

香港劇場年鑑2015

舞蹈・戲曲・戲劇

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二〇一五年香港戲劇發展概觀

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前言

原文於香港戲劇協會主辦、香港浸會大學傳理學院合辦、國際演藝評論家協會（香港分會）與香港戲劇工程協辦的「第十屆華文戲劇節（香港・2016）」研討會內，以口頭報告方式發表。由於當時「香港劇場年鑑」整理的二〇一五年戲劇資料尚未完全核實，因此在發表時主要總結二〇一三至一四年的數據觀察。本文已補充二〇一五年的數據資料，並同時分析了三年的情況；至於有關戲劇發展的近況則主要集中二〇一五年的觀察。

從一些數字說起

因「劇場年鑑」整理和收錄戲劇記事的定義與「戲劇年鑑」稍有分別，其中部分與戲劇教育計劃有關的總結式演出，以往是在「戲劇教育」一欄內顯示，但在二〇一五年則會在「戲劇記事」內收錄，因此全年製作數量的增長有部分是因年鑑在收錄條件上的修訂。按年鑑編輯部提供的資料，二〇一三年香港戲劇製作數量共473個，二〇一四年則有571個，二〇一五年就有582個（撇除因條件修訂而收錄的製作共12個），二

香港戲劇製作數量

	2015		2014		2013	
由香港藝術發展局資助劇團製作	57	10%	58	10%	46	10%
由民政事務局資助劇團製作	54	9%	43	8%	42	9%
由獨立的專業劇團製作（包括康文署主辦節目和由康文署場地伙伴計劃資助劇團）	111	19%	87	15%	72	15%
由業餘劇團製作（包括藝發局資助項目和香港演藝學院戲劇學院節目）	304	51%	312	55%	268	57%
由非本地劇團製作	68	11%	71	12%	45	9%
總數	594	100%	571	100%	473	100%

○一三至一四年間（不包括在社區場地和在學校進行的演出），顯示製作量增長達20%，二○一四至一五年間增長則只有約1%。製作數量增加是近年本地戲劇發展的趨勢，當中資助劇團的製作佔全年製作量近兩成，這比例在這三年間並無明顯改變；但獨立劇團的製作比例，就從逾一成半增加至兩成；若果非本地劇團製作的數量在比例上無特別增長（約一成），則業餘劇團製作的數量在比例上減少，與獨立的專業劇團製作數量的增加似乎有關。事實上「業餘」製作的參與者不少受過專業訓練甚至是以劇場工作為生，這一點令「業餘」和「獨立專業劇團」之間在製作數量上的擺動比較大，但日漸增加亦是可預見的情況。

旗艦劇團的積極姿態

目前由民政事務局直接資助的劇團，包括「香港話劇團」、「中英劇團」和「進念·二十面體」。其中「話劇團」近年演出節目數量每年平均超過20個，差不多每月都有不類型的戲劇活動發生。二○一三至一四年度舉辦共22個節目，除了「主劇目」、「黑盒劇場」、「讀戲劇場」外，亦包括首次舉辦

的「國際黑盒劇場節2014」，引入新加坡、日本及台灣等地小劇場實驗作品，和以本地新進藝術家為核心、搬演「當代香港為主題的原創舞台新作」的「新戲匠」演出計劃。二○一五至一六年度連同合辦節目則共舉行27個，包括主辦「戲有益」兒童劇場節，亦將續辦第二屆「國際黑盒劇場節」。¹

透過其黑盒劇場的可能性，話劇團近年在吸引和累積年輕觀眾方面似乎有相當明顯的增長，在製作數量儼然與主劇目分庭抗禮，但卻在形式、內容和策劃上更富冒險性，剛好補充了主劇目的限制，更全面地吸納不同口味的觀眾。另外兩個劇團在製作數量雖難與話劇團比較，但有個別項目值得一記。「中英」在二○〇八年進行「社區口述歷史戲劇計劃」²，同時在二○一三年起開拓長者劇場的發展，針對人口老化的趨勢和退休人士對藝術的好奇與追求，透過挖掘本土題材、探索歷史和個人的生命史，結合劇場創作和展現，活化和深耕香港和社區的文化，二○一五年的「社區口述歷史戲劇計劃—東區」繼續在這脈絡上發展。至於《安蒂岡妮》則是「導演舞台—個案研習公開課」的製作，由中英擔當顧問支援新進導演創立新劇團進行

