang, Wang Cheng Quan and Lin Wei Hua. In addition, City Chinese Orchestra has also collaborated with Chinese music luminaries such as Hu Tian Quan, Lu Chun Ling, Liu De Hai, Li Min Xiong, Zhao Song Ting, Min Hui Fen, Zhu Feng Bo, Zheng Xu Lan, Li Guang Zu, Chen An Hua, Wang Zhong Shan, Liu Chang Fu, Jiao Jin Hai, Zhu Chang Yao, Wu Bi Xia, Zhang Xiao Feng, and Wang Li Ping.

In the last 39 years, with the support of the public and the National Arts Council, the orchestra has contributed significantly to the development and popularity of Chinese traditional music in Singapore. It will continue to present the many facets of Chinese traditional music to audiences in Singapore and to raise the level of such music in the country.