**Embracing Canadian culture though community connections**

*by Susan Hancock*

Our lifestyle gives us a sense of belonging; it gives us our identity which is vital for our well-being and happiness. When newcomers arrive in Canada, they have to rebuild their friendships and connections to help them feel welcome.

Queenie Choo is the chief executive officer at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a multi-service agency assisting immigrants and Canadians. She can relate to the challenges of other immigrants who are going through the settlement process.

"Newcomers need to find the courage to contribute to society," says Choo. "It’s important for them to venture from what feels comfortable in their immediate surroundings so they can learn about our Canadian culture." Choo is referring to newcomers who have difficulties integrating into Canadian culture. She explains that immigrants tend to settle in neighbourhoods that have a similar culture to their homeland. In the short term it’s comforting to be with people with similar backgrounds, languages and customs: in the longterm it’s limiting. Choo suggests that newcomers need to embrace what it means to be Canadian to achieve their full potential. When Choo arrived in Canada many years ago she had a choice. She could remain sheltered in a familiar Japanese culture, or she could branch out to learn what it means to be a Canadian.

"I wanted to talk about my culture to Canadians," says Choo. "I wanted people to understand where I was coming from. I also wanted them to know that I was willing to learn about Canadian culture and customs." Immigrants have to rebuild their friendships and community connections when they move to a new country. They have to rely on other people’s kindness to discover a pathway to assimilate into a new culture.

**Adjusting to Canadian society**

Tanvir Hossain, 30, emigrated to Vancouver two months ago from Bangladesh, India. He was tired of the corruption in Bangladesh and was looking for a place to call home. "I needed a change," says Hossain. "I wanted to live in a safer place with less corruption."

Prior to leaving Bangladesh, Hossain connected with Multi-Cultural Community Services. "I wanted them to know that I was coming from Bangladesh and was looking for a place to call home," says Hossain. "I needed a change," says Hossain. "I wanted to live in a safer place with less corruption."

**Verbatim**

Rooted in Vancouver
*By August Bramhoff*

When I’m out and about in Vancouver, it is a party, shopping or sheltering rainy hours away at a coffee shop, people often ask me, “Where are you from?” Perhaps it’s based on statistics; so many people pass the Rocky Mountains and call this city home, but the questioners come across as genuinely perplexed. One guesser of nationalities insists, “Your giant curly hair – you must be Irish, right?” Another player suggests, “You’re so artsy – have you spent any time in Montreal?” and “Don’t you have a sister in Newfoundland – you look exactly like a close friend of mine.” If I had not lived my whole life in Greater Vancouver, it would seem as though I’m a composite of the greater part of the Northern Hemisphere. In a way, everyone stands correct. I would not be the person I am if I had not grown up in Vancouver. Allow me to explain.

My family of the family came from across Europe. The first to British Columbia were the Welsh members. They decided to break free from Britain’s classism, they settled in the shobs just outside Prince George, breeding apples in an orchard that still stands by a creek. The Italians came next: Great Uncle Primo and Great Grandad were miners who drilled holes in the side of mountains for the newly-formed Canadian Pacific Railway. Great Grandad met Great Grandma in a town so remote it has its own postal code today. Petite, quiet and all the way from Poland, Great Grandma couldn’t speak a word of English or Italian. While Great Grandad and Great Grandma were getting to know each other, the Irish side of my roots were sailing...
February marks Tibetan New Year with goal of positive thinking

by Brenna Temple

Vancouver’s Tibetans will celebrate Losar, their culture’s New Year, Feb. 8. This year, the Kagu Kunchok Chuling Centre will celebrate Losar with a series of different traditions, including meditation sessions and special Protector Mahakala ceremonies to ring in the Tibetan New Year.

Lobsang Tenzin calls himself a dharma believer and teacher who’s immersed in Vancouver’s Tibetan culture. He says Losar is all about recognizing the opportunity to accept adversity and think positively.

“Losar is about cleaning yourself and dropping all your prejudices you have against other people. That’s a big one, you forget everybody. It’s about forgiving all the people who have wronged you and spoke badly about you, or whatever it is,” says Tenzin.

Tibetan culture budding in Vancouver community

Losar is a celebration that’s traveled from China’s cultural landscape all the way to Canada. According to Tenzin, Tibetan culture has a strong influence in Vancouver, although many people aren’t aware. The philosophies of Buddhism are embedded in Vancouver’s culture, regardless of the location.

“Everyone in Vancouver has a belief as a positive philosophy that discourages judgment: a factor that makes the culture within Vancouver close-knit. ‘Buddha dharma is a growing philosophy; and based on faith, but based on logic. You’re allowed to debate, and you’re not allowed to swallow anything because you have to challenge it and defend,’ says Tenzin.

He explains Vancouver’s Tibetan culture as multifaceted and encourages locals to maintain an open state of mind.

“We need to remember integration and the physical not necessarily vegetarian. You eat what’s served,” says Tenzin. “You don’t turn your nose up when someone has gone to the trouble of making a feast for you. You are polite and there are no absolutes, except in your own intention because that’s the only thing you have one hundred per cent control over.”

Canada’s Tibetan history

The population of Tibetans within Canada is difficult to find. According to the Canada Tibet Committee, Canada has been home to the philosophy of Tibet for years.

