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A year in review: resilience amid adversity

by SIMON YEE

The year 2021, much like the preceding year, brought its fair share of trials and tribulations. In addition to the ongoing pandemic, our province has experienced extreme climate change in the form of wildfires and floods, an increased focus on pressing social issues and a full-throated turn to technology as a way to cope and a way to live.

During the year, The Source Newspaper reached out to the members of our community who found creative ways to ex-

press their thoughts and ideas on these weighty topics. Let's take a look back at some of the stories we covered from the year that was.

Living and working post-pandemic

In January, reporter Andreina Romero spoke with Governor General of Canada medal award winner Zabeen Hirji, who gave a talk about the post-pandemic workplace and the future of leadership. For Hirji, successful leaders use technology to enhance human skills and work and reimagines the workplace as a hybrid model fostering flexibility

and work/life balance. Leaders jumping aboard this accelerating trend towards this vision of the workplace will be better placed to succeed in the future of work.

In February, reporter Rafael Zen chatted with urban geographers Meg Holden and Sarah Moser about urban resilience in light of our experience with COVID-19. For them, the pandemic not only revealed deep inequalities that run through existing urban planning but exposed the systemic inadequacies of responding to slower emergencies, such as housing affordability, local business closures or

urban overcrowding. They argue that marginalized voices must be present in any future urban planning to help make new realities possible and offer resilient solutions that may be overlooked by those more fortunate.

In March, reporter Curtis Seufert wrote a Verbatim column about coping with our collective social isolation during the pandemic. Seufert finds that he and many of his friends downplay their own struggles and stresses, relative to others who may be going through worse problems. While it is healthy to be empathetic of other people's difficulties, he argues that peo-

ple's own struggles count just as much as others. What's important to recognize is that everyone's in this world together and that we should welcome support from others as much as we want to provide support.

Social issues at the forefront

In April, reporter Geoff Russ interviewed City of Vancouver sustainability specialist Angela Danyluk who hosted a webinar on climate change action. Danyluk remarked how extreme weather events, like droughts, forest fires and floods, will tend to become more common over the

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Issues and Ideas



Almost half of healthcare workers are not doctors and nurses: Health policies must address their burnout too

Vaccination rates are climbing, and COVID-19 cases are decreasing. While this is surely a relief to most of us, many healthcare workers are bracing themselves for a significant post-pandemic fallout. Far from getting a much-needed reprieve from an emotionally and physically draining 20 months, these professionals will be forced to work under similar strain to deal with the backlog of procedures now being scheduled again.

There is abundant evidence of increasingly high levels of stress and burnout among all healthcare workers in the system.

National and local television, radio, and print media have been covering the situation

extensively with horror stories of doctors working around the clock with no end in sight, and nurses burning out in unprecedented numbers. The warnings are consistent: we are headed towards a full-blown crisis.

Unfortunately, this tells only half of the story. In Canada, 42 per cent of healthcare workers are neither nurses, nor doctors, but hail from other, equally essential professions. We ignore their well-being at our peril.

Every time these professionals see “doctors and nurses” used to refer to healthcare workers, they shudder, reminded that they are being ignored yet again. While this media shorthand may be convenient, it only serves to reinforce the alarming tendency of healthcare decision makers to make policy based on considerations that exclude almost half the workforce.

We’ve already seen the potentially deadly consequences of health policies forgetting almost half the health workforce earlier in the pandemic.

Medical Radiation Technologists (MRTs) have been one of the oft-ignored professions. While many Canadians aren’t familiar with the term MRT, most have relied on them as part of their healthcare team at some point of their lives. MRTs are the professionals who do the X-rays, nuclear

medicine, MRIs and CT scans that allow doctors to diagnose and provide medical treatment. They also administer radiation therapy to cancer patients.

MRTs have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, providing the imaging required to monitor and manage COVID-19 patients,

their numbers and importance to diagnosis and care.

