

Talents from Hong Kong help ring in Year of the Pig at spring receptions (with photos)

Boonfaysau, an award-winning group of young a cappella singers from Hong Kong, was invited by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, San Francisco (HKETO SF) to perform at its spring receptions in five cities across three western states in the United States to celebrate the Year of the Pig.

The series of receptions began on February 4 in San Francisco, where about 300 guests enjoyed the flash mob and stage performances by this eight-member group. The choice of medleys, which included popular hits in the US and Hong Kong, fully displayed the East meets West culture of Hong Kong.

In welcoming the guests from various cities' political, business, art and culture communities, the Director of HKETO SF, Mr Ivanhoe Chang, said that the office was glad to invite talents again from Hong Kong to the US.

"Last year, we had an amazing rope skipping team that wowed our audience with their unique techniques. For a change of scene, we have this wonderful a cappella group, Boonfaysau, performing at our spring receptions this year. Since its inception in 2017, the group has won several competitions in Hong Kong and abroad. We are as excited as they are in showcasing our young, home-grown talents.

"Hong Kong has a vibrant art and cultural scene, and the city is completing one of the world's biggest cultural projects. The West Kowloon Cultural District is rising by the waterfront of Hong Kong. The Cultural District's dedicated Chinese opera house, the Xiqu Centre, just opened in January. The Art Park and the Freespace outdoor performance venue will be opening soon," Mr Chang said.

Mr Chang also took the opportunity to update the guests on Hong Kong's recent developments as an innovation and technology hub. He said that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has allocated about US\$10 billion for innovation and technology initiatives and encouraged US companies to explore opportunities and partnerships with Hong Kong.

He made special mentions about the new infrastructure including the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, opened in September and October 2018 respectively. Hong Kong is now well connected to other parts of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a regional development of national strategic importance with a population of some 70 million and a gross domestic product of US\$1.5 trillion.

Also speaking at the receptions in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle was the Hong Kong Commissioner for Economic and Trade Affairs, USA,

Mr Eddie Mak. He said that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the country's Belt and Road Initiative offer enormous trade, investment and commercial potential.

He pointed out that Hong Kong remains a free trade practitioner and a supporter of the multilateral trading system. "Thanks to our economic resilience and embrace of free market principles, Hong Kong has been ranked the world's freest economy for 25 consecutive years by the Heritage Foundation.

"Our economy grew 3.7 per cent in the first three quarters of 2018. Economic growth for 2018 as a whole is forecast at 3.2 per cent," he said.

Hong Kong is always open to investors and businesses from the US. "Hong Kong has long enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership with the US, Hong Kong's second largest trading partner.

"Wherever I go in the US, I am keen to emphasise that the US enjoys a US\$34.5 billion goods and services trade surplus with Hong Kong. This is testimony to the mutual benefit of having a stable and seamless relationship between our economies," he continued.

He added that in addition to the commercial relationship, Hong Kong values its partnership with the US in areas such as counter-terrorism, maintaining strict export controls and combating money-laundering and drug-trafficking.

HKETO SF concluded the Chinese New Year celebrations in Dallas on February 12. Other than San Francisco, other spring receptions were held in Los Angeles on February 6, Seattle on February 7 and Houston on February 11.





