

The Silent Dancers of China

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They move gracefully and with perfect coordination to the beat of the music, yet none of these dancers can hear the music, nor sing to it. Meet the deaf-mute dance unit of *My Dream* - China's Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe.

Founded in 1987, this troupe of 100 Chinese nationals with various disabilities, has performed in more than 40 countries and has raised awareness, as well as, over \$7,000,000mm U.S. dollars for charities benefiting people with disabilities.

Since the dancers cannot hear the music, they learn the beat by turning up the volume of the stereo speakers and *feeling* the vibrations. With continuous practice, they memorize the steps and sequences thoroughly. On stage, they are guided with hand gestures by two coaches, situated on either side of the podium.

Not all the members of this troupe are deaf and mute. Some are blind and others like Luo Xiangjun, who performs gravity-defying acrobatics, has no arms. Luo lost both his arms, after he touched a high-voltage cable while playing, when he was just seven-years old.



The troupe, which wowed the world at the Beijing's Paralympics in the summer of 2008, recently performed to rave reviews at Tel Aviv's Opera house in Israel. The show was part of a week-long festival entitled *'Experience China in Israel'*, and involved the performance of 21 hearing-impaired dancers who amongst other things, performed a Chinese version of *'Romeo and Juliet'*, as well as, their special signature dance - The *'Thousand-Hand Bodhisattva'* (*'Buddha with a Thousand Hands'*).

