

Chinese farmers cultivate a tradition of adaptability
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1999-2014

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Laughing outside the box: exploring the cultural specificity of humour

by SONJA GRGAR

Canada has a vibrant comedy scene whose face, both nationally and here in Vancouver, is changing to include an increasing number of comedians from minority communities: many are first generation individuals who primarily identify with their Canadian upbringing, and assume somewhat of an outsider position to their culture of origin, which nevertheless uniquely informs their comedic output.

Though only 27 years old, Sunee Dhaliwal has been a professional standup comedian for seven years, and is a rising star on both the Vancouver and Canadian comedy circuits.

"My background influences my comedy a lot. My parents are so traditionally Indian, and I grew up Canadian, so I notice a lot of differences in how they go about things," he says.

Though Dhaliwal's Punjabi-born parents are supportive of his career path, they are not always certain how to describe his profession to relatives and friends.

"Being a comedian is not a sought-out position in Indian culture. In fact, there is no word in Punjabi that means comedian," he says.

Dhaliwal, who describes his comedic style as energetic and informed by his life experiences, feels that his humour sensi-



▲ Sunee Dhaliwal's energetic brand of humour is influenced by his Punjabi background.

bilities are more Canadian than Indian.

He says that East Indian culture is conservative, and that

Punjabi humour has a tendency to be light, and not to tolerate crude nor provocative jokes. When he performs for mostly

Punjabi audiences, Dhaliwal slightly modifies his act to accommodate those sensibilities.

In front of culturally mixed audiences, he tends not to highlight his heritage heavily because he doesn't want to be fitted into the ethnic comedian box. However, he doesn't leave out certain Indian-inspired material regardless of the audience profile. For example, Dhaliwal jokes that though he is only 27, in Punjabi culture – which favours marrying early – he is considered to be 52 years old because he is still unmarried.

The outsider factor

Vancouver-based comedian Paul Bae, 45, moved to Canada from South Korea as a young child.

"[My Korean heritage] informs my comedy in the sense that, to some degree, it has made me an outsider. Most comedians have that perspective which allows them to observe things from a distance and from different points of view," he says.

In addition to the outsider paradigm, Bae says that Koreans have a strong oral tradition which has fed his own comedic writing talents.

"I've had it explained to me that Koreans are like the Irish of Asia: we've never colonized, but have been colonized, which has forced us to use humour as a survival technique. And due to this history of subjugation, we've become good storytellers," he says.

See "Cultural Humour" page 3 >

Verbatim

Embarrassed by your foreign accent?

by JUSTINE MALLOU

Foreign is the adjective which best describes the ambiguous feeling that came over me after the first rush of adrenaline faded. Add "er" and you have foreigner, which is what I am every time I enter a new country. I did not know that this one would become what I now call home, ten years after arrival. My inner identity remains hidden,

“Language is not just about communication but a reaching out to everything outside of our comfort zone.

an irresistible force makes me suppress my foreign accent; a force which leads me to be like everyone else. But at what cost? Each strand of our DNA provides our own particular ethno-cultural identity that can belong to no one else. To live in Vancouver only highlights this reality, don't you think?

I am a Francophile Filipina-Canadian, born in Makati – one of the sixteen cities that make up Metro Manila in the Philippines. I spent the first twelve years of my life in the nearby town of Parañaque. At the age of 3 I was attending an international Christian school where I grew up in an environment that embraced different nationalities; I formed a social network while discovering numerous other cultures. Like most of my peers I grew up speaking two languages: Tagalog at home as well as English at school. One might say, "It's nothing special", being bilingual in such a diverse multicultural community. Not until the age of 12 did I start

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A short history of Chinese farming in the Lower Mainland

by AUDREY TUNG

The Chinese community of the early 20th century played an integral role in Vancouver's agricultural industry. Urban development has lowered regional food security, and BC's agricultural land may be further undermined if the provincial government's proposed changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) are realized. Although the Lower Mainland's Chinese agricultural community has diminished over the years, the rising popularity of urban gardening marks a resurrection to old ways of adapting to a changing landscape.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, former peasant farm-

Chinese," says Lai Man Kam, a citizen service representative for the City of Vancouver – and prospective gardener.

Because she is unable to cultivate vegetables in her backyard, due to townhouse restrictions, she is considering renting a plot at the King George Park community garden.

"I don't own a plot here yet. I came here just to check it out, and this looks like an exciting opportunity," says Kam. "Before, I grew some strawberries and herbs in my old backyard; but I'm not allowed to garden, now that I've moved to a townhouse. Community gardens seem like a great idea, especially for people who don't have access to a backyard."

The organic lifestyle afforded by gardening appeals to Kam.

"Food from the supermarket is

were forced to sell their produce cheap.

Locally-sourced Chinese crops

The loss of agricultural land in the Lower Mainland has had a negative impact on food security (the degree to which access to food is guaranteed). A 2010 Vancouver Food Policy Council reports that BC's self-sufficiency in fruits dropped from 72 to 49 per cent, and self-sufficiency in cereals plunged from 267 to 54 per cent.

Notwithstanding the increase in imported fruits, Chinese vegetables sold in Vancouver's grocery stores often remain locally sourced.

"All of our vegetables are local – many from Langley and Surrey," says Ming Ho, manager of New Hong Kong Supermarket.

Despite the threat of urbanization, he is confident BC's agricultural land will be preserved.

"Luckily, a lot of farmland in the Lower Mainland is protected by the provincial Agricultural Land

Spencie's View

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Reserve," explains Ho. "According to the law, a certain amount of land must remain farmland."

Although the BC government is currently seeking major changes to the ALR, he remains optimistic about the situation.

"I don't think it'll change much because agriculture is important to BC," says Ho.

Long wait lists, of up to three years, for community garden

plots in the Lower Mainland indicate a high demand for urban agriculture. As a result, Vancouver (as part of its Greenest City 2020 plan) has established a target of 5,000 community garden plots by 2020. Similarly, Richmond's legislated 2041 Official Community Plan, in response to high demand, set an objective of developing new community gardens around the city. **E**



▲ King George Park Community Garden.

ers from China – in search of a better life – flocked to the fertile lands of the Fraser Valley. Because farming was an occupation familiar to them, many were drawn to the burgeoning agricultural industry.

More recent encroachment of urbanization and urban sprawl on agricultural lands has threatened the Chinese agricultural community. According to a 2005 Statistics Canada report, half of Canada's urbanized land in 2001 was located on formerly dependable agricultural land.

From commercial to urban farming

Although commercial agriculture is threatened to a certain extent, with the increasing popularity of community gardens and backyard-grown produce, urban farming is beginning to gain traction among the Chinese community.

"In the spring, I attended a vegetable gardening class at the Richmond Community Centre. Many class members were

probably covered in pesticides, but organic food is expensive. If I could grow some of my own food, I wouldn't have to worry about that as much," says Kam.

Cultivating a piece of history

According to a 2011 Simon Fraser University study, Chinese immigrants produced 90 per cent of BC's vegetables by 1921.

Familiarity with the agricultural lifestyle, though, proved elusive as Chinese immigrants not only adapted their farming practices – from one of small-scale subsistence farming to one of industrial-scale agriculture – but also navigated the difficulties of living in a new country.

"It was a lot of work, dawn to dusk. I remember my mum out there with a kerosene lamp hung on a pole harvesting stuff for the next day," recalls Ken Yip, in a video produced for the Chinese Canadian Stories project.

The success and proliferation of Chinese farmers provoked discrimination from society at large. In 1935, the introduction of the Vegetable Marketing Act made it difficult for Chinese farmers to distribute their produce with ease, leading to the violent arrests of several Chinese farmers who did not adhere to regulations. To stay afloat in a competitive market, Chinese farmers



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Women find guiding light in Shashi Assanand

by RIYAH LAKHANI

Domestic violence is an issue that plagues many women and communities, and Shashi Assanand has founded the Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society (VLMMFSS) to specifically tackle domestic violence in immigrant populations. The VLMMFSS uses language and culture as tools to make domestic violence counseling services more accessible to immigrants and refugees struggling with cultural and language barriers.

Assanand knows the plight of being a refugee all too well. She recalls how, in 1972, the South Asian community in Uganda was given a three-month deadline to get out of the country, leaving behind frozen bank accounts, seized properties and shattered dreams. The Ugandan exodus forced her and her family to abandon their well-structured lives to flee to Canada with very little to their name. Now director of the VLMMFSS, Assanand says her experiences as a refugee have given her a unique insight to establish a successful model for immigrant women and children who have had to struggle with domestic violence.

