



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

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* 《小二黑结婚》 *City Chinese Orchestra Premieres Beloved Chinese Tale in Singapore*

SINGAPORE—Consistent with its pursuit of programmatic innovation and artistic excellence, City Chinese Orchestra (CCO) presents the moving musical *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage*—and it promises to hit all the right chords with Singapore audiences again.

*Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* is the story of two star-crossed lovers who embark on a journey of overcoming the age-old tradition of arranged marriage during a feudal era. Inspired by a true story, the musical is an adaptation of the famous novel of the same name, and was first performed by the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing in 1953. Since then, *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* has become a modern classic, with one of its songs, “The Clear Waters and Deep Blue Sky” widely known and sung among the Chinese.

“City Chinese Orchestra is excited to present this musical for the first time in Singapore, and we are sure it will resonate with audiences, for it is about human nature—greed, selfishness, kindness, and above all, love,” said Cultural Medallion awardee Dr Tay Teow Kiat, the orchestra’s music director and conductor for this concert.

In 2008, the China Conservatory of Music restaged *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* in commemoration of Ma Ke, one of the musical’s key creators, and received great critical acclaim. Since then, the musical has enjoyed a revival in China. Riding on its universally appealing themes and artistic merit, City Chinese Orchestra is proud to present it for the first time in Singapore. Said Professor Cao Wengong of the China Conservatory, who arranged the pieces for this concert, “We chose to collaborate with City Chinese Orchestra because of its programming track record; we also know that Dr Tay and his musicians will live up to the spirit of the musical.”

Since its days as the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Chinese Orchestra, City Chinese Orchestra has enlivened Singapore’s cultural scene with innovative concerts aimed at presenting facets of Chinese culture. In the 1990s, the orchestra’s first collaboration with renowned composer Wang Liping to present the suite from *Dream of the Red Chamber* unleashed audiences’ interest in the literary classic and Wang’s work. In the years since, more than one hundred concerts of *Dream of the Red Chamber* have played all over the world, with the most recent rendition by Wesleyan University’s Chinese Music Ensemble in Connecticut, USA.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> More information about CCO’s programming history may be found in Annex B.



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Dr Tay, however, explained that programmatic innovation is not the only pursuit of City Chinese Orchestra. “While we want to bring Chinese music to Singapore, we also want to bring Singapore to the world. Since 1996 we have been on performance tours to various parts of China, and we intend to continue this culture of cultural exchange and learning by visiting Taiwan next June.”

This is no mean feat for an orchestra whose members are mostly non-professional musicians and who have careers in various fields. “We do this because we would like to bring Chinese music and culture to our audiences. At the same time, this music has enriched our lives,” commented Ng How Yong, a *dizi* player in the orchestra. Dr Ng is an Associate Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the National University of Singapore, and has been a member of CCO since 1986.

The orchestra hopes that its collaboration with the China Conservatory of Music for *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* will be one more milestone on its journey of musical excellence. Professor Cao leads a delegation of 17 teachers, performers, and creatives from the China Conservatory, which includes renowned tenor Associate Professor Zhou Qiang, who plays the titular character in the musical. “In this era of change and impermanence, the story of the enduring love between these two youths from a village in Shanxi is all the more poignant and relevant. Anyone who has loved will see in *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* the story of themselves,” commented Zhou.

Tickets are now on sale at all SISTIC outlets. For more information, please log on to [www.cityco.com.sg](http://www.cityco.com.sg).

## Media Contact

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Annex A

## ABOUT THE CONCERT

### About the Musical

Inspired by a true story, the moving tale of *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* comes from a famous novel published in 1943 by noted novelist Zhao Shu Li. The novel was adapted into a musical and first staged by the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing in 1953. Since then, *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* has remained highly popular in China till today. One of its theme songs, *The Clear Waters and Deep Blue Sky*, sung by lead character Xiao Qin, is considered one of Chinese opera's classic songs.

*Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* was restaged in 2008 by members of the theatre division from the China Conservatory of Music to commemorate Ma Ke, one of the musical's key composers. The musical was staged again in 2010 and 2011 at the National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing, and was well loved by the opera's fans. City Chinese Orchestra presents the Singapore premiere of the musical in 2012 in collaboration with the China Conservatory of Music.

