

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

Artistic Characteristic and Partnership Framework of
Performing Arts Venues in the West Kowloon Cultural District

PURPOSE

This paper serves to update Members on the proposed facility and artistic partnership framework for the Performing Arts (PA) venues in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD).

BACKGROUND

2. From 2015-16, a range of PA venues in the WKCD will be made available in stages. These include Freespace (a Black Box and an Outdoor Stage), Xiqu Centre, Lyric Theatre, Centre for Contemporary Performance + Medium Theatre and Music Centre. To prepare for the commissioning of these venues, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) needs to define the facility framework of these PA venues, including the artistic characteristics and facility requirements, as well as the artistic partnership framework with regard to the roles of arts groups in these venues.

OBJECTIVES

3. The WKCD is set to be a place for the arts community to interact, develop and collaborate, as well as a platform that showcases Hong Kong's rich local arts scene and identity in an international context. With a view to strengthening the overall performing arts ecosystem and sector in Hong Kong, the WKCDA aims to develop PA venues with strong artistic characteristics, and form long term relationships with partners who can contribute to the venues and to the WKCD. Each of the PA venues will have a clear and focused art form which will lend its unique characteristics to the

venue, and through strong partnerships, the WKCD will become a vibrant home to some of the leading performing arts companies.

4. Grounded on the vision of the WKCD and taking into account views of the local arts community, we have mapped out a proposed facility and artistic partnership framework for the PA venues in consultation with the local arts sector.

FACILITY FRAMEWORK

5. The WKCD currently plans that each PA venue, with the exception of the Black Box in Freespace which serves as an incubator of various PA programmes for the WKCD, should have one preferred art form, so as to create a strong identity for that art form and the venue concerned, and to fully maximise the venue functionally, supporting artists and audiences alike.

Black Box in Freespace

6. All art forms including theatre, dance, Xiqu, music, multimedia theatre and multidisciplinary art will be welcome at this venue with more than 450 seats, and there will be no priority for any specific art form. As the first venue to be made available, the Black Box in Freespace will, for the first five years whilst other venues in the WKCD are being planned / constructed, become the laboratory for creative opportunities for research and development for performing artists, knowledge exchange, and commissioning of works for and between arts groups.

Outdoor Stage in Freespace

7. **Music** will be the main art form at this outdoor venue in the Park, which is capable of welcoming over 10 000 standing visitors for large-scale performances and festivals. The annual Freespace Fest will likely continue to be held at this venue. External / commercial parties will also be able to rent the venue.

Xiqu Centre

8. Cantonese Opera will be the main **Xiqu** genre, with other types of Chinese Opera to be featured as well, in this 1 100-seat theatre with a 200-seat Tea House. Other art forms such as drama and music performances in relation to Chinese culture and Xiqu will

also be able to use this venue.

Lyric Theatre

9. Various art forms will be able to use this 1 200-seat venue, although the focus will be **dance**. The venue will be equipped with a Resident Company Centre and seeks to be a unique place for the creation and collaboration of all types of dance, including cross-collaboration between Chinese, contemporary and classical ballet dance.

Centre for Contemporary Performance + Medium Theatre

10. It is planned that the Centre for Contemporary Performance will be combined with the Medium Theatre to form a complex. Various art forms will be able to use the 150-seat, 250-seat and 400-seat blackboxes, as well as the 600-seat theatre and accompanying Resident Company Centre, although the focus will be **theatre**. A more diverse range of activities and events can be held at these venues, including education and community outreach programmes.

Music Centre

11. Major **music** events will be staged in the 1 800-seat Concert Hall, and a 300-seat Recital Hall will be available for smaller concerts or educational events. The Music Centre will also be equipped with a Resident Company Centre that can house local music organisations.

12. Whilst one main art form will be given the priority in most PA venues, other art forms will be welcome in these venues as well. For example, the Lyric Theatre may be used to stage amplified drama and musical performances, though dance performances will be its main focus.

