

Consultative Committee on the
Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the
West Kowloon Cultural District

Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group

The Report to the Consultative Committee

**CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON THE
CORE ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES OF THE
WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT**

PERFORMING ARTS AND TOURISM ADVISORY GROUP

REPORT TO THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

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Chapter 1

Background

1.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group (“The Advisory Group”) to the Consultative Committee (“Consultative Committee”) on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities (CACF) of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) and other non-museum arts and cultural facilities to be built in the WKCD. The recommendations have been drawn up following a series of intensive deliberations of the Advisory Group, which have taken into account public views including those from the arts and cultural sector as well as the tourism industry on the subject.

- **Terms of Reference**

1.2 The Advisory Group was established under the Consultative Committee in April 2006 to advise the Consultative Committee on the need for, and the major specifications of the various performance venues defined as CACF in the WKCD in the Invitation for Proposals (IFP) issued in September 2003, in particular from the perspectives of enriching performing arts and promoting tourism. Its terms of reference is at **Annex 1** and its membership is at **Annex 2**.

- **Invitation for Proposals**

1.3 In September 2003, the Government launched the Invitation for Proposals (IFP) for the development of the WKCD into a world-class arts, cultural, entertainment and commercial district. The IFP which was discontinued in February 2006, had specified the following CACF as Mandatory Requirements of the project -

- (a) **A Theatre Complex** comprising three theatres with seating capacities of at least 2,000, 800 and 400 seats respectively;
- (b) **A Performance Venue** with a seating capacity of at least 10,000 seats;
- (c) **A Museum Cluster** comprising four museums of differing themes with a total Net Operating Floor Area (NOFA) of at least 75,000 square meters;
- (d) **An Art Exhibition Centre** with NOFA of at least 10,000 square meters;
- (e) **A Water Amphitheatre**; and
- (f) At least four **Piazza Areas**.

1.4 In deciding on the CACF in the IFP, the Government had taken into account the objectives of developing the WKCD into a cultural hub in Asia with world-class facilities attracting renowned artists and visitors to Hong Kong; and promoting the long-term cultural development of Hong Kong by nurturing local talents and providing a wide range of activities for the community's enjoyment and cultural enrichment.

1.5 In addition, the Administration had also made reference to the five winning entries of the Concept Plan Competition held in 2001, views of the Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report, ex-Municipal Councils, results of formal and informal consultations with the arts, cultural, tourism and business sectors in late 2002, existing cultural facilities in Hong Kong and four consultancy studies^(Note 1).

1.6 The major recommendations of these consultancy studies on the provision of new performance venues are as follows:

(Note 1) The consultancy studies are –

- (a) Culture and Heritage Commission Policy Recommendation Report in 2003 and the views considered by its WKCD and Museum Working Groups;
- (b) "Cultural Facilities: Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines" commissioned by the Planning Department in 1999;
- (c) "Feasibility Study on a New Performance Venue for Hong Kong" commissioned by the then Hong Kong Tourist Association in 1999; and
- (d) "Consultancy Study on the Provision of Regional/District Cultural and Performance Facilities in Hong Kong" commissioned by the Home Affairs Bureau and Leisure and Cultural Services Department in 2002.

Details of these studies are available at PATAG/04/2006.

- Commercial cultural facilities for major international performances which are also significant tourist attractions;
- A 1,500 to 2,200-seat theater for sophisticated performances, such as musicals, theatre shows, cultural performances, dances and plays (it was also proposed to have a 1,700 seat theatre for commercial long runs);
- Purpose-designed medium-scale performing venues of 600 to 1,000 seats (500 to 900 seats in another study);
- Small-scale performance studio venues with 100 to 300 seats;
- Semi-outdoor open venue capable of accommodating 6,000 – 8,000 audiences for a wide range of events, such as concerts, cultural performances, circuses, acrobatic shows, festivals and exhibitions; and
- A medium-sized concert hall.

1.7 In order to form a critical mass of arts, cultural and entertainment venues in WKCD, the IFP also stipulated that arts and cultural facilities other than those specified as CACF above would also be considered. Facilities proposed by various parties and the public include concert hall, Cantonese Opera/Xiqu Centre, Book City, Performing Arts School, commercial galleries, Creative Industries Centre,

design shops etc.

Hong Kong's Cultural Policy

1.8 The Advisory Group has formulated its recommendations with due regard to Hong Kong's existing cultural policy, as well as the cultural vision and objectives of the WKCD, which are summarized below:

- Hong Kong's cultural policy refers to the policy on culture and the arts. The policy objective is to create an environment which is conducive to the freedom of artistic expression and creation, and the wider participation in cultural activities. The policy comprises four major elements:
 - ✦ respect for freedom of creation and expression
 - ✦ provision of opportunities for participation
 - ✦ encouraging diversified and balanced development
 - ✦ providing a supportive environment and conditions (venues, funding, education and administration)

1.9 The Government's objective of developing the WKCD is to develop a world-class arts and cultural district comprising local, traditional as well as international elements, to enrich the arts and cultural life for the people in Hong Kong and neighbouring areas, to create job opportunities and

benefit the tourism industry, and to make Hong Kong an international cultural metropolis. This is effectively a major initiative to implement the existing policy on culture and arts. This is also in line with Hong Kong's cultural position and vision, i.e. a metropolis in China which is most capable of bridging China and the world.

1.10 An elaboration of Hong Kong's Cultural Policy is at **Annex 3**.

- **The Current Performing Arts Scene**

1.11 Hong Kong has a vibrant performance arts scene. In a typical year, some 3,800 indoor and outdoor performances are presented by Leisure & Cultural Services Department (LCSD), while around 4,000 performances are presented by hirers of major facilities in LCSD venues. Furthermore, more than 2,500 programmes are provided in other major non-LCSD performing arts venues. A rough estimate shows that there are more than 1,000 performing arts groups in Hong Kong, the majority of which are small-scale and amateur.

1.12 The Government has been providing various kinds of funding support to major, medium, small-scale and budding performing arts groups. Some major professional performing arts groups are receiving recurrent funding directly from the Government while a number of the others

are receiving various types of grants from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Besides, a large majority of performing arts groups are non-profit-making organizations which are receiving programme and/or venue related subsidy from the Government, including performance fees, programme sponsorship with free use of venues, ticketing services and assistance in publicity, sponsorship fee, and rental reduction or subsidy in hiring Government performing arts venues. Through various kinds of support, some 500 performing arts groups staged a total of 4,200 performances or activities, reaching some 1.8 million audiences in 2004-05. Barring unforeseen circumstances, it is expected that these local performing arts groups, particularly the small and budding performing arts groups, would continue to rely on such support in their activities which are crucial in sustaining and promoting the diversity and vibrancy of the local performing arts scene. The design and planning of performing facilities in WKCD should be conducive to maintaining and sustaining the plurality and diversity of art forms as well as performing arts groups in Hong Kong.

1.13 The various forms of subsidy and support seek not only to support the running of performing arts programmes, but also to subsidize the ticket prices of the audience. The objective is to bring a rich and diverse range of quality traditional and avant-garde performing art forms to the general public, which would otherwise not be able to compete with popular entertainment programmes in the commercial

market. The performing arts venues and facilities should be planned and designed having regard to the need to ensure the accessibility and affordability of a broad and pluralistic range of performing arts programme to the community at large.

- **Acute Shortage of Venues**

1.14 At present, there are 26 performance venues in Hong Kong with a total seating capacity of 75,626. Among these venues, 15 are managed by LCSD and their major facilities have a maximum seating capacity of 33,379. The other 11 non-LCSD venues account for the remaining 42,247 seats (See **Annex 4** for details). The high utilization rates and the unsuccessful booking applications of these venues especially at prime venues indicate there is an acute shortage of performing arts facilities in Hong Kong. This shortage, coupled with the fact that there have not been any new performing arts facilities for many years, resulting in the demand for the use of these facilities not being met.

1.15 The local performing arts community has repeatedly been expressing the need for large-scale performance venues for long-run productions, medium and small-sized theatres, and black-box studio theatres for experimental works. On the other hand, the major performing arts companies are requesting for resident facilities in venues to facilitate their long-term development.

Since these requests cannot be accommodated within existing LCSD performing art venues, these performing arts groups have high aspirations that their demands would be addressed through the new performance venues in WKCD.

Chapter 2

Public Views

2.1 The Advisory Group noted that during the last round of public consultation exercise on the development of the WKCD project from December 2004 to June 2005, views expressed were generally in support of the development of the West Kowloon reclamation area as an arts and cultural district but the discussions focussed more on the development approach of the WKCD than the need for, and major requirements of CACF. To embark on the task of re-examining and re-confirming, if appropriate the need for CACF, the Advisory Group decided to hold open consultative forums and a number of sector-specific focus group meetings to gauge public views, particularly those from the arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism sectors. It also invited written submissions from mid May to mid June 2006. The Advisory Group had considered views received prior to and after the inception of the Advisory Group in the deliberations.

2.2 The list of Advisory Group's meetings, focus group meetings, the briefing by the international presenter and open consultative forums is at **Annex 5**.

2.3 Summary of discussions of the focus group meetings, the briefing and the two open consultative forums

are at **Annex 6**.

