

# HONG KONG

## THE ARTS

# DEFINING MOMENT FOR MAESTRO



Jaap van Zweden, music director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in the United States, leads members of the Hong Kong Philharmonic during an intense rehearsal. Photo: Jonathan Wong

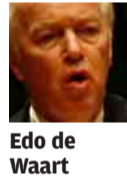
**Jaap van Zweden**, newly crowned US Conductor of the Year, is in spotlight as he auditions for Hong Kong Philharmonic's top spot with concert series this month

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One of the conductors vying for the post of artistic director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra has scooped a top international award.

Jaap van Zweden, music director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and one of the world's leading conductors, was named Musical America's Conductor of the Year 2012 two weeks before beginning a concert series with the Hong Kong Philharmonic last Friday.

"I thought the award would go to [Los Angeles Philharmonic chief] Dudamel or [New York Philharmonic chief] Gilbert. But they picked me. It was interesting," said the Dutch conductor, who is to receive the prize from the performing arts news outlet



**Edo de Waart**

in New York next month.

The maestro, 51, is one of a dozen candidates aiming to succeed Edo de Waart as leader of Hong Kong's top orchestra. Though it has not been formally announced, they are auditioning by acting as guest conductors for major orchestral works.

Others include the former music director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Andreas Delfs, the Japan Philharmonic's Alexander Lazarov and Vienna Philharmonic veteran Johannes Wildner. The exercise will finish at the end of the season in July.

Van Zweden has a long association with de Waart. He was concertmaster of the Concertgebouw or-

chestra in Amsterdam for 16 years, with which de Waart guest-conducted and recorded. In 2004, he succeeded de Waart as music chief of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. And next year, de Waart will succeed him to lead the Royal Flemish Philharmonic.

"I think there is an advantage for me to work at an orchestra previously led by Edo, although we are totally different," Van Zweden said. "Edo is more an orchestra-builder, and I am more on the performance side."

According to orchestra board chairman Liu Yuan-sung, the candidates will be evaluated anonymously by all members of the orchestra and the results will go to the search committee for consideration.

"Players will comment and rank the conductor's technique, musicianship and chemistry with the or-

chestra on a five-point scale," Liu said. "But the final decision rests with the search committee."

Despite the prospect that orchestra members may influence the verdict, van Zweden did not go easy on them during rehearsals. He remained sharply critical as he fine-tuned the orchestra for the Asian premiere of Philip Glass' double concerto.

**I will not tell them: 'Oh, you are so fantastic and great' in order to win the contract. I am not interested in that**

JAAP VAN ZWEDEN

"All my bones ached after those rehearsals," said one violin player.

But to van Zweden, there is only one way to make music, which he calls the way of life. He believes all musicians have the potential to reach that mentality.

"If something is to happen between me and the orchestra, it must be out of free will," he said. "I will not tell them: 'Oh, you are so fantastic and great' in order to win the contract. I am not interested in that."

"All I am interested in is how far I can stretch them and improve them. That would be the moment for me to say, 'Hey, that has potential to be an interesting marriage.'"

He believes a lasting relationship should not be rushed into, but be built on trust and respect. The first criterion he has for working with an orchestra is that he feels welcome.

"As conductors, we are no longer tyrants. Instead we should recognise the orchestra as people we can talk to, share thoughts with and feel for."

## OPERATION SANTA CLAUS

# Smash hit charity squash event raises HK\$1.1m

The 13th Wing Ding Squash Tournament was a blaze of colour and fun as players raced between courts

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Imagine SpongeBob SquarePants facing Super Mario at one squash court, while a Hawaiian tourist smashes a ball to Superman at the court next door.

This was the scene played out at the Hong Kong Football Club yesterday as the annual Wing Ding Squash Tournament got into full swing.

The 13th Wing Ding, one of the most fun and colourful fund-raising events in Hong Kong, raised more than HK\$1.1 million for this year's Operation Santa Claus (OSC) appeal.

