



# MEDIA 新聞稿 RELEASE

1 Gloucester Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong. Tel: 2584 8500 Fax: 2584 8739  
Press Enquiries: Wendy Chung, Catherine Lo Date of Release: 19 April 2006

---

## DAIRY FARM AND THE HKAPA RESTORED POKFULAM COWSHEDS AS WELLCOME THEATRE

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts has received a HK\$2.2 million sponsorship from the Dairy Farm Group to restore two historic cowsheds into a 150-seat theatre, now known as the Wellcome Theatre. The naming ceremony was held on 19 April 2006. Located in Pokfulam, the two octagonal cowsheds were part of Dairy Farm's original farm built in the late 19th century. After serving the community for almost 100 years, most of the cowsheds were torn down with only two remaining. (Please refer to the attachment for the history of the cowsheds and Dairy Farm.)

The company's history has been intertwined with the region's social history as it emerged from poverty to affluence. The story of Dairy Farm dates back to 1886, when a distinguished Scottish doctor, Sir Patrick Manson, persuaded five businessmen to embark on a venture to improve the health of the Hong Kong community by breeding imported cattle locally, to ensure a daily supply of disease-free fresh milk at an affordable price. Today, Dairy Farm has become one of Asia's largest food retailers and is the parent company of Wellcome. The Wellcome Theatre project is a major community initiative by the Dairy Farm Group to mark its 120th anniversary. Mr Gordon Manson-Bahr, great grandson of the company's founder attended the ceremony.

Officiating guests at the Wellcome Theatre naming ceremony included Mr Ronald J Floto, Group Chief Executive of the Dairy Farm Group, Mr Anthony Nightingale, Managing Director of the Jardine Matheson Group, Mr Gordon Manson-Bahr, Professor Leung Nai-kong, Chairman of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Professor Anna Pao Sohmen, Chairman of the Academy's Bethanie Advisory Group and Ms Esther Leung, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs. At the ceremony, Mr Floto remarked that 'Dairy Farm has transformed from dairymen to retailers and we have expanded far and wide from our beginnings on this spot. It is entirely appropriate that we commemorate our anniversary with a token of gratitude to the wonderful people of Hong Kong'. Professor Leung, a doctor himself, was grateful for the sponsorship from Dairy Farm, a company with long-history in serving the community. He also noted that 'the new facilities would not only enable Academy students to have more opportunities to perform, but also provide a new performance venue for the Southern District'. With the Wellcome Theatre, the Academy will participate in the 2006 Southern District Arts Festival to be held later this year.

Programmes at the ceremony included a performance by Academy Music students in *Dairy farm with Composers*, a specially commissioned composition by Academy student Galison Lau. A video about the history of Dairy Farm and the Wellcome Theatre was also shown to the audience. Video producer Amy Shuen, also an Academy alumni, spent over 6 months in research. 'It never occurred to me that milk was so precious in those days, and its history is just fascinating!' said Amy. Her video will be shown regularly to visitors at the Wellcome Theatre.

The restoration project started in 2000, when the Government's Architectural Services Department commissioned a feasibility study to investigate the renovation and potential adaptive uses of Bethanie, a former sanatorium built by the Missions Etrangères de Paris in 1875 and a close neighbour of the cowsheds. In 2003, the Legislative Council approved capital works funds for the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts to restore the cowsheds and Bethanie, as its second campus. The Bethanie project will be completed in fall 2006.

One of the two octagonal cowsheds has become a 150-seat, fully-equipped multipurpose theatre; the other provides foyer, reception and exhibition space. When restoration is complete, Bethanie will house training facilities for the Academy School of Film and Television, as well as serving the local community and overseas visitors with a museum dedicated to Bethanie and its founders, a chapel, two performance spaces and public gardens.

(For immediate release. Information is also listed in the 'News' section at Academy website [www.hkapa.edu](http://www.hkapa.edu) and Dairy Farm website [www.dairyfarmgroup.com](http://www.dairyfarmgroup.com))



Guests of honour of the Naming Ceremony from left to right, Mr Anthony Nightingale, Professor Anna Pao Sohmen, Mr Gordon Manson-Bahr, Mr Ronald J Floto, Ms Esther Leung, Professor Leung Nai-kong



Cowshed before restoration

More photos can be downloaded at

<http://www.hkapa.edu/public/WellcomeTheatrePhotos.zip>

<http://www.hkapa.edu/public/WellcomeMorePhotos.zip>

(For immediate release. Information is also listed in the section at Academy website [www.hkapa.edu](http://www.hkapa.edu) and Dairy Farm website [www.dairyfarmgroup.com](http://www.dairyfarmgroup.com))