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Photo by Tim Goww

## Youth employment, youth empowerment

by CURTIS SEUFERT

**COVID-19 has left its mark on British Columbia (B.C.)’s economy and workforce and shone a light on long-standing socioeconomic issues and anxieties in need of addressing. One group hit particularly hard by the pandemic were the youth of B.C. According to the B.C. Labour Market Statistics, as of March 2021, B.C. youth unemployment sits at a lofty 12.1 per**

**cent, compared to the overall provincial unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent.**

Three Canadian organizations speak to challenges and successes of youth seeking and maintaining employment, both during and prior to COVID-19.

London Farris, a virtual success coach with the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP), describes how the CCYP uses data from the recently com-

pleted Pivot Hub youth database project to inform their youth employment coaching program. Farris says that one key finding is that youth are in need of some more personal skills to supplement their career search.

“They were looking for personal development [as well]. They had to combine the skills that they were obtaining with how to apply them in the workplace and with their career building,” Farris explains.

Based on the database and from her own experience as a coach, Farris says the pandemic has heightened a pre-pandemic anxiety among youth about job prospects in tangible and unexpected ways.

“There was always an underlying anxiety there, but youth were more accepting of the gig economy world that we were in. But [with] the pandemic, that stemmed the fear in youth,” says Farris. “It solidified the

sense of, oh no, we’re screwed. Companies had hiring freezes. And you didn’t have in person interviews, which led a lot of people to [say] how do I make that connection now?”

For a youth and services-directed program like CCYP, being able to hone the skills needed to be confident in oneself and one’s abilities is key to finding work in what Farris deems a unforgiving job market.

See “Youth employment” page 6 ➤



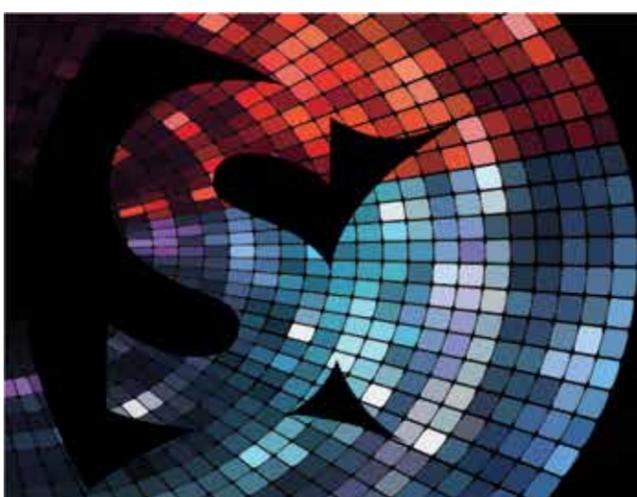
Trophy Ewila and Lady Dia want to reimagine the future of the world  
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# Cultural Spotlight

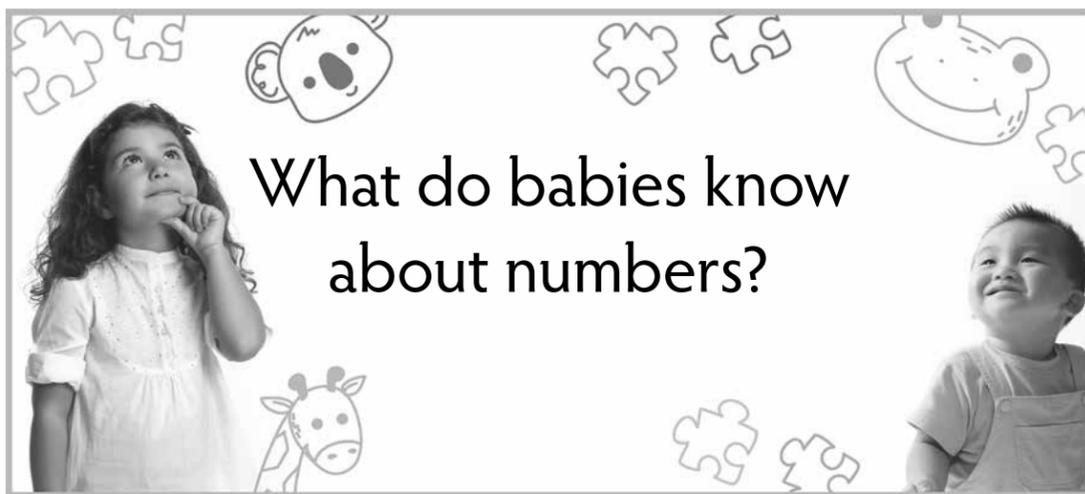


Photo courtesy of UBC

by SIMRYN ATWAL

The UBC Early Development Research Group (EDRG) will host their latest *Wonder Kids* talk with associate professor and developmental psychologist Darko Odic (PhD) on May 29. The webinar will explore the fascinating world of numbers and math concepts that infants can understand.

