Francophone arts, culture and education expand to new audiences

by JADE MIRAND

The francophone community in British Columbia is growing, with roughly 70,000 people whose first language is French, almost 30,000 of whom live in Vancouver, according to the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique.

With the Journée Internationale de la Francophonie (International Francophonie Day) coming up on the 28th, March is an important month to celebrate and promote the francophone community. Many events will take place all around the world, as well as in the Greater Vancouver area. This is an occasion to show off the major actors of the francophone community and their missions throughout the year.

A blend of tradition and modernity

In Metro Vancouver, francophones have a network that provides a meeting place for all forms of expressions of the francophone culture.

Fitting the cultural mandate in the Festival du bois de Maillardville, which celebrates French-Canadian traditions, Festival du Bois is produced by the Société francophone de Maillardville and is the largest francophone event west of the Rockies. The festival brings together over 15,000 people from all over the Lower Mainland and features artists such as La Botine Souriante, Lennie Gallant, De Temps Antan and Visitben.

“We are really satisfied. Every year we notice that the anglophone community shows interest in our culture, food and music. Approximately 55–60 per cent of our audience is anglophone, and this year again we consider that our mission is accomplished – all the poutine is gone!” says Joanne Dumas, executive & artistic director of the Société francophone de Maillardville.

Many francophone cultural organizations look to engage other cultural groups. Théâtre la Seizième, a unique French-language professional theatre group founded in 1979, creates French-language productions accessible to non-French speakers with English subtitles.

“We want to expand the access to our performances like À toi, pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou by Michel Tremblay, a famous Quebecois playwright, rarely performed in Vancouver. Also it is important to improve our audience’s experience by discovering a different repertoire,” says Esther Duquette, communications and administration director/associate artistic and managing director of Théâtre la Seizième.

André Lamontagne, a literature professor at UBC, and director of Centre de la Francophonie de UBC and treasurer of la Société historique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, confirms that students from all origins show interest in French studies.

Also in this issue

Educating young girls across the world

A modern approach to floral prints

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Bundled up well in my winter clothes, I arrived in Vancouver on the April 18, 2014, having more or less made it through a Montréal winter. Despite spring’s imminent arrival, the thermal contrast between the two cities was impressive. The first thing that hit me was, quite literally, the rain. It was a fine refreshing mist on my face – nothing chilling. The second thing that struck me was all the green – the green of the grass, the green of the trees, the green of the flowers and the green of the plants. After four months of a uniformly white landscape, all the greenery seemed surreal to me.

Staying with the green theme, one of Vancouver’s most unheard of events was, for me as a French woman little accustomed to Canadian ways, 4/20 or the April 20. While I was wandering downtown along Robson Street, I found myself in front of the Art Gallery of Vancouver in the midst of an overwhelming cloud of smoke that instantly relaxed anyone walking by. And even under Vancouver’s grey and misty skies, to see such a low, dense cloud is a curiosity. I had originally set out in search of chocolates to mark the Easter Sunday tradition, but now found myself surrounded by sweets and chocolate cake of a whole other sort. 4/20 is the amazing get-together of militiants in favour of legalizing cannabis, a celebration where both occasional and frequent users can buy and use cannabis in all its forms under the watchful eyes of the police detailed to the event. That year 30,000 people gathered to create the infamous cloud.

In spite of the apparent openness of spirit of Vancouverites, I heard many critic...
Empowerment and enlightenment for women in Afghanistan

by PAULA CHAUDHURY

A society with an educated population will find the tools and agency in itself to flourish. That’s the belief that motivates the Canadian Women for Afghanistan’s primary mission of women in Afghanistan. For the past 15 years, Canadian Women for Afghanistan has been working to provide education and support to women in Afghanistan, and advocating for the realization and implementation of education as a solid foundation for social development. With over 13 chapters in the spread across the country, CW4WAfghan’s mission is essential to enlighten Canadians, empower Afghan women and evolve the social landscape of Afghanistan.

For the past 15 years, Canadians in the organization have dedicated themselves to enlightening Canadian citizens on the state of human rights in Afghanistan. CW4WAfghan’s mission in education as a tool and sustenance for women and men in developing countries is a very deliberate central focus of the organization.

“The [Education]’s where we start – the right to education, the right to read, which opens the door to other rights. There is now a wealth of evidence from research demonstrating the link between women’s education and empowerment, as well as the status of women and things like state stability and economic growth,” she says.

The special status that education demands is a result of its compelling correlation to economic development.

“Research tells us that countries with the poorest children do not leave behind extreme poverty until they reach a national literacy rate of at least 80 per cent,” says Oates.

CW4WAfghan’s work

In Afghanistan, the organization runs two programs, investing in Basic Education and Afghanistan Reads! The former focuses on grades 1-12 and looks to provide equipment and resources that schools are in need of, such as textbooks and science labs.

Afghanistan Reads! focuses conversely on the out-of-school population and aims to educate adults or girls over the age of 15 who weren’t fortunate enough to receive public education. The program offers basic literacy classes, information regarding basic life skills as well as open access to community libraries much less pressing if the local population is given access to developing mental skills and attaining knowledge in a variety of realms. Oates believes providing these opportunities can empower the citizens of Afghanistan to solve internal problems.

CW4WAfghan also acts as an educator in terms of overturning the perceived view that surrounding Afghanistan as an inherently backwards country.

“The public has a tendency to want to simplify the story, to make it all good or all bad, when the process of rebuilding a country is more nuanced: it’s a gradual, complex process with both good and bad co-existing,” says Oates.

For more information on the organization, or any upcoming events visit www.cw4wafghan.ca

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“Empowerment and enlightenment for women in Afghanistan,” says Lauren Oates, program director of CW4WAfghan

WOMEN AND MEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES are partners, with Afghans that defines global citizenship,” says Oates.

