

PSHA's speech at J P Morgan Masters Series Private Dinner with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa  
(English only)

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Following is the speech delivered by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the J P Morgan Masters Series Private Dinner with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa today (September 28):

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,

We are most honoured to have Dame Kiri Te Kanawa to be here with us tonight. It is once in a life time that I could stand next to my idol and for this I thank Opera Hong Kong.

The ability of our cultural institutions to grow, develop and thrive depends on support from three areas: the community, the government and the corporate world. In recent years, Opera Hong Kong has been a beacon of success in its ability to attract fairly high levels of support from private corporations, donors and ticket sales to match some of the sponsorship from Hong Kong Government.

Opera Hong Kong is the first and only opera company in Hong Kong which continuously for five years produced at least two first class international standard operas which draws talents from overseas as principle roles and local young artists from Academy for Performing Arts (APA) as supporting roles. Overseas talents also include Chinese born artists raised and trained abroad.

I will just highlight some of the achievements of Opera Hong Kong. For example, their co-production has extended across the globe including collaboration with many international opera companies such as Rome Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera, Belgium Opera, Nice Opera, Hawaii Opera, Vancouver Opera and Toulouse Opera. New alliances formed with major Chinese opera houses means greater synergy to intensify the process of co-production. At the moment Opera Hong Kong is working with Beijing's China National Performing Arts Centre to bring Magic Flute to Hong Kong in 2009. Major Hong Kong arts groups collaboration means another visible platform to showcase flagship performance troupes like Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Hong Kong Ballet. I am particularly grateful for more international performing groups being brought to Hong Kong like Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, International Orchestra of Italy and Macau Orchestra, thus adding colour and vibrancy through cross fertilisation of experience.

Credits must go to the leadership in Opera Hong Kong for establishing the Opera Hong Kong Chorus as an icon choral group in Hong Kong. Their performance particularly in Aida and Don Carlo together with world renowned singers have been warmly received by our audience. Indeed this is an added platform for APA graduates and local talents like Yuki Ip to bring their best out in front of local and international opera lovers. All these accomplishments are most important to pave way for the birth of a new cultural hub in West Kowloon.

Two months ago in July we saw the passage of the long awaited West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Bill and the allocation of an one-off endowment of HK\$21.6 billion. We are in the process of constituting a new statutory authority to build a vibrant cultural hub and this is why Opera Hong Kong is so important to us. Equally important will be corporate sponsors which make possible costly yet most worthwhile productions to enhance the quality of life here. J P Morgan may be pleased to hear Opera Hong Kong's productions Turandot, Aida, Don Carlo all receive wide acclaims in both the local and overseas press.

On behalf of the Hong Kong Government, I would like to thank our sponsor, J P Morgan for playing its part in the growth and development of Hong Kong's cultural life by giving so much support to Opera Hong Kong. I believe the global financial tsunami has not swept away its passion for Opera Hong Kong. Indeed it's time for us to reflect. Stocks and bonds come and go but songs and operas will forever stay. Who could ever forget legendary Kiri's "O mio babbino caro"!

Dear friends, good songs just as good companions are forever. Thank you.

Ends/Sunday, September 28, 2008