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ExplorASIAN Festival 2021



A time to celebrate and reflect on Asian heritage

by XI CHEN

May is the Asian Heritage Month in Canada and this year the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS) also celebrates the 25th anniversary of its annual ExplorAsian festival. The festival brings together a variety of art and culture programs for the public to learn more about the diverse communities in Asia.

"Every year we try to support a specific Asian community. This year we are also focusing on creating more educational events. Our work is to educate the public of the many Asian cultures, heri-

tage, and traditions and make sure people see these communities in the best lights," Leticia Sanchez, president of the Board at VAHMS says.

The Model Minority Myth

One of the programs at the festival is an interesting and timely workshop *Deconstructing the Model Minority Myth* offered by The Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (GVJCCA). It is a part of a series of workshops to address racism and support racialized communities.

"The Model Minority is basically a stereotype, it ends up homogenizing all these very differ-

ent Asian communities into one group," says Emiko Newman, "It is a stereotype that all Asians are good at math, are hardworking, and are successful. The myth creates a hierarchy where Asians are at the top at the expense of other racialized groups. The success of Asian communities becomes weaponized in that if you work hard and keep your head down then you will be successful and deserving of rights." Newman is the workshop organizer and a master's student of Social Justice Education at the University of Toronto.

"The model minority image is something taught within Asian family as a safety measure," Judy

Hanazawa, the president of the GVJCCA further explains, "The premise is that if you are hardworking and successful, you will be safer, you will be more accepted and you will be more prone to be seen on an equal level. It is a kind of strategy to offset racism, success is safety."

GVJCCA has been established in Canada since the 1930s and it advocates for the rights of Japanese Canadians, particularly the survivors of internment camps during the second world war. It is currently in talks with the British Columbian government to redress all the losses and destruction suffered by the Japanese Canadians in the 1940s.

The experience of Japanese Canadians illustrates well the trajectory of a "model minority". During the second world war, some 21,000 Japanese Canadians were taken from their homes on Canada's West Coast, many were stripped of their properties and were pressured to accept mass deportation after the war. Japanese people have been settling in Canada since the late 19th century due to economic hardships at home according to Hanazawa.

"It was the largest property grab separate from the Indigenous people. Because of the destruction, there has been a lot of intermarrying and our com-

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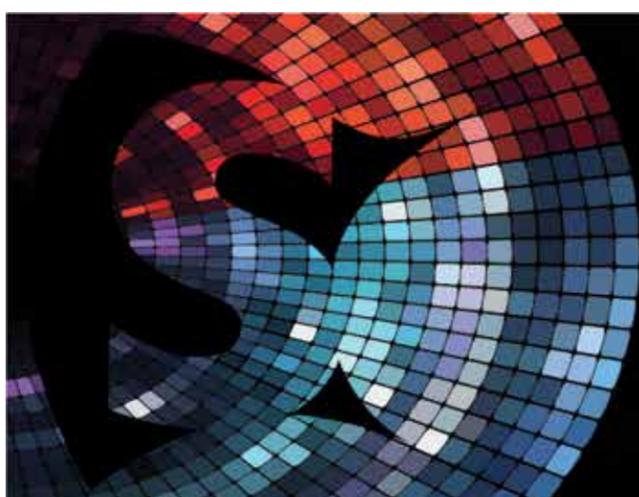
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Cultural Spotlight



Photo courtesy of Li Rong

Grandmaster Li Rong brings the ancient art of qigong to the 21st century

by ANINDITA GUPTA

Li Rong has been a grandmaster and trainer of tai chi and qigong for the last 30 years. She is the founder and director of the Tristar Taiji and Qigong Academy in Vancouver. As a part of showcasing talents and the contribution of many in the Asian community, Tristar Taiji has been selected to be part of the ExplorASIAN expo this year.

They will screen a mini-documentary, *SHEFU*, which focuses on Tristar Taiji and qigong on May 21, 2021. Li Rong answers questions and explains the creation of Tristar Taiji and qigong along with the health benefits associated with its regular practice. This virtual screening will be followed up with a Q&A session with Master Li Rong.

In the beginning

Born in the Sichuan province of China, Li Rong began training in Chinese martial arts at the age of eight. She was trained by many renowned masters such as Zeng Huai Xian, Wang Shu Tian, Men Hui Feng, Kan Gui Xiang, Chen Xiao Wang and Yang Zhen Duo.