“Women are given equal opportunity to receive an education. Therein lies CW4WAfghan’s primary mission of providing an education for girls,” says Oates.

“Education is the only way to move forward. The realization and implementation of education is a very deliberate central focus of the organization,” says Oates.

“Women and men in developing nations do not always receive equal opportunity to receive an education. Therein lies CW4WAfghan’s primary mission of providing an education for girls,” says Oates, program director of CW4WAfghan, says education is a very deliberate central focus of the organization.

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Friends of Simon builds promising future for youth

by Anuja Kapoor

Friends of Simon, an award-winning Simon Fraser University (SFU) faculty of education initiative, is committed to building a brighter future for school-aged children and teen-aged youth through literacy tutoring and mentoring in local communities.

In 2011, the initiative received a Celebration of Community Award by the United Way of the Lower Mainland — a recognition that paved a prosperous path for the project. 

10 years ago, the program was designed with the intent to assist children with challenging lives. Today, children from grades K-12 are offered educational support after school, on weekends and during the summer in small group settings or on an individual basis.

Mentors and students

Professor Kanwal Neel, a program coordinator for Friends of Simon, says the majority of children born yet lack the facilities Simon, says the majority of children born yet lack the facilities.

Parents of children from diverse backgrounds often approach local schools or libraries to learn more about what can be done to enhance their children’s learning capabilities.

At the heart of the initiative is a group of SFU undergraduate tutors recruited from a wide range of faculties. They are trained with care and supervised by members of the faculty of education, who share effective teaching techniques and ideas.

Tutors are assigned to various sites in the Lower Mainland, including community centres, local primary and secondary schools, public libraries and housing developments.

“At its peak, Friends of Simon operated at 20 different sites with over 80 tutors,” says Neel. He outlines the three principles of the project: mentoring, helping children with their daily homework and enhancing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Mentoring involves organizing workshops and activities that tend towards topics such as bullying and its prevention, says Neel. High school students are also given university guidance.

The mentors’ work goes far beyond the academic realm. They hope to leave their students empowered by fostering positive relationships, and communication helps break barriers to integration into the Canadian schooling system.

Neel, now semi-retired, speaks from 35 years of experience as an educator and believes there is much to learn from students’ feedback as they are not only ones doing the learning. Tutors learn an immense amount from the challenges and adversity some children face.

“The project is reciprocal,” says Neel, upon describing the mutual and reinforcing relationship that develops between students and tutors.

Teamwork and training

Edrène Dol Cabantog, a fourth-year health sciences major who has been involved with the program for almost two years, takes pride in her work as a tutor.

“The project is reciprocal,” says Neel, upon describing the mutual and reinforcing relationship that develops between students and tutors.

“At any given time, there are about 70 to 80 active tutors. They come together, says Dol Cabantog, as a large group for briefing and training. Candidates who join the program for the first time must attend 10 sessions to be trained under the guidance of their project coordinators, who pass on effective learning strategies and classroom management techniques.

Having the entire team gather regularly gives everyone the opportunity to share their experiences.

“Overall, it is a very enjoyable atmosphere even during our training sessions,” says Dol Cabantog.

As for the subjects she teaches, there is no one answer. She thinks it all boils down to what the children require and need more support in. "If you get a better education and for your children to speak the two official languages of Canada, besides their mother tongue."

Bilingualism lives through immersion, explains Painchaud.

More supply than demand

Regg Painchaud, executive director of Visions Ouest Productions, has been promoting francophone cinema in British Columbia since 1993. Among others, there is the Rendez-vous du cinéma Québécois, which takes place in February and March, the francophone movies and showcases a wide variety of French-language films.

In addition, Visions Ouest Productions, in collaboration with the Dream Circus/Les Transporteurs de rêves, offer circus camps and workshops in French for children. They started five years ago with the participation of the Pneus des rues, one of the co-founders of Le Cirque du Soleil. This kind of circus without animals is part of a long tradition in Quebec inspired by Eastern European countries, and involves both theatre and physical arts.

“They started in Quebec as street entertainers, jugglers, fire-eaters; 20 years later, the circus profession does not count [in Canada] 10,000 people,” explains Painchaud.

“Each circus profession has its own history, for example, the stilts-walkers tradition comes from the plastersers who needed to reach great heights,” explains Painchaud.

Despite the large range of cultural events, the audience is not always present in Vancouver.

“There is an amazing francophone cultural offering in Greater Vancouver; unfortunately the supply exceeds the demand,” says Painchaud.

One explanation might be the fact that francophone newcomers, such as working travellers, are not necessarily interested in joining a francophone community since they mostly come to the West Coast to totally immerse themselves in anglophone Canadian culture. Painchaud says another explanation may be the price of the shows or exhibits.

Francophone associations are struggling to maintain a dynamic network and they need to reach out to other communities by developing a Francophone community, explains Painchaud.

Francophone expansion through education

In addition to cultural offerings, the francophone community is also growing through education. Damien Hubert, executive director of L’Alliance Française de Vancouver, notices the growing interest from Asian communities in French culture, especially from Chinese communities. Per session, he says, there are approximately 100 children of Chinese origin who learn French. Newcomers who learn French are mostly driven by the will to get a better education and for their children to speak the two official languages of Canada, besides their mother tongue.

"Bilingualism lives through immigration," says Hubert.

L’Alliance Française also hosts events like the Movie Club, showcasing francophone movies with English subtitles, operas featuring anglophone singers singing French songs and even French theatre with English surtitles.