1. 詳情參見「香港話劇團」網頁：<http://www.hkrep.com/>

2. 詳情參見「中英劇團」網頁：<http://www.chungying.com/>

演出。與近年多個由劇團策劃的編劇培育計劃比較，針對導演的培訓計劃數量很少，這與其實踐所需要的資源有關。成立於二〇一四年的「黑幕劇團」雖是業餘組織，但選演的翻譯作品都探討嚴肅議題，如同年另一製作《凝·故》，加上其製作積極認真，這成果為計劃的未來發展帶來啟示。

其他資助概況與劇團發展

由香港藝術發展局（藝發局）資助的小型專業劇團目前共17個，近年獲資助者包括於二〇一五年獲資助的「普·劇場」，於二〇一四年獲資助的「糊塗戲班」和「iStage」，於二〇一三年獲資助的「天邊外劇場」和「浪人劇場」³。這些於近年獲資助的其實並非「新進」劇團，主創人員不少是劇界資深者。如同時獲二〇一五至二〇一八年度康樂及文化事務署（康文署）屯門大會堂場地伙伴計劃⁴資助的「普·劇場」，藝術總監陳永泉是香港演藝學院首屆畢業生，除擔任導演一職，同時亦是演員和教育項目的策劃。劇團在該場地上演不少適合一家大小的合家歡演出，如在二〇一五年上演、改編自董啟章同名小說的《貝貝的文字冒險》音樂劇，也在同年開始推出針對大專生的劇本寫作計劃「心之河土壤栽培計劃」。⁵

劇團多面向發展有時不免令劇團形象失焦，

但似乎在場地伙伴的框架下每年亦要策劃一定數量的製作，如何開拓場地的可能性和持續發展的可行性，一直是本地劇團發展的一大挑戰。由陳文剛擔任藝術總監的糊塗戲班，則是於二〇〇九年因為上演日本著名編劇三谷幸喜的喜劇《笑の大学》，而更進一步廣為觀眾認識；在二〇一四年甚至邀請本地著名電台主持組合林海峰和葛民輝合作上演「軟硬版」共18場，令劇團成功吸引到不少新觀眾⁶。「糊塗戲班」雖非政府場地伙伴，但就在由劇團排練室改裝成的「自助黑盒劇場」上演一些演期較長的小品演出，如二〇一五年製作原創的《一夫一妻》和翻譯劇《情信》，皆由陳文剛與劇團行政總監魏綺珊主演。

另類小型場地發展近況初探

這種在「自家製劇場」（特別是位於工廈內）進行的演出，以往較多在非資助劇團的場地舉辦，但近年資助劇團包括「同流」、「劇場工作室」、「愛麗絲劇場實驗室」和「天邊外劇場」都曾經在自己場地演出，形式相當多元，包括有計劃地作長期演出如同流於二〇一一首演的翻譯劇《魂遊你左右》和二〇一五年的默劇創作《活·在香港》；新進編劇的展演平台如劇場工作室在二〇一五年製作的《皇上晚安》，和階段性實驗展演如愛麗絲劇場實驗室於二〇一四年製作的

《十方一念》。除了「同流黑盒劇場」開放租借予其他劇團使用外⁷，「天邊外」於二〇一四年在唐樓建立的「水泊劇場」，以其製作的《禁區廣場》為開幕劇目；至於租借予其他劇團合辦的節目，三年來則累積逾20個。⁸