When she was new to martial arts, she trained for six hours every single day. This went on to become a practice she would continue for ten years. Li Rong won her first local competition after only six months of training. This victory motivated her to train harder and participate in many more local, national and international tournaments. She is named as one of the 100 most important people in Chinese martial arts.

“There was not too much entertainment [while growing up], and I found friends through training,” says Li Rong, recalling living in a housing complex with a large courtyard where at least 60 children would practice martial arts together after school.

In 1979, she was one of the 300 students accepted by the

After visiting the ancient Sanxingdui archeological ruins, Li Rong decided to pursue qigong and teach it to the world despite it being somewhat forgotten. At Sanxingdui – also known as tristar in Mandarin – she discovered buried statues of this form of art, and it inspired her to create Tristar Taiji in 1992.

“Your mind and in turn your body does not feel trapped, especially now during the pandemic.

Li Rong, grandmaster and trainer of tai chi and qigong

Wushu department of the prestigious Chengdu University of Physical Education.

After graduating in 1983, she travelled all over China and interviewed over 2000 martial arts masters in the country as a part of research for a book commissioned by the government.

Qigong and the immune system

Li Rong suffered an injury during one of her training sessions and healed herself through the ancient art of qigong.

Qigong, a branch of internal Chinese medicine and has been in existence for over 4000 years. It's a form of exercise that induces relaxation and energy flow. It stems mainly from using your body – the shoulders, the hips, the knees, and slowly moving energy within your body. As the name would suggest, it focuses on one's chi, or energy, and which it re-centres through the breath.

“Qigong is about internal movement when your body is externally not moving. You loosen your body and posture in slower motion,” she explains.

Tristar Taiji currently hosts virtual classes where they teach adults up to 80 years old. Even though this art form is native to China, most of her current students are local Canadians, and Li Rong is very happy about the fact that more and more people are learning about what exactly qigong is.

In talking about the many benefits of practicing qigong, including relaxation and stress management, Li Rong explains that it can also help strengthen your immune system. This can be helpful throughout life, but she has found that it is especially helpful now as we battle this pandemic.

“Your mind and in turn your body does not feel trapped, especially now during the pandemic,” she says.

At a time like this, Li Rong explains that practicing qigong can also help an individual feel mentally relieved. ✉

For more information please visit:
www.tristartaiji.com.
www.eventbrite.ca/e/virtual-screening-of-shefu-explorasian-2021-tickets-153419456725
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Cultivating social trust at the intersection of race and sexuality

by RAFAEL ZEN

“Art and love are powerful mechanisms that impact change,” says Jen Sungshine, co-creative director and founder of Love Intersections.

Sungshine, a queer Taiwanese interdisciplinary artist and activist, says Vancouver’s *Love Intersections* is a media arts collective dedicated to collaborative filmmaking and relational storytelling.

“We are not single-issue people who lead single-issue lives,” says Sungshine. “As queer artists-of-colour, we wanted to find creative ways to address systemic racism by exploring approaches that didn’t focus on the trauma of oppression (oppression porn, for example), and the suffering of our people.”

The artist, accompanied by co-creative director and collective partner David Ng, will share experiences about community collaborations as local documentary filmmakers in the University of British Columbia (UBC)’s next Through the Lens online workshop (May 12) *Finding Artful Activism at the Intersection of Race and Sexuality*.

Love Intersections will share strategies for building social

trust while upholding creative activism.

Sharing and collaborating

The collective, says Sungshine, aims to find ways to use arts to celebrate the lives, identities, and cultures of QTBIPOCS through the lens of diverse stories.

“An intersection is a place where accidents happen, and when people meet at that intersection we also see different forms of love. We find beauty in that,” she adds.

Presenting their film work, they will outline the challenges and joys of the collaborative filmmaking practice, sharing strategies with the audience for building social trust while upholding creative activism.

“When multiple voices come together we often find surprises, joy, tension, conflict, creative differences, and most of all, a diversity of tactics and approaches to social change,” says Sungshine, addressing the importance of understanding the nuances of collaboration. “Just because you throw a diverse bunch of people together doesn’t mean everyone is going to show up and process the same way. For us the process is about how we build and maintain relationships, and how to



Photo courtesy of Jen Sungshine

▲ There are multiple ways of using filmmaking to celebrate the lives, identities, and cultures of QTBIPOCS through diverse stories.

evolve and adapt ourselves to one another through the art of collaboration.”