To add insult to injury, they are now being ignored, yet again, in conversations about healthcare workers who are struggling to do their work in the face of enormous challenges to their mental health. For one public example, Quebec

to recognize the indispensable work that these tens of thousands of healthcare professionals do every day to keep the COVID response strong, to keep the healthcare system running, to battle the backlogs in the system and give us the chance to get back to normal.

“ According to our recent survey of MRTs (Medical Radiation Technologists), two thirds of respondents reported high levels of emotional exhaustion...

and through all the extreme challenges of this pandemic, have maintained the integrity of the health services for other diseases and conditions.

MRTs are the third largest contingent of healthcare professionals working in hospitals, and they also work in clinics, cancer centres and other settings across the country.

Throughout the pandemic, many MRTs have been forced to fight for access to adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), vaccine priority, and acknowledgement that they too were working on the front lines and putting their lives in danger for the well-being of other Canadians. This, despite

Premier Francois Legault, in defending his move to provide relief to Quebec nurses, explained that this relief was not being extended to other healthcare workers and compared them to convenience store workers doing overtime.

I wish these kinds of statements were surprising.

According to our recent survey of MRTs, two thirds of respondents reported high levels of emotional exhaustion (a symptom of burnout). It’s time MRTs and other healthcare professionals were included in policies and programs that address burn out in our health system.

This month celebrates MRT Week (November 7 to 13), a chance

As we begin to look at how healthcare workers are going to deal with the immediate future, conversations and solutions that focus exclusively on doctors and nurses will have devastating consequences and ultimately undermine efforts to address the crisis.

We will never solve our healthcare crisis by ignoring close to half of those who are paying the price. ✂

IRVING GOLD is the Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists.

Source: Quoi Media Group



▲ Irving Gold.

Photo courtesy of QUOI Media



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Examining and regulating intentional disinformation online

by JUSTIN LEE

“Society tolerates a lot of misinformation as we always have, but the internet and social media can act as a magnifier so that it gets blown up until it almost seems like it is true, and people believe those things that aren’t true are true,” says the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and co-chair of the Canadian Commission on Democratic Expression.

The Commission – consisting of nine Canadian experts in law, media, technology, civics and politics – will examine the meaning of democratic expression online, and how, if at all, it should be regulated. McLachlin – who served as the Chief Justice from 2000 until her retirement in 2017 – says that the growing adoption of social media platforms in recent decades has brought unique challenges to the spread of disinformation.

The Commission released the first of its three reports in January 2021 and is set to release the second and third in January and March 2022 respectively. The project is the first instance in Canadian history where citizens and experts convened to study the topic of democratic expression online.

It will examine how to increase the transparency and accountability of social media platforms for Canadians. The Citizens’ Assembly, a group of 42 randomly selected Canadians representing all provinces and territories, will explore the question: should legal or other consequences be enforced for those who intentionally spread disinformation online to cause harm, and if so, what should the consequences amount to?

McLachlin indicates that it can be challenging for users of social media platforms to find contrasting views, as opposed to other forms of media. “You don’t always have different views on one website. Typically, one hears more of a view until it gets enforced to the point where that is all the person thinks is true, and they don’t see the other perspectives,” she points out

“People often stick to certain sites and so they don’t get contrary views, unlike, for example, the newspaper, which will have the editorial saying one thing and you have an op-ed writer or a letter to the editor saying that it is all wrong, allowing the reader to have it all on one page,” she says.

Additionally, McLachlin recognizes the complexity of regulating intentional disinformation online due to its contention with fundamental Canadian values.

“It’s a complex situation – you have many conflicting values. You have freedom of expression which is constitutionally enshrined and very important to our democratic functioning, and we live in a society where we have always tolerated con-

trary views since it allows for criticism, open attitudes and advancement,” she explains.

Despite the importance of these values, McLachlin says that it needs to be balanced with protecting Canadian society from harm.

