

Around Town: Chinese embassy opens doors to Friends of NACO and music education



CAROLINE PHILLIPS

[More from Caroline Phillips](#)

Published on: September 9, 2015 | Last Updated: September 9, 2015 4:02 PM EDT



Ottawa-born cellist Bryan Cheng showed off his considerable talent (and flashy socks) at the Embassy Chamber Music Concert in support of Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, hosted by the Chinese embassy on Tuesday, September 8, 2015. *CAROLINE*

PHILLIPS / OTTAWA CITIZEN

After so many years of walking past the Chinese embassy, National Arts Centre Orchestra principal clarinetist **Kimball Sykes** finally got to see what the Lowertown building looks like on the inside. He was not alone.

The invitation came as a real treat, much like Sykes' performance there on Tuesday night with 18-year-old cellist **Bryan Cheng** and his pianist sister, **Silvie Cheng**, 24. They played in a hall adorned with red Chinese lanterns and fancy chandeliers to a sold-out crowd of nearly 200 in support of music education for young people.

Hosting the event was Chinese Ambassador **Luo Zhaohui** and his wife, **Jiang Yili**. The ambassador sat in the front row alongside the likes of Chief Justice **Beverley McLachlin**, **Susan Gregson**, assistant deputy minister of Asia Pacific with the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Friends of the NAC Orchestra board president **Robert Lafleur**.

Lafleur told the room how "super, super excited" Friends of the NAC Orchestra was when it first learned the Chinese embassy had agreed to host the \$100- to \$125-a-ticket benefit concert, which included a cocktail reception and buffet dinner.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties between our two countries and the second anniversary of the NAC Orchestra's ambitious tour of China. "More important for ... Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra is, I think, the fact that China dedicates massive energies to the music education of young people," added Lafleur. "That is also the mission of Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra."

The Cheng siblings, who are from Ottawa and of Chinese heritage, were their usual charming selves during and after the concert. The talented pair took a moment to personally thank the Friends of the NAC Orchestra for its support over the years.

Silvie is now performing and teaching in New York, where she recently finished her master's degree in piano performance at the Manhattan School of Music, while her bro, a recent graduate of Lisgar Collegiate Institute, is heading off to the Berlin University of the Arts to study cello. Let's hope he left room in his suitcase for all his snazzy socks, particularly the pair he donned last night.

Carolyn001@sympatico.ca