The tournament started in 1998 to celebrate the memory of Yuen Kam-wing, a physically disabled man who helped run the Hong Kong Squash Centre on Cotton Tree Drive. Yuen died at the age of 33 from complications related to his illness.

The money raised yesterday will go to 16 beneficiaries identified by OSC, an annual fund-raising campaign jointly organised by the *South China Morning Post* and Radio Television Hong Kong. Since it was established in 1988, OSC has supported more than 100 Hong Kong charities.

Under the rules of the Wing Ding, players must wear fancy dress and each plays 13 three-minute games. A horn blasts every three minutes to signal the start of a new game, and the players race from court to court.

This year saw 14 teams of 10 players battle it out, with each grade playing non-stop for 39 minutes.

"Coming up with the costumes is the most difficult part. We aren't allowed to choose the colour, so we have to invent a costume after we know what colour we have been given," said May Tang, whose team had to dress in orange and decided to wear Hawaiian T-shirts.

May has been competing in the squash tournament for five years and it has become a family event, with her husband playing and her daughter manning the horn.

"It is a proud event," said John Lau, a player with the American Club who has been participating for 13 years. "Basically everyone in Hong Kong who plays squash can join by forming their own team. We have fun when we support charity work."

Hong Kong Football Club won the event, with the Ladies Recreation Club second and the United Services Recreation Club third.

The nine-hour fund-raising event ended with an auction and a raffle. One of last year's successful auction bidders, Lee Robinson, said he had been too busy to enjoy the sailing course and trip to Bali and Phuket he bought last year. "But I really like this event because it is not just giving money away," he said. "We can participate and have fun while helping."

"I am very pleased with the result. Everyone is eager to help because they can support a charitable cause and know the beneficiaries depend on their donations," said Tim Everest, the Wing Ding's co-ordinator. "The most rewarding part is always the smiling faces I see at the squash courts and knowing the money we raise will be great help to the needy."



Squash players dressed for the occasion at the Wing Ding tournament, which raised HK\$1.1 million for charity. Photos: Sam Tsang



## HOW YOU CAN GIVE

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- Donations can be made at ATMs or at any branch of HSBC account number 502-676299-001 for SCMP CHARITIES LTD-OPERATION SANTA CLAUS
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- Donations of HK\$100 or more are tax-deductible. For a tax receipt, send the completed donation form and original bank receipt with your name, address and phone number to the address above.
- Contact us via e-mail at [osc@scmp.com](mailto:osc@scmp.com), telephone 2680 8159 or visit us online at [osc.scmp.com](http://osc.scmp.com)

## TRANSPORT



Road casualty totals are displayed on an electronic board at Aberdeen Tunnel and (right) a taxi that mounted the pavement in Shanghai Street, Mong Kok, yesterday. Photos: Edward Wong, SMP



# We're finally taking the road to a safer city

After an 11-year hold-up, the first audit of a proposed new route will be carried out to reduce accidents

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An idea first investigated more than a decade ago as a way of saving lives on Hong Kong's roads could finally be adopted.

The first safety audit of a proposed new road in the city will be carried out by the government.

The decision comes as the United Nations World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Accident Victims is observed today.

If the pilot scheme is a success, safety audits – common practice in much of the developed world – could be adopted for all new roads in Hong Kong.

The first audit will be carried out on the proposed Central-Kowloon route running via Yau Ma Tei to Kai Tak. Engineers and road safety activ-

ists hailed the initiative. Julian Kwong Tse-hin, chairman of Community for Road Safety, said many roads in Hong Kong were poorly designed and some had metal barriers which could not withstand a collision, leading to more serious crashes.

Vincent Chan Man-hong, of the

**We hope this will not turn into a procedure that requires people to write many reports and fill in forms**

JULIAN KWONG, COMMUNITY FOR ROAD SAFETY

Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, said he did not believe Hong Kong's roads were particularly unsafe, but added: "With road safety audits, the chance of having traffic accidents can be further reduced."