ARTISTIC PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

13. In order to nurture and develop close partnership with the arts groups, the WKCDA recommends two types of artistic partnership models – **Resident Partners** and **Associate Partners**.

14. **Resident Partners** will have a strong presence and

contribute towards the artistic direction and branding of the venue, support and collaborate in programmes initiated by the WKCD. Resident Partners will not only have priority access to the performing venue(s) and / or rehearsal studios but also be able to use office accommodation in the venues, and be close and valued partners of the WKCD. Local professional companies are welcome to be Resident Partners. Resident Partnership involves longer term commitment that may span three to five years, renewable subject to review. This type of partnership model will be applicable to venues with a Resident Company Centre, namely the Lyric Theatre, Centre for Contemporary Performance + Medium Theatre as well as Music Centre.

15. **Associate Partners** will also have priority access to the performing venue(s) and / or rehearsal studios after the Resident Partners, and Associate Partnership involves shorter term commitment spanning less than three years. Local as well as overseas professional companies and individual artists are welcome to be Associate Partners. This type of partnership model will be applicable to all WKCD PA venues.

16. Both Resident Partners and Associate Partners to a specific venue will be able to use performing venue(s) and / or rehearsal studios across other venues in the WKCD. Please see the **Annex** which summarises the proposed facility and artistic partnership framework applicable to each PA venue.

17. The WKCD believes that this partnership approach will cultivate a strong sense and identity of the art forms at each venue and in the WKCD as a whole; enable the WKCD to create collaborative programmes with the arts groups; and promote and support creation of new programmes. This approach will develop the WKCD into a staunch hub for the arts groups.

CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LOCAL ARTS SECTOR

18. The WKCD has been actively engaging the local arts sector in the past 15 months and has refined the proposed facility and artistic partnership framework in consultation with the local arts groups. The proposed facility framework and artistic partnership framework were received positively by the stakeholders from the arts and cultural sector in recent engagement sessions, and they were keen to move forward in this direction.

19. The WKCDA plans to continue engaging the local arts groups through forums and focus groups to solicit views on user requirements for the PA venues and to work out details on the partnership schemes.

20. In working out these proposed frameworks, the WKCDA has been in close dialogue with relevant government bureaux and departments to ensure coordination in the development and management of PA venues in Hong Kong.

WAY FORWARD

21. The WKCDA is preparing the detailed plans for Freespace (a Black Box and an Outdoor Stage), Xiqu Centre and Lyric Theatre, the three PA venues which are expected to come on stream the earliest. For the Black Box and Outdoor Stage in Freespace, user requirements will be collected via focus groups this year. The WKCDA will also start to establish the details of the Associate Partnership programme and engage the Associate Partners to commence programming for Freespace, which is targeted to open in 2015.

22. For the Lyric Theatre, user requirements will be collected via focus groups for devising the schematic design, establishing Resident Partnership programme details, and engaging Resident Partners in the detailed design-fit-out process in 2014-15.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
March 2014

Facilities, Partnership Types and Opening Timeline of WKCD Venues

WKCD Venue	Facilities	Art form focus	Partnership type	Expected opening year
Black Box in Freespace	450+-seat theatre Bar Workshop / Rehearsal studios	All art forms	Associate	2015-16
Outdoor Stage in Freespace	Stage capable of presenting outdoor events for over 10 000 standing visitors	Music	Associate	2015-16
Xiqu Centre	1 100-seat theatre 200-seat Tea House Rehearsal / Education studios	Xiqu	Associate	2016-17
Lyric Theatre	1 200-seat theatre Resident Company Centre Rehearsal / Education studios	Dance	Associate & Resident	2019-20
Centre for Contemporary Performance + Medium Theatre	150-, 250-, 400-seat blackboxes 600-seat theatre Resident Company Centre Rehearsal / Education studios	Theatre	Associate & Resident	2020-21
Music Centre	1 800-seat Concert Hall 300-seat Recital Hall Resident Company Centre Rehearsal / Education studios	Music	Associate & Resident	after 2020