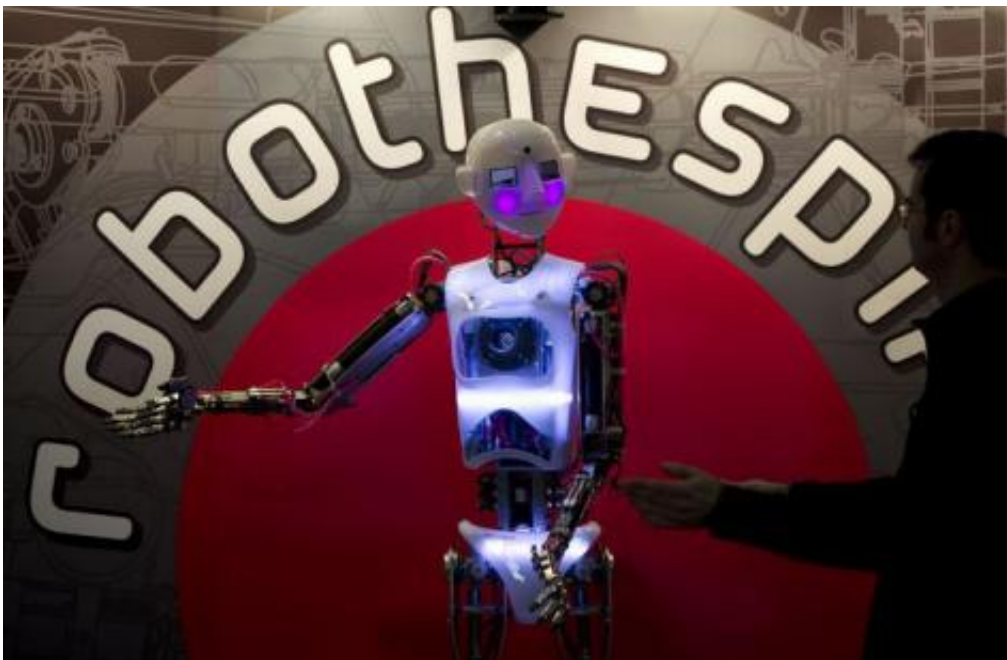


CeBIT: All-singing, all-dancing robot wows tech fair

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A man demonstrates a life-sized humanoid robot named RoboThespian created to educate, communicate, interact and entertain as preparations are under way for the CeBIT IT fair on February 28 in Hanover, central Germany.

A gleaming white robot that sings, dances, recites Shakespeare, mimics other famous robots and even tries to kiss passers-by drew huge crowds on Tuesday at the world's biggest high-tech fair.

Visitors to the CeBIT fair flocked to see the "RoboThespian" and its tricks, applauding loudly as the sleek machine gave a perfect

performance of the famous "Hamlet" soliloquy, complete with over-the-top thespian actions and voices.

Fluent in 20 languages -- including Chinese -- the [robot](#) can hold basic conversations, copy the actions of people in front of it and it wowed the crowd with its impersonation of C3PO, the world-famous robot from "Star Wars."

Marcus Hold, the engineer who designed "RoboThespian," said its main function was for entertainment and communication. For example, some robot museums have bought one so as to offer guided tours with a difference.

"RoboThespians," which are life-sized, are also in place at NASA and one national bank, where it is used to greet visitors in the lobby.

"There are 21 installed around the world," Hold told AFP. "But this is his first [CeBIT](#) and he's lapping it up."

Occasionally "RoboThespian" gets too amorous, however, with visitors getting up close for photos. When it senses someone standing next to it, it turns to them and tries to plant a kiss on their cheek.

"RoboThespian" is yours for 55,000 pounds (65,000 euros, \$90,000), said Will Jackson, director of the firm that created it.

"What's unique about the robot is that it can do nearly every motion that a human can do. There are only a few horizontal movements of the wrist that it struggles with," added Jackson.

The robot can be programmed to recite anything its owner wants, in almost any voice -- there are also female "RoboThespians" -- making it the perfect tour guide or presenter.

For the moment, "RoboThespian" is rooted to the floor but its developers hope to get it mobile as soon as possible. "Getting robots to move requires some tricky maths and millions of pounds," said Hold.

"Also, you need to make sure it doesn't kick kids out the way," he added.

And unfortunately, the robot isn't quite faultless. Attempting to demonstrate its maths skills, Jackson asked: "RoboThespian, what is 2+2?"

"496," replied the beaming machine.

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