To the collective, art can be a platform to create relational storytelling that addresses systemic racism in local communities. Producing intersectional and intergenerational stories from underrepresented bodies, they believe in mediating deep

and meaningful relationships that allow people to cultivate social trust through collective care and community responsibility.

“Social trust is a vehicle that moves our core ethics and values of doing art about social issues with transparency, meaningful collaboration and generosity,” says Sungshine. “Relationships move at the

speed of trust and social change moves at the speed of relationships. We’re not so naive as to think that we are dismantling power structures, but we think we can transform a sliver of it so that we have more room to breathe and most of all, play.”

Through the Lens

Organized by the UBC Equity & Inclusion Office, Through the Lens is a free-admission series of interactive workshops exploring how different identities intersect, navigate and experience the university environment while offering practical ideas on creating a more inclusive campus.

Led by experienced community leaders, the project aims to provoke meaningful conversations on issues of identity, diversity, equity and inclusion. Each workshop provides an opportunity to learn, connect and join a network of allies across campus through story-telling, statistics and other resources. ✉

Interested audiences can register for the event at the event’s webpage: www.equity.ubc.ca/events/through-the-lens-finding-artful-activism-at-the-intersection-of-race-and-sexuality



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GRATUIT

Difficult but necessary conversations

by GEOFF RUSS

Devika Pandey believes that constant conversations about anti-racism are the key to a more equitable future for marginalized communities in Canada. She says the events of 2020, such as the murder of George Floyd and the inequities related to COVID-19, thrust the discourse about race firmly into the spotlight. A manager with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), Pandey is dedicated to pushing anti-racist dialogues and initiatives into Canada's institutions.

"Individual communities are starting to reevaluate and determine what they want to see in their society," says Pandey, who

believes the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a new normal with regards to how racism is perceived and how anti-racism is taught.

Pandey works for the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), a Canadian non-profit seeking to educate Canadians on the value of diversity and inclusion. In partnership with Simon Fraser University (SFU), the CCDI is hosting a webinar titled *The Difference Between Racism,*

Not Racist, and Anti-Racist on May 13. Pandey is the webinar's main facilitator.

Uncomfortable conversations

"Meaningful transformation never happens overnight. It

"To make impactful change, having those conversations is essential," says Pandey.

Inequities and COVID-19

"Immigrants are disproportionately represented in jobs with

however. Pandey believes there is more potential for unity rather than division.

"We are seeing more polarization, but we are also seeing people come together because of these conversations and raising

“ The events of last year have amplified the spotlight on inequities and ramped up the conversations we are having.

Devika Pandey, manager with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

sion (CCDI), a Canadian non-profit seeking to educate Canadians on the value of diversity and inclusion. In partnership with Simon Fraser University (SFU), the CCDI is hosting a webinar titled *The Difference Between Racism,*

starts with those uncomfortable conversations in safe spaces," explains Pandey.

Certified as an administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), Pandey is also the manager of learning and knowledge solutions at the CCDI.

"Because these conversations are very difficult, it was a struggle initially, but, as we have them more and more, we're seeing that change more and more," she says.

Pandey believes it is necessary for educators to be part of the change to make public education fully anti-racist.

"I spent my post-secondary education in Canada. Conversations around racism were often difficult and uncomfortable, but, to make impactful change, having those conversations is essential," she says.

She is optimistic for the future and believes there is change already occurring in Canada's public education system.

"The goal for the education system is to move towards being anti-racist and I see many K-12 schools putting in that effort to add anti-racist education to their curriculums," says Pandey.

Last summer, the B.C. Ministry of Education publicly re-committed to anti-racism. Furthermore, the B.C. Teachers' Federation provides a list of anti-racist teaching resources for educators to use in their classes.

greater exposure to COVID-19 or are employed in industries affected first by the pandemic," says Pandey.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, accommodation and food services accounted for the largest share of jobs held by immigrants in Canada. COVID-related restrictions and lockdowns have caused a massive loss of jobs in both of those sectors. Immigrants have also been more severely affected by employment disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"With the pandemic, the normal we all knew has been shattered and we have been given the term 'the new normal,'" says Pandey.