“We have to worry about what can come of concentrations of information that are unallayed by other views, and the harms that can be caused—we know there have been attempts to interfere with elections and spread misinformation that can be harmful,” she says. “We must, like many other democracies, look carefully at how we can mitigate some of these harms in social media.”

When asked about how regular citizens can help respond to the problem of disinformation online, McLachlin emphasizes the importance of educating the public to develop a culture of inquiry.

“I think a huge amount of user control and education is really important. People, as they gain sophistication with technology, will realize that some of the messages that are sent are being manipulated by algorithms or other groups,” she says. “Ordinary citizens can help with that – they can talk about it, they can say ‘don’t believe everything you see and check it out’ and develop a culture of inquiry and a bit of skepticism.”

In addition, McLachlin highlights some techniques to cultivate a healthy skepticism.



▲ The Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin.

“Rather than following the simplistic black-and-white answer, the true believer answer, or what the latest wokeism idea is, ask a few questions and make your mind up after you’ve looked at other views,” she says. “If your ideas are good and strong, they can stand up to them. You can base the fact that somebody doesn’t say the same thing and say you don’t agree with it, but at least you’ve examined it, and then you are more confident in your own ideas, right?”

For more information about the Canadian Commission on Democratic Expression, visit here: <https://ppforum.ca/project/demx>

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Happy Holidays to all

Creating: collectively and internationally

by GEOFF RUSS

Just a little collaboration can give artists the juice needed for their creative process, encourages Alia Hijaab, an artist with Flavourcel. Solo work can be taxing for artists and Flavourcel seeks to make art less stressful, more playful, and more experimental.

"Art feels sometimes like an unchosen path, something I was always meant to do," says Hijaab.

Animation, poetry, and collaboration are at the centre of Flavourcel, a collective of artists and animators who choose to work together.

Collaborating and experimenting

Hijaab starts her days speaking with students at Emily Carr University where she is a Student Wellness Advocate. After leav-

membership. Dedicated to her profession, Hijaab says her path shifted slightly after arriving in Canada at the age of 18 and now also seeks to give to the community that supported her as a new immigrant.

"I'm trying to understand what skills, experience, and stories I can share to show my gratitude not only to the community, but to the land, and the people that were here before me," says the artist.

Flavourcel describes itself as a collective that emphasizes, at its core, their collaborative spirit. Hijaab describes the collective as artists drawn together by their mutual love for working together, food, and animation. Flavourcel pushes back against the notion that artistic independence requires artists to work alone rather than together.

"I feel like I have some independence, but it is a collective at

producing colourful internet GIFs, gallery shows, and other commissioned animation projects. The collective is currently in residence at Western Front, a non-profit centre in Vancouver run by multidisciplinary artists. Flavourcel, creating a more playful atmosphere, believes in making space for experimenting with different formats.

"We are open to experimental projects that push boundaries of collective art-making and animation as a medium itself," says Hijaab. "We use animation as a mechanism to play and explore and see what comes of it."

One of Hijaab's favourite pieces of her art pushed her own artistic boundaries. She created a comic called "Gone" in 2017, which was made into a short film. It became Hijaab's thesis project at Emily Carr University. Hijaab considers it the first time she felt animation was a means of expressing feelings beyond words.

"This comic was the first time I started leaning more into poetry as a jumping off point for animations," she says. "I never considered myself much of a writer, or a poet for that matter; but writing poetry is a very valuable tool for me to work through my feelings and come up with ideas for Flavourcel projects."

Giving back to the community

Hijaab suggests those who want to get to know her work with Flavourcel should look at a project called "Rear Window Cinema," which was a Flavourcel collaboration with Emily Carr University and VIVO Media Arts.

"I really love the animation I created for the Rear Window Cinema project," she says. "It is an animation about my neighborhood, and the Himalayan blackberries that find homes in the cracks of East Vancouver neighborhoods."

For Hijaab, it is good to pull the blackberries out of the sidewalks, because they are invasive but can still be enjoyed as a treat.

