

Hepatic Haven 13

Shen Yun at 20



Original AI illustration inspired by classical Chinese dance. Not an actual Shen Yun performance.

ISSUE 13 - AUTUMN 2026

Artistry, faith, performer health and the questions behind the stage

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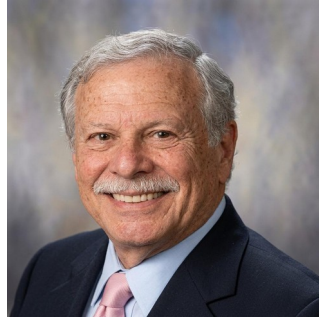
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A note from Dr Baruch

Why a transplant newsletter is looking at a dance company



Michael I. Baruch, MD, FACS • Supplied age-progressed portrait

Dear Friends,

Most of you know me as a surgeon and, since February 2021, as a liver transplant recipient. Hepatic Haven began as my effort to share what I learned on both sides of the operating table. So you may wonder why this issue is about a dance company.

The answer is that Shen Yun touches subjects this newsletter cares about: young bodies under heavy physical strain, the relationship between faith and medicine, and the responsibility of institutions entrusted with vulnerable people. Its connection to Falun Gong also brings the discussion close to our own concerns about ethical organ donation.

The beauty of a performance can move us. It should also make us interested in the people whose work makes it possible. Former performers have raised serious concerns; the company and other performers dispute those accounts. Readers deserve to hear the concerns and the responses without treating either as a substitute for evidence.

I spent my career teaching residents to look at the whole patient and to weigh evidence before acting. That is the approach I bring here. I have not examined these performers or reviewed their private medical records. My medical commentary explains general principles, not diagnoses of individuals.

My hope is that these pages help us appreciate artistic achievement while keeping health, consent and accountability in view. Every young performer deserves timely care and the freedom to describe pain without fear.

With warm regards,

Michael I. Baruch, MD, FACS

The performance and its mission

A visual language of movement and storytelling



Imagined classical Chinese dance ensemble • Original AI illustration

Shen Yun is a New York-based dance and music organization founded in 2006. It presents classical Chinese dance, stories, folk and ethnic traditions, and spiritual themes. Its stated purpose is to revive traditional Chinese culture. Its association with Falun Gong and its depictions of persecution are part of the context an audience should understand before attending. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

Classical Chinese dance combines expressive bearing with demanding physical technique. A gesture can suggest dignity, grief or humor; a leap changes the scale of the story. Watching only the tumbling misses the quiet work of posture, timing and expression that gives the movement meaning.

The production brings dancers together with a live orchestra, elaborate costumes and animated scenery. The company describes its orchestra as a permanent combination of Chinese and Western instruments. These elements allow a short scene to move rapidly between intimate human drama and a much larger imagined world. [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

For its completed 2026 anniversary season, Shen Yun reported eight touring companies, 165 cities, 20 countries and more than 700 performances. These are company-reported figures, not an independent attendance audit. [\[1\]](#)

An audience can respond to the artistry and still examine how a company educates, employs and cares for its performers. Those are compatible forms of attention.

Erhu pipa and dizi

Three different instruments and three ways of producing sound



Left to right: erhu, pipa and dizi • Original AI illustration, not a technical construction diagram

The erhu is a bowed instrument with two strings. Its long, slender neck and small resonating body produce a sound often described as expressive and voice-like. It is one of the Chinese instruments identified in Shen Yun's orchestra. [\[3\]](#)

The pipa is a plucked lute, not a flute. Its pear-shaped body, fretted neck and four strings distinguish it from the erhu. Plucking allows rapid articulation as well as sustained tremolo textures. Shen Yun identifies the pipa as another component of its combination of Chinese and Western instruments. [\[3\]](#)

The dizi is a Chinese transverse flute, usually made of bamboo. The Metropolitan Museum of Art describes an additional membrane-covered hole that contributes a characteristic buzzing quality. It is included here to clarify the flute reference; this illustration is not a claim that it is part of every Shen Yun orchestra or program. [\[4\]](#)

When listening, notice how a bowed line differs from a plucked attack and from a breath-driven phrase. A Western orchestral setting can surround these sounds without making their distinct identities disappear. The pleasure is in hearing both the individual voice and its place in the ensemble.

