

SCO News 新加坡华乐团讯息

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SCO concert turns into memorial for erhu maestro

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Senior Writer

Maestro Min Huifen, doyenne of the world of Chinese erhu music, was to have played at a Singapore Chinese Orchestra concert tomorrow and on Saturday evening.

But her unexpected death at Renji Hospital in Shanghai on May 12 has turned the concert, *A Bowed Affinity*, into a memorial event and tribute to this undisputed queen of the two-stringed, bowed Chinese musical instrument. She was 69.

The concert at the SCO Concert Hall in Shenton Way will feature two of her students – Chinese erhu virtuoso Liu Guangyu, 51, who flew here specially, and the orchestra's erhu principal Zhao Jianhua, 52. They will take turns to play their teacher's famous pieces.

Liu, who is head of the Chongqing Opera House and vice-president of the China Erhu Musicians' Association, will play the famous erhu concerto, *Reflections Of The Moon On Erquan*, and *Aspiration Of The Honghu People Capriccio*.

Zhao, who left the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to join the Singapore Chinese Orchestra in 1993, will play the erhu piece, *Song Of Sadness*.

They are among Min's signature tunes which brought her fame since she won the top prize at the Shanghai Spring Arts Festival's national erhu playing competition in 1963 when she was 18.

This weekend's concert will be conducted by Min's son, Liu Ju, 42, who is resident conductor of the Central Ballet Orchestra in Beijing.

SCO general manager Terence Ho, 44, said Min's concert was planned a year ago under the orchestra's *Masters' Series* and would have been the third time she played with the orchestra.

Her first was for its inaugural concert at Victoria Concert Hall in April 1997 and the second was in September 2006.

Mr Ho, who attended Min's wake when the orchestra was performing in Shanghai in May, said instead of cancelling the two-day concert following her sudden death from brain haemorrhage, the orchestra decided to turn it into a memorial event without changing its programme.

He added: "She was a popular and highly respected erhu soloist during the past five decades and we are privileged to pay tribute to her in this way."

Min started learning erhu from her father at the age of eight. After graduating from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1969, she joined China's national arts performing troupes in Beijing and later Shanghai, and performed in many parts of the world as a solo erhu player. In 1978, she joined the Shanghai Chinese Music Orchestra and was with the orchestra till her death.



Erhu maestro Min Huifen was well known for her exuberant performances which blended many genres. PHOTO: SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA

She was well known for her exuberant performances which showed a unique blend of many genres of traditional Chinese music, such as Beijing opera, Shaoxing Opera and Chaozhou music. She was also a prolific composer of erhu music which included hits such as *Yangguan Pass Melody – Three Variations* and *Wishes Of The People Of Honghu Lake*.

When she contracted cancer 30 years ago, she fought it with great courage, undergoing six surgeries and 15 chemotherapy cycles.

Her student Zhao, who learnt the erhu from her when he was with the Shanghai Chinese Music Orchestra between 1978 and 1991, remembers her as a great erhu soloist and a mentor.

He said: "Though she was my teacher, she treated her students, including myself, as her family and loved us as if we were all her children."

Book it

A BOWED AFFINITY: A CONCERT IN MEMORY OF THE ERHU DOYENNE MIN HUIFEN

Where: SCO Concert Hall, Shenton Way

When: Tomorrow and Saturday, 8 pm

Admission: \$35/\$19, \$45/\$24, \$65 and \$75 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to sistic.com.sg)