Odic has always been passionate in revealing through research the way that infants and children are far more capable and ingenious than typically given credit. This quandary guided the way for his doctoral work at John Hopkins University and later his research with the EDRG.

"I've always been drawn to the question of how to reconcile the ways that kids are so incredibly smart at figuring out many aspects of the world and yet at the same time seem to struggle with relatively rudimentary things. A lot of my research has been trying to solve this puzzle," he says.

The *Wonder Kids* talk provides a great medium to illustrate the extent to which children have an impressively robust understanding of numbers. It is a project that seeks to increase the information parents have on the research being done in early development at



Photo courtesy of UBC

▲ Dr. Darko Odic, Associate professor and developmental psychologist.



UBC, and open up communication between psychologists and the greater community.

## Putting two and two together

Odic hopes that his talk dispels the myth that children are blank slates when starting their math curricula but instead have an already innate sense of number.

"We often see math as a difficult concept, something that kids walk into the classroom not knowing anything about, and have to begin from scratch," Odic explains.

“Have kids approach mathematics as a form of play and encourage predictions.

*Darko Odic, developmental psychologist*

"However, research is telling us that even before children and preschoolers have learned anything about mathematics formally, they already have an incredibly rich intuition about what math and numbers are."

The webinar will further examine this idea through a combination of interactive activities and a discussion of developmental studies and research. Odic will explore burgeoning questions and topics associated with the basic sense of numbers, such as how it can lead to children understanding mathematical operations.

"Studies demonstrate that young kids can intuitively add and subtract. This can be seen for example when they are doing sharing behaviour. Many of us who have interacted with kids have seen them doing sharing behaviour, such as the concept one for you and one for me. They are also very sensitive to the fact when something is not being shared properly," states Odic.

The most recent research reveals the startling idea that kids can understand multiplication and division at an early age, a topic that Odic is also exploring in his own lab.

"We use the concept of growing to demonstrate intuitive multiplication and division. For example, kids have a very reinforced sense that if you eat you will grow," he says, clarifying

the way children can exhibit comprehension of seemingly difficult mathematical concepts.

Odic explains that, in his lab, participants are shown movies in which an amorphous blob eats a little magic bean and grows by a particular amount. Different beans make these blobs grow by different amounts – doubling, tripling or quadrupling.

"What is interesting is that after kids see this for a while they can then surmise and draw if the blob were to eat this yellow bean,

it is going to grow two times bigger, or if they eat the green one, it will grow three times as large," he says. "This is the way that we can capitalize on more intuitive tasks to showcase this idea of multiplication for example."

## Bridging the numbers gap

One question still remains: if children have this understanding of numbers, then why is math so hard? Odic will delve into this puzzle through his webinar, to understand the breakdown between formal learning and the innate sense.

He offers a recommendation to parents who want to bridge this disconnect. When teaching math curricula less emphasis should be placed on rote steps and right answers, and more on enriching understanding.

"Have kids approach mathematics as a form of play and encourage predictions," suggests Odic. "Find opportunities in daily life to gently drive their attention towards paying attention to numbers. For example, going to the park and asking them if they see more people or more trees. As long as kids are engaging in the process of thinking of these mathematical operations, they can later start understanding it on a conceptual and formal level at school." ✍

For more information, please visit: [www.edrg.psych.ubc.ca/events](http://www.edrg.psych.ubc.ca/events)

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## Erratum

In *The Journey of Navarana: from Nunavut to BC* by Isha Ohri (Vol 21, No 25), "Inuit" should have been "Innu."

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**Page 8 (bottom left): Photo courtesy of The Myrtle Sisters**

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**RACISM AND HATE HURT US ALL**

CITY OF VANCOUVER

# Ubuntu: a philosophy of care and community

by GEOFF RUSS

**Trophy Ewila and Lady Dia believe that Ubuntu – seeking a community where members each have space to shine their own light without diminishing another’s light – is key to rejecting the cultural norms of White supremacy. Ubuntu will be put into action with the upcoming workshop, “I Am Because You Are vs I Am Because You’re Not,” the sequel to their February workshop of the same name.**

“The fact that UBC wanted to do it again showed they understood what we’re trying to do with the AUA, specifically with the philosophy of Ubuntu – to reimagine the future of the world,” says Uganda-born Ewila.

Ewila and Dia are married and board members of the African Ubuntu Association (AUA) which serves the Okanagan’s African community and all those interested in Ubuntu philosophy. They will continue their dialogue on creative resilience and self-governance through Ubuntu and glocal resistance to imposed Western cultural norms like White supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy.

### Determining character

“What are White supremacist ideologies trying to achieve, what role are people of colour being forced to play?” asks Ewila. “Within these ideologies, characters like the ‘savage’ exist. The names and descriptions of the characters keep changing because of those who run the narratives and write the characters.”

One of Ewila and Dia’s goals with the AUA is using Ubuntu to help people take charge of their own societal characters.

“One thing we like to do with people on Ubuntu is listening and creating space to hear the stories of others,” says Ewila.