這三年間康文署的新建場地是於二〇一四年秋開幕的高山劇場新翼演藝廳，話劇團於該年底上演的《一頁飛鴻》為開幕誌慶節目；二〇一五年上演的戲劇製作有5個，包括「香港戲劇協會」製作的《都是我的孩子》。年度整體製作數量的增加，似乎與康文署場地增加沒必然關係，但在民間主導的另類場地，包括工廠大廈排練室、戶外或街頭的特定場地卻有較大的可能性。如天邊外分別在二〇一三年和二〇一五年於打鼓嶺坪輦保衛家園聯盟導賞中心上演希臘悲劇《禁葬—安蒂岡妮》（東北村落版）和捷克劇作家哈維爾的《花園宴會》（東北村落版）。二〇一五年在這些另類場地進行的製作逾80個，佔全年製作量的14%，當中已不包括由「前進進

戲劇工作坊」營運、可算是藝發局資助劇團營運獨立劇場的先行例子「牛棚劇場」。牛棚劇場的活躍與能量，為近十年香港民間獨立劇場提供一種運作的可能性——包括建立劇場性格、聚合數量不多但凝聚力強的「分眾群」、展示發表的自由與多元化——使另類小型劇場不斷在工廈、展覽場地等空間開花，稍微拉低本地劇場一直以政府康文署場地佔極高的數量比例。

目前這些另類場地的硬件質素和觀眾量都難以和康文署場地相比，民間營運獨立劇場所累積的能量，和其可持續發展的空間和條件如何不被削弱，是未來很值得關注的問題。近年較大規模又相對積極開拓劇場觀眾的「民營劇場」則是新光戲院大劇場，二〇一五年上演了「焦媛實驗劇團」的《鄧麗君》，但對一般資助劇團的規模來說，似乎並不太容易以主辦者的形式進入這些空間。未來場地發展包括於二〇二〇竣工的康文署場地東九文化中心，和於二〇一三年起分階段展開工程的「西九文化區」⁹。西九文化區的場

3. 參考香港藝術發展局網頁：<http://www.hkadc.org.hk/?p=2242&lang=tc>

4. 康樂及文化事務署二〇一五至一八年其他場地伙伴詳見：<http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/tc/vps/partners.html>

5. 見「普劇場」網頁：<http://www.poptheatre.info/>

6. 見「糊塗戲班」網頁：<http://nonsensemakers.com/>

7. 見「同流黑盒劇場」網頁：<http://www.wedraman.com/booking/blackbox/>

8. 見「天邊外水泊劇場」網頁：http://www.theatrehorizon.com/venues_watermargin_c.html

9. 見「西九文化區」網頁：<http://www.westkwoon.hk/tc/the-district/about-the-district>

地和節目策略顯然與康文署不同，「西九大戲棚」¹⁰系列節目和目前定期在公共空間進行的戶外表演藝術節「自由野」，開始為文化區累積不同年齡層的觀眾；同時西九文化區管理局亦積極建立與本地藝術家的聯繫，和在藝術家的創作、策劃、建立國際網絡方面提供協調和支援，包括於二〇一五年首辦、邀請兩岸三地製作人參與的「製作人網絡會議及論壇」¹¹，和亦是同年首辦的「國際劇場工作坊節」¹²，八節斷續為期四個月的活動邀請不少首度來港的國際表演藝術家與本地劇場工作者深度交流，為未來的場地硬件建立節目的軟件配套。論壇和工作坊節的參與者包括來自資助劇團和自由身背景的業界人士，這些經驗的補白和視野的開拓對本地劇場發展無疑是重要資產。

反映時代的原創作品

「雨傘運動」後沉澱了不少反思這場運動或香港社會狀態的原創作品，為劇場創作帶來新一波能量。如「社區文化發展中心」與「小息跨媒介創作室」於二〇一五年合辦《七天七夜——一缺（魔幻日常的）城市誦曲》，整個演出在城市五個開放的空間上演，在街頭拼貼香

港故事與身分；同年「演戲家族」演出由司徒偉健編劇的音樂劇《天堂之後》應該是首個把運動事件搬上舞台的作品；「Arts' Options」亦集體編作《獅子頭上釘Banner》、「三角關係」則集體編作《廢坑的黃色笑話之條鐵是這樣煉成的》，以上兩個都以笑鬧的進路直接緩解焦慮；話劇團由龍文康編劇的《維港乾了》以城市的重要象徵的消失思考議題；「劇場空間」則以捷克社會運動「布拉格之春」真實故事為題的翻譯音樂劇《布拉格·1968》寄託訊息；「凝動劇場」在《少年一心的煩惱》中透過幾位中學生的心事反映年輕人的心聲，甚至連在二〇一六「香港藝術節」上演「鄧樹榮戲劇工作室」的《馬克白》，馬克白和夫人夢醒後接過遞上的黑色雨傘亦顯有所指。

