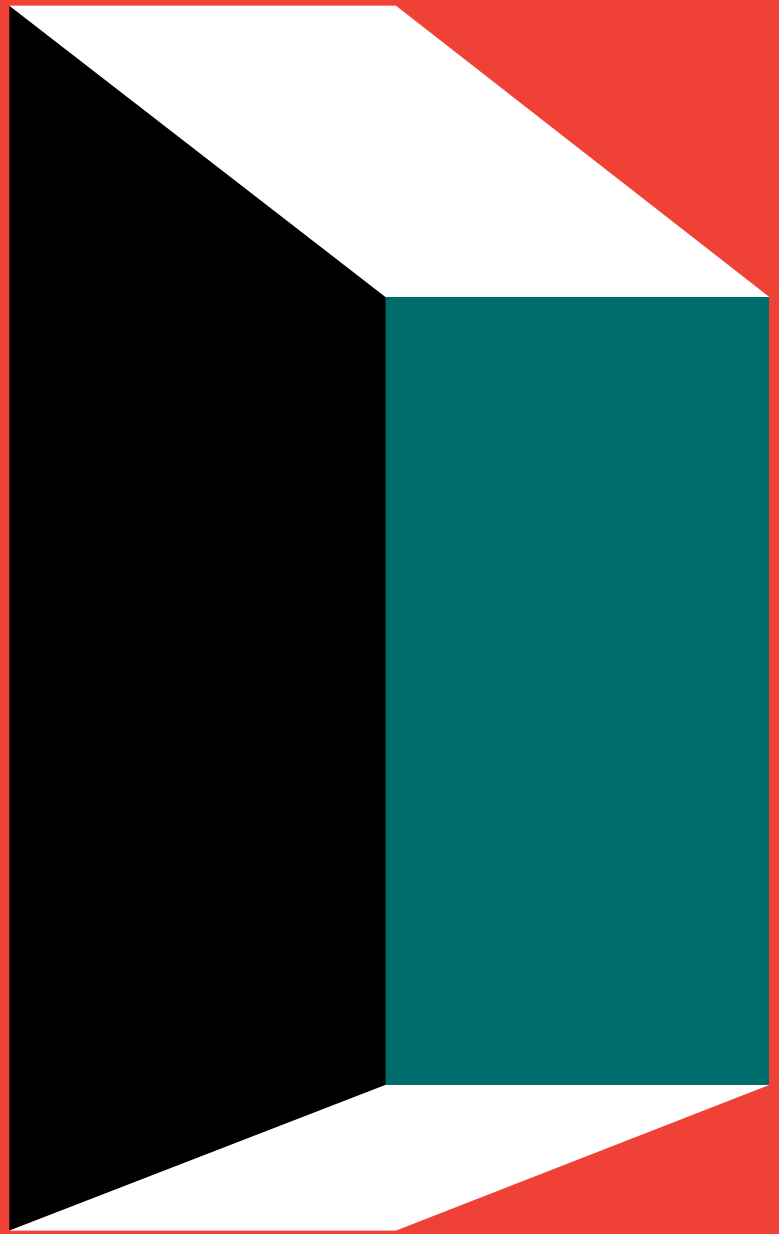
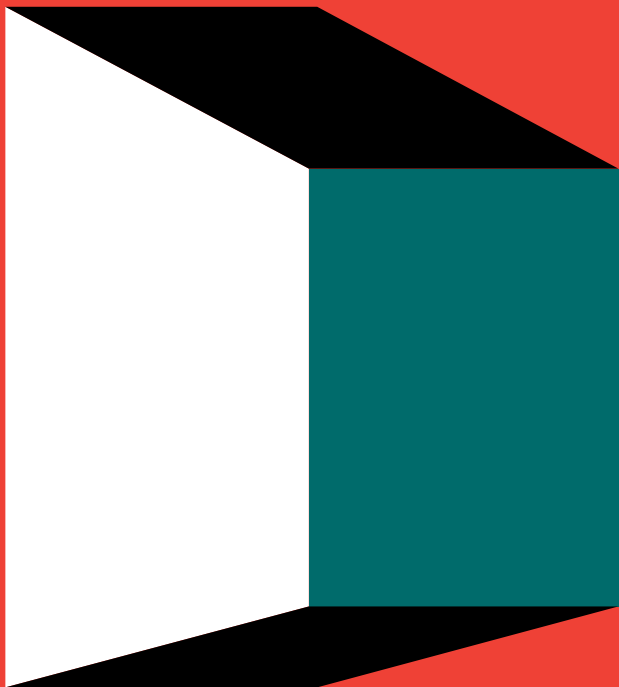
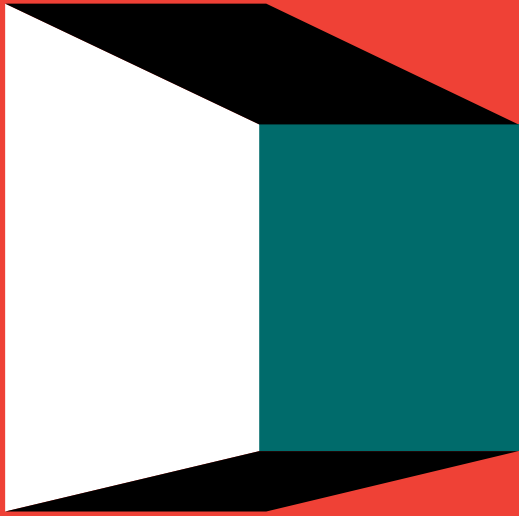


