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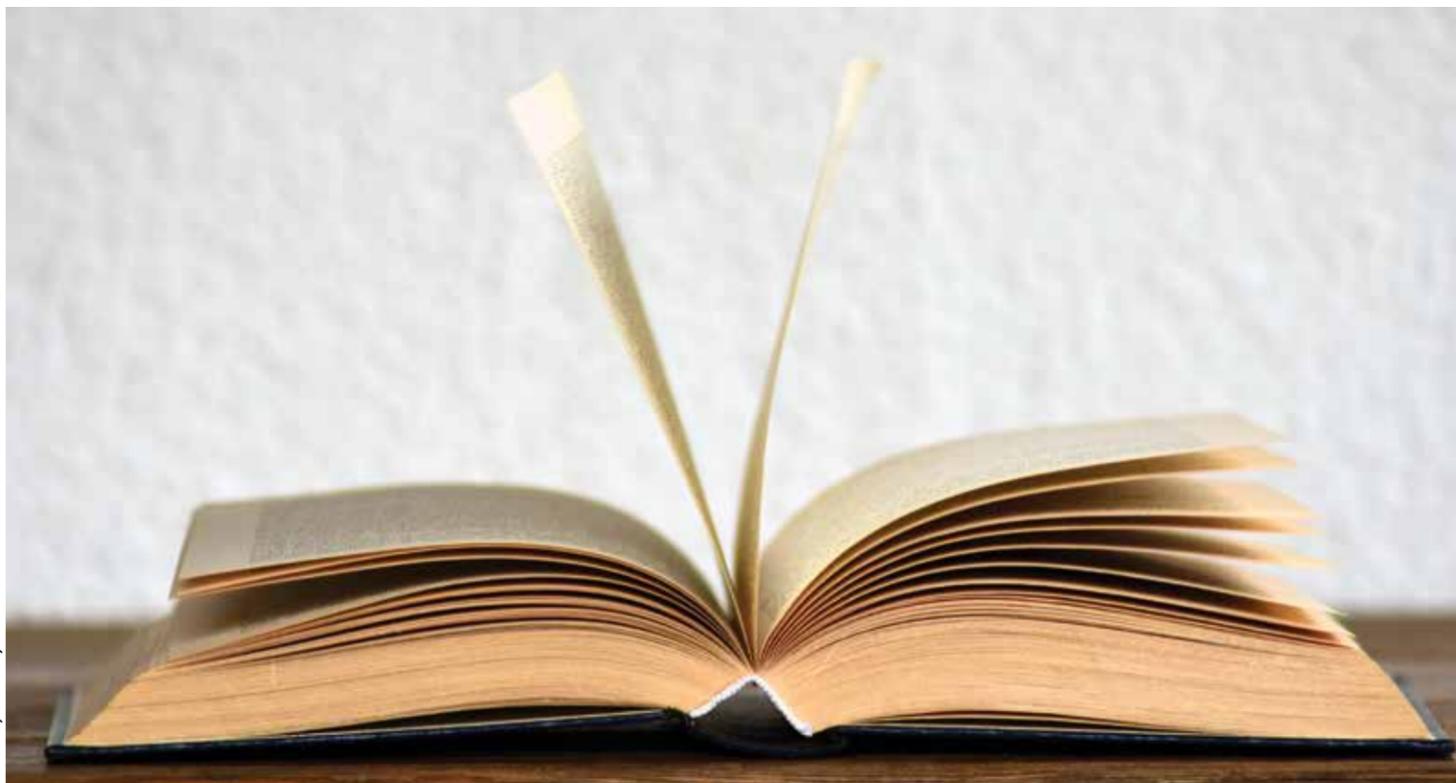
The Source

forum of diversity

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www.thelasource.com

Photo by Pixabay

Verbatim 

Love you, love you not

by FANNY TRICOIRE

When I look at you, walk along you, discover you, I have the song *Whirlwind* by Joseph, in mind. Vancouver, you surprise me but also throw me. You are both welcoming and recalcitrant. You open the door but do not let me in. You enthrall me by your lightness and your sweetness of life, and yet, your acrimony frustrates and upsets me.

You see me but do not recognize me. I'm like a commodity to you. A product whose value must be evaluated; warranted; approved. After four years spent living in the province of Quebec, I thought I had passed the test, showed my motivation, my determination, my ability to adapt. Indeed, I showed you, even demonstrated, that I chose this place as my new country.

As an explorer, I want to learn about you, explore you, discover you – my new home whose vastness fascinates me. So, I moved to meet you, and like the pioneers, my ancestors, I settled down my bags here to build a new future and create a new life. I am well aware that you are different, and this is one of the million reasons that drew me to establish myself in British Columbia. I was curious about this city that offers simultaneously a cosmopolitan life and a wild setting. Indeed, by learning to know you, by searching, I found that you are rich and alive. Culture access (musical, theatrical, gastronomic, etc.) is easy and affordable. The “icing on the cake” is an environment where nature is ubiquitous.

Thanks to you I'm growing up. Change. Resilience. These words have never made more sense in my life

See “Verbatim” page 6 >

An ever shrinking margin

by MATTHEW FRASER

Brian Lam (*Arsenal Pulp*), Rolf Maurer (*New Star Books*) and Allan Cho (*Rice Paper* magazine) are three of the Lower Mainland's leading publishers in Asian Canadian, POC and LGBTQ literature and arts. All three have seen the changes in both the market and challenges of previously marginalized artists, and have shared their insight into the past and near future of these works and the people who create them.

All three publishers have seen an internal evolution within the publishing and arts world where artists have begun to boldly step forward and consum-

previously marginalized communities feeling in a way that they now have permission to tell their stories. That has been very positive for the movement,” says

voice over the years and writers from those communities have found a place on our platform in particular, so I think things are looking up.”