預期本土創作劇陸續會有不少這方面的探索，二〇一五年以讀劇方式展演、由資深編劇潘惠森擔任創作指導的《PW壹捌零零編劇碩士成果展》內五個作品，除滿道的《左膠男與熱狗女》直接介入現場外，另外作品全都牽涉相反價值觀的碰撞，是香港目前社會狀態的反映。隨著近年針對編劇培育平台，比二〇〇六年由「新域劇團」首辦「劇場裏的臥虎與藏龍計劃」時為多，包括「進劇場」與「演戲家族」

10. 見「西九大戲棚」網頁：<http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/visit/west-kowloon-bamboo-theatre>

11. 見「製作人網絡會議及論壇」網頁：<http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/learning/producers-network-meeting-and-forum>

12. 見「國際劇場工作坊節」網頁：<http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/whats-on/past-events/international-workshop-festival-of-theatre/>



《天堂之後》（2015）
攝影：Yankov Wong



《獅子頭上釘Banner》（2015）
攝影：Dicky Wong

的「在臥虎與藏龍之後的貳想」、話劇團的「新戲匠」演出計劃、「前進」的「新文本工作室2.0」等，本地原創劇的能量期待有新一浪的凝聚，爆發有觀點和視野，並能反映時代的作品。

海外交流比前更活躍

近年劇團前往外地演出較前活躍，以往「非常林奕華」以台灣演員擔演在華文地區巡迴有不少優勢；二〇一五年底由台灣的國家表演藝術中心出版《Who's Afraid of 林奕華——在劇場，與禁忌玩遊戲》，更是該出版社首本論述香港藝術家的專書，但現在香港劇團以粵語演出似乎亦漸為華文地區觀眾所接受。如話劇團由鄭國偉編劇的《最後晚餐》，巡迴內地九個城市及新加坡，已累積超過百場演出；另一方面，藝發局透過特別的交流資助鼓勵劇團往外推廣香港戲劇，特別是透過藝術節的邀約，很多小型資助劇團都有機會到外地接觸更闊的觀眾群。

如愛麗絲劇場實驗室的《十方一念》在二〇一四和二〇一五年，於「北京青年戲劇節」、「上海當代戲劇節」和台北的「兩岸小劇場藝術節」等演出；糊塗戲班的《和媽媽中國漫遊》在二〇一五年分別獲邀在「新加坡華藝節」和「中國上海國際藝術節」演出；「影話戲」的《我的50呎豪華生活》在二〇一

四年參加蘇格蘭「愛丁堡藝穗節」，獲「Fringe Sustainable Practice Award」（可持續實踐獎）提名，二〇一五年參與「台北藝穗節」則獲「永真藝穗獎」；浪人劇場持續把改編香港文學作品的舞台演出帶往海外，如二〇一五年參加深圳「第二屆城市戲劇節」的《親愛的金子2.0》。小型資助劇團在這方面愈見活躍和主動，對劇團在策劃創作和提升質素、想像觀眾版圖、思考劇團發展方面都有大有幫助。較特别的例子是鄧樹榮戲劇工作室多個莎劇作品的海外邀約，二〇一五年《馬克白》的粵語演出，甚至是獲莎士比亞環球劇場邀約於當地首演，二〇一六年才於香港再演。這一方面是莎劇本身的世界性，而導演鄧樹榮獨特而具強烈風格的劇場美學，亦是讓其作品得以與世界劇場接軌的原因。創作人風格的塑成，其持續的深度探索是必然進程，本土製作在數量上增加的同時，如何在質素上不受「追求數量」所影響而變得平庸，並能在社會議題的帶動下產生具代表意義的作品，這相信是劇場工作者和觀眾對香港戲劇發展的共同願景。