"Both as an immigrant and a refugee I felt the loss. As an im-

migrant you have the time to say goodbye and you make a decision to leave the country. When you are a refugee, you have no choice, you just have to leave."

Refugees face the burden of trying to reestablish their lives in a foreign culture with language barriers and little or no community support, a challenging task for even the strongest of hearts.

Applying her experiences to help others

Assanand began her career as a social worker for the Immigration Service Center, primarily dealing with cases affecting the South Asian community. There,

she found that she was making great progress.

"People accepted me as a worker," she says.

Assanand saw positive changes in the manner in which people

relatability, in 1991 Shashi established the VLMMFSS with the collaboration of social services and the B.C. Ministries of Justice and Education, as well as transition houses. The VLMMFSS focuses

a sense of community and an intrinsic support system for the women.

Now in its 24th year, the society helps approximately 1,600 women and children annually,

“There is a lot of reluctance accepting that a woman is equal to a man.

Sashi Assanand, activist

related to her because of their shared culture. As the cultural boundaries were broken, she was able to work successfully in ways that a social worker from a different cultural background may have not been able to.

Noting the success of cultural

on counseling women and children facing domestic and sexual abuse, utilizing culture and language as tools. The society offers services in 24 different languages, allowing women and children to share their stories and receive counseling in their native tongue, thus making information more likely to be communicated successfully. The cultural diversity offered by VLMMFSS also helps women understand that domestic abuse isn't something that is culturally specific.

"There is a sense of denial, not just in immigrant communities, but in all communities. There is a lot of reluctance accepting that a woman is equal to a man. There are control issues in the relationship and that's why domestic violence occurs. It is something that happens across all cultures," Assanand explains.

Understanding that what they are experiencing is something experienced across all cultural borders is an important step for immigrant women. This creates

garnering Assanand awards like the 2014 YWCA Women of Distinction Award for Community Building and the MOSAIC Human Rights Award, among others. However, there wasn't always open dialogue in the media and ethnic communities about domestic violence because of fear of stigmatization.

"When I started talking in the mainstream media, I was criticized by community media for 'washing their dirty linen in public,'" says Assanand.

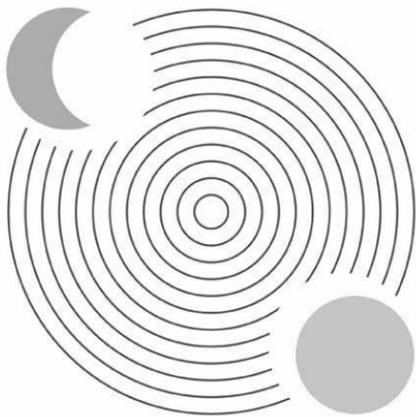
The lack of reliable statistics is another struggle for Assanand and her mission. According to her, there are a lot of domestic violence cases that go unreported for fear of stigmatization by the community, as well as the unavailability of recording systems in languages other than French and English.

Through Assanand's hard work and liaison with governmental and non-governmental agencies, we may be a step closer to combating domestic violence. ✎



▲ Shashi Assanand (right), winner of the 2014 YWCA Women of Distinction Award for Community Building.

Vancouver Chamber Choir
JON WASHBURN, CONDUCTOR



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Jon Washburn, conductor

Doors open at 7 pm. No tickets required.

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Other Sights

► "Cultural Humour" from page 1

After a standup career that has included a Comedy Now television special, and stints on CBC's *The Debaters*, Vancouver's Jeff Yu currently makes a living in the more financially reliable field of web design and internet marketing, and does comedy on a part-time basis.

Yu says that though his cultural background is Chinese, he identifies as Canadian, and avoids including Chinese-specific material in his performances because he says that it feels like an overly predictable comedic choice.

And though he has a rudimentary command of the Chinese language, Yu feels that he would have a hard time translating his material into Chinese.

"My [comedic] strength lies in my command of the English language: all of my tone, cadence, and timing is geared towards English. I wouldn't have the same mastery over Chinese, so there's a lot I wouldn't be able to communicate," he says.

And even if his Chinese roots do not position him as an outsider within the Canadian culture in which he was born and raised, Yu feels that the outsider mentality is not only a distinguishing component of Canadian national consciousness, but also a vital aspect of national humour.

"As a Canadian, I'm good at being an outsider. I think that's what makes so many Canadians good at comedy. We are so heavily influenced by American culture through movies and television, yet we aren't exactly a part of it - we're still observers," says Yu.

The layers of comedic distinction

39-year-old Vancouver comedian and actor Toby Hargrave whose family, though of Scottish origin, has lived in Canada for many generations, performs frequent-

ly in the United States, and can therefore testify to the distinct differences in comedic sensibilities between two countries.

"American comedy can be in-your-face, and though Canadians certainly have opinionated comics, there is an aspect of the Canadian performance style that lends itself to mutual respect: [we] apologize, make allowances for differences, and try to make everyone feel valid," he says.

The variation in humour identities is not only evident between the two countries, but also between different provinces in Canada.

Julie Kim is a Toronto-born and raised comedian of Korean origins who has recently moved to Vancouver, and finds the regional specificity in Canadian humour to be far more interesting and prominent than the differences in humour between the country's various ethnic communities.

"I like how easily the audiences in the eastern provinces laugh, and [how they] can laugh at themselves. I find that sometimes audiences in Vancouver

can be highly sensitive and easily offended," says Kim.

When it comes to the issue of comics being able to address in their act ethnic groups other than their own, there seems to be a strong consensus that a comedian should have that license, as long as they are coming from a place of respect, and are comfortable presenting those culturally specific jokes in front of the group they are satirizing.

"Comedy, I feel, is one of the last uncensored art forms...If we start saying that we can't talk about anybody's culture but our own, where does it stop?" says Dhaliwal.

"The wonderful part about a comedy show is the opportunity the performer has to challenge stereotypes...we are not separated by our differences in this world, we are separated by our silences," says Hargrave.

Yu cautions that jokes with an ethnic focus have the potential to enforce stereotypes when used irresponsibly. Yet, he feels that humour generally puts people at ease, and therefore has an incredible potential to bridge the gaps between cultures.

And even when culturally specific, Yu believes that humour has a strong universal component.

"If you're sitting around with a group of friends and reminiscing about the time your buddy fell out of a tree while trying to ask a girl out, you're going to laugh no matter where you were born. The rule of tragedy plus time is universal," says Yu. ✎



▲ Toby Hargrave's approachable and identifiable comedic style appeals to both Canadian and American audiences alike.

Photo by Claire Wheeler

For more information on the comedians in the order they are first mentioned in this article, please visit the following: www.sunecomed.com (headlining at Yuk Yuk's Vancouver on July 18 & 19), www.yousucksir.com, @JYUonline, www.seetobylive.com (headlining at the Comedy Mix in Vancouver August 14-16) and www.juliekimcomedy.com



Left Bank



With Trudeau riding high, it's time for soul searching on Canada's left

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? – Mark 8:36. I remember seeing this line from the Bible painted on the side of a grain elevator on the prairies. It's a rhetorical question members of Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) should be asking themselves. Under Thomas Mulcair, the party seems to have lost what was left of its soul. And they're not even going to gain the whole world.

The NDP suffered a real setback in last week's federal by-elections, especially in losing Olivia Chow's former Toronto riding by a decisive margin to the Liberals. Polls consistently show the Official Opposition well behind the Liberal Party. If Stephen Harper is going to be defeated in next year's election, it's most likely he's going to be replaced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. NDP members and supporters would do well to face up to this reality, and then take a good hard look at Mulcair's politics and what it all means for the future of the left in Canada.

Thomas Mulcair was brought in to win. Old time leftist commentators and NDP insiders like Gerald Caplan told us that Mulcair was the only leadership candidate with the "royal jelly" to paint 24 Sussex Drive orange for the first time in history. Two years on, that whole discussion now seems based on hubris bordering on delusion that the Liberal Party of Canada was going to all but disappear. It's now clear that analysts across the political spectrum underestimated the resilience of Canada's traditional ruling party. The Liberals were hobbled after a decade of vicious infighting and inept leadership choices, but they weren't dead. This whole strategic perspective – pursued ruthlessly during the later years of Jack Layton's tenure as NDP leader – of taking over the "dead centre" in Canadian politics needs to be reassessed.



▲ Tom Mulcair with NDP candidate Joe Cressy, who lost the Trinity-Spadina riding in last week's byelection.

