

Meet in Beijing Arts Festival grand opening unifies China and Canada talent

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Buzz Brass Quintet performs The Planets with pipe organ artist at the opening concert of Meet in Beijing Arts Festival on April 25, 2016.

The grand opening for the 16th Meet in Beijing Arts Festival took place at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) on April 25, 2016 with a Spring in China and Canada themed concert.

Chinese cultural Vice Minister Ding Wei, and former Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps, attended the concert.

Ding addressed the audience before the concert saying, "Since its inauguration in 2000, Meet in Beijing has developed into a comprehensive international arts festival. After 15 successive sessions, it has presented diverse and fabulous cultures and arts through performances by more than 30,000 artists and 1,000 art troupes from 115 countries and regions to the Beijing audience."

Mark Rowswell, a well-known Canadian scholar and TV host, who is better known as Dashan among Chinese audiences, hosted the concert. Rowswell is widely known for his mastery in spoken Chinese and performing "xiangsheng" - a traditional Chinese folk art.

Canada is the guest country of honor at this year's festival. Five Canadian art groups were invited to participate in the concert: the Ottawa Bach Choir, the Ensemble Caprice Baroque Orchestra, the Goh Ballet Academy, the Buzz Quintet, and soprano Katherine Whyte.

Under the baton of Chinese conductor Zhang Guoyong, the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra performs Antiphonal of Flowers at the opening concert of Meet in Beijing Arts Festival on April 25, 2016.

Under the baton of Chinese conductor Zhang Guoyong, the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra opened the night by performing Chinese composer Bao Yuankai's Antiphonal of Flowers, adapted from Chinese folk songs.

Zhang Guoyong, who was also the artistic director of the concert, said that the concert was a combination of artistry and entertainment.

"We especially paid attention to two aspects. One is to rich the form. We have symphony, soloists, chorus, brass quintet, pipe organ, and a dance routine all in one performance. The other is to rich the content. The scores to play are composed by artists of both countries, and have a large time span, from classical compositions of Bach period to newly created pieces," said Zhang.

The orchestra worked with Canadian artists to perform Ode to the Yellow River and Red River Valley. The Canadian folk song Red River Valley is well known in China because of Canadian thoracic surgeon Norman Bethune, who saved the lives of many Chinese people in the 1930s.

Mark Rowswell, a well-known Canadian scholar and TV host, who is better known as Dashan among Chinese audiences, delivers a recitation for the Ode to the Yellow River at the opening concert of Meet in Beijing Arts Festival on April 25, 2016.

Canadian soprano Katherine Whyte joined in the show, performing excerpts from the Romeo and Juliet opera and the Candide musical. She surprised the audience with three traditional Chinese songs: White Hair Girl, I Love You, China and Jasmine Flower.

Meet in Beijing Arts Festival is a large-scale international festival hosted by China's Ministry of Culture, the Beijing Municipality Government and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television. The Festival is held annually from late April to the end of May.

In its 16th year, the festival brings together nearly 400 Chinese artists and more than 400 International artists from 25 countries, including the United Kingdom, Spain and France.



Artists from the Goh Ballet Academy dance a modern ballet at the opening concert of Meet in Beijing Arts Festival on April 25, 2016. The dance is specially created for the festival.