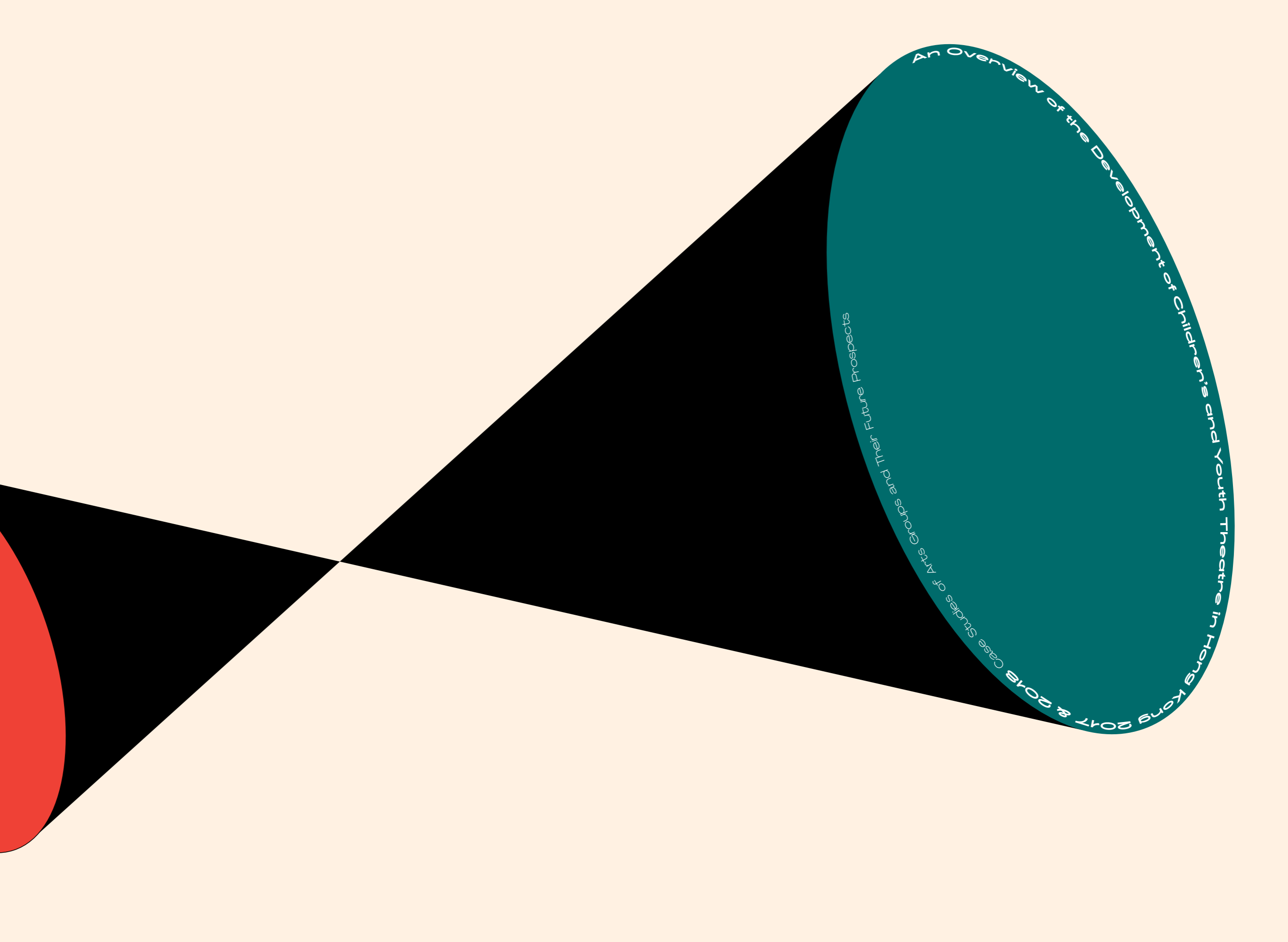
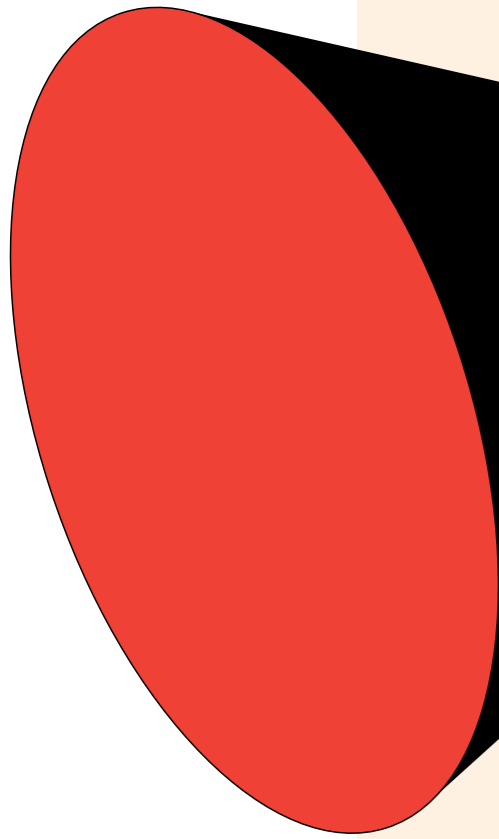
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Hong Kong  
Drama  
Overview