"It was an animation that felt like a gift to my neighborhood, and that is a practice that I would share with others," says Hijaab. "I never thought about making art for my neighbors, and it was really lovely framing animation in that way."

For more information about Flavourcel, visit www.flavourcel.com

For more information about Alia Hijaab, visit www.aliahijaab.com



▲ A lizard illustrates Uma Krishnaswami's goals of finding positive change within a community.

Photo courtesy of Uma Krishnaswami

Book Uncle and Me

Diversity, Connections, and Community

by GEORGE SUN

Uma Krishnaswami's children's book, *Book Uncle and Me*, explores the importance of children finding their voice in a community and the bond books can form with their readers. Through her book, Krishnaswami creates characters from various backgrounds and portrays how there are no barriers to friendships.

"*Book Uncle and Me* is at another level," says Krishnaswami, regarding the power of books.

The Fraser Valley Regional Library will host a virtual visit with Krishnaswami on Dec. 8, 2021. For over two decades, she has been a devoted author, writing and publishing books, short stories and poems for youth all around the world. *Book Uncle and Me*, first published in 2012, is commended as an USBBY Outstanding International Book. Through this children's story, Krishnaswami creates a stunning book that incorporates relatable characters and fascinating narrative.

The inspiration

Book Uncle and Me's inspiration first began when Krishnaswami was visiting her parents in India. As she walked along the streets, her eyes were drawn to a girl sitting cross-legged in the middle of a busy sidewalk, lost in a book. An election taking place at the same time the girl quietly was enjoying the novel, and the writer was inspired to put these two things together.

At its simplest form, *Book Uncle and Me* is about being lost in creativity. Nine-year-old Yasmin visits Book Uncle's Lending Library to borrow books, but, one day, when Book Uncle suggests a picture book, she is disappointed. After reading the story, however, she is humbled and cannot stop thinking about it – the doves trapped in a hunter's net working together to free themselves.

Although the main character of the book, Yasmin, has elements of the writer within her, the largest difference is ethnicity: while Yasmin's family is Muslim, Krishnaswami herself is Hindu.

"I wanted to write a story where kids of different backgrounds and faiths could be friends and religion didn't get in the way," she says.

Krishnaswami sheds light on the importance of inclusion while having a strong sense of community. The photo of a lizard illustrates Krishnaswami's goals of finding positive change within a community. The artifact is a model of a lizard. As a kid, she was actually scared of the creature, but growing up, she has now over-

come this fear.

A writer is born

Born in India, Krishnaswami grew up all over the country, living in whatever places her father's job took the family.

"Looking back, I think it gave me windows into so many beautiful places in northern and western India, and in the foothills of the Himalayas," she says, reflecting on her nomad-like upbringing.

Krishnaswami was an early reader and already an avid writer. On her father's old manual typewriter, she would crank out stories and poems, then send them off to magazines for review. Finally, as a culmination of consistent revision and constant practice, one of her poems was accepted and published—she was an author at age 13! Despite this achievement, Krishnaswami did not think she could become a writer. When she became a parent however, she was imbued with the inspiration that real live people could write children's books. Ever since 1994, she has been writing for young readers across the globe.

Her mission for freedom and inclusivity fits well with that of *Book Uncle and Me*. Krishnaswami hopes readers will gain a new appreciation of friends and books. As well as that,



▲ Book Uncle and Me.

she encourages more youth to start thinking about what matters in their communities and how to use their voice to create positive change.

When asked what message Krishnaswami hopes to convey through her book, she responds: "Be kind, read generously, think before you speak and don't be afraid to chase your dreams," she says.

For more information please visit the following sites: <https://fvrl.bibliocommons.com/events/618c5572d361fd2f00b07102> www.umakrishnaswami.com



Photo courtesy of Flavourcel

▲ Screenshot of animation by Flavourcel.



Photo by Alia Hijaab

▲ A page from Alia Hijaab's comic Gone.

ing work, she heads to her studio and works on projects for the Flavourcel Animation Collective.