"We want to go beyond the francophone community by developing a French-speaking community. So a child, even if he lives in an anglophone community, will have the chance to learn French at school," he says.
The Metro Vancouver transit referendum began this month. Despite a long campaign supported by the vast majority of mayors and political parties in the region, the ‘No’ side is leading in the polls. Why can’t the ‘Yes’ side seem to galvanize public opinion for a mere 0.5 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax to fund transit infrastructure?

First, there’s residual effects of a generation of anti-tax rhetoric. Right-wing parties have managed to frame all efforts to fund a robust public sector as “tax and spend,” as if this were something nefarious rather than the basic function of government. Second, in recent decades, corporate tax rates have been slashed and the share paid by the rich drastically reduced. Just last month, the B.C. Liberals introduced a new budget eliminating another higher income tax bracket.

All of this has been justified as “tax relief,” even though it’s only been a relief for those who need it least: the rich and super-rich. Everyone else has been saddled with new burdens for the form of user fees like rising MSP premiums. Meanwhile basic public services and infrastructure which poor and middle-income people depend on more than public transit, have suffered.

This ideological offensive proceeds year after year despite the mounting evidence that these policies lead to more inequality. But, much like the anti-tax frame is reinforced and Clark and the B.C. Liberals can interpret that as an endorsement of any and all infrastructure projects she’s planning anyway, many of which are about making room for more cars, not improving public transit, like her plan to replace the Massey Tunnel connecting Richmond and Delta with a huge new bridge.

Yes, Metro Vancouver needs better transit. But we also need a much better and thoroughgoing debate. Transit needs to be accessible to all. If we are at all serious about addressing the emergency of climate change, we should be moving toward free public transit and a massive expansion of buses, light rail and bike lanes. This transit referendum is badly flawed, and it should not be the last word on these matters.

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The Dance Centre presents Discover Dance!

Arts Umbrella Dance Company
Thursday April 23, 2015 at 12 noon
Scotiabank Dance Centre,
677 Davie St (at Granville), Vancouver

TICKETS
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604 606 6400 www.thedancecentre.ca

The energy and skill of a new generation takes the stage for the 2014 edition of the Discover Dance! series, when the exceptional young dancers of the Arts Umbrella Dance Company perform a varied and stimulating program of contemporary ballets. Trained through Arts Umbrella’s renowned dance program, these talented artists perform works created by choreographers including Crystal Pite, Lesley Telford, Shaun Hounsell, Simone Orlando, Amber Funk Barton, Connor Gnam, Gioconda Barbuto, and more.

Arts Umbrella’s dance programs are internationally recognized as education that develops the whole dancer, stressing technical strength, while embracing the importance of the intellectual and artistic elements of the art form. Dancers explore movement as artists, as athletes, as performers, as audience members and as future professionals. Graduates of the program have gone on to dance in professional companies including Ballet British Columbia, Swedish Royal Ballet, Batsheva Dance Ensemble, Nederlands Dans Theatre 1 and 2, Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal, Mannheim Ballet Theater, Ballet Dresden, Alvin Ailey II, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Compagnie Marie Chouinard. www.artsumbrella.com

Discover Dance! is a series showcasing diverse BC-based companies, presented by The Dance Centre, BC’s resource centre for dance, which provides information and services for the profession and the public, and operates the Scotiabank Dance Centre facility.

2014-2015 DISCOVER DANCE! SEASON SCHEDULE
September 18: Jacky Essombe (African dance)
October 23: South Asian Arts (bhangra and Bollywood, presented with DiwaliFest)
November 13: 605 Collective (contemporary)
March 12: JC Dance Co (ballroom)
April 23: Arts Umbrella Dance Company (contemporary ballet)
May 14: Aché Brasil (Brazilian dance and capoeira)

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The operations of The Dance Centre are supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia, the BC Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver through the Office of Cultural Affairs.

The Dance Centre
Scotiabank Dance Centre, Level 6, 677 Davie Street, Vancouver BC V6B 2G6
Tel 604 606 6400 www.thedancecentre.ca

As a snowboarder, a fringe community, we want to take a step forward in the right direction.

Tamo Campos, professional snowboarder and co-founder of Beyond Boarding

Living on the fringe: Inspiring environmentalism through snowboarding

by DONG YUE SU

Equipped with snowboards and guitars, a trio of young environmentalists went on an eight-month trip last year to northern British Columbia on a school bus that ran on vegetable oil. One day, they snowboarded their way down the majestic mountains, and the following day they sat around with local First Nations people and school kids, sharing stories, music, concerns and cheers.

Tamo Campos, 24, was one of them. He is a professional snowboarder from North Vancouver and the co-founder of Beyond Boarding, an environmental and humanitarian activism group aimed at raising awareness about issues impacting places including Peru, Chile and B.C. Last year, he was named the 2014 top environmentalist under 25 by tfo and his Beyond Boarding presents environmental talks to thousands of high school students through the connection of snowboarding.

“We also helped block the mining camp. We hiked along drill paths. We have gone plastic free, and cleaned up waste on the beach with the help of local school kids. We harvested our own food,” says Campos.

Campos believes that living life differently is essential.

“As the outside, you look a bit different. That is what we need. The mainstream culture now is not leading us the good direction.”

As a snowboarder, a fringe community, we want to take a step forward in the right direction.

The biggest thing we need right now is to get away from the ways we are doing things,” he says.

Bus run on vegetable oil

Creative, fun, different and socially responsible, Campos’s team travelled over 18,000 kilometers with their bus and produced their own vegetable oil.

“The B.C. coast is impacted by fossil fuel development. We are doing things,” he says.

“We glorify environmentalism. We are not coming as this preachers,” Campos says.

We put these environmentalists up on a pedestal to the point where it is almost impossible for a normal town folk to relate to them. That is a problem. It creates this feeling that we can’t be this incredible and amazing environmentalist, which is not true. Everyone of us has a part to play in this,” says Campos.

