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Cantonese
Opera
Workshop

桃花源粵劇工作舍發展指引

2003.2.12

膠著 MUDDY

BACKGROUND

Cantonese Opera is the native culture and arts of Hong Kong. This is undeniable.

"Sin Fung Ming Era" in last century [01] opened up a resurgence page in the Cantonese Opera history. For half a century since then, there has been no creation or innovation that has a profound impact in the Cantonese Opera sector. Bing-ye Yam, a Cantonese Opera professional actress, once said: "..... Cantonese Opera is really a dud today if you don't have another proper job and try to live on Cantonese Opera alone, it will be a bit difficult!"

[02] Stepping into the 21st century, the weakness of Cantonese Opera is already deeply rooted, and the prospect is indefinite if Cantonese Opera is still unable to nurture a new generation of professional actors, **will it ever have a future?**

PURPOSE

To ensure the survival of an art, there must be a healthy "circulatory system" at the back as a support, otherwise, it will naturally become extinct. Today the **"Cantonese Opera circulatory system"** [03] is crumbling with links all broken up. No sign of a turnaround can be seen. It has come to a critical moment. How to re-connect the broken links becomes a matter of urgency.

To save Cantonese Opera from perishing, merely relying on the government is not a fundamental solution. The government is only an administrative body which often fails to understand the delicate nature of artists. It is impossible to discern the success or failure in the industry should it be run by executives. The most they can do is to play a supporting role, such as in the case of the film industry, the Film Archive built by the government saves only the movie heritage. When there is a downturn of the film industry, they cannot do anything. To revitalize the film industry, we must constantly make quality movies and this responsibility has to be shouldered by the film workers. Years ago, the consultation paper released by the Cultural Commission of Hong Kong Government has already established strategies and directions which the private sector prevails.

On the proposition that art itself takes the leading role, Utopia Cantonese Opera House begins the fixing of the "Cantonese Opera circulatory system", hoping that **by throwing away a brick, we can get a gem** and that more Cantonese Opera fans can be drawn to participate in this mission. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the ingredients required for high-quality Cantonese Opera production. Now the only remaining ingredient is a number of "The Last Artists," but most of them are close to the age of 60 or more. **After ten years, Hong Kong Cantonese Opera will enter a generation of amateurism.** Therefore, restoration of the "Cantonese Opera circulatory system" is a matter that permits no delay.

TARGET

Up the stage: to open up a road for the next generation of Cantonese Opera artists;

Down the stage: to promote Cantonese Opera to the new and younger generation who knows little of this art. We will start from the young generation in Hong Kong to overseas Chinese community, further extend to westerners, and finally come back to non-Cantonese speaking communities in China. **[03]B**

CONTENT

The entire project is divided into **four phases**. The time required for each phase will depend on the human resources, the recipients' response and the fundraising progress. (We will start with covering all costs through fundraising which will tap into public resources, but aim at **self-financing** in the long run, so as to avoid bringing extra burden to our society). Each phase buckles and reinforces with each other, with the "Cantonese Opera circulatory system" being the axis, for the purpose of enhancing high-quality Cantonese opera productions and upgrading the appreciation level of this culture.

Phase One **[04]:** launch out "**ONE Book Cafe**" and "**ONE Studio**";

Phase Two **[05]:** add on "**TWO Exhibition Hall**" and "**TWO Learning Room**";

Phase Three **[06]:** add on "**THREE Workshop**";

Phase Four **[07]:** add on "**FOUR Stage.**"

Finally, we would like to use the words of Siu Si, a Hong Kong writer, to give this whole project a boost:

"This time, we must make a promise that we will be the descendants who are capable to shoulder and protect the legacy of our fathers."

Extracted from "Starry Night" published by Hann Colour Culture Co., Ltd.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Sin Fung Ming Era

Professional Cantonese Opera actor Siu-fai Yuen said: "We can say with no doubt that they (Kim-fai Yam, Shuet-sin Pak) has cast an incomparable influence in the modern history of Hong Kong Cantonese Opera. In the past there were many schools of Cantonese Opera (opera genre), but their impact was only limited within their school. For example, someone who studies drama will learn from his/her master the way to sing, act or perform, but he/she will not learn the trend or style promoted by the school. However, in the case of Yam and Pak, they created a trend that almost the whole industry is following. And I (Siu-fai Yuen) can affirm everybody that the impact of this trend is huge. We can even say that they actually formed a "Sin Fung Ming Era". In fact, Sin Fung Ming initiated an art movement. We can still find its residual glory today." (Extracted from Siu-fai Yuen in the "Sin Fung Ming, Yam Pak Bo" seminar organized by the District Council in February 1994, later collected by Kin Lai under "Sin Fung Ming Created a New Era" in "The Track of Hong Kong Cantonese Opera" p. 126-133, December 1998 First Edition, published by the Urban Council Public Library.)

Appendix 2

YAM Bing-yi's Comment

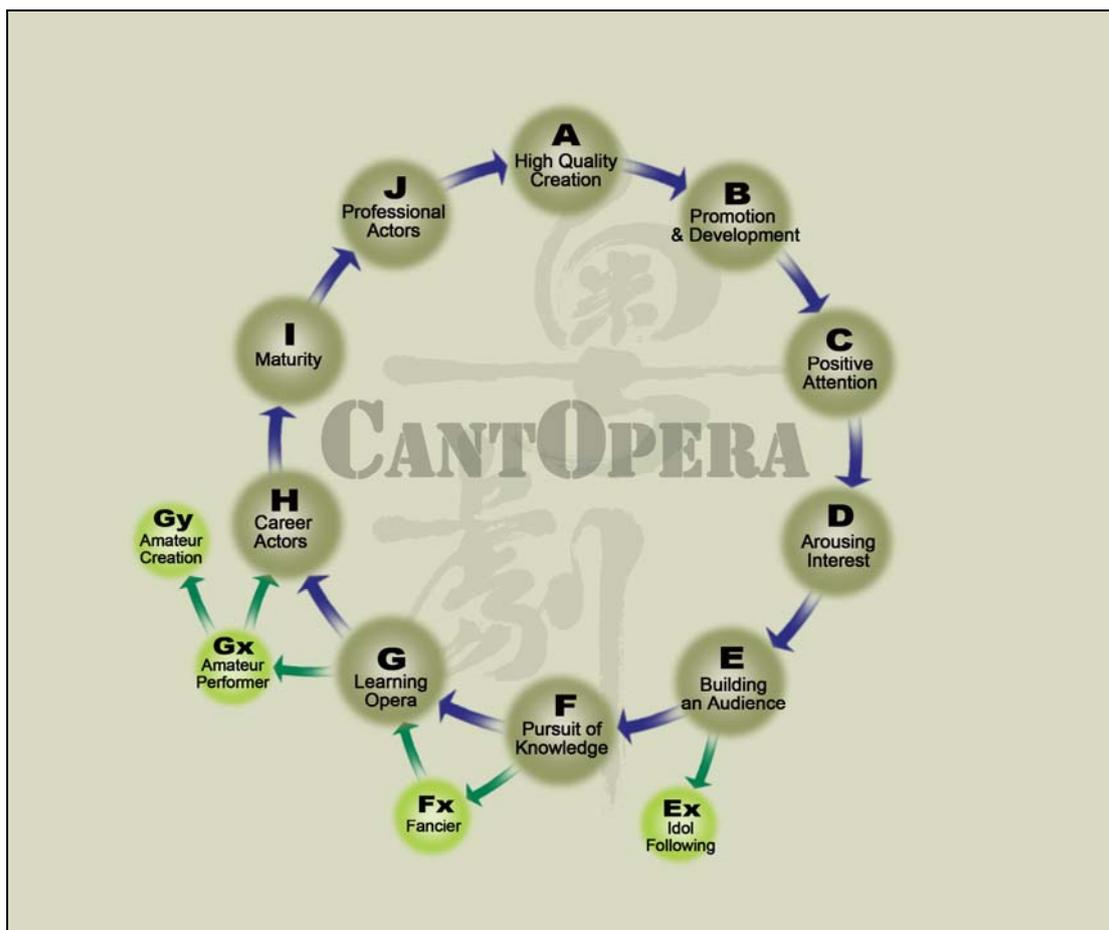
Professional Cantonese Opera actress Bing-yi Yam once said, "Nowadays, if the younger generation wants to learn Cantonese Opera or its music, I am glad, but I hope they only do it as an amateur, because Cantonese Opera is really a dud today if you don't have another proper job and try to live on Cantonese Opera alone, it will be a bit difficult!" (Extracted from Cantonese Opera VCD monthly magazine "Cantonese Opera Digest", November 2002, first edition, published by CantOpera Visual Production House)