2017  
2018





An Overview of the Development of Children's and Youth Theatre in Hong Kong 2017 & 2018  
Case Studies of Arts Groups and Their Future Prospects

# An Overview of the Development of Children's and Youth Theatre in Hong Kong 2017 & 2018

## Case Studies of Arts Groups and Their Future Prospects

Text  
Miu Law

### Introduction

According to the latest statistics from the Census and Statistics Department, as of the end of 2018, there were 1,155,900 people under 19 years of age in Hong Kong, which constituted approximately 15.4 per cent of the total population of Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> Children and teenagers make up about one-sixth of the total population of Hong Kong. How are adults going to equip them for an uncertain future? What role will art and culture play in their upbringing? Children's and youth theatre can foster the development of the senses, broaden the imagination and inspire thinking, and nurture future audiences for the arts. In this light, the development of children's and youth theatre is one of the cornerstones of a city's overall development.

According to the performance data collected in the Hong Kong Theatre Yearbook 2016, there are around 40 local arts groups mainly catering to children and youth. We selected four local arts organisations targeting different age groups, interviewed them, and wrote up the case studies included in this article. These four groups were established between five to 27 years ago; they differ in size, funding sources and production modes, and are representative in their respective fields of expertise. The interviews focus on the arts programmes of the four arts groups during 2017 and 2018. Using their experiences as a starting point, the interviews explore the current situation and challenges in the development of children's and youth theatre in Hong Kong, as well as visions and recommendations for the future.

<sup>1</sup> See the data on the Census and Statistics Department website: [https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp150\\_tc.jsp?tableID=002&ID=0&productType=8](https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp150_tc.jsp?tableID=002&ID=0&productType=8)

### Interviews with Arts Groups (In order of year of establishment)

#### 1. The Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation

Year of establishment	1993
Sources of funding	Commercial sponsorship, one-off grants from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and other foundations
Main mode	Children's and youth theatre
Interviewee	Anca Chung, Head of Performing Arts
Interview date	27 March 2020

#### Background

Established in 1993, the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (YAF) provides access to "high quality, non-competitive free-of-charge arts experiences"<sup>2</sup> for children and young people aged five to 25, as well as serving those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs. The majority of the participants are between the ages of nine and 20 and come from diverse backgrounds, ranging from those who have little exposure to the arts to young people who aspire to become professional artists. "We identify the gaps that need to be filled and different opportunities to serve different demographic segments," Chung remarks.

The YAF plans its annual programme around one or one-and-a-half years ahead, while it seeks sponsorship from commercial organisations, public institutions, foundations and individuals. "We try to secure sponsorship across a number of years.... Sustainability is especially important, not only for the young people and artistic development, but also for us as a charity."

#### 2017 & 2018 Programmes

Between 2017 and 2018, the YAF organised close to a hundred arts programmes and activities, including workshops, public performances, community arts projects, outdoor carnivals and parades. Chung shares three of the featured programmes.

<sup>2</sup> The Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation: <https://www.hkyaf.com/site/about>

### **Flood by the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain x Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation x ArtisTree**

The National Youth Theatre of Great Britain came to Hong Kong for the first time in 2018 with a brand new English-language production of *Flood*, based on the theme of climate change. It was performed by 22 local youths who had been selected from an audition for the show. The performance combined physical theatre, poetry recitation, shadow theatre, music and song, the use of props and video images. Chung states that the focus of the collaboration was on physical theatre, since the YAF observed that physical theatre was underdeveloped in Hong Kong. It was also in line with the YAF's mission to fill in the gaps in the industry.