For more information visit: www.beyondbording.org
Fashion designer creates carefree collection

by NAOMI TSE

Recent Art Institute of Vancouver graduate Zong Peng was one of 12 young fashion designers chosen to be featured in the Art Institutes fashion show during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Fall 2015. After graduating from high school, Peng says that he felt lost and unsure of what his post-secondary plans were. He became interested in the fashion design program at the Art Institute of Vancouver after attending an info session and school tour there. Peng felt that the program could only teach him so much though, and there was a need to self-study to further his knowledge in fashion design. “My personal work is about celebrating freedom in our time,” says Peng, who is originally from China. “Now it is legal to wear whatever you want compared to in the past.”

A new experience

Prior to enrolling in the fashion design program, Peng had limited interest in fashion design, but through the program, he learned to make his own clothes and the subject grew on him. He describes his personal style as a bit goth and minimalism. “The idea behind the collection is to represent a child’s carefree attitude,” explains Peng. “When you first discover something new, you feel excited, but you also feel scared and confused.”

All of the clothing in the collection is composed of circular and rectangular pattern pieces, and everything is sewn by hand. Images and colors from the playground are utilized to create the vibe. Loose threads, yarn and felt fabrics are also a part of this distinctive look. Some of the looks are accessorized with head-dresses and face coverings. Peng says that draping and designing took the longest, while experimenting with the fabric and choosing the colors were the toughest parts.

An ongoing education

According to Peng, of all the Art Institutes schools in North America, about 20 have a fashion design program and each program can submit the design collections of three students. Panlists at the Art Institute of New York then select the designs of 12 students to be featured in the fashion show. Now that his diploma program is complete, Peng is in the process of assembling his portfolio and hopes to start his career in fashion design. As a new grad, he says he is still not ready to work with big brands yet, but he is excited about the possibility of working in other countries. In addition, he says he will also pursue a degree program in fashion design as well to further his knowledge.

Peng is proud to have made his ideas come to life in his first collection. “Making clothes always interests me; I just love to do it without question,” he says. Peng’s work will be on display at the Art Institute of Vancouver’s fashion show on March 24. The show will feature the works of 22 graduating fashion design students along with culinary, film and fashion marketing students.

For more information, please visit www.picalive.com/AV2015FashionShow.

Errata

From Breaking down barriers for women engineers trained abroad:
People wishing to make use of MOSAIC’s online pre-arrival services can only do so from their country of origin.

From New exhibit provide thought-provoking take on Cantonese language: Tyler Russell and Natalie Tan work at Centre A gallery.

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Vol 15 No 15 | March 10–24, 2015
www.operationeyesight.com

Spreading worldwide literacy and gender equality

By Florence Hwang

Instead of the usual formal sit-down event, Room to Read, a global non-profit organization focused on literacy, wants to start a discussion for change. To commemorate its 15th anniversary, the Vancouver chapter plans to host a series of events instead of one big one. Room to Read is aiming to reach its 10 millionth child in 2015.

In collaboration with local communities, partner organizations and government, Room to Read develops literacy skills and reading habits among primary school children. The organization also helps girls complete secondary education and build skills to succeed in school and beyond.

“Locally, we focus our efforts on raising funds and awareness each year. This includes establishing and maintaining donor relationships, building a network of supporters and hosting events that create dialogue around our global programs,” says Megan Rendell, co-chapter leader, who works in sponsorship marketing.

Empowering girls

Room to Read focuses on gender equality as well as literacy, and offers scholarships to the girls to address global poverty.

“We know that if you educate girls, there is an immediate result. Educated women don’t hold their children back from going to school,” says Sharon Davis, a financial investor, who founded the Vancouver chapter in 2007 and is also a co-chapter leader.

The young girls who receive an education grow in confidence and find their voice. There are challenges, such as some fathers who wish for their daughters not to go to school because they want them to get married, explains Davis.

“I specifically want to give young girls the opportunity to choose a different life besides one, for example, of early marriage. And I think education and literacy is the most impactful way to do that,” says Davis.

Room to Read now has seen more than 95 per cent of the girls it supports remain in the program and graduate high school. And 72 per cent go on to pursue tertiary education.

“Once we get them, they live and breathe to go to school,” says Davis.

Volunteer experience

In April 2014, Peters was selected as a volunteer with when her Facebook page suggested a post to check out; it was Room to Read.

“I was immediately drawn to the clear goal and motto of this organization: world change starts with educated children,” says Peters, who participates in Room to Read’s events planning.

Peters, who taught kindergarten at a private school in Bangkok for a year, witnessed the impact of literacy on children as young as the age of three. She says going to library was one of the children’s favorite times because that was how they explored subjects of interest.

“I desperately wished that I could spread the joy of reading to children I saw throughout Southeast Asia who were much less fortunate,” says Peters, who graduated from UBC in 2011 with a degree in International Relations and Political Science.

Fundraising with a difference

Many of Room to Read’s fundraising events aim to connect its supporters to the work the organization does, the culture in the countries where it operates and its impact on literacy, says Rendell.

Davis says because Vancouver is very competitive and is a small market (for fundraising/philanthropy) their chapter needs a more targeted funding strategy.

“We didn’t want to throw another gala. We wanted to engage our donors in unique ways and create dialogue through film and speaker based events,” says Davis.

A fundraiser specific to Vancouver is Destination Dining, a series of dinner events, the first of which featured Nepal; April will feature Vietnam.

“Room to Read has a clear goal and motto of this organization: world change starts with educated children,” says Peters, who participates in Room to Read’s events planning.

In the past 14 years, the organization has reached 8.8 million children in 16 developing countries, including Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.