2.4 In general, the great majority of the views supported the government in developing the WKCD and looked forward to its early implementation. The major views are summarized as follows-

Public Aspirations of the WKCD

- (a) WKCD should be developed into an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district. Action has to be expedited to enable its early implementation;
- (b) Software development should be accorded equal priority, if not higher, alongside with the hardware development in the WKCD. The CACF in the district should be designed in pursuit of excellence;
- (c) The arts and cultural facilities in WKCD should factor in elements of nurturing budding artists, promoting arts education and enhancing audience building;
- (d) The arts and cultural, entertainment and commercial facilities should cluster together to create an environment conducive to attracting people flow day and night. There is a need for an

intra-district transport hub to facilitate people flow;

- (e) The clustering effects of the arts and cultural, entertainment and commercial facilities should help to build up the WKCD as an international icon and a 'must-go' for tourists;

Core Arts and Cultural Facilities

- (f) There should be more small-sized theatres to meet the needs of different performing troupes;
- (g) There should be multi-purpose venues to allow flexibility for different performing art forms but there were also people who advocated purpose-built venues to attract the audience by their venue characteristics;
- (h) There should be adequate backstage and storage facilities in the performance venues;

Specific Performing Arts Facilities

- ***A Xiqu Centre (戲曲中心)***
 - (i) An overwhelming majority of the views mentioned the need of the Cantonese Opera sector for a

dedicated performing venue for Cantonese Opera. There was a need for the provision of a dedicated performance venue for Cantonese Opera and other Chinese Operas in the WKCD. Venue availability was essential to the preservation of this traditional Chinese art form and the training of budding artists and audience building, particularly among the younger generation;

- (j) A purpose-built Xiqu Centre for the Chinese Operas was proposed. There should be a theatre for Xiqu performances; a small theatre for training budding artists and staging Cantonese Opera excerpts for tourists. There should also be ancillary facilities including a small Xiqu exhibition area; a library, souvenir shop and a tea house. Reference should be made to the mode of operation of Laoshe Tea House (老舍茶館) in Beijing;

- (k) The Cantonese Opera sector proposed a range of 1,000 to 1,500 seats in the theatre for Xiqu performances. The Chinese Artists Association (八和會館) suggested 1,200 to 1,400 seats for the Xiqu theatre and 400 seats for the small theatre;

- ***Concert Hall***

- (l) A concert hall which had been regarded as a ‘must’ for a world-class arts and cultural district like WKCD should be included. A purpose-built concert hall of high acoustics standard must be provided in the WKCD;

- ***Theatreland***

- (m) The Idea of ‘theatreland’- theatres to spread across a few streets with a number of performing venues of various seating capacities – was put forward. Not only could this idea offer various sizes of performing venues to cater for the needs of different performing groups and different art forms, it also fitted in well with the atmosphere of diversity and creativity advocated in WKCD. The suggested seating capacities of these theatres ranged from 200 to a maximum of 1,000;
- (n) There should be restaurants, cafes and commercial art galleries in close proximity to the theatres. They could even be intertwined with the theatres to enhance people flow and enhance the cultural vibrancy in the district;

- ***Performance Venue with 10,000 seats***

- (o) There is a need to retain the performance venue of 10,000 seats as one of the CACF in the WKCD. The venue had to be provided with good acoustic design, lighting configuration and a spacious backstage. There were also opinions that the venue should have 15,000 to 20,000 seats for multi-purpose performances;
- (p) The design of the 10, 000 seats venue should factor in the configuration of separating the 10,000 seats venues into two venues each with 5,000 seats;
- (q) a few expressed reservations about having a 10,000 seats venue in the WKCD because the market might not be able to support another 10,000 seats performance venue in addition to the Hong Kong Coliseum;

- ***Outdoor Performance Venue***

- (r) Views from the entertainment industry considered it essential to provide outdoor performance venues in the WKCD for staging world-class outdoor performances. Members of the public supported the Water Amphitheatre and four Piazza Areas as they could accommodate free entertainment and

the fusion of high arts and popular arts in the district;

- (s) Special attention to acoustic design and sound treatment was crucial for outdoor performance venues and this issue must be seriously addressed;

Complementary Facilities

- (t) There were suggestions to provide education venues, including arts-related institutions to nurture young talents in WKCD. They could also help in audience building for appreciation of different art forms;
- (u) There were suggestions for a Book City and a wide range of high quality restaurants for developing the WKCD into a gourmet centre;
- (v) There was a suggestion to build a sight-seeing tower in WKCD to attract the local community and the tourists; and
- (w) It was generally felt that there would be a need to provide different categories of hotels in WKCD to cater for the needs of different types of tourists and overseas performers.

Chapter 3

Vision, Guiding Principles and Key Considerations

- **Vision**

3.1 Taking into account the existing arts and cultural policy, the performing arts scene, the performing arts venues proposed at sector-specific focus groups meetings and the consultative forums, the Advisory Group considered the following to be the vision of performance venues in the WKCD.

“WKCD shall be an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district with a must-visit appeal to both local residents and visitors.”

- **Guiding Principles**

3.2 To realize the above vision, we have come up with some guiding principles on which the recommendations on the arts and cultural facilities in Chapter 4 should be broadly based. The Advisory Group’s guiding principles have responded positively to public views aired before the formation of the WKCD Consultative Committee as well as those submitted to the Group upon its invitation, and some of the principles put forward by the CHC, which include ‘people-oriented’, ‘partnership’ and ‘community-driven’ in the

planning and development of the WKCD.

3.3 The guiding principles are as follows –

Development of performing arts

- (a) The performing arts facilities in WKCD should be capable of meeting the long-term development needs of arts and culture in Hong Kong; and contribute to maintaining and sustaining the diversity and vibrancy of the performing arts scene in Hong Kong;
- (b) Both the hardware and software of arts and cultural facilities in WKCD should promote artistic excellence which ties in with WKCD's objective of becoming a world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district;
- (c) The performing arts facilities should be conducive to making WKCD a hub for local and international creative talents. It should provide an enabling environment to nurture creative talents and promote creative industries;
- (d) The performing arts facilities should be capable of fostering strategic partnerships with other international arts and cultural organizations;

- (e) There should be capacity for arts education and audience building both inside and outside Hong Kong with a view to developing the WKCD into a regional and international arts and cultural hub;
- (f) The performing arts facilities should be generally affordable to both performing arts groups and audience so as to encourage maximum participation from both the arts community and the general public;
- (g) Training of people of the right calibre is essential. The performing arts venues should adopt non-Government modes of management and operation so as to encourage more community participation and engaging creative talents, artists, professionals and business people from outside the Government in the development of WKCD venues;
- (h) The performing arts facilities should strive to operate on a self-financing basis with a level playing field and a healthy degree of competition amongst venues and performing arts groups;

Positioning of performing arts venues and facilities in a cultural district

- (i) The performing arts venues and facilities should be suitably clustered together and integrated with the commercial facilities in the WKCD so as to attract people flow both during the day and night, thus creating synergy and vibrancy. The original idea of segregating the district into three distinct areas (a cultural headland, an entertainment spine and a commercial gateway) to separately locate the different kinds of facilities is not conducive to achieving this integration effect and should no longer be pursued;
- (j) There should be emphasis on the concept of a 'central cultural district' when planning and designing the arts and cultural and other related facilities in the WKCD;
- (k) The concept of organic growth and sustainable development should be taken into account. Sufficient space should be reserved for further development of arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD;
- (l) The performance venues should enable WKCD to be developed into an attraction for the local residents which would in turn attract tourists into the district; and

- (m) Efforts should be made to integrate the arts and cultural facilities in WKCD with the neighbouring areas for the sake of cultivating a cultural ambience in the district and its vicinity.

- **Key Considerations**

Resident Companies

3.4 The Advisory Group is aware of the long-standing requests from the major performing arts groups for residency in performing arts venues. We see the need to accommodate resident performing arts groups in the performing venues of WKCD so as to put such venues on a par with other world-class performance venues. As such, suitable space and facilities should be provided for rehearsals, workshops, storage and offices in connection with the residency arrangements. The question of which performing arts groups should be the resident companies of any particular venues should be left to the future management of the venues (further discussion on this issue is in para. 6.3).

Artistic Character of Performance Venues

3.5 The Advisory Group considers the artistic character would be vital in determining whether the venues could be operated successfully with due regard to

composition of the programmes they present and their artistic excellence. The future mode of operation of the performance venues in the WKCD will not just be one of hiring out the venues. Their venue management should be proactive in building up the artistic character of the venues by sourcing and marketing their programmes, and soliciting sponsors.

3.6 In line with the recommendations of the Committee on Performing Arts (CPA) Recommendation Report I, the Advisory Group advocates the establishment of a partnership between the venue operators and performing arts groups (as programme providers) to help establish the artistic character of individual venues, enlarge the audience base; develop venue-based marketing strategies and facilitate the securing of corporate/private sponsorships. To complement the future mode of governance of the performance venues in the WKCD, the venue management is expected to curate and present a certain percentage of their programmes as opposed to mere hiring to outside presenters. This approach would contribute to building up venue identity and allow the venue management to have artistic control and ability to build and develop its own audiences.

