

Unificationist Kids Recognized for Performing in Broadway Musical Miss Saigon

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Two Unificationist-born children were recognized by both the City Council and the Board of Education of Elizabeth, New Jersey, for performing in the Broadway musical Miss Saigon.

Elie Conrad, 6, and Edelle Cayla, 4, were honored at the Elizabeth City Council meeting of January 23, 2018, for playing the role of "Tam" in alternate performances.

Elie and Edelle are the children of Emiljun R., Assistant Pastor of the Elizabeth Family Church, and Christine R., the chair of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) for Elizabeth.



The R. siblings get recognized by City Council of Elizabeth

Elie began playing Tam in late June 2017 after a series of auditions that started in March. Although he did not get the role the first time around, he was cast as Tam when two other boys left the show. Meanwhile, Edelle also auditioned and was called back but not contracted until September. They alternated the role, playing four times a week including weekends. Their co-actors admired their professionalism on stage despite their young age.

Elie and Edelle were the 41st and 42nd children to play Tam since Miss Saigon debuted in September of 1989; they are also one of only four sets of siblings to perform the role. They both successfully completed the show on January 14 and for the first time performed on the same stage in its January 13 show.



Elie and Edelle with City Council member

Mr. Nelson Gonzales, the City Council member representing Elizabeth's Second Ward, recommended that the children be honored. At the council meeting, Mr. Gonzales read the resolution and requested the whole family to receive the resolution together.

On February 22, the R. children received another honor when the Elizabeth City Board of Education invited the siblings to its monthly meeting at John Marshall School No. 20 and recognized their accomplishments.

Board President Maria Carvalho, together with all the board members and Superintendent of Schools Olga Hugelmeyer, presented the children with a certificate for their "Achievement in the Arts."

The Elizabeth Public Schools website (www.epsnj.org) reported: "Among those honored at the meeting were ... siblings Elie and Edelle R. for reaching an elite level in the performing arts by performing in the Broadway musical Miss Saigon in the role of Tam from summer 2017 until January 2018."

Although the show has ended, the children's experience has given them great confidence, discipline, practice in working hard (because they still had to go school the morning after their show) and even discovery of their potential in the performing arts.