“There is a lot of receptivity towards difference.

Rolf Maurer, *New Star Books*

ers have welcomed them with open arms.

An advancing era

“What we have seen in recent years is a new generation of

Lam. “Historically, there have been communities such as the Indigenous community and also trans writers [who felt ostracized], but I think both of those communities have found their

As these communities continue to push forward with their stories, the wider consumer public has made it clear that they wish to experience

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half of photography
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Cultural Spotlight



Photo courtesy of Coquitlam Heritage at Mackin House

A taste of Judaism

by COLLEEN ADDISON

It's the order of the day! Seder, meaning order, is a Jewish festival at which Jews (and privileged guests) eat ritual food and have conversation. One such upcoming dinner will give Jews and community members the chance to experience key elements of Jewish heritage, say Jennie Johnston and Sandra Hochstein.

The dinner is part of *Feasts of Coquitlam*, events put on by the Coquitlam Heritage Society (CHS) in connection with their year-long exhibit *Heirlooms and Treasure* currently taking place at Mackin house. This particular "feast" will be held Apr. 11 and will include a cooking lesson.

Herbs and heritage

"[The Heirlooms exhibit aims to show] the things we hand down through the generations," says Johnston, CHS program manager.

These things are sometimes physical objects and sometimes cultural aspects, Johnston explains.

"People don't realize how multicultural Coquitlam is," she says. "We have a meat grinder salvaged out of a [European] home destroyed during World War II and brought to Canada. [And we show] different ways of celebrating birthdays, recipes, dance, and stories."

Seder is a perfect mix of the physical and cultural, says Hochstein, the CHS board member who will be demonstrating her Jewish cooking skills and knowledge as host of the dinner.

There is a tangible object, a Seder plate, which rests in the middle of the table during the dinner.

"They're very beautiful," notes Hochstein. "They're [passed] down through families, glass art."

Found on that plate are many foods commemorating the Jewish exodus from Egypt, continues Hochstein. 3000 years ago, the Jews left their previous existence as slaves under an unnamed Pharaoh, and on Seder, this journey is brought to life.

"The sensory experience, seeing and tasting, brings back what the exodus [was] like," says Hochstein. "[There are] bitter herbs, usually grated horseradish mixed with beets and apple cider vinegar into a paste. It's strong; it'll bring tears to your eyes! It represents the bitterness of slavery. Another dish is called haroset; it's a sweet paste, represent[ing] the mortar used by slaves to build the pyramids."

Water and life

Although this food is made from traditional recipes, there are newer additions to the Seder plate that point to more recent retellings of Jewish history which include women, says Hochstein.

She explains that water can be placed on the table for Miriam, the Jewish woman who found a well in the desert at the time of the exodus.

Recent life can be represented as well.

"Many families add an orange to represent modern day liberation struggles, feminism, gay rights," she says. "[And] some families put an olive, a symbol of hope, for peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

Individual families can put their stamp too, Hochstein points out. Another traditional dish is a lamb shank bone, symbolizing sacrifices made by Jews under Pharaoh.

"My kids are vegetarian or vegan," says Hochstein. "So we've created a new Seder plate, where the lamb bone is replaced

by a roasted beet, [which] has that red blood look."

Passover participation

A key part of Seder dinner in particular and the Feasts of Coquitlam in general is audience participation, say Johnston and Hochstein.

"What is lovely about the Feasts is that people come in and ask a lot of questions; it's very interactive," says Johnston. "It's a sharing of the culture."

Hochstein clarifies that questions and responses are an established ritual at a Seder dinner.

"There's a tradition," she says, "that the youngest person has to ask four questions, [beginning with] 'why is this night different than all other nights?' [Seder] hinges on retelling the story."

Hochstein notes the dinner lends itself very well to friends who wish to learn, as this theme of strengthening communities is important in Jewish culture.



▲ Sandra Hochstein, CHS board member.

"For 3000 years, in the same lunar month, all Jews all over the world, regardless of their circumstances, sit down together," says Hochstein. "We tell the story; we eat the ritual food, and we celebrate."

For more information, please visit: www.coquitlamheritage.ca

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Women newcomers get job-ready skills to enter B.C.'s high-tech industry

by SUSAN HANCOCK

A partnership between Immigrant Services Society of B.C. (ISSofBC) and Emily Carr University of Art and Design invites women, immigrants and refugees to develop job-ready skills to support B.C.'s high tech sector.

"This program opened my eyes to the Canadian job market and workplace expectations," says Saba Farheen, a student currently enrolled in courses through TechWomen. "It's not only technical – it's English, it's what to say, what to expect from others, what to expect on the job. You learn so many things that can't be put into words."

A pre-employment program

Last fall, 10 women enrolled in Emily Carr's continuing education studies to complete web design courses such as Adobe suite, industrial design, architectural design and more. Access to these free courses were made possible through a tech training program called TechWomen, offered by ISSofBC.

TechWomen, a pre-employment program, encourages newcomers to upgrade their basic computer skills with Adobe suite and industrial design for re-entering the Canadian workforce or for building a career in the tech industry.

"Through industry dialogue we've been able to bring people together and make new things happen in terms of possibilities for different segments of the population who are underserved," says Kate Armstrong, artist, curator and director of Startland at Emily Carr University.

Startland is an initiative that supports creative projects, social ventures and entrepreneurship in art and design at Emily Carr. It was formed around the



▲ Tech jobs are in high demand.

same time approximately 3,000 Syrian refugees arrived in B.C., spurring conversations on how B.C.'s tech sector should be better equipped to support skilled workers emigrating from other countries. Through discussions with industry stakeholders, TechWomen was formed.

Skilled workers in tech industry in demand

Armstrong explains tech jobs are in high demand around the world, so filling these types of roles are competitive for B.C. based companies. A framework would benefit both businesses and immigrants entering the technology sector in B.C.