The Liberals are not going away, so Canada really doesn't need another liberal party. Canada still needs a party of the left. We need an articulation of the demands of today's social movements. We need a voice for the exploited, the excluded and the oppressed – a voice that will stand unequivocally behind Indigenous struggles for land and rights. We need a voice in the electoral arena against war and for international solidarity. We need a party willing to push for fair taxes and for economic democracy, a party that will take on concentrated corporate power.

Does this sound anything like today's NDP?

Mulcair, who until 2006 was a Quebec Liberal, doesn't seem to want to identify with the left at all. Last month, he told Global TV: "If

you look at the history of some of the social democratic parties, if you look at British labour under Tony Blair, he used to quip that it wasn't a question of left and right, it was a question of what worked and what didn't."

It's especially strange timing to be citing Blair as a beacon of post-ideological pragmatism. The disaster that Blair helped create by riding shotgun on the illegal US invasion of Iraq has descended into a terrifying bloodbath, with extremist Sunni militias massacring opponents and declaring a new Caliphate. While most Labour Party politicians in the UK are eager to distance themselves from Blair's legacy of war and privatization, the old war criminal's venality appears boundless. Last week it was revealed that Blair is helping consult the new Egyptian dictator Sisi, a spin off from another gig with the monarchy in the United Arab Emirates. What a downright bizarre moment for Mulcair to cite Blair, a politically toxic and shameless mercenary, as an example. But I digress...

After the untimely death of Layton after the 2011 election, the leadership race to replace him hinged on who could present themselves as most "prime ministerial". The debate was not about who could best embody the historic values and policies of the NDP, but simply about who could win. Mulcair was chosen on this basis. Critics, those of us who noted his past as a cabinet minister in a right-wing Liberal government in Quebec or his hostility to supporters of basic Palestinian human rights, were brushed aside.

The obsession with winning at all costs reflects a long-term depoliticization and withering of the democratic mechanisms within the NDP. Riding associations and rank and file members have less influence than ever. Where members used to have many avenues for real participation, they are now treated as mere donors. The leader's office and his communications staff are in command.

Take Paul Manly, who was accepted by his riding association on Vancouver Island as a candidate for the NDP's nomination in the 2015 election. The federal executive vetoed this decision. Why? Because Paul Manly, two years ago, had spoken up in support of his father Jim Manly, a former NDP Member of Parliament who was jailed by Israel after joining one of the boats to Gaza challenging the cruel blockade of that open air prison for Palestinians.

None of this to suggest that Mulcair is singularly responsible for the NDP's shift to the right. A recent piece in Jacobin Magazine by Gerard di Trolio noted that this has been a decades-long process linked to a global crisis of traditional social democratic parties.

Is it time for people who consider themselves on the left to abandon the NDP? At the very least, it's time for soul searching about what to do now that the NDP has abandoned us. ✉

Next issue Left Bank will return to matters related to municipal politics, as we get closer to the November elections.

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"Traditions are a big part of my culture. Unfortunately, so is diabetes."

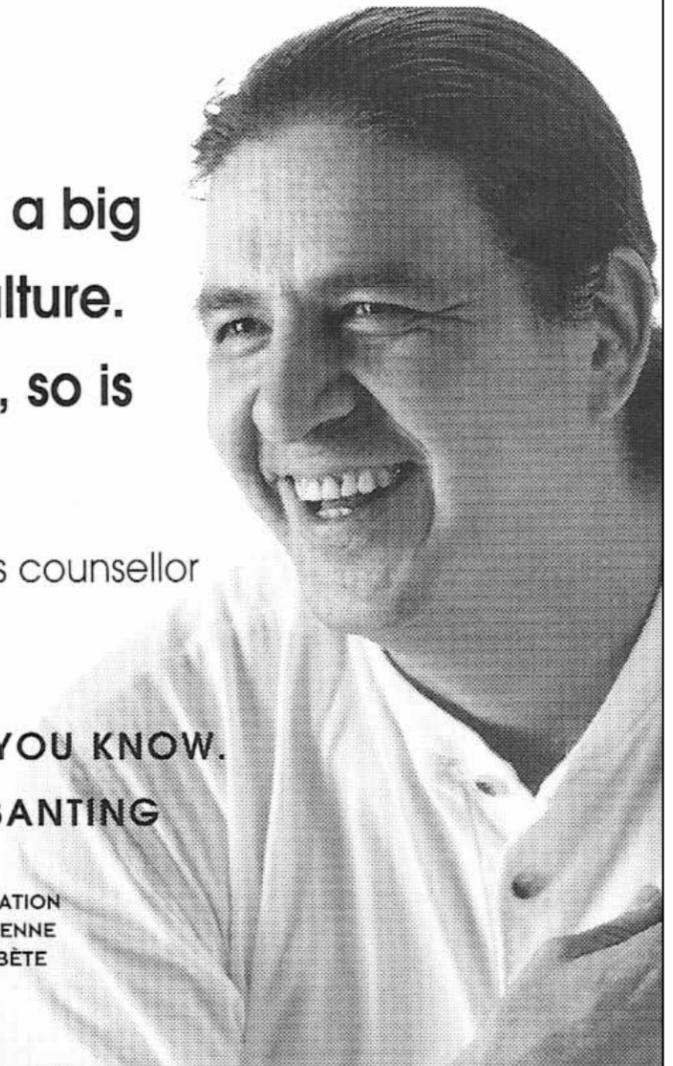
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Vancouver Chamber Choir
JON WASHBURN, CONDUCTOR

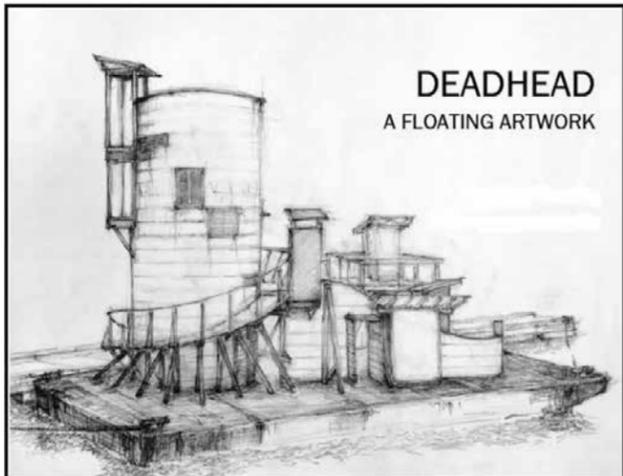
DEADHEAD

A FLOATING SCULPTURE

by Cedric Bomford

with Nathan Bomford and Jim Bomford

including FREE performances
by the Vancouver Chamber Choir
on the barge and at Ryerson United Church



Presented by Other Sights for Artists' Projects
Curated by Barbara Cole
Hosted by the Vancouver Maritime Museum
in Heritage Harbour
1905 Ogden Avenue, Vancouver, BC
June 14–September 2, 2014

DEADHEAD is a large-scale sculpture mounted to a barge and towed by tug to different locations along Vancouver's waterways. Created by Cedric Bomford, in collaboration with his father Jim Bomford (a retired engineer), and brother Nathan Bomford (an artist and builder), the sculpture is constructed primarily of salvaged wood with some sections wrapped in photographic murals.

Working from a stockpile of reclaimed materials and with an attitude of inventive re-use, the artists created an imaginative assemblage of sentry posts, guard houses, lookouts and observation platforms, connected by swooping walls and spiraling stairs and ramps. A curious marine outpost, DEADHEAD'S enigmatic spaces are designed for public access.

Inspired by the west coast's unique climate, histories, and economies it is a hybrid model of function and fantasy, logic and mystery. The floating sculpture adds a unique cultural cargo to the pleasure craft, ferries, cruise ships, and freighters stacked high with global commodities.

PUBLIC EVENTS

All visitors to DEADHEAD public events receive a 25% discount on admission to the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

8 pm Friday, July 18

Vancouver Chamber Choir performs Narvaez Bay:
Tidal Predictions and other selections in this FREE concert
at Ryerson United Church,
2205 West 45th Avenue (Kerrisdale).
Doors open at 7 pm. No tickets required. Details here.

