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**Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of  
the West Kowloon Cultural District Project**

**Meeting on 6 November 2018**

**Updated background brief on the development of Xiqu Centre**

**Purpose**

This paper provides updated background information on the Xiqu Centre in the West Kowloon Cultural District ("WKCD"). It also summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members of the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project ("the Joint Subcommittee") on issues relating to the development of the Xiqu Centre.

**Background**

2. According to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority ("WKCDA"),<sup>1</sup> the Xiqu Centre is designed to be a world-class platform for the conservation, promotion and development of Cantonese opera and other genres of xiqu (Chinese traditional theatre). The prime objective of the Xiqu Centre is to encourage the development of all forms of Chinese opera in Hong Kong, in particular Cantonese opera which was included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 following a joint application by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Region governments via the Mainland Government. The opening of the Xiqu Centre will be conducive to developing a locally-rooted xiqu network that has a regional impact and an important role in international arts development.

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<sup>1</sup> [LC Paper No. CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)](#)

3. The Xiqu Centre, located at the junction of Canton Road and Austin Road West, will be the first core arts and cultural facility to be opened in WKCD. According to WKCDA in May 2018,<sup>2</sup> the occupation permit for the Xiqu Centre was obtained in April 2018, with its practical completion expected to be achieved in the third quarter of 2018. The two-stage opening plan of Xiqu Centre will include (a) Stage Dedication Day and Open Days in the fourth quarter of 2018, and (b) a three-month Opening Season starting in the first quarter of 2019. The facilities at the Xiqu Centre would be open for programmes of hirers after the Opening Season. A flowchart of the opening schedule and an overview of the opening programmes (provided by WKCDA in May 2018) are given in **Appendices I** and **II** respectively.

4. Upon opening, the Xiqu Centre, with a total area of 28 164 square metres, will provide facilities for performances, notably a 1 073-seat Grand Theatre and a 200-seat Tea House Theatre;<sup>3</sup> rehearsal and training spaces; arts education facilities; retail, dining and entertainment ("RDE") facilities; public open spaces as well as associated facilities such as car parking spaces.

### **Major views and concerns expressed by members**

5. Issues relating to the development of the Xiqu Centre were discussed at meetings of the Joint Subcommittee. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Project cost and operation cost

6. Some members expressed grave concern that the estimated project cost for the Xiqu Centre and related facilities at \$2.7 billion in money-of-the-day ("MOD") prices based on the chosen design<sup>4</sup> was more than double the cost estimate for the relevant facilities in 2006. They were concerned if the the final project cost of the Xiqu Centre could be contained within the target budget.

7. The Administration and WKCDA clarified that the estimated project cost of \$2.7 billion (in MOD prices) was based on the current scope of the

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<sup>2</sup> [LC Paper No. CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Based on the latest information on the webpage for the Xiqu Centre:  
<https://www.westkowloon.hk/en/the-district/architecture-facilities/xiqu-centre/>

<sup>4</sup> The design was selected from the Xiqu Centre Design Competition held in 2012.

Xiqu Centre, which included additional accommodation such as arts education facilities and increased open spaces not covered in the original scope in 2006.

8. WKCDA also indicated that it had undertaken rigorous value engineering exercises to make the design of the Xiqu Centre more cost-effective thereby reducing the total project budget by up to \$100 million. A contingency fund was made available to cater for any cost overrun. WKCDA would continue to explore and implement other possible cost-saving measures for the project without compromising the overall functions and quality of the facility.

9. Some members enquired whether the Xiqu Centre would operate on a self-financing basis, and whether the estimated project cost had taken into account depreciation expenses and repair and maintenance costs of its facilities, in addition to its daily operating expenses.