For more information, go to their website: roomtoread.org

IN BRIEF: Studio 58 concludes the 49th season with the new Canadian musical, Elbow Room Café: The Musical (Phase 1). This show celebrates the hectic world of one of Vancouver’s most recognizable eateries, frequented by an eclectic and campy cast of misfits, drag queens, and the perpetually hung over. Get an inside look at how a new Canadian musical is made! Not to be missed! Elbow Room Café: The Musical (Phase 1) is on stage for a limited run March 19th to 29th, 2015. Order tickets today by contacting Tickets Tonight online at www.ticketsonight.ca or 604.684.7787. Warning: Graphic language and immature content.

Toronto, ON—Studio 58, the nationally renowned professional theatre training program at Langara College, proudly presents Elbow Room Café: The Musical (Phase 1) as the final production of the season. Elbow Room offers a candid look inside the world of Vancouver’s iconic Elbow Room Café, home of razzoo savunsa, oriental sightings, and a heart of gold. This show explores how we age together in a technicolor world. With Elbow Room; playwright/lyricist Dave Deveau; (Lowest Common Denominator, My Funny Valentine); composer/lyricists Anton Lipowsky; (Coal Birds, Broken Sex Doll, The Path); and director Cameron Mackenzie; (Lowest Common Denominator, Kansans), the Musical dives into the world of cafe owners Patricia and Bryan as they manage one of Vancouver’s most recognizable estabishments. Partners in business and life, they are the heart and soul of the piece and anchor an eclectic and campy cast of misfits, drag queens, and the perpetually hung over.

Working in a development model with Studio 58 students will be musical and theatrical experiences with new material showcased every night. Come get an inside look at how a new Canadian musical theatre is made!

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Music & Lyrics by ANTON LIPOWSKY
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Featuring DAVID AGADI & ALLAN ZNYK

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Previews & FREE Student Nights March 17 & 20; Opens March 21
At Studio 58, Langara College, 105 West 45th Avenue
www.studio58.ca
www.langara.ca
www.thesubwaytheatre.com

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Tickets tonight: www.ticketsonight.ca or 604.684.7787
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#Studio58 #ElbowRoomCafe

A Girl reading at International Literacy Day in Zambia.
Mehrad Rahbar has always been tuned in to events around him—the Iran revolution in 1979, the 1989 Montreal massacre of 14 female students and the Arab Spring that spread across the Middle East and North Africa in early 2011. He considers himself a human rights activist and is involved in various Iranian-Canadian organizations throughout the city and province.

Although he studied architecture, Rahbar says he has always been interested in painting and drawing. His work, which uses mainly acrylic and ink, is primarily composed of characters, backgrounds and symbolic gestures to represent locality—the human side, both abstract and surreal. The scriptures on his artwork are in both English and Persian.

"Everything in me exists in my painting. I basically belong to the world," says Rahbar, 52.

Power of the third dimension

The idea for a sculpture came out of one of his paintings: hundreds of women rising, interwoven, arms and legs. Rahbar envisioned a sculpture of women standing together, rising, and claiming equality and respect. After making a sketch, he decided his real-life sculpture would consist of five figures holding a globe, with materials including copper plates, stainless steel tubes and flat bars.

Rahbar says sculptures, a more 3-D art form, draw in a wider audience.

Inspiration

"Women's rights are human rights. It's not only affecting the woman and her family, but it's my problem also," says Rahbar. As a male artist, he hopes to encourage more men to become interested in this movement.

Growing up in Iran, Rahbar says his father was respectful of women and very sensitive to women issues.

"This was unique in a male-dominated society such as Iran," he says.

Rahbar moved to Montreal in 1979 on a student visa, and earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Architecture from McGill University. He never moved back to his birth country, but relocated to Vancouver in 1996 to finish his Master's thesis on affordable housing.

Rahbar then became a Canadian citizen, married an Italian-Canadian and has three children.

"Having a daughter changed my life quite a bit. I told her I'll do whatever I can for women's rights in the world," says Rahbar.

Student-led initiative

Mike Silley, who has known Rahbar for 15 years, having attended the same school as his son, was first approached by Rahbar about the idea of a "universal sculpture" in 2008.

"We didn't have the time or capability (at the time) to invest in such a project," says Silley, 26, who has held a number of positions at UBC, including Alma Mater Society (AMS) Arts Representative, 2013 UBC Graduating Class Council President and member of the Board of Governors.

A few years later, in 2013, an opportunity came up for graduating students of 2013 to "leave a landmark gift for future generations," so Silley reconnected with Rahbar.

For Silley, the project is important because of the timely subject matter that serves as a topic of discussion for both genders. Given the rates of alleged sexual assaults on UBC campus (circa late 2013), Silley says the sculpture can represent 'gender equality as a whole.'

"We have the power of the third dimension. We take the third dimension, and then we represented it," says Rahbar.

Much of the proceeds have been raised at fundraisers organized by Rahbar, Silley, university students from UBC, SFU, Emily Carr and Capilano University and the general public.

Both Rahbar and Silley say the placement of the sculpture on the UBC grounds is an amazing opportunity to educate people through art and encourage dialogue in a public space.

Rahbar says work can begin on the sculpture once the team has reached another $50,000. He is hopeful that will be in the summer of 2016.

"I can't sleep at night. I can't wait – I'm so excited about the project," says Rahbar.

For more information please visit:

www.whenwomenrise.org
Homage to still life painting

by SANDRA ZIMMERMANN

Bernadette Phan, a Vietnamese-Canadian painter, currently exhibits a series of drawings titled “Lili and the Migratory Influences” at the Bob Pratt Library in Burnaby. With this project, Phan wants to homage to her late aunt Lili, who shaped and influenced her greatly.