Scenery and costumes

Imagining a world beyond the stage



Original AI interpretations of Chinese theatrical scenery and costumes. These are not reproductions of Shen Yun designs.

Shen Yun uses animated backdrops and a large costume collection to support changes of story, setting and character. The company describes these as signature features of its production. [\[2\]](#)

Color, fabric and silhouette help an audience read movement from a distance. Long sleeves extend a gesture; layered skirts emphasize a turn. A mountain or palace backdrop can suggest an entire world before a dancer takes a step. The illustrations here celebrate that visual vocabulary without claiming to document a particular production.

Dragon Springs

A Tang Dynasty World Hidden in the Hills of Orange County, New York

By Michael I. Baruch, MD, FACS • Personal tour account, edited for this issue

This fall I took a guided tour of Dragon Springs. Fall in the Hudson Valley is reason enough for a drive. The road to Deerpark, in the western corner of Orange County, winds through hills covered in red, orange, and gold. Then the trees open onto a quiet lake. Above it, rising from the forest, is a sight few people expect to find in upstate New York: golden roofs, sweeping eaves, and a five-tiered pagoda in the style of China's Tang Dynasty.

This is Dragon Springs.

What it is

Dragon Springs describes itself as a private campus of roughly 400 acres. It is an important center for Falun Gong, also called Falun Dafa, and the home of Shen Yun and the Fei Tian arts schools. Falun Gong combines meditation and qigong exercises with moral and spiritual teachings. It draws on Buddhist-school and Taoist concepts while constituting a distinct practice. [\[16\]](#)

Shen Yun was founded in 2006 and presents classical Chinese dance and music, with a stated mission of reviving traditional Chinese culture. Its familiar theme, "China before communism," asks audiences to distinguish a civilization from the political system that governs it today. The company's history and mission are discussed earlier in this issue.

Architecture built the old way

The temple halls and pagoda evoke the Tang Dynasty, which ruled from 618 to 907 CE. The campus describes its timber structures as following traditional Tang methods. A published profile of builder Lai Hanchang explains interlocking mortise-and-tenon joinery and the layered wooden brackets known as dougong. These are modern buildings inspired by old techniques, not surviving Tang-era monuments. [\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#)

Walking through Chinese symbolism

Dragon Springs • Details remembered from the tour

Walking the grounds feels like walking through a book of Chinese symbolism. The following descriptions preserve the features and traditional associations in my tour account. Meanings can vary by period, region and religious setting; they are not a universal code for every Chinese building.

Bamboo gardens and nine carved dragons

Bamboo bends without breaking, making it a familiar image of integrity and resilience. Nine carved marble dragons recall imperial imagery: nine was associated with the emperor, and the dragon with sovereign power. Nine-dragon motifs also appear in historic palace decoration.

Marble lotuses and the ancient wàn symbol

The lotus rises clean from muddy water and, in Buddhist tradition, evokes purity. The 卐 symbol, read wàn in Chinese and associated with “ten thousand” and auspicious abundance, also appears in the Falun Gong emblem. Its sacred use in Asian traditions long predates the Nazis’ appropriation of a related form. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum explains both the ancient history and the later Nazi association. Context matters when interpreting or displaying it. [\[27\]](#)

Male and female guardian lions

Often called “foo dogs” in English, these guardians are lions. In a common paired arrangement, the male rests a paw on a ball, often interpreted as the world or authority, while the female shelters a cub, associated with nurture and continuity. Together they guard an entrance.

Carved marble deer

The Chinese word for deer, lù, sounds like a word associated with official salary or emolument. Deer can therefore convey prosperity, and they also appear in imagery of longevity and good fortune.

Round and square doorways

In classical Chinese cosmological imagery, the circle is associated with heaven and the square with earth. Passing through these forms offers a small lesson in how architecture can express a worldview.