Allowing White supremacist ideologies to determine one’s own character in life, he says, has negative consequences.

“If you play that character, you are going to be treated inhumanely,” explains Ewila. “Characters like the so-called ‘savage’ are supposed to enact characteristics which can be inhuman or not purely human.”

The AUA hosts a program called *Ubuntu’s Children*, focusing on empowering people to believe and trust their inner being.

“The beauty of going with the flow is you also have to trust yourself,” says Dia. “This encourages youth and people to trust how they feel and go with that.”

Like Ewila, Dia is an alumnus of UBCO and Board Secretary of the AUA. Ewila, the AUA’s vice-president, believes this mentality helps people deal with anxieties in the modern world.

“In dealing with what you can control and feeling truly uncontrollable, we should see the value in how that plays into life,” says Ewila. “Sometimes, we can want to go in one direction and with uncertainties right like COV-

ID, how do we find harmony within that?”

### Rejecting Western norms is not a threat

One topic of the upcoming webinar is choosing to reject the forced imposition of Western cultural norms like White supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy. Dia says it is a matter of taking care of one’s self and community.

“It’s about understanding your own local position,” she says. “On airplanes, you secure your own mask first in emergencies. We as Black people have to get ourselves first, which is why I say it’s not about you.”

Dia emphasizes for White people who feel threatened when people of colour actively reject imposed Western cultural norms.



▲ Trophy Ewila and Lady Dia.

“There’s so much focus on teaching White people, or not coming off as threatening,” she says. “It’s not necessarily about you, as White people, at the end of the day.”

“It’s not a threat. We’re trying to get people settled in and comfortable, and get that sense of community,” adds Ewila.

Building community connections for the Okanagan’s African community was a major motivation for the couple when founding the AUA. Ewila, a founding member of the UBCO’s African Caribbean Student Club, says that after university, there was little sense of community until the AUA’s creation.

“One thing we are trying to do is create support for people who arrived here alone, with no parents or community resources,” he says.

Ewila says many new Okanagan residents find community resources and support systems inaccessible.

“We want to fill that gap for those that lack representation, or don’t feel welcome within existing community resources,” he says.

Both Ewila and Dia are looking forward to the upcoming workshop as part of UBC’s “Through the Lens” series, and see it as a way to build their community and support.

“There’s a lot of potential and possibilities and it’s a great platform to bring people together,” says Dia. ✍️

For more information, please visit: [www.equity.ubc.ca/events/through-the-lens-i-am-because-you-are-vs-i-am-because-youre-not-encore](http://www.equity.ubc.ca/events/through-the-lens-i-am-because-you-are-vs-i-am-because-youre-not-encore) [www.africaubuntuassociation.com](http://www.africaubuntuassociation.com)

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# Avant garde comic book taps into the question of identity

by LIANGMEI LI

**Exploring the meaning of identity in every sense – individual, cultural, moral and national – allows Sami Alwani to delve into the personal reflection of other issues in his life.**

“We’re Canadians. What does that mean? I think of Canada as a made-up country that doesn’t

ics including but not limited to neo-colonialism, capitalism, esoteric mystical experiences, identity, mental health and the role of an artist in society.

## Passion for the alternative comic arts

Since he was 13, Alwani had always enjoyed storytelling in the form of prose fiction. What initially drew him to take on comics

“I don’t think that it tells the whole story to say that this is a book about LGBTQ issues, or colonialism, or about any of the specific topics, because all of those topics are kind of just part of my daily life,” says Alwani. “I experienced them because I moved through the world, as a gay Arabic man.”

The final story was created in response to anger and frus-

“Resentment about white supremacy and colonialism, it kind of lives in your body, and it kind of colours your interactions with other people and it affects you emotionally.

*Sami Alwani, cartoonist-illustrator*

really exist. It’s like if I come to somebody’s house and I push them out, and I take their stuff and I say, “This is my house now and this is the land of Sami.” That’s not real,” comments Alwani, a cartoonist-illustrator who won the Doug Wright Award in 2018 for his story *The Dead Father*.

Alwani’s recently published *The Pleasure of the Text* (Conundrum Press, 2021) is a dark comedy that touches on top-

was his love for concrete poetry, where the format and content both play an important role in telling stories. Seeing great potential in contemporary alternative comics, a young and avant garde media form, he started learning how to draw at the age of 20. Fond of storytelling, Alwani especially favours comics that have a very clear narrative over experimental ones.

“Alternative comics haven’t existed for longer than a century so it was kind of like the exciting Wild West. And because there’s not so much infrastructure or pressure either, there’s a complete autonomy for creators to do whatever they feel like,” he explains.

## Personal experience free of didactic messages

Alwani’s latest is a collection of stories that compiles seven years of his work, including previously published ones on *Vice* and *Now* and 50 pages of new work written exclusively for the book. Satirically motivated at times, the stories are told through a slice of life narrative.

tration he felt during the Black Lives Matter protests that happened last year. Rather than commenting on the political issue itself, he focuses on how it is manifesting in his individual life and how he manages these emotions.