### Notable Songs

"Our Marriage, Our Decision" 《咱们的婚姻自己做主》

"Why Don't I See You by the Cliff" 《怎不见你在这崖畔上》

"Our Love Never Dies" 《咱们俩的情意断不了》

"The Clear Waters and Deep Blue Sky" 《清粼粼的水来蓝莹莹的天》

### Lead Performers and Creatives



**Zhou Qiang as Xiao Er Hei**

Zhou Qiang is a renowned tenor in China and Associate Professor of Vocal Performance at the China Conservatory of Music. Notable productions include *Sister Jiang*, *The Party's Daughter* and *Dou Er Yuan*. Zhou Qiang was highly commended for his depiction of "Xiao Er Hei" in the staging of the musical *Xiao Er Hei's Marriage* by China Conservatory of Music in 2008. He was invited by the National Grand Theatre to play the same role in 2010 and 2011, and henceforth was known as the "third generation Xiao Er Hei" for his superb performance.



**Cao Xiao Jing as Xiao Qin**

Cao Xiao Jing is a multiple-award winning soprano, who studied under the tutelage of Zhou Qiang at the China Conservatory of Music. Her recent musical works include *Goodbye Cambridge* and *The Morning Snow*



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## **Cao Wengong, Arranger and Artistic Consultant**

Professor Cao Wengong is an accomplished composer and conductor in China, as well as professor emeritus at the China Conservatory of Music.



## **Tay Teow Kiat, 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 Dunman High School Chinese Orchestra. For his accomplishments, Dr Tay was awarded the Cultural Medallion by the National Arts Council in 1993. He received his PhD from Beijing Normal University.

### **Concert Details**

Date: 19 August 2012 (Sunday)

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Esplanade Concert Hall

Tickets: \$38, \$32, \$26\*, \$20^

Limited Concessions for Students, NSF and Senior Citizens: \$22\*, \$16^

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

### **Ticketing Outlets**

Tickets can be purchased at the Esplanade Box Office and other authorised SISTIC outlets.

Website: [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg)

SISTIC hotline: 6348 5555

A SISTIC booking fee applies for each ticket. Latecomers will only be admitted during suitable breaks. No admission for infants in arms and children below seven years of age, unless otherwise stated. Tickets are required for all patrons.

For more information, please contact us at 6742 9359, email us at [info@cityco.com.sg](mailto:info@cityco.com.sg) or visit us on FaceBook at [www.facebook.com/cityco.sg](http://www.facebook.com/cityco.sg).





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## Annex B

### ABOUT CITY CHINESE ORCHESTRA

Formerly the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Chinese Orchestra, the orchestra was formed in 1974 and, since then, has continuously expanded and progressed. The orchestra now has a repertoire of more than 1,000 compositions and is highly regarded in Singapore and the region.

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 Singapore Chinese traditional music scene and have contributed greatly to the development of Chinese traditional 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 visited Beijing and Tianjin in 1996, Zhengzhou in 2002, and Changchun and Beijing in 2007. The performance tours were highly successful and well received. In 1998, Dr Tay was elected to be the first ever president of the Singapore Chinese Instrumental Music Association.

The orchestra has as its resident composers the renowned Li Chongwang, Wang Chengquan and Lin Weihua. In addition, it has also collaborated with Chinese music luminaries such as Hu Tianquan, Lu Chunling, Liu Dehai, Li Minxiong, Zhao Songting, Min Huifen, Zhu Fengbo, Zheng Xulan, Li Guangzu, Chen Anhua, Wang Zhongshan, Liu Changfu, Jiao Jinhai, Zhu Changyao, Wu Bixia, Zhang Xiaofeng, and Wang Liping.

In the last 38 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 music lovers in Singapore and to raise the level of such music in the country.



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## CITY CHINESE ORCHESTRA (SINGAPORE) LTD

Annex C

### KEY TRANSLATIONS

Central Academy of Drama	中央戏剧学院
China Conservatory of Music	中国音乐学院
Ma Ke	马可
Wang Liping	王立平
Dream of the Red Chamber	红楼梦
Dr Ng How Yong	黄浩勇副教授
Zhou Qiang as Xiao Er Hei	周 强 饰 小二黑
Cao Xiaojing as Xiao Qin	曹晓静 饰 小芹
Dr Tay Teow Kiat	郑朝吉博士
Cao Wengong	曹文工