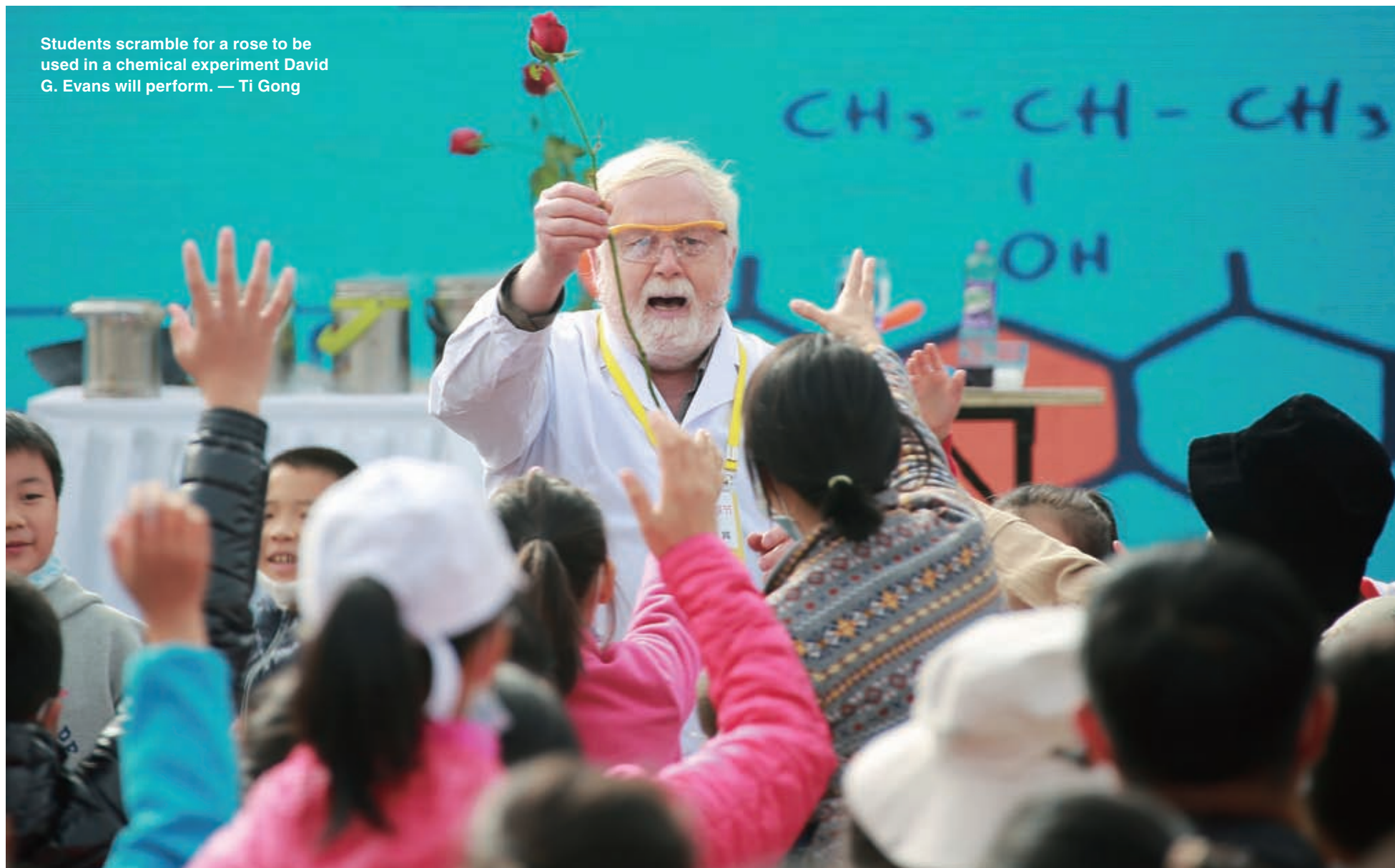


Students scramble for a rose to be used in a chemical experiment David G. Evans will perform. — Ti Gong



# British chemistry professor catapults to online fame by making science fun

Li Qian

Professor David G. Evans, 65, an Oxford University graduate who has been teaching chemistry at a Beijing institute for nearly three decades, has broken out of cloistered campus life to become an Internet sensation in China.

The springboard from academic to online celebrity resulted from his mission to enlighten the general public on the wonders of chemistry by making science accessible and fun.

On the short-video app Kuaishou, his videos of chemical experiments have attracted nearly 10 million followers.

He is also a frequent visitor at schools, dazzling young students with experiments that produce bubbles in test tubes, smoke, fire and fluorescent colors.

“The most important thing is not which reaction you choose to show, but how you present the material to make it interesting and to impart some knowledge,” he said. “I want to use the Internet to ignite their interest in chemistry.”

Evans, known on social media as Dr Dai from his Chinese name Dai Wei, has been teaching at the Beijing University of Chemical Technology since 1996. But

his interest in China dates back to his childhood in Britain.

When he was 11, he wanted to take a peek at a faraway exotic country, so he subscribed to the Beijing Review magazine from the Chinese Embassy in London.

Back then, he explained, people had little access to information about China.

“I wanted to learn more about China, just as I did chemistry,” Evans said.

His childhood dream of one day stepping foot in the country came to pass in 1987, when the then chemistry professor from University of Exeter was

invited to attend a chemistry conference in Nanjing.

He first disembarked in Shanghai, recalling how he stood on the Bund and gazed across the Huangpu River at the eastern shore, which was then paddy fields.

“Look how advanced and convenient Shanghai is now,” he said. “Even food delivery service 24 hours a day is available.”

He returned to China once or twice a year before moving to Beijing in 1996 to take up a teaching post there — a “once in a lifetime opportunity,” he called it.

Friends and colleagues in the UK were