With the conversations surrounding Black Lives Matter and the responses to anti-Asian racism in Canada, Pandey thinks that how society and the education system approaches race will change in the so-called 'new normal.'

"COVID-19 has brought structural inequities faced by Canada's marginalized communities into the spotlight," says Pandey.

She also believes that these communities are beginning to rethink what they expect from society, especially in the area of mental health, which has been severely affected by COVID-19.

Conversations and strategies with regards to anti-racism have not been without controversy,

their voices to bring these inequities to light," says Pandey.

She states that none of these conversations are new. They have simply been given a new spotlight because of the events of 2020.

"Conversations around race and racism have always been happening. The events of last year have amplified the spotlight on inequities and ramped up the conversations we are having," explains Pandey.

She adds that modern technology like social media is greatly beneficial in helping these developments. The CCDI has an active Twitter account that routinely shares stories from marginalized communities with their audience.

"CCDI is trying to build on this momentum and to create safe spaces to have these conversations and ultimately move towards being anti-racist everyday," says Pandey.

The CCDI webinar with SFU will be the latest platform for these dialogues. ✉

For more information visit www.ccdi.ca/our-people/our-team/devika-pandey

For more information about *The Difference Between Racism, Not Racist, and Anti-Racist*, visit www.ccdi.ca/event-calendar/ccdi-webinar-the-difference-between-racism-not-racist-and-anti-racist



Photo courtesy of Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

▲ COVID-19 has brought structural inequities faced by Canada's marginalized communities into the spotlight says Devika Pandey.

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LIVE NATION

Jane Jae Kyung Shin

A journey of chance encounters and pivotal moments

by ISHA JAIN

Jane Jae Kyung Shin, Vancouver Community College's VP, Students and Community Development, was recently nominated for YWCA's Women of Distinction Award in the Education, Training & Development category.

Shin, who was also named one of Canada's Top 25 Immigrants 2019, says that she is both surprised and humbled to be nominated for the award.

Defining moments of a journey

"Eleven is such a wonderful age, because you are old enough to develop a strong sense of your heritage, but just young enough to assimilate into a new country without significant barriers," says Shin, recalling moving to Canada from Korea at age 11 along with her family.

In her adolescent years, Shin says a few major events significantly shaped her values.

At age 16, Shin was diagnosed with a rare and life-threatening blood disorder but was nursed back to health at B.C. Children's Hospital. She attributes her smooth and speedy recovery to the healthcare system and is grateful to be a recipient of Canada's large web of support.

She also saw her parents struggle to make ends meet, which strengthened her resolve to give them a better life. Like many other immigrants with foreign credentials and language barriers, Shin's parents were forced to abandon their professions and accept minimum wage positions and graveyard shifts. And then later, in their 50s, they had to find new careers.

"When I was in university, by pure coincidence, my mother applied for government funding to attend a Health Care Aide Certification program at age 51. Even though she was embarrassed to be the oldest student in the cohort, seeing her walk across the



▲ Jane Jae Kyung Shin believes that there is power in sharing stories.

stage on her graduation day was one of my proudest moments as a daughter," says Shin.

Acknowledging that her family was a beneficiary of government and community support, she was motivated to contribute to Canadian society meaningfully.

Career pivots

Shin decided that pursuing a career in medicine would fulfill her multi-fold goals of giving back to society, becoming financially secure and most importantly, making her parents proud. However, after completing her MD, Shin realized that she was not cut out to be a doctor.

"During my gap year, coincidentally, I went to visit an old professor. He was very busy that day and just needed someone to fill in his biology class. He asked me to go in and talk about first year biology," she says.

That lecture was the beginning of Shin's flourishing career in the educational sector.

A couple years down the line, in an attempt to learn about Canadian politics, Shin reached out to some of her local representatives. Much to her surprise, Derek Corrigan – mayor of Burnaby at the time – wrote back and invited her for a meeting. It was during their conversation that Shin first considered a career in politics.

"NDP was looking for minority women as candidates and before I knew it, I was running to be an MLA in Burnaby," she says.

After a term as an MLA, Shin bowed out of politics and has since resumed her work in the educational field full time.

Perseverance vs chance

To an outsider, it might appear that Shin's career pivots were a function of chance encounters.