A school, a sanctuary, a community

Dragon Springs • Education, persecution and public scrutiny

Learning alongside the arts

Dragon Springs hosts Fei Tian Academy of the Arts and Fei Tian College. The academy lists English, mathematics, science, history and other subjects alongside arts training. The college's catalog combines specialist study with general education in the humanities, quantitative and scientific reasoning, and other fields. Programs and campus offerings should be checked directly with the schools. [\[16\]](#) [\[18\]](#) [\[19\]](#)

Why it exists here

Falun Gong grew rapidly in China in the 1990s. The Chinese government began its suppression in 1999, and U.S. religious-freedom reporting continues to describe severe abuses against practitioners. The persecution concerns people who practice Falun Gong; Shen Yun is a performing company associated with that community. For many practitioners, preserving culture abroad is inseparable from seeking religious freedom. [\[20\]](#)

Worth knowing

The campus has also faced construction and environmental disputes. In September 2025, the Second Circuit vacated a dismissal of a Clean Water Act case and returned it for further proceedings, finding the presuit notice sufficient. That procedural decision did not establish that pollution occurred. A supporter website disputes the criticism, but its account of a dismissal should be read alongside the later appellate opinion. [\[21\]](#) [\[22\]](#)

Former performers have separately brought civil claims against Shen Yun and related defendants. The company disputes the allegations. The August 18, 2026 order discussed later in this issue allowed substantial claims to proceed; it was not a trial finding of abuse or trafficking. [\[8\]](#)

Dragon Springs is generally not open for unrestricted public visits; my visit was an arranged guided tour. Access should be confirmed with the organizers. [\[22\]](#)

Whatever your view, Dragon Springs is a striking example of how a persecuted community carried its culture across an ocean and rebuilt it, beam by beam, in the hills of New York.

Accuracy note: "roughly 400 acres" follows the campus description. Pagoda height is omitted because published accounts differ. "Tang-style temple halls" avoids equating this Falun Gong setting with a conventional Buddhist monastery.

Guardians and purity

AI-generated artistic interpretations, not photographs or verified depictions of Dragon Springs.



Male and female guardian lions

The male rests a paw on a ball; the female shelters a cub. Often called foo dogs in English, these guardians are lions.



Lotus in marble and water

The lotus is associated with purity in Buddhist tradition. This illustration pairs a carved blossom with living flowers.

Architecture in the landscape

AI-generated artistic interpretations, not photographs or verified depictions of Dragon Springs.



Tang-style temple hall

Broad rooflines, timber columns and layered brackets evoke traditional Chinese temple architecture.



A five-tiered pagoda

Five distinct roof tiers rise above a lakeside garden. This is an imagined architectural view inspired by the tour account.

Gardens and carved stone

AI-generated artistic interpretations, not photographs or verified depictions of Dragon Springs.



Bamboo garden

Slender bamboo and a winding path illustrate the garden imagery described in the article.



Nine-dragon marble walkway

A conceptual marble relief walkway inspired by the nine carved dragons in the tour account; not a record of the campus layout.

Symbols and openings

AI-generated artistic interpretations, not photographs or verified depictions of Dragon Springs.



The Buddhist wan symbol

An ancient sacred motif in a Buddhist decorative setting. Its religious history long predates Nazi appropriation of a related form; see reference 27.



Round and square openings

A circular moon gate and a square opening illustrate the heaven-and-earth associations discussed in the article.

The craft beneath the roof

AI-generated artistic interpretations, not photographs or verified depictions of Dragon Springs.



Timber joinery and dougong brackets

An artistic study of layered wooden brackets and a mortise-and-tenon sample: a shaped projection fits a matching socket. This is not a measured construction drawing.

The tour article describes traditional interlocking wooden construction. The bracket assembly shown here illustrates the craft visually; the exact forms and structural details of individual campus buildings require architectural documentation.

Read more in the article on page 7 and references 16-17.

