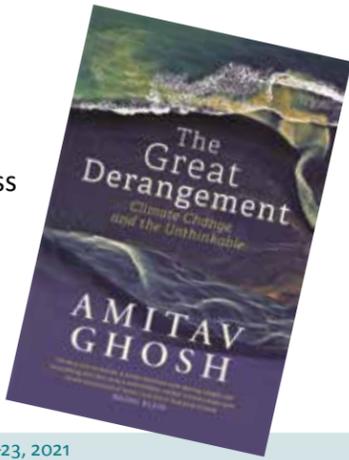


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The Source

forum of diversity

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KDocsFF

A new form of life: can Artificial Intelligence become a tool for surveillance capitalism?

by RAFAEL ZEN

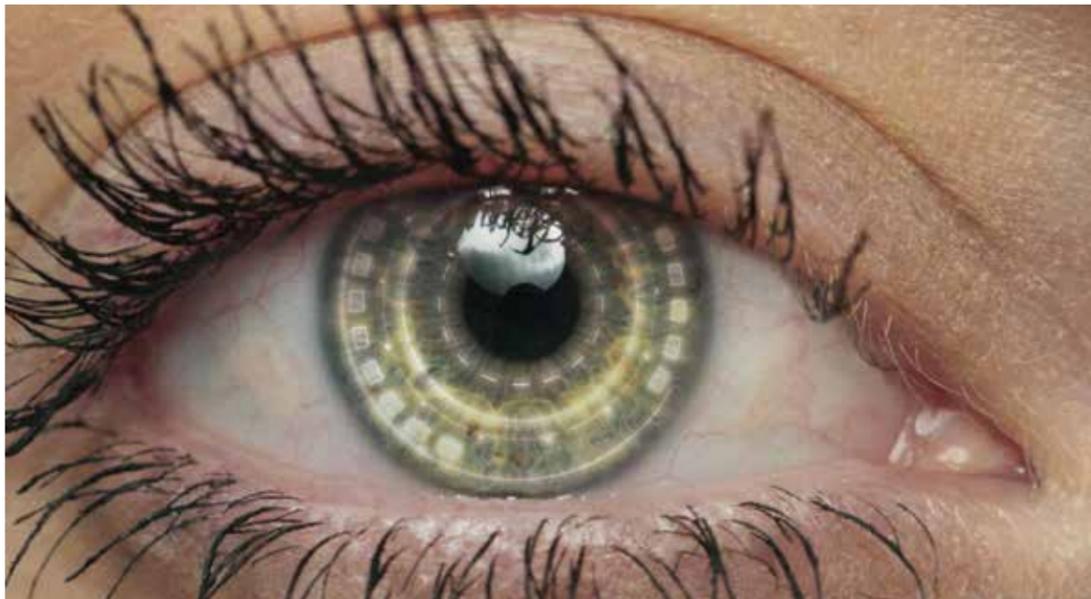
“We are setting the stage for something that transcends us. A new form of life is emerging. Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the world. It’s going to be everywhere all the time. It’s going to hear everything. It’s going to be connected to every single camera on the planet. AI will ultimately be the best thing to happen to humanity – or the worst thing ever.”

This mosaic of diverse voices comes at the very beginning of *iHuman*, a provocative political documentary presented at the Kwantlen Polytechnic University of Surrey’s (KPU) KDocs Film Festival (KDocsFF), Mar. 12–21.

The documentary by director Tonje Schei (Sweden, 2019, 99min), investigates how Artificial Intelligence (AI) impacts people and how legal and ethical standards can make sure global tech companies develop AI that is safe and is employed for the common good.

Throughout the film, examples of the positive social impact AI can bring include optimizing healthcare and driving forward progress on the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals.

Foreseeing a future when Artificial Intelligence is just as smart as, or smarter than humans, the



film asks an important question for the 21st century: how to set the boundaries between tech-paranoia and a critical evaluation of our society’s use of AI?

Director Schei acknowledges that the best way to combat paranoia is by getting informed.

“Today that means we need to develop a new way of critical thinking, that goes beyond clicks, likes, and headlines. For me as a director, it was most important to focus on the ethical challenges we are facing with AI today, to make sure we are in control of this powerful and far-reaching technology rather than tech giants that now

are the most powerful companies in the world,” she says.

Schei believes that people working in the AI industry are solving the issues of today’s ethical challenges, doing their very best to ensure that the field is laying the best possible groundwork for further ethical development.

“Some of the experts in *iHuman* hope it will lead to AGI, Artificial General Intelligence, where AI is just as smart or smarter than us humans. So, when many of the world’s smartest computer scientists are spending tons of money and resources to make this happen, we better pay attention, and

make sure we are going the right way,” warns Schei.

KDocsFF 2021: 15 films in 10 days of dialogue

With the theme of “Resistance. Freedom. Justice.”, the 2021 edition of KPU’s KDocs intends to engage, through documentary film, documentary activism, and community dialogue, debates around critical thinking, and understanding about multiple communities.