3:30 and 4:45 pm Saturday, July 19

Vancouver Chamber Choir performs Narvaez Bay:Tidal
Predictions by Mark Timmings, co-composed with Stephen Morris
(on the barge)*

6 pm Thursday, August 7

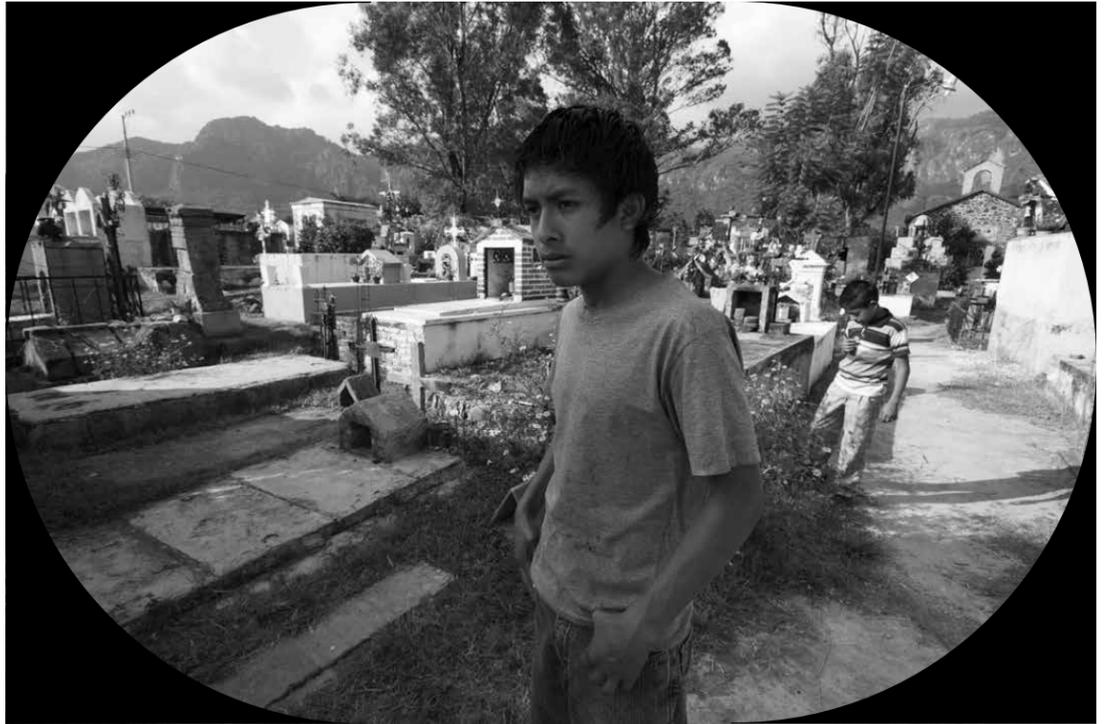
Artist Talk with Cedric Bomford
(Vancouver Maritime Museum)

2–5 pm Sunday, August 24

Open House (on the barge)*

* Free ferry service is provided between the Vancouver Maritime Museum dock and DEADHEAD. In addition to on-board activities, passersby may hear occasional drifting duets at sunset.

All DEADHEAD events are free to the public, but July 19 Vancouver Chamber Choir concerts on the barge require tickets to reserve your space. Beginning Monday, June 9 at noon, tickets will be available for the 3:30 pm and 4:45 pm performances at deadhead. othersights.ca/tidal-predictions



▲ A scene from *Summer of Goliath*.

Educating beyond the lens: filmmaker Nicolás Pereda joins SFU

by MAGGIE CHUANG

Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts will soon add to Vancouver's film pedigree by welcoming a filmmaking talent to their faculty. Nicolás Pereda, 32, a Mexican film director and writer, will join SFU as an assistant professor. With five feature films to his credits, Pereda's work has been shown in prestigious festivals worldwide, including the Venice Film Festival. There, he was awarded the 2010 Orizzonti Award for Best Film for his latest feature, *Summer of Goliath*.

Pereda was born in Mexico City in 1982. Intent on studying arts, he moved to Toronto at the age of 19 to attend York University, where he settled on film as his principal mode of storytelling. He left York with a Master of Fine Arts, and later found himself as a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. Despite his wanderings, Pereda has remained faithful to his first home. Almost all of his films are set in the lushness of Mexico, and his scripts are usually in Spanish.

"It just feels natural to make films in a country, in a culture where I grew up, and also in my first language. It's also that I met a group of people that I like working with, and they happen to be in Mexico," says Pereda.

Bringing the story back to the people

While it is difficult to live and work in different places, he finds excitement in meeting new faces, and learning radically different cultures. Perhaps it's this wealth of exposure that feeds into his style of filmmaking. His work is known for steep human interaction, and the intimacy of family structures and communities. It's centered on his fascination with social issues, family dynamics and power relations. Despite the complexity of the subject matters, he confesses he presents them without a concrete agenda, citing his interest in their ambiguity.

Agenda or not, he certainly has found success with his methods. His films have had audiences not only from Mexico, but in Toronto, Rotterdam, Venice and Jeonju as well. The most notable film is his latest, *Summer of Goliath*, and it may be his most haunting.

"It is a film that presents a kind of violence that I think anybody can relate to, and [is] at the same time, difficult to define. For example, I interview a child who supposedly killed his girlfriend. There are several layers of violence in the scene: First, the killing, second, the other kids who

film education; classrooms are safe environments to critique and analyze others' work. Therefore, with his new responsibilities as an assistant professor at SFU, he's determined to bring out the voice of his students.

But rousing students' minds won't be the only activity keep-

“It just feels natural to make films in a country, in a culture where I grew up, and also in my first language.

Nicolas Pereda, Mexican film director and writer

don't believe his innocence, and third, the director, myself, who puts kids in a very difficult position," says the young filmmaker.

Returning to the classroom

The importance of formal education isn't lost on Pereda, and he credits academia for his ongoing

ing him busy in our city. Pereda already has plans for new projects.

"I'm working on two films about domestic labour in Mexico City. I'll spend the next semester in Vancouver writing them," he says.

While Vancouver plays host to a growing number of films, it nonetheless remains competitive and crowded, often leaving young artists discouraged. He has this advice for any aspiring filmmaker:

"Experiment. Filmmaking is probably the most conservative art form. It would be nice if young people broke from traditional forms and developed new and/or interesting film languages." ✍

Nicolás Pereda joins SFU this fall. For more information, visit www.sfu.ca/sca/about/news.

For details on *Summer of Goliath*, visit www.fandor.com/films/summer_of_goliath



▲ Nicolás Pereda will be an Assistant Professor at SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts.



▲ Pereda with his cast on the set of *Summer of Goliath*.

Telling Nigerian stories at the Surrey Fusion Festival

by SIMON YEE

The 2014 Surrey Fusion Festival will take place on July 19 and 20, and this year Nigeria will be one of six new Cultural Pavilions among the 38 to be showcased at the festival. Nigeria is the most populous and most economically influential country in Africa, and boasts a diverse array of cultural history and traditions. Comfort Ero, a storyteller with the African Stages Association and president of the Nigeria Canada Development Association of British Columbia (NCDABC), shares her views about Nigerian culture and the situation with Nigerian immigrants hoping to come to Canada.

Nigeria's ethnic and religious groups are roughly divided between the Muslim-based cul-



▲ Comfort Ero.

tures in the north, where the Hausa are the dominant group; a mix of Christian, Muslim and indigenous faiths in the southwest, which is largely Yoruba; and the mostly Christian southeast, where the Igbo ethnic group is the majority.

When Ero lived in Nigeria during the late sixties and early seventies, Nigerian life was peaceful and safe. She credits the government at that time for focusing on education and infrastructure building, which brought the country together.

"[At that time], Muslims and Christians lived in peace and there were no religious terrorists like we have today," Ero says. "There are about 350 different tribes, each with its own unique cultural history. The cultural traditions vary according to the different tribes and ethnic groups, although some traditions – like marriages, way of dressing, storytelling and respect for elders – are common to almost all the tribes."

Dancing and festivals are the customary ways to honour these traditions. Two important festivals include the Egungun Festival, where the ancestral spirits are honoured and appeased in order to cleanse the land from evil and sickness, and the New Yam Festival, thanking God and celebrating a successful harvest of the yam, which is a staple food in Nigeria, especially among the Igbo people.

Struggling to immigrate

As president of the NCDABC, Ero wants to provide a meeting space



▲ African Stages Association Members performing.

for Nigerians where children and youth can learn about Nigerian culture and values, establish consulate offices, and promote trade, commerce and intercultural exchange between Nigeria and Canada. Established in 1984, the association has provided support to Nigerians hoping to fit positively into Canadian society.