"I recognize that not every visit to your professor will lead to a revelation about a new career and not everyone walking into a mayor's office will be encouraged to run for local government," she says. "However, in between those pivotal moments and seemingly chance encounters, I walked into a hundred different rooms and spoke to thousands of people. It's all about approaching those hundreds of opportunities with the same curiosity and perseverance."

Shin's message is simple; she believes that there is power in sharing stories because many such serendipitous conversations can be pivotal. We are connected to each other in more ways than we can imagine, and each act of kindness matters. ✍

For more information about the YWCA award, visit www.ywcavan.org/women-distinction-awards



Photo by Shannon Walsh

The invisible workers of the gig economy

by CURTIS SEUFERT

The economic mammoth that is the global gig economy is the subject of director and UBC film professor Shannon Walsh's film *The Gig is Up*. From the experiences of Parisian drivers sustaining the most popular delivery and taxiing apps, to the trials of Nigerian "crowd workers" who make a living sorting algorithms and search engine queries, the film offers a critical international and multi-faceted perspective on the challenges and the successes of workers in the world's gig economy.

"It really fascinated me, this idea that a kind of techno-utopianism has taken hold of us, because I've been looking at how that is such an illusion for a number of years now. And I really wanted to get the inside story from the people who were actually working on these jobs, who you almost never hear from," explains Walsh.

Ideal vs. reality

Being approached to direct *The Gig is Up* was the perfect opportunity for Walsh to showcase the reality of one of the fastest-growing socio-technological services of the past decade.

"I think the first step is starting to understand what conditions of work on the apps that you're using and holding governments and companies accountable. I think there's a lot of room [for change], but it needs to be a bigger societal conversation that we haven't really started to have," says Walsh who has a passion for understanding how capitalism and technology intersect with each other and influence our lives.

As far as working for the gig economy, one of the biggest parts of the techno-utopian illusion for Walsh is the oft-touted promise of "flexibility" in one's schedule. While this may be a reality for some, Walsh says

that for most workers this ideal of flexibility is more fantasy than reality.

"It's not true for the most part with anybody I met, whether that means you're sitting with your app on for 24 hours a day or having to work for multiple apps just to make a full day's work," adds Walsh. "It's the 'always on' part of the platform-based gig economy. What we're paying for is the ability to get something at any time as consumers."

The human in the loop

Despite the similarities in different kinds of gig-based work, it can be difficult to generalize experiences across such a huge workforce and economy. Perhaps the greatest divide the film reveals is an economy whose workers are likely invisible to most people. They are often referred to as crowdworkers,

putational language, which is needed for almost every piece of technology that we use. All of those people are so written out of the discussion."

But Walsh's film also hopes to show the resilience, pushback, and worker organization taking place among both groups of workers. Whether it's meeting up and discussing organization at major pickup hubs or finding Whatsapp and Reddit groups online to ensure that computational gigs are paying at consistent rates, workers have some success that Walsh feels could continue as long as the discussion remains in the fore.

"I'm inspired by how workers are fighting for the rights that they have, but there's a huge push back to crush the worker organizing. But people have the power. The economy works because people work. That's why



▲ The greatest divide *The Gig is Up* reveals, may be an economy made up of workers who are likely invisible to most people.

people whose work we interact with every day, multiple times a day, but who are sometimes paid only pennies for their work.

"We're all familiar with delivery drivers and Uber drivers, but it's the shadow economy of online gig workers which are the majority of people doing platform-based gig work. I think that's where you really see a difference," says Walsh. "Everything from training AI and [sorting] images to filling in Google searches and being 'the human in the loop' as they call it in com-

it matters that workers are organizing because it takes people to make any of this stuff work. "I feel optimistic that things can definitely get better from here if we start talking about it. I don't think I would've made a film if I didn't feel that." ✍

The Gig is Up premieres online from May 6–16 for the DOXA festival and has a special socially distanced Drive-In screening at the PNE Amphitheatre on May 13. For more information please visit: www.doxafestival.ca

Photo by Shannon Walsh

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Opera Transcriptions: a spiritual adventure

by LIANGMEI LI

“Life and death. Those are the ultimate mysteries. We think about death not as an end in itself, but we imagine how that transforms us as energy,” says Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa, Vancouver-based contemporary pianist.