Explaining the choice of *iHuman* for this year’s selection, Janice Morris – founder of the festival – agrees that the world of artificial
See “KDocsFF” page 5 >

Verbatim

A Type A extrovert’s guide to pandemic life: One Direction dance breaks

by ISHA OHRI

In March 2020, I was in my first year and second term at UBC Sauder. I was caught up in running to my next class, going to Timmies and finding a quiet space to study.

Then UBC shut down and my life became boring.

Instead of walking to class, I walked to my desk and opened my laptop. I DoorDashed and all I had was quiet. My eyes were glued to the screen for hours watching my professors try to navigate Zoom and repeat the phrase, “We will do breakout rooms now!”

I missed the chaos of university life no matter how stressful because, as an extrovert, loneliness is fatal.

I am a Type A person and I have my whole life planned out. I want to be a CPA and have two golden doodles. I have spreadsheets (colour coded!) for everything imaginable.

March to April was when I was truly frazzled. A lot of opportunities that I wanted were either gone, postponed or remote. My fear and hatred of uncertainty made my anxiety sky rocket to the moon. After a pep talk from my older sister (who is way calmer than me), I was able to stop freaking out and make a new spreadsheet (yes, really).

By May, I was enrolled in four summer courses. Summer school was uneventful to say the least. Same Zoom screen, same desk and same water bottle. No new friends or faces. Just squares on Zoom. My loneliness increased by 1,000 per cent during summer. Even being in a class of 100 students, I never felt more isolated from my Sauder community.

After another pep talk from my sister, I decided I was not going to wallow.

I was exploring the attic one day when I found my One Direction posters. I think they
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Cultural Spotlight

Coast Mental Health honoured as one of B.C.'s Top Employers

by ISHA JAIN

Despite a challenging year for the healthcare industry, Coast Mental Health (CMH), a registered charity, was named one of BC's Top Employers for 2021.

"We're very excited by this announcement because it's the first time we've been recognized on this prestigious list," says Susan Hancock, senior manager for communications and community development. "It's not every day a non-profit gets recognized alongside a number of large B.C. agencies."

CMH, a registered charity established in 1972, advocates for and supports people living with a range of mental health challenges. The organization offers several client-focused and community-based programs to individuals with mental illness.

"When it comes to our services, the three pillars are housing, support services and education and employment, which are essential to recovery and well-being," adds Hancock.

Over five decades, CMH has expanded to 52 facilities and 1,371 homes spread across the Lower Mainland with close to 800 part-time and full-time employees.

Working for CMH

"Many of our employees are essential front-line healthcare workers, and thanks to their commitment and dedication, we've been able to continue to provide exceptional client care throughout the pandemic," says Hancock.

CMH deeply values the contributions of their employees and is dedicated to their growth and well-being.

"We excel only because of the hard work put in by our staff, therefore CMH provides their employees numerous opportunities to grow and advance in their career through training programs, educational bursaries and



▲ Mental health teams connect weekly to review client recovery plans and progress.

regular performance check-ins," says Hancock.

Manager of the recovery and rehabilitation program and senior manager for Timbergrove enhanced supportive housing at CMH, Veena Reddy is a testament to this fact over her 12-year career at the organization.

"CMH offered me an educational bursary 12 years ago, after which I decided to do my practicum here," recalls Reddy. "Since then, I have worked as a casual as well as full-time employee, shifting between different roles and programs over the years."

Similar to Reddy, many employees have taken advantage of the opportunities at CMH and taken the next step in their career.

CMH has also been recognized for offering comprehensive health and benefits plans for their employees as well as their families, which varies on their program and position. They offer flexibility around the employee's personal and educational goals, invest in their growth through training programs and tools and strive to create a diverse and close-knit community.

"It really does feel like one big family. We take care of each other and enjoy coming together to celebrate the team," says Hancock.

COVID-19 and seeing beyond

"The pandemic has been a test for everybody, especially since most

of our staff are frontline workers," says Hancock. "Our staff members have pushed through adversity to offer exceptional services to our clients and ensure our communities are safe."

Despite the challenges, the CMH has been able to fine-tune their communication, improve their engagement and become more resilient as an organization. As a non-profit organization, CMH depends on fundraising and philanthropy in order to operate.

"We are grateful for the support, however, we are often limited by our resources. Due to stigma surrounding mental health, we receive less visibility and recognition than other medical services and that often affects our funding," says Reddy.

"Despite this, we, as an organization, are extremely thankful for our employees who have done incredible work and will continue doing so as we move out of the pandemic," adds Hancock. "We are one of B.C.'s top employers because of our staff, and this award is an opportunity for us to publicly express gratitude to them."

Moving forward, CMH is eager to create more visibility for mental health within the healthcare industry. ✍

To learn more about their advocacy efforts and to pledge your support, visit www.coastmentalhealth.com

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MARCH 11	Hannah McElgun The Politics of Hopi Language Circulation: How to make a sign point back
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MOSAIC

New program aims to help immigrant couples navigate challenging waters

by GEOFF RUSS

Cultural disorientation can inflict strain on personal relationships, says Pooja Tuli, a certified intercultural competence facilitator and a mental health first-aider.