### **Miller Performing Arts: Pull Back the Curtain**

As part of the theatre arts programme Miller Performing Arts, the YAF organised an annual English-language playwriting scheme for young people called Pull Back the Curtain in 2017 and 2018. It recruited young people between the ages of 13 and 25 to write 30-minute plays under the guidance of professional theatre director and playwright Clare Stearns. At the end of the three-month workshop, three of the selected works were performed in public, two in the form of a reading or staged reading, and the most promising one given a full production, directed by the YAF founder. Pull Back the Curtain was conducted in English in the previous years. The YAF is planning to launch the Chinese version, with veteran local playwright Loong Man-hong as the instructor.

### **Standard Chartered Arts in the Park**

The Standard Chartered Bank Foundation sponsors a six-month youth education programme every year, where artists are matched with students in primary and secondary schools to create large-scale puppets and costumes. It allows students to develop their creativity, teamwork, leadership and problem-solving skills through art making. This culminates in a large-scale youth arts festival, Standard Chartered Arts in the Park, featuring giant puppet parades, art stalls, and stage performances. The festival is held in the Victoria Park and nearby neighbourhoods in November every year.

For example, in 2018, the two-day carnival mobilised over 3,500 young people, over 700 volunteers and 26 groups of local and British arts groups. Sixteen interactive arts stalls were set up for free-of-charge public participation, and a large stage erected for all-day performances by 60 youth performance groups. The performances included traditional dance, jazz dance, street

dance, contemporary dance, rope skipping, marching bands, magic shows, acrobatics, and a 200-strong choir. The festival attracts on average 180,000 local residents and tourists every year.<sup>3</sup>

### **Challenges**

Since its founding 27 years ago, Chung believes that the YAF has built a trustworthy reputation and a distinctive profile, which serves as a guarantee of performance quality. However, in terms of media and public recognition, she believes that there is still room for improvement. "Youth theatre is usually regarded as amateur. Arts critics and the media usually relegate it to the education section... Youth does not mean non-professional, nor does it mean compromising performance quality."

Moreover, in the years of working with the educational sector, Chung has observed that local schools still shy away from certain types of topics. For example, when the YAF thematised bullying within schools in one of their programmes, certain schools refused to participate on the grounds that bullying did not happen in their schools. During their schools tour of *Spring Awakening*, which thematises the subject of sex, some schools expressed alarm. In the face of taboos still surrounding certain important issues, "we, as a youth organisation, need to step up," she remarks.



Miller Performing Arts: Pull Back the Curtain 2018 — Photo courtesy: YAF

<sup>3</sup> See the press release available on the Media Outreach website: <https://www.media-outreach.com/release.php/View/7124>

## 2. The Radiant Theatre

Year of establishment	2009
Sources of funding	Box office receipts, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Main mode	Theatre productions for children and young audiences
Interviewee	Ava Au, Artistic Director
Interview date	30 March 2020

### Background

In 2012, the Radiant Theatre became a venue partner of the Sha Tin Town Hall. After three years of realignment, the company decided to focus on producing performing arts programmes and activities for children and young people. The theatre runs three main programmes: the parent-child collaborative theatre series *Pillow Talk*, an interactive sensory theatre series, and a family Christmas musical series. It also organises different levels of drama classes for young children (K2-K3), junior drama classes (P1-4) and parent-child drama classes (for children between the ages of three and six, with one parent in attendance). The first two culminate in a short graduation show where pupils can showcase the results of their learning to their parents.

To build up a regular audience base, the company launched the Radiant Membership Programme in 2014, where parents are encouraged to register as members in return for ticket discounts. Since taking up residency in the Tai Po Arts Centre in early 2019, the company has collaborated with other resident companies to arrange exclusive activities for Radiant members, such as special courses, performances or experiences. Examples include an acrobatic workshop with the TS Crew, and intimate, small-scale interactive shows where young children are invited on stage. It is Au's wish that the Radiant Theatre should not just be a theatre company. "In addition to watching our shows, I hope that the Radiant Theatre will be a platform where parents and children can experience many different things together."

### 2017 & 2018 Programmes

Between 2017 and 2018, the Radiant Theatre organised six performances for children and young audiences across three series, each with its own target audience and production features.

### Parent-Child Collaborative Theatre: *Pillow Talk Pillow Talk 3 (2017) and Pillow Talk 4 (2018)*

The *Pillow Talk* series, held in the Exhibition Gallery, is aimed at children aged two to seven, accompanied by their parents. The series focuses on parent-child interaction. Under the guidance of the actors, they play different roles in the story, seeking to recreate the "intimacy of parents telling a bedtime story". There is no auditorium. Parents and children are free to snuggle and watch the play however they wish. The soft lighting and musical effects, combined with storytelling and games, make the shows especially suitable for children who are attending theatre for the first time.