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Drama

A Survey of Developments in Hong Kong Theatre in 2015

Bernice Chan

Introduction

The original version of this article was presented at The 10th Chinese Drama Festival (Hong Kong 2016) conference which was jointly organised by the Hong Kong Federation of Drama Societies and the School of Communication of Hong Kong Baptist University, in association with the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong

Kong) and Hong Kong Theatre Works, in the form of an oral report. At the time, the 2015 data compiled by the Hong Kong Theatre Yearbook had not yet been fully verified. Hence, the report cited 2013-14 data. This article has included the 2015 data and analysed the situation for the past three years. Current developments in drama are mainly focused on 2015.

Number of drama productions in Hong Kong	2015		2014		2013	
Number of productions by theatre companies supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council	57	10%	58	10%	46	10%
Number of productions by theatre companies supported by the Home Affairs Bureau	54	9%	43	8%	42	9%
Productions by independent theatre companies (including those of companies supported by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Venue Partnership Scheme)	111	19%	87	15%	72	15%
Number of productions by amateur theatre companies (including those sponsored by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and productions by The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts)	304	51%	312	55%	268	57%
Number of productions by non-local theatre companies	68	11%	71	12%	45	9%
Total	594	100%	571	100%	473	100%

Starting from the numbers

The current Theatre Yearbook uses a slightly different definition to organise and record drama related items than the Drama Yearbook. In the past, performances related to drama education schemes were listed under “Drama Education”. However in the 2015 yearbook these will be included under “Performances”. Hence some of the annual growth in the number of productions is partly due to the changed criteria of inclusion in the Theatre Yearbook. According to the information provided by the editorial department of the Theatre Yearbook, there were 473 drama productions in Hong Kong in 2013, 571 in 2014, and 582 in 2015 (minus the 12 productions included because of the change of criteria). From 2013 to 2014 (excluding performances in community venues and schools), the number of productions increased by 20%. However from 2014 to 2015 the increase was only about 1%. In recent years, this increase in the number of productions has been a trend in the development of local drama, with the productions of subsidised theatre companies accounting for nearly 20%. This proportion has not changed significantly in the past three years. However, productions by independents grew from around 15% to 20%; since the number of productions by non-local theatre companies has

not significantly changed (at approximately 10%), this means the proportion of amateur productions has decreased, which seems related to the increase in the number of independent productions. In fact, quite a few participants in “amateur” productions have received professional training and even make a living from theatre, which contributes to the substantial swing between “amateur” and “independent professional” productions. A gradual increase in numbers however can be predicted.

The proactive approach of flagship theatre companies

At the present moment, theatres funded directly by the Home Affairs Bureau include the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (Hong Kong Rep), the Chung Ying Theatre Company and Zuni Icosahedron. In recent years, the number of performances by the Hong Kong Rep has averaged more than 20 per year, and almost every month there are different kinds of drama activities. Of the 22 programmes in 2013 to 2014, in addition to main stage production, black box production and reader’s theatre, there was also the first International Black Box Theatre Festival 2014, attracting experimental studio productions from Singapore, Japan and Taiwan, as well as the “New-Wrighting Series” featuring “original works with a theme surrounding contemporary Hong

Kong”, with local emerging artists as their core. A total of 27 programmes were held in 2015-16, including hosting the Children’s Theatre Festival and the Second International Black Box Theatre Festival.¹

Through the possibilities opened up by black box theatre, the Hong Kong Rep has seen considerable success in attracting and retaining young audiences in recent years, rivalling the main stage repertoire in number of productions, with more adventurous form, content and planning, which complements and circumvents the limitations of main stage productions, catering to audiences with different tastes. The other two theatre companies cannot be compared to the Hong Kong Rep in terms of number of productions, but there are individual items worth mentioning. In 2008, Chung Ying Theatre organised the “Community Oral History Theatre Project”² and, in 2013, in response to the ageing of the population and the curiosity and desire for art on the part of retirees, developed a theatre for older people. By combining the excavation of local thematic material, such as the exploration of personal and local histories, with theatrical creation and performance, this project plowed deeply into the culture of Hong Kong and the community, bringing it to life. The “Community

