

“The Hong Kong Stories” of Two Music Professionals

The new permanent exhibition of the Hong Kong Museum of History will adopt a “people-oriented” approach, covering people from all walks of life, irrespective of gender, age, profession and nationality, as a tribute to the pluralistic society of Hong Kong. The museum would especially like to use the permanent exhibition as a platform to inform the public about representative figures who have passed away. The two professionals in this article have different nationalities, but they both lived in Hong Kong for a long time, and their lives were inseparably connected to music.

Wong Hay (1923-2017, alias Uncle Calvin) was born in Canton and started his performing career in Macau and Zhanjiang. After the anti-Japanese War, he returned to Canton and focused on his music and performing career. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1949, where he started as a music teacher and then performed puppet shows on the newly opened Rediffusion Television in the late 1950s. Using the stage name “Uncle Calvin”, Wong later played host to the children’s programme “Happy Birthday”, which was well-received by the younger generation in the 1960s and 70s. Wong was acclaimed among the first generation TV hosts of children’s programme in Hong Kong. After his retirement in the 1980s, he was still committed to teaching music and served as an extra-curricular music teacher for over 20 primary and secondary schools. He trained a wide spectrum of musical teams, including a pastor flute team, a pipe band, a percussion band, and a marching band, using music to nurture the younger generation until his death.

Dr Solomon Matthew Bard (1916-2014) was born in a Jewish family in Russia. He arrived in Hong Kong from Harbin via Shanghai in 1936 and enrolled in the medical school of the University of Hong Kong. In March of the same year, he made his musical debut in Hong Kong, playing violin at the Helena May Institute. During the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941, Dr Bard served in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps and fought in the battle for Hong Kong, after which he was interned in the Sham Shui Po prisoner of war camp. During his internment, he formed a small orchestra and staged three “Bard Concerts”, much to the enjoyment of his fellow prisoners. After the war, he went into private practice for some time before joining the University Health Service of the University of Hong Kong and later the Antiquities and Monuments Office. Dr Bard contributed a great deal to the local music community by founding the Sino-British Orchestra, which later became the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, grooming many renowned musicians, including Doming Lam and Lo King-man. Wearing a typical Chinese cheongsam in the master’s

style, Dr Bard occasionally conducted the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra after its founding in 1977.

These two music professionals will be covered in the new permanent exhibition, thanks to the memorabilia their families have shared with us. Interesting episodes from Uncle Calvin's children's shows will be showcased in the Hong Kong Television Pioneers corner, while the legendary career of Dr Bard will be told through our thematic gallery of the new exhibition focusing on non-Chinese communities.



Wong Hay (centre) and members of his family at an interview arranged by the Museum of History, 29 May 2017



Record disc of the TV programme "Happy Birthday", hosted by Wong Hay in the 1960s



Paul Bard (left), son of Dr Solomon Bard, with our colleague in Sydney, Australia, on 6 October 2017



British medals awarded to Dr Bard in recognition of his military service