10. WKCDA advised that instead of applying the quest for self-sufficiency on a venue-by-venue basis, self-sufficiency would be strived for at the district level as theatres and museums generally would not generate much profit. Towards this end, WKCDA would have to offset the costly operation of the arts and cultural facilities by the income derived from the other elements in WKCD. Specifically, the RDE part of the commercial sites in WKCD, including the RDE facilities in the Xiqu Centre, would be vested in WKCDA to provide it with a steady source of recurrent income through rental proceeds. As for the operating and maintenance costs for the Xiqu Centre, such expenses would be borne by WKCDA and had already been budgeted. Separately on the financial capability of WKCDA to operate various WKCD facilities and continue to develop the remaining planned facilities, members were briefed on the implementation of the Enhanced Financial Arrangement ("EFA") for the WKCD project announced by the Government in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

11. Noting that the area of the RDE part in the Xiqu Centre had been reduced under the current scope, members expressed concern that this would have the effect of reducing the rental proceeds. They enquired about the reasons for such reduction. WKCDA advised that according to a consultancy study, given the lower pedestrian volumes, the RDE spaces on the upper floors of the Xiqu Centre were generally of less value than those on the ground floor. The proposed reduction of the floor area of RDE facilities on the upper floors sought only to enhance the overall efficiency of the provision of such spaces in the Xiqu Centre.

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<sup>5</sup> For details of the EFA for the WKCD Project, please refer to the LegCo Brief ([SF\(37\) to HABCS CR 7/1/27/1](#)) issued on 19 January 2017 and [LC Paper No. CB\(1\)559/17-18\(01\)](#) issued in February 2018.

### Facilities of Xiqu Centre

12. Some members enquired whether WKCDA would consider increasing the seating capacity of the Grand Theatre of the Xiqu Centre. Members also called on WKCDA to make available appropriate set-ups in the Grand Theatre and other theatres of the Xiqu Centre to achieve the best acoustic effects. There was also a suggestion that a multi-media library/resource centre should be set up to facilitate access to collections of xiqu performances and xiqu-related educational software by students and members of the public.

13. According to WKCDA, the seating capacity of the Grand Theatre (with 1 073 seats) was proposed with reference to that of other Cantonese opera performance venues in Hong Kong (e.g. the Sunbeam Theatre),<sup>6</sup> and was considered ideal by the local xiqu community. The Grand Theatre was designed specifically for the staging of xiqu performances, where performers would be able to perform without microphones and speakers. WKCDA would provide rehearsal and production spaces in the venue to facilitate new productions and rehearsals by up-and-coming artistic talents. WKCDA had been in discussion with the xiqu sector to explore methods to help preserve and reinvent the archives of xiqu/Cantonese opera. At the same time, WKCDA had been working on collection of scripts of xiqu/Cantonese opera performances and development of an online database for relevant documentation.

14. On members' views that appropriate barrier-free facilities should be provided in the Xiqu Centre, WKCDA advised that as it was expected that the Xiqu Centre would appeal to elderly people in particular, the building had been designed with a focus on facilitating universal access. Various facilities such as escalators, lifts, staircases and ramps with handrails would be provided to satisfy all public access requirements.

### Governance and management structure of Xiqu Centre

15. On the future mode of governance of the Xiqu Centre, WKCDA advised that the Authority would directly operate the Xiqu Centre, instead of engaging a single troupe to take on a residency role there. WKCDA had established a Xiqu Centre Advisory Panel, comprising members from the local xiqu sector, experienced xiqu performers, and the academia to offer advice to

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<sup>6</sup> The seating capacities of the two theatres of the Sunbeam Theatre are 1 033 and 340 respectively. (Source: <http://sunbeamtheatre.com/hk/facilities.php>)

the Performing Arts Committee on the management and operation of the Xiqu Centre and other matters relating to the development of the xiqu art form.

16. Members relayed the concern of a local Chinese artists association over the appointment of a non-Chinese Artistic Director ("AD") by WKCDA in October 2017, worrying that the development of xiqu would be overlooked. Members asked how WKCDA would set out clearly the positioning of the Xiqu Centre, foster communications with the local xiqu sector, and build a greater xiqu audience, in particular among the younger generations.