"Programs like TechWomen help facilitate and close gaps in recruiting skilled people for the B.C. tech industry," says Armstrong. "It gives people a chance to do what they want to do professionally, which is especially true for newcomers to Canada who have a background in technology, design, or as teachers. It's important for them to be able to flow into the sector in a way that makes sense, not do some other job."

Anitha Amarnath left India in 2017, immigrating to Canada with her husband and three-year-old son. She enrolled in TechWomen and gives credit to the program for helping her



▲ Kate Armstrong, director of Startland, Emily Carr University.

identify specific career goals to work towards. Amarnath took web design and development introductory courses and has now developed a professional website to support her resume and job search.

"All of the components of this program have helped me carve a path toward reaching my professional goals," says Amarnath. "The practical, activities-based learning has not only provided me with critical technical skills, but helped lay the foundation of understanding and engaging in Canadian culture and ways of interacting." ✍

Learn more at www.issbc.org

► "Literature" from page 1

more diversity in the literary world.

"I know that different people's stories have been garnering a lot of interest, and there is no question in my mind that it's been going on for quite a while now," says Maurer, who also volunteers in a bookstore. "Especially when writers get out of their own little neighbourhood, within the arts, writing and publishing community there is a lot of receptivity towards differences".



▲ Asian and other voices want to be heard.

The path is not easy and success is never guaranteed especially when up and coming artists clash against the big names of the genre.

"Kazuo Ishiguro and Haruki Murakami are now well-known Asian writers in the English-speaking world, but it's an uphill climb for Asian-Canadian writers despite being constantly told that they live in a land of opportunities and pluralistic values," Cho says. "The Canadian literary and publishing in-

dustry still has a long way to go, and this is indicative in the deflated hopes of many marginalized writers in the mainstream and lost in the wilderness of the Canadian literary world. There is a collective lack of understanding of diverse cultures by literary critics. The power of these few critics can arbitrarily decide which works will remain invisible."

New homes and new roles.

According to Lam, many smaller publishing houses have made themselves the best routes for local artists and storytellers.

"As far as we [at Arsenal Pulp] are concerned, I think there is ample room for Asian and other voices to be heard, especially with indie presses, though I can't speak for large multinational companies. [As far as] our indie publishing world is concerned those voices are more than welcome," he says

Cho also points to the history of various independent organizations furthering the cause of writers.

"I see concerted efforts such as the Asian-American Writers Workshop, Asian-Canadian

Writers Workshop and the Vancouver Asian Film Festival as attempts to give journalists/writers/cultural producers of Asian ancestry a spotlight to experiment and hone their crafts through a supportive network. They are still relatively recent organizations and are a temporary solution to a much larger issue at stake."

Still, he continues, new challenges emerge when these artists enter the wider industry.

"The success of Asian-Canadian writers has also produced a strange and unintended consequence of identity crisis among Asian-Canadian writers," he says. "Once an Asian-Canadian author has achieved status, they need to carefully choose the path that they take on the course of being a 'serious' writer in the Canadian literary mainstream without being held back by specific labels."

Cho believes some writers carefully shed their 'Asian-tag' in order to suit the marketability of their brand. In a way, it reflects what some have called the 'Bamboo-ceiling' (term first coined by Jane Hyun). He also sees a troubling trend that

Asian journalists in Canada are limited in their roles and are often reporting or writing about 'ethnic issues.'

"This is a complex issue, of course, and part of that could simply be the reason that Asian-Canadian writers are sometimes interested in narrowly writing and telling their stories about issues that deal with diversity within the mainstream," says Cho.

Shared experience and a well-lit path

When posed with the question of how an evolving industry will shape and groom new artists, Maurer looks to the past.

"I think that is part of the ongoing built-in tension that the arts have to resolve, that writers have to resolve," he says. "I think it's just a case of looking at someone with an experience parallel to yours and you learn from those people. Writers like James Baldwin and Franz Fanon have a lot to say to people of all backgrounds and descriptions but particularly to people whose lived experiences reflect the impact of colonialism." ✍

Philosophy of Fake News and the diffusion of disinformation

by SIDDHARTH BALA

A trio of philosophers will be discussing *The Philosophy of Fake News*, at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Public Square as part of the 2019 Community Summit.

Endre Begby, Ph.D., associate professor of philosophy at SFU, will hold a discourse with Regina Rini, Ph.D., Canada Research Chair in Moral and Social Cognition, Department of Philosophy at York University and Jennifer Nagel, Ph.D., professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto. Together, they invite the public to join in the conversation on April 17.

Begby intends to address the dichotomy behind the phenomenon termed as 'fake news' and the underlying mechanisms that



▲ Endre Begby, assistant professor of philosophy, SFU.

make it so easily permeable in today's news stream. In doing so, he intends to help the audience reevaluate attitudes that slander people who fall prey to such phenomena.

"One thing, to which philosophers can contribute, is to probe beyond or behind those initial appearances [of fake news] or look at those underlying mechanisms that information gets disseminated in [such as] peer networks, social media and so forth and see how it works," says Begby.

Defining 'fake news'

According to Begby, the overarching concept of 'fake news' can be split into two distinct phenomena.

"The first are the fabricated click-bait stories. You have people who are sort of specializing in creating false stories that involve real people, and they involve settings that have a feeling of familiarity and so on," he says.

The second phenomenon that comes under the banner of 'fake news' is when entire news organizations are deemed to be peddlers of fake news.

"From Donald Trump saying, 'Oh the New York Times is fake news etc.," says Begby, "you are trying to cast, not individual stories, but whole news organizations as peddlers of fake news."

People could be led to believe that the organization itself is dubious and, in the process, could also suspect that all the stories that are published are fake and



▲ Deconstructing fake news.

are agenda driven. In such cases, Begby states that they might not judge each individual story based on its actual merits.