Music on Main celebrates its 15th season with music and conversation through its Listening. Together. free online festival from May 14 to 18, 2021. Iwaasa will perform *Opera Transcriptions*, a cycle of three pieces for solo piano written for the artist by composer Rodney Sharman on May 14. Inspired by pre-existing classics from the opera world and recollection of memories, together Iwaasa and Sharman thoroughly reimagined a spiritual performance that interprets the theme of death and transfiguration.

Grounded in the Western classical tradition

The three pieces in the performance speak to one another. They work their way through music history, from the early Renaissance to the Romantic period to the late 20th century. The first is inspired by Mercurio dal ciel in terra from Claudio Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea*. The second is a transformation of Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner.

languages. Iwaasa also tells the story of Vivier’s death through voice acting.

“It’s a little bit like opera. What happens on the piano speaks to and informs the part of the story that I tell and then the story responds to the feel of the music and so on,” explains the pianist.

It is a story, says Isaawa, that is often told in a judgmental way, whereas the story itself tells more of the spiritual side of how Vivier is seeking oblivion.

“It is profound and perhaps disturbing, but in a way also infused with humor and fondness and affection and respect. It’s very complex and paradoxical. Music on Main is a presenter that doesn’t shy away from things that might be difficult or controversial. I think Music on Main audiences tend to be quite adventurous,” she says.

A lineage of queer musicians

Performing *Opera Transcriptions* is like putting on a tailor-made suit, says Isaawa, because, based on their 20-year collaboration, Sharman crafted the music according to the pianist’s artistic skills. The music explores the sound colours of the instrument, particularly in the very soft realm, which Iwaasa excels at. The pieces have long arcs that require a good sense of the large scale as opposed to the small phrasing.

Vivier, Sharman and Iwaasa form a lineage of queer



Photo courtesy of Music on Main

▲ Life and death are the ultimate mysteries, says Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa.

“It actually uses every single note of Wagner but is really transformed. It was written for a huge orchestra and huge voices, and Rodney has taken that and distilled that down until I can hold it and play it with just my two hands. And then the singing in it is very soft. It comes as quite a surprise in a sense because you don’t expect it,” notes Iwaasa.

The third is *Wounded*, a piece inspired by the Québécois composer Claude Vivier’s opera *Kopernikus*. It is a memoir and musical meditation on Sharman’s conversations with Vivier, whose music is grounded in Western classical tradition.

On *Wounded*

The music in *Wounded* is a conversation between Vivier and Sharman in their own harmonic

artists through mentorship and friendship.

“Claude Vivier, as one of Canada’s greatest composers ever, took young Rodney under his wing and was there for him. In many ways that was also the role that Rodney has played for me as an older queer classical musician who has been a great support for my career,” says the pianist.

Iwaasa is also a co-founder of the Queer Arts Festival in Vancouver. As part of the festival, she will discuss queerness in music at the Zoom Artist Talk on May 14.

She is currently working on *The Garden*, which features the complete works of Sharman, written for solo piano. ✍️

For more information, please visit www.musiconmain.ca

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**RACISM AND HATE
HURT US ALL**

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by VICTOR VAN DER MERWE
Looking beyond a disability and experiencing the joy of music, Wheel Voices: Tune In! weaves personal stories rooted in the disability experience with passionate anthemic scenes, and a hilarious comedic take on revenge fantasy.

"I wouldn't call it a musical," says Caitriona Murphy, Wheel Voices: Tune In!'s musical director. "It's about music: How music affects us and how music is a part of our lives. So, we have combined music and theatre and we created this piece about the participants and their personalities."

Tune In! Virtually

Murphy, a professional music therapist, is also an actor and

musician and this showcase was a perfect project.

"For me, it is a perfect marriage of all that I do: working with people who are not necessarily musicians to help express themselves with music," she says.

Although this was a project Murphy and the rest of the company was well equipped to handle, the pandemic did throw some unique challenges their way. The show was supposed to be performed last May, however due to the pandemic and strict lockdown procedures of last year, the showcase had to be halted.

"We had barely begun when lockdown happened, in fact some of our participants were of the first people to be locked down, because some of them have dis-

abilities and live at group homes and their health affects other people," says Murphy.

The production did have some previous experience with virtual meetings using Zoom with participants who lived a bit too

when it became clear live performances were in no one's near future, the plan was to adapt the material and go online with it.

"Our material, we had. So, then it was just rehearsing and

certain disabilities, but the show asks the audience to see the person and not just the disability.