Oral History Theatre Project – Eastern District” in 2015 continued to develop along these lines. *Antigone* was the product of the “Director Stage” project, in which Chung Ying acted as a consultant to support emerging directors to create theatre companies. In comparison with the many writing programmes organised by theatres in recent years, the number of training programmes for directors is small, due to the resources needed. Although the Black Curtain, established in 2014, is an amateur organisation, the translated works it performs all explore serious issues, such as the earnest and conscientious production of *Time Stands Still* of the same year. This is inspirational for future development and planning.

A survey of other forms of support, and the development of theatre companies

Currently 17 small professional companies are funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. In recent years, these have included Pop Theatre (supported in 2015), the Nonsensemakers and iStage (2014), Theatre Horizon and Theatre Ronin (2013). The companies that have won grants are not in fact “emerging” companies, since many of the creative founders are theatre veterans.

Pop Theatre simultaneously received support in 2015-18 from Tuen Mun Town Hall through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Venue Partnership Scheme. The Artistic Director Chan Wing-chuen was a member of the first cohort to graduate from The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. He directs, acts and curates the educational programme. In Tuen Mun, his theatre has produced a number of family performances, such as the 2015 musical *The Writing Adventure of Bui Bui* adapted from Dung Kai-cheung's eponymous novel. In the same year they also rolled out a playwriting programme aimed at tertiary students called "Heart River Cultivation Programme".³

The multi-faceted development of theatre companies sometimes leads unavoidably to a loss of sharpness of profile. However, it seems that a certain number of productions are planned each year under the framework of the venue partners. How to open up spaces and the feasibility of sustainable development have always been

challenges for the development of local theatre. The Nonsensemakers, led by Artistic Director Rensen Chan, has gained wider recognition since featuring in the comedy *Academy of Laughter* in 2009 by the famous Japanese dramatist Koki Mitani. In 2014, they even invited well-known local radio host Jan Lamb and Eric Kot to co-star in "Soft Hard Version" for a total of 18 performances, successfully attracting new audience members to the theatre.⁴ Although the Nonsensemakers is not a government venue-partner, it converted rehearsal space into a "self-service black box theatre" where it has presented a number of small scale productions with a longer run, such as the original work *The Only One* in 2015, and the translated drama *Love Letters*, both starring Rensen Chan and the theatre troupe's executive director Jo Ngai.

The kind of productions which takes place in "DIY theatre spaces" (especially those in industrial buildings) used to be the provenance of non-subsidised theatre companies. In recent years,

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1. For details please refer to Hong Kong Repertory Theatre's website: <http://www.hkrep.com/>
2. For details please refer to Chung Ying Theatre Company's website: <http://www.chungying.com/>
3. Please refer to Pop Theatre's website: <http://www.poptheatre.info/>
4. Please refer to Nonsensemakers' website: <http://nonsensemakers.com/>

subsidised theatres like We Draman Theatre, Drama Gallery, Alice Theatre Laboratory and Theatre Horizon have also performed in their own premises. These productions take a variety of forms — long-run productions such as We Draman's 2011 production of *The Woman in Black* in translation and their 2015 mime *Life in Hong Kong*; new writing platforms like Drama Gallery's 2015 production of *Night King*, and phased experimental performances such as Alice Theatre Laboratory's 2014 *Once the Muse Speaks*. In addition to the use of the We Draman Black-box Theatre which is available to rent out to other theatre companies,⁵ Theatre Horizon established the Water Margin Theatre in an old tenement building in 2014, which opened with their own production of *The Square*. They also lease their space to other theatre companies, which has resulted in over 20 productions in the past three years.⁶