However, despite the association's best efforts there are still problems facing young Nigerian immigrants. For example, since Nigerians applying to come to Canada must use the visa application centre in Ghana, the immigration process entails large financial and physical problems for young and elderly Nigerians.

"Unlike other immigrant groups who have critical mass to give support to new immigrants, the Nigerian immigrants are mostly still first generation immigrants and still struggling with settlement issues," Ero says.

"Tohio! Hia hia, hia hia kpo!"

As a storyteller, Ero begins her stories with the chant "Tohio! Hia hia, hia hia kpo!", which announces that the storyteller is ready to tell a story and the audience has come together, ready to listen. She has been listening to, dramatizing and bringing stories to life since she was a young girl and she helped found the Af-

rican Stages Association, which allows her to perform her stories in schools, libraries and festivals, and provide a place for African artists to create and perform.

The African Stages members will perform at the Fusion Festival on July 20, and they will entertain and educate with Nigerian stories and dance. They will also have a tent to showcase Nigerian food and crafts. ✉

To learn more about the African Stages Association, please visit: www.africanstages.org

To learn more about the Surrey Fusion Festival, please visit: www.surrey.ca/fusionfestival

Surrey's Rakhi Project reaches across the Pacific

by TIA LOW

Until August 10, locals can support the City of Surrey's work against domestic violence by wearing a purple handmade bracelet (\$5) for sale at various Metro Vancouver locations. Called the Rakhi Project, the initiative has run since 2011, and men are encouraged to show solidarity to the cause.

Rakhi is a traditional ceremony, in India, in which a sister ties a rakhi (thread/bracelet) on her brother's wrist – once a year – as a symbol of love and respect. Adopting the meaning behind the occasion, City Councillor Bandler Rasode spearheaded the project for the Surrey Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (SCADA). All funds from bracelet sales go to SCADA.

"We came up with the idea of including men in the conversation around domestic abuse. And any man who ties a purple bracelet around his wrist, vows to stand with his sisters against domestic abuse," she adds.

In 2010, 5,000 bracelets were made in China and used for the 2010 and 2011 campaigns. In 2013, the Sambhali Trust – a non-profit charitable organization that empowers women and girls in India – made another 5000 for the 2013 and 2014 campaigns.

Making of the bracelets

The cotton macramé bracelets designed by local artist Karen Lipsett-Kidd are made by women in India through the Sambhali Trust.

Things were different in the project's first year: due to time

constraints, the City had them mass-produced in China. But since the beginning, Lipsett-Kidd, who co-owns Crystalworks Gallery in Vancouver, saw an additional opportunity.

"I said, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great if women could benefit from making this piece?'" says Lipsett-Kidd.

It was a Crystalworks Gallery client who suggested the Sambhali Trust, and put Lipsett-Kidd in touch with a founder of the organization. Based in Jodhpur, the non-profit works with women in the Dalit community (the lowest standing in India's traditional caste system: members experience abuse on multiple levels).

"[Working with Sambhali Trust] was an amazing experience because first of all, they had never done any macramé before; and second of all, every aspect of this bracelet was produced and made by the Trust," says Lipsett-Kidd. "They found the string,

dyed this string purple...[and] they found the beads there."

Lipsett-Kidd says 100 women were employed specifically to make the Rakhi Project bracelets. Five thousand bracelets were made over a couple months, which the City of Surrey purchased outright with the previous year's Rakhi sales proceeds.

"Just this idea that so many women benefitted from something that would then go forward to possibly benefit more women and families; and raising awareness around domestic abuse and violence – to me, it just seemed like an incredible circle of benefit," says Lipsett-Kidd.

Being part of the solution

According to Surrey RCMP, around 4,000 domestic abuse-related files were opened last year; but that figure paints a limited picture. The City aims to educate and include more individuals in the dialogue.



▲ Karen Lipsett-Kidd, designer of the Rakhi bracelet.

"The fact that we've had such serious, horrid examples of domestic abuse...and also on a day-to-day basis of all the women who live in silence, I think it was important to raise awareness," says Rasode.

With more awareness and more vendors selling the bracelets by the year, says Rasode, support for the project has increased. But the project has met with some criticism. A Vancouver Observer blogger condemned the City in 2012 for associating domestic abuse with Indian culture: "By saying that it is a problem with people of Indian, or broader South Asian heritage, you are saying it doesn't exist in other communities."

Vancouver Observer posted Rasode's response, where she's quoted: "It's very unfortunate when you read of page headlines, of very tragic cases, where people would actually ask, 'Why is domestic violence so prevalent in South Asian culture? Why is it that the South Asian culture doesn't value equality toward women?' I said, actually that's the opposite. South Asian culture has a tradition where we do show real value toward women (through rakhi)."

Proceeds from bracelet sales go towards implementing the awareness program each year, and also to Surrey's Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (SCADA) – which brings together community organizations who specialize in addressing and reducing domestic abuse. ✉

Bracelets will be sold at select Surrey locations. For more information: www.surrey.ca/community/13203.aspx



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The Caribbean Community celebrates its own diversity

by JAKE MCGRAIL

Experience the culture of the Caribbean without having to buy a plane ticket. The Caribbean Days Festival is a showcase of Caribbean Cuisine and celebration in North Vancouver, organized and presented by the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Society of B.C.

Yvonne Taffe is part of the committee that organizes Caribbean Days, and is also a member of the Board of Directors at the Trinidad and Tobago Society.

"Our [The Trinidad and Tobago Society] purpose is to foster harmonious relationships between peoples of different cultures," Taffe says, "people of the Caribbean are descended from a variety of cultures. Our roots are multicultural, so we must respect them all."

Of the nine Caribbean Cultural Societies in B.C., the one from Trinidad and Tobago is the only community group to host the event. The reason is simple: they were here first. When the Trinidad and Tobago Society was only a few years old, they were one of the few groups contacted by North Vancouver to provide a backdrop at a celebration for new Canadian Citizens. By the time Societies from other Caribbean

countries in the Caribbean or their members here are overseen by the BCOCCA. If there is a hurricane in Jamaica or Grenada, instead of all the societies sending small amounts of relief, the BCOCCA gathers everything and spearheads the relief. This helps foster a sense of unity, which may lead to something else with the societies.

"I think, down the road, we could see the societies merge into one. It is hard to sustain multiple groups when old members pass away, especially when the members come from a place with a small population."

Multiple cultural groups merging into one is not unknown.

▲ Gold plumage costume.

▲ Caribbean Street Parade.

bean countries arrived, the festival had already been going on for a few years, so they already had their own rhythm in running it. Taffe goes on to explain:

"We have often wanted to co-host with them, but one party needs to be responsible for the celebration. If lots of people are responsible, no one is responsible."

▲ Yvonne Taffe.

That is not to say that the other societies are not allowed to be involved.

"The other groups help a lot," Taffe says, "they volunteer, but they are not part of the official hosting."

There is cooperation between all the different societies. Each head of the different societies chooses two people to represent them at the BCOCCA (the BC Organization of Caribbean Cultural Associations), a sort of United Nations within BC's Caribbean popu-

There were once nineteen different Greek cultural groups in Vancouver, representing all the different areas of Greece, from Thessaloniki to Crete. Now they have merged into one group.

The Caribbean can be described as a giant mixing bowl for culture, and that is especially true for cuisine. Caribbean cooking has recipes and ingredients from so many different countries and areas that there is no food like Caribbean food. The reason is that there is no typical Caribbean cuisine, since it has been touched by so many different cultures. From colonization, to merchants, to slaves being brought to work on plantations, the people of the Caribbean combined all of the ingredients into their own dishes.

"Caribbean food is most influenced from East India," says Taffe, "When East Indians were brought over to work on the plantations, they brought some women to cook for them. After the years of indentured servitude were over, they dispersed over the countries and spread their cuisine."

Caribbean Days will have many types of food for everyone to try. From Jamaican, Indian and many more, you can sample the different foods of the cultures of the Caribbean here in North Vancouver.

Caribbean Days is on July 26 and 27 at Waterfront Park in North Vancouver. For more information please visit caribbeandays.ca.

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Translating sensations at Richmond film and media arts festival

by SIMON YEE

Local artist and Emily Carr University instructor Vjeko Sager believes art is an external and ineffable idea comprehended through an immersion of spiritual sensations and the artist is a performer who is responsible for the translation of those sensations. From dawn to dusk, Sager will translate those sensations from atop Divination Tower, the featured exhibit of Cinevolution's Your Kontinent Film and Media Arts Festival, from July 17 to 26 at Minoru Plaza in Richmond.