“Resentment about white supremacy and colonialism, it kind of lives in your body, and it kind of colours your interactions with other people and it affects you emotionally,” he adds.

## A multitude of inspirations

The title and the cover design of *The Pleasure of the Text* is a direct reference to the book under the same title by Roland Barthes, the French literary theorist who popularized the field of semiotics. Inspired by Barthes’ *Mythologies*, Alwani tries to deconstruct a lot of popular myths in the same way.

“I kind of see myself in a lineage with a lot of these short story writers. It’s definitely a relationship that I’m trying to forge,” says Alwani.

Besides influences from literary prose and contemporary po-



▲ Sami Alwani.

litical issues, readers are able to sense sources that influenced Alwani personally, such as Wilhelm Reich’s *Orgone Accumulator* and David Hockney’s paintings.

In addition, all new content created just for the book was written during the pandemic and directly inspired by this context.

“I actually personified it into a ghost, your anxieties and fears around COVID became this character who’s called the ghost of COVID-19, a friendly and silly roommate for the characters to live with,” says Alwani. ✉

Find out more about Sami Alwani here: [www.samialwani.com](http://www.samialwani.com)



▲ The Pleasure of the Text by Sami Alwani.

Photo courtesy of Sami Alwani

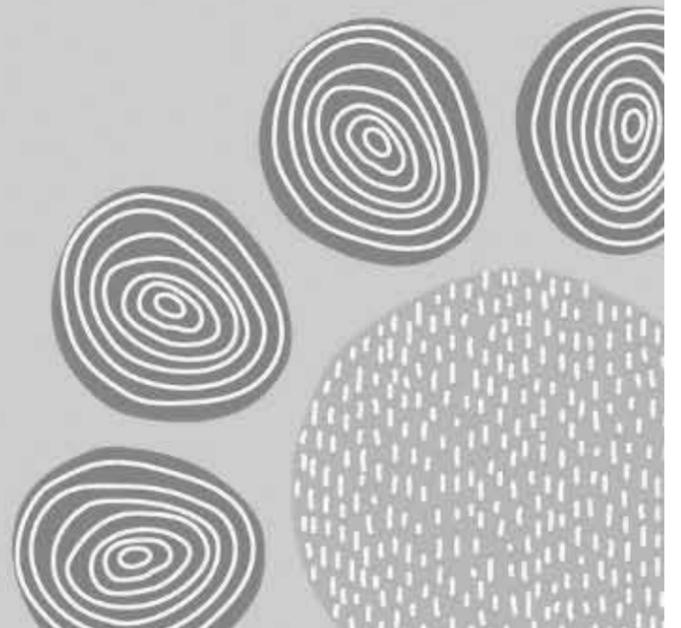
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New endings to old paradigms

# Queer art as resistance against colonial-patriarchal ideas of success

by RAFAEL ZEN

**Queer Filipino photographer Rydel Cerezo invites audiences to fail. He sees failure as a means to open new possibilities for queer and marginalized bodies to thrive. His exhibition at the Burrard Arts Foundation Gallery (BAF), entitled *New Ending*, investigates the space between sexuality, religion, and race, and how these disparate themes coalesce metaphorically and visually.**

As Ada Dragomir's presentation text for the exhibition acknowledges, "For most people, to fail is to not achieve, not accomplish, not understand, a cessation of power, systemic collapse, an unexpected betrayal – a loss, a flop, a letdown."

*New Ending*, however, asks: what happens on the other side of failure? Through Cerezo's lens, potential answers to the question are the opening of new worlds, the refusal to care about systems that do not care about people, the magic of queerness, the unlikely possibility of a world where anything is possible.

"I think failure is a powerful act of resistance for queer bodies," says Cerezo, who holds a Bachelor of the Fine Arts Degree from Emily Carr University and is Vancouver resident. "Failing against western and patriarchal standards of success opens new possibilities for queer and marginalized bodies to thrive. The resistance to reiterate and perform what history has handed us empowers us to create our own realities."

"The title *New Ending* came from one of my driving inspirations, *Autobiography of Red* (1998) by Ann Carson," says Cer-

ezo about his solo exhibition. "It's a poetic novel that deals with coming of age, queerness, and photography in a very mythic way. Additionally, it seemed like the opposite side of the coin to the first words of the Bible: 'In the beginning...'"

Dragomir notes that *New Endings* dialogues with the artist's coming-of-age stories, his images being infused with the experiences of a queer Catholic Filipino man navigating desire, societal and cultural conditioning, sexuality, and shame.

Her description of one of Cerezo's pieces goes: a sculptural grotesquery, a blood red flip-flop impaled by three 10" spiral landscaping spikes, also red. In Dragomir's analysis, the object manages to connote the culture of global capitalism, while simultaneously invoking its indispensable presence in Filipino life. In the context of the exhibition, however, "it is neither a serviceable flip-flop nor a wearable high heel, but a picture of pain and violence, of queerness and unbelonging, an unexpected crucifix nailed to the wall."

