

For discussion on
28 March 2014

Legislative Council
Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the
West Kowloon Cultural District Project

Update on the Development of Xiqu Centre

PURPOSE

This paper serves to update Members on the progress of Xiqu Centre building project, as well as its artistic positioning and mode of governance.

BACKGROUND

2. Xiqu Centre, being one of the core performing arts venues of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), has been undergoing design and development after the completion of the Xiqu Centre Design Competition in end 2012. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) recognises that a successful venue requires a strong vision to direct the programming and its artistic mission. To ensure that this is achieved, the WKCDA has in parallel commenced the development of the artistic positioning and the governance and management structure for Xiqu Centre.

PROGRESS OF BUILDING PROJECT

3. There are very few contemporary examples of purpose-built venues for Xiqu anywhere in the world. As such, the design requires in-depth study of the art form and its practices. This is compounded with the added challenge of having to respond to an evolving art form that is both historic and contemporary in equal measure.

4. The winning design of Xiqu Centre is centred around four core design principles –

- (a) A gateway and performance pavilion – The concept of gateway and pavilion is represented in the openness and door-less nature of the design, welcoming visitors into the building from all four of its corners;
- (b) A Chinese courtyard – The concept of courtyard is presented as a generous covered public space on ground level, which serves as a perfect urban stage for events and celebrations;
- (c) Nature and urban landscape – The concept of nature is expressed by bringing soft landscape into in-between spaces created at different levels of the building; and
- (d) Journey of “flow” or “qi” (氣) – The concept of “flow” or “qi” is interpreted in the dynamic movements in the building and the use of curved planes, arched openings and curvilinear paths.

5. The foundation construction of Xiqu Centre is generally on track since the commencement of the works in September 2013. The main contract works are scheduled to commence in the third or fourth quarter of this year, and the Occupation Permit is targeted to be obtained in 2016.

6. Rigorous value engineering exercise for Xiqu Centre had been carried out to lower the construction cost as far as practicable, without compromising the overall function and quality of the facilities. The various value engineering strategies implemented include –

- (a) Using cost effective finishes and materials;
- (b) Streamlining the vertical transport design after vertical traffic study;
- (c) Optimising the design and removing some of the retail, dining and entertainment spaces with less value; and
- (d) Engaging the works contractors to streamline the design and construction methodology.

7. The WKCDA will continue to work with the consultant architect and quantity surveyor to explore and implement other possible cost-saving measures for the project.

ARTISTIC POSITIONING

8. Taking into account the views of the Xiqu sector, the WKCDA has established the artistic positioning and three key objectives for Xiqu Centre.

9. Xiqu Centre's artistic positioning is to become the best venue for Xiqu in the region in a world-class facility with a core mission to preserve and develop the art of Xiqu, which includes Cantonese Opera and other Xiqu genres. It will leverage the increasing global interest in traditional Chinese art forms, and become the standard bearer and leader in the development of traditional Chinese performing arts and Xiqu as an intangible cultural heritage regionally and globally.

10. The prime objective of Xiqu Centre is to encourage robust development of local Xiqu, especially Cantonese Opera, in Hong Kong, which is inevitably tied to the growth of Xiqu in the region. It is crucial to develop a locally-rooted Xiqu network that has a regional impact and aligned with international arts development. In particular, Xiqu Centre needs to achieve the following three key objectives –

- (a) Showcasing contemporary visage of Cantonese Opera and other Xiqu genres, giving a full view of Xiqu and enabling Hong Kong to become the new global gateway to the art of Xiqu;
- (b) Furthering the refinement of local Xiqu, especially Cantonese Opera, and other traditional Chinese music (e.g. Nanyin) through the adoption of mature arts management strategies and consolidated cultural resources, and advancing the standing of Cantonese Opera within Xiqu by leveraging on Hong Kong's international status; and
- (c) Fostering cultural exchange, experimentation and collaboration between Xiqu and other art forms, and delineating a lively and all-encompassing art hub identity for

Hong Kong that has a touch of traditional beauty.