Appendix 3

Cantonese Opera Circulatory System

Concepts of the Cantonese Opera Circulatory System

A school of art often starts from the sparkles of a brilliant flare. It is then established after winning a position and recognitions in the audiences' hearts. Once the sparkle started, if the various important elements are compliantly and tightly connected, they will automatically link together to form a self-running circulatory system. Same as a human body, instead of taking stop-gap measures and concentrating on the symptoms of sickness, it is better to build a healthy circulatory system so that the body will continue to thrive naturally.



Link **A**: High Quality Creation

Art is a combination of **technology** and **connotation**.

Technology: It varies in response to different art forms but still must be able to produce extraordinary performances. Connotation: It is derived from human life, sensitive meditation and intelligent interpretation. New creation is the only way to continue the practice of art; therefore high-quality creation is the most important element in the entire circulatory system.

In traditional Cantonese Opera, the technology mainly refers to the 4 skills and 5 movements (singing, acting, reciting, fighting and hands, eyes, body, walking, mouth) mastered by the actors. These are all dependent on the actors. On the other hand, stage technology (stage setting, lighting and sound systems, etc.) and directorship are often believed to be for western concept of theater, and therefore not being accepted in the scope of Cantonese opera.

Until Sin Fung Ming Era came, Cantonese opera were revamped and improved. Let us **look at some examples of Sin Fung Ming productions and find out the criteria of a high-quality Cantonese Opera production:**

(1) Technical Aspects

Performer's skill: "She (Shuet-sin Pak) did not simply work hard on 'hand movements'. What she pursued was the highest realm of opera art. For example, in 'Peony Pavilion', she assiduously studied the figure and gesture displayed by Lan-fong Mui in 'Garden Walk' and incorporated the 'dancing while singing' method in Kunqu into the traditional Cantonese opera performancesAt that time, Cantonese opera emphasized singing but not performing. Generally there was no 'acting' or 'performing' as seen in drama. Yet Shuet-sin Pak pushed the 'acting' part of Cantonese Opera to an artistic level." (Extracted from "Let's talk about Shuet-sin Pak" by Kin Lai, originally appeared in "Cross-border Magazine", December 1991, Issue No. 14, page 29)

Sin Fung Ming had top notch actors of art: Kim-fai Yam, Shuet-sin Pak, Sing-bo Leung, Lang-chi Pak and Bing-yi Yam, etc. Today, those who can be classified as professional actors are all close to 60 or even above. How many more years can they keep performing on the stage? Besides, they have close to zero successors. **After ten years, Hong Kong Cantonese Opera will enter a generation of amateurism.**

Stage technology: Instead of traditional materials, Sin Fung Ming made use of Gu embroidery in their costume to reduce the weight and improve the texture. Other than that, "Pak felt that the 3-dimensional stage setting had certain advantages but also had disadvantages because more space was taken up by the setting leaving less space for the actors to fully express themselves. She therefore adopted the half abstract half 3-dimensional setting while maximizing the use of lights to produce the effect of multiple planes The colour in clothing and setting was required to be in harmonized tone, and lightings had to match them too." (Extracted from "The 7th Tsuen Wan Arts Festival Special Issue: Cantonese Opera Accompaniment and Stage Devices" by Siu-tak Yip, 1985, page 39)

A completely new stage effect was created at that time. However, after then, things have gone back to square one for almost half a century. The main reason for this is the actor-oriented concept in which anything besides performers are considered unimportant and that the performance of the actors alone is considered to be sufficient for satisfying the audience. Today, modern theatrical technology has made great progress. It seems a bit awkward that Cantonese Opera stage neither adheres to the old "one table, two chairs" style (basically use only one table and two chairs in different combinations to create the entire virtual scene), nor adopts the more progressive theater technology. Instead, it sticks to the technology used half a century ago – making it neither simple and classic nor contemporary. As a result, an outdated image is unwittingly printed on the minds of our next generation.

Music & accompaniment: Sin Fung Ming emphasized the creation of little songs (such as 'Escape to Zen' in "Dream of Red Mansions", 'Garden Song' in "Peony Pavilion", 'Romance' in "West Pavilion Dream", 'Eighteen Songs of Fashion' and 'Tomb Cry' in "Reincarnation of the Red Plum", etc.) and the discovery of ancient melodies (such as 'Dresser side Autumn Thoughts' in "Princess Cheung-ping" and 'Towering Phenomenon' in "The Fairy of Ninth Heaven", etc.) in order to look for something new, something different and something that goes along with the story line. In the accompaniment aspects, on top of the original band, they added in a small Chinese music band so that by introducing different instruments to play the little songs, the musical level would be raised to a higher ground.

"In 1957, Mr. Yuet-sang Wong brought in the zither accompaniment in the performance of 'Princess Cheung-ping' by Sin Fung Ming. The tunes provided for screenwriter to use included the Guangdong major 'The Farewell Cry at Autumn River Side' and 'Dresser side Autumn Thoughts', the fourth section of 'Songs from the War':. After this performance, not only the beautiful and elegant melodies and lyrics enraptured the audience, but how the music tempo tightly followed the pace of the entire story also indicated a high performance level of the musical accompaniment. The operatic songs in 'Princess Cheung-ping' were intoxicating to a lot of those who reveled in Cantonese Opera. A correct path of Cantonese Opera was thus stabilized." (Extracted from "The 7th Tsuen Wan Arts Festival Special Issue: Cantonese Opera Accompaniment and Stage Devices" by Siu-tak Yip, 1985, page 38)

Cantonese Opera singing activities are popular nowadays. (Amateurs are singing operatic songs for pleasure with a live band.) It is relatively easy for the backing band to satisfy the requirements of amateur singers. Simply playing in the routine way is already enough to earn a substantial reward for the musicians. There is no new production in the industry anyway that forces the musicians to use their brains. Rehearsal fee of the band is also so expensive that a normal amateur troupe will not be able to afford. No motive for creative writing results in no writing at all, let alone any creative achievement.