Born in Syria, Hijaab is one of the ten artists from Ontario, Nova Scotia, South Korea, the United States, and elsewhere who make up the collective's

the end of the day. We are more an entity than one person," says Hijaab.

Hijaab says she can choose to take part in as many or as little projects as she desires. Flavourcel believes solitary practice puts more pressure on artists and working collaboratively alleviates stress. Whatever input Hijaab gives, she believes Flavourcel always values it.

"I feel respected and valued enough within the collective that I feel my ideas and viewpoints are deeply considered," she says. "We all do equally, so everything is more of a conversation than an independent action."

Flavourcel's projects include producing animated music videos for punk bands,

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How far can paying off debt go?

by DAPHNÉ DOSSIOS

Director Tunç Şahin wants the hunted to become the hunter in his film *Two Types of People*. The movie, presented by the Vancouver Turkish Film Festival (VTFF) on Dec. 8, follows three characters and their will to survive a system that puts them into heavy debt.

Şahin and producer Ersan Çongar reveal that their film reflects a harsh reality not only in Turkey, but also in many other countries.

"We are all fighting the same battles. This monstrous machine called capitalism is grinding us all," says Şahin.

A game of cat-and-mouse

The film poster for *Two Types of People* summarizes its plot: three people trapped in a labyrinth, desperately seeking a way out. This movie tells the story of two employees from a debt collection agency going after their new target, a young debtor, by using all means possible.

"It's a neo-noir film taking place in the finance world," sums up Şahin.

The film quickly turns into a cat-and-mouse game as the protagonists' roles constantly switch, passing from hunted to hunter.

"It's almost like a heist movie: they're trying to do a sort of robbery," says Şahin without spoiling the mystery.

According to the producer, the movie is full of suspense that will keep the audience hooked.



▲ Duygu (left), a debt collector, and Ceren (right), a debtor, play a cat-and-mouse game in the film.

"As the film unfolds you discover something else, which makes you even more curious as to what will happen next," adds Çongar.

Accurate depiction

For Şahin, the trigger to writing the script was his sister being pursued by an agency that collects receivables.

"For two weeks we talked to this woman working for a company. After a while we realized we had been led in the wrong direction. We made all the wrong decisions," he says, adding that it is easy to be manipulated when being scared and ashamed.

His personal situation is not unique, he adds, and many Turkish people can relate, pointing out that most of the population in the country currently hold debts.

"Everybody in Turkey is feeling this huge financial danger. Even if

you are not in debt, we all know that we are one or two steps away from that – unless you're very wealthy," Şahin says.

What makes the film unique is that the story is not only told from the perspective of the debtor, but also from the company's employees.

"[I asked myself] what sort of human being would wake up every morning to go to an office where they would pressure people who are already at the end of their rope?" shares Şahin.

As he investigated the topic, he found that many employees are burnt out because of working under high pressure, most of themselves being indebted.

Universal story

Besides the prevalence of family bonds – a Turkish cultural element – the story could be easily

translated to many other countries as debt is everywhere, says Çongar. And it includes Canada. In 2017, the OECD ranked Canada as the country with the highest household debt levels. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Vancouver had the higher debt-to-income ratio of the country in 2020: for every \$1 of their disposable income, Vancouverites owed \$2.10.

Data privacy is another issue discussed in the movie. The debt collection agency would dig for debtors' personal information, such as their relatives' phone numbers.

"Let's say you have debt, you can't pay. They will call your parents, spouses or distant relatives. It's a common practice in Turkey. They don't have the right to do so. You cannot interfere in

someone's life like that," says the director with frustration.

Seeking for debtors' personal information is also a common practice used by debt collection agencies in Vancouver, as one can read on the websites of CGI Credit Guard Inc. and Dixon corporations.