"It is saying look at the person-hood. I am not a disability; I am a person living with a disability. I am also a person who sings and I

“ It is saying look at the person-hood. I am not a disability; I am a person living with a disability.

Caitriona Murphy, musical director of Wheel Voices: Tune In!

far away. All they did now was use that model for all participants, and work continued.

"We were kind of ahead of the curve on that one," says Murphy.

The bulk of the work was there ready to be worked, and

creating an online show," says Murphy.

This process was new to all involved and even the professionals were learning on the fly about how to create a virtual live experience. Murphy goes on to praise all the participants that trusted the production and came along for this unique ride.

See the person-hood

Wheel Voices: Tune In!'s cast is made up of 14 Vancouver-based community artists that perform an eclectic mix of rap music, spoken word, choral pieces and even some original scenes.

Murphy hopes everyone will hear about the disability experience from those who live with disabilities.

"It is a great show with dynamic characters and good music, but the material centers around people explaining what it is like to live this life," says Murphy.

She goes on to explain that yes, these are people who live with

am a person who plays an instrument," she explains.

Although the idea of Zoom meetings now seems old hat, for a company to want to rehearse and put together a theatre show virtually almost goes against what the idea of the theatre is.

"Theatre is so much about being together and the collective energy we use to produce the show. So, for these folks to be alone in their rooms, just emoting and giving us everything they had so that we could eventually put it all together and edit it, was really astonishing," says Murphy.

Realwheels Theatre will present their latest show, Wheel Voices: Tune In! on May 14. Because of COVID restrictions the show will be showcased as a virtual performance. There is no plan to revive this show once some of the restrictions are lifted.

For more information please visit: www.realwheels.ca



▲ Wheel Voices: Tune In! is an eclectic mix of rap music, spoken word, choral pieces and original scenes.

► "ExplorAsian" from page 1
 community has dispersed throughout Canada. There is also a strong sense of shame culture as Asian that what you appear on the outside is not to be criticized. So when you look at being a model minority, it was a way that people needed then to get back to finding security, being accepted, and never be rejected. It is destructive but it is the way for us to survive," Hanazawa says.

She adds that with those kinds of goals as a community, there is no sense of what it would do to other communities of colour and it leads to a separation from other

racialized communities that suffer similar tragedies. "There is no sense of understanding of the indigenous suffering that is fundamental to Canada. The way that racism violates people is that it diminishes the sense of empathy," she says.

For Newman, the model minority myth also perpetuates the idea that Asian communities actually benefited from the system and worked their ways to the top when it hides the truth that systematic discrimination continues.

"There is still this myth that Canada was founded as this benevolent country, one of the first

steps in addressing racism is to acknowledge that it happened," she says, "COVID shows us that racism has not gone away. Anti-Asian racism is still very present but it slips through the radar and the model minority is one way that happens," says Newman.

Education is the key

Hanazawa believes that a fundamental change that needs to happen is the history education of people of colour in Canada on a mandatory level.

"There is a need for racialized communities to develop allyship with each other, but they don't

know each other's histories well to become allies. There is a need for our community to have dialogues to understand some internalized racism issues. The white community also needs to look internally at their own racism, and how they have sustained the power structure," she says.

Sanchez concurs that education is the key and the festival serves as such a platform to foster better communications and understandings among different communities.

"For me as a non-Asian, I can see how we can make an effort to really understand the world outside of

us and how all the Asian communities can come together, that is the main objective of the festival. The more we learn about pan-Asian heritage and culture, the more we will understand and appreciate different ways of thinking and living, so we can better integrate as a unified society," she states.

This year's festival will showcase more than 15 virtual events, from online videos, gallery exhibitions to informative workshops, many of which are produced by VAHMS.

To find out more, please go to: www.explorasian.org



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Cultural Calendar

May 11–25, 2021

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was the first Canadian monarch to rule over a united self-governing Dominion of Canada from 1867 to her death in 1901. After her death, Victoria Day as a federal holiday was made law and subsequently expanded to celebrate the official birthday of the Canadian Head of State. Usually the holiday falls on the last Monday preceding May 25, but this year, Victoria Day will happen on Queen Victoria's actual birthday on May 24. So happy 202nd birthday Queenie! And for the rest of us, have a great Victoria Day weekend everyone!

