

For discussion on
6 November 2018

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 latest development of the Xiqu Centre.

BACKGROUND

2. Located at the junction of Canton Road and Austin Road West, 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) in Hong Kong and beyond. The Xiqu Centre not only houses facilities for performances (notably a 1 065-seat Grand Theatre and a 244-seat Tea House Theatre) but it will also present quality programmes with a mission to promote the development of new repertory, research, education, training and exchanges, as well as holding professional development programmes to help nurture young talent.

3. The prime objective of the Xiqu Centre is to encourage the development of all forms of xiqu in Hong Kong, in particular Cantonese opera. The year 2019 commemorates the 10th anniversary of Cantonese opera's inclusion in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity following a joint application by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao SAR governments via the Central Government in 2009. The opening of the Xiqu Centre will be conducive to developing a locally-rooted xiqu network that has a regional impact with an important role in

international arts development.

PROGRESS OF BUILDING PROJECT

4. After the ground-breaking ceremony in September 2013, the foundation works of the Xiqu Centre were completed in late 2014, following which the main superstructure works commenced in December 2014. The occupation permit (OP) was obtained in April 2018. The works are effectively completed, and the Substantial Completion Certificate will be issued to the main works contractor in November. The theatre audio and lighting system together with the rigging system are being tested, getting ready for the first performances at the end of 2018.

XIQU CENTRE OPENING SCHEDULE

5. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) has an ambitious launch plan that includes an official opening ceremony in January 2019, to be followed by a three-month opening season. Details of the opening arrangements are set out below.

6. The Xiqu Centre will have programming activities covering four categories, namely (a) performances (WKCDA productions, partnerships and venue hiring), (b) cultural exchanges, (c) new creations, and (d) learning and participation.

7. Following the official opening ceremony on 20 January 2019, WKCDA will present the Cantonese opera classic, *The Reincarnation of Red Plum* (再世紅梅記), under the artistic curation of legendary Cantonese opera artist, Dr Pak Suet-sin. With performance by established and emerging Cantonese opera artists, *The Reincarnation of Red Plum* celebrates the 60th anniversary of its premiere and commemorates the 60th anniversary of the passing of the Cantonese opera playwright master, Tong Dik Sang. It also marks the commencement of a three-month Opening Season.

8. We anticipate significant demand for the tickets of

The Reincarnation of Red Plum. Over 5 500 tickets for nine performances are available for allocation to the public via balloting of the right to buy tickets. Ballot application online at www.westkwoon.hk commenced from 16 October to 28 October 2018. Ballot application in person at the Xiqu Centre ticket office was also accepted during the same period. About 28 000 ballot applications have been received with the majority being made online. All applications made during the 13-day period have an equal chance in the ballot. The results of the ballot will be announced on 5 November 2018. Successful applicants will be eligible to purchase up to 4 tickets between 10 and 18 November 2018. Prices range from HK\$288 to HK\$1,188. Unsuccessful applicants will be automatically put on a waitlist according to the ballot sequence and will be eligible for any unallocated tickets after the ticketing purchasing period ends on 18 November 2018. Any tickets remaining after the full ballot process is completed and the waitlist has been exhausted will be made available for public sale on a first-come, first-served basis in due course.

9. A series of Spring Festival Showcase by the Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Chamber of Commerce (香港粵劇商會) will be presented in February 2019 to continue WKCDA's initiative of promoting xiqu during the Lunar New Year. The Opening Season will be concluded by a master selection of excerpts, including jingju, kunqu, yueju, and pingju from award-winning artists of the renowned Plum Blossom Award Art Troupe of the Chinese Theatre Association (中國戲劇家協會梅花獎藝術團) in March 2019.

10. At the Tea House Theatre, *Cantonese Opera and Tea*, directed and curated by Cantonese opera virtuoso, Law Ka-ying, and performed by the Tea House Rising Stars Troupe will be introduced to audiences new to Chinese traditional theatre, offering an intimate viewing experience with traditional tea and dim sum served during the performance.

11. The Xiqu Centre will also present a special screening series as part of the opening programme, showcasing some of the most iconic xiqu films produced over the past 80 years. Alongside the xiqu performances will be a

comprehensive programme of guided tours, talks, workshops and a special school programme.

12. Tickets for the above-mentioned opening programmes will be on sale online, via telephone booking, at the Xiqu Centre ticket office or other ticket outlets at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and three designated Tom Lee Music outlets from 26 November 2018 onward.

13. Before the opening of the Xiqu Centre, a stage dedication ceremony will be carried out by the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong (香港八和會館) with two specially selected pieces — *Birthday of the God of Venus* (碧天賀壽) and *Prime Minister of Six States* (六國大封相). These will be staged on 30 December 2018 to mark the start of use of the Grand Theatre in accordance with the customary practice of the xiqu sector. The Stage Dedication Day will be followed by a week of Open Days with an array of free programmes designed to allow the public to participate in the final stages as WKCDA prepares for the operations of the Xiqu Centre. Tickets for stage dedication and Open Days will be available for online registration from 11 December 2018 and limited tickets will be available on the day at the Xiqu Centre ticket office. Details will be announced in due course.

14. Other WKCDA-produced special programming will be staged throughout the opening year. The facilities at the Xiqu Centre will be open for hirers' programmes after completion of the opening season in the first quarter of 2019. WKCDA processes venue hire applications on an ongoing process, and so far around 20 bookings have been confirmed through the end of 2019.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the latest development of the Xiqu Centre, including its opening schedule.

West Kowloon Cultural District Authority
October 2018