The audits cover the layout of the road, bends, gradients, barriers, road signs and even drainage and are carried out by an independent team.

The Transport Department employed consultants to start studying the possibilities of introducing road safety audits for Hong Kong as early as 2000.

A department spokesman could not say why it had taken so long to adopt the system.

In July 2003, a truck crashed into double-decker bus and pushed it through the parapet of Ting Kau Bridge on Tuen Mun Road, killing 21 people and injuring 20.

Despite calls from the public to establish a safety audit system, a panel set up to examine the cause of the accident recommended only a com-

prehensive safety review of Tuen Mun Road.

Yesterday alone, at least 47 traffic accidents happened across the city that caused injuries, according to the government's Information Services Department.

The actual number could be larger, as not all accidents are reported.

Inside Shing Mun Tunnel, which connects Tsuen Wan and Sha Tin, a vehicle caught fire as it was travelling towards Tsuen Wan. Its male driver had to escape from the burning car.

In Tsuen Wan, a double-decker bus hit a bunch of bamboo poles on the pavement, with the flying wood injuring a female passer-by.

A taxi lost control in Shanghai Street, Mong Kok, and mounted the pavement, injuring a pedestrian. The 70-year-old driver apparently felt unwell and was hospitalised.

Road safety consultant Kwong, of Community for Road Safety, said Hong Kong lagged behind other countries on road safety.

The audit system is currently

operated in Britain, the United States, Singapore and Australia. Kwong said that while sections of a road may comply with international standards, the audits would help build a picture of the overall safety of the route.

"We hope this will not turn into merely a procedure that requires people to write many reports and fill in forms. We hope there will be quality road safety audits in Hong Kong."

According to police figures there have been 12,586 traffic accidents in Hong Kong in the first 10 months of this year, up 198 year-on-year.

In the same period 102 people died in traffic accidents, seven more than last year.

Kwong added: "The situation clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of the current approach and the need for a far more aggressive road safety strategy."

Chan said Hong Kong had about 100 to 150 traffic engineers and it would not be difficult to train them to become qualified auditors.

## REVIEW

# Stunning one-man show succeeds at every level

**Desh Akram Khan**  
Kwai Tsing Theatre  
Thursday

*Desh* is the first full-length solo work by Akram Khan. The celebrated dancer-choreographer has been seen before in Hong Kong in his duos with ballet star Sylvie Guillem and actress Juliette Binoche. *Desh* is far more substantial in terms of both choreography and emotional content and reveals Khan's true stature as an artist.

Khan has drawn on the life of his father, who emigrated to Britain from Bangladesh ("*desh*" means "homeland" in the Bangla language) and his own experience growing up as the child of immigrants to fashion a powerful show which speaks to people of all ages and cultures. The themes are universal: conflict between generations, the struggle to hand down traditions and the sense of loss when parents are gone and it is too late to know them better.

Combining theatre with dance, Khan interweaves his father's story, the struggle for freedom in Bangladesh and his own attempts to interest his young niece in the traditions of their forebears' homeland. There is

drama, fantasy and humour (including an extremely clever sequence in Khan turns himself into his father by painting a face on the top of his shaven head which he keeps bent forward, creating the illusion of a much shorter man to astonishing effect).

Although Khan is the only live performer, Tim Yip's simple yet brilliant visual design, Jocelyn Pook's evocative music and a soundtrack that conjures up the street life of Bangladesh and the presence of other characters make this seem a much larger-scale production.

The outstanding feature of the work, however, is Khan's dancing. The freedom and expressiveness of movement of contemporary dance are enhanced by footwork of dazzling speed and precision and a superb use of hands that attest to his background in kathak classical Indian dance. At one point he spins around and around the stage so fast that he seems about to take off like a helicopter yet never loses control.

*Desh* is a multi-layered work that succeeds on every level – aesthetic, emotional and intellectual – and is as profound as it is entertaining. The audience responded to it with a prolonged and fervent standing ovation. Natasha Rogai