"The highest level of artistic creativity is to figure out what the idea wants to become, not what the artist wants it to become," Sager says.

Classical aesthetic theory, such as those advanced by the 18th century aesthetics thinker Alexander Baumgarten, privileges sight and sound, provided by the eyes and ears, as the only senses capable of understanding beauty and art. The other senses are relegated as primitive as they are only needed for survival. Sager believes otherwise: all the senses are needed and essential to access and translate art.

"The biggest problem today is that the eyes and ears are the

cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek among some of his influences.

"I lived in Montenegro and Žižek lived in Slovenia (at the time, both socialist republics of the former Yugoslavia), and he was a formative influence on me. He collaborated with some of the most avant-garde musicians and artists in my old country, such as Neue Slowenische Kunst. Žižek doesn't subscribe to any rule, he breaks them all," says Sager.

Sager sees these rule-breaking acts as true expressions of one's own unique and ultimate humanity, qualities that are vital for accessing and discovering art, truth and beauty. Although Sager doesn't see himself as an iconoclast, he hopes his artistic journey on Divination Tower re-emphasizes the artist and its poesis, the act of being creative.

"In this project, I will be portraying seven personas to show how humanity can progress from being technologically imprisoned to a spiritual being," says Sager.

Clothing, diet, behaviour, thoughts, attitudes and the means of creation vary with each persona, which in turn influences the sensations that are felt, the art work which is



▲ TriVo will be performing and offering a free workshop at this year's Harrison festival of the Arts.

Photo courtesy of Harrison Festival of the Arts

A global arts festival with a community feel

by ALISON CHIANG

This July, a place famous for its natural hot springs will welcome international music performances. The 36th annual Harrison Festival of the Arts takes place July 12 to 20 and brings together a diverse community of artists and music-lovers alike. It's a celebration of cultural diversity, from old world music, Zimbabwean beats to live theatre.

Having spent many years performing on stage, musician Andy Hillhouse, is taking on a new role as this year's Harrison Festival of the Arts artistic director. The festival features an impressive roster – including music from all over the globe, flamenco dancing and live theatre.

Hillhouse wanted to achieve a sense of continuity in this year's performance lineup: festival goers will have the opportunity to see both past acts and new faces.

Having an arts festival with world-class performers in Harrison is very special, says Hillhouse.

"This kind of intimacy and small town experience distinguish the Harrison Festival from most other festivals in the province," says Hillhouse.

Three musicians, a world of music

Having been to the Harrison Festival a few times before, both as a spectator and performer, Dawn Pemberton is looking forward to the "little festival that's guaranteed to have a lot of fun."

This time around, Pemberton takes the stage with her musical group TriVo. The group likes to sing a variety of music from all over the world, spanning all centuries and decades. From early classical to African, gospel, modern and just about everything, the group will cover it.

It's been a natural transition for Pemberton, 35, who comes from a musical family and has been involved in music almost her entire life. It was at the Universal Gospel Choir Vancouver where she met two friends who would make up the rest of the musical group. Pemberton and friends wanted something that

was fun and low-stress – creating TriVo was the answer.

Coming up with their group name was pretty straightforward says Pemberton. Three members – tri and vo – short for vocals.

It will be TriVo's first time performing at the Harrison Festival and the group is also offering a workshop on July 20. It's open to everyone and no experience is necessary says Pemberton. The purpose is to give people a sample of TriVo's music and teach songs from around the world.

"One of the fantastic roles of music festivals is it brings people from different corners of the world, right to you. They're kind of like taste makers, they're introducing old acts people know and also introducing new sounds," says Pemberton.

A little taste of southern Africa

Curtis Andrews' musical journey began in Labrador and New-

"It's distinct, repetitive in one sense, but it allows you to really get into the music on a different emotional level than say rock, jazz or classical music," says Andrews.

An audience member at the Harrison Festival last year, Andrews is looking forward to performing on stage with the rest of Zimbabwe this summer.

Andrews is drawn to the location of the festival – situated close to the lake.

"It's very intimate, it's a small stage, the audience is very close to you and they're very focused on you, which is missing in some festivals," says Andrews.

He says the best part is meeting and hanging out with other artists, many of whom become friends.

"It's about cultural awareness, openness and sharing," says Andrews, who also takes people on educational trips to southern Africa with the focus on music and cultural diversity.



▲ Zimbabwe brings southern African beats to Harrison.

foundland and continues today, here in Vancouver. It wasn't too long after his coast to coast move that Andrews, 37, connected with people who shared his love of music and joined the musical group Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is described as a mix of traditional and modern Zimbabwean music. Andrews plays the *mbira*, a type of 'hand piano' – though he says this isn't the best description – and provides vocals for the cross-cultural group.

For Andrews, the appeal of this southern African music is the way it makes him feel.

"In today's world, the intermingling is so important and the arts is one of the best ways to promote tolerance and acceptance and erase any intolerance," says Andrews.

TriVo and Zimbabwe are part of a diverse selection of sights and sounds at this year's Harrison Festival of the Arts. The performance list is extensive and there is something for everyone. ☘

www.harrisonfestival.com/index.gk
www.briantatemusic.com/trivo.php
www.zimbabwe.com/#top



Photo by Simon Yee

▲ Vjeko Sager says true art is a style, an immersive experience.

easiest to trick and we have the trickery interpreted as art," says Sager. "True art is a style, an immersion. I find artists today focus too much on the tools of art, not on the art itself."

Art that is interpreted as entertainment, as therapy, or as the output from the latest technological gadget becomes banal or novel and is, for Sager, a misuse of art. And art instruction that focuses too much on photo editing, camera settings, sound mixing, and other manipulations detracts from experiencing art itself. According to Sager, the artist's challenge is to minimize degrading the artistic idea when trying to communicate with those tools.

"Tools limit art, and the emphasis on tools today is what I grieve," Sager says.

Sager finds inspiration through provocateurs, iconoclasts and thinkers who challenge the status quo and established dogma. He counts figures like Nikola Tesla, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Slovenian

produced and the messages that are relayed.

"In our everyday lives, we usually subscribe to one persona, and we don't allow ourselves to experience different attitudes. The project is called *Divination*, because I view it as a prophecy of what has happened to humanity and what can happen," says Sager.

Sager will unveil the Tower and help open Your Kontinent's Film and Media Arts Festival, which showcases digital and media artists from diverse backgrounds. Film screenings, theatre performances, light shows and youth programs are among some of the program highlights. The theme of the festival is the connections between humanity, art and technology, which encourages festivalgoers to rethink their relationship with technology amidst technology's isolating, connecting and globalizing forces. ☘

To learn more about Vjeko Sager's philosophy of art and the film and media arts festival, please visit www.ykfestival.ca.

Haida Gwaii artist draws beautiful lines and crosses cultural and artistic boundaries

by ANASTASIA SCHERDERS

The 2014 Indian Summer Festival's Artpolitik: Culture and the Graphic Novel brings Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas to Vancouver on July 9, along with Indian graphic artist Orijit Sen and architect David Wong, to discuss their work and the storytelling power of the graphic novel.

This power lies not only in its captivating intersection of image and text, but also in its undoubted accessibility. Graphic novels tell stories visually, sharing complex ideas in a way that transcends barriers in communication. For artist and author Yahgulanaas, that accessibility is the most striking quality of visual storytelling.

"A graphic novel contains the possibility of speaking with people outside of cultural, ethnic and class enclaves, without the constraints of language or literacy," says Yahgulanaas, who belongs to the Lanaas nation of Haida Gwaii.

Ideas of the Coast

Yahgulanaas, who considers the graphic novel to be a spectacular union of idea and form, is known for his innovative Haida Manga style. It is a unique form of graphic art that blends Haida art with Japanese manga.

His highly regarded graphic novel, *Red*, displays this original style while telling the tragic story of a vengeful leader who leads his community to the brink of destruction.

At Artpolitik, he plans to address the political and cultural influence of the graphic novel

within the contemporary context of the West Coast of Canada.

"The relationship between the Nation State and Indigenous peoples will be a constant theme in my talk," he says.

Although this relationship is loaded with political, economic, and social tensions, Yahgulanaas doesn't consider his work to be 'capital-P' political.

"[It is] more like an invitation to explore personal responsibility and engagement in issues that are inherently political," he says.

A significant part of what led Yahgulanaas to work in illustration was his exposure to drawing in early childhood. He points out that in the 1960s resources on more classical forms of Western art were not common on Haida Gwaii, and this significantly influenced his introduction to art and his immersion in drawing.