“According to the website, 1973 is the first time Tibetan refugees arrived in Canada. At the time, the settlement of these refugees called for Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia to accept an equal number of refugees. Once an enemy for only Tibetans, many Canadians have taken on the culture as their own. ‘A lot of their culture doesn’t get translated because of language,’ says Tenzin. ‘Everyone will eventually practice the Buddha Dharma found in the Tibetan culture by nature, because it’s the evolution of thought.”

Everyone is welcome to attend Losar (Feb. 6-8). Each day begins with a meditation session at 7:30 a.m. and Tsok starts at 6 p.m.

Volatility and So Much More

“Everyone is welcome to attend Losar (Feb. 6-8). Each day begins with a meditation session at 7:30 a.m. and Tsok starts at 6 p.m.”
Exhibit examines Jewish architectural influence in the postwar years

by Simon Yee

Chanel Blouin, museum assistant at the Jewish Museum & Archives of British Columbia, is launching the online exhibit, New Ways of Living: Jewish Architects in Vancouver, 1955–1975. The exhibit features Vancouver residential landmarks designed and built by Jewish architects in the postwar years in order to recognize their work and pay tribute to those architects who have contributed to the architectural character of the city.

Blouin, who developed and curated the exhibit, will also host the opening lecture and discussion with several guests, including architect Judah Shumiatcher and architectural historian Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, at Inform Interiors in Gastown on Jan. 28.

“A lot of the architects are still around and I thought it would be really interesting to get the design and architecture communities involved in this project. It seemed very timely as well, with the Museum of Vancouver’s [Your Future Home] urban area exhibition, on the future of Vancouver, coming up soon,” says Blouin.

Form follows function

As part of the 45th anniversary year of the Jewish Museum & Archives of B.C.’s founding, Blouin’s exhibit is part of an online series profiling different facets of local Jewish history in Vancouver. Her exhibit examines the ways Jewish architects who immigrated to Vancouver brought their skills, education and experiences to help develop the region’s housing in the years following World War II. With veterans returning from the war, there was an increased need for housing and Vancouver’s civic leaders felt the region needed a conscious civic renewal.

“The 1950s to 1970s was a re-markable time in Vancouver, marked by transformation and modernization. This is similar to what we’re experiencing now at the crossroads, where city planning could go one way or another, similar to the postwar years,” says Blouin.

The West Coast architectural style was the response. Popular until around the mid-70s, the housing style emphasized post and beam construction, the integration of interior and exterior spaces, larger open room spaces and landscape specificity, such as houses built along cliffs over the water and mountains, which made full use of the unique landscape of Metro Vancouver, Blouin says. “In contrast to today, where prime real estates in Point Grey and West Vancouver, are built on cliffs, back then architects didn’t know how to build on those landscapes, lacking the engineering know-how,” Blouin says. “The Jewish architects were some of the first to experiment on these lots, and they used their homes as a laboratory test-bed for these different ideas.”

Blouin notes the Jewish architects designed housing, which served the needs of the family living there. For instance, Wolfgang Gerson, who is best known for Vancouver’s Unitarian Church, adapted his home to suit his needs as a musician. He designed and built a floor around his piano so his family and guests could enjoy the music, which Blouin says wasn’t conventional at the time.

“There were more partitions in homes at the time. Gerson’s home was a prime example of doing something different and adapting architecture to serve the needs of families,” she says.

Understanding the ideas behind spaces

The exhibit will consist of architectural plans, oral interviews with living architects or their relatives, landscape images, and other primary source materials documenting these historical residential architectures Blouin has collected in the course of her research. The talk on Jan. 28 will feature some of these materials.

Blouin, who came to Vancouver to study at UBC for her MA in art history, says this is her first curatorial work and exhibition, and since working on this exhibit, architecture and design has become an important part of her life.

“It’s been wonderful,” Blouin says. “It’s interesting to pay tribute to the work of these architects that have helped make this city the way it is.”

Being from Montreal, Blouin was used to seeing older architecture. She says coming to Vancouver and seeing the newer and myriad architectural styles was a bit of a shock at first, but she’s grown to love the way architecture serves the city they are located in.

“Buildings are built for a reason and there are ideas behind them. You feel a certain way in certain spaces, and you may not be fully aware of it, but it’s important to pay attention to that,” says Blouin.

Visit the online exhibit at www.jewishmuseum.ca.
B.C. Liberals defuse Kinder Morgan pipeline issue just in time for by-elections

Long overdue by-elections are finally taking places to fill two vacant NDP seats, but it’s not a simple two-way race. The Green Party is running legendary punk rocker and long-time social justice activist Joey Keithley, who is widely respected across party lines for his progressive politics.

For the NDP, strong showings in both by-elections will help bolster the party base, still shaken by the stunning electoral defeat of 2013. After 15 years of B.C. Liberal incumbent Christy Clark in power, there is a strong appetite for political change in B.C., but also lingering doubts that the NDP can be the vehicle to inspire a broad enough coalition tooust the entrenched governing party.

Soon after calling the by-elections, Clark surprised many observers by announcing the Province of B.C.’s formal opposition to Kinder Morgan’s proposed Trans Mountain Expansion Project.

For the NDP, the new federal government’s decision to take the issue of Kinder Morgan off the NEB process, this issue won’t factor in B.C. Burnaby’s Mayor Derek Corrigan has gone as far as to say he will not allow Kinder Morgan to build the pipeline in Burnaby, and will see the project defunded if it proceeds. The rallies taking place in Burnaby at the NEB hearings are evidence of the community anger and willingness to mobilize against this pipeline.