“Couples often see that they are slowly moving away from their traditional cultural roles and adapting to the Canadian lifestyle,” says Tuli, who also has an academic background including psychology and sociology.

She is currently running MOSAIC’s Enhancing Healthy Relationships Project (EHRP) for immigrant, refugee and visible minority couples facing new stresses in a new country.

Shared stresses of newcomers

Since 1976, MOSAIC has provided settlement and employment services for newcomers in Canada. EHRP is one the latest programs offered by MOSAIC to make it easier for disadvan-

According to Tuli, this is especially true for immigrant women in Canada who are thrust into a new society.

“The woman is now either expected or wishes to be independent and work,” she says.

The couples fear they are losing their culture, and one of the side effects is increased issues within their relationships. Tuli has learned from MOSAIC’s clients that couples do not always see adaptation to Canadian societal norms as a positive.

“In some circumstances, the woman may have a chance to be financially independent, however the home chores would still be her burden as it is part of her role from the cultural perspective,” says Tuli.

Another situation mentioned by Tuli is one where the woman is working and expected to be financially independent to support her family. However, the husband sometimes remains the one within the couple making financial decisions for the family.

“The program was designed and created in the hopes of assisting immigrant couples who may be facing relationship stressors.

Pooja Tuli, certified intercultural competence facilitator and a mental health first-aider

taged persons to adapt and settle down. Conducted virtually over seven sessions, the EHRP provides skills and strategies for couples to reduce stresses that can lead to domestic violence.

“The program was designed and created in the hopes of assisting immigrant couples who may be facing relationship stressors,” says Tuli. “We also hope that participating in this program will significantly lower the chances of potential domestic violence incidents.”

Newcomers in Canada face many challenges including at-risk finances and lowering or loss of professional and social status. Often their academic degrees or work experience are negated upon arrival, adding to stresses and anxieties. These hardships are only part of what MOSAIC seeks to address with the EHRP.

“Most of our clients might have had Bachelors or Masters degrees or were certified professionals, doctors or engineers,” says Tuli. “Getting credentials and degrees recognized in Canada for immigrants is often very expensive and long.”

Changing power dynamics and new couples

One of the most prominent stresses faced by newcomers is adapting to the cultural and social environment of Canada, she says.

The status of the wife breaking away from her role as homemaker to become the breadwinner is often a jarring change for the husband.

“It has often been observed that the other partner may find this change a bit hard to adapt to, where they may be moving away from their traditional roles,” says Tuli.

Tuli explains that tight finances often leave immigrant couples with no choice but to both enter the workforce despite the shock of changing power dynamics.

Safety and belonging

“We hope to help the couples enhance their relationship by learning constructive ways to deal with conflict, improve communication...and strategies to further help them decrease the chances of future incidents,” says Tuli.

Canada is often ranked as the one of the world’s top destinations of immigrants. According to Statistics Canada, as of 2016, over 20 percent of the country’s population were immigrants. Tuli and MOSAIC hope EHRP will help ease the stresses faced by this huge part of Canada’s population. Another goal of Tuli and MOSAIC is simply to help these new couples feel less alone on their path of migration to a new country and support their sense of belonging in Canada.

For more information, please visit: www.mosaicbc.org

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Gender inclusion in the workplace starts with they

by XI CHEN

In 2019, Merriam-Webster – America's oldest dictionary – declared the word "they" its word of the year and added a new definition: used to refer to a single person whose gender identity is non-binary.

Despite what some language skeptics might think, the use of "they" as a singular pronoun in English goes way back, even before the time of Shakespeare.

The rise of "they"

"I attended a conference for pronouns for non-binary people in 2019; what they found was there are over 50 gender pronouns that are actively in use in English," says Jade Pichette, manager of Programs, Pride at Work Canada. "15 years ago 'they/them' was just an option for non-binary pronouns, but it wasn't the most common. Now we have reached a tipping point which is very exciting."

Pichette, who would like to be addressed as they/them professionally, says they also sees the emergence of Mx as a non-binary title at work. Pichette also clarifies that just because someone uses "they", it doesn't necessarily mean they identifies with transgender because "they/them" doesn't assign a specific gender to a person. They adds that most trans people still use he/him or she/her, though there is a growing number of non-binary people who are increasingly adopting "they".

"I work with a lot of large employers. Many of them have staff who openly use they/them pronouns. It has been made part of the communication procedure and policy – you will actually see pronouns in the email signatures quite consistently. Those who are working in the inclusion and diversity space will put

ered low income. In comparison, this means trans people are five times more likely to be in poverty than people who aren't," they says. "Trans people are less likely to have stable employment. The main form of employment for many trans women is still sex work because there is no access to employment elsewhere. Quite often trans people are experiencing subtle discrimination at work – they are told they are an unconventional hire, despite they have the education and the experience."

A more inclusive workplace

According to the Transitioning Employers report published in 2020, on which Pichette was an author, many organizations surveyed stated that they did not believe they have any trans people in their work environment. However, some trans people simply do not come out for fear of discrimination or negative employment outcomes.