(2) Connotation

Theatrical art content generally relies on the **script** and the particular ideological level that **the dominant director** set the script at. Finally, it is revealed on the stage according to the **interpretation of the actors**.

Script writing: "(Shuet-sin Pak) encouraged Tik-sang Tong to write scripts with literature connotation based on the Ming & Ching Dynasty legendary stories. She especially focused on the characters of the script in order to refine the image of the characters in the drama. The characters that she interpreted were often complex – either the figure or the inner world." (Extracted from "Let's talk about Shuet-sin Pak" by Kin Lai, originally published in "Cross-border Magazine", December 1991, Issue No. 14, page 27)

Cantonese Opera creative script writing was led by Tik-sang Tong during the Sin Fung Ming Era. (The four famous ones nowadays, "Princess Cheung-ping", "The Purple Hairpin", "Reincarnation of Red Plum" and "Peony Pavilion" were all written in that period of time.) Tik-sang Tong died in 1959. Half a century since then, it was generally accepted that there was none as good as him. Old opera scripts tend to emphasize on actors' skills. Metaphysical ingredient was not pursued. People entered the theatre for the sake of entertainment. For those who pursue arts, Cantonese Opera is not attractive to them.

Today, it is a known fact that there is a shortage of good script in Cantonese opera, but when we look at the screenwriter fee, it is shamefully low. The Art Development Council typically pays little above \$30,000 for a new screenplay. Even the so-called professional writer fee is only \$50,000 or \$60,000. While a high quality script often takes at least three months or even longer to finish, effort and rewards are simply not in balance. No wonder no one wants to choose this career and those mature screenwriters remaining nowadays are all beyond their retirement age already.

Directorship: By tradition, there is no director in Cantonese Opera. Actors perform according to their own understanding of the screenplay. This kind of non-uniformed approach is perhaps good enough for single-book scripts and entertaining performances. However if we want to raise the artistic level of Cantonese Opera and bring out its sophisticated content using this same approach, it would be rather impossible.

"Shuet-sin Pak, the leading actress of Sin Fung Ming, must be a serious even harsh director in rehearsing; otherwise there will be no legendary Cantonese opera as famous as 'Yam Pak'. Although in the sixties, this kind of impromptu directorships are few, there were legendary and memorable works left." (Extracted from "Stand Up Mastermind" by Kin Lai, originally published in "Ill Domains, Human, Ghost & Deity", special issue for 2002 rerun, page 146).

However, today's professional theatrical troupes in Hong Kong all considered directorship as unnecessary. Only those programs that are run by the Leisure & Cultural Services Department have directors. Those that are run by professional theatrical troupes generally do not have directorship.

Summing up the above analysis and from the examples of Sin Fung Ming Era, we can see that a quality creation should have five contributing factors. In the connotation aspect, we need a **wise screenplay** and **directorship**. In the technical aspects, we need **skilled actors, utilization of stage technology and high-standard musical accompaniment**.

However, these five major elements in the Cantonese Opera circle nowadays all have the red lights turned on. The emergency stage is already here.

Today, if we want quality opera creations, we should start from establishing favourable creation conditions. Of course, in the long run, we need to have healthy development of all five factors, but high-quality creation is the main body. The whole "circulatory system" must be driven by this particular link, otherwise other links will not move. Therefore our immediate task is to take advantage of the limited expertise that are still remaining (mostly veteran artists) and seek ways to mobilize them. Then we may still have a chance of getting some high quality creative works.

And this allows no further delay because the fuel that can ignite this link will soon be exhausted in ten years' time.

Link B: Promotion & Development

(1) Promotion Principles

Once we have high-quality creations, the next step will be how to make them become well known. No art activity can own all the audience. A subtle relationship exists between an art and its audience. Just like a pair of lovers, the first step is always a **cordial encounter**. The second step is whether they hit it or not after **getting along** for a while. To hit it means to be able to discover the admirable personality of each other. If the outcome is positive, the two will treasure each other more. If it is negative, this relationship will end gradually.

So whether it is the high quality creation or its promotion and development, we must emphasize the nature of art itself in order to find the audience with the same

wavelength. Following that is to retain the heart of its audience through enriching itself, rather than relying on packaging or gimmicks. In fact, there are still some hidden Cantonese Opera enthusiasts out there. The reason they do not enter the theater is that there is no good production. These enthusiasts are the estate left to us by former Cantonese Opera workers. If we have good creations that can stimulate them once again, they will readily contribute to the promotion of Cantonese Opera. After all, they are an audience who takes pursuit of art truthfully. Their power is more solid than the frills of those who are merely blind followers of idols.

(2) Promotion Targets

1. Cantonese Speaking Community

Cantonese speaking community being the first target of our promotion is simply natural because Cantonese Opera is a performing art in Cantonese language. The first one we target is the Cantonese speaking community in Hong Kong, followed by those in other Chinese communities around the world, since Cantonese is the first language of all Chinese communities. We have to re-establish an audience base; otherwise Cantonese Opera will not have the resources to develop.

2. European and American Community

Oriental art somehow has a mysterious charm for people from Europe and America. It is a pity that we have not made good use of this advantage. Let us show them the real good stuff instead of 'playing little tricks' which generates only small gain at the expense of a huge audience group.

3. Mainland China Community

There is a saying that "Material is precious when it is away from its homeland." Local talents will not be given positive treatment unless they are returning home with good reputation and fame earned from outside. Although this seems a little sad, it is a hard fact. So, in order to be more effective, returning to the motherland will be our last stop.

Link C: Positive Attention

Not everybody understands western opera, but most people have a positive feel about it, even to a point that as if a little touch of this art is enough to upgrade an individual's status and temperament. Conversely, the Cantonese opera is often reminiscent of a bunch of negative descriptions such as "outdated", "the old fashion stuff of our fathers", "boring", "noisy" and so on. Therefore, the most important goal of our promotion is to create the positive attention effect. Not just to abruptly remind people the existence of Cantonese opera, but more importantly, to reverse the perception that people have on this art.

Link D: Arousing Interest

After drawing positive attention, we will then have the chance to get to the next link: "Arousing interest". People who have positive attention towards Cantonese Opera are like a multitude of open doors inviting quality productions to freely visit and pick out from inside bosom friends, that is, people who will eventually become interested in

Cantonese opera. In fact, today there is no lack of people interested in Cantonese opera; what we lack is outstanding quality works that can capture their hearts.

