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November 2012  
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Epic Dance Spectacle

# *Qingming Riverside*

A stage wonder that arises from a national treasure painting

Presented by China Performing Arts Agency and Sony Centre for the Performing Arts

Performed by Hong Kong Dance Company and Guangdong Song and Dance Ensemble

Supported by Home Affairs Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and Department of Culture of Guangdong Province

Sponsored by Mr. Stephen YIP Chun-nam, M.H., J.P.

A programme celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong SAR

Inspired by the most important scroll painting in Chinese art history – *Along the River during the Qingming Festival*, the Hong Kong Dance Company (HKDC)'s epic dance spectacle *Qingming Riverside* animates the masterpiece and brings to life a prosperous era of Chinese history. The dance drama depicts life in the capital of Northern Song dynasty (AD 960–1127) in the early 12th century in broad painterly impressions, inviting the audience to travel through time to the dynamic city on the Bian Canal, and salutes the long and profound history of Chinese culture through contemporary expressions.

Featuring more than 40 dancers the show has been performed for 33 times in Hong Kong and abroad. This original production by the HKDC has dazzled more than 40,000 audiences since its premiere in 2007. It was invited to perform at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

China Performing Arts Agency, the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts and the Hong Kong Dance Company are excited to present *Qingming Riverside* in Canada and the USA in January 2013, including four performances at The Sony Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto on 4 and 5 January 2013 and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC on 11 and 12 January 2013. The North American tour of *Qingming Riverside* is supported by the Home Affairs Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong SAR and the Department of Culture of Guangdong Province of the People's Republic of China and sponsored by Mr. Stephen YIP Chun-nam, M.H., J.P. Promotions of the performances in Toronto are supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Toronto). The performances will include dancers from the Guangdong Song and Dance Ensemble.

[www.hkdance.com](http://www.hkdance.com)



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Mr Leung Kwok-shing, Director & Choreographer of *Qingming Riverside*, remarks, "*Qingming Riverside* embodies Chinese culture and is created to explore the boundlessness of creativity. It makes a thousand-year-old painting come to life, distilling and representing in the language of dance the movement, personality and spirit of the 800-plus characters depicted in the painting. Its style pushes beyond the boundary of Chinese ethnic dance and Chinese classical dance, creating a new aesthetics that exemplifies the vernacular, traditional and classical."

*"An epic dance of the national treasure class"*— Sing Tao Daily

*"Delightful and attractive; exquisite and refined."* — Bai Shuxiang, Chairman, China Dancers Association

*"The Hong Kong Dance Company's Qingming Riverside is a bright light."* — Lin Kehuan, am Post

*"Archaic elegance and an admirable collection of talents. Affection through dance and dance with affection."*

— Jia Zuoguang, Honorary Chairman, China Dancers Association and famous choreographer

### **A Chinese National Treasure: Along the River during the Qingming Festival**

Painted between AD 1119 and 1125, *Along the River during the Qingming Festival* is a masterpiece by the imperial court painter Zhang Zeduan. The scroll painting reveals in astounding details the prosperous and busy streets of the Northern Song Dynasty capital, Bianjing (now Kaifeng, Henan). With realistic portrayal, multi-point perspective and a dexterously devised structure, it continues to be a major inspiration for painters for centuries to come.

Zhang was a member of Hanlin Academy, an art academy established by the imperial court to train artists and to provide service for royal commissions.

The painting is now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

### **An Epic Dance Drama: Qingming Riverside**

The dance drama *Qingming Riverside* is a living scroll painting. The production explores traditional Chinese culture through tapping into the rich dance culture of China as the basis of performance. It is a gateway to the prosperous utopian city of the Song Dynasty and a salute to the long and profound history of Chinese culture. Its Script and Research Director Gerard Tsang was the former Director of the Hong Kong Museum of Art and an art historian.

In *Canal Willows*, female dancers on chopines imitate the willows swaying in the breeze to simulate foot-binding of the period. *Spring Countryside* draws on vernacular donkey dance to recapture the scene of donkey caravans carrying charcoal into the city as depicted in the painting. *Rituals and Festivities* incorporates a variety of traditional dances, including a ritual parade and stylised horse-riding movements from Chinese opera, to portray the lively, bustling capital city bursting with buskers, acrobats and opera performers showing off their skills. Together with traditional and ritual dances such as boat rowing on land, fish watching, lever dance and squat dance, the kaleidoscope of vernacular dances come alive on stage, reinterpreted with modern aesthetics.



## **Qingming Riverside: A Chronicle**

*Qingming Riverside* premiered at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in July 2007 to commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong SAR. In the same year, the production toured to four major Chinese cities – Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing, including performances at the Shanghai International Creative Industry Week and The Fifth Beijing International Dance Festival.