New venues opened by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in the past three years include a new wing for the Ko Shan Theatre, which opened in the autumn of 2014. The Hong Kong Rep's *Footprints in the Snow* was the opening show at the new auditorium. In 2015 there were five productions, including Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* produced by the Hong Kong Federation of Drama Societies. The annual increase in the overall

number of productions is not necessarily correlated to the increase in LCSD venues. More likely this corresponds with the existence of private alternative venues, including rehearsal rooms in factory buildings, outdoor, street, or site-specific venues. For example, Theatre Horizon staged the Greek tragedy *Antigone* (Northeast Village version) and Czech dramatist Havel's *The Garden Party* (Northeast Village version) at the Visitors' Centre of Ta Kwu Ling/Ping Che Alliance for "Saving our home" in 2013 and 2015 respectively. More than 80 productions took place in these alternative venues in 2015, representing 14% of the annual production volume. These numbers already exclude productions by Cattle Depot Theatre, operated by On and On Theatre Workshop, which can be regarded as a pioneering example of an independent theatre subsidised by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. In the past decade, the activity and energy of the Cattle Depot Theatre has opened up possibilities for Hong Kong's private independent theatres, blazing a trail in creating a profile, building small but cohesive "niche audiences", and demonstrating freedom and pluralism of expression, thus encouraging alternative small-scale theatres to continue blossoming in industrial and exhibition venues and other places, and to lessen local drama's dependency on LCSD venues.

At present, the infrastructure and audience numbers of these alternative venues cannot be compared with productions in LCSD venues. How not to undermine the momentum of the independent theatres and the space and conditions for their sustainable development is an important question for the future. In recent years, Sunbeam Theatre, which is relatively large, independent, and active in audience development, staged Perry Chiu Experimental Theatre's *Teresa Teng*, but the size of most subsidised theatre companies all but precludes them from producing in such spaces. Future venues include the LCSD venue East Kowloon Cultural Centre, due to be completed in 2020, and the West Kowloon Cultural District, which commenced construction in phases starting from 2013.⁷ West Kowloon Cultural District's programming and venue strategy is noticeably different from that of the LCSD. The West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre's programme⁸ and the outdoor performing arts festival Free Space Fest, now regularly held in public spaces, have attracted

an audience of different age groups to the cultural district. And the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority has actively forged links with local artists, coordinating and supporting artists in the creation, planning and establishment of international networks, including the initial 2015 Producers' Network Meeting and Forum which involved producers from Hong Kong, Macau, China and Taiwan,⁹ as well as the International Theatre Workshop Festival, held in the same year.¹⁰ The festival, which took place in eight sessions over four months, invited many international performing artists to Hong Kong for the first time, making possible in-depth exchange with local artists and local theatre workers, thus providing the software to complement the hardware of new venues. Participants in the forum and workshop included industry professionals from both the subsidised and independent theatre sectors. This deepening of experience and broadening of horizons will undoubtedly play an important part in developing local theatre.

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5. Please refer to We Draman's website: <http://www.wedraman.com/booking/blackbox/>

6. Please refer to Theatre Horizon's Water Margin Theatre's webpage: http://www.theatrehorizon.com/venues_watermargin_c.html

7. Please refer to West Kowloon Cultural District's webpage: <http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/the-district/about-the-district>

8. Please refer to West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre's webpage: <http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/visit/west-kowloon-bamboo-theatre>

9. Please refer to the Producers' Network Meeting and Forum's webpage: <http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/learning/producers-net-work-meeting-and-forum>

10. Please refer to the International Workshop Festival of Theatre's webpage: <http://www.westkowloon.hk/tc/whats-on/past-events/international-workshop-festival-of-theatre/>

Original works which reflect the times

The Umbrella Movement inspired many original works reflecting on the movement or the social situation in Hong Kong, bringing a new wave of energy to dramatic creation. Examples include the 2015 *Heptahedron: A City's Odyssey (of Surreality)*, co-produced by the Centre for Community Cultural Development and the Littlebreath Creative Workshop. This was staged in five open spaces in the city, a street collage of Hong Kong's stories and identity. That same year, Actors' Family staged Szeto Wai-kin's musical *Beyond Paradise* which might well be the first time that a sports event had been featured on stage. *Banner Stuck on Lion Head*, devised by Arts' Options, and Trinity Theatre's collectively devised piece *Living in the Rain* are both comedies which seek to ease anxieties. Meanwhile the Hong Kong Rep staged Loong Man-hong's *The Abandoned Harbour* which meditated upon the disappearance of one of the city's main symbols. Theatre Space took the real story of the "Prague Spring" to convey its message and staged the Czech musical *Prague 1968*; and Ricochet Ensemble's *The Sorrows of Young Yat Sam* explores the concerns of a few secondary school students to reflect young people's innermost thoughts. Even in *Macbeth* of Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio at the 2016 Hong Kong Arts Festival, Macbeth and his wife

accept the gift of a black umbrella on awakening — a manifestly significant symbol.