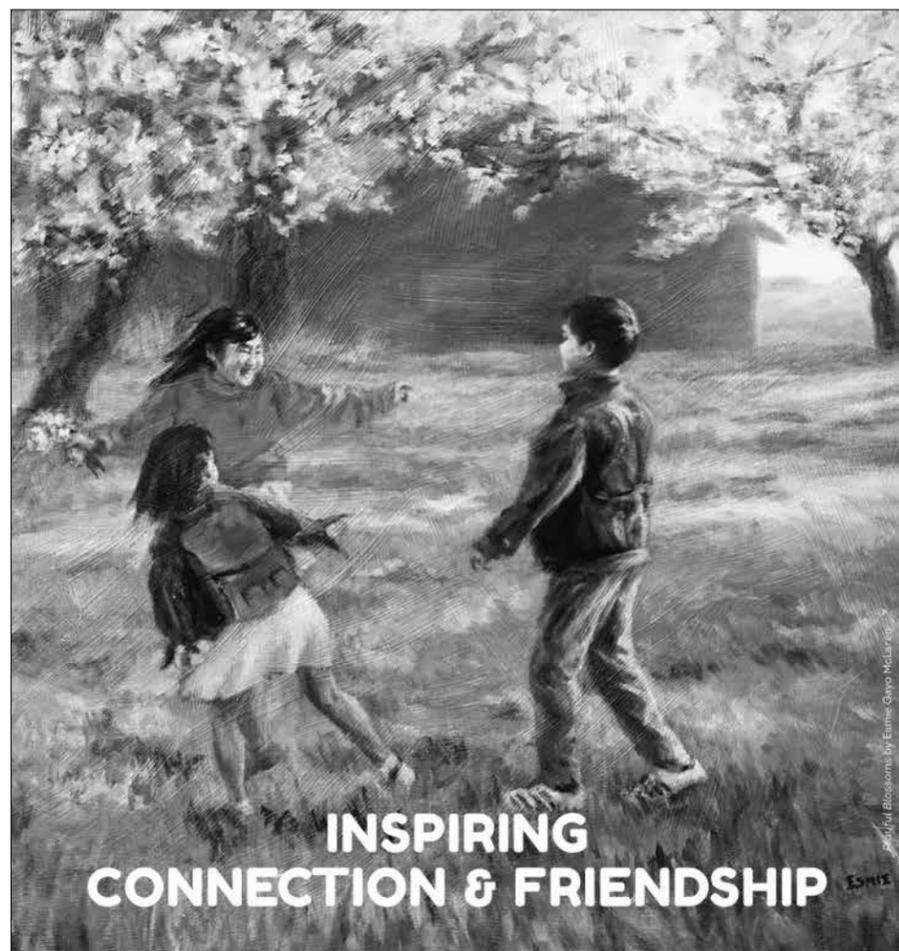
Crack in the system

Despite appearances, *Two Types of People* is not a dark film. Şahin explains he wanted to show a glimpse of hope and of self-esteem to the Turkish people who frequently see all their dreams crushed.

"The system is designed like if you make one mistake you're out and everything ends. But the consequences don't need to be that dark. You can find a way through. No matter how vicious the system is, you can always find a crack in the system," he says.

This prospect of a fresh start seems to have spoken to the public. The movie was selected for several festivals in Turkey, Germany, and China. In 2020, it won the best screenplay and best supporting actress awards at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. In addition to the Vancouver Turkish Film Festival (VTFF), the movie will be shortly broadcasted at the Seattle Turkish Film Festival in one of the most indebted countries in the world. ✍

Two Types of People will be screened at the VTFF on Dec. 10 at 6:30 p.m. at the SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts. For more information visit www.vtff.ca



"Inspired by sakura blooms and shrieks of spontaneous play, *Playful Blossoms* pays homage to children's ability to easily accept others and forge friendships. Perhaps unencumbered by discrimination and fears, they readily initiate play with newcomers. With energetic brushstrokes and soft Spring colours, I aspire to encourage connection with others and inspire new friendships."