"Some of the ones that I know who have come out at the most senior corporate levels, they are not necessarily openly talking about it," Pichette says. "The one space that I see trans people who are honoured and respected is the non-profit sector; they are pushing a lot of these conversations forward."

To make the workplace more gender-inclusive, Pichette says companies need to update their workplace harassment policies, as some of them were created before the legislation on gender identity rights came about.

"For example, consistently misgendering someone under the law is considered harassment. Many wouldn't consider that to be, but legally it is," says Pichette.

They adds that companies should also have a trans inclusion policy that addresses an employee that is transitioning at work. The gender clothing policies should be obsolete and people should be able to wear whatever is considered professional.

Companies also need better data collection procedures and systems according to Pichette, as most employee benefits and insurance plans are gendered, though some insurers have rolled out gender-inclusive plans that speak to the experience of trans employees.

"When we did our research in 2018 to look at the experience of LGBTQ2S+ as job seekers, the top thing that people care about is what policy a company has. If you don't have an inclusive environment, your employees leave," says Pichette.

With their experience at Pride at Work Canada, Pichette says that positive changes are happening now for the community.

"We are making progress. Sometimes it is slow and sometimes it is hard, but the progress is happening. I have been an educator in this field; the thing I would like to say to trans and non-binary folks, there is support out there, whether it is your employment journey or your connection to other people," they says. ✉

For more information please visit: <https://alumni.utoronto.ca/events-and-programs/more-pronouns-dialogue-trans-inclusion-workplace>



Photo courtesy of Jade Pichette

▲ Jade Pichette says that many employers have staff who openly use they/them pronouns.

pronouns in their LinkedIn accounts. Increasingly it is becoming the standard. Another thing I started noticing is younger people will put their pronouns on their resumes," Pichette says.

Pichette welcomes the change in pronouns to properly recognize non-binary people at work. They adds that the conversation should also extend to the broader changes that need to happen at the workplace.

"In Canada, about 40 per cent of trans people are consid-

The Great Derangement

A call to action on climate change

by ISHA OHRI

“Climate change is the most important issue of our times,” says Indian writer Amitav Ghosh.

Ghosh believes the stress associated with climate change has altered people’s mindset towards creativity and other issues. He also thinks that in literature, climate change has been simplified to a point where the intersectionality be-

tween other elements such as arts is missing or ignored. He wants literature to be an avenue of education, encouraging others to act.

Born in Calcutta, Ghosh grew up in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. He studied in Delhi, Oxford and Alexandria. With 15 works under his belt, his work and determination in using the written word to break down barriers and expose harsh realities has been reflected in his achievements. In 2007, Ghosh received the Padma Shri Award, one of the highest honors bestowed by the Indian government to civilians, and the Grand Prix of the Blue Metropolis festival in Montreal in 2011 among others. His work has been translated into more than 30 languages.

The writer is currently set to speak at UBC Reads Sustainability on Mar. 11 about his current non-fiction book *The Great Derangement*.

Childhood

“My ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented,” says Ghosh in the introduction of *The Great Derangement*.

In his book, he recalls the beginning and how it was in-

fluenced by his family. His family are native to Bangladesh and have several stories about how climate change affected them in their day to day lives due to their proximity to the Padma River, a major river in India and Bangladesh. Ghosh grew up listening to these stories and these be-

imagination took off as he tried to find ways to interpret this in his mind. Since then climate change has been a huge factor in his childhood and all of his works.

The new generation

Ghosh isn’t the first author to speak about climate change to

Young people are the future leaders. And if they are not given support from current leaders in any sector they are handicapped in their ability to solve these problems. Ghosh is the voice from the literary world helping younger generations find their own voice, so they in their own way can tack-



Photo courtesy of Amitav Ghosh

▲ Amitav Ghosh, author of *The Great Derangement*.

“My ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented.”

Amitav Ghosh, writer

came embedded into the fabric of his imagination and his writing journey.

“I was a child then, and as I looked into those swirling waters I imagined a great storm, with coconut palms bending over backward until their fronds lashed the ground,” he writes in an excerpt from *The Great Derangement*.

He remembers hearing a particular story as his family were travelling in a steamboat on the Padma River. Although he was just a child during this journey, this story stuck with him. His

the future leaders of the world, and he won’t be the last. But, his interpretation on the importance of educating young people is what stands out.

“I think it’s necessary to discuss this issue whenever possible,” he says.

By educating and raising more awareness to this topic, real change can start to happen.

“Young people everywhere recognize now that they will be dealing with very serious climate change impacts,” Ghosh maintains.

le climate change. His biggest ask for younger generations is to “recognize the seriousness of climate change.”

Ghosh’s power to use words to educate and inspire the younger generations into acting on this pressing issue and could be an example for other writers to use their power to help the next generation of doers, thinkers and innovators. ✍

For more information please visit: www.sustain.ubc.ca/climate-justice-series
www.amitavghosh.com

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LED BY ELDER GARY MANSON
MARCH 17, 4 P.M.

THE ART OF CHINESE DUMPLINGS
MARCH 16, 6 P.M.