3.7 The Advisory Group considers it important that the venue management should be able to enjoy autonomy in determining their programmes and be allocated enough resources to carry out their work. Healthy competition among

the performance venues should be encouraged in order to maximize the artistic impact of the facilities.

Development of Cultural Software and Talents

3.8 Generally speaking, development of cultural software includes, but is not limited to, nurturing of arts practitioners, training of arts administrators, discernment of excellence in programming, provision of arts education, audience building, promotion and marketing of events. During the public consultation, many of the views received emphasized that cultural software should be developed in parallel with the hardware to be in place in the WKCD.

3.9 There are currently insufficient creative and technical talents of various art forms. There is also an acute shortage of arts-related management talents i.e. the arts administrators who should play a crucial role in ensuring the effective management and sustainable operation of the performing arts facilities in the WKCD. The Government should increase its investment in cultural software, lest we would face the challenge of not being able to bridge the gap between the demand for and the supply of these talents by the time the facilities in the WKCD are in place.

3.10 The Advisory group considers that the efforts in nurturing talents in arts and culture should start with arts education. Due weight should be given to arts and culture

and literature subjects in primary and secondary education to enhance the ability of arts appreciation amongst the younger generation and help to identify and develop young talents. It is recommended that the Home Affairs Bureau, Education and Manpower Bureau and LCSD should take more proactive steps and put in more resources on this front. This would not only pave the way for the development of WKCD, but also enhance the quality of life of Hong Kong people as a whole and lay a solid foundation for the development of creative industries in Hong Kong.

3.11 To ensure the successful operation of the performance venues in the WKCD, it is important that the future WKCD Authority should include this function of developing cultural software as top priorities and an essential element of its primary responsibility of managing arts and cultural facilities. To this end, the WKCD Authority needs to be provided with sufficient resources for the purpose.

Chapter 4

Recommendations on Arts and Cultural Facilities

- **Essential Concerns**

4.1 The Advisory Group considers it important to plan and design venues and facilities which should cater for the needs of the long-term development of the arts and culture in Hong Kong. We consider the arts and cultural facilities should be developed in an organic manner and have to be in place by phases. Therefore, the recommendations and cultural facilities proposed in this chapter which are most imminently required are proposed to be in place at the start of the WKCD development project (phase I development). As for those venues required in the longer term, we do not consider it necessary to specify precisely when they should be in place, for it should be a matter to be determined by the future WKCD Authority having regard to the changes in the market response as reflected by the then prevalent utilization of the facilities and subject to regular review.

4.2 The Advisory Groups is aware that there are examples that the performance venues have not been put into their best use upon completion because the there are a lot of constraints which render them not user-friendly. Given the sophisticated and demanding technical

requirements of the performing arts venues proposed to be located in WKCD (such as the acoustic requirements of concert hall), there is a practical need to adopt the approach of according a higher priority to facilities' technical requirements over building and architectural concerns, such as through tendering for the technical requirements in advance of the construction tender, in order that the internal technical requirements are thoroughly defined and designed for subsequent incorporation in the architectural design ('building from the inside out' approach). This approach will ensure that the technical and operational requirements of the relevant art forms to be supported by the performing venues would not be unduly compromised. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account users' input in the design brief so as to ensure that the performing arts facilities are viable and practicable when being put to use.

4.3 The arts and cultural facilities recommended in the WKCD are set out in the paragraphs below.

(I) Xiqu Centre (戲曲中心)

• **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.4 Cantonese opera is one of the major categories of regional Chinese opera, which flourished in Southern China's Cantonese culture. Like all other categories of Chinese opera, it is a traditional Chinese art form, involving

music, singing, martial arts, acrobatics and acting. This indigenous art form is locally bred and is indigenous to Hong Kong's culture. The Cantonese Opera sector has been very vocal about their need for a dedicated performance venue, especially in view of the closure of the Sunbeam Theatre in 2009.

4.5 All the public views received supported the provision of a dedicated and purpose-built venue for Cantonese Opera which should also cater for all Chinese Opera (Xiqu) in the WKCD. Xiqu covers Cantonese opera, Kunju (崑曲), Peking opera (京劇) and other kinds of Chinese opera. The venue should serve to both preserve and promote these valuable traditional Chinese art forms to the local community as well as the tourists.

4.6 The Xiqu Centre in the WKCD has been proposed in response to views of the public and those of the Cantonese Opera sector about the need for suitable performance venues and the promotion and development of Cantonese operatic art. Strategically, the Xiqu Centre should help establish WKCD as a place where the Chinese traditional culture are given recognition and social status. Xiqu, a traditional Chinese art form, will create synergy with other art forms to make the WKCD a pivotal part of Hong Kong as an international metropolis. It also signifies the support for preservation and development of traditional Chinese culture.

- **Hardware Description**

4.7 There were different views about the design, seating capacity of the theatres and the ancillary facilities of the Xiqu Centre as expressed at the consultative forums and focus group meetings. After deliberating on the views of the Chinese Artists Association (八和會館) and other views from the Cantonese opera sector, the Advisory Group recommends a purpose-built Xiqu Centre in the WKCD. The facilities in the Centre will create an ambience for the appreciation of Xiqu and help to develop this traditional Chinese art form and attracts people flow in the district. The outlook and the architectural design of the Xiqu Centre should be iconic and fully demonstrate the characteristics and unique cultural identity of Chinese Xiqu. The Xiqu Centre should include the following facilities-

- (a) a theatre with a seating capacity of 1,200 to 1,400 seats;
- (b) a small theatre with a seating capacity of 400 seats;
- (c) a place like the Xiqu Tea House (戲曲茶座) to attract locals and tourists;
- (d) well-equipped rehearsal rooms and spacious backstage and other ancillary facilities;

- (e) a small exhibition hall on the history of Xiqu history;
- (f) souvenir shops selling Xiqu-related souvenirs; and
- (g) catering outlets.

(a) A theatre with a seating capacity of 1,200 to 1,400 seats

4.8 The theatre will be used for Xiqu performances by professional performing troupes. Having regard to the existing usage rate of full-length Cantonese operas/opera excerpts in the LCSD venues (Ko Shan Theatre in particular) and non-LCSD's venues (Sunbeam Theatre in particular which stage 300 performances annually), and the projected usage, the theatre should be almost fully utilized by the professional performing troupes. Furthermore, the Advisory Group has also taken into account of the impact of the loss of a suitable and conveniently located venue for Cantonese Opera performances after the closure of Sunbeam Theatre in North Point in early 2009.

4.9 For seating capacity, taking into consideration the need to ensure audience's comfort and the commercial viability of the performances, we consider the range of 1,200 to 1,400 seats appropriate.

4.10 An orchestral pit should be provided in the front part of the stage.

4.11 The acoustics design should be good and be able to address the requirements of Chinese orchestral performances in the theatre.

4.12 The auditorium of the theatre should be designed with no more than two tiers of audience seating.

4.13 Comparing the usage rate of existing venues among other forms of Chinese operas, it is obvious that the theatre would mainly be utilized for Cantonese opera performances. However, the theatre should also be open for use by other art forms when it is not occupied. It is possible that Chinese instrumental music performances may use this venue quite frequently because of the compatibility of the art form with the artistic identity of the venue. Meanwhile, we suggest to adopt a more innovative approach in promoting and fostering the development of Xiqu, particularly the genre of Cantonese opera. Efforts should be made to develop cross-over performances involving both Cantonese Opera and other art forms like Chinese orchestral music, music and drama etc, both to optimize potential for creativity and to embrace traditional culture with contemporary culture.

(b) A small theatre with a seating capacity of 400 seats

4.14 The small theatre would target budding artists and performing groups for both performance and training purposes.

4.15 The Advisory Group shares the concerns expressed by both the Cantonese opera sector and the public about the imminent succession problem facing the sector. The intention is for the budding artists/performing groups to perform and practice their skills at the small theatre. This should be conducive to grooming performing talents and audience building for the long-term development of Chinese opera particularly Cantonese opera. When their skills become mature, these performing groups will be encouraged to perform in the large theatre of 1,200 to 1,400 seats. In addition, this theatre can be a platform for performances of other Chinese music e.g. Hakka songs, Chiu Chow music. This accords with the positioning of this Xiqu Centre for the preservation of traditional and indigenous culture.

4.16 The small theatre can also be used occasionally for children Cantonese opera and Cantonese operas sung in English.

4.17 The co-location of the small theatre with the large theatre for professional performances in the Xiqu Centre would enable the budding artists to learn from the

professional artists. The high usage rate of the small-sized theatres run by LCSD and non-LCSD venues for full-length Cantonese opera, Cantonese opera excerpts, face-changing and puppet shows indicates that a 400-seat theatre for Xiqu in the WKCD can help to meet the unmet demand and fulfill the mission of nurturing young and budding artists in the field of Xiqu particularly Cantonese opera.

(c) Xiqu Tea House

4.18 A Xiqu Tea House style of venue could accommodate tailor-made traditional Chinese cultural performances such as Xiqu excerpts, where the audience could be served Chinese tea and snacks while enjoying performances in a relaxed atmosphere.