How fake news permeates through society

The talk will focus on how (dis)information gets diffused in society and the underlying mechanisms as to how fake news is at times positively received by people.

"These phenomena [the two kinds of fake news] that we see these days work as well as they do because they are tailored to piggy-back on otherwise rational belief-forming processes," says Begby.

Begby further explains that it is not the individual's belief-formation process itself that is manipulated but the context in which the individual has to apply these processes. He adds that when people believe fake news, they use otherwise rational belief-formation processes but in a different context or information environment.

"We manipulate the information environment in which people operate. In a carefully manipulated information environment, even the most rational belief-forming process may output clearly false beliefs," he adds.

Begby also notes that social media platforms act as cata-

lysts for the accelerated inflow of such stories as it is now easier to share information in abundance through these arenas. Sharing of information through known contacts also lends some authority to the (dis)information being transmitted.

"You know maybe there is something to this because my friend retweeted or shared it – sort of gives it the stamp of approval," he says.

Understanding victims of fake news

"I do worry that people who are going to attend the talk aren't the people who necessarily will be highly susceptible to this kind of, say, click-bait stories or something like that," says Begby. "They are hostage to that kind of information. It's not their fault that they grow up in this kind of context."

The information environment itself is often manipulated and the belief-formation processes that are normally exercised would not yield the same results in a doctored environment or context.

"In that sense, I don't think it will do to simply dismiss people who believe in such things as just being plain old dumb," says Begby. ✍

For more information, please visit: www.sfu.ca/publicsquare/community-summit/2019-community-summit/philosophy-of-fake-news.html

Portrait of a poet: Natalie Lim

by PRACHI DIWAN

Natalie Lim, a Vancouver-born, Chinese-Canadian poet, won the 2018 CBC poetry prize with her first public poem submission: "Arrhythmia." This surprise success has encouraged her to continue to explore her heritage and share her work.

Lim explains that writing has always been part of her life, but that it was the discovery of spoken word YouTube videos that really persuaded her to finally put pen to paper in poetic form.

"The performances made me realize that poetry doesn't necessarily have to rhyme, and that the topics these artists covered were contemporary issues that I was able to connect to," says Lim. "For me, this opened the door to poetry, and I have been writing ever since."

Inspiration from disconnection

Until "Arrhythmia" Lim kept most of her work private, using poetry during high school as a platform for self-expression. With her award-winning poem, she began to dissect her feelings of disconnection to her Chinese culture.

"The feelings of not being able to connect to my culture through language or being able to communicate with my grandparents has been something I had been wrestling with for a while," she says. "I also had some thoughts and images related to the subject that I really wanted to talk about and the poem came out of that."

Stephen Collis, English professor and poet at SFU, encouraged her to add Chinese words to her poem.

"This helped me unlock the connection to my language," says Lim.

"Arrhythmia" is also a touching memento for Lim's family.

"My mom was the first person to read it in my family. She said 'this is really good but I didn't know that this could be poetry.. it doesn't rhyme!.' My grandparents understand that I won a prize and are super proud of me. I am close to getting a full Chinese translation done

of the poem for them to read," says Lim.

Future forward

As Lim enters her last semester as an English major at SFU, her long term focus is on a marketing/communications career in technology, but she says that poetry will always be a part of her life.

"I am always going to be writing," she says. "I will keep sharing my work as long as people want to read it!" she says jokingly.

Two of Lim's new poems are soon to be published in literary magazine *Honey & Lime*.

"I am very excited about these two poems!" she says. "One was inspired by Isabella Wang who is a local 18 year old poet, while the other was inspired by a visit to a class of grade 10s where I did a Q & A about writing poetry."

As for her advice for budding poets, Lim suggests they "read a lot of poetry, and listen to a lot of poetry – it is really amazing what you can learn from others. Then just keep writing and sharing your work!" ✍

For more information, please visit www.natalielim.ca



▲ Natalie Lim, author of "Arrhythmia."

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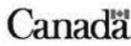
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One Girl, a film about beauty and diversity

by JESS CAUSBY

The 21st annual Reel to Real Film Festival for Youth presents culturally diverse films and documentaries, aiming to expose youth to new ideas and cultural perspectives. *One Girl*, a documentary offering a glimpse into the life of five girls from five different countries, fits exactly this aim.

"I wanted to show how diverse and beautiful the world is," explains Rosa Russo, director of *One Girl*.

One Girl will be showing at Vancity Theatre on Apr. 9 and 13.

A day in the life

Through her documentary, Russo shows an ordinary day in the lives of five girls, all living in dif-

ferent countries but along the same geographical meridian. Their lives vastly differ, from their education and lifestyle, to the challenges they face and dreams they have. It explores their schools, daily chores and how they play and interact with the world. Through their lives, *One Girl* aims to inspire viewers to have a better understanding of their own world.

Russo describes how "a friend showed me a video of a small boy who had to walk two hours to school every day, and when he got there he couldn't concentrate because he was starving."

"We always complain. When the bus is late, or the internet is slow, we complain," she explains.

Russo chooses to focus on the beauty of the world, and look into the beauty of little things," says Russo. Russo's mission fits well with that of the Reel to Real. This festival is designed to involve youth in both viewing and discussing professional films, through public screenings, workshops, panel discussions and public forums. Festival staff hope to expose young people to new ideas and perspectives, explore issues that are important to their generation and help them to gain an understanding of the art of filmmaking.

"I wanted to show how diverse and beautiful the world is."

Rosa Russo, director of *One Girl*

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choose. Even in the search for girls, the contrast in opportunities between the different countries was evident.