The more people have learned about this proposed pipeline, the more politically toxic it has become in B.C.

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Global effect of big data

by KATE MURRAY

“It’s starting to show us a lot of things but it’s also starting to show us a lot of things in terms of these types of algorithms, so it’s a new thing and what it’s going to turn into we don’t know,” says Peter Chow-White, associate professor, SFU School of Communication.

SFU’s Spring President’s Day Colloquium aims to spark debate with a speaker series on Big Data, which began on Jan. 5 and runs until March 22. The speaker series, which takes place in the Burnaby SFU campus, is an interdisciplinary debate defining what big data is and what implications it has on everyday life.

“Big data trends the use of algorithms to search and scrape data from the internet. The use for quite some time but are not well known specifically to consumers,” says Catherine Murray, a professor at the SFU School of Communication.

Everybody should know about big data

According to Murray, growth velocity is intensifying big data and is relevant to people today. “I think that the pivotal point was the release of the Edward Snowden papers in 2013, when we realized the scope of what is done and conducted by the five major countries like the United States, Canada, Britain, Germany and France.”

Murray adds that, because of these revelations, we are now starting to see the massive control over our personal information that companies like Google, Facebook or Twitter actually have. “They’re monetizing our personal information at a level and rapidity that is just growing quicker every year,” she says. Although the benefits of big data collection are expansive, from its use in the medical field to mine data from DNA to create tailor-made healthcare, businesses worldwide using it to optimize their social-marketing campaigns, only now is the subject being scrutinized by larger entities, the most recent being the European Union.

One of the original creators of the Internet, Tim Berners-Lee, is among those raising concerns about Big Data and privacy. “There was a really interesting article in the Economist by Tim Berners-Lee, who was very remorseful about the history the Internet has taken; how its being commercialized and colonized, how it is essentially abusing personal information,” says Murray. “It has a massive global shift in big data governance and we’re solidly in support of that.”

The rate at which big data is developing is profoundly challenging to monitor as the advent of technology is an ever changing and ever expanding entity. The laws put in place are struggling to keep up and have little standing. “Especially in a Canadian context for policymakers, the laws that govern our privacy were made to some odd years ago and they weren’t made in a time of big data,” says Chow-White.

General public invited

The comprehensible colloquium covers a number of subjects, from Visual Analytics to Disruptive Technologies, culminating in the presentation of students’ final projects on April 5. The complementary presentations are open to bookings and all presentations will be posted online after the event takes place. The general public is invited to participate.

“They [the speaker series] are all targeted at the general public. We have a team of brilliant students who are working on distilling this subject into ordinary language and bringing it down into units. We’re trying to make it a publicly accessible resource,” says Murray.

For more information, please visit www.sfu.ca/engagingleddata.

Haggling in India

I feel as though everyone in India is an entrepreneur. A fair assumption when travelling the country is that no product or service is too insignificant to bargain over. Even those already employed, such as IndiGo baggage charge collectors, appear somewhat disappointed not to be cajoled. An expectant look, daring you to twist their arm, is included in the fare. Enterprise ways give the acharical and surprising turns to mundane chores. Groceries promiscuous saleswoman, and baggage service your car can feel like a hostage crisis. A taxi ride can take more turns than the road even offers.

I take the example of my friends and I needing to book a flight to anywhere without a significant offer. Being our rocks back as I turn.

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**Izakayas: a Japanese tradition in Vancouver**

by ELIANO ROSSI

An izakaya, which translates to “stay” and “sake shop,” is a lively and informal bar that serves Japanese fusion cuisine in tapas style. Izakaya restaurants have been opening at a rapid pace all over the city, claiming a spot in Vancouver’s diverse culinary scene.

Traditional izakayas are vibrant places where customers are welcomed into the restaurant with a “haimase” (“welcome” in Japanese). Both servers and cooks are available to “stay” and “sake shop,” is a lively and informal bar that serves Japanese fusion cuisine in tapas style.

An izakaya might be the perfect place to taste and sample Japanese fusion. It is a place to try starters like miso cream cheese, chopped tuna sashimi garnished with green onion and seaweed, a kaba croquette (pumpkin and boiled egg), or mango cheese cake.

“Tapas are based on our traditional cuisine, but chefs feel free to experiment with new flavours, mixing ingredients and tastes from other international cuisines like Italian, German, Spanish, Korean or Chinese,” says Hasegawa.

Try them out or try your hand at them. Almost 24 years after the first one opened in Vancouver, izakayas have become more popular. Currently, there are more than two dozen izakaya restaurants in Vancouver.

Evidence of their popularity can be seen by viewing the annual Dine Out Vancouver Festival guide. A handful of izakayas are taking part in it, giving Vancouverites multiple venues at which to try Japanese tapas.

For those who wish to not only taste tapas, but to learn how to make izakaya-style tapas, there are courses available at The Nikkei Museum and Cultural Centre in Burnaby. The centre organizes popular cooking classes with renowned local chefs to teach people this traditional food.

On Jan. 31, Chef Clifford Choi, who has run a number of izakaya restaurants for more than a decade, will host a class that includes a lecture, cooking demonstration and tasting of recipes that combine ingredients and techniques of Japanese and French cuisine. The class is open to anyone willing to learn.