Link E: Building an Audience

When people have positive attention and later develop an interest, they will be ready to become the stage audience if we can give them quality works. We need a continuous supply of quality productions in order to accumulate a strong base of Cantonese Opera audiences.

Link EX: Idol Following

Once we have established a considerable audience base, we must then be careful of the emergence of the blind idol-worshipping culture. Sometimes, to love an idol, be his follower and support his performances can spur on the idol and make him do better. But in today's pop music or Cantonese Opera circles, majority of the followers are blind worshippers who desire only to see their idols and care nothing about their performance quality. On the other hand, those serious viewers (fanciers) who can spur on their idols are disappointed at their lazy performances and therefore gradually walk away.

People tend to be blinded by the illusion of so-called prosperity created by the idol-worshipping audience. In fact, according to statistics, currently there are only 5-8000 people who regularly watch Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong. That means even if we have a fully occupied theatre in every performance, we are only looking at these few thousands of people repeatedly supporting the stage. How can we say the industry is flourishing? We need to clearly understand this phenomenon. We cannot naively think that the whole circulatory system can operate using this single fuel. In other words, the circulatory system is now in stalemate. We are surviving on the residual glory of the previous generation only.

Link F: Pursuit of Knowledge

When we look at the above links, it seems that as long as there are high-quality works, this art will come back to life again. To a certain extent, this is true, but do not forget no matter how experienced the artists are, they will get old one day. Without successors, the audience will also grow old together with the performers and Cantonese Opera will unavoidably become a sunset art. So, what we need is an endlessly cycling system, rather than one with linear development only.

The pursuit of knowledge is for long-term development in order to achieve the cycling effect. This is an important part. We must take care of the nurturing of new people, explore potential practitioners from the audience to keep the cycle go on non-stop. The first step to nurture new people is to provide them with other resources besides performances for enjoyment only, so that the spectators have the opportunity to acquire further knowledge and information. Appreciation of arts is not innate, more knowledge and information is necessary for cultivating the ability of deeper appreciation.

Link G: Learning Opera

Wanting to learn opera is a natural outcome of the proper functioning of the circulatory system. Interested parties, after getting further information and understanding, will naturally give birth to a number of people wanting to practice opera. To grasp the potential of these people, we must have sound and systematic ways for teaching the next generation. Cantonese opera sector currently still uses oral teaching pedagogy. We must look into the education of other schools of arts, screen and modify their techniques in order to develop an advanced academic training system which is in line with the times.

Link FX: Fancier

Other than getting more opera learners, the pursuit of knowledge can also produce fanciers. A fancier may not necessarily be interested in doing the acting part themselves, but they have good knowledge and know how to appreciate this art. Some of them may eventually end up studying opera. The quality of stage performance and the number of fanciers are cyclically influencing each other. More fanciers mean more encouragement and stage production will then gradually improve. On the other hand, if the stage quality is poor, fanciers will not be attracted, encouragement force will then diminish. We do not have too many Cantonese opera fanciers remaining nowadays. We must re-attract those fanciers who have been disappointed by our stage before.

Link GX: Amateur Performer

People who study opera may not necessarily become a professional actor. Many are just giving amateur performances for fun. When all the conditions permit, amateur actors may develop into professional actors, but to become a strong professional actor, he must be built upon all of the preceding links. Nowadays, some half-amateur half-professional artists have been making frequent opera performances, but because they do not have good foundation, their performances are just 'a play without technique'. If they present their work as professional performances, they will only create a wrong image of Cantonese Opera to the audience. This definitely brings nothing but harm to the theatrical circle.

Link H: Career Actors

We must train out determined and serious people to become professional actors in order to develop the art of Cantonese opera. As what we quoted from the professional artist, Bing-ye Yam at above, having in interest in Cantonese Opera as an amateur is good, but to try to live on it will be very difficult. It does not mean that no one should take Cantonese Opera as his career. It only reflects a problem that is clearly understood by all insiders, a reality that we cannot help but reluctantly accept. We must try to salvage this situation, otherwise there will be no professional actors, circulatory system will not operate, and the fate of Cantonese Opera will be gloomy.

Link I: Maturity

Professional Cantonese Opera actor Ka-ying Law said: "'Kai Tak playground' played a very important role in the maturity of the current 'mid-level actors' because it was the only venue allowed for performances and internships. Up to now, major actors of the new generation in Hong Kong, such as Mei-ying Ng, Siu-fai Yuen, Chin-sui Man, Fei-yin Wen, Kei-lun Choi and I (Ka-ying Law), etc. all came out from 'Kai Tak playground'. After long practices and trainings, refined actors will come out. At that time, a group of actors observed and affirmed each other in this venue. All have gained great benefit. However, in the eighties, 'Kai Tak Playground' came to a halt." (Extracted from RTHK Radio 4 radio program: "Colourful Arts - Hong Kong Cantonese Opera" specials, Seminar date: January 1, 1991, later published in "Hong Kong Cantonese Oral History" edited by Kin Lai, page 210-211: "Aspects of the 1990s Cantonese Opera", November 1993 first edition, published and distributed by Joint Publishing (HK) Co. Ltd.)

Young artists need to go through the process of trial and error, and be given the opportunities to learn from their mistakes and practices in order to mature. Nowadays we are lacking venues like 'Kai Tak Playground' where the new generation of artists can refine their skills and feelings. If the skills and feelings of the actors fail to mature and deepen, it will be difficult for them to execute quality performances.