The CCP's political warfare

How influence abroad can advance authoritarian power

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks influence far beyond China's borders. In this discussion, political warfare means the coordinated use of political relationships, information, pressure and other nonmilitary tools to advance strategic objectives. It is an analytical description, not a criminal charge or a claim that every exchange with China is hostile.

What the evidence supports

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission describes united front work and external propaganda as methods for winning support, reducing opposition and shaping foreign perceptions and policy. Its analysis identifies risks to political institutions, information access and civil liberties. These are attributed conclusions from a congressional commission, not findings about every Chinese organization overseas. [\[23\]](#)

ODNI's March 2026 public assessment describes China's aim as strengthening its political, economic, military and technological power, increasing global influence, and protecting its interests. That formulation supports concern about a more Beijing-centered international environment. It does not establish a single operational plan to replace every foreign government with a communist party. [\[25\]](#)

What does "convert the world" mean?

The phrase captures a concern that foreign societies may be pushed toward the CCP's preferences: less criticism of its rule, acceptance of censorship, and greater tolerance of coercion. As an editorial interpretation, the danger is that democratic institutions could gradually accommodate authoritarian practices even while retaining their own flags, elections and constitutions.

Persuading an official to mute criticism, discouraging a venue from hosting dissidents, or making independent speech financially costly can change behavior without converting anyone to Marxism. The relevant questions are concrete: who directed the action, what leverage was used, whose rights were affected, and what evidence establishes responsibility?

The concern is the spread of coercive practices and political dependence. Claims about motive should remain as precise as the evidence.

How the pressure operates

Relationships, information control and transnational repression

Cultivating influence

United front work seeks to cultivate useful relationships and neutralize opposition. The USCC describes approaches involving influential figures and institutions across political, business, media and academic settings. The potential harm arises when concealed direction or coercion compromises independent decisions. An ordinary cultural event, business relationship or academic exchange does not by itself establish such conduct. [\[23\]](#)

Shaping what people see and say

The 2025 U.S. intelligence assessment describes efforts to suppress criticism of China and weaken confidence in U.S. leadership. It also reports that pro-China online actors used AI-generated presenters and false social-media identities to intensify divisions on domestic issues in 2024. These are intelligence assessments; they do not show that every divisive post originated in Beijing or that such operations determined an election result. [\[24\]](#)

Extending repression across borders

Freedom House's 2021 China case study documents a broad pattern of surveillance, intimidation, digital threats and pressure against diaspora and exile communities, including Falun Gong practitioners. It describes coercion directed at people outside China and sometimes at relatives or associates. These methods can make freedom abroad feel conditional on silence. The report is historical research, not a current count of incidents. [\[26\]](#)

A documented case involving Shen Yun

In 2024, John Chen and Lin Feng pleaded guilty in a PRC-directed scheme to undermine the tax-exempt status of the Shen Yun Performing Arts Center. The Justice Department reported that they paid bribes to a purported IRS official who was actually an undercover officer. Chen received a 20-month prison sentence; Feng received approximately 16 months, time served. This is a concrete criminal case, rather than a general allegation of hostile publicity. [\[14\]](#)

Its significance is specific: agents tried to turn an American administrative process against a U.S.-based organization. The case does not establish that every adverse article, local complaint or lawsuit involving Shen Yun was directed by the CCP.

Defending freedom and accountability

An editorial perspective for readers of Hepatic Haven

A democratic response should protect both the right to criticize the Chinese government and the right to scrutinize institutions associated with its critics. Neither religious freedom nor investigative journalism should depend on political convenience.

Do not confuse a people with a ruling party

The CCP is a political organization. China is a country and a civilization; Chinese people and overseas Chinese communities hold diverse views. People of Chinese ancestry can themselves be targets of intimidation. Assigning suspicion by ethnicity would harm the very freedoms that a response to foreign repression should defend.

Demand evidence of direction

Claims of a CCP connection should identify documents, payments, communications, admissions or credible official findings. A shared opinion, an unpopular viewpoint or a family connection is not enough. Allegations of state direction deserve investigation; they do not become established facts merely through repetition.