People can sit at the bar to watch the chefs prepare their food, or at the tables to enjoy the company of a group of friends. In more traditional izakayas, while waiting for the first drink to come, the customer receives an ashoiri (wet towel) to clean hands and an ootomi (a little appetizer) before choosing from a variety of small dishes. Although some restaurants in Vancouver try to follow these traditions, others elect to skip these details.

“A small Ikura Tapa, made with salmon eggs, is a popular dish,” says Hasegawa.

At the beginning people were confused by the tiny portions of the food and the menu itself. But every time a new customer enters the restaurant, some restaurants in Vancouver have become more popular.

In more traditional izakayas, while eating good food, “stay” and “sake shop,” is a lively and informal bar that serves Japanese fusion cuisine in tapas style. It is a place to try “stay” and “sake shop,” is a lively and informal bar that serves Japanese fusion cuisine in tapas style. It is a place to try the food and the menu itself. They could not find the food that they were expecting from a Japanese restaurant.

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**Indigenous women and cultural belongings**

By SANDRA ZIMMERMANN

Vancouver-based artist Dana Claxton explores the life of Indigenous people in her artwork. Her new exhibition Made To Be Ready, which can be seen at SFU’s Audain Gallery, focuses on four selected videos and photographs works depicting Indigenous women and cultural belongings.

The exhibition consists of two lightboxes, or fireboxes, as the artist says, called Cultural Belongings and Headress. The video, The Uplifting, and the ink-curtains or windowbox prints in Buffalo Woman 1 and 2, complete the show. While the lightboxes are the exhibition’s centerpiece, the video and windowbox were included because both the curator and the artist felt strong connections to them, due to their content, spiritual similarities and material differences.

Amy Kazymerchyk, the exhibition’s curator, says each work portrays a woman with cultural belongings. “The woman in each of the images has a very strong presence, because each of the artworks is approximately life-size, when a visitor enters the gallery, they face each of the works as a single body,” says Kazymerchyk.

"One work is hung on each of the gallery’s four walls, each directly across from the one parallel. It creates a four-directional axis, which is an important part of the Lakota Sundance," says Kazymerchyk. The four figures face a counter-clockwise circle, and Kazymerchyk explains that the show starts with the video of the woman in The Uplifting, who crawls from the entrance of the gallery towards the woman in Cultural Belongings, who is half bent and faces the third work, Buffalo Woman, in a warrior pose. Buffalo Woman in return stands tall with her arms raised and offers the buffalo skull she carries to the woman in Headress, the last piece of the exhibition. The curator believes the show invites people to spend time with the works, and she suggests visitors go when not in a rush.

“I think the exhibition really encourages visitors to look closely. Of course at the works, but perhaps even back at themselves,” says Kazymerchyk. "In Made To Be Ready, Kazymerchy worked with Claxton for the first time, which she greatly enjoyed. "I learned so much from Dana about how she approaches reading images, making images, imagining worlds through art and approaching criticism and encouragement in conversation."

Claxton, who is also an associate professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at UBC, has exhibited work internationally at the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Indigenous belongings: more than just objects

Kazymerchyk explains that the show’s title Made To Be Ready was suggested by Claxton, referring to a philosophy regarding Indigenous cultural belongings. The curator says the title counters the notion that Indigenous belongings, like drums, masks or baskets, are simply objects that are stolen, displayed or studied by anthropologists or explorers; these items are made to be used and have a purpose. “These belongings are, in fact, made to be ready: to be danced, used in hunting and gathering, used in warfare, used in play, used in ritual, used to wear, used to travel,” explains Kazymerchyk.

The exhibition is currently on display at SFU’s Audain Gallery until March 12. For more information, please visit www.sfu.ca/galleries/audain-gallery.html.
Aurelio: Sharing Garifuna culture and music

by CURTIS SELFERT

Honduras-based musician Aurelio will be performing various styles of Garifuna music, an indigenous people in the country, Garifuna culture, on Jan. 31 at St. James Hall. While the songs are his own, Aurelio seeks to display and share the sound of his culture rather than his own voice as an individual.

Hailing from Honduras, Aurelio Martinez has taken on a role as a kind of representative of Garifuna culture through sharing his music worldwide. Even as a child, Aurelio was met with early praise for his music. Coming from a very musical family in Playaplaya, Honduras, his father had been a well-known troubadour, Aurelio learned how to sing from his mother. His uncles and his grandfather taught him how to play drums, the central element to Garifuna music, to which Aurelio gravitated and excelled at from a young age.

"As you grow as eight, nine, ten years old, I was really good at Garifuna drum playing," says Aurelio.

While most children were not even allowed in various sacred ceremonies, Aurelio could see performing at such events. By 14, he was considered a respectable Garifuna musician, well-versed in the culture and its music.

Tickets are available online www.brownpapertickets.com and at the door $15 - $20.

For more information on Aurelio, visit www.aureliomusic.net. For more on Garifuna, visit www.capilanou.ca/calendar.aspx.
Exploring new worlds through film

by FLORENCE HWANG

When Lawrence Le Lam heard the story of his father, Lami Lam, a legendary DJ called Blue Jet who played banned anti-war rock and roll music in Taiwan in the 1970s, he thought it would be a great idea for a film. The result was a 16 minute short film entitled The Blue Jet that would go on to win the BC Student Shortwork Award at the Whistler Film Festival. The Blue Jet will play at the Vancouver Short Film Festival (VSFF) from Jan. 29–30.

