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THE MOON REPRESENTS MY HEART: MUSIC, MEMORY AND BELONGING

May 2 – September 15, 2019

[New York, NY] March 15, 2019 – This groundbreaking exhibition *The Moon Represents My Heart: Music, Memory and Belonging*, which opens May 2, 2019 at the Museum of Chinese in America, will focus on the transformative power of music identity in immigrant Chinese communities from the 1850s to the present. During this period, disparate music genres converged with historic milestones, including changes in U.S. immigration legislation and China's soft power emergence. The exhibition will delve into how Chinese immigrant communities have yearned for the 'old country', fashioned new American identities, or challenged stereotypes through their embrace of music forms as far-reaching as Cantonese opera, hip hop, Asian American Movement music, Taiwan love ballads, Canto-pop, western classical, karaoke, Beijing underground rock, and many other genres.

The exhibition is co-curated by Hua Hsu, staff writer at *The New Yorker*, and MOCA's curatorial team: Herb Tam, Curator and Director of Exhibitions, and Andrew Rebatta, Associate Curator.



"The Fortune Cookies" top row: Rose Lau, Joanne Lau; bottom: Sue Jean Lee, Joann Lee 1965, courtesy of Joann Lee

"Putting together this show was like making a mixtape. It's full of echoes, resonances, connections across time and space, proud defiance and soft-neon sappiness," says Hua Hsu, co-curator and staff writer at *The New Yorker*. "We knew it was impossible to tell some definitive story about music's role in Chinese American life. Instead, we tried to mix together as much of it as we could, from the epic performers to everyday fandom. It's about what happens when sounds cross borders or beckon you home."

Although music has been an important facet of the Chinese experience in America since the Hong Took Tong Cantonese opera troupe performed in San Francisco in 1852, the contributions of Chinese and Asian Americans have gone largely unnoticed to mainstream listeners. *The Moon Represents My Heart* will highlight the work of over fifty notable singers, performers, musicians and organizations such as Peking opera star Mei Lanfang,



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rapper MC Jin, Cantonese opera group Chinese Music and Theatre Association, pop singer Teresa Teng, hip hop producer David Eng, experimental sound artists C. Spencer Yeh and Charmaine Lee, Broadway actor and Chinese folk singer Stephen Cheng, Winnie's karaoke bar, the Chinatown singing group The Fortune Cookies, and many others.

"Beyond just defining Chinese music, the exhibition will prompt visitors to ask: How does music reflect who I am?" says **Herb Tam**, Curator and Director of Exhibitions. "By doing so, it will make the case that music has played a foundational role in immigrant culture."

The exhibition will connect diverse musical forms in ways that break from conventional genre categorizations and historical timelines. Is there shared DNA between Cantonese opera and Asian American hip hop? Why did a generation of Asian Americans find solace in English new wave bands, such as Erasure and Depeche Mode? By free associating with the typical way music is organized, we hope the exhibition will prompt visitors to explore how music, memory and belonging are connected.

"Music genres such as Cantonese opera and mid-90s pop music from Taiwan are ostensibly removed from one another, but further inquiry shows us that aspects of Chinese culture and tradition are a common thread," said **Nancy Yao Maasbach**, President of the Museum of Chinese in America. "This exhibition touches upon themes of community and spirituality, longing and belonging, appropriation and appreciation. We are so grateful to the artists, advisors, and generous supporters who have made this exhibition possible."

Stories will be told within a dynamic presentation of event flyers and posters, performance documentation and artist notebooks, music listening stations and contemporary art, magazine and album cover art, and liner notes and manifestos. These materials, presented on and around an enclosed central stage, will immerse visitors in a discussion of immigrant music, memory and identity, and will be a dramatic backdrop for nighttime karaoke sing-alongs and musical performances.

In conjunction with *The Moon Represents My Heart*, MOCA will offer a dynamic program calendar throughout the spring and summer of 2019. MOCA's free monthly Music + Mic Nights featuring emerging talent from the community will be staged within the exhibition, activating the archival and



Hiro Kone promotional concert poster, 2017, courtesy of Nicky Mao



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documentary materials with live music. In addition, new programming will feature themed karaoke nights, traditional Chinese music ensemble performances, classical Western music showcases, DJ-led listening sessions, and experimental music performances.

Limited edition merchandise and product tie-ins related to the exhibition will be sold at the Museum's newly relaunched store called **MOCA Shop by Pearl River**, a unique retail experience launched in January 2019 that celebrates art, history, identity and community in partnership with family-owned Asian emporium Pearl River Mart.

The exhibition is supported with research by Yuli Cheng, MOCA's curatorial intern. It is advised by Henry Chang, Nancy Bulalacao, Alexander Lau, Eva Lerner-Lam, Su Zheng, Taiyo Na, and Yuanyuan Yang.



About the Guest Curator

Hua Hsu is a staff writer at *The New Yorker* and the author of *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific* (Harvard University Press, 2016.) He is also an associate professor of English and director of the American Studies program at Vassar College. He is a board member for the Asian American Writers' Workshop and a fellow at the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University.

Additional Programs

During the run of this exhibition, MOCA will offer a series of related events, public programs, family programs, walking tours and gallery tours. A schedule of guided tours of *The Moon Represents My Heart* and updates on upcoming related programs will be available on MOCA's website, www.mocanyc.org. Follow the exhibitions on Twitter and Instagram at @mocanyc, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mocanyc and at #MoonRepresentsMyHeart.

For press and image requests, email press@mocanyc.org.

The Moon Represents My Heart: Music, Memory and Belonging and related programs are made possible with the generous support of the S.H. Ho Foundation, Con Edison, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

About the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)

The Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) aims to engage audiences in an ongoing and historical dialogue, in which people of all backgrounds are able to see American history through a critical perspective, to reflect on their own experiences, and to make meaningful connections between: the past and the present, the global and the local, themselves and others.



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MOCA is a proud partner of the New York City IDNYC card benefit program and Culture Pass, a program for cardholders of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Library in which New Yorkers 13 and older can reserve passes and get free admission to dozens of NYC cultural institutions.

Hours:

Monday: Closed

Tuesday to Sunday: 11am-6pm

Thursday: 11am-9pm

MOCA Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month, made possible through the generosity of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and J.T. Tai & Co. Foundation.

Admission:

General Admission: \$12

Seniors (65 and older with ID), Students (with school ID): \$8

Children under 2 in groups less than 10: Free

Cool Culture families: Free

MOCA Members: Free