Russo and the Reel to Real

Originally from Italy, Russo started as an assistant director and went on to set up her own company with the help of friends. Due to difficulties in Italy with the film industry, Russo moved to London. There, she worked with independent producers doing films and documentaries alongside working on her own company. Russo is now an award-winning producer and director and her productions have been selected and awarded in the main film festivals around the world.



▲ From the movie *One Girl*.

Photo courtesy of Rosa Russo

Russo was inspired to create something which showed people how lucky they are and illustrate that what may seem like an ordinary life to some people, appears extraordinary to others. Through *One Girl*, she wanted to show the reality of the girls' lives, while also showing a contrast.

"Everything in film now is so huge with superheroes and things. I'm afraid that children won't know what is normal. I'm not against this kind of film, but we now rarely have films of normal people," she says.

Casting contrasts

The five girls, from Finland, Jordan, South Sudan, Romania and Turkey, each tell their own

"I want people to be able to see themselves as well as how diverse the world is, and look into the beauty of little things," says Russo.

Russo's mission fits well with that of the Reel to Real. This festival is designed to involve youth in both viewing and discussing professional films, through public screenings, workshops, panel discussions and public forums. Festival staff hope to expose young people to new ideas and perspectives, explore issues that are important to their generation and help them to gain an understanding of the art of filmmaking.

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Photo by Emiliano Leyva



When magic comes to town

by RAMAN KANG

It's a tale with a twist! Theatre professionals Amaranta Leyva and Kim Selody are working hard to retell the most magical of all stories, fairy tales. And these stories are a little different than you're used to.

"The heart of the play is the message," says Leyva, lead actor in *Jack and the Magic Bean*. It's a different message than usual. In this re-imagined story, director Selody explores the need for sustainability rather than money.



Photo by Emiliano Leyva

▲ In *Jack and the Magic Bean* the audience plays its part.

Jack and the Magic Bean will be shown at the Presentation House Theatre from Apr. 11–28.

Taking care of the land

The big theme of the play is sustainability. Written by Linda A. Carson, this version of the fairytale stars Jackie as the working class hero, instead of Jack, played by Leyva.

"The story starts because the land that Jackie and her father live on is dead, so nothing grows," says Leyva. "Kids are growing up with the idea that money is very easy to get and spend, so for me, when I knew the treasure for Jackie was knowledge, that was big."

The play emphasizes the value of actions, rather than material goods, Leyva notes. When Jackie's father needs to sell their land in order to make money for the family, Jackie decides to sell her toys to help.

This was a very important moment for Leyva when presenting the play in Mexico.

"The moment of being poor is what starts the story; it's very moving because in Mexico we have many communities that are very poor," she says.

What Jackie soon learns is that money doesn't last and what she really needs is the knowledge to make her land grow again.

"In this world and in this moment where everything goes to material things, to make the treasure in this story be knowl-

edge; that is very important," she says.

A twist on a classic

The play is a result of the close working partnership between Leyva and Selody. After meeting at a festival where they presented their own plays, the two theatre professionals liked each

"I was so scared, I didn't want to act in the beginning, the interaction with kids is more direct if you do it by acting than with puppets," she explains.

By acting Leyva realized she was making a different connection to the audience and couldn't treat the audience as a whole, but rather as individuals.

theatre he calls guide and play because kids are guided and are free to play in the show," she says.

When Leyva's character is given a magic bean by a gardener, she needs the audience's help to believe in magic and push the story forward. Through dancing, fighting, getting scared and coming together, the audience

“ In this world and in this moment where everything goes to material things, to make the treasure in this story be knowledge; that is very important.

Amaranta Leyva, theatre professional

other's work so much that they decided to collaborate on some projects.

Leyva travelled with her team, from Mexico to Canada to train a local cast in Vancouver to perform her play, *Sleeping Beauty Dreams*, in English and Selody went to Mexico to put *Jack and the Magic Bean* together which is now coming to Vancouver.

Usually Leyva remains hidden from audiences during her plays as she is a puppeteer, but for this role she is putting her puppets away and facing audiences head on.

"As Jackie, I need to be there in the moment and be present with the kids, you can't see kids as a whole group, every kid in the audience is different and thinks differently and you have to know what to do with each of them," says Leyva.

Points for participation

In *Jack and the Magic Bean*, because the audience is encouraged to participate, that connection becomes even more important.

"It's very funny and very novel. [Selody] works with this way of

helps Jackie get to the land of the giant.

This emphasis on participation helps the audience understand the power to change circumstances.

"Because Jackie's life hasn't been easy, it's important we get the kids to believe in magic. Moment[s] ha[ve] to be very sincere because kids need to believe in magic. They have to believe that Jackie needs [and can use] their help," says Leyva. ✂

For more information, visit www.mpmgarts.com

► "Verbatim" from page 1

than since I moved here. Of your rules, codes, habits and customs, I understand the merits and origins. But why are you asking me to change so much? Why don't you take advantage of my individuality? Why do you stand so "cold and conservative" in the light of my past? I observe you and see behind your communication, your speeches that accept my origins, but still ask me to start all over again as though I were a stranger. From this paradox ensues enriching, surprising, praising,

unique experiences, encounters and walks.

And at the same time, I take root a little more every day, because I love you. Thanks to you again, I learn more about who am I. I reinvent myself sometimes in pain. However, I forget everything when I meet your true nature – the beaches, the smiles of the people, the love your residents express for you.

And I think that in your way, you love me too, because you put on my side caring people who support me and back me up in the construction of our relationship.



Photo by Luke Miller

▲ Vancouver, beautiful and recalcitrant.

Of the definition of "my paradise," you are close to it and its opposite in many ways. We learn to tame each other, to build a common purpose and a team that will allow each other to flourish. I'm pretty sure of it.

We are on the road to achieve something together. Something that will allow each of us to find our place and live together.