In July 2008, *Qingming Riverside* toured to the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Culture as part of the “Meet in Beijing 2008” Arts Festival that celebrated the Beijing Olympic Games; the HKDC was the only dance troupe representing Hong Kong at the Festival.

*Qingming Riverside* was popularly received and praised as “a stage wonder that arises from a painting masterpiece”. The pioneering aspects of the production were recognized by the 2008 Hong Kong Dance Award. The dance drama returned to the Hong Kong stage in January 2009; in November and December of the same year, the production was invited by the Guangdong Cultural Bureau to perform and compete at The Tenth Guangdong Arts Festival at Dongguan's Yulan Grand Theatre, where it won three major awards: Special Grand Prize for Artistic Value, First Prize for Choreography and Direction, and Second Prize for Performance for the Principal Dancer.

In 2010, *Qingming Riverside* took part in The Ninth China Arts Festival at the invitation of the Guangdong Cultural Bureau, with a performance at the Guangzhou Baiyun Convention Centre. The production was also invited by the Hong Kong SAR Government to be part of the 2010 Shanghai Expo cultural presentations, with two performances at the Shanghai Grand Theatre in July. Prior to that, *Qingming Riverside* returned to the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Grand Theatre for the third time in April 2010, for three enthusiastically-received, sold-out performances. In May 2011 it was staged in Hong Kong for the fourth time for five sold-out performances.

## Creative Team

### Advisers

Yang Xin

(Former Deputy Director and Research Fellow of the Palace Museum, Beijing)

Prof. Wang Kefen

(Research Fellow and Tutor of PhD of Dance, China Art Academy and Chinese Dance Historian)

Chiu Kwong-chiu

(Author of *Notes on Along the River During Qingming Festival*)

### Director & Choreographer

**Leung Kwok-shing**

Composer

Shi Zhiyou

Script & Research Director

Gerard CC Tsang

Folk Dance Concept & Choreography

Yang Zida

Music Coordinator

Deng Jun

Set Designer

Sam Leung

Costume & Props Designer

Eddy Mok

Lighting Designer

Billy Tang

## Leung Kwok-shing

Artistic Director, Hong Kong Dance Company

Director & Choreographer of *Qingming Riverside*

Graduated from Guangdong Dance School, Leung Kwok-shing joined the Hong Kong Dance Company in 1981 as the first cohort of company dancers. In 2005, he became the Assistant Artistic Director, and since 2009, he has been leading the Company as Artistic Director.

Leung is recognized as a highly productive choreographer in Chinese Dance in Hong Kong, and his works are based on traditional Chinese art and dance forms, blending Eastern and Western cultures together. He has also choreographed numerous highly acclaimed dance dramas and performances. His recent productions include *Evacuation Order; The Smiling, Proud Wanderer; Qingming Riverside; Snow Fox; Eagle Companions; Poet Dongpo; Two Swallows – Ode to Wu Guanzhong* and *Plateau Bluebells*.

Leung's contribution to the arts in Hong Kong is recognized by many organizations. He received the Hong Kong Arts Development Award from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 2008, and the Commendation Certificate for making outstanding contributions to the development of arts and cultural activities by the Secretary for Home Affairs in 2009. In 2012, he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.



## **Hong Kong Dance Company**

**“Dancing across East and West, Moving to the Tempo of Hong Kong”**

### **Mission Statement**

We are nurtured in the cultural tradition of China, combining with the creativity of contemporary art, to impress the world with Chinese dance of Hong Kong character.

Established in 1981 with the aim of promoting Chinese dance, the Hong Kong Dance Company was incorporated in 2001 as a charitable and non-profit-making institution, and is financially supported by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The Hong Kong Dance Company has staged more than 100 productions, many of which received popular and critical acclaim. Recent productions include *Qingming Riverside*; *Evacuation Order*; *Mulan*; *Everlasting Love*; *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer*; *Snow Fox*; *Eagle Companions*; *Painted Face*; *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; *Poet Dongpo*; *Dance Roots*; *Two Swallows – Ode to Wu Guanzhong*; *Spring Ritual* • *Eulogy* and *Plateau Bluebells*.

The Company has toured internationally as well as around Mainland China as a way to encourage cultural exchange, visiting Australia, the United Kingdom, Korea, Singapore, Canada, Japan, Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Zhongshan, Dongguan, Taipei and Macau. The tour performances were well received by the public with rave reviews.

Invited by the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China, the Company was the only Hong Kong dance company to perform at the “Meet in Beijing 2008” Arts Festival at the Olympics. In 2009, the Company was invited to perform at the opening ceremony of the East Asian Games. In 2010, the Company participated in The Ninth China Art Festival and the World Expo in Shanghai, with two performances of *Qingming Riverside* at the Shanghai Grand Theatre. Its Outreach team was invited to perform at the “Universiade Shenzhen 2011”.

### **Media Inquiries**

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