

For discussion on
13 June 2017

Legislative Council
Panel on Development and Panel on Home Affairs
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 the development of the Xiqu Centre, as well as the opening preparation plan.

BACKGROUND

2. The Xiqu Centre will be a major performing arts venue within the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). The 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 robust development of all forms of Chinese opera in Hong Kong, with a particular focus on Cantonese opera. It is crucial to develop a locally-rooted Xiqu Centre that has a regional impact and also plays a role in international arts development.

3. The Xiqu Centre will house a range of facilities for performances, developing new repertory, research, education, training and exchange, and offer professional development programmes to help nurture young talents and support the development of new performances. The construction of the main works for Xiqu Centre started in late 2014, and plans are in hand for a soft opening in the 3rd quarter of 2018.

4. While the development of the Xiqu Centre is in progress, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) has been organising a range of professional development and audience building programmes to prepare for the opening of the Xiqu Centre. Through collaboration with xiqu centres, associations and troupes in the region, WKCDA is working to promote the traditional Chinese performing arts to a wider audience, both regionally and globally.

UPDATE ON HARDWARE DEVELOPMENT

5. The building structure of Xiqu Centre, inclusive of the building façade modules and roof mesh modules, is substantially completed at the end of April 2017 (A plan showing the location of the Xiqu Centre is at **Annex**).

6. Works on the Grand Theatre, Atrium, Tea House Theatre and Seminar Hall is now proceeding apace, with the building services installation and interior fitting out works well underway. We target to obtain the Occupation Permit (OP) for Xiqu Centre by the end of November 2017 and, allowing time for technical testing, plan for its soft opening in the 3rd quarter of 2018.

7. The main construction works of the Xiqu Centre is reaching a peak, with almost 1 300 workers employed on site as of May 2017.

XIQU CENTRE OPENING PREPARATION PLAN

8. With the target opening of the Xiqu Centre in late 2018, WKCDA has formulated an opening plan which will be carried out in three stages.

Stage 1: Technical Testing, Soft Opening and Final Preparation ***(In the 2nd to 3rd Quarters of 2018)***

9. Around five months after obtaining OP, technical testing at various facilities in the Xiqu Centre will be conducted and the process will take around two to four months. Upon completion of the technical testing, a two-week

soft opening period is planned during which an array of programmes, such as performances, guided tours, backstage tours, xiqu film screenings, seminars, workshops, exhibitions, markets, xiqu introduction courses, will be arranged to test the operations of its various facilities and to invite feedback from visitors for necessary refinement of operational arrangements. Trial run of restaurants in the Xiqu Centre will also be carried out. With the feedback gathered during this soft opening period, final preparation works will be undertaken to prepare for the official opening of the venue. It is anticipated that the final preparation works will take around two weeks to complete.

Stage 2: Opening Festival
(In the 4th quarter of 2018)

10. A one-month Opening Festival will be organised with a formal opening ceremony, special performances and a wide range of public programmes. Highlighted programmes will include performances featuring renowned troupes from Hong Kong and outside Hong Kong, education and appreciation sessions for public/ tourists, xiqu film screenings, seminars, education courses, guided tours, markets, demonstration of traditional Chinese handicrafts, exhibitions, workshops and xiqu introductory courses.

Stage 3: Opening Season
(From the 4th quarter of 2018 to the 1st quarter of 2019)

11. The Opening Festival will be followed by an Opening Season in which Cantonese opera performances and regional xiqu performances (non-Cantonese opera) will form the bulk of the programming.

XIQU CENTRE HIRING POLICY

12. With the opening of the Xiqu Centre in 2018, followed by the opening of Freespace and the completion of the Lyric Theatre Complex in 2019 and around 2021 respectively, WKCDA will provide rentable spaces of different sizes and functions for performances, rehearsals and other events. In consultation with stakeholders, WKCDA is devising a venue hiring policy to govern how venue hire is managed and

operated within WKCD. The policy is intended to be applicable to the hiring of performance, event, rehearsal or functional spaces of all performing arts venues in WKCD. Five guiding principles are proposed as follows:

- (a) Artistically-driven on the choice of programmes and companies;
- (b) Maximising utilisation of each space;
- (c) User-friendly, flexible and responsive to market changes;
- (d) Supporting longer run productions; and
- (e) Taking into account financial implications.