"When I was able to put more thought into art as a form of communicating ideas of inter-



▲ Haida Gwaii artist and author, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas.

est with other people, it became obvious that cartooning was a potent accessible vehicle," says

"I wanted to convey ideas more than I wanted to convey beautiful lines."

Michael Yahgulanaas, Haida artist

Yahgulanaas, who points to editorial cartoons as a strong example of this.

Crossing the line

As the years passed, Yahgulanaas developed a deep appreciation for illustration, and while he respected the complexity of the form, he quickly realized that he was most inspired by what it could express.

"I wanted to convey ideas more than I wanted to convey beautiful lines," he says.

This motivation is apparent in Yahgulanaas' body of work, which reaches far beyond illustration into painting, sculpture and installation. Working with a variety of materials, Yahgulanaas' artwork is exceptionally diverse and continuously transforming.

In his 2012 *Flappes* series, he examined the highly symbolic status of the automobile, creating stunning visual art with gas-cap lids covered in copper leaf and painted with bold images.

"[I] wonder about the ideas that inform the object and about the ideas that are created by persons viewing the object," he says.

Presently, Yahgulanaas continues to explore these questions in the realm of public art, produc-

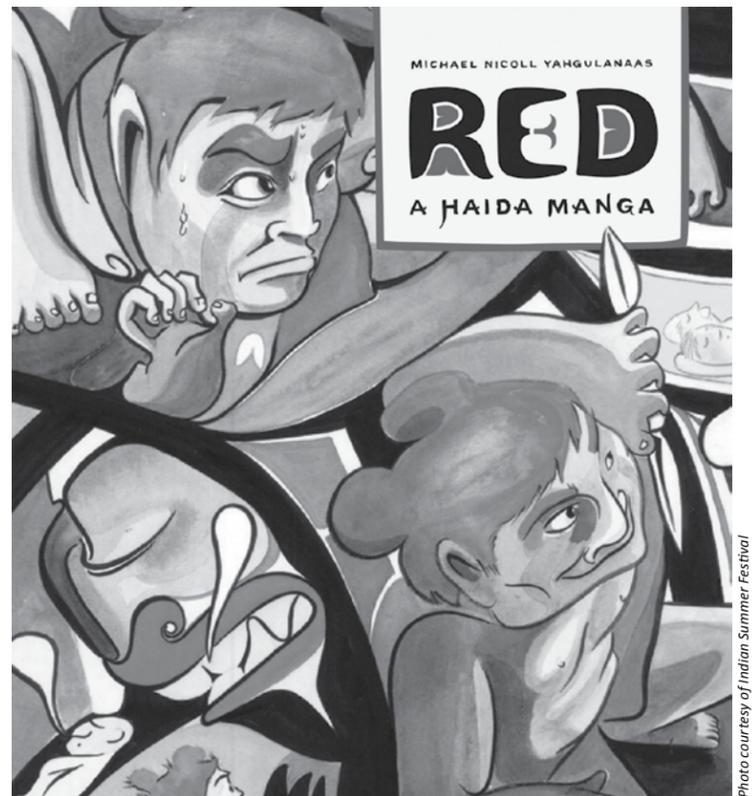
ing 10-metre tall works in steel that create new relationships between viewer and object.

database in preparation of what I anticipate to be a time of changes in my work," he says. ✎

As his practice evolves, Yahgulanaas anticipates that his subject matter will change as well.

"I'm cataloging all my works and developing a comprehensive

Artpolitik: Culture and the Graphic Novel July 9, 6 p.m. SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts For more information, please visit www.indiansummerfestival.ca



▲ Red, an innovative and stunning story in the Haida Manga style.



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Venue: Meet at Burnaby Village Museum sign, 6501 Deer Lake Ave
Registration required: Call 604 438 8214

MOSAIC is a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

► "Verbatim" from page 1

learning French after finding out my family had decided to move to Canada. After getting a glimpse of Canadian history I learned that there isn't just one but two official languages in Canada. This realization was the driving force for me to become fluent. Setting the bar ever higher, I enrolled in the French Cohort Program, a multidisciplinary program at the Office of Francophone and Francophile Affairs at Si-

academic and linguistic strategy to bridge the gap between Canadians and myself, the foreigner. Smiling no longer sufficed, words were necessary to express myself. For a young twelve-year-old girl, the program seemed to be the only conceivable way to integrate into my new community.

At first glance Vancouver was not what I envisioned, but the city's multiculturalism intrigued me and its cultural harmony sparked my curiosity. Travelling from Chinatown on Pender Street to Little Italy on Commercial Drive showcases the diversity that Vancouver possesses. Given the richness of this community it is only fair to take full advantage. So how did I do it?

Have the guts to be true to yourself. A sense of belonging is not something to be sought out but rather to be created with our differences. Language is not just about communication but a reaching out to everything outside of our comfort zone. It is about discovering what makes us unique within this world of diversity, sometimes this could mean being proud of our foreign accent. Given the cultural plurality that surrounds us in this beautiful city, we can no longer be, after all, considered foreigners. ✎

Translation Barry Brisebois



▲ Books have no accents.

mon Fraser University where I was given the opportunity to study in Quebec and France. I have therefore been able to quench my thirst for all things Francophone. Upon reflection it appears I was aiming for an



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Photo by Kumiko Aoki

Ecuadorian musician shares his inspirations

by KUMIKO AOKI

Edgar Muenala, an Ecuadorian pan flute player, composer and songwriter pursues his passion by creating a fusion of traditional Ecuadorian tunes with Asian, Western and other South American music. Muenala, who will perform at the Surrey Fusion Festival, July 19 to 20, shares how he got started as a musician, found his inspiration and his mindset when dealing with cultural struggles.

Growing up in a family of musicians, Muenala was naturally exposed to traditional Ecuadorian music at an early age. However, it was in his early teenage years when his involvement with music became more concrete.

Muenala explains it was an accidental encounter that really sparked his passion for music. One of his neighbours had been taking piano lessons, but didn't enjoy them. Muenala started going in his place. He never mas-

tered the piano, but did start to learn other instruments, such as the violin, guitar and mandolin.

"It's like a different way. Others [would] probably go to school and study. Me, I was like, 'I will learn a different way,'" he says.

In describing his music, Muenala says it is a new age meditation and fusion of Asian, Western, South American and Ecuadorian tunes. He uses various flutes that



▲ Musician Edgar Muelana performing at Granville Island on June 28.

originate from places such as Romania, South America and the Middle East.

"I am always hunting for new flavors to do my musical work" he says.

In addition to flutes, Muenala also uses the *erhu*, a two-string bowed Chinese instrument in his work.

Influences and inspiration

For Muenala, music is his life and passion. He explains that through his music he contributes to society and helps people regain the warmth of family and nature that can be lost when living in the city.

"Society's been turning so metallic or cold and so I found my music is a tool for people to help them. Instead of watching TV, families could put on my CD and enjoy the music and have a conversation about it," says Muenala.

Because traditional music in Ecuador is all acoustic, Muenala says he was also inspired by the technology of using electronic

instruments and amplifiers. He says that using these digital sounds in combination with traditional instruments results in a beautiful mix.

Muenala adds that his inspirations for creating music are his family, nature and the love he feels from others.

"My children are the ones that inspire me a lot. I always thank my ancestors and grandparents who I grew up with because they gave me very good, strong roots," he says.

Choosing happiness

Prior to coming to Canada 20 years ago, Muenala traveled to numerous countries to perform his music. From South American countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Colombia to European countries like Spain, Germany and France, Muenala experienced both smooth adjustments and culture shocks.

Muenala explains that one needs to be willing to adapt to new societies.

"If you think [you're going] to be and live like an Ecuadorian all the time, when you go to other countries, [you're] going to suffer. So I really learned how adapt here," he says.

In such circumstances of cultural adjustment, Muenala recalls that music is what pushed him to be strong and happy.

Muenala hopes the audience will enjoy the experience of attentively listening to his music so certain memories or images can be visualized, soothe the audience and make them happy.

"I'm really lucky to do something I like and I can make it out of that," he says. ☺

Surrey Fusion Festival
July 19–20
Holland Park, Surrey
www.surrey.ca/fusionfestival/default.aspx

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Cultural Calendar

July 8–August 26, 2014

by SALENA TRAN

Planning to stay in the Lower Mainland for the summer? There are plenty of events for the whole family to enjoy around Vancouver! July and August are filled with festivities ranging from the annual Powell Street Festival to the Vancouver Pride Parade. If you're feeling artsy this summer, attend the Folk Music Festival or the Theatre Under the Stars to get your fill! There are many events to attend to show your support for the different communities of the Lower Mainland; you won't be sorry that you did.

