

## Honorary Fellow A Citation

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### **Dr Koo Ti-hua, B.Eng., M.B.A., Ph.D (Hon.)**

The Tang dynasty essayist and Confucian scholar Han Yu wrote in *Explanation Upon Entering the Academy*, 'Learning is attained by hard work rather than recreation. Achievements are gained by thorough consideration, not casual decision.' It is clear from the quote that success and knowledge require dedication. This also applies to modern entrepreneurs: when facing tough market competition, insights and foresights come to those with specialist knowledge and an international vision. Success and wealth accumulate when one taps into one's history, when one cares about the continuation of one's country and culture. Determination and love for country show through action, through charitable deeds that give back to society and people.

A native of Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, Dr Koo Ti-hua was born to a scholarly family in Shanghai in 1937. His maternal grandfather was a founder of the Chinese silk industry. In the 1950s, Dr Koo took third place in the national entry examination and was admitted by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University to study civil engineering. He received a full scholarship from the West German government to further his studies at the University of Munich, graduating with a master's degree in Business Administration. Dr Koo is a natural linguist, having mastered Russian, English and German in his youth. He translated a book by the Soviet hydraulic engineering expert G S Khovanskii on nomogram calculations for hydraulics. This accurate translation is a testament to Dr Koo's exceptional knowledge of engineering and Russian.

With his linguistic and professional capability, Dr Koo came to Hong Kong in 1962 to join the British firm Jardine Matheson, and was engaged in international trading of technological products, particularly in China's first purchase of commercial aircrafts. He furthered his studies in Germany in business administration before moving back to Hong Kong and established the multinational group Novelact Limited, which grew to more than 20 subsidiaries with 3,000 staff worldwide. Its main business included a joint venture with a famous German consortium, pioneering the sales of Chinese agricultural products in Western Europe, reaching several hundred thousand tons of sales annually. The company also introduced technologically advanced products to assist China's Four Modernizations, bringing in biochemical and medical equipment taking approximately one-third of the market share. It also owned a fleet of 13 ocean freighters. The company was a visionary property developer, investing in Shanghai's Pudong area in the early days of China's economic reform. Under the leadership of Dr Koo, the company encompassed a wide spread of business activity, including manufacturing, logistics, property development and international trade, making a sizeable contribution to global economic development.

Dr Koo infuses traditional Chinese values with business management, practicing a six-way operation theory based on 'Righteousness, Gratitude, Affection'. This management philosophy has been embraced by the international business community. Staff wellbeing is of utmost

importance to Dr Koo and he often compares operating a business to running a ship. It cannot simply rely on the captain to navigate. It is a close-knit crew that guides a ship through rough seas.

Dr Koo balances his successful business life with his passion for arts and literature. He has loved Chinese opera since he was a child, especially Peking opera and Kunqu. When he was young, he learnt Peking opera from Zhang Shusheng, a disciple of the famed Master of 'Red Bean Chamber'. In 1979, he became the first overseas disciple of Kunqu master Yu Zhenfei, learning both Kunqu and Peking opera. Dr Koo studies Shuimodiao (the water-polished music of Kunqu) and Yu's singing style. With superb diction and in-depth knowledge of Kunqu libretto, he is an outstanding performer of the Yu style. Even when he was living in Germany, he practised singing regularly and learnt from Master Yu's recordings. Dr Koo also takes part in performances and specializes in the young scholarly male roles, xiaosheng. Taking after his master, Dr Koo's refined stage persona projects a literary air and his technique is widely lauded in the field, often compared to professional disciples of Master Yu. He received the first Gold Orchid Award from the Chinese Opera Association and is regarded as China's best amateur opera singer. Over the past two decades, Dr Koo has actively promoted the art of Kunqu and contributed to its preservation – collecting, restoring and recording traditional Kunqu repertory. He has published an annotated edition of Kunqu music scores and a collection of Kunqu highlights, as well as headed productions of CDs and DVDs about the art. He also funded the publication of, and penned the preface for, an educational anthology featuring 300 works. In 1996, Dr Koo founded the Koo Ti Hua Foundation for the Promotion of Kunqu Opera to support Kunqu troupes in mainland China. In 2002, he founded the Shanghai Kunqu International Association, acting as Chairman. Since 2006, he has been the Director of the China Peking Opera Arts Foundation, and since 2011, a member of the Cultural Committee of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Hong Kong Association. Dr Koo has done much for the promotion of Kunqu and Peking Opera.

Dr Koo is also a great philanthropist, in addition to supporting many educational and culture development projects in the Mainland. In 2013, because of high healthcare costs in the US and the lack of facilities available to the less fortunate living in San Francisco, Dr and Mrs Koo donated a whole building in a prime location of San Francisco's Richmond district to the United States non-profit community medical centre North East Medical Services. Converted into the 'Koo's Clinical Building', it offers healthcare services to local Chinese communities. Dr Koo's concern for the wellbeing of fellow Chinese stretches beyond geographical and national boundaries.

Dr Koo is an important patron of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is a major donor of the Lee Woo Sing College, funding scholarships that assist the disadvantaged to complete their education. He also supported the Music Department in the publication of *An Anthology of Annotated North and South Ci Music in Nine Modes: A Critical Edition with Commentary*. Dedicated to promoting Chinese traditional opera amongst the student and staff body at the

University, he graced the audience with his kunqu singing at the 'Beijing Opera Appreciation cum Lee Woo Sing College 5th Anniversary Opening Ceremony'. He also organized and funded the University's 50th anniversary celebration programme, 'An Operatic Journey of Cultural Heritage through Peking, Kunqu and Cantonese Traditions'.

Dr Koo has made outstanding and long-lasting contribution to our country's educational development and its culture's continuation. His great academic and commercial achievements, together with noble personal qualities, make him a role model and an exemplar for the students. Mr Chairman, to recognize this exceptional entrepreneur and artist, it is my privilege to present to you Dr Koo Ti-hua for the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the University.