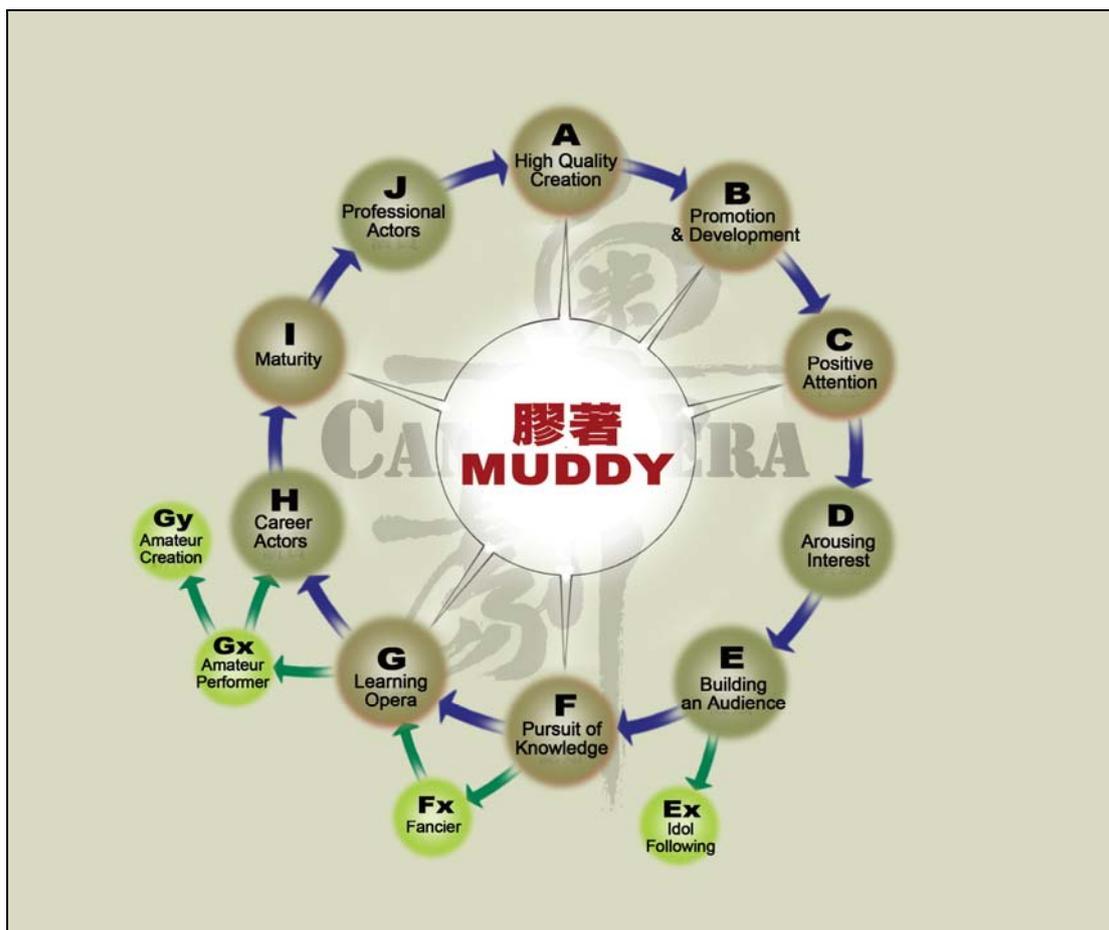
Link J: Professional Actors

When an actor has a solid foundation and reaches the mature state after certain performance practices, he can then be regarded as a professional actor. Professional actors are not those who merely make their living on the stage. Professional actors should be capable of uplifting their skills and feelings to the level of art. They are what we call artists and soldiers who directly contribute in the continual development of Cantonese Opera.

Link Gy: Amateur Creation

Currently we have many amateur creations in the Cantonese Opera circle, but is the power of amateur creation strong enough to mobilize the circulatory system? Is the flooding of amateur creations equivalent to the prosperity of the Cantonese Opera circle? In the era when Cantonese Opera was flourishing, have we ever seen many amateur creations? Undoubtedly, the existence of amateur creation is good, but at the end, to move the circulatory system must always be the responsibility of the professional theatrical troupes.

THE CANTONESE OPERA CIRCULATORY SYSTEM IS IN A MUDDY STATE.



(1) It is in a stalemate today and unable to keep the cycle going

If we try to apply this circulatory system model into our existing Cantonese Opera circle, it is not difficult to notice that the existing operating system is fragmented. Boldly speaking, we have not created any good quality works. For decades, all we have been repeatedly playing are just those few vintage scripts. From this, you can easily imagine the quality of today's creation. Screenplays that cannot be repeated cannot be considered as good quality works.

Moreover, up till now, Cantonese Opera still leaves a negative image to people most of the time. Without positive attention, we cannot trigger interest or create an audience who may go further to pursue knowledge and to study opera. Even if there may be some interested people out there who want to further their understanding of this art, they will not be able to find adequate and comprehensive resources or any systematic way to learn, let alone a venue that allows them to practice. If things go on like this, it is obvious that we will not be able to give birth to the next generation of high quality creation. To change all this, it is necessary to grasp the current remaining personnel resources, repair the few notches in the current circulatory system and tightly reconnect all the links. This is the only way the system can self-reproduce incessantly.

If we remain satisfied with a blooming illusion that is superficial and without a solid foundation, ten years later, when the few startup

resources that we possess nowadays are used up, the Cantonese Opera world will have no more hope of rebirth.

(2) How to resolve the stalemate, prevent breakage and reconnect the links

Once the circulatory system is back on track, many of the links will simply be the natural outcome of the successful operation of their preceding links. Currently, several important links are in muddy condition or even broken apart, therefore the entire system cannot operate properly. Take the link of promotion as an example. We especially emphasize that the personnel in charge of promotion must have a very good sense in the art of Cantonese Opera in order to bring out the effect of positive attention. Nowadays, we do have promotional activities about Cantonese Opera from time to time, but can those promotional tactics or slogans produce an image of taste and get positive attention?

Let us look at one promotion example that draws positive attention. Chinese medicine and herbal tea have been quiet for a while after the advance of western medicine. But in recent years they revived. Because the promoters make use of wordings which are in line with the popular trend over the world, like 'natural food' and 'natural therapies', to create a positive image of the product. Therefore herbal tea house came to life again. Taking traditional Chinese medicine is no longer considered as an act of "ignorant women and children" only.

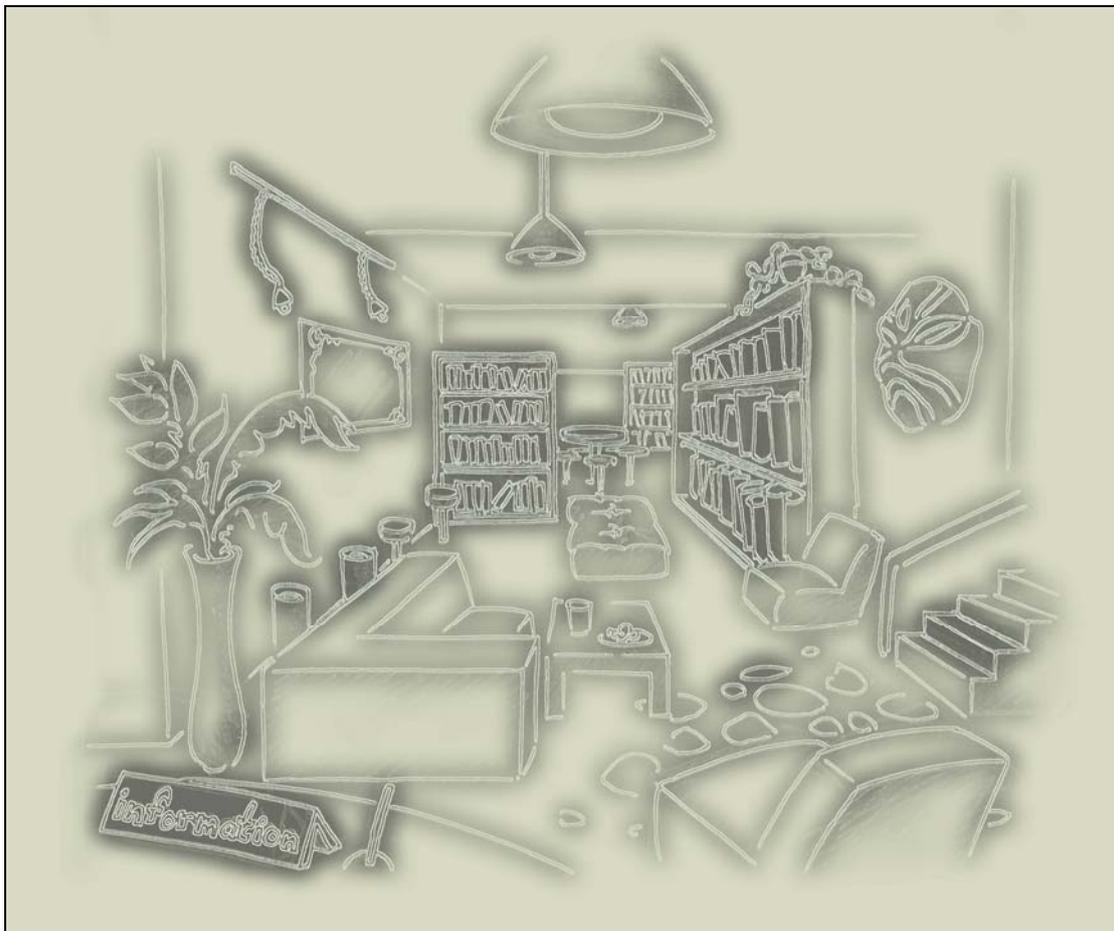
Cantonese Opera must attract more people to become audience. The next thing we need to work on is to provide opportunities and channels, and develop a systematic resources system which includes the compiling of reference books and the setup of a systematic curriculum so that interested parties can pursue further knowledge, or even take the next step to learn opera.

