

OPENING GALA

- PROGRAM
1. Opening Dance: *The Heavenly Forbidden City*  
Performed by Beijing Dance, Drama and Opera
  2. Melodies of Folk Music: *Long Song and Bright Moon*  
Performed by Zhang Weiliang  
(Folk Music: Pure of Beijing Dance, Drama and Opera)
  3. Kunqu Opera: *Spring Pipa*  
Performed by Wei Chunrong and others (Northern Kunqu Opera Theater)
  4. Peking Opera: *Surpassing Beauty in Pear Garden*  
Performed by China National Acrobatic Troupe
  5. Dance: *Red and Black*  
Performed by Beijing Dance, Drama and Opera
  6. *Beautiful China*  
Performed by Miracle September
  7. Acrobatic Performance: *Shadows Dancing under the Moonlight*  
Performed by China National Acrobatic Troupe
  8. Dance: *Good Fortune*  
Performed by Beijing Dance, Drama and Opera
  9. Duet: *You and Me*  
Sung by soprano Hayley Westenra and tenor Ding Yi
  10. Acrobatic Performance: *Oriental Spirit*  
Performed by China National Acrobatic Troupe
  11. China's Three Tenors: *Nessus Drama, Auki Lang Syne*  
Sung by Dai Yuqiang, Warren Mok, Wei Song
  12. Curtain call song: *Welcome to Beijing*  
Performed by the cast

# China's Kunqu Opera classics set to impress the UK

## Northern Kunqu Opera Theater will make its debut in London for the 2012 Olympics, Mu Qian reports.

Two rare performances of Kunqu Opera in London will transport audiences to ancient China. As part of the Beijing Culture Week organized by the government of Beijing, the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater will give two performances at the Shaw Theatre in London on July 24 and 25. *A Dream of Red Mansions* on July 24 and *A New Legend of Pipa* on the following day.

"Kunqu is regarded as the 'begin of a hundred operas' in China," Northern Kunqu Opera Theater vice-president Cao Ning said. "It has a history of 600 years and has influenced not only many styles of Chinese opera, but also Chinese literature, music and art."

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, one of Chi-

na's "Four Great Classical Novels", there are 26 depictions of Kunqu, the best-known of which is the part about the heroine Lin Daiyu being enchanted by 12 girls' singing Kunqu on the 23rd chapter.

However, there was never a Kunqu adaptation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, except for some excerpts, until the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater premiered their version last year. *A Dream of Red Mansions* is a great work that covers various aspects of feudal China, including political, social and cultural aspects, and even medicine and food. The version has some plots run simultaneously onstage — for example, that of Lin burning her scripts and his wedding.

"It's a great challenge for us to bring it to the stage."

The lyrics of Kunqu are much more elegant than those of today's dramas, and reading the lyrics alone is very enjoyable," Cao, the director, said.

Kunqu's music is also softer than many other traditional Chinese operas, such as Peking Opera, with *qin* (a type of flute) as a main instrument.

Accompanying *A Dream of Red Mansions* is an orchestra with 40 musicians. Apart from Kunqu's instruments, there are also Western instruments like violins, violas and cellos.

"For this original work, we want to experiment with some new instruments, and they proved to be suitable to supplement the band," Cao Ying says.

"We don't know how Kunqu was performed for centuries and was only recently revived by the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater after a script was found in the National Library of China."

The work tells of Cai Wenji, a Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) poet and composer, who was taken prisoner by the Xiongnu nomads and became a chieftain's wife but eventually returned back.

Founded in Beijing in 1957, the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater is one of China's

seven professional Kunqu troupes and the only one in North China. The troupe has revived and created many Kunqu Opera works and trained a number of renowned performers.

There has been increasing interest in Kunqu Opera in recent years. Apart from the seven official Kunqu Opera troupes in China, there are many smaller commercial groups. In Beijing, there are several Kunqu Opera-themed restaurants.

The Northern Kunqu Opera Theater had 360 performances in 2010, including some in universities, which students very much welcomed.

"People are ever-busier," Cao Ying said. "Watching Kunqu Opera enables one to slow down and be spiritually purified. I think that's why Kunqu Opera is becoming more popular."