After the show, the actors continue to interact with the children, allowing parents to participate in a sharing session hosted by experts who discuss the specific themes of each show, and listen to parents bringing up difficult parenting issues. Experts who have been invited to the performances include drama therapists, child psychologists, and experienced family social workers.

### The Interactive Sensory Theatre Series *Starry (2017) and Beautiful Sounds (2018)*

The interactive sensory theatre series, held in the Cultural Activities Hall, targets a slightly older audience of children between the ages of four to 11. The series is created in collaboration with other arts groups, such as the acrobatic team Trickstation for *Starry*, which incorporates stunts and interactive sequences into the performance; and *Beautiful Sounds*, a collaboration with the music education group Orff 4 Kids, and Busymama, a team of mothers passionate about handicrafts, with the former using an alternative approach to create music for the performance, and the latter repurposing junk to make the set. "I hope that children and their parents will realise that going to the theatre is not only about drama and stories, but also includes other artistic elements," Au contends.

### The Family Musical Series *MAGIC TOFU FLOWER Re-run (2017) and Rubber Man (2018)*

This series, also held in the Cultural Activities Hall, is targeted at a similar age range as the interactive sensory theatre series, although it also appeals to junior secondary school students. Au likens the series to a work of "anime", with a more exciting plot and quicker rhythms. "We do not just want children to have fun, but also adults." The issues discussed are also more complex. For example, the 2017 revival of *MAGIC TOFU FLOWER* touches on how the regime uses tricks to trap good people. "Some parents told me 'Don't talk too much about politics'," sighs Au. Although parents have become more accepting in recent years, it will still take time before non-mainstream story topics such as life and death, race, and sexual orientation gain widespread acceptance.

All three series are performed by professional adult actors. In the beginning, the company would select child actors from the students of the children's drama course, but rehearsal time was short and the number of scenes limited. In recent years, the troupe has insisted on having only professional actors, which Au describes as being responsible to both the production team and the child actors. "I don't want to add a song and dance scene for no reason just to get the kids on stage.... My main focus is to produce an outstanding performance for children, and there are always trade-offs."



*Beautiful Sounds* (2018) — Photo: Kit Chan@KC Creative Photo courtesy: The Radiant Theatre

### 3. Hong Kong Repertory Theatre School

<b>Year of establishment</b>	2010
<b>Sources of funding</b>	One of the nine major performing arts groups funded by the Home Affairs Bureau
<b>Main mode</b>	Children's and youth theatre
<b>Interviewee</b>	Chow Chiu-lun, Head of Outreach and Education
<b>Interview date</b>	20 April 2020

#### Background

Founded in 1977, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (HKRep) is the oldest and largest professional theatre company in Hong Kong, and it is funded by the HKSAR Government. In 2010, the company's Outreach and Education Department officially established the Outreach Studio. It was expanded into the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre Affiliated Drama School in 2013, and officially renamed the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre School in 2018. Its remit includes early childhood drama courses, children's drama courses, a children's drama group, a youth drama group, and other theatre arts related training courses for participants from three to retirement age.<sup>4</sup> The following interview focuses on the children's (P4-6) and youth (S1-5) drama groups.

As an extension of the drama programmes for toddlers and children which de-centred public performances, the inaugural groups were established in 2014/2015. The entire programmes of the children's and youth drama groups spanned nearly ten months. The groups met at least once a week, with the last month devoted to intensive rehearsals, culminating in a public performance at the HKRep Black Box.

#### 2017 & 2018 Programmes

The main focus of the children's drama group is on drama with elements of general education. The instructor integrates the ideas provided by the students and transforms them into scripts. In 2017 and 2018, the children's drama group first attempted musical theatre with their productions of *Eminence Measurement Index* (2017) and *EMI 2: Brave New World* (2018).

The youth drama group has focused mainly on adaptations of classic works, such as Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Nobel Prize winner José Saramago's *Blindness*, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and*

<sup>4</sup> The Hong Kong Repertory Theatre Drama School Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/香港話劇團戲劇學校/our-story/1587722714600799/>

*Juliet*. In 2017, the youth group staged a production of the French playwright Molière's farce *The Imaginary Invalid*. In 2018, the group took on the challenge of creative theatre for the first time with an original production of *Life in VR*. The programme aims to provide a platform for the members of the youth group to participate in the playwriting process.