The next broken part in this muddy system that urgently needs to be fixed is the provision of a place like 'Kai Tak Playground' as an internship stage so that the next generation of actors can have more opportunities to practice, mature and further themselves in this art.

Once a few key links are tightly reconnected, the circulatory system will then be able to move forward link by link.

Appendix 4

Phase One: "ONE Book Cafe" and "ONE Studio"



Purpose:

"ONE Book Cafe" is for building link C (Positive Attention) and link F (Pursuit of Knowledge).

It is the **"entry point"** and **"gathering place"** for Cantonese Opera lovers. "Entry point" is a place that a person who has never touched Cantonese Opera would consciously or unconsciously think of when he wants to look for **more information** about Cantonese Opera. It is a place where he can get what he wants, whether he speaks Chinese or not. (In order to get this **positive attention**, we must be careful on the daily promotion to make sure it promotes a positive image.) "Gathering place" is a free venue that allows everyone to come and exchange his views on Cantonese Opera with others. Through this, people can get to know and help each other, grow together and understand Cantonese Opera more. A better tomorrow will then be possible.

"ONE Studio" is the first step to construct link G (Learning Opera)

Basic courses will be designed for Cantonese Opera lovers on the technique of singing, acting, reciting and fighting; and organize Cantonese Opera related activities and seminars.

Site Design:

(1) Site Selection

We choose an urban site that possesses the typical Hong Kong style in order to match the cultural root of Cantonese Opera. Local people will then realize that Cantonese Opera is a cultural art that belongs to them, while foreigners will notice the style of this entire region and sense a strong and artistic atmosphere of the authentic Hong Kong. It will be on ground floor, with a loft, at a location where transportation is convenient, opening daily from 12:00 to 23:00. In the long run, we hope that the government will grant us a vacant historic building for development, like what they have given to the Fringe Club.

(2) Interior Design

It will be a fusion of the Cantonese Opera tradition and modern culture. There will also be exhibits of some Cantonese Opera posters and art works, in order to bring out the vitality of this ancient art.

ONE Book Cafe

The first phase is a space of about 2000-3000 square feet. About half of it will be designated as a small data pavilion, collecting books and audio-visual resources on Cantonese Opera and other regional opera. Sofas that can accommodate 15-20 people will also be there to provide users a comfortable reading or chatting space. Other than that, there will be 10 separate seats for AV data viewing and Internet browsing.

ONE Studio

The other half of the space will be built as a rehearsal studio with basic opera training equipment like mirrors, carpets and multi-barre.

Services:

(1) Free Access

We offer free access to books, audio-visual materials and electronic data in the "ONE Book Cafe" hoping to develop "ONE Book Cafe" into a central library for introductory and in-depth study of Cantonese Opera for both Chinese and foreigners.

(2) Sales Service

Books, audio-visual materials and souvenirs on Cantonese Opera and other Chinese opera are offered for sale here so that people can centralize their purchases in just one store. At the same time, it can generate income to support its operation.

(3) A Read & Chat Teahouse

A quiet and leisure space, with vending machines for drinks and snacks, is there for users to have a comfortable reading environment. Chinese and non-Chinese parties may also come here to share their views on Cantonese Opera, its music and other Chinese opera music.

(4) Individual Seats for AV Material Viewing and Internet Browsing

In addition to free internet and AV data from the public market, we will also build our own audio-visual and computer databases to provide a wider and more refined stock of resources on Cantonese opera and other Chinese opera.

(5) Photocopying and Facsimile Services

Provide self-served photocopying, scanning and facsimile facilities.

(6) Holding Thematic Seminars

Organize topical symposium in which both insiders and outsiders can share their views on Cantonese Opera. The content of discussion will then be compiled in text, video or audio finishing and collected in the database in "ONE Book Cafe", making it convenient and ready for all Cantonese Opera enthusiasts and researchers to use.

(7) ONE Studio— Basic Courses

Organize basic Cantonese Opera courses on: posture, basic skills, blankets skill, handle skill, singing and acting skill, etc. This is the first step for building Link G (Learning Opera) in the circulatory system.

(8) Studio Rental

The studio is available for rent to different Cantonese and other opera troupes or individuals to use for rehearsal and organizing activities. This will also help generating income to support the operation. Simple percussion instruments and opera props are also available for rent.

Development Goals:

(1) To expand the database and establish a publishing house

Our target is to further develop "ONE Book Cafe" into a hybrid of a large scale "Art Library" and a characteristic book club that contains a more extensive coverage of opera books and related materials. On the other hand, a databank on other art forms such as painting, dance, drama, musicals, film, sculpture and architecture, etc. will also be set up because different forms of art have things in common. Therefore they can be cross-reference for each other and can trigger inspirations. Moreover, bringing together artists of different sectors to a place of exchange can let them have a chance to get in touch with Cantonese Opera. As for the AV library, it will be developed into a specialty store like HMV.

In the long run, we are going to set up a publishing house to provide the opportunity for scholars and researchers interested in Cantonese operatic drama and songs to express their views and ideas. Hopefully we can come up to a comprehensive and systematic series of book on Cantonese opera.

(2) To develop "ONE Studio" into a prep school for professional training

The scale of "ONE Studio" will be enlarged to become something like "Jean M. Wong Dance School". On one hand, we can improve the level of appreciation or performances of amateur. On the other hand, it can build up a new creative generation with a solid foundation which will better fit in further post-secondary education (such as the full-time Cantonese Opera professional courses offered by The Academy of Performing Arts). All these will better prepare them to step on the career path of professional actors.