Keep separate investigations separate

The criminal interference case against Chen and Feng deserves attention. So do performers' allegations about their own treatment. Proof of one does not settle the other. A local environmental dispute must likewise be assessed through the relevant evidence and court record, rather than treated automatically as either persecution or proof of wrongdoing.

Protect the conditions for independent judgment

Practical safeguards include transparent funding, disclosure of relevant institutional relationships, editorial independence, protection for people reporting threats, and fair access to courts. Institutions should preserve records of intimidation and obtain appropriate legal or law-enforcement help when safety or unlawful conduct is at issue.

We can oppose authoritarian interference, defend a persecuted community and insist on institutional accountability at the same time.

Editorial analysis. No claim is made that the news organizations or civil plaintiffs discussed in this issue act for Beijing.

The New York Times investigation

How former performers described their treatment

On August 16, 2024, Nicole Hong and Michael Rothfeld reported allegations from former Shen Yun dancers, musicians and instructors. Their investigation described young performers working demanding schedules, experiencing public criticism and feeling pressure to continue despite injury. Some said seeking medical care could be interpreted as inadequate faith. Others described weight-related humiliation and fear about leaving. [\[5\]](#)

The article drew on 25 former performers and instructors, public records and other materials. It also acknowledged that some performers received treatment, including surgery, and that some former members valued their experiences. [\[5\]](#)

Shen Yun and Falun Gong representatives rejected the portrayal. They said injured performers received necessary treatment and characterized the criticism as distorted and damaging to a persecuted religious community. These denials belong alongside the allegations. [\[5\]](#)

The central health question is broader than whether any dancer ever saw a doctor. It is whether each performer could obtain appropriate care promptly, whether symptoms could be reported safely, and whether decisions about return to performance were made on clinical grounds.

A physician's published account, a former dancer's recollection and a company policy may each describe something important. They do not necessarily describe the same person, period or episode. Responsible evaluation requires attention to those differences.

The testimony of a former member should not be dismissed merely because that person left. Equally, a troubling account should not be generalized automatically to every performer. Where accounts conflict, contemporaneous records and independent review matter.

This newsletter does not turn a newspaper investigation into a medical finding or a verdict. It presents the reporting as reporting, identifies the response, and keeps the welfare of young people at the center.

CBS and NPR coverage

Watch and listen to the accounts directly

CBS Sunday Morning

Lisa Ling's CBS report juxtaposes former dancers' allegations with Shen Yun's responses and current performers' accounts. [\[6\]](#)

NPR All Things Considered

In Juliana Kim's May 13, 2025 report, Sun Zan and Cheng Qing Ling described joining as teenagers, isolation from family, fear and lasting physical and emotional harm. The report discussed their civil lawsuit and an allegation that forced stretching injured Sun's legs. [\[7\]](#)

Shen Yun told NPR that dancers have access to medical treatment, physical therapy and rehabilitation during rehearsals and tours. It also defended its educational provision and said that criticism occurred against a background of Chinese Communist Party harassment and disinformation. [\[7\]](#)

The interview gives listeners the former dancers' own descriptions of their experience. It is not an independent physical examination, and the company's response is not a court's factual determination. [\[7\]](#)

How to read across different formats

A short broadcast, a long investigation and a court pleading have different purposes. An interview lets a person tell a story; reporting tests and contextualizes it; a pleading presents a legal claim. A court order may resolve a procedural question without resolving the underlying facts.

Read the response next to the allegation. Notice the dates of the experiences being described. Ask whether a source is discussing a particular patient, an entire program, a written policy or its practical implementation. Those distinctions are especially important when the subject is medical access.

The source pages include direct links to the CBS report and the NPR interview and transcript, as well as the community-hosted medical interviews. Reading and listening across them gives a fuller basis for judgment than a headline alone.