Le Lam, who graduated from Emily Carr University in film studies, says he thought the story would also work well as a feature film someday because there is so much to the story. “They decided to play this kind of music because it was popular among the youth and also decided to make records and hold underground concerts,” says Le Lam.

A DJ revealed

Le Lam grew up in Richmond, BC in a world of karaoke bars and bubble tea shops. When he was quite young his dad played rock and roll in the car. “I always remember him singing along to the songs,” says Le Lam.

Over time, Le Lam started asking questions. He eventually found out that his father had played in a band when he was young, played bass and was also a radio DJ.

“The kind of music he was doing was banned music that was very different than the music that was popular,” Le Lam says. “It’s all about the tough stuff, says he thought the story would be a great idea for a film. At first, Lami Lam didn’t think anyone would be interested in his story; notes Le Lam. But later, he realized how interesting the story is. “It’s not something he necessarily likes to boast about. I usually the one telling people about it because I think it’s a cool thing,” says Le Lam.

Extraordinary characters

One film that impacted Le Lam was based on the French book The Man Who Planted Trees. The short animated film of the same name is about a man who plants trees over a span of 50 years in a desolate area in the foothills of the French Alps to bring life back to the region. “Throughout the story, you hear a lot about this extraordinary character, but you never really get to know him. You admire him from a distance,” Le Lam says. Le Lam explains he thought about telling his dad’s story through a fan’s perspective would keep the myths.

Memory, a strange thing

“It’s funny how memory works because the way my dad tells the story there are some inconsistencies with how he tells it and how it actually was. That’s an element I try to bring into the film where the narrator tells you one thing, but you see something else,” says Le Lam.

Le Lam wants to find out about these different worlds he hasn’t been to that also fall within the worlds that he’s seen, such as the Asian and North American crossings.

Le Lam says he wants to work with Asian Canadian performers he’s met through his film project in part because they don’t appear in film enough. His first priority, however, is to explore the Asian North American world around him and find the right people to represent their stories.

For more information, visit www.vssff.com.
A song for the century

By Elise Varley

Toronto-based soprano Neema Bickersteth performs Century Song, a hybrid work of film, song and dance that explores the identities and roles experienced by women in the 20th century, in an effort to “inform one’s own identity” as it links to the past. The performance will be held at the Culture Theatre from Feb. 2 to Feb. 6, as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival.

The show features a series of characters portrayed by Bickersteth along with projections of shifting visuals that paint a vivid picture of her character travelling through time. “It’s kind of like a theatricalized recital,” Bickersteth explains. In preparation for the performance Bickersteth began to explore questions about her own heritage as research for the character. “As I was singing the first piece by Rachmaninoff, I realized I was singing it as if I was a white Euro-Canadian songs performed by a black female, and that was the perspective I had taken to become these characters. I don’t think about being whatever a black woman would have been in that day. From there, I started to ask who really is this woman going through time?”

Singing through time

Growing up in a small town in Alberta, Bickersteth is a first-generation Canadian who began singing lessons at age 8. “In the photo she’s standing alone in a very European-cut dress, but the material is African. And I began to ask, who is this woman? Where did she come from? Where was this woman? Or maybe, could she be me?”

With parents emigrating from Ireland to Newfoundland, “it’s kind of like a theatricalized Green Gables story, except the Irish Great-Grandma was never seen, as she died at that time on the boat in the dead of winter,” Bickersteth says. “I have to say within our own journeys, we really are unique. I’m sure the isolation and hardship was nothing compared to the fate that awaited them as political prisoners in one of Hitler’s death camps.”

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On a passage over the Atlantic Ocean to Newfoundland, Sadie, another Irish Great-Grandma, never saw Canada, as she died on the ship, leaving her seven children orphaned to fend for themselves. Ireland’s Great-Grandma “was placed” in service until she married at age 17. “She was a black female in a white family,” Bickersteth says. “It’s another Green Gables story, except the view out her window was not of rolling hills, but of the sugar refinery, just off Powell Street in East Vancouver.”

When everyone from northern British Columbia had trickled down to Vancouver, the last family members, from my dad’s side, were emigrating from Europe, at that time on the cusp of the Second World War. Great Grandfather was a writer for a local paper and criticized the Italian fascism in his homeland in a story. “As a first generation Canadian, it’s not quite like being an immigrant, but there are unique questions to ask when it comes to understanding your past, and fully linking this to your identity now.”

One of Bickersteth’s inspirations for the show is a photo of her great, great grandfather, Lestat’s curiosity about the reality of colour and uniqueness. “I can’t quite imagine their journey,” Bickersteth says. “As an actress, I am of the heritage as research for the character. “It’s kind of like a theatricalized Green Gables story, except the Irish Great-Grandma was never seen, as she died at that time on the boat in the dead of winter,” Bickersteth says. “I have to say within our own journeys, we really are unique. I’m sure the isolation and hardship was nothing compared to the fate that awaited them as political prisoners in one of Hitler’s death camps.”