Appendix 5

**Phase Two: "TWO Exhibition Hall"
and "TWO Learning Room"**



Purpose:

"TWO Exhibition Hall" is for building link B (Promotion & Development) and Link C (Positive Attention).

Creative thematic exhibitions on Cantonese and other opera will be organized and co-organized from time to time to build bridges between promoters and viewers, and plant the seeds for a new generation of Cantonese Opera.

The addition of "TWO Learning Room" is a further step to construct link G (Learning Opera)

Other than strengthening the basic courses, we will also develop extended curriculum, by adding in courses about opera theater and other related topics, so that opera lovers can further develop themselves in this art.

Site Design:

"TWO Exhibition Hall"

Preliminarily set aside an area of about 2,000 square feet. Equip it with basic exhibition facilities such as spotlights, panels and other basic audio and amplifying system.

"TWO Learning Room"

Add in "TWO Learning Room" of several hundred square feet to cope with the needs of other courses. Also, increase the size and the number of "ONE Studio". Put in additional equipment, such as screenings, audio, amplifier, video and sound recordings, etc., as a diversified preparation for organizing different types of courses and activities.

Additional Services:

(1) Theme Exhibition

"TWO Exhibition Hall" will be devoted to organizing theme exhibitions on Cantonese Opera and various Chinese opera, such as: stage weapons, stills, stage design, makeup, costume, hair style, hair accessories and so on.

(2) Little Movie Club

Precious movies on Cantonese and other Chinese opera will be shown at the "TWO Exhibition Hall" or some larger "ONE Studio". Seminars will be held for discussion afterwards.

(3) "TWO Learning Room" – Extension Courses

Add in extension curriculum and organize study courses on different aspects of Cantonese opera, including:

music (singing, accompaniment, percussion, music theory, etc.)

make-up (basic makeup for leading actor, actress, the elderly and all kinds of facial makeup)

costume (its historical evolution, basic production and design)

stagecraft (basic introduction and appreciation)

stage production (use contemporary stage production technique to produce a Cantonese opera)

Cantonese Opera director (discuss the development of Cantonese opera director system)

screenplay guided appreciation (select fine classic screenplay from different eras for analysis and guided appreciation)

scriptwriting (introduce the basic elements of script writing and put theories into practice)

troupe management (analyze the management of a Cantonese Opera Troupe from the perspective of modern administration)

(4) Rental Service

"TWO Exhibition Hall", "ONE Studio" and "TWO Learning Room" are all open for rent to different opera groups to use on exhibitions, rehearsals, organizing courses and activities. This can also generate income to support the operation.

Development Goals:

To hold varieties exhibition to create a positive culture of Cantonese Opera

Enlarge the scale of "TWO Exhibition Hall". Divide it into Cantonese Opera section and a thematic section. Cantonese opera section holds year round exhibitions on front and back stage subjects. Front stage subjects include past and present stage appearance. Back stage subjects include its culture and rituals, etc.

The thematic section is for organizing exhibition of diversified themes on Cantonese and other Chinese opera, such as Hong Kong Famous Cantonese Opera Troupe, Cantonese Puppet Opera, Peking Opera masks, Lan-fong Mui's stage image, ancient stage and so on.

Appendix 6	"THREE Workshop" — Relationship between image and movement and their development trend
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Purpose:

The addition of "THREE Workshop" is for building Link I (Maturity) and to develop outfits image and stage image through this place.

(1) Outfits Image

Other than nurturing the actors, we also need to further explore those behind the scenes. The one that was rather well developed in our tradition is the outfits, which mainly refers to costumes. Next to costume are other accessories, such as helmet, hair style, sleeves, and footwear, etc. In fact, the relationship between outfits and the figure (body movement) of the actors is a tight link which is inseparable. However, over the years, there is little data or systematic research about it, so it is difficult to learn and sometimes even causes confusion and disputes on how to use them. It is hoped that through data collection, research and practice done in "THREE Workshop", a comprehensive system can be set up as a positive support for future performances and research, and contribute to the creations of newer and better Cantonese Opera outfits and movement.

(2) Theater Image – Props

The theater image is mainly made up of components like scenery, lighting and props, etc. The setting and lighting has not been much developed in our tradition, therefore no rigid link has been established between them and any particular patterns of performances. This means we have a large capacity for development. On the other hand, modern theater technology is quite mature, and how to apply that onto the Cantonese Opera stage should be the lesson of the directors. This topic will be explored in the extension courses run by "TWO Learning Room". Props (mainly refers to props used by actors such as knives, spear, swords, whips, fan, fan pleats and machetes, etc., rather than the furnishings in the scenery) is closely related to actors' movements. However, after so many years, users only know and follow the ways to use them, and have little understanding of the relationship between the structure of the props and body movement, causing difficulties in the application and not knowing how to solve the problems. Even worse, figure design is stifled because of this, let alone having creativity and development. Therefore it is necessary to identify the props structure essentials from our tradition, so that improvement can be started from there to develop and create better props and movements in Cantonese Opera.

Site Design:

(1) The Addition of "Clothing Studio"

a. Design room: about 200 square feet with computer, drafting table and light boxes, etc.

b. Production station: about 700-1000 square feet, equipped with cutting platforms, sewing machines, etc.

c. Fabric warehouse: about 300-500 square feet, for collection and storage of special fabric.

d. Dyeing room: about 200 square feet with ventilation facilities, hot and cold water supply, washing and drying machines, etc.

e. Accessories workshop: about 500 square feet for design and production of helmet, hairpin, hair style, sleeves style, masks, footwear and so on.

(2) The Addition of "Props Studio"

Set aside an area of about 500 square feet with computers and equipment for design and production of props.

Additional Services:

(1) "THREE Workshop" – Relationship between image and movement and their development trend

Organize and co-organize workshops on design and production of costume, helmet head, hairpin, masks and props in Cantonese Opera.

(2) Sales Service

Offer sale of performing costumes and equipment used in Cantonese and other Chinese opera that are designed by Workshop or ordered from mainland China for convenience of purchase by people in this industry. This can also generate income to support the operation.

Development Goals:

(1) To publish book series on Cantonese Opera image

Compile a comprehensive and systematic data bank on Cantonese Opera outfits. Have it published and distributed in Chinese and English to provide a complete research and application series for Chinese and non-Chinese amateurs, professionals and researchers in this industry.

