

Retired Teachers Sponsor Kids to See Shen Yun

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Yousef who has been learning violin through DAREarts came with his parents and siblings. (Courtesy NTDTV)



TORONTO—This Thanksgiving, retired teachers offered the gift of art to students in Toronto by giving them the chance to see Shen Yun Performing Arts at the Canon Theatre.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for the children to be here to see such a wonderful performance. We’re just pleased to be a part of it,” said Simon Leibovitz, director of administrative and member services for The Retired Teachers of Ontario, an organization of over 63,000 members.

With its mission to “breathe new life into traditional Chinese culture” and provide audience members with an experience of beauty and goodness, Shen Yun exposed the students to the richness of China’s 5000-year-old civilization and its virtues of courage, loyalty, integrity, and tolerance.

The kids, some of whom came accompanied by their parents or siblings, are all part of DAREarts, a Canadian organization that fosters arts education in at-risk students and dares them to pursue excellence through the values of Discipline, Action, and Responsibility in Education.

‘It’s brilliant. Beautiful,” Cassandra said of Shen Yun. She has been involved in the DAREarts program, learning about the different aspect of art and participating in DAREarts’ annual performances of song and dance.

By encouraging their members to see Shen Yun, the Retired Teachers of Ontario also wanted to help these kids who might not have otherwise had the opportunity to see it. For every ticket bought by a retired teacher, their family and friends, a portion went to sponsor a child and their family.

Cassandra, who learned to appreciate dance through DAREarts, particularly appreciated Shen Yun’s performances of classical Chinese dance. “I liked how [well] choreographed it was and how you wouldn’t think that people could make such beautiful things through dance,” she noted.



Simon Leibovitz, an avid theatre goer and Harold Brathwaite, the executive director for the Retired Teachers of Ontario (Courtesy NTDV)

Simon Leibovitz, an avid theatre goer who has personally directed and performed in several plays expressed his admiration for Shen Yun.

“Oh, it’s amazing,” he exclaimed. “The grace with which they move, just magnificent. ‘Wow’ is the best way to describe it.”

Through story-based dances, ethnic dances, and flower and court dances, Shen Yun’s performers presented a taste of the richness of China’s culture. Shen Yun also features a wide range of artistic forms, including soaring performances by world renowned vocalists, colourful costumes, a state-of-the-art digital backdrop and a live orchestra that combines Eastern and Western instruments.

Harold Brathwaite, the executive director for the Retired Teachers of Ontario also had high praise for Shen Yun. “It’s outstanding. Very athletic and yet very serene and very optimistic,” he said. Brathwaite is a former director of the Peel District School Board and

has been honoured with the Order of Ontario. He is also on the board of directors of the Nelson Mandela Children's fund.



Cassandra, who learned to appreciate dance through DAREarts and Cailie, a DAREarts student. (Courtesy NTDTV)

When asked what she enjoyed most, Cailie, a DAREarts student didn't hesitate. "Really, everything. Everything so far has been so awesome. It's all my favourite," she said.

Yousef who has been learning violin through DAREarts came with his parents and siblings. He agreed with Callie. "I liked it all," he said. His mother also nodded, "Everything was wonderful."

The kids and their parents expressed their thanks to the retired teachers for their support. "We appreciate that. The kids really look forward to see these kinds of shows and they really like and enjoy these kinds of shows," said Yousef's father.

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