RED CARPET SHORT FILM SCREENINGS
MARCH 20, 5:30 P.M.
Screening of films made during 48-hour challenge

PANEL DISCUSSION ON ADDRESSING RACISM IN OUR COMMUNITY
MARCH 20, 4 P.M.

More information about each workshop on our website. All events available online, for free and times listed are in pacific standard times.

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► “KDocsFF” from page 1

intelligence is already a reality for mankind. “AI is a far-reaching technology that has endless implications and ramifications for systems of power – be they social, political, or economic. And yet, AI is understood and controlled by relatively few people,” she says.

“Documentary film and documentary activism (where a documentarian’s artistic creation becomes a mechanism for activism, organizing, and advocacy) have become essential tools in the fight for social justice across the globe. As such, documentary film and documentary activism, because they call attention to injustice and oppression, are necessarily acts of resistance, of protest,” Morris explains.

Schei agrees that documentaries have the unique ability to go behind the headlines, tell human stories, and show the context and connections of power and control.

“There is a lot of power in AI, and as Putin says, the ones who will control AI will control the world,” she points out. “There is a lot of truth to this. We often question the new power structures of our society, and the truth is that tech empires have more power and spend more money on developing AI than entire nations.”

Schei believes a new digital future is possible.

“I hope this is a place where our beautiful diversity as the human species reigns, rather than algorithms that enforces a system of surveillance capitalism which we have today.”

Resistance, Freedom, Justice: the triad of documentary activism

Morris points out that while this kind of technology undoubtedly promises advancement and innovation, society must understand the ways in which it also consolidates power and, thus, power inequities.



▲ Tonje Schei.

Photo by Marte Garmann

“As global citizens, we are obligated to understand artificial intelligence – what it is, how it’s created, how it’s implemented, and how it’s controlled,” says Morris. “We must immerse ourselves in thinking about and discussions of AI and ask ourselves not just what we can do with it but also what we should do with it.”

As a social justice film festival, the importance of KDocsFF’s programming, and its community outreach program, year-round program, and YouTube channel (KDocs Talks), is to speak directly to the issues of social justice, human and animal rights, environmental stewardship, and anti-oppression.

Welcoming people to attend the festival, Morris states that films like iHuman seek not only to raise awareness, but to educate, and to catalyze action against injustice and oppression. Consequently, documentary activism becomes a fight for freedom and, ultimately, justice.

KDocsFF 2021 will be held virtually/online and will showcase 15 award-winning documentary films. As a part of the program, iHuman will be screened with the support of keynote speaker Anita Ho. ✍

For more information about KDocsFF, the films, and/or to view trailers, visit the festival’s website (KDocsFF.com) or join their Facebook (@KDocsFF), Instagram (@KDocsFF), Twitter (@KDocsFF) and YouTube channel (KDocs Talks).

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Celebrating resilience through performing arts

by LIANGMEI LI

Dancers of Damelahamid will be holding the 14th annual Coastal Dance Festival online in celebration of Indigenous arts. The virtual video program will feature the world premiere of a short dance in honour of the late Elder Margaret Harris by Dancers of Damelahamid. Performances and stories by the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers, Git Hayetsk Dancers, Git Hoan Dancers, Spakwus Slolem, 'Yisya'winuxw Dancers, Casey James, Demetrius Paul and David Robert Boxley will be presented during the online festival from March 12–18.

Although a smaller scale festival compared to previous editions, this event offers a stage to celebrate the resilience of Indigenous communities while many cultural gatherings have been cancelled this past year.

A new way of connecting communities

According to Margaret Grenier, the festival's executive and artistic director, the online presentation is a blessing in the midst of cancellations because it enables the performing artists and Indigenous communities to maintain cultural practices. This virtual and free festival will reach a wider audience outside of Vancouver and connect them to the cultural celebration. "The online format is allowing for some of the artists to go



▲ Dakhká Khwáan Dancers.



▲ 'Yisya'winuxw Dancers.

into their home community or home territory, to share some outside footage to show the landscape or cultural sights," Grenier comments.

Marilyn Jensen, group leader of the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers, a national award winning Inland Tlingit dance group based out of Whitehorse, also sees the video format as an opportunity to bring the audience a step closer to their traditional land.

"Some of the shots will really highlight our land, our traditional territory, here in the southern Yukon, because that's something that we really don't get to show people when we're at the festival, live, every year," says Jensen.

A legacy of courage and resilience

Dancers of Damelahamid will share a preview of a new short dance and its creation process in honour of the late Elder Mar-

garet Harris, who dedicated her life to reviving artistic practices along the Northwest Coast and recently passed on July 15, 2020. The work commemorates the legacy and the teachings of the elders that continuously guide younger generations towards upholding their own ancestral traditions.

"It's intended to not only mark our loss and the family of Elder Margaret Harris but to celebrate her generation, which was the generation that brought revitalization to song and dance for Indigenous communities on the Northwest Coast," explains Grenier.

Jensen, herself a performer, similarly recalls the empowering teachings of her deceased

mother and her appreciation of the performing arts.