The school's motto of "Learning to Live Well," "Asking for a Better Life" and "Creating a Better Life" is consistent with the choice of repertoire and creative direction of both the children's and youth drama groups, allowing participants to reflect on the current state of society through creative works. Chow describes the two ensembles' repertoire as non-conventional, as it seeks to break away from the limited themes of children's and youth theatre. "We want to break away from the usual happy-ever-after with black and white characters genre of children's theatre. If we take 'Asking for a Better Life' seriously, then we can no longer be satisfied with just black and white."

Since their founding, the two groups have been using the HKRep Black Box as a rehearsal and performance base, which not only enhances their sense of belonging, but also takes into account curriculum planning. Chow has long wondered what theatre size is ideal for young people to perform. The audience for HKRep's Black Box is limited, consisting of a mere 500 people for the four performances, with family and friends of the participants making up 90 per cent of the audience. Low box office pressure allows the instructors to focus on teaching and the quality of creation. As Chow explains: "The children's and youth groups can each take up to 15 students annually, so everyone gets more opportunities and more space to develop their voices.... It so happens that [HKRep] has its own venue, which gives me a framework to implement what I want to do. Small is beautiful."

### Challenges

Advertising for the drama school mainly piggy-backs off advertising for the main productions of the HKRep, plus word of mouth from former students and parents. It has never lacked applicants. However, Chow observes that the number of male students has been decreasing in recent years, especially in the youth drama group which targets secondary school students, leading to a gender imbalance in the 2018 group which necessitated a bespoke play for the group. Chow attributes this to the current cultural atmosphere, which does not encourage boys to express themselves, as well as the early maturity of adolescent girls. In contrast, boys are less able to express themselves and think emotionally, and have a greater sense of frustration in drama classes.

In the early days, graduates of the children's drama group were given priority to join the youth drama group to ensure a seamless transition when they entered secondary school. The hope was that through a long period of participation, trainees would be able to grow along with the group in a stable environment. However, Chow observes that some of the trainees came under increasing pressure after entering secondary school and found it difficult to find time to participate in drama training due to the heavy schoolwork, dropping out after one term. At the start of 2019, the youth and children's drama groups no longer give priority to existing students, in order to attract new students who are interested in joining the drama groups.



EMI 2: *Brave New World* (2018) — Photo: On the Paper Photo courtesy: HKRep

#### 4. Hong Kong Five Senses Education Experimental Theatre

Year of establishment	2015
Sources of funding	Box office receipts, one-off grants from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and other foundations
Main mode	Theatre productions for children and young audiences
Interviewee	Wong Yuk-tak, Founder
Interview date	12 April 2020

##### Background

The Hong Kong Five Senses Education Experimental Theatre (HK5Senses) is currently the only local professional theatre company dedicated to exploring sensory, infant and early childhood theatre, and is a pioneer in the field. The productions are participatory, sensory, interactive and non-verbal, with an emphasis on physical theatre, multimedia interaction, story imagery, a simple style and sensory stimulation. They aim to “cultivate a ‘borderless’ theatre culture that knows no boundaries of age, language, race, region, or ability.”<sup>5</sup>

Founder Wong Yuk-tak has many years of experience in mainstream and special needs education. “I taught the subject ‘Sensory Perception’ and worked with speech therapists and physiotherapists. Our students were severely mentally handicapped children, who were able to absorb drama education or art education with simple sensory-perceptual elements.” Based on these experiences, she began to explore the possibility of combining theatrical performance with sensory perception. “Can children’s theatre be simpler? Is there a form of theatre that can cater to infants and toddlers, while also taking into account the needs of the plot?”

The first three annual productions were co-presented with HKRep and performed in the HKRep’s Black Box. Wong explains the advantages of this arrangement, not only in securing a venue, but also providing important support in terms of audience base, publicity, and ticketing administration, as well as helping to build up audiences and industry networks.

##### 2017 & 2018 Programmes

In 2017 and 2018, the HK5Senses presented its second annual revival of *Start from a Dot*, and the premiere and rerun of its third annual production *Wind Blows, Sea Flows*, which was invited

<sup>5</sup> See the house programme for the production *I’m bLack & whiTE* by the Hong Kong Five Senses Education Experimental Theatre (“Introduction to the Company”).

to mainland China and Macau respectively. “*Wind Blows, Sea Flows* was the most popular of our productions, with audiences accumulated over two years. Moreover, at the time we were the only theatre focusing on infants and toddlers, so the demand was very high,” Wong recalls. After opening, all nine performances of *Wind Blows, Sea Flows* sold out in one day.

At the beginning, the target audience was children aged two to six, but in the later revivals, the target age was lowered to 18 months old. “The sensory elements are applicable to children aged zero to two, but older children can also benefit, which is why we are experimenting with a wider age range.” Unlike the usual practice of narrowly age-defined infant and toddler theatre, the HK5Senses does not set a strict age limit. Children as old as nine years old and as young as 18 months old can attend the show. For the first time, dancers were invited to participate in the creation of *Wind Blows, Sea Flows*, performing a state of flux and imaginatively spurring on the senses. After the performance, the programme extended to an independent Sensory Theatre Experience Workshop, combining theatrical elements, simple props and sound and lighting effects to encourage parents and children to “bring theatre home”.