Esmie Gayo McLaren

Let's Stop Racism in Our Community
[theCDI.ca/resources](http://the CDI.ca/resources)



► "2021" from page 1

next few decades. Danyluk argues Vancouverites will not be able to ignore the effects of climate change much longer, since these changes will not only disrupt our natural ecosystem, but raise economic costs such as higher insurance and prices of food, fuel and consumer goods. Given all that's happened in the province with the heatwave, flood and supply chain issues, her warning in April seems highly prescient.

During Asian Heritage Month in May, reporter Xi Chen covered the topic of the model minority myth and how this stereotype ends up homogenizing very different Asian communities into one group. Asians are frequently taught to keep their heads down and work hard in order to be successful, but for some this conflict-averse lesson can hide systemic discrimination and allow anti-Asian racism to thrive. Chen found that educating others and talking openly about this problem is the best way to tackle hidden discrimination and cultivate a healthier relationship with Asian communities.

In June, reporter Liangmei Li spoke with UBC doctoral researcher Bonnie Tulloch to examine how youth use internet memes to communicate information and develop digital citizenship. Memes take a situation, event or image from a specific situation and apply it to new contexts, raising questions of privacy and authorship rights. Tulloch's research focuses on how students engage with memes and she hopes to use her completed research to help schools create curriculums to foster positive and accountable digital citizenship and reduce instances of hate speech and cyberbullying.

Using art to visualize new worlds

In September, reporter Selin Oğuz covered the Vancouver Maritime Museum exhibition, *If I Lived in the Ocean*, an immersive underwater experience by artist

Paula Nishikawara. With climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss becoming more acute, Nishikawara wanted to ask how humanity can take collective responsibility and create sustainable environmental systems to protect nature and life. Through her use of the Japanese art form *gyotaku*, she hopes to engage her viewers' senses and emotions and to inspire their curiosity and question preconceived attitudes towards the environment.

During B.C. Culture Days in October, reporter Aman Chung interviewed Mexican comic book artist and instructor Laura Rivera about her experiences growing up with comics. Coming from a media culture that stereotypes female characters as helpless and timid, Rivera strives to create strong female heroes with compelling stories in her comics. By opening up the process of comic creation to everyone, she hopes to expand comic representation in order to allow budding artists to pursue their dreams.

In November, reporter Isha Ohri spoke with director Trevor Mack about his latest film *Portraits from a Fire*. This coming-of-age story features Tyler, an Indigenous teenager making films in his native community, and whose latest film about his mother's disappearance leads to a reckoning and opens up deep-seated secrets about his reserve. Mack wanted to create a film that resonated not just within the Indigenous peoples but anyone who has experienced intergenerational trauma in their community – finding one's truth may involve reopening old wounds and having the courage to face what results from that.

We will return in the new year continuing to report on the people living and working in our city, creating art, promoting understanding and enriching our community. On behalf of everyone at The Source Newspaper, we wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and a better new year to come. ✍

SNOWFLAKE

An intergenerational Christmas story

by ISHA OHRI

Mitch and Murray Productions presents the premiere of *SNOWFLAKE*, a play written by Olivier Award-winning playwright Mike Bartlett. From Dec. 10 to 23, 2021, audiences can attend the live performance in person at the Red Gate Revue Stage on Granville Island.

The play, which features performer Aaron Craven, follows Andy and his daughter Maya through their heartfelt reunion during Christmastime. Though disagreements have torn these two apart before, the holidays pave the way for their path to reconciliation and understanding despite their different outlooks. *SNOWFLAKE*'s theme is centered around generational divides, which everyone can relate to regardless of race, religion or culture.

Playing Andy

Craven plays Andy, Maya's father. Although he points out he may be a bit biased about his favorite character, he says that Andy's love for Maya is one of the most relatable aspects about him. Most parents show unconditional love towards their children in their own ways and Andy is no different. He says Andy is a unique character due to his dilemma regarding following certain societal norms that are associated with specific generations. This dilemma is one of the main parts of Andy's journey. Craven says that while these types of dilemmas are often tucked away, *SNOWFLAKE* showcases it.

