Chinese Culture Festival 2026 in Hong Kong turns retold legends into shared discovery

In partnership with:
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

In its third year, the four-month event brought Chinese heritage to the public on stage and through films, exhibitions and community activities



Acrobatic Spectacle of Ancient Tang **was presented as part of Hong Kong's Chinese Culture Festival 2026, which featured an array of programmes over four months under the theme of "Legends".**

During a Hong Kong workshop on the traditional Chinese diabolo, or Chinese yo-yo, a Korean father was reminded of the *paengi*, the string-whipped spinning top he played with as a child. An elderly woman even stood up from her wheelchair to try the diabolo herself.

Such moments captured the spirit that the Chinese Culture Festival 2026 was created to inspire, according to Veron Lam, chief manager of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Cultural Presentations Section.

"What makes this festival distinct isn't just the scale of its programming, but Hong Kong's ability to bring people together around Chinese culture, locals, tourists and Chinese mainland visitors alike," she said. "It has truly become a landmark event that audiences plan their calendars around."

Legends reimagined for today

Under the theme of "Legends", this year's festival drew audiences spanning different generations and cultural backgrounds to venues across Hong Kong, with Luoyang, capital of the Sui (AD589-617) and Tang (AD618-907) dynasties, spotlighted as the "City in Focus".

The festival-opening performance *Lady White Snake*, a dance drama by the Shanghai Grand Theatre, presented a new take on the famous Chinese folktale about a snake spirit who takes human form in pursuit of love. Under the artistic direction of internationally renowned ballerina Tan Yuan Yuan, the story was reimagined as a modern woman's journey of self-discovery.



"Showcase of Peking Opera Actors in Full Armour Roles" featured acrobatics, stage combat and weapon work performed by male martial-arts actors known as *wusheng*.

"That is how tradition thrives, by letting each generation find its own voice within the story," Lam said.

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Acrobatic Troupe brought ancient stories to new audiences with *Acrobatic Spectacle of Ancient Tang*, which revived the splendour of the Tang dynasty for families.

The Hubei Opera and Dance Drama Theater performed the sold-out show *Harmony in Eternal Melody*, which draws on an ancient Chu story centred around conflict, diplomacy and peace. Combining dance, music and replicas of archaic bronze chime bells, the production brought the Chu civilisation (1030-223BC) to life.

The "Legends" theme could also be seen in "Showcase of Peking Opera Actors in Full Armour Roles", which revisited classic tales of loyalty and heroism through the martial artistry of *wusheng* (martial male role) actors. It was the opening programme of the 14th Chinese Opera Festival, a core component of the Chinese Culture Festival, which this year was centred around "Righteousness and Loyalty in Chinese Opera".

A city of cultural exchange

Hong Kong's appeal as a meeting point for cultural exchange was made evident by the Chinese Culture Festival, with music lovers travelling from Beijing and other mainland Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou to hear "Resonance of Strings and Harmonics", a recital featuring *guqin* maestro Yao Gongbai and his mastery of the traditional Chinese seven-stringed instrument.

The festival also included an artist-sharing session involving the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong), which gave aspiring critics the chance to exchange ideas with theatre makers.

"City in Focus: Luoyang" showcased the ancient capital set at the confluence of the Yellow and Luo rivers in Henan province, known as Heluo, with the Luoyang Yu Opera Troupe presenting signature masterpieces of the late Yu opera master Ma Jinfeng. Families who came for the *Heluo Dance Gala: Tang Figurines Treading the Tune* programme went on to the "Heluo Culture Bonds Hong Kong" exhibition – a chain of encounters that let Luoyang's culture resonate beyond any single event.

Reaching the next generation

Youth engagement has always been a priority for the Chinese Culture Festival. A group of Form Four students were among the more than 7,000 young people, teachers and community members who took part in "Chinese Culture for All: A Special Performance Series", which offered free opportunities to attend selected performances as well as participate in artist exchanges and guided activities.

"We learn about Chinese culture through sharing with each other, and it's made us realise how much there is to discover," one student said.

For Lam, that is the goal: to move young people from passive spectatorship towards active curiosity and sharing.

The series presented the drama *The Code of the Dynasty*, which turned the iconic Song dynasty (AD960-1279) painting *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* into a suspense thriller. Teachers reported that students showed a keen interest as they linked the production to history they had studied in class.

Other programmes providing inroads into China's cultural traditions included "Journeys to the West: Cinematic Dialogues Across Time", which screened adaptations of the classic story made over the decades.

In addition, the "Encountering Chinese Culture" Performing Arts Carnival featured excerpts from stage programmes along with intangible cultural heritage performances.

Building deeper connections

Lam emphasised collaboration as the key to the festival's success, such as the involvement of cultural organisations like the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Hong Kong Member Association and the Bauhinia Culture Group.

Other collaborators such as Chamber of Young Snow and Paso a Paso Foundation sponsored the "Chinese Culture for All" series, while Sun Hung Kai Properties provided the venue and promotional support for the "Encountering Chinese Culture" Performing Arts Carnival.



Stage programmes and intangible cultural heritage performances were highlighted at the "Encountering Chinese Culture" Performing Arts Carnival.

"Promoting Chinese culture requires the commitment of the entire community," Lam said. "We are grateful to every partner, artist and audience member who was part of this journey."

The four-month run of the festival welcomed around 1.4 million visitors across more than 320 programmes. The "Chinese Culture for All" series engaged more than 100 schools and community organisations, while 85 per cent of the respondents were eager for more of the special performance series.

"Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to bringing Chinese culture to life, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and connection for everyone," Lam said, adding that she hopes audiences will see Chinese culture as being "far closer to them than they think".

Visit ccf.gov.hk to see more highlights from the Chinese Culture Festival 2026 and learn what comes next with future celebrations of Chinese arts and heritage.