*Wind Blows, Sea Flows* (2017) — Photo courtesy: HK5Senses



### The Open Theatre

In 2019, the HK5Senses was invited to move into the Tai Po Arts Centre, and Wong immediately crowdfunded Hong Kong's first open (sensory) theatre space—a space that is without barriers or borders, suitable for people of all ages, languages, cultural backgrounds and needs. This open theatre space is equipped with interactive sensory training devices, theatre performance and exhibition equipment, rehearsal room facilities and multimedia equipment,<sup>6</sup> and is open to the public for free at specified times. There are on-site instructors for interactive improvisation. “After the show, you can stay here for free play, talk to other parents, drink coffee and read picture books. Only with this kind of creative cycle can interest be sustained.... It is a form of audience outreach, bringing theatre into the home. I want it to feel intimate, to go beyond the performance into the imagination.” The Open Theatre completed its crowdfunding campaign and renovation in mid-2020, and is now open for parent-child activities.

Wong also hopes that the space will become a platform for exchange among creators, local and overseas arts groups, potential investors and business partners. “I will invite more artists to come here for different kinds of exchanges, and help them find like-minded people.... Understanding each other's knowledge base and beliefs is also part of the training.” Wong's future goals include linking up with partners, broadening the definition of children's and youth theatre, and breaking down the age stratification of the audience. “It is no longer just about infant and toddler theatre. The social environment in Hong Kong has reached a bottleneck. We can no longer expect the government to support the arts. We must inspire each other and get to know more people from different walks of life in order to maintain our vitality and circulation.”

### Recommendations for the Future

Based on their experiences, the four arts organisations made a number of recommendations for the development of children's and youth theatre. Here we explore two recommendations, one for hardware and one for software: firstly, the creation of specialised theatres for children and youth; secondly, the promotion of audience data collection and analysis.

### Imagining a “Children's and Youth Theatre”

The shortage of performance venues is a long-standing problem faced by the Hong Kong theatre industry. Apart from the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre School, which is equipped with a standard

<sup>6</sup> See the crowdfunding website of the Hong Kong Five Senses Education Experimental Theatre: <https://gogetfunding.com/sensesplaylab/>

theatre, the other three companies, even one as well resourced as the YAF, are faced with a shortage of performance venues—the waiting period to hire a venue, the short and temporary runs, which makes securing a venue like guerrilla warfare. For future development, the industry has started to discuss the establishment of specialised performance venues mainly targeting children and young people. There are many examples of “Children's and Youth Theatres” overseas. These purpose-built theatres allow arts groups to take up long-term residencies, thus enabling more efficient and strategic planning of long-term programmes and activities, as well as hardware design that better targets the needs of children and youth audiences.

In the interviews, the four organisations shared their insights of “Children's and Youth Theatre”. They cited their own contexts and experiences in using the venues, reflecting on the special needs of producing performances for children and young people, as they imagined a theatre that does not yet exist.

The Hong Kong Repertory Theatre School is the only one of the four with guaranteed access to a venue, since it uses the Theatre's own black box theatre at Sheung Wan Civic Centre as a base. Chow believes that in general, theatres in Hong Kong lack character, and that a characterful, specialised theatre for children and youth should be built. This theatre should be host to arts groups specialising in children's and youth productions, and the hardware design and programming should be tailored to the tastes and preferences of children and youth. Moreover, it should have public outdoor spaces where young people should be encouraged to play and socialise so as to generate a sense of belonging, just as the regular creative gatherings at the Black Box Theatre have established a strong sense of belonging among the children's and youth theatre groups.

As a venue partner of the Sha Tin Town Hall, the Radiant Theatre has been operating in the same venue for many years. Au describes how the long-term relationships they have built with the venue's technical staff means they can ask for feedback earlier on in the creative process. Summing up her years of experience, Au has made a number of observations that need to be addressed in the future of children's and youth theatres.

The first issue is funding and ticketing. How does one fulfil one's social responsibility, and at the same time ensure a reasonable income for the resident groups? At present, the Venue Partnership Scheme only provides minimal subsidies to the theatre company, which means box office revenue is the main source of income. However, in accordance with the principles of the public sector, the

concessionary ticket prices of partner theatres must be half-price.<sup>7</sup> “Most attendees of children’s theatre are students, which means that even if we sell 80 per cent or 90 per cent of tickets, more than half of those tickets would have been sold at half price. We barely break even or suffer a small loss every time.”