Human trafficking allegations

Civil claims and the meaning of a preliminary ruling

In *Chang v. Shen Yun Performing Arts*, former performers brought civil claims under federal trafficking law and New York labor law. The alleged conduct includes forced labor, restrictions on leaving and retention of identity documents. The defendants contest the claims. [\[8\]](#)

On August 18, 2026, Judge Philip M. Halpern allowed substantial claims to proceed while dismissing some portions. Wang's specified state labor claims were dismissed, as were requests for certain prospective relief. The bank defendant's conspiracy claim was dismissed; a beneficiary-liability claim survived. [\[8\]](#)

The court considered whether well-pleaded allegations stated legally sufficient claims. It did not conduct a trial or establish that trafficking occurred. Its discussion also referenced the separate Sun litigation. A denial of dismissal is neither a conviction nor a final award of damages. [\[8\]](#)

The trafficking language here concerns alleged coercion in labor. It should not be conflated with an allegation of sex trafficking or with the separate subject of organ harvesting. [\[8\]](#)

Why terminology matters

An accusation of trafficking is serious. Describing it precisely protects both the people bringing the claim and those defending against it. This issue therefore uses phrases such as "the plaintiffs allege" and "the company denies," rather than presenting contested descriptions as settled events.

The medical and legal questions overlap, but they are not identical. Poor injury management would not, by itself, answer every element of a trafficking claim. Conversely, evidence of medical treatment for some performers would not resolve every allegation about documents, movement, compensation or coercion.

Readers following the litigation should return to the docket for later developments. The verified August order establishes a procedural milestone; it cannot predict the outcome of discovery, trial, settlement or appeal.

The medical response

Dr Damon Noto and Northern Medical Center

Dr. Damon Noto is identified in Shen Yun Voices materials as a physiatrist, a physician in physical medicine and rehabilitation. The September 4, 2024 episode presents him as a clinician treating athletes and Shen Yun dancers. The episode covers dance injuries, medical access, parental concerns and preparation for a long performing career. It is hosted by Shen Yun master of ceremonies Leeshai Lemish. [\[9\]](#)

Noto's public response challenges the suggestion that dancers generally go without treatment. His experience is relevant evidence about the patients he has treated; it is not, by itself, an independent audit of every performer's access to care over the company's history.

[\[9\]](#) [\[10\]](#)

A distinction between the two doctors

Dr. Jingduan Yang, rather than Dr. Noto, is identified as Northern Medical Center's CEO in the September 24, 2024 Shen Yun Voices episode. Yang discusses medical care for dancers and musicians and the place of meditation in their lives. Both interviews should be understood as community-hosted responses, with a clear connection to Shen Yun. [\[11\]](#)

The most useful next questions concern the system of care. Who can request an appointment? Is care available while touring? Can a performer seek a second opinion? Who decides when an injured dancer can safely return? What happens when a performer's account of pain conflicts with the demands of rehearsal?

A treating physician can explain examination findings and treatment for a consenting patient. A broader assessment requires evidence about access, referrals, follow-up and outcomes across the relevant time period. Patient confidentiality should remain protected throughout that process.

Faith can provide comfort and purpose. The clinical responsibility remains to evaluate symptoms, explain options and support informed decisions. For young performers, an environment in which asking for help is safe is as important as having a doctor's name on a policy.

Understanding REDs

Relative energy deficiency in sport applies to dancers too

Relative energy deficiency in sport, commonly written RED-S or REDs, describes harmful health and performance effects associated with insufficient energy availability. It can affect female and male athletes. The International Olympic Committee's 2023 consensus emphasizes clinical assessment and individualized risk evaluation. A dancer's appearance or weight alone cannot establish the diagnosis. [\[12\]](#)

The problem develops when energy remaining after exercise is inadequate for the body's other needs. In a growing performer, those needs include development as well as ordinary physiological function. Possible concerns include menstrual disruption, impaired bone health, fatigue, recurrent injury and psychological difficulties. These findings have other possible causes and require evaluation. [\[12\]](#)

Reports of weight pressure make RED-S an appropriate educational topic. They do not establish that any named performer has the condition, or that a particular institution caused it.