"My mom always said to us, 'I don't want you to ever take for granted that you can sing songs because we weren't allowed to sing our songs. And now you are. So you have to really treasure that,'" says Jensen. "Just the fact that we are able to sing still and participate in our culture in that way is a very powerful thing, an expression of self determination, an expression of resilience."

An uplifting and joyful gift

Dancing, singing, drumming and storytelling is not only a way to carry on traditions but also an inherently uplifting activity to cheer up the performers and the audience alike.

"It's an expression of joy," Jensen says. "It's just so much fun to be able to dance together as a group and to really feel the power of our songs and the unity of that, to be moving in synchronicity to the beat of the drum."

Grenier is also looking forward to spreading positivity to spectators through the arts and practices.

"They're healing, they're uplifting and, I think that when we're in the pandemic, just keeping our spirits up. I hope that the festival will be an offering that the audience can take away something that will nourish their spirit as well," she says. ✉

For more information, please visit www.damelahamid.ca



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Photo by Chris Sternberg

Angst, but the show must go on: a digital production

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Shane Koyczan will share his passionate and empathetic observations of humankind in an online performance via the Chan Centre on March 12. Backed by his band during the show, the Penticton-based author and spoken word poet will lead a heartfelt and earnest performance around topics of social isolation, depression, social media and other challenging themes.

"It's a weird time in the world where, you know, we can't build without trust and yet it's become one of the casualties of this entire thing. And a lot of it is because we're trying so hard to hold on to what we have that it's crumbling in our grasp. We're the ones who are destroying it," says Koyczan.

“I feel more scared about this show than I have for any other.”

Shane Koyczan, author and spoken word poet

"And so, I don't have an answer in terms of like, here's where hope lies for people. But I guess I see it in our potential, what we can be, versus what we are."

Performing in the pandemic

It has been a strange and difficult year for many, with Koyczan being no exception. And though he may be Canada's most well-known spoken word artist, Koyczan says the pandemic has proved inarguably stranger and more difficult than usual.

Before the pandemic, Koyczan tells of having two years of shows and performances lined up and ready to go before being dashed by COVID-19 restrictions. Holding a mix of hope and concern, Koyczan wonders what a return of the arts scene will look like following the end of the social distancing measures.

"One of the brilliant things about art is that it evolves, you know, it changes shape with what it has to fit into," says Koyczan. "[But] will there be spoken word poetry in the future though? I don't know. And those things sort of keep me up. It keeps evolving and changing and I don't know what it's gonna look like at the end of it. I don't

know if there's going to be like arts festivals. But I certainly hope there is."

Koyczan also presages a bottleneck of popular artists and performers getting priority to perform at what should inevitably be a decreased number of performance venues. For now, Koyczan, like many other artists, is making the most of the pre-recorded so-called 'live' show genre, despite the unfamiliarity with this brand of performance.

"I'm really nervous about this show in particular. Filming it is so different in terms of being in empty spaces and not having people there with you and really showing that isolation and what it's doing," says Koyczan. "I'm not even having to walk out on stage and do a show to a live audience. That is an absolutely terrifying thing. I feel more scared about this show than I have for any other."

Hope and gratitude

Unfamiliar and daunting as this performance is, Koyczan has found some catharsis in his creative outlet, finding it to be a means of escape from an especially isolated living experience in his home in Penticton.

"It's always good to be working. You get a sense of accomplishment at the end of writing something. That gives you a boost," he says.

Koyczan makes it very clear that this is, at times, a sincerely difficult show. As Koyczan has never been a stranger to honestly engaging with both the highs and lows of the human experience, he feels that creating a show that contained 'the answer' to fighting the pandemic would be disingenuous.

"I think for me, working through this show in particular, there was so much venom and so much anger and despair that I didn't know what to cut," he explains.

However, Koyczan is far from hopeless. Instead, he says that a key takeaway for people is to continue to actively value and put effort into one of the many important things the pandemic has done so much to strain: friendship.

"I'm grateful for the people that do that heavy lifting of friendship. I don't want to speak for everybody, but there feels like there's a disconnect coming where a friendship maybe is not as valuable a commodity as it used to be. And to me it's kind of everything," says Koyczan. ✍️

For more information on the event, visit www.chancentre.com
For more info on Koyczan, visit www.shanekoyczan.com

Arno Kamolika

An unlikely Bharatanatyam dancer

by ANINDITA GUPTA

"Dance is an expression of community, and the performer brings something to the performances based on their experiences," says Arno Kamolika.

A Bangladeshi-Canadian architect-turned-dancer, Kamolika is bringing her latest performance, *Parasakti*, to audiences on March 19, 2021 at UBC's Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

Growing up in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Kamolika, who comes from an academic family, was always more inclined towards the arts. Through her mother, she discovered singing and a song-and-dance school at the age of six. Originally interested in singing, Kamolika discovered her preferred dancing and was introduced to a dance form called Manipuri, a classical form of dance from Manipur, India.

"The fact that the dance form was colourful and creative at the same time is what attracted me to it," says Kamolika.