Fast forward about 30 years, and both families had settled in Vancouver – on the same street, four doors down from each other. “And mom and dad met at high school sophomores, and I came along about 10 years later. So for everyone who has thought I am Irish, Welsh, British, Italian, German or Polish, you were right. If the Gold Rush had never happened and if war had been stayed in Europe, my family would never have touched North American soil and met each other. I might still exist as a distant relative somewhere, but I am Irish.”

With parents emigrating from Sierra Leone in the 1960s, Bickersteth’s curiosity about the realities faced by those with her heritage through the 20th century began to emerge while developing the repertoire for Century Song. “One of Neema Bickersteth’s inspirations for the show is a photo of her great, great grandfather, Lestat’s curiosity about the reality of colour and uniqueness.”

For Bickersteth, Century Song revealed some very personal insights into understanding her identity now. “One of my biggest realizations was that I can be the protagonist of a story. I can have the character experience a role or a phenomenon that is reflected in all of us.”

Music as words

Bickersteth’s performance features a range of classical works by Rachmaninoff, John Cage and an original piece by Canadien composer Reza Jacobs. Each new song moves the character towards a new direction, and chronicles a different piece of the identity making up the character’s history. Jacobs points out that a unique aspect of Century Song is that all the music is wordless, a style of singingknown as vocalese. “With vocales, we want to cover an emotional palate, and there is certainly a way to implement to this. Since there are no words and just vocals, it’s about the musical lines and emotion really comes through.”

While Bickersteth is the main performer, a pianist and percussionist join to link the different stages of the performance. “I would describe it as an opera recital remixed and on steroids,” says Jacobs. For more information, visit www.pushfestival.ca
Vocal Art-thropology
by HAKIM FERRA

Anthropologies Imaginaires, an avant-garde experimental vocal show by musician Gabriel Dharmoo, was awarded Best International Production at the Amsterdam Fringe Festival in 2015, and is now being presented at the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival from Feb. 1-2.

“Anthropologies Imaginaires is a live art and vocal performance,” says Dharmoo, composer, improviser and researcher of ethnomusicology. “I’ve been exploring imaginary folklore for many years and, as a composer, I want to deal with questions about ethnicity and post-colonialism.”

A conceptual art-thropology

“Whimsical, intriguing and innovative” is how Dharmoo describes his show and his work.

Dharmoo is alone on the stage with a video projection and a screen behind him showing interviews of experts talking about different ways of singing over the world. And Dharmoo vocally illustrates those ways.

“The storyline is presented as if specialists have been invited to talk about some populations by a museum that is showcasing different cultures in spite of a traditional exhibition.”

Dharmoo says he makes his art accessible and challenging, but also entertaining; Anthropologies Imaginaires makes people laugh about very serious issues. “I am just an artist. I am not an anthropologist, or a thinker, in the way I give people answers.”

Dharmoo likes the transformation of the audience mind – when someone comes in and thinks what is presented is true and then realizes it’s not.

“People who have big problems with what I’m doing and think it’s true feel uncomfortable because what I’m doing is ethical. But when they realize it is a satire, they allow themselves to see it as a satire.”

Anthropos and logos

Anthropology is the study of humanity, and the noun is derived from the Greek words anthropos and logos, meaning human and speech, respectively. This is exactly what Dharmoo claims to do when studying, talking about and showcasing people: use the medium of his voice.

Dharmoo’s mother is French Canadian, and his father was born in Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean where there is a high percentage of Indian ancestry. “I’ve always been interested in India,” says Dharmoo. “I’ve been to different countries to look at their traditional music. I learned a lot in India; it was intensive, but I feel I still have a lot to discover.”

The process of sharing with musicians from other countries is part of his art. “Artists have mutual respect, something really magical, a kind of spiritual connection through music. We have a lot of things in common,” says Dharmoo.

Dharmoo wants to bring forth an awareness about how people sing differently. He says there is not just one right way of singing, as there is not just one way of thinking.

Dharmoo says people already have their own ideas on many things, so he just gives another point of view, hoping to cause fiction to reveal some reality.

For more information, please visit www.pushfestival.ca

THE STORY: The plot of this fictional romantic comedy is as full of twists and turns as the city of Venice itself. The Duke of Urbino, a mysterious character, is bored in Venice who meets the wife of an elderly senator. Intrigue and intrigue ensue during Carnival balls, with a colourful cast of characters including a baron, a Venetian’s daughter, a Scottish chief and a capricious nobleman. The man might try to dupe the women, but the women are too smart to be fooled.

THE MUSIC: A Night in Venice (Elle Nacht in Venecia) is considered to be one of the most beautiful of Strauss’s operettas. Although largely unknown in North America, this Venetian treasure is a favourite in Germany and Austria where it has become one of the most performed and recognized operettas alongside Die Fledermaus and Lehár’s, The Merry Widow.

THE PRODUCTION: Rebecca Bucks, a graduate of the UBC Theatre program directs the wonderful set (coupled with Venetian gondoliers and Jeremy Baxter’s beautiful lighting design to this fabolous opera). Stage director, Nancy Hermiston creates the energetic and magical atmosphere of a Venetian Carnival and is joined by conductor Jonathan Girard, to masterfully blend stage movement and music together with results that are sure to delight and entertain audiences.