While Phan was mostly raised in Canada, she has a diverse background. Born in Cambodia to Vietnamese parents who left the country before she was born, Phan lived in France for a while before her family relocated to Quebec when she was three years old. Eventually, the family moved to the Canadian West Coast. Her aunt Lili, however, remained in Paris, and chose the French capital as her own home.

“I still go back to Paris regularly. I try to be there at least once a year. I still have close friends there that are like family,” Phan says.

Even though she left the country at an early age, Phan, whose mother tongue is French, has kept close ties with both France and her aunt. She has always been close to Lili, despite the geographical distance. After high school, the artist lived in Paris with Lili for three months and helped out at Editions Gallimard, one of the biggest French publishing houses, where her aunt worked. The two women engaged in lively discussions about art, ideas and ethics and Lili regularly nurtured her niece with new books.

Books became art

Lili was one of the most influential people in her life, particularly regarding her passion for reading.

“I owe my love for books to her,” Phan says. “I had a specific desire to acquire it’s anonymous but still capable of representing people. The drawings contain many innuendos only close people to me to understand,” Phan explains.

While many contemporary artists work with digital media, Phan prefers the traditional way: paint, pencil and paper. “It’s like writing a love song. You come to the same result, but faster,” says Phan.

The time she spends in the studio is both her greatest reward and her biggest challenge.

A passion for painting

Phan’s enthusiasm for painting and drawing emerged at an early age, and she vividly remembers a significant childhood moment. “I was given a paint-by-numbers of a running horse for Christmas when we lived in Quebec,” she says. “That’s when I thought I might become an artist.”

Her mother was against it. “She feared I wouldn’t make any money,” says Phan. “But she studied Fine Arts any way– first at Montreal’s Concordia University, and then in Philadelphia, where she received her MFA degree in printmaking from Temple University. Now, she returns to printing only sparingly; painting and drawing are her passions.”

“I love the dialogue, the sharing of culture and of experience that is passed on from one generation to the next,” says Phan.


Coastal Sound offers an uplifting cultural experience

With new season Award-winning choirs deliver artistry, spirit, communication and heart to concert-goers

From Sea to Sea: Sunday, June 7th, 5pm at the Evergreen Cultural Centre, 918 Granville Street, Vancouver. Experience what everyone is talking about: MissMumford and Sons presents Coastal Sound Youth Choir and local indie band Snakeskins perform for a fourth year to present their innovative cross-pollination of classical choral music and indie rock. Choral music just got cooler than ever.

Ticket pricing and purchase information for all shows at www.coastalsoundmusic.com. VIP Season pass program for preferred seating and other advantages available until November 1st, 2014.

About the Coastal Sound Music Academy

Coastal Sound Music connects singers and outstanding choral music educators with the community. From the woe to 5 year old Yuliasourcoux song play performed by the professional and award winning Youth and Children’s Chours, to DeCoro, a new choral experience for adults, there is a place for singers to share a sense of spirit, artistry, heart, and community.

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By JULIE MAUVILLE

This year, the Vancouver International Dance Festival invited the Par B.L.eux dance company to present its renowned show Snakeskins. The show is a way for the public to realize that watching dance is like learning a new language, where the relationship with the surrounding world changes.

Created in 1998, the Vancouver International Dance Festival aims to promote cultural diversity and all expressions of contemporary dance including those from European and North American origins.

The movement influenced by the environment

“We look for artists that focus on the body as the vehicle for communication. We like artists who push themselves to the limit of their physical expression. We like artists who sweat, who transcend themselves in their effort to say who they are,” explains festival co-creator Jay Hirabayashi.

Benoit Lachambre is one of these artists. Dance has always been a passion. “My first memory in life is watching dance,” he says. “I was only six months,” he says.

Later in his life, around his teenage years, Lachambre explains that this body language helped him to get more confidence. He began learning new techniques with the Ballets Jazz de Montréal and discovered the kinesthetic approach of his art. This approach of movement and gesture can change through the environment around you.

“The senses awake and link the artistic and the somatic part. Skin becomes porous and malable, almost like when you are under a drug, just by listening to your body,” he says.

In 1996, Lachambre created his own company Par B.L.eux in Montréal : ‘B.L.’ for Benoit Lachambre, and ‘eux’ for “them,” the creative artists he collaborates with. Two of his collaborators, dancer Daniele Allebasse and multi-instrumentalist Hahn Rowe, will accompany Lachambre on stage for the Snakeskins performance at the Roundhouse Centre.

A poetic communication with the viewer

With Snakeskins, Lachambre opens himself up as never before, making his own skin a surface of experience. The surprising result has been a long-term effort. "It took me years of theory preparation to imagine Snakeskins, with a big somatic work,” Lachambre says.

The piece is the result of his meeting with Amelie Icubu, a Saskatchewan pioneer dancer who died in 2011, and her work on the dispersal of the weight in the body.

There is a lot of exercise on the ground, where you undulate your body and every organ slacks, almost like a water snake,” says Lachambre.

If it seems difficult at first to understand it, don’t worry, Hirabayashi says. Audiences will soon feel the emotions being conveyed by the dancers’ bodies in their own.

“lt is like poetic communication where words are metaphoric for a plethora of meanings. The physical exertion has an emotional impact that resonates with the experiences of the audience and they feel the meaning of the movements without the need for words,” Hirabayashi says.

The relationship between the audience and dancer is key.

“Tо survive as a dance artist, you have to have an audience. You have to make work that lets audiences have the opportunity to find themselves, just as you are expressing yourself to let them know who you are,” explains Hirabayashi.