4.19 The Xiqu Centre could be very attractive from the tourism perspective. Local traditional and indigenous performing art forms like the Cantonese opera do not only appeal to local people but also tourists. Views received particularly those from the tourism sector advocated that performance venues for the Cantonese opera and other forms of Chinese operas in the WKCD could be integrated with catering and retail outlets and other tourists activities. The Advisory Group has therefore come up with the idea of having a Xiqu Tea House type of venue to attract both the locals and the tourists.

(d) Ancillary facilities

4.20 For ancillary facilities, there should be well-equipped rehearsal rooms, spacious backstage and dressing rooms.

4.21 The location of the dressing rooms should be on the same floor with the performance stage to spare the inconvenience of the artists moving up and down the stairs in their bulky costume.

(e) Small exhibition hall

4.22 The small exhibition hall should display the history and the development of Xiqu. Docent services should be provided to enhance the interest of the visitors.

(f) Xiqu-related souvenir shops

4.23 The Xiqu-related souvenir shop could be made a spontaneous extension of the Xiqu Centre for the local people and tourists. Suggested items for sale are Chinese opera masks, costumes and Chinese musical instruments.

(g) Catering outlets

4.24 There should be catering outlets inside the Xiqu Centre to draw people into it and to create people flow.

4.25 The software in the Xiqu Centre should be primarily directed towards the pursuit of excellence. The Advisory Group considers that the future venue management of the Xiqu Centre, like other performance venues in the WKCD, should build up the artistic character and promote the artistic excellence of the Xiqu Centre.

- **Work to be done in the Interim**

4.26 The Advisory Group is fully aware of the lead time required to put in place the Xiqu Centre in the WKCD. In the interim, all parties concerned including the Government, the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee and the Cantonese opera sector should continue to make concerted efforts on all fronts on the preservation of this indigenous art form, training of budding artists for succession and building audience for the Cantonese opera. These efforts are crucial to ensure that the software development would keep pace with that of hardware of the Xiqu Centre in WKCD.

(II) Concert Hall

4.27 The need for a Concert Hall in the WKCD stems from the high usage rate of the venues for orchestral music and the aspiration to put the arts and cultural facilities of WKCD on par with, if not better than, those in other countries. At present, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (HKCC)

concert hall (2,019 seats) and the Hong Kong City Hall (HKCH) concert hall (1,434 seats) are the only centrally located venues in that are acoustically equipped for orchestral performances. Although the auditoriums at Sha Tin Town Hall, Tsuen Wan Town Hall, Kwai Tsing Theatre and Tuen Mun Town Hall also suitable for orchestral performances, they are situated in suburban or outer-suburban areas and not purpose-built for orchestral performances. Usage rates in these four venues indicate that they are unable to cope with the excess demand for the concert hall in HKCC and HKCH.

4.28 The arts-related usage rate of the concert hall of HKCC and HKCH reached 97% and 92% in 2005-06 respectively. The orchestral performances of these venues are mainly presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HKPO), Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (HKCO) and Hong Kong Sinfonietta, for which the Government has been providing direct or indirect funding support. Furthermore, demand for bookings on prime performance nights (mainly Friday and Saturday evenings) far exceeds supply, with a great number of requests for bookings being denied annually. It is quite clear that the current provision of concert hall facilities is unable to cope with demand at present. Over the next decade or so, the orchestral performing groups in Hong Kong are projecting a significant growth in audience number, thereby creating an even greater demand for orchestral performances and venues.

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.29 The Advisory Group recommends to have a Concert Hall with a maximum seating capacity of 2,000 seats (including choir stall) in the WKCD. The reasons are-

- (a) The concert hall should have the iconic effect of branding the WKCD as a world-class integrated arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district. Public views received have expressed that a concert hall should not have been left out as one of the mandatory requirements in the original IFP and they strongly support that a dedicated concert hall with good acoustics is an essential facility for a world-class arts and cultural district like the WKCD;
- (b) One of the Advisory Group's guiding principles of the performing arts facilities in the WKCD is to cater for the long-term development needs of the arts and culture in Hong Kong. The Advisory Group is aware of the criticisms that the acoustics and design of the concert hall of HKCC have some insurmountable difficulties. The proposed Concert Hall is needed to meet the existing and projected demand for venues of this art form;

- (c) Strategically, Hong Kong needs to have a high quality concert hall in the WKCD to bring it on par with other internationally renowned performing arts centres like the Lincoln Centre in New York, the Barbican Centre in UK and the Sydney Opera House. Meanwhile, first class concert hall have already been in place in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Shanghai. Since the 1970s, Japan has constructed more than a dozen first-class concert halls, and new halls are under construction in major Chinese cities, including Shenzhen and Beijing. We need to have a Concert Hall in the WKCD. Otherwise, we will lose our competitive edge to our neighbouring cities on this front; and
- (d) Unlike some other art forms, orchestral music requires purpose-built performance venues and we consider that this art form cannot be adequately accommodated in dual or multi-purpose halls or theatres. Furthermore, venues with a clear artistic character can facilitate audience building and lead to greater participation of the community. A dedicated concert hall can also contribute to the promotion of arts education in orchestral music.

- **Hardware Description**

Seating Capacity

4.30 Reference has been made to the acoustic requirement of the internationally renowned concert halls and the Advisory Group proposes a maximum seating capacity of 2,000 seats (including choir stall).

Design and Technical Requirements

4.31 We recommend that priority should be given to the technical and acoustics design of the hall in order to achieve the goal of having a first-class concert hall in the WKCD. The acoustic design should also be able to address the different requirements for Western and Chinese orchestral music, possibly by incorporating some adjustable acoustics elements.

4.32 In addition to the standard requirements of a modern orchestral hall such as excellent acoustic quality both on-stage and in the body of the hall, a grand organ and the provision of choir stalls, facilities for recording and broadcasting, the design should also accommodate the specific needs of Chinese orchestral music by incorporating the large-scale, traditional Chinese instruments, especially bells and drums.

Ancillary Facilities

4.33 We recognize that orchestras require significant amount of storage space for large instruments such as harps, drums, bells, double basses, grand pianos etc and for music libraries, and the provision of such space would be essential to ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the WKCD concert hall.

4.34 There should be at least two rehearsal rooms for full-scale orchestral rehearsals.

4.35 The backstage should be spacious enough to accommodate the large number of musicians of the performing groups and a decent meeting place should be provided in close proximity to the stage for the performing groups to meet the press or prestigious guests as well as a backstage canteen or 'green room'.

4.36 Dressing rooms need to be provided to accommodate the maximum number of artists for large-scale productions. Musicians of the resident orchestras should have permanent, dedicated areas for lockers and storage.

4.37 Space should be provided to place the Bianzhong (編鐘) on the stage of the concert hall.

4.38 Front-of-house facilities should include a convenient and appropriate space for pre-concert talks, a dedicated space for sponsor receptions, excellent catering and service facilities for the audience and dedicated areas for promotional materials.

(III) Chamber Music Hall

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.39 The Advisory Group recommends to have a Chamber Music Hall with a seating capacity of 600 to 800 which could also cater for ensemble performances in the WKCD. The Advisory Group notes that Hong Kong lacks a dedicated venue for performances of chamber music. A wide range of musical performances, ranging from solo piano recitals, through song and instrumental recitals to string quartet, large ensemble and chamber orchestra performances currently take place in different kinds of non-dedicated venues. The larger existing halls such as the HKCC Concert Hall and the HKCH Concert Hall are too large to be suitable for these more intimate performances while other venues like the APA Concert Hall, with a capacity of only 300 seats, are considered too small. More importantly, the high acoustics requirements of chamber music make it impossible to share use with other music art form like pop music and musicals.

4.40 The Chamber Music Hall in the WKCD will fill the gap in the current provision of venues for recitals and chamber music performances. The Chamber Music Hall will also be used for smaller performances, contemporary music programmes (while artistically vital, frequently attract only small but highly discerning audience) and a large number of educational activities. It is envisaged that it would help to energize and induce audience development of chamber music. Recent experiences in other major cities have demonstrated that the building of a first-class dedicated chamber music hall could stimulate and re-invigorate the musical life of the city by offering a wide range of programmes which had previously failed to make an impact in larger or otherwise unsuitable venues. Sydney's City Recital Hall, Angel Place serves as a good example, and has been responsible for the renaissance of recital, chamber music and chamber orchestral activity in that city.

- **Co-location of the Concert Hall and the Chamber Music Hall**

4.41 The Advisory Group considers that the purpose-built concert hall and the dedicated chamber music hall should have their distinct identity for orchestral music performances. These two performance venues should be co-located in the same complex in the WKCD to create synergy and enhance image-building of this art form.

(IV) The Concept of Theatreland

4.42 In the original IFP issued in September 2003, the specified CACF have included, inter alia, a Theatre Complex comprising three theatres with seating capacities of at least 2,000, 800 and 400 seats respectively. The Theatre Complex was intended to address to the findings of the consultancy studies mentioned in Chapter 1 above, usage rate of existing facilities, public views as well as opinions from the arts and cultural sector.