Northern Kunqu Opera Theater has toured more than 100 countries and regions. "We assumed that the traditional art of Kunqu Opera is difficult for foreigners to appreciate," Cao Ying says.

"But foreign audiences usually enjoy our performances very much."

English subtitles will be provided for both shows in London.

### SINGING AN ANCIENT OPERA'S PRAISES

Kunqu Opera is one of the oldest extant forms of Chinese opera.

It evolved from the Kunshan melody and developed during the late Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). A famous early pioneer was Lu Jiani from Qiantong town in Kunshan, Jiangsu province.

Kunqu Opera dominated Chinese theatre from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and has influenced many other Chinese performing arts, including Peking Opera. Its emergence ushered in the second golden era of Chinese drama. But it had nearly disappeared by the early 20th century.

In 1956, *Fifteen Strings of Cash* by the Zhejiang Kunqu Opera Troupe ran to 46 performances in Beijing and was attended by leaders Zou Taofeng and Zhou Enlai. The work was said to have salvaged Kunqu Opera.

Kunqu Opera was suppressed during the "cultural revolution" (1966-76), when all operas, except "revolutionary operas", were banned.

There has been a revival of the art form since the 1980s.

Today, there are professional Kunqu Opera troupes in seven cities on the mainland: Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou and Nanjing in Jiangsu province, Chenzhou in Hunan province, and Ningxia and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province. Amateur opera societies are active in many other cities in China and overseas.

Some of the best-known Kunqu Opera works are *The Peach Blossom Fan*, *The Palace of Long Life*, *The White Snake*, *The Western Garden* and *The Kid*.

Kunqu Opera has been listed by UNESCO among the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2001.

And although the BSO has yet to visit London, many in the United Kingdom have already heard them play.

The orchestra recorded the Games anthem and national anthems for the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, a project that the recording of 212 works.

The BSO will also be in London during the Olympic Games, and perform with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at a special gala concert at the Royal Festival Hall of London's Southbank Centre on July 29.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is delighted to be working with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra for this unique collaborative Gala concert to celebrate this international summer and momentous year, and the passing of the musical baton from Beijing to London," said Timothy Walker, chief executive and artistic director of the London Philharmonic.

"The concert will culminate with a performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Choral, with soprano Rebecca Evans, mezzo soprano Ning Jing, tenor Andrew Kennedy, bass Matthew Rose, and the London Philharmonic Choir.

"Another Chinese work to be performed at the concert will be Tang Jian-

# Miracle September delivers red music with a twist

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

"I'm not the best music they played is still the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Another big challenge: There is no music available for the modern instrument to accompany Chinese red classics. The two had to first compose the music and then add red classic lyrics.

Besides pop music, Wang Xiaowei also injects operatic singing and rap to add colour to their performance. To complement her partner, Wang Xiaowei also makes some visual improvisations.

"The performance is constantly evolving and is full of surprises," she said.

She adds that her association with the singer has reshaped her idea of her own band.

"I've been fortunate to have many young initial plans to be a teacher," she says. "The usual path taken by a music graduate in China."

Since music is her band's main business, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

Another big challenge: There is no music available for the modern instrument to accompany Chinese red classics. The two had to first compose the music and then add red classic lyrics.

Besides pop music, Wang Xiaowei also injects operatic singing and rap to add colour to their performance. To complement her partner, Wang Xiaowei also makes some visual improvisations.

"The performance is constantly evolving and is full of surprises," she said.

She adds that her association with the singer has reshaped her idea of her own band.

"I've been fortunate to have many young initial plans to be a teacher," she says. "The usual path taken by a music graduate in China."

Since music is her band's main business, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

Instrumentalist Wang Xiaowei and singer Wang Xiaohui say mistakes have happened since they met and became the band Miracle September. They rose from nothing, they say, to stardom after winning the grand prize at Star Boulevard, a popular competition in China Central Television in September 2008. Then they found themselves in the spotlight of the 2011 CCTV Spring Festival Gala show.

Now, they are preparing to perform at the opening gala of Beijing Culture Week, from July 24 to 31, during the London Olympics. They will present two of their most popular hits, *Red Memory* and *Beautiful China*.

