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# Speaking for itself

Many words of knowledge and wisdom were spoken at the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum that took place last month in Hong Kong to foster regional cultural co-operation, share good practices and promote arts and culture. But in attending one of its open forums on the all-important subject of arts sponsorship, I found my mind wandering off to a show I saw more than a month ago at Sheung Wan Civic Centre.

That night 10 soloists, who may be lawyers or secretaries by day and opera singers by night, performed at a concert put together by Opera Hong Kong, a non-

opera, it was full of inherently theatrical moments. The performers stepped out of their written roles and enjoyed their own performances as opera aficionados, not just executants, breathing new life into the potentially yawn-inducing ritual of seeing a not exactly virtuoso reprising an ultra-familiar work.

A concert like this generates a different atmosphere, and satisfies a different kind of yearning. You are happy for the performers and for yourself. They are there when art happens, and so are you. The best argument for art is art. You can rise to the highest level of eloquence, but your eloquence will fall on deaf ears unless

每一個人的靈魂至少要有一道裂痕，好讓藝術的亮光可以穿進來

profit organization established in 2003 to promote appreciation of the art form and local musical talent, through concerts and educational programs. The performers are amateurs in the best sense of the word - they sing not to make a living, but for the love of it. That's why their performance had an impulsive edge.

Making mischief with the pianists, improvising on the spot, adding ornaments, smiling at the audience and taking other opportunities for creativity in performance, the singers were subtly but heroically trying to cast off the rigid habits they had been trained to adopt through an extended rehearsal process, and return to spontaneity and idiosyncrasy.

It's hard to tell how many of these opera lovers will one day mature into distinctive artists. But every one of them apparently found their fulfilling moments on stage that night. That was exactly what made the show so memorable. While the performance might not have brought the audience much deeper into the art of

the people you're trying to convince have somehow experienced art and its healing, transformative power.

The Canadian singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen is right about many things, and never more so than when he sings that *There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in*. There is a crack in our souls. That's how the light of art gets in.

Perry Lam, Editorial Director