Weight is not a public performance score

A 2023 expert review warns against overemphasis on becoming lighter or leaner. It recommends multidisciplinary oversight and treating body-composition information as confidential medical information. No single body-composition cutoff identified superior performance across athletes. The practical lesson is to protect health rather than turn measurements into public judgments. [\[13\]](#)

Care and prevention

An evaluation should consider training load, nutrition, symptoms, injury history and psychological wellbeing. Treatment may require increased energy intake, changes to exercise and support from a physician, sports dietitian and mental health professional. Training and competition decisions should follow clinical risk assessment. [\[12\]](#)

For families, a written health policy is a useful beginning. Equally important is whether the young person can speak privately, report difficulties early and receive help without humiliation. Healthy development must remain the purpose of training, not a cost accepted in pursuit of it.

Faith persecution and transplant ethics

Keeping distinct questions in view

Shen Yun's association with Falun Gong is central to its mission and to the hostility it encounters from Beijing. For a transplant audience, that context also connects to allegations of forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience. These are separate issues from the labor allegations against the performing organization.

A documented example of interference

The U.S. Department of Justice reported that John Chen and Lin Feng pleaded guilty in a Chinese government-directed scheme involving bribery and an attempt to undermine the tax-exempt status of the Shen Yun Performing Arts Center. Chen received a 20-month sentence in November 2024; Feng had received a time-served sentence of approximately 16 months. This was a criminal case about interference against the organization, not a finding about how dancers were treated. [\[14\]](#)

The organ donation connection

In 2021, UN human-rights experts raised concerns about reports of forced organ harvesting targeting detained minorities, including Falun Gong practitioners. Their communication sought answers and scrutiny; it should not be described as a criminal judgment. China rejects allegations of forced organ harvesting. [\[15\]](#)

For Hepatic Haven, the ethical principle is straightforward: donation must rest on valid consent, and care must respect the dignity of every person involved. A recipient's gratitude for a second chance should strengthen, not weaken, concern about how an organ was obtained.

Evidence of repression deserves attention on its own merits. It does not automatically disprove a former performer's account. Likewise, allegations about an arts institution do not erase persecution experienced by people who share its faith. Each claim requires its own evidence.

The same discipline applies to images. The beautiful scenes in this issue are illustrations, not proof about either working conditions or persecution. Their role is to illuminate the arts discussion; the factual discussion rests on identified sources.

Care that earns trust

A reader guide and closing reflection

For families considering a residential arts or athletic program, the important questions are practical. Ask who provides medical care, how appointments are requested, and how care continues during travel. Clarify how parents are notified and what consent arrangements apply. Ask how a young person can speak privately with a clinician or an independent safeguarding contact.

Before enrollment, obtain written terms for education, hours, rest, compensation, scholarships and withdrawal. Understand how identity documents are stored and accessed, how family contact works, and how a student can leave. Reassurance is most useful when it is supported by procedures that can be explained and checked.

Nutrition should be addressed with qualified health professionals. A supportive program should be able to explain how it handles body-image concerns, injury rehabilitation and a return to training. A young person should never have to choose between belonging to a community and asking for medical help.

For clinicians, the task begins with listening. Consider the patient's own account, provide appropriate privacy and explain confidentiality and its limits. Evaluate symptoms on their merits. If abuse or neglect is suspected, follow the reporting requirements and safeguarding procedures applicable to your setting.

A closing reflection from Dr Baruch

When I was a patient waiting for a new liver, I learned how much depends on institutions we cannot see into. I trusted a transplant program, its surgeons and a system of organ donation built on consent and transparency. That trust was earned because the people involved accepted scrutiny.

Young performers also place enormous trust in institutions, often far from home. Whatever a court eventually finds, every performer deserves to be seen as a whole person, to have pain taken seriously and to receive appropriate care.

Art can be beautiful and still invite hard questions. Faith can be sincere and still be accountable. We can appreciate what moves us while remaining attentive to the health of the people who create it.

With gratitude for every second chance,
Dr. Michael I. Baruch
Founder, livertransplantguide.com

General educational information only; not individual medical or legal advice. This newsletter is independent of Shen Yun. Original AI artwork depicts imagined scenes and costumes.

