

“Hong Kong Pop 60+” Exhibition

Audio Tour Script

Sun Ma Sze Tsang releasing a letter concerning fund-raising and disaster relief activities

September 1962

Hong Kong is on the South China coast, and is threatened by typhoons every summer. On 1 September 1962, Typhoon Wanda made a direct hit on Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Observatory hoisted tropical cyclone warning signal No. 10. Wanda’s arrival coincided with a rising tide, and this together with raging onshore winds resulted in the local sea level being considerably higher than usual. The storm surge caused serious flooding in low-lying areas, especially in Shatin and Tai Po. There were more than 100 people killed, and many more made homeless as their houses were destroyed. This was a very painful experience for the public.

At that time, the radio not only provided the public with the latest news on the typhoon, but also became a way for communities to provide assistance to the victims – including by serving as a medium for singers to raise money through charity performances for the victims. Just after Typhoon Wanda, Cantonese opera singer Sun Ma Sze Tsang, widely known as the “King of Charity Singers”, released a letter saying he would hold a fund-raising party on Radio Rediffusion’s Silver Channel, singing for the victims and calling for donations from Hong Kong people.

Originally called Tang Wing-cheung, Sun was born in Shunde, Guangdong. He began learning Cantonese opera at just 9 years old, debuted on stage at 10, and was known as a child prodigy. He gave a stunning performance imitating a famous Cantonese opera singer, Ma Sze Tsang, which led to him having the stage name Sun Ma Sze Tsang. Sun was good at performing ancient tunes with Peking Opera singing skills. From time to time, he drew on the *Nanyin* style, and integrated the strengths of various schools to form a unique “Sun Ma Style”.

In addition to stage performances, Sun acted in films, like other singers in the 1950s. He also served as the chairman of the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong many times. He often devoted himself to charity activities, and so was known as the “King of Charity Singers”. In 1977, Sun was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Arts from Oxford University, UK, in recognition of his outstanding achievements and contributions to the performing art of Cantonese opera.