The band has also recorded *Red Wish*. From Beijing a song celebrating the London Olympics, written by renowned musician Wang Pengtao and young composer Chang Shiqi.

"We didn't expect this opportunity to perform during the London Olympics. We've

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

Another big challenge: There is no music available for the modern instrument to accompany Chinese red classics. The two had to first compose the music and then add red classic lyrics.

Besides pop music, Wang Xiaowei also injects operatic singing and rap to add colour to their performance. To complement her partner, Wang Xiaowei also makes some visual improvisations.

"The performance is constantly evolving and is full of surprises," she said.

She adds that her association with the singer has reshaped her idea of her own band.

"I've been fortunate to have many young initial plans to be a teacher," she says. "The usual path taken by a music graduate in China."

Since music is her band's main business, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

chosen the two songs because they represent our style and let us sing about our country," said Wang Xiaowei, an accountant and graduate of Dongbei University. When he heard Wang Xiaowei play the organ for her graduation solo at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in 2004, he was enthralled.

Although the nine-to-five office worker and karaoke fan had never received any musical training, a bold idea began to take shape in his mind.

"I'd never seen this instrument," said Wang Xiaowei. "But after hearing it being played, I just couldn't get its sound out of my head."

He contacted the performer, who was equally impressed by Wang Xiaowei's singing. They also met often to discuss their ideas.

At the gala concert, the BSO will bring attention, the number of students learning the instrument has doubled or even tripled, Wang Xiaowei believes.

# LET THE MUSIC PLAY

## It will be a prolific season for the Beijing Symphony Orchestra in 2012, with a crowded program that will also see it travelling to the London Olympics, Mu Qian reports.

This will be the year of 100 concerts in the orchestra's history. Apart from a concert in London during the Olympics, the Beijing Symphony Orchestra will also be performing at the Antalya Music Festival in Turkey and appear with the Kolner Philharmonic and Berliner Philharmonie in Germany in September.

On home ground, the orchestra has invited a cast of world-class musicians to visit, including maestros Christoph Eschenbach and Daniel Barenboim. The BSO has also invited celebrity soloists, and both Herbie Hancock and Lang Lang will be star attractions.

Compared with the world's leading orchestras, we are still young," the orchestra's music director and principal conductor Tan Lihua said. "And collaborating

with world-class musicians will help us become one of the best orchestras in the world," Tan said.

Behind the ambitious new season of the Beijing Symphony Orchestra is support from the Beijing municipal government with a generous subsidy of 50 million yuan (7.85 million). The support is mainly driven by the new approach of Western music as the country develops and parents become more eager to round off their children's education.

China now has the world's third largest number of symphony orchestras, after the United States and Germany, according to visit, including maestros Christoph Eschenbach and Daniel Barenboim. The BSO has also invited celebrity soloists, and both Herbie Hancock and Lang Lang will be star attractions.

Compared with the world's leading orchestras, we are still young," the orchestra's music director and principal conductor Tan Lihua said. "And collaborating

with world-class musicians will help us become one of the best orchestras in the world," Tan said.

Behind the ambitious new season of the Beijing Symphony Orchestra is support from the Beijing municipal government with a generous subsidy of 50 million yuan (7.85 million). The support is mainly driven by the new approach of Western music as the country develops and parents become more eager to round off their children's education.

China now has the world's third largest number of symphony orchestras, after the United States and Germany, according to visit, including maestros Christoph Eschenbach and Daniel Barenboim. The BSO has also invited celebrity soloists, and both Herbie Hancock and Lang Lang will be star attractions.

Compared with the world's leading orchestras, we are still young," the orchestra's music director and principal conductor Tan Lihua said. "And collaborating

with world-class musicians will help us become one of the best orchestras in the world," Tan said.

Behind the ambitious new season of the Beijing Symphony Orchestra is support from the Beijing municipal government with a generous subsidy of 50 million yuan (7.85 million). The support is mainly driven by the new approach of Western music as the country develops and parents become more eager to round off their children's education.

China now has the world's third largest number of symphony orchestras, after the United States and Germany, according to visit, including maestros Christoph Eschenbach and Daniel Barenboim. The BSO has also invited celebrity soloists, and both Herbie Hancock and Lang Lang will be star attractions.