"How can artists ever be apolitical?" Cerezo asks. "I think a role or a hat that I put on as a photographer is being constantly aware of the power dynamics between myself as a photographer and the subject or the community I'm photographing. In a photograph, I try to achieve a physical and emotional reaction first and foremost."

Dragomir ends the exhibition's introduction by arguing that belonging can also be read as forced cohesion, and that in a heteronormative hyper-masculine hazing ritual-society that keeps unquestioning – playing oppressive norms on repeat – unbelonging serves as a powerful queer and



▲ Vancouver based artist Rydel Cerezo highlights the importance of being aware of the power dynamics between photographers and the subjects or communities they are photographing.



▲ Vancouver based artist Rydel Cerezo.

feminine antidote. Unbelonging, then, can be perceived as an act of resistance, a possibility of betraying compulsory social positions.

"As an artist, I happen to choose to speak to my identity as it's a massive well of inspiration for me. Deciphering why and how is difficult to unpick because as an artist who lives in this body and moves through the world with this identity, making art this way is a cathartic impulse," Cerezo concludes.

## Visiting new ending

The exhibition will be open to the public until June 19 (Saturday) at the BAF Gallery on 258 E 1st Ave, Vancouver. Tickets are free and the gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 12–5 p.m.

The exhibition is a result of BAF's on-site artist residency,

an initiative that offers creative support and professional development to qualified Vancouver-based artists.

Recognizing that Vancouver is a city where the space, time and financial resources needed to create art can be scarce, BAF's on-site artist residency helps artists overcome these barriers, providing a dedicated space for creative production, and facilitating work that otherwise would not have been realized. ✉

To know more about *New Ending*, interested audiences can visit: [www.burrardarts.org/exhibit/new-ending-rydel-cerezo/](http://www.burrardarts.org/exhibit/new-ending-rydel-cerezo/).

To know more about the BAF Artist Residency Program, artists can visit: [www.burrardarts.org/residency-program](http://www.burrardarts.org/residency-program).

## ► "Youth employment" from page 1

"We not only championed their ability within the workplace, but also the ability for them to become the best person they can be, so that they could go out and get that employment and be successful in it," says Farris.

## Dealing with isolation

Queenie Choo is the CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. B.C., which provides a diversity of services and programs to B.C. residents, including employment services. S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s Youth Employment Connect (YEC) focusses on working with youth looking to enter either Marketing and Sales

or the Information, Communication and Technology fields.

Having run the YEC program for multiple years now, Choo has seen a similar set of heightened challenges for even qualified skilled youth finding jobs in their field.

"They come in with the skills that they have, but they might not have the work experience in the sector... They might not have the business connections. We're hoping through this [program's] opportunity for them, they will pick a point to start and create a network," says Choo.

Like Farris, Choo sees similar concerns about how general

life issues and anxieties – both heightened by the pandemic – as well as a lack of in-person interaction feed into difficulties with finding or maintaining work.

"Some youth are experiencing increasing anxiety and isolation due to the pandemic... And a substantial number of marketing jobs are driven by person-to-person interactions during the pandemic. It makes it very challenging for the youth to apply their learned skills in an actual work environment," says Choo. "They can go virtual, but the interaction with their peers and supervisors is not really there."

The YEC program has a certain level of connection with employers themselves too. While the program mostly focuses on youth developing their own skills, Choo encourages employers to see youth as an opportunity for diversity.

"The youth bring in a lot of new ideas, being from a different generation. And many of them are very digitally inclined, and they're quick learners. They could bring out-of-the-box thinking. They have different skill sets to bring. So, I

think the opportunities can be there for them," says Choo.

## Green jobs for youth

One significant ray of hope for the province's youth is the recently announced \$45 million provincial youth jobs program. Among those opportunities are a variety of positions pertaining to ecological conservation and outdoor recreation sites.

Tori Ball, senior campaigner for the B.C. chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (C-PAWS) notes that this is the second jobs program in the last year with a much-needed focus on serving B.C.'s outdoors.

"B.C. Parks has been dramatically underfunded for the last two decades. We got big bumps in the recent budget, but Recreation and Trails has also been dramatically underfunded for a long time and it's an even smaller part of the budget than B.C. parks," says Ball. "So, it was great to see some more staffing being able to go to upkeep those areas and that infrastructure, because it's also a critical part of our recreation infrastructure in B.C."

While these sectors have had a more short-term employment focus and a lack, at least historically, of long-term staff, Ball says that contract-based short-term positions can at least work well for many students and youth who have time open during B.C. parks' busiest summer months, and could lead to greater and more long-term possibilities for those interested in the field.

"Working in conservation is an incredibly rewarding pathway and there's multiple ways to go, but being able to have a contract with the provincial government is one great foot in the door to start your path," says Ball.