We can expect a lot more exploration in this vein among local creatives. In 2015, veteran playwright Poon Wai-sum created a scratch night of five works in the *PW1800 M.A. Playwriting Showcase*. Apart from Mandu Creation's *The Lefted Man and the Hotdog Girl* which directly engaged with the site, the other works all involved the collision of opposite values, reflecting Hong Kong's current social situation. The initial 2006 Playwright Scheme by Prospects Theatre has spawned a whole cottage industry of playwriting programmes in recent years. This includes Theatre du pif's and Actors' Family's "New Plays Series", the Hong Kong Rep's "New-Wrighting Series", On and On Theatre Workshop's "New Writing Lab 2.0", etc. Hence we expect a new and intense wave of new writing with original voices, visions, and which reflect the times.

The intensification of overseas cultural exchange

In recent years, theatre companies have become more active in performing abroad. In the past Edward Lam Dance Theatre's employment of Taiwanese actors touring Chinese speaking areas conferred many advantages. At the end of 2015, the



Beyond Paradise (2015)
Photo: Yankov Wong



Banner Stuck on Lion Head (2015)
Photo: Dicky Wong

Taiwan National Performing Arts Centre published *Who's Afraid of Edward Lam: playing with taboos on the stage* which is the first book dedicated to a Hong Kong artist by this publisher. Now however, Hong Kong's Cantonese productions seem to be gradually finding acceptance among Chinese language audiences. For example Hong Kong Rep's *Last Supper* by Matthew Cheng toured in nine cities in mainland China and Singapore with more than 100 performances. In addition, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council encourages theatre companies to go abroad and promote Hong Kong drama through special funds for cultural exchange, especially by invitation to festivals. Many small-scale subsidised theatre companies have thus had the opportunity to go abroad and reach out to a wider audience.

For example Alice Theatre Laboratory's *Once the Muse Speaks* was shown at the Beijing Fringe Festival, Shanghai International Contemporary Theatre Festival, and the Cross-Strait Theatre Festival, Taiwan station among others; the Nonsensemakers' *Travel with My Mum* was invited to perform at Singapore's Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts and the China Shanghai International Arts Festival in 2015; Cinematic Theatre's *My Luxurious 50 sqft Life* was performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2014, was nominated for the "Fringe Sustainable Practice Award" and received the "Yong Zhen Fringe Award" at the Taipei

Fringe Festival in 2015. The Theatre Ronin continues to bring its productions of Hong Kong literary adaptations abroad, such as *Wilderness of Soul 2.0* which was performed at the 2nd Shenzhen Urban Drama Festival in 2015. In this respect, small-scale subsidised theatre companies have become more lively and active, which has been enormously helpful for theatre companies in planning, creating, enhancing their quality, conceiving of new audiences, and thinking about the development of the company. A more exceptional example is that of the Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio, which has received many overseas invitations for their Shakespeare productions. Their Cantonese performance of *Macbeth* was premiered at none less than the Shakespeare Globe Theatre in 2015, and was revived in Hong Kong only in 2016. Part of this is because of the global nature of Shakespeare, and director Tang Shu-wing's unique and striking theatre aesthetics, which allows his works to connect internationally. The creation of an artistic style inevitably requires a continual process of deep exploration. How, in the midst of this increase in number of productions, do we guard against quality suffering and becoming mediocre in the pursuit of quantity? How do we create meaningful works driven by social issues? This I believe is the shared vision of theatre practitioners and audiences for the development of theatre in Hong Kong.

(Translated by Amy Ng)

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