4.43 Upon critical re-examination of the need for the Theatre Complex, the Advisory Group has the following observations-

- (a) As the performing arts facilities in the WKCD are planned for the future, the provision of only three theatres in the Theatre Complex in the original IPF would not adequately address the future demand. With the continuous efforts on all fronts in performing arts education and audience building, we are projecting a growth in audience numbers in different art forms. More venues would be needed and suitable space should be reserved to cater for the organic growth of the theatres in the WKCD;
- (b) The performing arts facilities in the WKCD have the mission of nurturing the budding artists and

providing opportunities not only for the established performing arts companies but also the budding small and medium-sized companies with good quality work. This is vital to sustaining the vibrancy and diversity of our performing arts scene. We need to construct more theatres with different ranges of seating capacities to meet users' needs; and

- (c) To achieve the integration and clustering effect, the TheatreLand concept (like that in the West End) for performance venues instead of a stand-alone theatre complex is considered appropriate.

4.44 The TheatreLand concept embodies the street theatre concept. It is a place where high art and popular art forms meet to make available a platform for different art forms, as well as small and medium-sized performing arts groups to showcase their performances. The place should consist of theatres of various sizes, the small and medium-sized theatres in particular, and the configurations of the theatres have to be very flexible. They are not solely for drama performances but also various art forms like, opera, dance, pop music, jazz, stand-up comedy, multi-media performances, experimental drama and tourist shows etc. Furthermore, two or three of these theaters of various sizes can cluster together in one building where catering and commercial facilities are also provided. These theatres will

cover two to three streets in the district and the design of the streets should be performance-friendly to cater for street-performances to attract visitors and tourists.

4.45 Views received indicated that the three theatres proposed in the IFP were not adequate and they are in favour of the idea of having a number of theatres of various sizes. Besides, the TheatreLand concept is generally well received by the arts and cultural sector. The acute shortage of theatre venues and the present booking arrangements of LCSD venues have been deterring long-run international musicals from according high priority to staging touring performances in Hong Kong. For long-run musicals that are operated on a highly commercial basis, they need venues capable of accommodating performances running for at least two to three months in order to be financially viable. The Advisory Group considers that there is a need to provide a theatre for overseas long-run musicals in order not to lose out in our competitiveness with our neighbouring cities.

(a) Great Theatres

4.46 The Advisory Group recommends to have a Great Theatre [“the Great Theatre I”] with a seating capacity of 2,100 to 2,200 in the WKCD. At present, we have the Grand Theatre of 1,734 seats in HKCC and the Lyric Theatre of 1,181 seats in the Academy for Performing Arts as the only centrally located venues for large-size theatrical

performances. It is noted that the usage rate of arts-related activities of the Grand Theatre in HKCC in 2004-05 reached 100 % and the unsuccessful booking applications in 2005-06 amount to a total of 197 days. These centrally located venues are always in great demand, and to ease the demand, the existing concert hall in HKCH is often used for theatrical performances not requiring sophisticated stage facilities.

4.47 As Asia's World City, Hong Kong should have its appeal to international touring performing groups. As expressed by the Really Useful Company (RUG) Ltd at an experience-sharing meeting with the Advisory Group, the lack of suitable performance venues (in terms of seating capacity and location); the LCSD's booking policy which was not compatible with the requirements of long-run musicals and the high venue rental have very often discouraged them, among others, from staging their long-run shows in Hong Kong.

4.48 There should be a performance venue for staging international (such as West End and Broadway) as well as home-grown long-run musicals to attract audience not only from the local community and overseas but more conveniently from the Pearl River Delta where there is great market potential. Both the local arts and cultural sector and the renowned overseas presenter support the provision of the Great Theatre I in the WKCD for long-run musicals and commercial productions which would find a profitable niche.

The Great Theatre I is not intended to be an exclusively dedicated venue for long-run musicals. Other types of presentation, such as musical performances and operas can also be staged there.

- **Hardware Description**

4.49 The Great Theatre I will be a proscenium theatre mainly for overseas long-run musicals/shows; homegrown musicals; large scale theatrical productions, operas, ballets, and musical presentations. The seating capacity of 2,100 to 2,200 seats is recommended having regard to audience comfort and the commercial viability of staging performances there.

4.50 The layout of the Great Theatre I should preferably consist of different levels to allow presenters the flexibility of closing part of the seating areas of the Great Theatre, if required. There is no need for very elaborate stage facilities as overseas long-run productions will usually pull in their own sets and props. However, up-to-standard technical facilities, flexible flying systems and good loading and unloading facilities should be provided. There should be spacious backstage for the cast and the crew to move around.

4.51 As the Government should like to explore the feasibility of using PPP approach in the WKCD, the Advisory Group thinks that this proposed Great Theatre I should have considerable potential of development by PPP because it has

the potential of attracting private sector's participation in building and operating the venue, as the venue is expected to be used mostly for staging long-run musicals run on a commercial basis.

(b) Medium-sized Theatres

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.52 The Advisory Group recommends to have two medium-sized theatres each with a seating capacity of 500 to 800 seats. Regarding the current provision of performance arts venues in Hong Kong, there is a considerable number of medium-sized performance venues in the centrally located area of the territory which fall within the range of 200 to 500 seats for example the Studio Theatre of the HKCC (496 seats), the Theatre of the HKCH (463 seats), the Shouson Theatre of the HK Arts Centre (439 seats), the Drama Theatre of the APA (415 seats) etc. In 2004-05, the usage of the HKCC Studio Theatre and the Theatre of the HKCH reached 99% and 95% respectively and the other two non-LCSD venues mentioned above are always in great demand. The Advisory Group notes the gap in performance venues with seating capacity from 500 to 800 seats. According to the statistics of the unsuccessful booking applications received for the LCSD's medium-size theatres in 2005-06, the total number of unsuccessful bookings for arts-related activities is 1,127 days. The number of days of unsuccessful bookings

for the HKCC Studio Theatre and the HKCH Theatre are 306 days (27%) and 383 days (33%) respectively. The situation of oversubscription should be even more serious if telephone enquiries for bookings have been included in the above figures. For the Shouson Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre (HKAC), the estimated unmet demand in 2005-06 is about 50% of the successful bookings.

4.53 The two medium-sized theatres should be able to fill the existing gap of medium-sized theatres. They would also be able to create new demand for the venues. They would play an important role in ensuring the development of a vibrant performing arts scene and medium-sized performing groups.

- **Hardware Description**

4.54 These two medium-sized theatres will be multi-form theatres to cater for a wide range of performances including dance, Canton pop concerts for up and coming artists, jazz, stand-up comedy, drama, cabaret, opera, children shows and all-day-round shows for tourists etc.

4.55 Their configuration should be as flexible as possible but consideration can be given to provide a higher standard of acoustics for one of the two theatres so that it will become a more preferred venue for music performances. The Advisory Group does not consider it necessary to specify the

art forms for each of these two theatres as this should be a matter for the future venue management to decide when mapping out the artistic characteristics of these venues.

(c) Blackbox Theatres

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.56 There are only a limited number of small theatres (blackboxes) with a seating capacity below 250 seats in Hong Kong and they are non-LCSD venues. For example the Fringe Studio (80 seats) and the Fringe Theatre (100 seats) in the Hong Kong Fringe Club, the Recital Hall (202 seats) and Studio Theatre (240 seats) in the HKAPA. Against this background, the Advisory Group recommends to have four blackbox theatres each with a seating capacity of 150 to 250 seats to cope with the increasing demand.

4.57 These Blackbox Theatres in the WKCD will help to boost the creativity and vibrancy among the budding performing arts groups. Views gauged at the open consultative forums point to the need for blackbox theatres to provide more opportunities for the development of the local small and medium performing arts groups. There is a proven demand of this size of venues which are suitable for small experimental theatrical productions, contemporary dance performances, film screenings, solo recitals, jazz, puppet shows, children and family shows.

- **Hardware Description**

4.58 The design of these Blackbox Theatres should be simple and flexible to maximize flexibility for the users. The seats should be collapsible to allow interactive communications between the performers and the audience when required, for example children and family shows. The floor of the blackbox theatres should be flat. Again, the venue management will have to decide how these venues are to be operated. We are quite confident that the blackbox theatres can help to build up the atmosphere of encouraging up-and-coming performing arts groups to showcase their work and create the kind of synergy expected of the district. It will also attract young audience to go to the district.

- **The Need for Excellence in the Medium-sized Theatre and Blackbox Theatres**

4.59 The small and medium-sized performing arts groups will find the two medium-sized theatres and the four blackbox theatres suitable for small-scale and experimental productions, having regard to the size of the audience and financial affordability. These facilities are intended for the nurturing of budding artists and creative talents. The Advisory Group considers that as a world-class arts and cultural district, WKCD venues should house performances that reach a high threshold of standard and quality. Thus

budding arts groups and their programmes must reach a certain artistic standard before their performances would be staged in the theatres in WKCD.

(V) Mega Performance Venue

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.60 The Advisory Group recommends to have a mega performance venue with a maximum seating capacity of 15,000. The seating configuration should allow flexibility of converting the venue into a smaller one with less seats (say 5,000) for smaller size performances. At present, there are 26 performance venues (both LCSD and non-LCSD venues) in Hong Kong with a total seating capacity of 75,625 seats. Among these performance venues, there is no single purpose-built performing venue of over 10,000 seats for mega shows and pop concerts.