As B.C. and the rest of Canada continue to grapple with COVID-19's impact on the labour market, there's some hope for a renewed, closer look at the youth who have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. ✉

For more information, please visit: [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca), [www.cpaws.org](http://www.cpaws.org), [www.ccpj-ccpj.org](http://www.ccpj-ccpj.org)



▲ A ray of hope as B.C. announced a \$45 million provincial youth jobs program.



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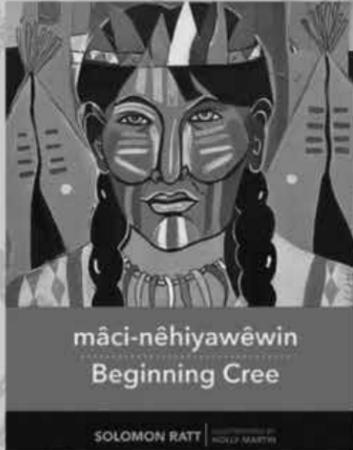
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## The Myrtle Sisters: singing, dancing and a good porch

by ISHA OHRI

The Myrtle Sisters, East Vancouver-based performing artists Candice Roberts, Nayana Fielkov and Kat Single-Dain, are performing their online comical interdisciplinary show *Out of Time* from May 14–29.

*Out of Time* reveals their yearning. The sisters are travelling through time and their time machine, a framework for their songs and dances, breaks.

They travel from 1921 to 2021, collecting songs and dances throughout the different decades. But their three-part harmony breaks down in 2021 and the Myrtle Sisters part ways. The suspenseful ending is meant to pose the following questions to the audience: Are these two events related? Could three-part harmony mean more than just singing the right notes? Will the sisters get back together?

Regardless of the dances and stories, the Myrtle Sisters strive to show a connection – to themselves, each other and their community. They feel their purpose is to allow audiences to feel joy in a world full of anxiety.

### How it all began

"I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we were all very expressive children," says Roberts.

Throughout their childhoods, each 'sister' was in love with performing, which has only intensified as they grew older. Although the 'sister's are not connected by blood, they are connected by their never-ending love and dedication to the arts.

Single-Dain says she was interested in a mixture of creative expression, science and

friend played Dorothy while she played every other character.

### The birth of the Myrtle Sisters

"The Myrtle Sisters came out of a combination of character play, music and clown," Roberts explains. "It developed naturally from our shared interests, and the Myrtle sisters as individuals are all unique caricatures of ourselves. Sometimes we don't know if art imitates life or life imitates art."

Single-Dain returned to Vancouver after attending UC Berkeley – where she studied dance and theatre – and started a theatre company called Play More Theatre.

Single-Dain felt it must have been fate when the company was invited to a House Festival, where both Fielkov and Roberts were also participating. The three were beasts meant to scare people just for thirty seconds during the House Festival play but ended up spending five hours in character before and after the show.

### The era of simplicity

The essence of the Myrtle Sisters is the era of simplicity. The sisters believe that the internet is amazing, but also detrimental to one's psychic space.

"We find the joy of singing and dancing to be a way of dipping into that dream, a way of experiencing the here and now. When we get the pleasure of sharing that with an audience, it amplifies in such satisfying ways," says Fielkov.

The Myrtle Sisters strive to connect to their souls and their dreams by re-enacting a simpler time where the internet was not a distraction.



▲ The Myrtle Sisters travel from 1921 to 2021, collecting songs and dances.

environmentalism. At 39, she is still pursuing new interests and learning ways to merge her talents with newfound skills. She feels her unrelenting dedication to creative pursuits like dance, theatre and music have allowed her to explore her artistry as a Myrtle Sister.

"Doing what I am drawn to, even when sometimes that comes with trepidation or nervous excitement, and remaining curious has led to a life rooted in the arts," says Single-Dain.

Roberts has been creating costumes, stories, puppets, songs and dances for as long as she can remember.

"[I] was always making shows for my parents, and any guest that would come over!" recalls Roberts.

Fielkov's love of the arts started early as well; she recalls putting on several reenactments of the Wizard of Oz. Fielkov's close

"The most satisfying moments of life happen off of a screen," says Single-Dain.

### The pandemic

Despite the pandemic hitting theatres hard, the trio has taken the pandemic as a sign of innovation as opposed to one of sadness.

When the lockdown ends, the sisters hope to increase their production value and include Paul Hendriks on the wash tub bass and Steven Drake on the slide guitar or the full sisters' group with Kathleen Nesbit on the upright bass, Devora Laye on washboard percussion and Clara Rose on the fiddle in their theatre performances as well.