Let's walk hand in hand, ignore our accepted ideas and "prejudiced" ideas, and please Vancouver, take my hand, accept my love. ✂

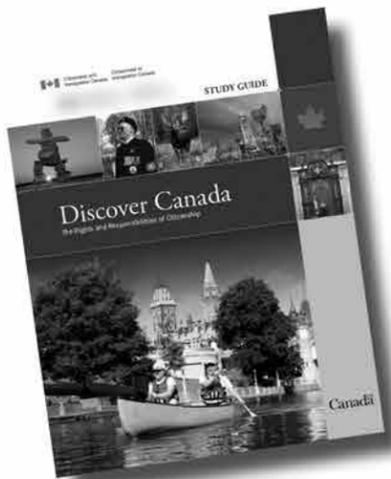
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Performance photography from India

by KATY SWAINSON

A major exhibition of Indian photography exploring gender, religion, and sexual identity will open at the Vancouver Art Gallery on Apr. 19. And will run till Sept. 2.

Moving Still: Performative Photography in India has been three years in the making, with Diana Freundl, associate curator of Asian Art at Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) meeting Critical Collective's Gayatri Sinha while in Delhi, India. Sinha's renowned group does work to build knowledge of the arts in India. Both curators share an interest in photographic art, which led to them talking about co-curating an exhibition together.

"...photography can explore dimensions that other media cannot because it allows the artist to appear as auteur, narrator, and actor, who can subvert the image or the icon, and render it in an entirely different context and time frame," says Sinha.

One hundred and fifty years of photography

Both curators also share the view that photography has an important place in Indian art and its history.

"A lot of self-taught photographers embraced the camera from very early on in India," says Freundl. "These artists were reading, studying, and establishing photographic societies soon after the invention of the camera and their work took on a very local vernacular."

The art they have included in the exhibition is self-consciously performative. The images are



▲ Pushpamala N, *Sunhere Sapne (Golden Dreams)*, 1998, hand-tinted black and white photograph

staged and the people featured know they are being photographed. How they choose to present themselves and their surroundings says a lot about how they see themselves in the world around them.

"Very early in its history, the photograph demonstrated the ability to 'perform' and create contexts of wish fulfilment," says Sinha. "People turned to the photograph in popular studios to create identities of who they aspired to be, rendering the photograph as a document removed from the quotidian."

The exhibition shows the different forms this performance has taken during over 150 years of photography in India. Some of the earliest works include never before displayed pieces from the 'Photographer Prince', Sawai Ram Singh II, the Maharaja of Jaipur from 1835 to 1880, who photographed his staff and visitors against elaborate backdrops.

Timeless issues

Later works are more pronounced in using performance



▲ Tejal Shah, *Between the Waves—Outer*, 2013, mixed media collage, digital prints on archival rag paper.

Photo courtesy of Tejal Shah



▲ Gauri Gill, *Untitled from Acts of Appearance series*, 2015–ongoing, archival pigment print.

Photo courtesy of Gauri Gill

to explore difficult areas of identity.

Sunil Gupta's exploration of gay life and immigration is shown in *Sun City* (2011), whilst nostalgic, hand-tinted photographs are used by Pushpamala N to examine family, class, and fantasy in *Sunhere Sapne (Golden Dreams)* (1998).

"The photographs on view mark explorations of identity that are gendered and sexual, as well as in the realm of religion and sectarian affiliation," says Sinha. "They use the tropes of popular culture, Bollywood, and performance to affect gender swaps, role play, and identity formation for a viewership that knows the contextual references."

Freundl feels that the works are all tied together by "timeless issues that in many ways are all the more relevant today".

"Sexual politics and gender identity are issues that have been contested or perceived politically and socially for centuries. The difference now is that artists who self-identify with LGBTQIA communities are not just being given a platform to exhibit their work," she says "but platforms also allow viewers to explore more progressive themes."

VAG is making sure that these platforms extends beyond the existing artworks. It is running a series of curator and artist talks, along with commissioning local artist Sandeep Johal to create new artwork installations in the niches of the gallery building.

"One of the things we're very aware of is that it's not just about the India that's there," says Freundl, "but the intercultural connections with South Asian visual culture that's here in Vancouver." ☞

Find out more information here:
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

Väsen: a new take on Swedish folk music

by CURTIS SEUFERT

The Swedish acoustic trio Väsen, celebrating their 30th anniversary this year, has developed their own spin on traditional Swedish Folk music over the last three decades, lending what they feel is a virtuosic level of rhythmic and melodic complexity to their both their studio albums and live performances. The Rogue Folk Club, will present the trio at St. James Hall on Apr. 13.

"I'd say that we want to bring the audience into our world of music and give them a bit of the experience we have when we play this music," says Olov Johansson, nyckleharpist and cofounder of Väsen. "In the [better] moments, someone in the band does something that surprises others in a good way, like a pleasant surprise. And in the absolute best moments, you manage to surprise even yourself."

An interest in tradition

Johansson co-founded Väsen nearly 30 years ago in Sweden with his friends and fellow performers Roger Tallroth (12-string guitar) and Mikael Marin (5-string viola). The trio has been composing and performing their own complex brand of folk music – informed heavily by Swedish tradition – for the last three decades, performing around the world and recording more than a dozen albums.

For Johansson, an interest for the folk music of his home country was piqued early on. While

whether it was a simple case of happenstance.

"I've asked [my mother] several times if she planned this – to have me play the *nyckelharpa*, – by buying one by herself, and she refused to answer that. She's clever," says Johansson.

Inspired composition

Johansson would have nearly a decade to practice with the *nyckelharpa* on his own before forming Väsen with Tallroth and Marin. Nowadays, however, the trio couldn't be more in tune with one another. Johansson says that with each member contributing to the writing and composing process, the trio has learned over time how to inspire each other to create fun yet complex and multi-layered music.

