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Artist for Peace



[caption id="attachment_10347" align="alignright" width="405" caption="Zhang Jun (R) and Shen Yili (L) perform Kunqu opera"][/caption]

Chinese opera performer Zhang Jun has been selected as the UNESCO Artist for Peace for a period of two years for his "long-term commitment to promoting" Chinese Kunqu Opera, the Paris-based UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization announced.

[UNESCO](#) Director-General Irina Bokova will designate Zhang during an official ceremony at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on May 26, the organization said in a statement.

Born in Shanghai, in 1974, Zhang is a leading promoter of Kunqu, one of the oldest forms of Chinese opera, inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

While pursuing his stage career, Zhang Jun has promoted programs such as the Hope Project to build schools and improve education in China's poorest areas. He has also supported numerous cultural initiatives in Shanghai.

After receiving the laureate, Zhang Jun will help raise national and international awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding, including Kunqu Opera, the statement added.

Kunqu was developed under the Ming dynasty (14th-17th centuries) in the city of Kunshan in east China and is characterized by the combination of song, recital and complex choreographic techniques, which include acrobatic and symbolic gestures. This genre, having inspired a revival of Chinese theatre in the Ming era, risked disappearance from the stage in the 20th century.


The Artist for Peace is appointed by UNESCO every two years to drive public awareness regarding key development issues. Chinese actress Kong Li won the honor in 2000 and the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe in 2006.

Source: [Xinhua](#)

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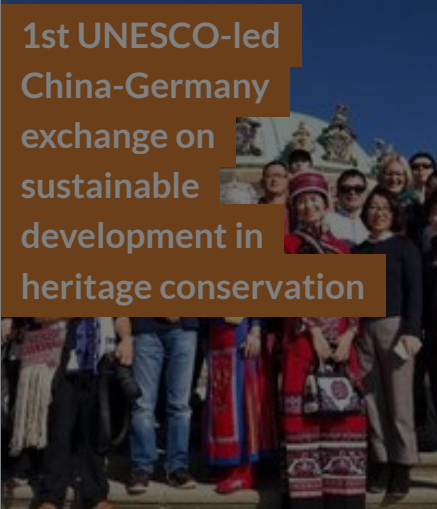
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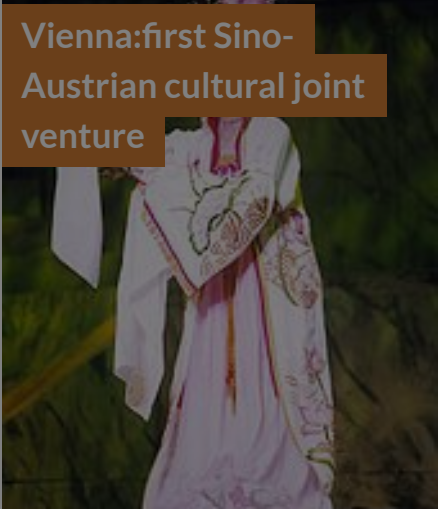
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