For more information about the show and the Myrtle Sisters please visit the following sites: [www.surrey.ca/news-events/events/out-of-time-myrtle-sisters](http://www.surrey.ca/news-events/events/out-of-time-myrtle-sisters) [www.themyrtlesisters.com](http://www.themyrtlesisters.com)





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# 1 Hour Photo: As relevant as ever

by VICTOR VAN DER MERWE

The Cultch and Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre (vAct) are offering a pre-recorded performance of Tetsuro Shigematsu's award-winning play, *1 Hour Photo*, to be streamed online on May 28, 29 and 30. This will be a cinematic adaptation of the stage play that debuted at the Cultch in 2017 to a sold-out audience. Shigematsu not only wrote the play, but he is also the performer. The 2021 revival was to be a touring show, but the world had other plans.

"Originally our plan was to tour *1 Hour Photo* to four cities across Canada, but things took a change during the advent of the pandemic," says Shigematsu.

The play follows the story of Mas Yamamoto, whose personal life was impacted by major currents of the 20th century. He grew up in a fishing village on the banks of the Fraser River, then went on to be confined at a Japanese-Canadian internment camp during World War Two. In the years following the war, he even helped build the Distant Early Warning Line in the Canadian Arctic during the height of the Cold War.

With live performances postponed indefinitely, a new plan had to be made to bring this fascinating story to the people.

"Rather than shelving the project all together, my producer, Donna Yamamoto, asked our funders – Canada Council in particular – if we could use our funds to adapt the play cinematically," says Shigematsu.

## Japan Camera

Mas Yamamoto's story might seem like something created to shine a light on certain current social issues, but for Shigematsu, it is a very personal story. It all started when he discovered a mug in the home he was rent-



▲ Tetsuro Shigematsu.

ing from his producer, Donna Yamamoto.

"I guess the mug was sort of my 'Rosebud,' so to speak. It said 'Japan Camera' on it. I had this vague memory that it was some kind of photo finishing lab franchise back in the day," says Shigematsu.

The mug was one thing, but when other household items

such as towels branded with the Japan Camera logo joined the collection, he asked Yamamoto about it and discovered that Japan Camera was the Yamamoto family business. He kept on asking more questions and soon ar-

rived at the amazing life story of Mas Yamamoto.

Shigematsu had a chance to sit down with Mas Yamamoto and have conversations about his life. The original idea of the play was going to look into the life of a family that gets to handle a whole community's memo-

ries as they develop photos, but it soon became clear that this is a story that is about much more than just a successful photo lab business.

"The more I spoke with Mas the more I realized that we were going to need a bigger canvas to tell this story," says Shigematsu.

## Adaptation

Whenever a piece of art gets adapted to another medium, some changes need to be made. *1 Hour Photo* was no exception, and it did present a few challenges.

"For one thing, we had to make it significantly shorter," says Shigematsu.

An entire storyline that involves Shigematsu's father does not appear in this version of the play, but the message and the theme of Mas' life became much more relevant during our current cultural climate.

"One of the side effects of COVID-19 is the rise of xenophobia and anti-Asian hate crimes," says Shigematsu.

Last year – much like during World War Two – the pandemic was used by some to try and dehumanize the Asian community, and *1 Hour Photo* hopes to do the opposite. Yamamoto's story has more themes that connect us as humans.

"To be able to sit [with Mas] for just over an hour and hear his life story and realize that Mas is just like me and I am just like Mas. We are so similar in all these ways in terms of his depression, his setbacks, his resilience and his love story," says Shigematsu.

Shigematsu hopes that hearing this story helps close the cultural gap between this great man and the people who are lucky enough to see the play.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.thecultch.com](http://www.thecultch.com)  
[www.vact.ca](http://www.vact.ca)

Photo by Raymond Shum. Photo design Terry Wong

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## Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

It's June, and the summer season is right around the corner! As we emerge from the third wave of the pandemic with more people being vaccinated and lockdown restrictions are being relaxed, activities and events may start to re-open again – here's hoping that we have as close to a normal summer as we can!

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**rEvolver Festival**  
May 19–June 6  
[www.upintheairtheatre.com](http://www.upintheairtheatre.com)

The rEvolver Festival's digital presentation series is currently playing 12 events created by artist teams and festival staff, screening live on various online platforms, until June 6. Shaped around digital and audio experiences, conversations and workshops, readings and talkbacks, this year's festival is dedicated to starting dialogues about change. This can take many forms: change to our planet as well as change to our cultural and societal systems, offering a time for reflection, by participating artist groups and audiences alike. Themes explored include: finding connection, the environment, colonialism, mental health, protest and hope. For detailed descriptions of the events, check out the festival's website.

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**Past Echoes in the Present**  
May 24–31  
[www.newworks.ca](http://www.newworks.ca)

The *Past Echoes in the Present* exhibit, on display both as an online exhibition and live on Granville Island, highlights Asian-Canadian contributions to the creative community, celebrates the resilience of artists with Asian heritage and fosters inclusion through safe and accessible platforms of discussion. The event also features a pre-recorded site tour on Granville Island by filmmaker Ladan Sahraei. The tour is offered in spoken English with English captions, and subtitles in simplified Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi and Tagalog, with ASL interpretation.