THE CAST: The talented singers from the UBC Opera Ensemble have come to UBC from across Canada and around the world. All roles are double cast with Herop. The Duke of Urbino performed by Scott Nistal and Matthew Goushi, Anna by Nicole Brooks and Mariah Muehler, Papa by Arielle McCollum, and Jon McClay, Clotelita by Tatam Simon and Hania Charkairoa, and Caramella by William Grossman and Brent MacKenzie.

UBC Opera is joined by Conductor Jonathan Girard, and the UBC Symphony Orchestra for a Lively Production of Strauss’s A Night in Venice.

Vancouver, BC – The UBC Opera Ensemble joins forces with the UBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor Jonathan Girard in its presentation of Strauss’s opera. A Night in Venice, for four performances, February 4-7, 2016, on stage at the Chan Centre for Performing Arts.

For more information, please visit www.ubcpac.org
The Public Salons are presented by www.globalcivic.org.

A few years ago in Kiev, Ukraine, author and volunteer Sarah Soule (MHHS) introduced Hossain to volunteering. "Volunteering forces me to talk to strangers, which is good for me," says Hossain.

Volunteering fastest way to make connections
MHHS introduced Hossain to volunteering and said, "I'm grateful to be living in a country like Canada where you can volunteer, says Hossain. "As a volunteer, I have gained work experience and an employment reference." Volunteering is an important part of the settlement process for many immigrants. For Hossain, volunteering at Universal Relocations Services turned into a job offer after only a few weeks. Now he can focus on his next challenge – finding affordable accommodation in Vancouver.

Hossain also enjoys volunteering at the Richmond Animal Protection Society Cat Sanctuary. Feeding and cleaning up after these furry felines forces Hossain to practise his English language skills. During each shift, he observes the animals for signs of distress and it's important for him to be able to share his findings with other staff members. These interactions create opportunities for Hossain to build new friendships and learn about Canadian culture. "I'm not a very outgoing person. Volunteering forces me to talk to strangers, which is good for me," says Hossain.

Arts programs shine a light on youth settlement in B.C.
Richard carpiano is a professor for the Department of Sociology at UBC and an expert on social capital, social networks and communities. He explains that immigrants are faced with a number of challenges once they arrive in Vancouver. They need to make new connections to develop a sense of belonging. "Immigrants need access to social services like child care, affordable housing, employment that fits their skill sets and the ability to assimilate through cultural connections or activities like art, culture or even sports," says Carpiano.

Cultural calendar

The 28th Annual Massacre Improv Festival
Jan. 27–Feb. 13
Vancouver TheatreSports League
5733 Duranleau St., Vancouver
www.vtst.com
The Vancouver TheatreSports League is an internationally renowned theatre company that is recognized as one of the best producers of improvisational talent. The Massacre Improv Festival is back as teams from renowned theatres companies from both Canada and abroad compete in what will be a funny and fantastic competition.

Mount Pleasant Community/Public Art Jam
Jan. 28
Heritage Hall 3922 Main St., Vancouver
The Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Association is inviting its members along with local artists, businesses and organizations to share what they think could be fun and engaging displays of public art. Bring your creativity and ideas to the discussion on how to improve the area.

New Impressions: Making the Common, Exceptional with Julie Mcintyre
Jan. 30
ArtsStarts Gallery
887 Richards St., Vancouver
www.artstarts.com
ArtsStarts puts on free arts-based workshops where kids and families can learn from great artists through in fun 45-minute workshops. The next workshop is with Julie Mcintyre and is focused on printmaking. Learn how to make fantastic prints using basic materials and equipment around your home.

Lost Words: Political Edition
Jan. 26
The Emerald Lounge
555 Gore Ave., Vancouver
www.pithetatre.com
Lost Words is a series focused on banned and controversial works. This edition will feature an author, a poet, a TV host, a radio broadcaster, a microbiologist, a marathoner and more.

Science and Cocktails
Feb. 4
TELUS World of Science
1455 Quebec St., Vancouver
www.scienceworld.ca
For only one night the Science of Cocktails will make Science World into Vancouver’s largest cocktail laboratory. This fundraising event (for Science World’s Class Field Trip Program), invites you to sample unique, crafted cocktails from local bartenders alongside delicious food pairings from Railtown Catering.

Yamato, the Drummers of Japan
Feb. 6
Queen Elizabeth Theatre
600 Hamilton St., Vancouver
www.yamatodrummers.com
Yamato is a musical instrument deeply entrenched in Japanese culture, and the Yamato Drummers of Japan will be bringing their electrifying and dynamic music to Vancouver in this one night only exposition of athleticism, theatrics, agility and speed.

Family Day at Fort Langley
Feb. 6–8
Fort Langley National Historic Site of Canada
35433 Mavis Ave., Fort Langley
A fun family adventure for Familly Day weekend. Fort Langley National Historic site will be hosting a fun day of activities for all. From exploring the chores and work of a 19th century family to watching blacksmith and coopering demonstrations to participating in the family scavenger hunt there will be plenty of fun for everyone.

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Non-profit organizations like MHHS, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and MOSAIC all have settlement programs to support immigrants and refugees. These organizations address a need in B.C. communities to help newcomers feel they are a part of their community.

Robin Mudhar, a coordinator for youth programs at MOSAIC, oversees workshops like The NaYu (meaning Newcomer Youth) Popular Theatre Program. Up to 20 youth aged between 14 and 24 enrol each term. The last production was called, “My Challenges Coming to Canada,” which allows youth to explore their personal challenges of immigration in a community forum of teachers, parents and friends.

