

**HONG KONG ARTS FESTIVAL presentation  
To LEGCO on CULTURAL SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT  
15 February 2008**

The Hong Kong Arts Festival was established as a citizens' initiative in 1972 to improve the quality of life. From inception, the Festival's mandate has been to present performances of the highest standards by both local and visiting artists, and to have fully professional management.

A highlight of Hong Kong's cultural calendar, and with a strong international and regional reputation, it runs for over 4 weeks in February and March each year, and encompasses music, dance, theatre and opera. The Festival serves an average paid audienceship of 100,000 each year, and additional 12,000 young audiences in the Young Friends' Scheme. This year, the numbers will be even higher with the equestrian show Zingaro, at Hung Hom.

Official funding for the Festival disbursed through LCSD has stagnated at \$15,734,000 since 2005. After deducting venue rental, box office charges and other unavoidable and non-negotiable venue related costs, net support has come to no more than 15% of operating budget in recent years. This is an exceptionally low percentage and cannot be sustained in the long term without detriment to the quality of work presented.

In presenting top talent from around the world, the Festival

- Ø acts as a catalyst in the development of local audiences and artistic community
- Ø provides a platform for local companies
- Ø provides professional engagements for local artists and ensembles.

It should be highlighted that each year, the Festival

- Ø invests in new local productions and collaborations
- Ø presents a Cantonese Opera production as a contribution towards promoting this art form.
- Ø organizes a Symposium to promote discourse on subjects of interest. The 2008 Symposium is on Funding Models.

The Festival is managed by a highly professional and dedicated team, many of whom participate in training programmes as guest lecturers or speakers. There is also an impressive alumnus of Festival personnel who now serve in other organizations.

With a full time team of 17, the Festival's in house training capabilities is limited, but with adequate means, the Festival would be happy to host and send interns on local and international attachments, assist in the management of smaller companies participating in the Festival with a view to skills transfer, and take an active role in training programmes offered in educational institutions.

The Festival invests heavily in audience development, particularly in its Young Friends' Scheme, which allows members to participate in three Festival performances or events at a nominal cost. This programme does not currently enjoy any funding support from the government, and is subsidized from Festival resources.

The Festival welcomes the Home Affairs Bureau's proposal to undertake a manpower mapping exercise, and would also encourage further investigation of audience profiles and tourism potential. This data will be pertinent both for the WKCD, and for the long term development of Hong Kong, as audiences form an integral part of cultural software