4.61 The Hong Kong Coliseum, originally designed as a multi-purpose indoor stadium for different sports, entertainment and assembly activities, has become the most popular venue in presenting pop concerts and big entertainment shows since its opening in 1983. The usage rate of Hong Kong Coliseum in 2005-2006 in respect of arts-related activities reached 84%, (out of venue's total usage rate of 98%) and most of it were for pop concerts and entertainment shows presented by the hirers. In recent years,

non-designated venues in the private sector have been adapted for performing arts use to meet market demand, such as convention and exhibition halls in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Hong Kong International Trade and Exhibition Centre as well as the newly-opened arena in the Asia-World Expo.

4.62 Views received at the focus group meeting with the presenters of the cultural and entertainment events are as follows -

- (a) The presenters complain about the venue constraints of the Hong Kong Coliseum, a non purpose-built venue. They include acoustics, lighting, flying systems, storage space for stage set and props etc. Their production costs have been raised because of the need to overcome these constraints. There is a need for a purpose-built mega size performance venue provided with basic acoustics design and lighting configuration and equipment. There is no need for very fine acoustics because considerable adaptation to lighting, sound and the stage design would usually be made to meet the requirements of the productions;
- (b) The presenters of entertainment events prefer to stage their productions in venue of no less than 10,000 seats for they could earn more admissions

income to offset their production cost per seat and make their productions more financially viable. At present, they have no other choice except the Hong Kong Coliseum;

- (c) The absence of a purpose-built mega size performance venue has prevented the staging of international pop concerts, mega entertainment events and touring orchestral performances in Hong Kong; and
- (d) The new performance venue in the WKCD should factor in flexible seating configurations to meet users' requirements. The flexibility of splitting the large venue of no less than 10, 000 seats into two venues of equal seating capacity has been suggested by the presenters, as this size is considered suitable for presenting concerts of up and coming artists.

4.63 Views received during the open consultative forums also supported the need for a purpose-built mega venue. Taking into account the proven market demand for a mega size performance venue for entertainment events, the presenters' views about the limitations of using non-designated venues to stage their productions and the public views, the Advisory Group recommends to have a mega size purpose-built venue of a maximum seating

capacity of 15,000 seats with flexible seating configuration.

- **Hardware Description**

4.64 In order to plan for the future, the Advisory Group recommends a maximum seating capacity of 15,000 seats. We are aware that venue of about 5,000 seats is much sought after for medium-sized entertainment events by the upcoming artists, and have deliberated the suggestion of satisfying the demand by allowing flexible seating and stage configuration of turning the mega venue into two venues of equal seating capacity for performances to be staged simultaneously. However, we consider that it may not be acoustically and technically feasible to build in the requirements for converting the mega venue into two smaller size venues for performances to be held at the same time. Even if it is feasible, the cost involved will be too high to justify such specifications.

4.65 The Advisory Group concludes that the mega size performance venue should have a maximum seating capacity of 15,000 seats with flexible seating configuration to allow the venue to be converted into smaller seating capacity to meet the requirement of the hirers.

4.66 As for the Hong Kong Coliseum, the Advisory Group understands that there will possibly be a review on its utilization after the arts and cultural facilities have been put

in place in the WKCD. We consider it better to let prevailing market forces to decide on the use of the Hong Kong Coliseum at a suitable time in future.

(VI) Water Amphitheatre

4.67 A Water Amphitheatre was included as one of the CACF in the original IFP. The Amphitheatre, covering an area of 10,000 square meters, will make full use of the semi-open space created by the canopy (one of the Mandatory Requirements of the original IFP) so that the skylight provided by the canopy and the magnificent backdrop of the harbour skyline/sea view will become a distinct characteristic of the WKCD. Apart from multi-media, aquatic, light and sound performances at the water area, it can provide a terraced seating area of around 5,000 seats around the water area for live performances.

4.68 According to the consultancy study commissioned by the former Hong Kong Tourist Association in 1999, Hong Kong has a need for outdoor performance venues for festive events. Views recently received from the presenters of cultural and entertainment events and the public at the consultative forums also confirm the need for outdoor performance venues. In fact, the shortage of suitable outdoor venues has made it difficult to attract renowned international touring groups like the Cirque du Soleil to stage their spectacular performances in Hong Kong. Some views

expressed the need to have an outdoor performance venue of 30,000 seats. At the moment, they can only resort to staging performances at soccer pitches at the LCSD parks or the temporary Tamar site, where they have encountered a lot of frustrations over the site constraints.

4.69 We note the beauty of having an outdoor performance venue that takes advantage of the spectacular harbour view. However, we also consider it prudent to take the following factors into account -

- (a) Learning from the experience of the Hong Kong Stadium, noise pollution is a very serious problem that needs to be addressed. The amplification of the noise of the performances facing the residential area adjacent to the WKCD will be an issue;
- (b) Considering the hot and humid climate of Hong Kong and its rainy season, outdoor performances may not be able to be staged as scheduled due to inclement weather, and the unbearable heat could deter the audience from watching outdoor performances;
- (c) There are other ways to satisfy the need for outdoor performance venues in the WKCD yet addressing the problems mention in (a) and (b)

above, such as the erection of collapsible tent-like structures in the open space for outdoor performances; and

- (d) The piazza areas can also serve as outdoor performance venues.

As a conclusion, we do not recommend to have a Water Amphitheatre in the WKCD.

(VII) Piazza Areas

- **Artistic and Strategic Significance**

4.70 The original IPF includes at least four Piazza Areas of a total area site area of 30,000 square meters (3 hectares) in the form of multi-purpose event spaces for cultural and entertainment activities such as visiting circus, mid-autumn and spring lantern festive fair and festival parades. They should also be provided with suitable greenery for public enjoyment.

4.71 Public views gauged supported having a lot of open space/green space in the WKCD. The Advisory Group unanimously agrees that not only does the WKCD present an unprecedented opportunity for cultural development in Hong Kong, it also makes available a vast piece of open space for the public to enjoy. The open space will serve the following

purposes -

- (a) Open green space for public recreation and leisure. There should be comfortably landscaped open space spread throughout the district. The piazza-like space can attract people particularly families to stroll leisurely in the district. It would create a relaxing atmosphere for the public to enjoy the scenery and the space. Reference can be drawn from the Millennium Park in Chicago for artistic recreational piazza-like space;
- (b) The open space has rich artistic potential. Not only can it be used for outdoor tented or open ticketed performances like shows presented by Cirque du Soleil, it can also be used to provide free cultural entertainment performances for the public. It should complement the ticketed performances inside the performance venues. It would also facilitate arts and culture to reach out to the public for arts education and audience development. It will provide opportunities for the creative and budding artists to take part in outdoor performances. The piazza areas could also be used for visual arts display; and
- (c) The open space should enhance people flow and provide space for the audience to hang out before

and after the performances.

- **Hardware Description**

4.72 The Advisory Group recommends to have Piazza Areas with a total site area of at least 30,000 square meters (3 hectares) throughout the WKCD.

4.73 We consider it desirable to cover part of the Piazza Areas under a small canopy or shelter to enable the public to enjoy the open space and free entertainment in a shady and comfortable environment, particularly during the hot and humid summer in Hong Kong. A semi-open space with a small canopy or shelter would also allow more flexible use of the open space.

4.74 Again, the Advisory Group reiterates the importance of addressing the noise pollution problem for outdoor performances when mapping out the master layout plan of the WKCD. The Piazza Areas must not be compromised to allow for the organic growth of the arts and cultural facilities in the district. Rather, land should be reserved separately from the outset for that purpose.

(VIII) Related Arts and Cultural Facilities

4.75 The objective of WKCD project is to develop the WKCD into an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district. Some peripheral facilities would need to be built in the vicinity to create the clustering effect. Space could be set aside for facilities to develop and promote creative industries in the WKCD such as publishing, advertising, design centre, visual arts studio, cinema centres etc. The suggestions include a Mega Book City, arts galleries, cinema centres etc. While acknowledging that some of these facilities could be operated on a commercial basis, there is a need for an appropriate leasing policy in favour of arts-related commercial facilities with a view to enabling these facilities to sustain their business under Hong Kong's economic climate, thereby cultivating the cultural ambience in WKCD. The future WKCD Authority should take the above suggestion for peripheral facilities into account.

4.76 There is also the suggestion to set up a Hong Kong Arts and Cultural Information Centre in the district. It will perform the role as a platform for promoting arts and cultural programmes and more importantly it will help to promote local arts and cultural talents, as people around the world could obtain ready information on the respective arts and culture talents through the Centre. This will create business opportunities for the arts and culture sector. The

future statutory body could consider taking this into account.

4.77 In line with the Advisory Group's support for residency in the performance venues, space should be set aside for facilities of the resident performing arts companies and offices for staff and members of the performing art groups. The Advisory Group has a general consensus that there should be residency arrangements for some of the performing arts groups which are frequent users of facilities like the Concert Hall and the Great Theatre I, but facilities of the resident companies need not be provided inside the performance venues, as they can be provided elsewhere in the district. These facilities should be grouped together in one or two buildings in close proximity to the performance venues for creative talents and the staff of the companies to congregate in and frequent the district, thus creating synergy. A 'separate' leasing policy for the resident performing art groups and performing arts groups is needed in order that the rental level is affordable to them.