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**Jordan Abel: Nishga**  
May 28, 12–1 p.m.  
[vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/608c73ea1aa7d52400e4f54d](http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/608c73ea1aa7d52400e4f54d)

Nisga'a writer Jordan Abel, winner of the Griffin Poetry Prize, will present *NISHGA*, an autobiographical meditation on the impact of Canada's residential school system and how it affects contemporary Indigenous existence. Hosted by the Vancouver



Photo courtesy of the dance centre

▲ Goh Ballet Youth Company joins forces and grace with Goh Ballet Academy's Senior Professional Division for a unique virtual performance.

Public Library and Massy Books, this Zoom webinar will be held in conversation with award-winning poet, author, and scholar, Billy-Ray Belcourt. For the Zoom link and more information, please check out the Vancouver Public Library website.

\*\*\*

**2021 Vancouver International Children's Festival**  
May 31–June 13  
[www.childrensfestival.ca](http://www.childrensfestival.ca)



Photo courtesy of Vancouver Public Library

▲ Jordan Abel's *NISHGA* is an autobiographical meditation on the impact of Canada's residential school system.

Reimagine fun at the 2021 Vancouver International Children's Festival with an extraordinary online line-up of world-class theatre, music, dance and storytelling created specifically for children. The reimagined 2021 Festival will offer a mix of live online and prerecorded online performances with an extra seven days of extended show viewing. Watch a show online from the comfort of home from May 31 to June 13 with Pay-What-You-Can pricing. Check out the festival's website for more information on the performances.

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**Concerti Virtuosi Feat. Pacific Baroque Orchestra and Vincent Lauzer**  
June 2, 7:30 p.m.  
[www.earlymusic.bc.ca](http://www.earlymusic.bc.ca)

Join the Early Music Vancouver team for their season finale with the Pacific Baroque Orchestra and recorder player Vincent Lauzer. Gaining a reputation as one of the world's most virtuosic soloists of his generation, Lauzer is a national treasure whose career is only just beginning. This pro-

gramme features ravishing music by German composer George Frideric Handel and his Italian contemporaries that are the perfect vehicle for Vincent's prodigious talents.

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**Goh Ballet**  
June 3–17  
[www.thedancecentre.ca](http://www.thedancecentre.ca)

The elegance and precision of ballet comes to life with a performance featuring the dancers of the Goh Ballet Youth Company and Goh Ballet Academy's Senior Professional Division. Recognized as one of the world's finest training institutes, Goh Ballet produces graduates who go on to dance with major companies across North America, Europe and Asia. Goh Ballet will perform a selection of ensemble pieces as well as award-winning solos by dancers who recently won top prizes at international competitions, in a performance celebrating classical repertoire, Chinese traditional dance and contemporary works. The presentation will be streamed online; for more

ardship leave less obvious traces on the land, when compared to historical viewpoints that commodified "natural resources" like wood and promoted the clearing of land as a prerequisite of "ownership".

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**Lem 2021: Stanisław Lem on Film**  
June 4–July 1  
[www.thecinematheque.ca/series/lem-2021](http://www.thecinematheque.ca/series/lem-2021)

The Cinematheque and the Polish Cultural Institute New York will mark the centennial of Polish literary icon and science-fiction master Stanisław Lem (1921–2006), author of *Solaris*, with an online retrospective of Lem-inspired cinema, including acclaimed Lem adaptations by leading filmmakers Andrei Tarkovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Steven Soderbergh and the Brothers Quay; rare features and shorts from the former Eastern Bloc; a documentary devoted to Lem's life and work and more. Check out the Cinematheque's website for more information.



Photo courtesy of The Cinematheque

▲ *Solaris*, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972.

information, visit The Dance Centre's website.

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**That Which Sustains Us**  
Opening June 3  
[www.museumofvancouver.ca](http://www.museumofvancouver.ca)

*That Which Sustains Us* is a long-term exhibition hosted by the Museum of Vancouver that will explore the convergence of different knowledge traditions in the Vancouver area through an examination of people's interactions with forests and their natural environment. It will do so by showcasing traditional ecological knowledge related to forests; consequences of the deforestation and urbanization of Vancouver; and the possibility of returning to sustainable land use practices in the Greater Vancouver area. The thread that will connect these narratives is the idea that culture ultimately shapes how people choose to interact with the natural world. Teachings that embrace stew-

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**The Birth of the Hollywood Musical: 1929–1936**  
June 8, 7:30 p.m.  
[www.kaymeek.com](http://www.kaymeek.com)

If one movie genre has the unique power to uplift the spirit, it's the movie musical, and couldn't we all use a shot of that vibrant vaccine now?! In this presentation hosted by the Kay Meek Arts Centre, Capilano University animation history teacher and classic movie scholar Michael van den Bos will explore the early development of movie musicals, which first exploded on screen at the dawn of the motion picture sound era when Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* made the excited exclamation: "You ain't heard nothin' yet!" How did the sophisticated, integrated musical motion picture (one of the most difficult types of films to make, and make good) find its choreographed footing and singing voice?



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