17. WKCDA explained that there was a division of work among the Executive Director ("ED"), AD and the Head of Xiqu of Performing Arts. While ED and AD were overseeing broader policy issues and management and operation of various performing arts venues in WKCD, the incumbent Head of Xiqu, who was a seasoned producer of xiqu performances, would be responsible specifically for formulating the artistic plan for xiqu, developing partnerships in Hong Kong, China and globally, as well as other matters relating to the development of the xiqu art form.

#### Venue hiring policy and arrangements

18. Some members held the view that well-known, high quality and long-run productions would appeal to visitors. Members noted that "supporting longer-run productions" was among the four proposed guiding principles for the performing arts venue hiring policy of WKCDA intending to provide flexibility and responsiveness to market changes.<sup>7</sup> In this context, members enquired about the definition of "longer-run" productions, and how WKCDA would support long-run productions in the Xiqu Centre, in particular, whether some Cantonese opera virtuosos would be allowed to mount major shows in the Xiqu Centre for a longer period, and whether flexibility would be allowed such that smaller arts troupes with limited capacity to stage long-run productions could still secure venue bookings. Some members also asked if non-Chinese opera programmes, e.g. pop music, drama, would be allowed to use the venues in the Xiqu Centre.

19. WKCDA advised that the charging mechanism for ticketed events would be based on a low threshold two-tier approach comprising a base hiring fee and a percentage share of box office income, whilst non-ticketed events would be charged for a lump sum hiring fee. WKCDA considered that the

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<sup>7</sup> The four guiding principles proposed by WKCDA were: (a) artistically-driven on the choice of programmes and companies; (b) maximizing utilization of each space; (c) supporting longer-run productions; and (d) achieving financial sustainability. ([LC Paper No. CB\(1\)354/17-18\(01\)](#))

low threshold two-tier charging approach could enable troupes of various sizes, including small and medium performing companies, to run their productions for a longer period of time by sharing of financial risks between the hirer and the Authority. Under the artistically-driven principle, xiqu productions, which belonged to the preferred arts forms specific to the Xiqu Centre, would be accorded priority in using the venues in the Xiqu Centre. If any venues were still available in the Xiqu Centre after the scheduling of xiqu productions, WKCDA would flexibly allocate the resources to maximize the utilization, such as releasing the venues to artistic groups of different art forms or organizers of community activities.

20. At the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee in May 2018, members were advised by WKCDA that bookings for Xiqu Centre were already open with dates available starting from April 2019. Preliminary bookings could be accepted up to three years in advance.

#### Audience building for and positioning of Xiqu Centre

21. There was a suggestion that WKCDA should engage an expert in xiqu education to take charge of matters relating to the promotion of xiqu education, audience building and community participation. Members also considered that WKCDA and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department should enhance their co-ordination in optimizing the usage of venues for xiqu performances, and the nurturing of young artists and the building up of audience for the Xiqu Centre.

22. WKCDA advised that the Authority had been working over the past years on building new audiences of different generations and different types for the future Xiqu Centre through various pre-opening programmes such as the West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre and the Tea House Theatre Taster. WKCDA would conduct more audience building programmes after the opening of the Xiqu Centre. In parallel, the Administration had introduced various initiatives in recent years to cultivate young talents in Cantonese opera.

23. Some members further enquired about the respective positioning of the Xiqu Centre and the Yau Ma Tei Theatre ("YMTT"), and how WKCDA would ensure that the two venues could complement or collaborate with each other. WKCDA advised that YMTT, with a seating capacity of 300, would serve mainly as a training venue for budding artists of Cantonese opera, whereas the Xiqu Centre aimed at providing a platform for emerging talents of Cantonese opera to showcase their artistic performance.