11. The WKCDA has, over the last two years, launched a series of projects to establish Xiqu Centre's artistic positioning and make necessary preparatory works to achieve the key artistic objectives. They include audience development projects such as the West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre which had just completed its third annual run in February 2014; artistic and professional development projects such as the ongoing Xiqu Centre Seminar Series; and development of regional networks through regular exchanges with key regional institutions and experts in Xiqu. A summary of the projects is at **Annex 1**.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

12. The WKCDA established the Xiqu Centre Advisory Group (Advisory Group) under the Performing Arts Committee in July 2013 to advise on the planning and development of institutional framework for the venue, including the governance structure, management structure and partnership arrangements for Xiqu Centre. Membership of the Advisory Group is at **Annex 2**.

13. Taking into account the artistic positioning and the views of the Xiqu sector and advice of the Advisory Group, the WKCDA has decided to directly operate Xiqu Centre. It is also recommended that, after the initial operational phase, say five to seven years after the commissioning of the facility, the WKCDA may review the suitability and feasibility of migrating to other operation models.

14. Given the strong artistic mission of Xiqu Centre, a dedicated Artistic Director (AD) will be appointed to take charge of the artistic direction of the entire venue. It is a newly introduced feature for performing venues in Hong Kong. The AD will be tasked to establish and deliver the vision and objectives of Xiqu Centre in line with the artistic positioning set out in paragraphs 8 to 10 above, and be responsible for the artistic output and overall image of the venue. In parallel, a General Manager (GM) will be appointed to take charge of the operational and technical side of venue management, overseeing the operations, administration and overall financial performance of the venue. Both the AD and GM will be jointly responsible for the smooth running of Xiqu Centre.

15. To support the management structure, it is planned that an advisory committee be set up to advise the WKCDA Management on matters relating to the programming, partnership, management and operation of Xiqu Centre. It is preliminarily planned that the advisory committee will comprise members from WKCDA Performing Arts Committee, the artistic community as well as relevant management and business experts.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LOCAL ARTS SECTOR

16. The WKCDA fully recognises that the success of Xiqu Centre would hinge largely on the support from local Xiqu partners. In preparation for the commissioning of Xiqu Centre, the WKCDA plans to explore potential artistic partnership with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Hong Kong Arts Festival Society as well as potential education partnership with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong (Barwo) and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Partnerships would be part of the artistic functions of the venue.

**West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
March 2014**

Annex 1

Projects leading up to the opening of Xiqu Centre

West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre

Organised by WKCDA

	Date	Duration	No. of visitors
West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre 2012	18 to 23 Jan 2012	One week	12 000
West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre 2013	28 Jan to 16 Feb 2013	Three weeks	100 000
West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre 2014 + The Mad Phoenix (organised by the Spring-Time Group)	17 Jan to 9 Feb 2014 + 12 to 25 Feb and 3 to 9 Mar 2014	Four weeks + Three weeks	63 000

Xiqu Centre Seminar Series

Presented by WKCDA in collaboration with the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong (Barwo) and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Topic	Date	Venue	Guest speakers
Sharing Across Genres in Chinese Traditional Theatre 劇種的借鑒與研習	22 and 24 Jun 2013	Yau Ma Tei Theatre	Pei Yanling (裴豔玲), Yuen Siu-fai (阮兆輝)
Xiqu and City Life 傳統戲曲與城市生活	28 and 30 Sep 2013	Recital Hall, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts	Luo Huaizhen (羅懷臻), Cheung Ping-kuen (張秉權)
The Way of Success for Various Role Categories 不同行當的成名之路	23 and 25 Nov 2013	Yau Ma Tei Theatre	Shang Changrong (尚長榮), Law Ka-ying (羅家英)

Membership of the Xiqu Centre Advisory Group

1. Prof. CHAN Chi-fai, Andrew (陳志輝)
2. Mrs. CHENG LI Kam-fun, Eva (鄭李錦芬)
3. Miss LEUNG Wai-yee, Candice (梁慧怡)
4. Mr. LI Chi-kei, Danny (李奇峰)
5. Mr. MAO Chun-fai, Fredric (毛俊輝)
6. Dr. WANG Ming-chun, Liza (汪明荃)
7. Mr. YEUNG Wai-shing, Frankie (楊偉誠)
8. Mr. YUEN Siu-fai (阮兆輝)
9. Mr. YUNG Ning-tsun, Danny (榮念曾)