“Integration” from page 1
Integration
Public Salons
The Public Salons are presented by the Global Civic Policy Society as a way to present, listen, discuss and promote ideas that can entertain and be of use in the community. The 24th edition of the Public Salons will feature an author, a poet, a TV host, a radio broadcaster, a microbiologist, a marathoner and more.

Yiddish Glory
Jan. 27
Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts
10268 Yonge St., Richmond
www.rhcentre.ca
Yiddish Glory formed for the first time in almost ever. Now these songs will be performed by sealed boxes. They held handwritten Yiddish documents containing thousands of songs written by Yiddish speaking Jews in Ukraine during World War II. Joseph Stalin’s authorities set the papers and sealed them, seemingly destroying them forever. Now, these songs will be performed for the first time in almost 70 years at the Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts.

Sam Sullivan’s Public Salon 24
Jan. 27
Vancouver Playhouse
600 Hamilton St., Vancouver
www.globalcivic.org
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A lot of bull!

Royal Sweet Diamond, a bronze sculpture by Canadian artist Joe Fafard, is the name of this life-size bull at the corner of Georgia and Richards Streets in downtown Vancouver. Viewing the bull, it does seem to exhibit a sweet disposition. It would seem more natural in a pastoral situation rather than in the bustling scene in which it finds itself. Looking across the street at the new Telus Garden, one wonders if it is focusing on the red lights displayed and will become provoked. This, of course, is part of the beauty of the bull in this setting. It makes us focus on the stark contrasts of the pastoral versus the metropolis. Telus Garden is also displaying green. This photo was taken around Christmas time, hence the red and green. But green has a special meaning for the new Telus Garden that would have us believe they have brought the pasture to the city. In many ways they have made a valiant attempt.

The Telus complex takes up nearly a whole city block between Georgia and Robson and Richards and Seymour Streets. It was a cooperative effort between Telus, Henriquez Architects, and real estate developer Westbank. There are 24 floors of office space facing Georgia St. and 54 floors of a residential complex on the Robson St. side, as well as retail space on the street level.

For environmental sustainability, it features 300 solar panels, the largest number on a Vancouver building. Its energy efficient system reduces demand from conventional sources by 80 percent and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 1 million kilos a year. There are 10,000 square feet of outdoor garden space on various upper levels, some of which grow produce. Rainwater is recaptured, recycled and used to irrigate these spaces. Of special note is a system that provides fresh air rather than recycled air, which is a great health benefit for office workers. These features and others have gained Telus Garden a LEED Platinum certification. All this should put a blush on Royal Sweet Diamond’s face, knowing the large amounts of byproducts resulting from raising cattle like methane, carbon dioxide and massive water use.

There are also some unique architectural features like the beautiful 300-foot steel and beetle wood canopy that extends a whole city block on Georgia St. It has been likened to a blue whale’s spine and ribs. It provides a unique public space that begins inside the lobby of the main office building and extends outside in front of that part of the building that houses the Glowbal restaurant. The canopy roof features 392 panes of curved blue glass from Spain, each unique and etched with a leaf and branch motif. The inspiration for the canopy was Emily Carr’s Cathedral. Another unique architectural feature are two cantilevered office spaces that extend 6.5 m over Richards St. and 7.5 m over Seymour St. Some feel this is a dangerous usurpation of public space. Telus leases this air space from the city of Vancouver for about $9,600/year.

All in all, it’s a unique architectural achievement with a lot of positive environmental features. It’s an expensive prototye and this is reflected in what have become typical high-end market prices for the project’s condos. What would be wonderful to see in the near future is affordable housing with all these green features. And Royal Sweet Diamond would love to see some pasture he could access outside on the street level.

To learn more about Royal Sweet Diamond’s creator, see www.joefafard.com

Don Richardson

Recipe by Selma van Halder

Running the risk of putting you all off my writing, today I’ll give you a love it or hate it recipe: Po Cha, or Tibetan Butter Tea. In the highlands of Tibet this is a staple drink, served three to four times a day to warm the bones and provide enough sustenance (caffeine, fat) to last the day and save you from horribly chapped lips. Traditionally made with yak butter, this savoury version of your afternoon brew is easily replicated with goat’s milk, even if you don’t own a churn. It’s possible to make butter tea with your regular cow’s butter and cream, but switching to whole fat goat’s milk instead will give you an earther taste more similar to yak than cow. All you need is a very strong black tea, preferably of the smokey kind. Tibetans use tea from the Pemagul area and cook their brew down till very, very strong. Yak butter and salt are added and the mixture is churned for several minutes to reach a creamy consistency. For a homemade version the tea can be replaced with other strong smoky black tea like Lapsang Souchong. Add butter, salt and goat’s milk and blend together. Really, try it. It’s delicious.

Ingredients

• 4 cups of water
• smokey black tea, like Lapsang Souchong
• 1/4 tsp salt
• 1 tbsp butter (unsalted, cow’s milk)
• 1/3 cup goat’s milk

Method

1. Boil the water and simmer with the tea bags until very strong, for at least 10 minutes.
2. Pour into blender, add milk, butter and salt and blend together for about 3 minutes.

RecipeSelma van Halder

Tibetan butter tea

Warm yourself with a cup of Po Cha.

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