Sources and listening links

Select an underlined title to open its source

01 Shen Yun Performing Arts

[2026 season and anniversary tour summary](#)

Company-reported tour figures.

02 Shen Yun Performing Arts

[20 Years of Shen Yun](#)

Company account of its history, production and mission.

03 Shen Yun Performing Arts

[Is there a live orchestra](#)

Official description of Chinese and Western instruments.

04 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

[Dizi](#)

Collection record explaining the transverse flute and its membrane.

05 Nicole Hong and Michael Rothfeld • The New York Times

[Behind the Pageantry of Shen Yun, Untreated Injuries and Emotional Abuse](#)

August 16, 2024. Reporting and company denials; accessible republication consulted.

06 Lisa Ling • CBS Sunday Morning

[Behind the scenes of Shen Yun](#)

Report and video.

07 Juliana Kim • NPR All Things Considered

[Two former Shen Yun dancers allege forced child labor, brutal conditions in lawsuit](#)

May 13, 2025. Interview, company response and audio transcript via NCPR.

08 U.S. District Court • Southern District of New York

[Chang v. Shen Yun Performing Arts • Document 113](#)

August 18, 2026. Opinion and order on motions to dismiss; court text hosted by Justia.

Sources and listening links

Select an underlined title to open its source

09 Shen Yun Voices

[I Treat Shen Yun Dancers All the Time • Dr Damon Noto](#)

September 4, 2024. Community-hosted medical interview; episode notes and listening link.

10 People

[What Is Going On with Shen Yun](#)

April 2, 2025. Reporting that includes Noto's response to medical-care criticism.

11 Shen Yun Voices

[Not True and Not Respectful to Shen Yun • Dr Jingduan Yang](#)

September 24, 2024. Identifies Yang as Northern Medical Center CEO.

12 Mountjoy and colleagues • British Journal of Sports Medicine

[2023 IOC consensus statement on Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport](#)

DOI 10.1136/bjsports-2023-106994. PubMed record also links the 2024 correction.

13 Mathisen and colleagues • British Journal of Sports Medicine

[Best practice recommendations for body composition considerations in sport](#)

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14 U.S. Department of Justice

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15 UN human-rights experts • OHCHR

[China organ harvesting allegations](#)

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Editorial and narrative adapted from the supplied ShenYun manuscript. New factual details were checked against the sources above on October 16, 2026. Source links may require a subscription or change over time.

Artwork: four original AI-generated illustrations created for this issue. Portrait: supplied age-progressed image. Neither the artwork nor the portrait is documentary evidence about the reporting.

Additional sources

Dragon Springs and political warfare • Checked October 18, 2026

16 Dragon Springs

[Our campus](#)

Institutional description of its roughly 400-acre campus, temples, arts and schools.

17 Magnifissance

[Traditional Chinese Architecture Reborn in New York](#)

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18 Fei Tian College

[College catalog](#)

Institutional source for degree programs and general education.

19 Fei Tian Academy of the Arts

[High-school curriculum](#)

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20 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

[Religious freedom conditions in China](#)

Official commission reporting; indexed material reviewed October 18, 2026.

21 U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit

[Mid-New York Environ. v. Dragon Springs, No. 24-2451](#)

September 16, 2025. Court opinion hosted by Justia; dismissal vacated and case remanded.

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22 Friends of Dragon Springs

Frequently asked questions

Supporter account of access and local disputes. Its dismissal discussion must be read with the later appellate ruling in reference 21.

23 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

China's United Front and Propaganda Work

2023 Annual Report, chapter 2, section 2. Congressional commission analysis of overseas influence.

24 Office of the Director of National Intelligence

2025 Annual Threat Assessment

See China / Malign Influence, printed pages 15–16. Intelligence assessment, not a judicial finding.

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2026 threat-assessment release and opening remarks

March 18, 2026. Official assessment of China's power and global influence objectives.

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China: Transnational Repression Origin Country Case Study

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27 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

History of the Swastika

Historical and religious context, including ancient use and Nazi appropriation.