She continued being trained in Manipuri under her first guru, Sharmila Banerjee, when she

discovered the form of dance she continues to practice and be in love with: Bharatanatyam. At age eight, she discovered Bharatanatyam, a classical form of dance from Tamil Nadu, southern India, and trained under Belayat Hossain, who was one of the few Bharatanatyam teachers in Bangladesh at the time.

At 15, she was fortunate enough to join a rigorous workshop conducted by Hossain's own guru, renowned scholar, professor CV Chandrasekhar. His dance performance had a transcendental effect on her. Even though his dance was accompanied by music in a language she did not understand, she understood what was being conveyed through dance.

"He had knowledge of music, rhythm and literature, and his body embodied his knowledge of the dance form at the same time," recalls Kamolika.

Bharatanatyam in the West

After moving to Vancouver, Kamolika, an architect by profession, was not sure if she would be able to continue her training as a first generation immigrant and dancer. However, she was fortunate enough to find Van-

couver-based guru, Jai Govinda. Through Govinda, Kamolika has found other gurus, such as India-based Bragh Bessel and came across opportunities to teach dance and be a part of dance schools and studios. Among them is a Toronto-based dance company, NovaDance.

"I think the kindness and warmth I received from my mentors, peers, dance and musician buddies, audience and students helped me to re-establish my identity as a dance artist," says Kamolika.

In talking about whether such an Indian classical dance is difficult to understand for an audience unaware of its intricacies, Kamolika assures that music and dance know no boundaries or language barriers especially. She says a little bit of extra love and thought goes into creating a production for an audience that may not speak the same language as the narration.

Collaboration and dance performances

"Any work becomes different the moment a new collaborator or artist comes into the scene," says Kamolika who has worked in collaboration with many dancers and musicians for her various performances including *Shyama* in 2018.

Kamolika along with a few other colleagues adapted the Tagorian drama, *Shyama*, into a dance drama performance. *Shyama* was performed in Vancouver and was also taken to Dhaka and parts of the U.S. and received a lot of appreciation. Even though Kamolika has collaborated with other artists in the past, her upcoming project is very different, mainly due to its diversity.

Her next performance is coming to the audience virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. *Parasakti* – the flame within is going to be a collaboration of six artists: Akhil Jobanputra, a Hindustani vocalist; Srividhya Sairam, a Carnatic vocalist; Curtis Andrews, a percussionist and mridangist; sitar player Sharanjeet Singh Mand; tabla and dilruba players Satpreet Singh; and Kamolika as the Bharatanatyam dancer.

"Ideas only take shape when you welcome others into the space, and they react to what you are doing and saying and that's how I work," says Kamolika. ✍️

More information on tickets and how to register can be found on: www.chancentre.com



Photo courtesy of Arno Kamolika

▲ *Dancer Arno Kamolika says that ideas only take shape when you welcome others into your space.*

► "Verbatim" from page 1

were deemed uncool in Grade 10 and so I went from "avid Directioner" to "One Direction as if" girl. I went back to my computer and pulled up my Spotify. The first songs I had favoured were One Direction songs. I remember how their music never made me feel alone when I was going through hard times. Looking back at it, I realized how silly it was for me to stop listening to them just because some teenagers (I don't even remember their names) deemed it was not cool.

"Okay Google, play One Direction" became my new phrase. I again became enamored with those five of boys who had swept me off my feet in 2010. I

especially fell more in love with Harry Styles. Etsy and Amazon searches for "Harry Styles posters" took up most of my browser history. I found TikTok trends and Facebook groups about One Direction and Harry Styles too. I became obsessed. No other word for it.

The loneliness I had been feeling because of the pandemic slowly melted away because their songs had always made me feel safe and at peace. I started having One Direction dance breaks between classes, study sessions and endless club Zoom meetings. I felt happier than I had in months.

By September, having done more online school than in per-

son school at UBC, I felt ready to take on Year 2. I wouldn't have been able to have a spectacular LinkedIn and GPA (yes, I am bragging!) without my One Direction dance breaks. Their lyrics made me believe in myself again and grounded me back to reality.

When your world is falling apart (or so you think), crank up some of your favorite tunes and start dancing! This is the best advice I can give to my fellow Type A, super anxious people out there. Anything that helps you become grounded and calm will help you succeed – take my word for it!

Pandemic life is hard, but dancing isn't! ✍️

March 9–23, 2021

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Spring begins on March 20 this year! Celebrate the start of spring with some delightful film festivals, music and dance. Alas, since the coronavirus is still around, many of the events and festivals are still being hosted virtually. But, you can take your laptop, find a socially distant area outside and enjoy some of the online events below!

* * *

16th Annual Vancouver International Women in Film Festival

Mar. 4–14
www.viwff.ca

This year's Vancouver International Women in Film Festival is a virtual festival showcasing an international lineup of short- and feature-length films, from narrative and documentary to experimental and animation – celebrating the complexity and diversity of ways girls and women choose to challenge, overcome and inspire – themselves, each other, their communities and our world today. For tickets and a lineup of films, check out the festival's website.