* * *

Theatre Under The Stars

July 11–Aug. 25
Malkin Bowl in Stanley Park
610 Pipeline Rd., Vancouver
www.tuts.ca

With two different performances to choose from, families will laugh and sing along to the wonderful music of Shrek and Legally Blonde. Watch as performers re-enact the fun twisted fairy tale of Shrek and friends, or see as the talented actors bring Legally Blonde to life. Located in the middle of the beautiful Stanley Park, TUTS provides a night full of fun for the family. Visit the website for the full schedule and ticket information.



▲ A Japanese performer at the annual Powell Street Festival.



▲ Lindsey Warnock and Matt Palmer bring Shrek and Fiona to life in Shrek: the Musical.

* * *

Vancouver Folk Music Festival

July 18–20
Jericho Beach, Vancouver
www.thefestival.bc.ca

The annual Vancouver Folk Music Festival is a highly anticipated summer event. With musicians from all over the world coming together for two days of folk fun, the festival will be attended by music lovers all across Vancouver. This festival is a great way to sample new music, or to enjoy a favourite artist! For the full performance line-up and ticket information, visit the website at www.thefestival.bc.ca.

* * *

Surrey Fusion Festival

July 19–20
Holland Park
13428 Old Yale Rd., Surrey
www.surrey.ca/fusionfestival

Surrey's Fusion Festival is a two-

day event that celebrates music, food, and culture. With multiple cultural pavilions, the festival samples different cultures from all around the world. Many performances will be held at the festival, ranging from dance to martial arts. Learn to cook at the Celebrity Cooking stage, or entertain your children at Kids World. Celebrate and enjoy the different cultures with the free two day festival.

* * *

Caribbean Days Festival

July 26–27
Waterfront Park
200 Block W. Esplanade St., North Vancouver
www.caribbeandays.ca

Experience a slice of the Caribbean in Vancouver at the Caribbean Days Festival. The festival has many tropical foods and performances packed into

two days. The Caribbean Festival aims to educate attendees about Caribbean culture while showing them a good time. Free admission.

* * *

Jog for the Bog 2014

July 27, 8:30 a.m.
Burns Bog, Delta
www.burnsbog.org/jog

Help raise awareness and conserve Burns Bog by participating in Jog for the Bog 2014. Help raise money while running through the beautiful bog. The run includes a pancake breakfast, and many other fun activities and prizes. Have fun while supporting an incredible cause to preserve the beautiful and pristine nature of Burns Bog.

* * *

Multicultural Fair of Coquitlam

July 29, 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
Spirit Square
3000 Burlington Dr., Coquitlam
www.coquitlam.ca/parks-recreation-and-culture

Come and celebrate multiculturalism with the city of Coquitlam. There will be many performances for the whole family to enjoy, such as Chinese Classical Dance and Korean Drummers. With many demonstrations, kids will surely be engaged by TaeKwon-Do and Chinese Brush Painting. There are many prizes to be won and free culinary sampling! Free admission.

* * *

Powell Street Festival

Aug. 1–3
Oppenheimer Park
(and other venues)
400 Powell St., Vancouver
www.powellstreetfestival.com

Attend the annual Powell Street Festival and learn more about Japanese culture! Enjoy the delicacies of Japan while enjoying a full line-up of performances. This year's theme is "Roots," with multiple performances focused on the artists of Japanese descent. Hear from Japanese film makers, actors, authors and many more. With multiple craft booths and a large array of Japanese cuisine, kids will surely have a blast experiencing Japanese culture. Visit the website for all the venues and information. Free admission.

* * *

The Pride Parade of Vancouver

Aug. 3, noon–3 p.m.
Downtown Vancouver
www.vancouverpride.ca

Support the LGBT community of Vancouver by attending the annual Pride Parade of Vancouver. With eccentric attendees and parade floats, the parade will never have a dull moment. The parade is attended by thousands of people who dress up in bright colours and wave their rainbow flags! The best viewing spots according to the Vancouver Pride Society include three locations:

the Safeway on Robson and Denman, Denman Place Mall, and the Boathouse.

* * *

Chariot Fest of India

Aug. 10, 11:30 a.m.–Dusk
Along Beach Ave. from Howe to 2nd Beach
www.vanchariotfest.com

The event includes a parade, multiple food venues, and performances. Enjoy Indian cuisine and learn how to prepare your own with several Veggie-cooking demonstrations! The event also includes face painting, clowns, balloon artists and kids fun tents for children to enjoy. Yoga demonstrations, Mendi hand tattoos and live theatre allow for adults to experience Indian culture as well! Free admission.

* * *

London Family Farm Day

Aug. 17, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
London Heritage Farm
6511 Dyke Rd., Richmond
www.londonheritagefarm.ca

London Family Farm Day focuses their event on fun for the children. Enjoy the petting zoos, pony rides and other activities that will guarantee a day of fun and memories for the whole family. This year, Family Farm Day includes Richmond Art Gallery's "Art Truck," which will allow kids to express their creative side. Farm Day has many demonstrations and craft tables as well. Kids will never have a dull moment.

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The circle comes round

Welcome to Cowichan Bay located just outside Duncan, BC on Vancouver Island. This is a charming little tourist and fishing village of about 2600 people with homes, shops, galleries, restaurants, marine buildings, marinas and other businesses. Many waterfront buildings are partially on stilts overlooking the bay. Pictured here is True Grain Bread, which opened in 2004. It's a European style bakery featuring organic products and sourcing local and sustainable ingredients. They "connect the farmer to the miller to the baker to the community." True Grain inspired similarly focused businesses in the village, and in 2009, Cowichan Bay became North America's first Cittaslow community.

Cittaslow is a movement that began in Italy in 1999 and promotes slow food as opposed to fast food. This has come to mean respect for the eco system, using high-quality, locally grown, sustainable food prepared with care. It encourages the interaction of local small businesses that subscribe to this philosophy as illustrated by True Grain Bread. It's against the globalization of agricultural products where profit often overrides quality. It's a whole cultural trend of slowing down the pace of life through a community's use of space. It encourages the pleasure of walking through an area full of art,



shops, theatres, restaurants in a beautiful, natural setting. Indeed, this is the only way to appreciate Cowichan Bay. You need to walk down alleys to find shops and that lead to wharfs with marine buildings, views of boathouses and beautiful Cowichan Bay which faces Mount Tzouhalem. An incredible maritime museum is built on one wharf that has 3 open buildings to walk through and a 2-story building at the end, all illustrating various aspects of the maritime history of the area.

Cowichan Bay is part of Cowichan Valley which is centrally located between the cities of Victoria and Nanaimo. There are many farm areas, including wineries and food establishments, which practice the same slow philosophy.

Before European contact, this sustainable approach to life was much the manner in which the Cowichan First Nations people lived in this area for thousands of years. In the mid-1800's European settlement began to change all this. With the rapid development of farming, logging and fishing, the Cowichans were relocated to reserves. Their traditional way of life was inhibited and they were subject to diseases such as smallpox, scarlet fever and tuberculosis. All these factors combined to reduce their population from around 5000 to 500 by the early 1900's.

Meanwhile the Europeans thrived. Cowichan Bay became famous for boat building, fishing and log harvesting. For a while it was the salmon capital of the

world, attracting sportsmen from the whole of the British Empire. It was popular for sailing and aside from Wimbledon still has one of the oldest grass tennis courts in the world. Of course, industry finally took its toll on the ecology of the area in a relatively short time, especially compared to the stewardship of the Cowichans over thousands of years. The result was the subsequent decline of logging and fishing. Today, there is still logging, fishing and boat building but the protection of the ecosystem is in the forefront.

Things will probably never be the same as they were before European contact. The Cowichan First Nations people are still struggling from the effects of residential schools and still suf-

fer from racism, discrimination, unemployment and lack of adequate housing. But they have also come a long way. They now have an economic development company, providing job and training opportunities. More young people are staying in school and healthier lifestyles are being adopted. Traditional food, art, rites and ceremonies are strong and the population has now grown to over 4000.

When you travel through the Cowichan Valley, its arresting beauty and peacefulness give you hope that life can be better, sustainability can be a reality and living in harmony with nature and each other can be achieved.

Don Richardson

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