## Traffic and crowd control arrangements upon opening of the Xiqu Centre

24. Members were concerned about the measures to ease the traffic congestion at the nearby road of the Xiqu Centre, and the crowd control plan during the first couples of weeks after the opening of the Xiqu Centre when a particularly high number of visitors would be expected.

25. WKCDA advised that a new head of security of WKCDA was appointed to take charge of the crowd control planning and other security issues for the district. Other measures under planning included a proper ticketing system for controlling access to the free opening programmes within the capacity limits, deployment of sufficient manpower and cooperation with the police, etc., with a view to ensuring the smooth opening of the Xiqu Centre. Further, the road widening works at the junction of Canton Road with Austin Road would be completed prior to the opening of the Xiqu Centre. In the long term, the planned relocation of the supporting operation facilities of the existing Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station Complex, Fire Services Club and accommodations would enable a vehicle-free avenue stretching west from Canton Road, linking up Xiqu Centre and other parts of WKCD.

### **Latest development**

26. At the meeting of the Joint Subcommittee to be held on 6 November 2018, the Administration and WKCDA will update members on the development of the Xiqu Centre.

### **Relevant papers**

27. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix III**.

戲曲中心開幕計劃  
Xiqu Centre Opening Schedule



資料來源：[立法會 CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)號文件的附件二](#)

Source: [Annex 2 to LC Paper No. CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)](#)



戲曲中心開幕節目概覽  
Overview of Xiqu Centre opening programmes

	大劇院 Grand Theatre	茶館劇場 Tea House Theatre	排練室 Studio	演講廳 Seminar Hall	中庭及其他部分 Atrium and other areas
開台日和開放日 (2018 年第四季) Stage Dedication Day and Open Days (4th quarter of 2018)	- 香港八和會館帶來開台例戲和粵劇折子戲巡禮 Traditional rituals and excerpt performances by The Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong	- 介紹場 (60 分鐘) Introductory performances (60 minutes)	- 教育及拓展入門課程 Introductory learning and participation programme	- 戲曲講座 Xiqu seminars	- 展覽 Exhibition - 場地參觀 Venue tours - 零售／餐飲／娛樂設施投入營運 Retail/ dining/ entertainment facilities in operation
開幕季 (2019 年第一季) Opening Season (1st quarter of 2019)	- 開幕典禮 Opening ceremony - 任白慈善基金開幕演出 Opening performances by Yam Pak Charitable Foundation	- 茶館節目 (90 分鐘)：粵劇、粵樂、粵曲、古曲 Regular Tea House programme (90 minutes): Cantonese opera,	- 排練和工作坊 Rehearsals and workshops	- 戲曲電影放映 Xiqu film screenings - 戲曲 101 講座 Xiqu 101 seminars	- 演出／示範／展覽 Performances/ demonstrations/ exhibitions - 戲曲中心導賞 Guided tours - 後台參觀 Backstage tours

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 香港粵劇商會粵劇演出 Cantonese opera performances by the Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Chamber of Commerce</li><li>- 中國戲劇家協會梅花獎藝術團演出 Performances by the Plum Blossom Award Art Troupe of the Chinese Theatre Association</li></ul>	<p>Cantonese music, Cantonese songs, traditional music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 特備節目 (待定) Special programme (to be confirmed)</li></ul>			
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資料來源：[立法會 CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)號文件的附件三](#)

Source: Annex 3 to [LC Paper No. CB\(1\)559/17-18\(03\)](#)

## Development of Xiqu Centre

## List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Former Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project (in operation in the Fifth Legislative Council)	25.2.2013 Item III	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	8.4.2013 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	29.11.2013 Item III	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	28.3.2014 Item III	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	24.11.2014 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	19.5.2015 Item I	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>  <a href="#">Response of the Administration/WKCDA to members' concerns raised at the meeting</a>
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project	20.12.2016 Item III	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	13.6.2017 Item II	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>  <a href="#">Response of the Administration/WKCDA to members' concerns raised at the meeting</a>
	11.5.2018 Item III	<a href="#">Agenda</a>