

# Art fest preparations on schedule, in full swing

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The 10th China Art Festival organizing committee announced recently that preparations have gone smoothly for the upcoming national art gala, which is scheduled to kick off in October in Shandong province.

"Preparations involving the collection and creation of art work, performance rehearsals — including rehearsals for the opening and closing ceremonies — as well as venue construction are all well under way," said Xu Xianghong, head of the Shandong Department of Culture and deputy secretary-general of the festival's organizing committee.

"We are confident we can host a successful event that will

further promote the development of grassroots culture and enhance the influence of Chinese arts in the international community," said Xu.

As one of the nation's top art galas, the event is sponsored by the Ministry of Culture.

It has been held every two or three years since 1987. Late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping wrote an inscription for the title of the event.

This year's festival will feature more than 20 kinds of events, including a national competition for more than 80 newly created plays, showings of excellent dramas from overseas and exhibitions of China's intangible cultural heritage items.

There will also be professional contests for various types of art forms, including Chinese opera, singing, dance,

acrobatics, painting, calligraphy, and *quyi* — a folk art that combines singing and storytelling.

"Most of these performances and competitions will be staged in all the 17 cities of the province to enable as many people as possible to enjoy and benefit from the event," said Xu, who stressed that the event would be a gala "by the people, for the people and of the people".

To fulfill this goal, so far this year more than 10,000 art performances and 52,000 cultural activities have been held in schools, villages, residential communities as well as public squares in urban and rural areas across the province.

A total of 280 million yuan (\$45.7 million) has been allocated by the provincial government to support the creation



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**Grassroots art forms like local operas will be a major part of the 10th China Art Festival.**

of art during the past three years. The move has helped the province create more than 1,100 grassroots cultural projects and 62 excellent musicals, dramas as well as other plays.

Among them, 39 have been

selected to be shown and compete for top prizes at the upcoming art festival, which places Shandong the first among all the participating provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The province also plans to pour as much as 9.8 billion yuan this year into the construction of new culture and art facilities.

Chen Zhong, deputy chief of the venue construction department for the festival, said construction of all the 13 new venues for the festival is now nearing completion and they can be operational by next month.

One of the projects is the 5.65-billion-yuan Shandong Culture and Art Center, the festival's main venue.

Located in the provincial capital Jinan and covering an area of 32 hectares, the complex features a theater, a gallery, a museum, a cinema, shopping malls, as well as facilities for the creative industry.

Chen said the provincial and local governments will organize regular art activities at these venues and keep most of them open to the public for free after the festival.

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**A theater group from Brigham Young University stages their show the *Music of Life* in Jinan on May 7.**

## Foreign performers touring Shandong

By ZHAO RUIXUE  
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To warm up for the upcoming China Arts Festival, more than 50 performances presented by foreign art groups have been staged or scheduled in cities across Shandong, said a senior official from Shandong Department of Culture.

Li Guolin, deputy chief of the department, said that these shows feature performers from such countries as Russia, Spain, France, the US, Canada and India.

To give more people the chance to enjoy these exotic performances at home, a special fund has been allocated by the provincial government as a subsidy to help people afford tickets, Li said.

The organizing committee for the 10th Arts Festival will spend 10,000 yuan to 50,000 buying some tickets to each performance. These tickets will be distributed for free to people like migrant workers and those with physical disabilities.

Among the performances is *The Music of Life* by a singing and dancing troupe from Brigham Young University in the US, which was staged on May 7 in Jinan, the capital

city of Shandong.

Featuring scenes from life's most significant moments to the accompaniment of some classics by well-known composers like George and Ira Gershwin, the show was well received by Shandong residents.

"It's cool to see such a great musical performance at such a close distance with the foreign performers," said Zhang Qingmiao, a third-year student from the Shandong University of Arts.

Other performances to be staged include *Mamma Mia*, symphonies from Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, the classical Spanish flamenco *Carmen*, Russian classical ballets, Spectrum-Yannick Rieu Jazz Quartet from Quebec, Indian dances and Yu Opera from Taiwan.

In addition to Georg Bizet's *Carmen Suite*, Claude Debussy's *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune*, Maurice Ravel's *Bolero* and Camille Saint-Saens' piano concerto, the renowned Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire from France will also play classical Chinese music.

These performances will be staged from August to October in several cities throughout Shandong.



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**After hosting this year's art gala, the Shandong Culture and Art Center in Jinan will be a venue for regular art activities.**