The work is based on exploring every human sense, imagining the transformation of the body outside of itself. Lachambre believes that the evolution of dance rests upon an abundance of ideas, as well as dynamic and continuous exchange. According to Hirabayashi, that is the purpose of the festival.

“If you can come out of witnessing a dance performance and say to yourself that you know yourself better, then that is what we are here to do. To witness and to dance we live to dance. That is our motto,” says Hirabayashi.

Snakeskins Roundhouse Performance Centre March 12–14 at 8 p.m.
Emotions are to be explored when viewing artwork from Melvin Yap, a Malaysian-born Vancouver-raised artist. He encourages people to take a second look at how flowers can be photographed. At his new flower exhibition to be held at the Kimoto Gallery in Vancouver, March 6–28.

“Ka-Bloom is an explosion with out the dynamite,” says Yap, 36, when describing his new exhibit. After already being successful with his latest book, Theory and Problems, which shows intricate pictures of flowers, Yap decided to bring forth the human condition, he now has turned his artistic talents to still life in order to challenge the cliché of shooting flowers.

Ode to family
Flowers also became a worthy subject to take on because they reminded him of his grandmother who loved them. Flowers were also appreciated by his mother who used to say to him it was always a thoughtful person who sends them.

Yap knows his way around music and photography, and he remembers how photography all began.

“I remember begging my mom to buy me my first camera when I was around seven (1986). I remember this because I had just seen Top Gun,” says Yap, a self-taught photographer.

It was the first thing Yap had asked for that wasn’t a toy or candy. He did not factor in the various factors associated with photography such as time and cost of film development. His new found career stopped there.

His career picked up speed again when he was working as a 3-D artist for a video game company and he was given a spare digital camera by a friend, explains Yap.

With this new career knowledge and a lot of practice, he was able to learn and use methods, such as the printing of his work on metallic paper and using trans-mounting. Trans-mounting is done with an acrylic/plexiglass, for the front, and aluminum, put on the back. This gives the look of a light box without the box.

Trans-mounting involves bonding the face of a print to the underside of the acrylic with a clear film. According to Yap, this method gives an effective look for the flowers.

“When my background is music, and paired with my skills as a digital artist, the camera gave me the most options to get out and challenge my creativity while exploring the meaning of life,” says Yap.

Intuitive artwork
Yap was born in Kotakinabalu, Malaysia and grew up in Vancouver. In high school, he met Kazumi Kimoto (the brother of the current art gallery owner and curator) and Kimoto’s wife, Jiali, a graphic designer.

Kimoto has known Yap for many years appreciates Yap’s talent with his clean and contemporary floated frameless pictures on the wall.

“Something you have to see to truly appreciate,” says Kimoto.

Yap puts every part of himself into his photographs, but does not consciously think about himself or his heritage when making his photographs.

“I rely on intuition and block out the past and future; and instead focus on the moment, so I can relate to anyone and everyone,” says Yap.

He explains it is not so much the subject at hand, but more about the experience. His goal is to eliminate preconceptions and be faithful to his intuition.

He says when he sees flowers now he thinks about how they have a huge burst of energy, and realizes eventually this beauty dies when they decay.

“Everything I want to say is in these bouquets!” says Yap.

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PICS Vancouver also offers one-on-one employment assistance, paid on-the-job work experience through our Wage Subsidy program, and a one-stop Career Centre with a broad range of job hunting resources. Funding for all programs is provided by the Ministry of Social Development, Employment and Labour Market Services Division.

Please call 604-324-7733 to end with another amusing anecdote, I recall the time I was having my lunch break in front of the art gallery, and a young woman invited me to stick a piece of chewing gum on a sculpture. I had indeed noticed the installation a few days earlier of a statue representing a man’s head, a work by Douglas Coupland. Not withstanding hygienic qualms, I found the idea of Gum Head inspiring, and that allowed me to discover another Canadian artist from Vancouver that I had only vaguely heard about in Paris. For me the magic of Vancouver is just that, its cultural eclectic-ism without the elitist element - culture within reach of all. In the end you have to have culture for all tastes.

PHOTOGRAPHER CHALLENGES Clichés

by Vivien Hannos

Emotions are to be explored when viewing artwork from Melvin Yap, a Malaysian-born Vancouver-raised artist. He encourages people to take a second look at how flowers can be photographed at his new flower exhibition to be held at the Kimoto Gallery in Vancouver, March 6–28.

“Ka-Bloom is an explosion without the dynamite,” says Yap, 36, when describing his new exhibit. After already being successful with his latest book, Theory and Problems, which shows intricate pictures of flowers, Yap decided to bring forth the human condition, he now has turned his artistic talents to still life in order to challenge the cliché of shooting flowers.

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He says when he sees flowers now he thinks about how they have a huge burst of energy, and realizes eventually this beauty dies when they decay.

“Everything I want to say is in these bouquets!” says Yap.

Opening reception is Friday, March 6, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. at the Kimoto Gallery. For more information, visit: www.kimotagallery.com/exhibitions
March 10–24, 2015

**VanDusen Botanical Garden – Kids are Free**
March 1–31
VanDusen Botanical Garden
525 Oak St., Vancouver
www.vandusenbc.org/kids

Enjoy the beautiful weather at the world famous VanDusen Botanical Garden. With the most recent promotion, kids get in free with the purchase of an adult admission. Bring the whole family to view over 7,000 species of plants from all around the world. For more information on hours, please visit the website.

**Spring Break at the Cannery**
March 7–29
Gulf of Georgia Cannery
777 Pacific Boulevard, Vancouver
BC Place
www.bcplacestadium.com/playdome

Part of the Vancouver International Dance Festival, Mushu no Hoshi brings forward Japan’s butoh performance group. This two day performance combines visually stunning dancing with a daring performance that turns humans into insects. For more information on ticket pricing and reservations, please visit the website.