4.78 There is a need to set aside space for suitable arts education venues e.g. ballet training school and music school etc. to facilitate the promotion of arts education and nurturing of budding artists. On the suggestion of having a dedicated performing arts high school in the WKCD, the Advisory Group recognizes the need to prepare gifted young performers at an early stage but the feeder high school does not need to be

located in the WKCD.

4.79 Space should be set aside for banquet and conference facilities. These facilities can be suitably integrated with the CACF to create the necessary synergy. There is an increasing demand for these facilities and they can generate income to cross-subsidise other less or non-profit-making facilities in the WKCD.

- **Operational and Technical Issues**

4.80 The Advisory Group considers it necessary to take heed of the following operational and technical issues in planning, design and construction of the proposed performing arts facilities:

- (a) To place emphasis on acoustic design and noise abatement measures of the outdoor performance venues in the WKCD to address the noise problem;
- (b) To install stand-alone subtitle viewing system at the back of the seats in suitable venues to cater for the needs of the audience. These facilities have already been available in a number of world-class performing venues overseas;
- (c) To ensure the design of the seats will allow comfortable leg room for the audience;

- (d) To provide an orchestral lift platform with the flexibility of creating traps, for theatres with a seating capacity of over 400 seats;
- (e) To provide sprung floor for theatre stage for dance performances and for dance studio for rehearsals;
- (f) To equip indoor performing venues with facilities for recording and broadcasting of the performances staged in the venues;
- (g) To ensure that the provision of a user-friendly ticketing system, which is able to adequately support on-line booking outside Hong Kong; and
- (h) To ensure adequate provision of toilet facilities in the performance venues in the WKCD.

Chapter 5

The Leisure and Tourism Perspectives

5.1 Guided by its vision of making the WKCD a ‘must-go’ for the tourists, the Advisory Group has taken into consideration the leisure and tourism perspective when recommending the arts and cultural and other facilities in the district. The WKCD has presented a golden opportunity not only for cultural development but also for tourism development in Hong Kong. The arts and cultural facilities and other facilities such as catering and retail facilities need to be clustered together to create synergy and vibrancy in the district. Views gauged from the tourism sector indicate that they are eager to see the early implementation of the WKCD development project for Hong Kong has the risk of losing its competitive edge to our neighbouring cities particularly those that have a more vibrant and energetic nightlife.

- **Tourism Appeal of Arts and Cultural Facilities**

5.2 Of the proposed arts and cultural facilities, the Xiqu Centre has rich ‘must-visit’ appeal to the tourists. Not only should the iconic design of the Xiqu Centre be appealing, the facilities inside the Centre should also be attractive to the tourists, in particular the Tea House venue. The tourists will find it an enjoyable experience to visit a place with

tailor-made performances like Xiqu excerpts, Chinese tea and snacks served, an exhibition hall on Xiqu history and Xiqu-related souvenir shops. The proposed Xiqu Centre is welcomed by the tourism sector.

5.3 Furthermore, the provision of world-class performance venues in the WKCD will attract international orchestral groups and touring musicals to stage their performances. Such performances will certainly attract the tourists particularly those from the Pearl River Delta and the neighbouring cities in the Asia Region. Street performances, with local and international flavour and in an open atmosphere, would no doubt be a plus in attracting tourists.

- **Retail Facilities**

5.4 There should be space for retail facilities spreading over the district to achieve the clustering effect for the local visitors and the tourists. It is understood that there are already some shopping malls planned in the adjacent area. The WKCD should avoid replicating the shops commonly found in the shopping malls elsewhere, and the retailing mix should reflect the character of the district as the cultural hub of our city. The future management of WKCD should take these factors into consideration in the provision of retail facilities.

- **Catering Facilities**

5.5 Catering facilities are very important in energizing a district. The WKCD has good potential to be developed into a gourmet centre to attract internationally renowned restaurants to set up their restaurants in the district. The catering facilities have to be suitably integrated with the arts and cultural facilities, to allow both performance goers (pre/post performance supper) and non-performance goers to hang out to create the atmosphere. They should have their special features e.g. thematic restaurants, jazz bars and restaurants for stand-up comedy etc.

- **Other Tourism Facilities**

5.6 The Advisory Group unanimously agrees that the magnificent backdrop of the waterfront harbour view will become a distinctive characteristic of the WKCD and should be maximized to attract among others, the tourists, like the spectacular tourist spot, the Darling Harbour and the Rocks in Sydney. It is worth pursuing the creative idea of ‘promenade of romance’ i.e. to make use of the waterfront promenade to create a romantic atmosphere for lovers to stroll along and appreciate the charming harbour view in the evening. It will become another attraction for the local residents and tourists.

5.7 The hotel facilities being an integral part of tourism facilities should not be missed out. There should be different classes and styles of hotels including boutique hotels to suit the needs of the tourists. Also, the building of a Hong Kong Eye similar to that of London's in the WKCD to be surrounded by catering and retail facilities to draw people flow is an attractive suggestion. We believe that the tourists will be attracted to places where the locals like to go. The WKCD, once developed into an attraction for the local residents, would naturally draw in the tourists.

5.8 There is a need to ensure that the loading and unloading areas for coaches are adequately provided in the WKCD.

- **Cross-sector Cooperation**

5.9 There is a need, as reflected by the tourism sector and the arts and culture sector, for an institutional platform to facilitate ongoing communication and exchange of views between these two sectors. This should help to devise measures to facilitate the tourists to obtain information on the arts and cultural and entertainment events staged in the WKCD. The in-bound agents should have up-to-date information on arts and cultural and entertainment events to facilitate bookings from overseas. As mentioned in Chapter 4, there should be a user-friendly ticketing system to facilitate

on-line purchasing of tickets from outside Hong Kong for performances in the WKCD.

- **Tourism Hub of the Mainland and the Asia Region**

5.10 The Advisory Group is confident that the WKCD, guided by its vision of becoming a ‘must-visit’ appeal to the tourists and supported by its world-class arts and cultural facilities both in terms of hardware and software, will have a the magnetic effect of drawing tourists to the district. Figures show that 23.4 million tourists came to visit Hong Kong in 2005, which represents 7.1 % increase when compared to 2004. Over 83% of the tourists in 2005 came from Asia Region, of whom 64 % were from the Mainland and 36% from other Asian countries. The high percentage of tourists from the Asia Region illustrates Hong Kong’s position as a tourism hub in the Asia Region. The facilities in the WKCD, when in place, will further enhance Hong Kong’s status as an international cultural metropolis. With the Mainland as our hinterland, Hong Kong should be able to make good use of the WKCD to tap the huge tourism market in the Mainland. The furtherance of tourism in Hong Kong is expected to bring about enormous economic benefits to Hong Kong.

Chapter 6

Other Issues Considered

- **Development of Local Performing Arts Groups**

6.1 As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 about the current performing arts scene, the Advisory Group registers the fact that a large majority of the local performing arts groups, the major and small and medium-sized performing groups alike, are receiving funding support from the Government in one way or the other.

6.2 For the performance venues in the WKCD, we generally agree that they should aim to operate on a self-financing basis whilst being mindful of the affordability of the venues to both the performing groups and audience. The future management is expected to devise appropriate business strategies and secure sponsorships in operating their venues and facilities. In any case, we consider it necessary for the Government and the performing arts sector to put in place suitable measures to facilitate the long-term development of the sector on the one hand, and to ensure the continued diversity and vibrancy of the performing arts scene on the other. This could include areas like the mechanism of funding support, venue management strategy and support, arts education, nurturing of performing arts talents and arts

administration expertise, marketing and promotion, and solicitation of community participation and corporate sponsorship. The Advisory Group notes that the Government has been reviewing these areas in close consultation with the Committee on Performing Arts.

6.3 As for residency arrangements in the performance venues in the WKCD, the Advisory Group recognizes such need for the performing arts groups not only for the benefit of their long-term development but also for the world-class WKCD district to be on par with other world-class performance venues abroad. On resident companies, we have the following observations –

- (a) Not only should the big performance venues like the Concert Hall and Great Theatre I consider to have residency, small performance venues like the blackbox theatres could also have resident performing companies to cater for the needs of the small and medium-sized groups;
- (b) rehearsal rooms and offices of the resident performing companies need not necessarily be housed inside the performance venues, but rather they can be housed together with other performing companies in close proximity elsewhere in the WKCD to create synergy. However, the Advisory Group considers that facilities for

resident companies of the orchestral performing groups may have to be provided inside their performance venues for practical reasons; and

- (c) for storage space for long-term items (not items imminently required for upcoming performances) of the resident performing companies, consideration can be given to provide it outside the district.

- **Mode of Governance and Venue Management Strategy**

6.4 The Advisory Group is aware that the arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD, as stated by the Government, will not be operated under the existing mode for government performing arts venues. It is envisaged that an independent statutory body will be set up to oversee the operation of the arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD and the Government is exploring the feasibility of adopting a Public Private Partnership (PPP) approach in developing the facilities. The setting up of the new body is in line with CHC recommendations that emphasis should be given to the principles of ‘people-oriented’, ‘partnership’ and ‘community driven’ in the development of the WKCD.