LiterAsian
Now until May 31
www.literasian.com

This year's festival – GlobalAsian: from Grassroots to Globalization – features authors and cultural activists from not only Canada, but across the Asian diaspora. As "Asian" cannot easily be defined within geographical borders of one continent, but rather a conceptual collection of experiences and memories, LiterASIAN shines a spotlight that critically examines what it means to be a storyteller of Asian descent. Check out the LiterASIAN website for this year's event schedule. Events are free, but registration is required.

Digital Carnival Z
Now until June 5
www.digitalcarnival.ca

Cinevolution's annual flagship event, Digital Carnival Z is a festival of cutting-edge media art for community and artistic audiences of all ages. This year, for the first time, the event is taking place as a hybrid festival simultaneously on the traditional, unceded territories of the hən̓q̓əmin̓ əm̓ speaking peoples (Richmond, B.C.) and online. Under the theme of Z, Digital Carnival explores alternative conceptions of the relationship between bodies, gestures, culture and society. Z references the gender-neutral pronoun 'zie', the emergent generation-Z, and the possibilities for moving beyond the XX/XY binary. Join Cinevolution in exploring a series of dynamic projects and conversations that make visible alternative ways of occupying and performing the body, past, present and future.

To Speak With a Golden Voice
Now until Sept. 6
www.billreidgallery.ca

The Bill Reid Gallery has extended its exhibition honouring the life and legacy of Canadian artist Bill Reid, 'To Speak With a Golden Voice,' until Sept. 6. The extension includes the addition of two new artworks – the Eagle and Beaver Pole (1980) by Haida carver Reg Davidson and an exquisitely carved cedar door, designed by Bill Reid and carved by James Hart in 1980 – as well as the anticipated commemorative book: Bill Reid, To Speak With a Golden Voice. If you haven't yet checked out the exhibit, you have until Sept. 6 to do so!

yellow objects
May 11–22
www.firehallartscentre.ca

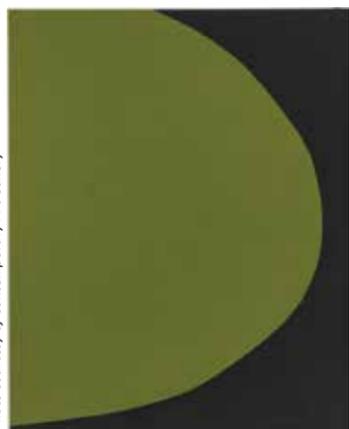
The Firehall Arts Centre will be hosting the world premiere of yellow objects, an exhibition created by playwright Derek Chan, from May 11 to May 22. The exhibition will take patrons through the theatre to the Firehall's courtyard, and be limited to ten patrons per showing. The show invites us to question our responsibility to future generations by stepping into a Hong Kong of two eras – 2019 and 2050. Inspired by the ongoing pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong and the Chinese government's oppressive enforcement of the National Security Law in July 2020, individuals can step into the world of yellow objects through the shoes of protagonists 'Sandra Wong' and 'Uncle Chan'. Check out the arts centre website for more information.

Listening Together Festival
May 14–18
www.musiconmain.ca

Listening together has always been Music on Main's deepest purpose, and continues to drive all that they do. The shared music and art experiences throughout the past year have become a beacon of light for human connection between listeners and creators. Celebrate Music on Main's 15th season with great music, top-flight artists, and sounds you may have never heard before. Listen together, no matter where you are in the world, to five days of special online performances, artist talks and opportunities to learn about music. Check out the Music on Main's website for more information.

Big Form, Big Space
May 14–Aug. 22
www.contemporaryartgallery.ca

The Contemporary Art Gallery will present the first solo exhibition in a public gallery in Canada by American artist Leon Polk Smith (1906–1996). Focusing on paintings and works on paper from the 1950s, the exhibition charts a critical moment in Smith's artistic career in which the signature visual language of his work began to manifest, reflective both of prevalent trends of the time and an increasing engagement with the contexts of his upbringing and identity. Through almost forty works, the exhibition traces a period in which Smith initiated a move away from the Eurocentric impulses of his formative years to embrace and make plain connections to his rural upbringing in the American Southwest, his Indigenous heritage and his identity as a gay man. For more details, check out the gallery's website.



▲ Leon Polk Smith, untitled, 1956.

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