* * *

Corelli, Janitsch and J. B. Bach

Mar. 10, 7:30 p.m.
www.earlymusic.bc.ca

In this online performance, members of the Baroque Mentorship Orchestra reconvened at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts to record this varied programme of instrumental music spanning over a half-century of music from Italy and Germany. Smaller chamber ensembles and the full baroque string orchestra play the music of Arcangelo Corelli, J.G. Janitsch, and J.B. Bach, one of J.S. Bach's talented cousins. For more information about the music, the composers and the performers, check out the Early Music Vancouver website.

* * *

CelticFest Vancouver

Mar. 11–20
www.celticfestvancouver.com



▲ *Joe*, by Montreal choreographer Jean-Pierre Perreault, is said to be one of the most iconic creations in the Canadian dance canon.

CelticFest Vancouver returns this March with a fantastic virtual festival! Participate in a virtual cocktail class, watch live online concerts, play in virtual game shows and enjoy comedy, music and more! For more information, please check out the CelticFest Vancouver website.

* * *

The Music Shop

Mar. 13, 7:30 p.m.
digital.vancouveropera.ca/the-music-shop

The Vancouver Opera will digitally premiere American composer Richard Wargo's *The Music Shop* online this March 13. A mild-mannered man comes to the music shop on an urgent mission—to purchase music for a song that his wife has been requested to sing at the wedding of the prince. Unfortunately, he cannot remember the title or the tune. What ensues are hallucinations of the rage of his Wagnerian soprano wife, his own unhappy fate when he returns empty-handed and a mad scramble through the entire stock of 'the largest collection of music in all of Russia' in a desperate attempt to recognise the requested melody in the ill-fated music shop. Check out the Vancouver Opera's website for tickets and more information.

* * *

Virtual Cosmic Nights: Einstein's Relativity

Mar. 14, 7–8 p.m.
www.spacecentre.ca

The latest in the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre's series of astronomy live streams, for adults, is Virtual Cosmic Nights: Einstein's Relativity. This special broadcast will take place on March 14th, which is Pi Day and Einstein's birthday. Join the Centre for talks by industry experts, shows and trivia that you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home. By tuning in live you will have an opportunity to ask questions and join the discussion. So grab your favourite beverage and tune in as they celebrate Pi Day and Einstein's Birthday!

* * *

The Caribbean Sea in Canada: Notes on Tributaries

Mar. 16, 1–2:30 p.m.
www.sfu.ca/sfu-community/events.html#/view/event/event_id/20764

Rinaldo Walcott is a professor in the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto and he will be speaking on Mar. 16 on the relationship between Canada and the Caribbean. Drawing on historical evidence and an impressionistic reading of that evidence, Walcott theorizes the long relations between white Canada and the Caribbean making a case that blackness in Canada is not simply denied because of racism, but rather that Canada as a geopolitical entity does not exist outside of the terrible history of the Caribbean Sea. Walcott draws on impressions of history to offer a different way to think

about the long history of and the current manifestations of anti-Black racism in Canada.

* * *

Decolonization: 160 Years of Italian Unity

Mar. 17, 4:30 - 5:30
<https://fhis.ubc.ca/events/event/italian-happy-hour-decolonization-160-years-of-italian-unity>

Grab a drink and attend UBC's Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies' virtual Italian Happy Hour! UBC Professor of Italian Carlo Testa will be giving an interactive presentation on "Risorgimento" or "Decolonization: 160 Years of Italian Unity (1861-2021)" on Mar. 17 over Zoom. The presentation will mostly be in English, with a little bit of Italian; all are welcome to attend. RSVP on the UBC department's website.

* * *

Joe

Mar. 17–23
www.dancehouse.ca

DanceHouse will stream the exclusive online broadcast of Montreal choreographer Jean-Pierre Perreault's (1947–2002) milestone work *Joe* from Mar. 17 to 23. Having premiered in 1984 to critical acclaim, the visually arresting work is considered one of the most iconic creations in the Canadian dance canon and showcases the brilliance and scope of Perreault's vision, as a company of 32 power through a driving commentary

on the human condition. Despite *Joe*'s revered status in Canadian dance, the broadcast will mark many audiences' first opportunity to experience the massive spectacle, in particular for Vancouverites, as the work never toured to the west coast and has not been staged since 2005. For tickets and more information, check out DanceHouse's website.

* * *

Out of Order

Mar. 18–21
www.thecultch.com

Tongue firmly in cheek, *Out of Order* – a livestream by The Cultch on Mar. 18 to 21 – is a look at the social balance between raw animal instinct and the elevation of minds, bodies and souls in an educated and conformed society. In a not-so-distant future lingers the bitter aftertaste of a déjà vu, the theatres are empty, meeting places and cultural venues are no longer permitted, physical contact is prohibited. Artists are forced to meet secretly in forsaken spaces. The big top is achingly deserted. Spread out across this post-apocalyptic setting, ten gloved and masked characters, scrutinize one another, prepare, approach and avoid contact. Coming from all walks of life, these forgotten acrobats cling to their vocation as best they can. What was a performance now feels more like a masquerade of fallen aristocracy wavering between the thrill of shining in the spotlight and the futility of exhibition without an audience.

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