(2) To provide tools and outfits for performance

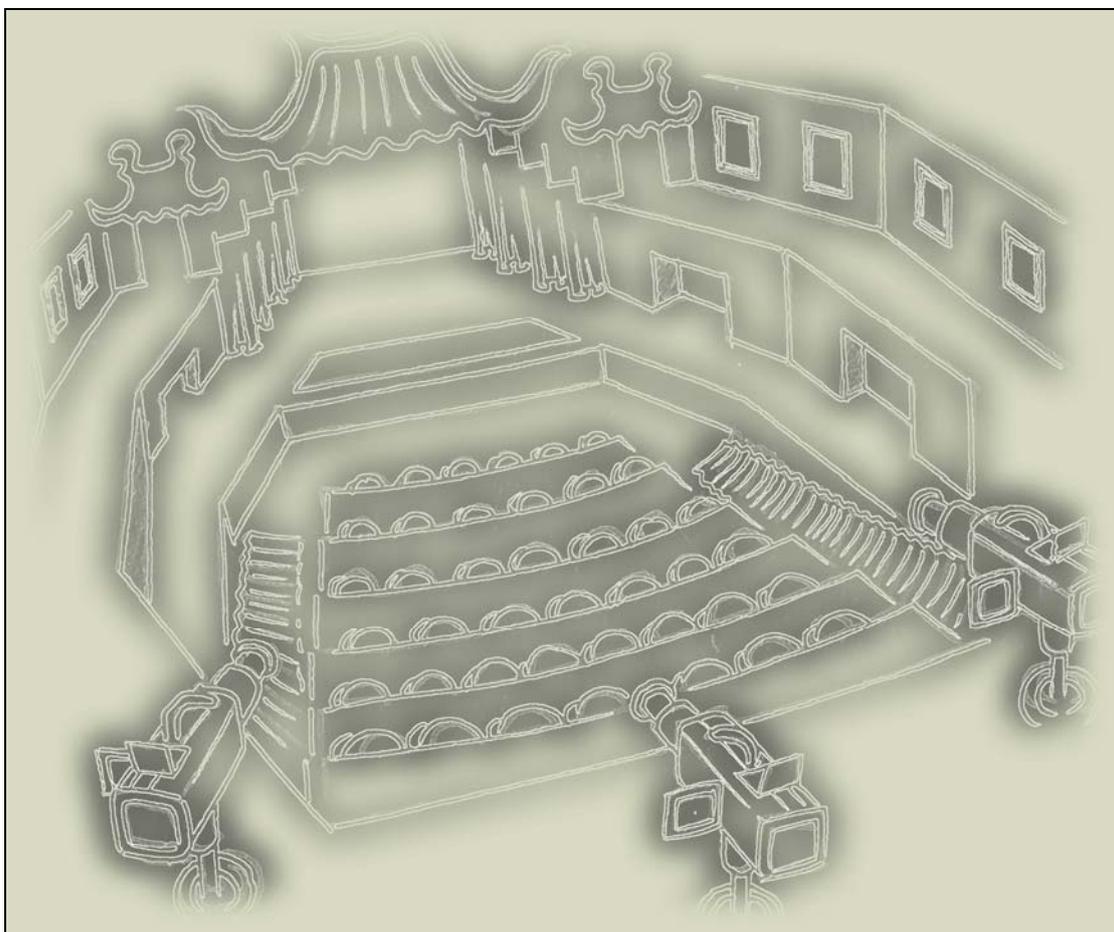
Provide at reasonable price things used in performances and technical support services to schools, professionals and amateur individuals, etc. We have to emphasize that this is a research department, rather than a production one and we have no intention to bring up competition in this business. On the contrary, it is to support the development in the industry.

(3) To create new outfits for performance

Diligently carry out research and create better Cantonese Opera outfits and ornaments to facilitate healthy development on the premise that our tradition is to be preserved.

Appendix 7

Phase Four: "FOUR Stage" — small versatile experimental Cantonese Opera theater



Purpose:

The addition of "FOUR Stage" is the next step to build link I (maturity)

We have already mentioned at above Mr. Ka-ying Law's comment on the importance of "Kai Tak Playground". Therefore, the addition of "FOUR Stage" is to let the young actors have a chance to perform regularly, for only stage performance are real internships that can provide the training and experience for them to become mature. More importantly, it is for preparing a group of outstanding actors for quality Cantonese Opera stage production.

Site Design:

(1) Design Style

Combine characteristics of ancient Chinese and modern experimental theater so as to embrace both the quaint atmosphere and modern culture in this brand new theater design.

(2) Scale

A small-scale theater that has comprehensive technical facilities. Seating capacity can be flexible in the range of 300-400 to meet the requirements of different types of show.

(3) Suitable for Multi-functional Usage

A versatile space that has technical equipment suitable for different uses:

- a. experimental stage
- b. recording studio
- c. mini theater
- d. audio studio
- e. lecture room

Additional Services:

(1) Theatrical Productions

Cantonese opera performances are organized and co-organized regularly to provide professional and amateur Cantonese Opera actors with various forms of performance opportunities.

(2) Mini Theater

Movie shows are arranged during daytime. The operation will be like the former Astor Theatre and Lee Theatre so as to generate income to support the operations. Only those movies of higher artistic level are to be selected, as what is practiced in Cine-Art House and Broadway Cinematheque.

(3) Chinese Opera Film Festival

Join with the universities, opera development organizations or literature development organizations to hold great Cantonese Opera and Chinese opera film festivals, in which the films are given Chinese and English subtitles for Chinese and non-Chinese viewers. Seminars are held for afterwards discussions. The discussion content will be further recorded and compiled in text, video or audio finishing and collected in "ONE Book Cafe" for future reference by enthusiasts and researchers.

(4) Seminar

Seminars on Cantonese opera are organized and co-organized to draw people's attention and better their understanding of Cantonese Opera.

(5) Video Production

- a. Quality live performances are video-recorded and stored in the audio-visual database in "ONE Book Cafe".
- b. Make video production plan on Cantonese opera subjects such as: professional teaching materials, school textbooks, promotional documentaries and various Cantonese Opera special and so on.

(6) Audio Production

- a. Organize contests on new Cantonese Opera music arrangement. Invite actors and singers of outstanding quality to do the recordings. This will enrich the databank of "ONEBook Cafe". On the other hand, contact publishers to publish and distribute them so as to enhance promotion and generate income to support the operation.
- b. Record teaching materials such as: Cantonese Opera stage terminology, Cantonese Opera percussion, Cantonese opera music collection and ancient Cantonese Opera performance programs, etc. to enrich the collection in "ONE Book Cafe". They will also be given out freely to schools for use as teaching materials.

(7) Rental Service

Available for rent to Cantonese and other Chinese opera groups for organizing performances or activities. This also helps generating income to support the operation.

Development Goals:

"FOUR Stage" is the cornerstone of quality Cantonese Opera production, and therefore it must have a lively development. It also needs to give its full effort to provide resources and encourage a new generation of learners to solidly build their foundation, dare to try, open up their mind and incorporate modern culture in their learning in order to keep themselves up to date. We need to create Cantonese Opera works that have both technical assurance and artistic quality deep down from the soul in order that Cantonese Opera will survive incessantly.

At this point, basically every aspect of the Cantonese Opera circulatory system are reconnected and come to life again. What we need in the future is constant motivation and adjustment so that the circulatory system can keep running smoothly, create more audience from the next generation and encourage Cantonese Opera lovers to join in the industry and become professional practitioners.

There is a saying in this industry, **"We see a top most scholar in every 3 years but not one good actor in 10 years"**. This explains the difficulty of finding a successful actor, but as long as "Cantonese Opera circulatory system" keeps running and growing healthily, **"There is talent in every generation"—Cantonese Opera can still have a bright future.**