**TransMigration**
March 17–21
The Cultch Theatre
1895 Venables St., Vancouver
www.thecultch.com
(604) 251-1363

Inspired by the life and paintings of iconic Ojibwe shaman-artist Norval Morrisseau, this event focuses on the visions and struggles of the artist. Performing at the Cultch, this performance is concentrated on the visceral costumes, the visually astounding stage and the power to transform and transcend.

**Virtual Solitaire**
March 17–29
Graveline Island
1998 Cartwright St., Vancouver
www.vancouverfringe.com

Virtual Solitaire is a performance that will leave audiences feeling more connected to their virtual world. Nathan is addicted to virtual reality to the point where he can’t tell the difference between dimensions. Part of the Fringe Festival, this highly anticipated performance has received good reviews from the Vancouver Sun.

**Lulu Series: Art in the City**
March 19
Richmond City Hall
6911 No. 3 Rd., Richmond
www.vancouverfringe.com/luluseries

Connie Watts, a First Nations artist and designer, discusses her work with other Aboriginal artists across Canada. Watts discusses her own work along with how other Aboriginal artists contribute their works to Canadian society. This event is open to the public. For more information on the event, please visit the website.

**B.C. Cadet Honour Band**
March 19
Michael J. Fox Theatre
7773 MacPherson Ave., Burnaby
www.michaeljfoxtheatre.ca

The B.C. Cadet Honour Band is the ultimate goal for all cadet musicians. This talented group of cadets brings you a night of musical excitement, featuring music from Disney’s Frozen and the Hunger Games. These musicians mix all of their songs in three days and then proceed to tour the province performing for thousands of listeners.

**Mushu no Hoshi – Space Insect**
March 20–22, 8 p.m.
The Vancouver Playhouse
600 Hamilton St, Vancouver
www.vancouverfringe.com

Part of the Vancouver International Dance Festival, Mushu no Hoshi brings forward Japan’s butoh performance group. This two day performance combines visually stunning dancing with a daring performance that turns humans into insects. For more information on ticket pricing and reservations, please visit the website.

**Zakir Hussain’s Celtic Connections**
March 21, 8 p.m.
Chan Centre for the Performing Arts
6265 Crescent Rd., Vancouver
www.chancentre.com
(604) 822-2697

The internationally renowned Indian tabla master Zakir Hussain is performing at UBC’s Chan Centre for the Performing Arts. Hussain combines Indian and Celtic traditional music with an ensemble of talented musicians. This performance is guaranteed to leave audiences with a sense of wonder as Hussain engages with stunning blends of native tones.
Festival du Bois

The Festival du Bois has now finished but this wood sculpture by Michel Campeau will remain as a tribute to the festival and to francophone culture in Mackin Park, Maillardville, Coquitlam, BC. It’s an eight-foot wooden sculpture of a lumberjack, carved from salvaged cedar wood. Eventually it will be painted and accompanied by a second sculpture of a young woman with a violin. Campeau is a Longueuil, Que. wood carver whose interest in carving began at the age of eight. He has practiced his art for 42 years and taught sculpture for almost 30 years. He has worked on projects in the House of Commons and helped to restore the chapel of the Sacred Heart of Notre-Dame in Montreal.

The Mammoth of Maillardville is less than three per cent of the general population. However, its francophone heritage is being revitalized by events such as the Festival du Bois, which attracts an average 15,000 visitors a year and raises between $10,000 and $15,000 for scholarships and bursaries. Heritage Square also has an outdoor theatre and museum as well as an old Canadian Pacific Railroad Station museum where many francophones arrived to live and work in Maillardville. Meanwhile, the city of Coquitlam is revitalizing the old Maillardville business district in partnership with all three levels of government. The focus will be on French Canadian heritage through the development of francophone businesses.

Don Richardson

Recipe by Selma van Halder

Bourani Banjan

The first time one of my Middle Eastern friends cooked me dinner I could’ve sworn she made an entire bottle of olive oil disappear into the dish. To be honest I expected it to be greasy, heavy and unpleasant, but none of that was the case. In my culinary upbringing, we were conservative with fats and often used margarine. Nutritional science has since evolved and after going to a French cuisine-based culinary school I now know better. Good food needs butter. Good Middle Eastern food needs olive oil. This Afghan eggplant dish will be a nice exercise in loosening your olive oil wrist. And you know what? Olive oil isn’t bad for you, either!

Ingredients
- olive oil
- salt
- 2 eggplants
- 3 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 2 tsp turmeric
dried chilli flakes to taste

Yoghurt sauce ingredients
- 1 cup Greek style yoghurt
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 bunch fresh mint

Method
1. Cut the eggplants into slices of about a centimetre thick. Discard the tops. Place the slices on a cooling rack and salt lightly on both sides. Let sit for about ten minutes to draw out moisture and bitterness. Pat dry with a paper towel.
2. Preheat oven to 350F.
3. Shallow fry the garlic, turmeric, and chilli flakes (if using) for about a minute. Add the tomatoes and simmer for about ten minutes to form a tomato sauce.
4. Turn the heat down to medium. Use your skillet with about two tablespoons of oil (discard the rest) to lightly fry the garlic, turmeric, and chilli flakes (if using) for about a minute. Add the tomatoes and simmer for about ten minutes to form a tomato sauce.
5. Meanwhile prepare the yoghurt sauce by combining yoghurt, grated garlic and chopped fresh mint in a bowl.
6. Layer your eggplant and tomato sauce into your oven safe baking dish. Finish with the last of your tomato sauce.
7. Bake in the oven for about 15 more minutes. Top with the yoghurt sauce and garnish with mint leaves. Serve with jasmine rice or flatbread.