

Govt welcomes inscription of Yueju on UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Yueju (Cantonese opera), which was jointly applied by Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong SAR governments via the Central Government for inscription, was officially inscribed onto UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity making it the first item of the world intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Bureau said, "Having verified with the Ministry of Culture today (October 2), the HKSAR Government is glad to confirm that Yueju opera has been inscribed onto UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The success of this application shows the UNESCO's recognition of the art of Yueju. The governments of the three regions have drawn up a plan to further preserve and promote Yueju, which includes continuing to conduct study on the history and the schools derived from Yueju, strengthening the promotion and participation in Yueju, as well as enhancing the performances and education work so that the public and youths could gain deeper knowledge and have more opportunities to get in touch with Yueju, and further preserve Yueju as an indigenous culture and art form. In addition, we will introduce this world intangible cultural heritage to overseas through cultural exchanges."

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by UNESCO in 2003 and became effective in April, 2006. The Central Government officially ratified the Convention in 2004 and became the sixth state party to the Convention. According to the article 16 of the Convention, the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" should be established to enhance the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage around the world. In fact, it was as early as in 2003 that Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong joined efforts to prepare application to UNESCO for inscribing Yueju on the Representative List. In 2005, we commissioned the Chinese Academy of Arts, which is experienced in making applications to UNESCO, to draft relevant application documents.

The Central Government in September 2008 submitted to UNESCO applications, which included the Yueju jointly nominated by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. It became the first batch of applications submitted by the Central Government for inscription onto the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of

Humanity.

The spokesman also said, the SAR Government understood the importance of providing adequate resources for the development of Yueju. The Government established the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee in 2004 and the Cantonese Opera Development Fund in 2005. The Fund has so far granted about \$20 million to support more than 260 projects. The Government also supports the development of Yueju through various measures. These include support by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to about 500 Yueju and operatic singing performances each year; funding of performance, education, promotion and other development projects by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; and the subsidy by the Home Affairs Bureau for Yueju programmes organised by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

To provide more performance venues for Yueju, the Government not only introduces priority booking systems at LCSD venues, but will also develop venues of different scales to meet the development needs of Yueju. The relevant projects include conversion of the Yau Ma Tei Theatre and the Red Brick Building into a small theatre; construction of a medium-sized theatre and practising rooms at the Annex Building of the Ko Shan Theatre; and the building of a large theatre, a small theatre and practising facilities in the Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District, so as to provide permanent Yueju performance venues of international standard for professional performances.

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