

World Harmonica Festival 2009

28 October 2009, Trossingen

Opening Remarks

Dear Dr Müller, ladies and gentlemen:

- I am very honoured to have the opportunity to participate in the opening ceremony of World Harmonica Festival 2009 in Trossingen.
- This is the sixth time that the World Harmonica Festival takes place in Trossingen, the town of the harmonica in Germany. In the next few days in this beautiful region of southern Germany, there will be many gala concerts featuring some of the finest harmonica virtuosos in the world, the excitement and tension of competitions in which Hong Kong is represented by a 80-strong delegation, the youngest member of which is only 7 years old. There will also be seminars and workshops conducted by harmonica legends.
- Trossingen is renowned as a "music town". Although its population is about 15,000, the town is home to the renowned 'University of Music Trossingen' (with its famous Early Music department) and there are several other institutions specializing in musical education, like the 'Bundesakademie für musikalische Jugendbildung' and the 'Hohner Konservatorium'.

Hong Kong as a cultural centre

- Whilst I am not a harmonica player, I am a harmonica lover. 40 years ago, I started to learn how to play harmonica. Unlike today when young boys and girls have the benefits of following proper tuitions and training under the auspices of Mr. Muller's International Federation of Harmonica, or Mr. Johnny Kuan's Hong Kong Harmonica Association, I picked up the skills over the radio. In those days, we all tuned to a commercial radio in Hong Kong at 4 pm on Saturdays and we did as told by harmonica master Leung through a programme broadcast on a weekly basis.

- Like Trossingen, we in Hong Kong also recognise how arts, music and culture can enrich the quality of life in our society. We are implementing an ambitious cultural project known as the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) which is a massive cultural district on a prime harbour front site with an upfront endowment of almost EUR 2 billions. The WKCD will be an integrated arts facility spanning 40 hectares. It is a strategic investment for our future generation and the future of Hong Kong. The WKCD will include various performing arts venues, including a mega performance venue, theatres, concert halls and music halls. In developing this mega project, we are also learning from the experience of different European cities, including those in Germany. I have every confidence that you will enjoy performing in one of the concert halls of the WKCD in future.
- Over the next few days, the Hong Kong delegation will participate in 10 competition categories with a total of more than 70 entries. Moreover, the Hong Kong Harmonica Association Harmonica Orchestra has been invited to perform in a special concert during the Festival on 31 October. They will show to the audience western classical music, traditional Chinese music and original compositions by Hong Kong composers, as well as the blending of the western and Chinese music. The world renowned King's Harmonica Quintet (KHQ) of Hong Kong will be featured in another gala concert and conduct a seminar on the "The Art of Harmonica Ensemble".

Hong Kong as a creative hub

- Recently, the Government of HKSAR has also identified six priority industries which have great potential for the long-term development of Hong Kong. One of them is the cultural and creative industries (the others are educational services, medical services, testing and certification, the environmental industry as well as innovation and technology industry).
- To promote our creative industries, we have set up a new Steering Committee on Culture and Creativity that aims to streamline the work

in supporting the development of creative industries including arts education, audience building and co-ordinating cultural and creative events.

- A new government department “Create Hong Kong” was also set up in June 2009 to lead, champion and drive the development of the creative economy in Hong Kong.
- One exciting new initiative is taking place as I speak. In Hong Kong, we have designated this month as “Creative October” to promote creativity, arts and culture in our community. There are 40 programmes and 200 activities covering performing arts, visual arts, workshops, Cantonese opera and much more. The “Creative October” initiative complements our campaign to raise awareness and appreciation of arts and culture particularly among our young people.
- Also in October, we sent a high level delegation to join this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair and organised different activities to promote the publishing industry and literature of Hong Kong.
- One of the highlights of the performance of the Harmonica Orchestra of the Hong Kong Harmonica Association is the première of “Harmonica Rainbow” (a harmonica orchestral work specially commissioned for this Festival), composed by the Hong Kong leading composer Dr MUI Kwong-chiu. In this sense, Hong Kong’s participation in the World Harmonica Festival dovetails nicely with our efforts and initiatives in Hong Kong.
- Indeed, 2009 is a very special year in the bilateral relations between Hong Kong and Germany. In March, the first overseas government representative office established after our reunification with the mainland of China, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin commenced operation in the capital of Germany.
- We are therefore very proud to have the opportunity to join this prestigious event and support our musical talents from Hong Kong.
- Harmonica is perhaps a small instrument, but its appeal to music

lovers is not limited by its size. Like Hong Kong, a small entity can sometimes work wonder.

- Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you will be impressed by the performances of talented harmonica players from all over the world in the next few days.

HKETO, Berlin

October 2009