"We kind of discovered more and more what music we should compose for this band to make it interesting, to kind of challenge each other," says Johansson. "I remember, in the beginning when I started to compose, especially for Väsen, I was trying to compose the music in such a way that others would get ideas from the tunes."

For Väsen, the inspiration regularly comes from playing off of tradition. One of the members will often start the songwriting process by riffing off of or using a traditional Swedish melody or rhythm as a basis for the song. From there, the structure of the tune becomes more dense, as layers and sections are continually added, and the various sonic ranges are carved out for each performer and their instrument.

But as much as the trio puts time and diligence into their



Photo by Sarah Thorén

▲ Väsen trio bring the sounds of Swedish folk music.

no one in his family played music professionally, Johansson would always look forward to family gatherings as a child where one could always expect an exciting jam session.

"I really enjoyed that. I looked forward to those occasions, I remember, when I was small. And I joined early too with whatever kind of music I could make at the time," says Johansson. "And then one of my maternal uncles, he played the fiddle and the *nyckelharpa*, so through him I met this instrument."

His mother was equally enamored with the Swedish fiddle variant so she ended up buying one for herself, which Johansson ended up taking to. He says that's how it all started for him, though he's always questioned

craft, in the end he says it's about creating music that's both enjoyable to perform and to listen to.

"We have always composed and developed the music we enjoy to play, [that] we think is fun to play. We've never had the thought, 'what should we compose to get a lot of airplay, or to get a lot of people to buy our records?'," says Johansson. "We've always managed to play the music we think is fun to play. And enough people enjoy that too, so we've been able to keep on doing this for 30 years." ✍

For more information on the event and Väsen, visit the following sites: www.roguefolk.bc.ca/concerts/ev19041320 www.vasen.se



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Kobo Town

Colourful Caribbean stories through music

by XI CHEN

Kobo Town, winner of multiple music awards including the prestigious Juno award, will be performing at the Wise Hall on Apr. 16. The event is organized by Caravan World Rhythms, a non-profit organization that promotes music from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Founded and fronted by Toronto-based Trinidad singer Drew Gonsalves, Kobo Town is named after the historical neighbourhood in Port of Spain, Trinidad where calypso music was born.

Storytelling with calypso

The root of this music genre is traced far back to the arrival of African slaves who, not being allowed to speak with each other, communicated through song. Other music authorities also cited the genre's European influence, particularly from medieval French troubadours. In recent history, the music further evolved as a way of spreading news around in Trinidad.

According to Gonsalves, modern calypso is the folk music of urban Trinidad, but it has always drawn on outside influences, from big band and jazz in the 1930s and 40s to funk and disco in the 1970s and 80s. "For me, the calypsonian is a singing newspaperman commenting on the events of the day, with an attitude halfway between a court jester and griot," he says.

With a music tradition that is rich in storytelling, Kobo Town's songs are often a perfect mix of danceable rhythms and poetic, witty lyrics.

"The songs are either stories or paintings in words. Some of my songs are just telling the stories of Caribbean histories, some others try to evoke sights, smells, sounds and places that have some sort of importance to me," says Gonsalves.

Guayaguare, a song in Kobo Town's award-winning album *Where the Galleon Sank*, was inspired by a remote desolate beach in southeastern coast of Trinidad where Christopher Columbus was said to have made the first contact with the country on his third voyage.

"Like the lifting of a sunken ship from the ocean bed, many of these songs aim to raise to the surface some of our hidden past: at exploring, lamenting and celebrating our history and the uncertain legacy it has bestowed on our islands and their people," Gonsalves writes in a note that explains the inspiration behind the album.

He says his own creative process is also similar to ocean waves:

"It is rather random - I know others are more disciplined. I need to wait for the waves in order to do anything; sometimes it comes and sometimes it takes a while," he says.

Citing diverse musical influences from reggae and ska, all the way to British rock bands



Photo by Paul Wright

▲ Trinidad born, Toronto-based Drew Gonsalves sings songs of calypso.

such as the Beatles, Gonsalves says he tries to include many new elements to interpret and reinvent calypso music. Trinidad itself is also very interesting culturally with people from all over the world, says the musi-

cian, he himself being of Portuguese descent.

Music with international recognition

Gonsalves has been a musician since his teenager years, pick-

ing up a guitar at age 11. He moved to Canada at the age of 13 after a bitter family breakup and sought comfort in music during the initial difficult adjustment to a new life. Prior to fully embarking on a music career, he was a school teacher for two years after studying history in university.

Gonsalves put Kobo Town together in 2004 with some of the band members he met way back in high school; he says the band of six has a great repertoire of skills including guitar, drums, flute, saxophone and bass.

"We all met from different circumstances. I feel blessed to be surrounded by these great musicians and, more so, they are amazing people," he says.

The band debuted in 2006 with the album *Independence* and quickly became a crowd favourite on the festival circuit. They released their second album *Jumbie in the Jukebox* in 2013 and with it achieved international fame as the album reached number one on the European world music charts. Their third release *Where the Galleon Sank*, 2017, won a Canadian Folk Music Award that year and the Juno World Music Album of the Year the following year. The band is currently recording their fourth album. ✍

To learn more about Kobo Town, visit www.rootsrockcalypso.com

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Cultural Calendar

April 9–23, 2019

by SIMON YEE

I hope everyone is enjoying their April so far. With the flowers and trees in bloom, the weather getting warmer and the long Easter weekend, there is much to see and do outside in Vancouver. But of course, there are plenty of indoor events to keep you busy: theatre plays, music festivals and orchestras, art exhibitions and more! Also, Earth Day is on April 22 – be sure to celebrate by conserving energy or planting a flower or two!

