



Art Gallery of Ontario
Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario



**CANADIAN
OPERA
COMPANY**



大多倫多中華文化中心
Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto



SONY CENTRE
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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**EAST MEETS WEST Cultural Extravaganza to Kick Start
Asian Heritage Month Celebration at Chinese Cultural Centre**

Toronto, April 17, 2012 – In celebration of Asian Heritage Month, the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto (CCC) has partnered with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), the Canadian Opera Company (COC) and the Sony Centre For The Performing Arts to present **EAST MEETS WEST – A Cultural Extravaganza** on **Thursday, May 3, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.** Taking place at the **Chinese Cultural Centre** (5183 Sheppard Ave. E., Toronto), this **admission-free** event previews three upcoming exciting cultural events in Toronto this year, namely *Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors* at the AGO (May 5 – Aug. 19), *Semele* at the COC (May 9 – 26) and the *National Chinese Acrobats with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony* at the Sony Centre For the Performing Arts (May 12), and features live classical music, opera, dance and acrobatic performances as well as a hands-on community art-making activity.

The May 3 gala will start with traditional Chinese dragon and lion dances. The 50-member **Ontario Cross Cultural Music Society Youth Orchestra** will showcase instrumentals and medley as part of the 15th anniversary celebration of Hong Kong's return to China. Renowned soprano **Angela Zheng** will collaborate with the Orchestra. Acclaimed virtuoso player **Wendy Zhao** will display her dexterity and percussive skills on Pipa. The finale will be a Chinese dance performance.

Robert Wainstein, Research Analyst for the AGO's curatorial department, will present an interesting overview of the Gallery's upcoming Zhang Huan exhibition, discussing the artist's works and their significance. Members of the AGO's education and public programming department **Vincent Luk** and **Catherine Campbell** will lead a creative hands-on project inspired by *Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors*.

The COC offers a tantalizing preview of Handel's opera about the pitfalls of love affairs between gods and mortals, with a special performance by soprano **Mireille Asselin** and pianist **Timothy Cheung**. Both artists are members of the COC's Ensemble Studio, a training program for young opera professionals. On May 3 Asselin will perform a selection of operatic arias, including a musical excerpt evocative of *Semele*'s sensual tone and vividly dramatic sound.

In addition to a jaw-dropping performance by four contortionists from the world-renowned Hunan Acrobatic Troupe in China, the Assistant Conductor of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, **Evan Mitchell**, will speak about the musical aspect of the show.

More information on *Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors* at the AGO, *Semele* at the COC and the *National Chinese Acrobats with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony* at the Sony Centre will be available at the Chinese Cultural Centre on May 3, with each participating arts organization hosting an information booth about their respective exhibits and performances.

The collaborative efforts of AGO, COC, CCC and the Sony Centre for the May 3 opening event of the Cultural Extravaganza is sponsored by **Downtown Fine Cars Group, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, and RBC Royal Bank.**

Individuals interested in attending these upcoming events may take advantage of a special promotional offer to purchase tickets to all three events at a discounted price. Ticket packages are available for as little as \$97.

Tickets for this **free** event on **May 3** must be reserved in advance.

OTHER EAST MEETS WEST CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA SERIES EVENTS

Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors at the Art Gallery of Ontario

(May 5 to Aug. 19, 2012)

Incense and memory will pervade the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) this summer with the opening of *Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors*. On display in the Philip B. Lind Gallery, the exhibition features 12 works from two of Zhang's most recent series: *Ash Paintings*, detailed canvases painted with authentic incense ash collected from Buddhist temples; and *Memory Doors*, carved antique wood doors imprinted with photographic imagery. Both series are inspired by images from old magazines, newspaper clippings, and family photographs that depict scenes of daily life, labour, and military service during the 1940s and 1970s. The works address the disconnection between personal and collective memory – what people remember – and the official historical record of that era in Chinese history.

The exhibition is included in the price of general admission to the AGO, ranging from \$11 to \$19.50. Admission is free for children under the age of 5 and AGO members.

For more information on the AGO exhibition *Zhang Huan: Ash Paintings and Memory Doors*, please contact: Andrea-Jo Wilson, News Officer, tel: 416-979-6660 ext. 403, e-mail: andrea-jo_wilson@ago.net.

Semele at the Canadian Opera Company

(May 9, 11, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24 and 26, 2012)

The Canadian Opera Company presents the company premiere of George Frideric Handel's *Semele* in a production directed by famed Chinese visual and performance artist Zhang Huan. Zhang's *Semele* takes the world of classical music and presents it through his perspective

as a contemporary Chinese artist, drawing on parallels between Greco-Roman mythology and Chinese legends, as well as Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation, to create a true interaction of Eastern and Western cultures. The production's centerpiece is a 450-year-old Ming Dynasty ancestral temple salvaged by Zhang from a small town in China.

Sung in English with English SURTITLES™, *Semele* runs for eight performances at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (145 Queen St. W). Single tickets for *Semele* are \$12 – \$318 (includes applicable taxes). Tickets are available online at www.coc.ca, by calling 416-363-8231, or in person at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts Box Office, Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

National Chinese Acrobats with Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony at the Sony Centre For The Performing Arts (May 12, 2012)

National Chinese Acrobats is an exciting Canada-China cultural exchange between the Hunan Acrobatic Troupe, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and the Sony Centre For The Performing Arts. With a musical programme that includes Verdi, Mozart and Mendelssohn, the Hunan Acrobatic Troupe will create a new spectacle of dazzling feats, daredevil maneuvers, and breathtaking balancing acts for an unforgettable performance that will both mesmerize and mystify. The entire range of Chinese circus acts will be on display including martial arts, contortion, silks, and the perennial favourite, plate spinning.

Ticket prices range from \$38-\$68, plus applicable taxes and service charges, and can be purchased in person at the Sony Centre box office, over the phone at 1-855-872-SONY (7669) or online at www.sonycentre.ca.

Discounts are available for groups of 8 or more through THE Group Tix Company, 647-438-5559 or Toll Free 1-866-447-7849 <http://www.thegrouptixcompany.com/>

FOR MEDIA INFORMATION CONTACTS

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Sony Centre For The Performing Arts

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