Compared with the world's leading orchestras, we are still young," the orchestra's music director and principal conductor Tan Lihua said. "And collaborating

Under the baton of its music director Tan Lihua (centre), Beijing Symphony Orchestra will perform in London on July 29.

peem *Lotus* by Chinese composer Guo Wenjing.

"The easy way out was to create a magnificent piece with a lot of bagles. I also considered using cultural symbols from the host country. In the end, I decided to compose a work that is more lyrical and Oriental," Guo said. His work, he said, brings goodwill and best wishes to the London Olympics.

"The concert will culminate with a performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Choral, with soprano Rebecca Evans, mezzo soprano Ning Jing, tenor Andrew Kennedy, bass Matthew Rose, and the London Philharmonic Choir.

"Another Chinese work to be performed at the concert will be Tang Jian-

# Dai Yuqiang's journey from the building site to 'Three Tenors'

Tosca — along with well-known Chinese songs.

"The three tenors have their own distinctive singing styles. When they come together their voices go together harmoniously," said Zhang Shurong, director of China's Three Tenors concert. "Opera in China is booming. More original opera productions have taken place during the past few years. China's Three Tenors represents the country's best operatic talent."

Dai agrees and says he has experienced the lyrics day and night since he was 10 years old.

He grew up in a small town, Wenlan, in Hebei province, but never even saw a piano until he was 18. His parents, both farmers, loved singing folk songs while they worked and this shaped their son's early interest in singing.

"Singing made my parents happy, so I guessed the main function of singing was to bring fun and happiness," Dai said.

The first heard opera on the radio. Though he couldn't understand the lyrics in Italian, he studied it by singing along. And though he dreamed of becoming a singer, he started work at 22 as a construction site worker in Taiyuan, Shanxi province.

Eventually he got into a drama school in Beijing in 1984, where he was taught to sing in a Chinese style.

"I not only studied with Pavarotti but also with Pavarotti's teacher," Dai said. "Both of them would hand clap when I sang in Italian because it was rare for a Chinese to sing opera

In Italy. One of the most important things they taught me is that opera singing requires constant passion and proper control of the voice, depending on the roles' personalities."

Among all Dai's shows he says one of the most memorable will always be his appearance with Maria Guleghina and Samuel Ramey in Puccini's *Tosca* at Covent Garden.

"The boots and robe I wore were decades or even 100 years old. The co-stars were all world-class operatic singers. You can imagine how nervous I was," he said. "However when I stood on the stage and listened to my voice, I became confident and I met her."

His successful debut led him to more singing dates around the world. He had to be returning to his roots in China.

"I love performing for Chinese audiences and watching their expressions. Their sharing attitude makes me excited on stage," he said.

After returning from London, he will give a recital at Beijing Concert Hall on August 26.

Today, Dai lives happily with his wife, Liu Yan, and his 16-year-old daughter, who has studied piano from an early age. He also has a few students, who are rising stars in the opera world.

He says his dream now is simply to perform, which is a real and inspiring idea, rather than becoming an operatic celebrity.

In Italy. One of the most important things they taught me is that opera singing requires constant passion and proper control of the voice, depending on the roles' personalities."

Among all Dai's shows he says one of the most memorable will always be his appearance with Maria Guleghina and Samuel Ramey in Puccini's *Tosca* at Covent Garden.

"The boots and robe I wore were decades or even 100 years old. The co-stars were all world-class operatic singers. You can imagine how nervous I was," he said. "However when I stood on the stage and listened to my voice, I became confident and I met her."

His successful debut led him to more singing dates around the world. He had to be returning to his roots in China.

"I love performing for Chinese audiences and watching their expressions. Their sharing attitude makes me excited on stage," he said.

After returning from London, he will give a recital at Beijing Concert Hall on August 26.

Today, Dai lives happily with his wife, Liu Yan, and his 16-year-old daughter, who has studied piano from an early age. He also has a few students, who are rising stars in the opera world.

He says his dream now is simply to perform, which is a real and inspiring idea, rather than becoming an operatic celebrity.

