

Globe Life & Arts

GOOD DEEDS

Music and a brief moment of kindness give me hope for humanity



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Rebekah Wolkstein stands at the front of an auditorium, facing her unconventional audience. She is 35, a bright spark of life with her big smile, red lipstick and enthusiasm for Buenos Aires tango. She introduces herself and the Payadora Tango Ensemble, a sought-after quartet that has played to sold-out audiences in Toronto at popular venues such as the St Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Koerner Hall and the Four Seasons Centre.

Accompanied by a cello, accordion and piano, she begins to play her violin, the bow across the strings an insistent plea to live, to love, to dance.

The audience remains still. Many appear asleep.

Their eyes are closed. They do not move.

Wrapped in blankets and crocheted covers, they lie reclined in their wheelchairs, feet poking out the end of their blankets in colourful socks or fluffy slippers.

But soon, the faces of some break into a look of unexpected delight, the edges of their mouths lifting in small smiles, their eyebrows raised a bit, the eyes wider.

This is Seven Oaks, a long-term care facility for seniors, one of 10 operated by the City of Toronto.

The name suggests grandeur and grace but outside the windows lies a low-rise concrete landscape in Scarborough.

And inside, well, a gathering of giant snowmen greets visitors at

reception – jolly, of course, all big fake smiles and robust girths. Several inches of cotton wool snow have fallen on ledges here and there down a corridor leading to the auditorium where oversized bright pink ornaments hang from the institutional ceiling of fibreboard and florescent lights, some of which are burnt out.

Here, though, is a chance to witness goodwill in action.

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