6.5 In examining the need for and specifications of the arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD, the Advisory Group considers it necessary to deliberate on mode of governance of

these facilities as it would have implications on their sustainability.

6.6 We are aware that a large majority of the performing arts groups, both major and small and medium-sized ones, are receiving funding support from the Government. As performance venues in the future WKCD would be operated on a non-government model, we consider that the venue management bodies should seek to build up the artistic character of each venue. Instead of merely managing the venue for hire, they should curate and present their programmes in order to build up the venue characteristics and audience. They should also manage the venues in close partnership with the performing arts groups (particularly the relevant resident companies), as well as devise pro-active and entrepreneurial strategies in arts education, audience building and community involvement. While the venues would be intended to be operated on a self-financing basis, there is a need to strike a suitable balance between financial viability and artistic excellence which is essentially important to making WKCD a world-class arts and cultural, tourism and entertainment district. We also consider the need for cross-subsidizations between the more commercially viable performance venues and the less income-generating ones to ensure the overall financial viability of all the arts and cultural venues in the district.

6.7 Having regard to the vision/artistic characteristics

of different performance venues, there should be different modes of operation, mainly self-financed and subsidized modes and the extent of subsidy may vary between different venues. We envisage that the Theatres predominantly for staging long-run musicals may be able to operate on a self-financing basis but the Concert Hall would need to cross-subsidization from other income sources. Some of the venues may find it feasible to adopt a mixed mode of operation.

6.8 It is crucial that the new statutory body for WKCD should be given sufficient resources for the start-up operation and the sustainability of the arts and cultural facilities, both in terms of hardware and software, in the WKCD. The body should have the autonomy to deploy its funds without having to seek approval from the Government/Legislative Council at regular intervals, as long as it is transparent and accountable in the deployment of its resources.

Rationalization of existing Cultural Facilities

6.9 The Advisory Group recognizes the increasing demand for performance venues in Hong Kong and the fact that there is an acute shortage of newly designed venues to respond to market need. The proposed arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD will alleviate the shortage of performance venues, and space should also be reserved in

WKCD for organic development of arts and cultural activities in the district in the long run. With the facilities in place in the WKCD, it is envisaged that the Government will be in a better position to review the existing performing arts facilities under LCSD, having regard to the changing needs of the performing arts market and the evolution of the local culture and arts scene.

Chapter 7

Catering for Future Development

7.1 The performing arts facilities in the WKCD should target at meeting the long-term development needs of arts and culture in Hong Kong. The Advisory Group considers that the following are possible future development directions which could be examined further in due course.

- **A Pearl River Delta / Regional Hub**

7.2 To realize the vision of developing the WKCD into an integrated world-class arts and cultural, entertainment and tourism district, the arts and cultural facilities and their programmes aim to draw in the people from the local community and the tourists. This is conducive to enhancing Hong Kong's position as an international cultural metropolis. The Advisory Group is also aware of the growth potential of the audience in the Pearl River Delta who could be attracted to attend quality and world-class performances staged in the WKCD performances venues. Moreover, the WKCD can establish closer co-operation with the cultural and arts communities in the Pearl River Delta so that the district can be developed into a cultural gateway for the Pearl River Delta area.

7.3 With its world-class hardware and software facilities, the WKCD should aspire to become the regional hub for arts and cultural activities and be able to open up new opportunities on the cultural front.

- **Organic Development**

7.4 One of the guiding principles, as stated in Chapter 3, is that the arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD should be developed in an organic manner. The facilities recommended in Chapter 4 should be provided at the upfront of the WKCD and they are facilities included in the Phase I development. For the provision of the facilities in the subsequent phases, the Advisory Group does not see the need to specify its timing for it should better be determined by the prevailing circumstances and market forces. We recommend the following additional facilities be included in the Phase II development –

- (a) a Great Theatre II with a seating capacity of 1,800 to 1,900 seats; and
- (b) two medium-sized theatres each with a seating capacity of 500 to 800 seats.

7.5 In the light of the proven demand for an additional theatre for large-size theatrical performances for overseas

long-run musicals; home-grown musicals, operas, ballets and musical presentations, we recommend the inclusion of a Great Theatre I of 2,100 to 2,200 seats in Phase I development. We suggest to leave it to the usage of the Great Theatre I to trigger the timing for building the Great Theatre II. It is important that such a need is included in the master layout plan, while the seating and other technical capacities could be revised accordingly at a later stage. Drawing up the requirements right at the planning stage would narrow the lead time required to have the Great Theatre II in place. In line with the principle of the mode of operation of the performance venues in the WKCD, the Great Theatre II should be encouraged to be operated in a self-financing manner and make use of avenues like corporate and private sponsorships to offset the operation costs if necessary.

7.6 The same should apply to the two proposed medium-sized theatres in Phase II. We envisage that there would be an increasing demand for medium-sized theatres to cater for the needs of various art forms but should like to let the market force decide the timing of providing the two theatres in Phase II. Again, a marker has to be put down for the requirement of these two theatres right from the start when drawing up the master layout plan. This forward-looking way of planning will not only shorten the time required for building these two theatres but help to minimize the disruption caused to the operation of the

facilities in Phase I when building the facilities required in Phase II.

7.7 To allow for the organic growth of the performing arts facilities in the district, the crucial thing is to set aside sufficient space for the future WKCD governing body to respond to future demand.

- **Chinese Music Centre (中國音樂中心)**

7.8 When deliberating on the Xiqu Centre in the WKCD, the Advisory Group considers that the small theatre of 400 seats can be used to perform other Chinese music e.g. Hakka songs and Chiu Chow music. We also see the potential for the WKCD to contribute to the further development of Chinese culture and become a centre of Chinese Music (中國音樂中心). It can help to enhance both the locals and the tourists' interest in Chinese music, thereby contributing to the preservation of this art form.

Chapter 8

Executive Summary

Vision

- 8.1 Developing WKCD into an integrated world-class arts and cultural and entertainment and tourism district with a must-visit appeal to both local residents and visitors.

Guiding Principles

- 8.2 Aiming to meet the long-term development needs of culture and the arts in Hong Kong, and maintain and sustain the diversity and vibrancy of the performing arts scene in Hong Kong.
- 8.3 Promoting artistic excellence in the hardware and software of the arts and cultural facilities.
- 8.4 Providing a hub for local and international creative talents,
- 8.5 Fostering strategic partnerships with international arts and cultural organizations.

- 8.6 Capacity for arts education and audience building within and outside Hong Kong.
- 8.7 Encouraging wider community participation in arts and culture by providing performing arts facilities generally affordable to both performing groups and audiences.
- 8.8 Developing new mode of management and operation of performing arts venue with greater involvement with the arts community and the public.
- 8.9 Striving to operate performing arts facilities on a self-financing basis with a level playing field and healthy competition.
- 8.10 Clustering and integrating the arts and cultural and the commercial facilities together to create synergy and attract people flow.
- 8.11 Emphasizing on the concept of “central cultural district”.
- 8.12 Allowing space for organic growth and sustainable development.
- 8.13 Developing venues and facilities into attractions for local residents and tourists alike.

- 8.14 Integrating arts and cultural facilities in WKCD with neighbouring areas to cultivate cultural ambience in the vicinity
- 8.15 Building up WKCD as a hub for arts and cultural activities in Pearl River Delta and the region.

Recommendations on Arts and Cultural Facilities

Phase I Development

- 8.16 A Xiqu Centre comprising a theatre with a seating capacity of 1,200 to 1,400 seats; a small theatre with a seating capacity of 400 seats, and a Xiqu Tea House type of venue.
- 8.17 A Concert Hall with a maximum seating capacity of 2,000 seats including choir stall.
- 8.18 A Chamber Music Hall with a seating capacity of 600 to 800 seats.
- 8.19 A Great Theatre I with a seating capacity of 2,100 to 2,200 seats.
- 8.20 Two Medium-sized Theatres each with a seating capacity of 500 to 800 seats.

8.21 Four Black Box Theatres each with a seating capacity of 150 to 250 seats.

8.22 A Mega Performance Venue with a maximum seating capacity of 15,000 seats with flexible seating configuration to allow converting the venue into smaller size performance venue.

8.23 Piazza Areas of a total area of at least 30, 000 square meters.

Phase II Development

8.24 Requirements for a Great Theatre II of a seating capacity of 1,800 to 1,900 seats and two Medium-sized Theatres each with a seating capacity of 500 to 800 seats should also be catered for when planning the upfront arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD. It should be up to the prevailing market force to decide when these facilities will actually need to be in place.

Relevant Issues Considered

8.25 Highlighting the need for comprehensive strategy and measures to facilitate the long-term development of the performing arts sector, and sustain the vibrancy and diversity of the performing arts scene in Hong Kong.

- 8.26 The need for appropriate mode of governance and venue management strategy for performing arts venues and facilities.
- 8.27 Ensuring the availability of sufficient resources for the start-up operation and sustainability of the arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD.
- 8.28 Highlighting the need for development of cultural software and talents to narrow the gap between the demand for and the supply of talents when the cultural hardware is in place.
- 8.29 Enhancing WKCD as a major tourist attraction of the Mainland and the Asia Region.