The second is the location and supporting facilities. Referring to the cultural and creative parks in Taiwan and other places, where the theatres are integrated with gift shops, catering, exhibition and public space, theatre going for parents and children should not only be a one-item activity, but one facet of a cultural life steadily built up over time. Au refers to the Sha Tin Town Hall as an example—it is conveniently located and easily accessible, with a large shopping mall nearby for parents to plan their dining and activities before and after the play. From this, we can see how this children’s and youth theatre should be planned and supported, so as to create a family-friendly cultural ecology.

The third is the hardware design of the theatre, including the performance space, the lobby and the auditorium. How can we put more thought into the details to address the special needs of children’s and youth theatres? Take the Cultural Activities Hall of Sha Tin Town Hall as an example. Au describes the performance area as too wide but not deep enough, which limits the set design. “Children’s theatre presents a kind of ‘journey’, and it is difficult to deal with changes of place here. If the theatre design could be more thoughtful... For example, there could be drapes? A secret door? Children’s theatre is a world full of imagination, and we really need something like this to help spark imagination.” In addition, while children are waiting to enter the theatre, the lobby space can be opened up for the actors to interact with them, making the whole experience of entering the theatre more complete. “Kids can start playing as soon as they enter the theatre, so it is no longer just a cold and forbidding space.” Finally, the seats can be adjusted in height and equipped with movable armrests to help parents and children get closer to each other.

#### **Audience data collection and analysis**

Expanding the audience base of children’s and youth theatres and developing target audiences are issues on the minds of many arts groups. During the interview, both the YAF and the HK5Senses mentioned that data is useful for marketing and understanding audience needs, in order to identify appropriate promotional and creative strategies.

<sup>7</sup> Concessions are available to senior citizens aged 60 or above, persons with disabilities and their carers, full-time students and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients.

Chung of the YAF believes that the ticketing system in Hong Kong should provide consumer data to the arts groups using its services, as such information is important for marketing purposes. She cites her own experience in London’s cultural venues as an example. “Data is everything. It helps you develop as a programmer, as a producer, as a marketer. Data is another kind of hardware.” In London, arts groups are able to collect data through the ticketing system to analyse audience composition, spending and attendance, which enables them to adjust their promotional strategies, such as offering exclusive discounts to first-time audiences, establishing a membership system and promoting specific forms of productions to audiences with similar interests. “If you know who your audience is, you know how to speak to them in their language.”

On the other hand, the HK5Senses tries to understand its audience through post-performance questionnaires. In 2020 and 2021, it plans to collaborate with the Department of Early Childhood Education at the Education University of Hong Kong to develop more detailed and in-depth questionnaires, based on academic research, and starting from the premise of assisting the development of theatre companies. Instead of simply asking the audience whether they liked the performances or not, Wong hopes to specifically explore their needs. For example, the questions may include: “What kind of stimuli do parents expect their children to get in theatre? How do these stimuli help children’s long-term development?”

The project is not yet underway and is still under discussion. Initially, the Department of Early Childhood Education will arrange for interns to observe open rehearsals and parent-child interaction in the open theatre in the Tai Po Arts Centre. The researchers will also observe the theatre performances and record the problems encountered in the process. With the participation of the university, Wong hopes to analyse the data and feedback in order to adjust their creative strategy.

#### **Conclusion**

In the short term, the theatres promoted by the government for children and youths have failed to materialise, and the “land issue” has yet to see the light of day. The performing arts groups should consider how to make the best use of the existing Venue Partnership Scheme and brand new arts spaces through practice and negotiation, experiment with performance spaces specifically designed for children and youth, and raise the awareness of existing performance venues to meet the special needs of children’s and youth theatre, so as to achieve the special quality of children’s

and youth theatre in terms of venue management and implementation. This is something that arts organisations should be thinking about, because they could then build on their achievements to further advocate for their sector.

Although arts groups have begun to realise the importance of data collation and analysis in recent years, the development of local arts data collation and documentation has been particularly slow, and there has never been a dedicated children's and youth theatre database. In this era of big data, arts groups and funding organisations need to catch up with the times, change their mindset, and understand their audiences, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses, in order to move forward on the road to long-term development.

(Translated by Amy Ng)

#### Miu Law

is a freelance art curator, theatre director, translator and writer. A graduate of the Department of Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Law has been actively involved in conducting feature interviews, translation and other editorial work. She has collaborated with organisations such as the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the Jockey Club New Arts Power, the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong), City Contemporary Dance Company, Hong Kong Dance Exchange (HDX), Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong, and On & On Theatre Workshop. Law is passionate about theatre making, and she co-founded HerStory Polygon with friends in 2011. HerStory Polygon is an experimental art and theatre group with an interest in society and gender, and which explores the aesthetics of theatre.