Elements Film Festival

Apr. 8–14
Telus World of Science, Vancouver
www.scienceworld.ca/elements-film-festival

The Elements Film Festival is a showcase of the best environmental films from British Columbia, Canadian and international filmmakers. There is something for all ages, featuring wildlife, conservation and political action films, special events, guest speakers and expert discussion panels. In the daytime program there will be Science Theatre Shorts, Omnimax Theatre Features and special guest panels. In the evening program there will be a series of beautiful feature films that showcase incredible places on our planet and the people working hard to save them; there will also be special guests and keynote speakers who shine a spotlight on the wonders of nature and humanity as part of nature.

Chilliwack Tulip Festival

Apr. 10–May 5
41310 Yale Rd, Chilliwack
www.chilliwacktulipfest.com

The cherry blossom isn't the only flower around! Why not visit the Chilliwack Tulip Festival, Western Canada's largest and most recognized tulip festival returning for the 13th time. Roam through 20 acres of tulip fields set against a Dutch-themed countryside. Check out handmade floral mosaics, a traditional windmill, tractor rides, kids' crafts and more. There will also be food trucks onsite, serving traditional Dutch foods including stroop waffles. For more information, please check out the festival's website.

qa? y xw – water honours us: Womxn and Waterways

Apr. 10–Oct. 2
Bill Reid Gallery, Vancouver
www.billreidgallery.ca

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art will present *qa? yəxw – water honours us: Womxn*



▲ Celebrate spring in full color at the Tulip Festival in Chilliwack.

and *Waterways* from Apr. 10 to Oct. 2. The exhibit features video, photography, carving, printmaking, beading and performance by artists affiliated with various Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast and the interior of British Columbia. Each of the artists in the exhibit considers a unique experience with the life-giving element of water and creates innovative works based on culturally specific practices. The show honours the important role of Indigenous women on the coast, both past and present, in a timely investigation amid ongoing debates about pipelines and Indigenous rights. *qa? yəxw* is a *hənqəminəm* expression that means "water honours us." For more information, please check out the gallery's website.

Is Social Media Destroying Democracy?

Apr. 11, 7–9 p.m.
Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch
www.sfu.ca/sfu-community/events.html#!/view/event/event_id/4872

Democracy, the fundamental idea that an individual can express their personal choices through a vote, hangs in the balance. But is social media a tool that informs and unites, or is it responsible for deeper divisions and a more polarized society? Are misinformation, digital propaganda, algorithmic biases and campaign hacking scandals determining the results of our elections? What role can public policy play in regulation – will regulation even work – and can we save our democracy before it's too late? Don't miss this Oxford-style debate on Apr. 11 at the VPL Central Branch.

Cristina Pato Quartet

Apr. 11, 8 p.m.
Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC, University Endowment Lands
www.chancentre.com

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts will present the sensational sounds of the Cristina Pato Quartet 8 p.m. on April 11. Cristina Pato is a musical force, skillfully playing at the edges of jazz, classical, Latin and world music with a tightly knit, synergistic band featuring Julien Labro on accordion, Edward Perez on double bass and Mauricio Zottarelli on percussion. The multi-talented Pato can be heard in collaboration with musicians from around the world, including Yo-Yo Ma and the supergroup Silkroad Ensemble. There will also be a number of ancillary events around town related to Pato, including a film screening and pre-show talk. Check out the Chan Centre's website for more information.

Sakura Days Japan Fair

Apr. 13–14, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
VanDusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver
www.vcbf.ca

As part of the annual Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival (VCBF), explore a bit of Japan at the Sakura Days Japan Fair, a favourite family-friendly fair featuring traditional food, cultural arts and performances. Experience the special ritual of the Japanese tea ceremony, watch culinary demonstrations, enjoy Japanese festival food, sample premium sake, take guided Tree Talks and Walks to the cherry trees and listen to haiku readings. There will also be hands-on workshops in calligraphy, origami and other Japanese arts and crafts demonstrations.

Check out the VCBF's website for more information.

Omer Arbel: Particles for the Built World

Apr. 13–June 16
Surrey Art Gallery
www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/28790.aspx

Experimentation drives artist Omer Arbel's art and design practice. He manipulates basic materials by applying heat, force, pressure, electricity or movement to achieve surprising results. *Particles for the Built World*, on display at the Surrey Art Gallery until June 16, focuses on Arbel's experiments with concrete over the past five years. What if we poured concrete into fabric forms rather than plywood boxes or tube columns used in most building construction? The astonishing results are on display in this exhibit. Celebrate the launch of the exhibit at an opening reception where Arbel will be part of an artist conversation with Gallery Curator Jordan Strom, kicking off at 6:30 p.m. on the evening of Apr. 13.

Mariza

Apr. 17, 8 p.m.
Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC, University Endowment Lands
www.chancentre.com

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts will present Portugal's brightest star Mariza at 8 p.m. on Apr. 17. The internationally lauded fadista – a performer of Portugal's traditional soul music, fado – will showcase brand new material from her recently released eponymous album, her seventh studio recording, produced by Spain's Javier Limón, the singer's.



Photo courtesy of Chan Centre

▲ Musical Mariza: the Portuguese singer presents an evening of fado.

Effortlessly effusing passion, joy and nostalgia, the talented vocalist will weave her impressive vocal range and commanding stage presence into a deeply moving and memorable evening of music. Please check out the Chan Centre's website for tickets and more information.

Surrey Vaisakhi Parade

Apr. 20, 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Gurdwara Sahib Dasmesh Darbar Temple, Surrey
www.surreyvaisakhiparade.com

The annual Vaisakhi Parade, taking place on Apr. 20, will once again host a lively and celebratory event to mark the birth of the Sikh faith. The parade is expected to draw in excess of 300,000 people to the community to celebrate and enjoy one of the most important elements of the annual event: the amazing foods of India. Each year hundreds of local businesses and individual families present free food offerings to the crowd in celebration of the Parade. For more information about the event including the parade route, check out the parade's website.



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