13. The guiding principles set out above will provide a basis for WKCD to formulate the detailed venue hiring policy. In the process, WKCD will continue to engage relevant stakeholders (see also paragraph 14 below).

XIQU CENTRE ADVISORY PANEL

14. In preparation for the opening of the Xiqu Centre, WKCD will set up a Xiqu Centre Advisory Panel (Advisory Panel) in 2017. The Advisory Panel will advise the WKCD Performing Arts Committee (PAC) on matters relating to the management and operation of the Xiqu Centre, including venue hiring charges, user mix and priority, programming, etc. It will also advise on the strategies and policies for the nurturing and training of xiqu artists and related professionals, art education and partnership initiative. It is planned that the Advisory Panel will comprise some of the existing members of PAC, the artistic community as well as relevant management and business experts.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND AUDIENCE BUILDING PROGRAMMES

15. It is important for the Xiqu Centre, especially in its initial years, to incorporate a wide variety of programmes

including performances by local troupes, public programming, new works and overseas presentations to fulfill the Centre's objectives. While performances during the Opening Festival and Opening Season will mainly be productions presented by WKCDA, the programmes thereafter will come from a combination of productions by external hirers, programming with local and overseas artistic and education partners, and WKCDA's self-productions. In anticipation of the opening of the Xiqu Centre in the near future, WKCDA has been stepping up its efforts in fostering professional development and audience building by conducting an array of programmes in 2016-17 and 2017-18. Details are set out below.

Public Programming

Rising Stars of Cantonese Opera

16. Introduced in 2014, *Rising Stars of Cantonese Opera* has established itself as a unique platform for nurturing talented young artists in Cantonese opera with training arranged under the guidance of veteran artists. As part of WKCDA's ongoing efforts to groom young talents, *Rising Stars of Cantonese Opera IV* will be held in July to August 2017.

Tea House Theatre Taster

17. In May 2017, the third edition of the *Tea House Theatre Taster* was held which provided a preview of the types of performances that can be enjoyed at the Tea House Theatre of the Xiqu Centre. The event again featured a specially built replica of the future Tea House Theatre at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Having taken into consideration the after-show feedback for the spatial design, operation and programming from the previous trial held in 2015, WKCDA has made some improvements/enhancement on the design such as the stage and provision of furniture, artistic content, pairing of exquisite snacks/dim sum and tea, as well as operational models, etc. in this year's event. Considering that the novelty of the teahouse experience makes the Theatre a perfect means to cultivate new audiences, an educational matinee was held for secondary school students. In addition, one session was streamed live to let members of the public get a glimpse of the type of performances the future Xiqu Centre Tea House Theatre promises to deliver. The event provided

WKCDA with feedback for further fine-tuning the future programming and operation of the Tea House Theatre.

Cultural Exchange and Creation

18. WKCDA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on exchange and collaboration with the Shanghai Center of Chinese Operas (上海戲曲藝術中心) in July 2016 and will continue to explore exchange and collaborative relationships with other xiqu institutions outside Hong Kong.

19. The Xiqu Centre and the Shanghai Center of Chinese Operas will take turns to organise exchange activities for three years since the signing of the MOU in 2016. To begin with, WKCDA participated in the *Shanghai Experimental Xiqu Festival* (上海小劇場戲曲節) in late 2016 presenting the experimental Cantonese opera *Farewell My Concubine* (霸王別姬). To build up ongoing cultural exchange initiatives with regional partners, WKCDA will launch *Experimental Series: Cantonese Opera* in Hong Kong in 2017, restaging *Farewell My Concubine* plus presenting other new programmes by regional partners.

Research and Archive

20. To support the Xiqu Centre's wider mission in preserving, promoting and developing xiqu arts, WKCDA will initiate the Cantonese Opera Script Archive which will strategically collect scripts of different periods with a view to establishing a comprehensive database on Cantonese opera scripts. It is planned that an online script database will be developed to facilitate research on, easy access to and broad utilisation of the scripts collected.

ADVICE SOUGHT

21. Members are invited to note the latest development of the Xiqu Centre as well as the opening preparation plan.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
June 2017

附件 Annex : 戲曲中心的位置圖 Location Plan of Xiqu Centre