"He refuses to be pigeon-holed politically. It's a strange time, very binary in the sense that viewpoints on either side

'snowflakes,' but this should no longer be the norm.

"What happens within a family when political differences fracture its members?" Craven asks.

He hopes that this polarization in the play will spark many interesting conversations.

For Craven, the magic of this play would not have been possible without the cast and crew. His castmates, Natasha Burnett and Anni Ramsay, and his director Jennifer Copping have given much energy to this production.

"We have a blast every day in the rehearsal hall," he says. "I'm also so lucky to have crew members who return over and over to work with us. Our set designer David Roberts has worked on just about every one of our shows over our history. It's a special sense of community within the company."

The magic of Christmas

This drama is set during Christmas, a time that can be emotionally charged. Therefore, Craven hopes people will watch and debate the play at the Christmas dinner table.

"It's a high stakes time of year, a time for communion and family, and so it's a time of loneliness for many people who are on their own, without familial connection," he says.

This sentiment fits perfectly within this family as Maya and Andy's conflict led to Maya leaving for three years. The abrupt separation left Andy in emotional turmoil and distanced from his own flesh and blood. This longing to have a sense of community drives Andy to invite Maya over on Christmas Eve and the journey to understanding starts there.

Giving back

Mitch and Murray Productions is alive due to the support of the audience and donation and during their 10 years of operations, there has been barely any monetary acknowledgement from public bodies.

"It's kind of like the website Rotten Tomatoes, when the critics hate something but the audiences love it. But in our case, the critics and audiences mostly enjoy our work, but the public funders seem to give us the thumbs down. Such is Canadian arts funding. We've learned to just have a laugh about it and keep doing our thing, no matter what," says Craven who is also the artistic director of Mitch and Murray Productions.

This hasn't stopped the production house from creating scholarships to help emerging actors. The Young Actors Scholarship provides free training and mentorship.

"I give it to young actors specifically, out of the recognition of how tough and overwhelming the industry can be when you first start out," says Craven.

His advice to his younger self? "[L]ive another 20 years and get back to me." ✍️

For more information please visit the following sites:
www.mitchandmurrayproductions.com
www.redgate.at.org



Photo by Shimon Photo

▲ A father and his daughter work out their differences over the holidays.

of the political spectrum all tend to line up cleanly, very tribalistic," says Craven. "Andy's kind of the voice of the center, stuck between the values of Gen X and the shifting social currents of today. I have a lot of compassion for where he's at."

The conflict that arises between Maya and Andy is because of political differences. Craven points out that it is easy to dismiss others by saying comments like 'okay Boomer' or by calling younger people

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Photo by Christophe Reynaud de Lage

Babel 7.16

An epic dance performance about diversity

by XI CHEN

An epic award-winning international dance performance *Babel 7.16* will be on offer to the Canadian audiences through DIGIDANCE webcast from Dec. 8 to 19, 2021.

With a cast of 22 dancers from 15 different countries, *Babel 7.16* weaves together dance, music, and theatre in a two-hour production to explore the complexity, chaos and possibilities that arise when different people with diverse backgrounds and languages try to understand each other and coexist.

The expanded *Babel 7.16* was a special commission for the 70th anniversary of the Festival d'Avignon in 2016. The original version was created in 2010 by Belgian choreographers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Damien Jalet, with stage design by British sculptor Antony Gormley. The piece was performed nearly 150 times in cities all over the world for nearly seven years.

DIGIDANCE is an initiative of Centre national des Arts (Ottawa), DanceHouse (Vancouver), Danse Danse (Montréal) and Harbourfront Centre (Toronto) to present exciting dance performances through streaming.

"This work is something special. I hope the audience who

symbolizing the 'tower,' the performance uses the Bible story *The Tower of Babel* as a starting point. It hints at a nameless intersection in a no man's land where people who speak different languages strive to cooperate.

"The musical element is another lens through which we see this richness of differences; it is very much an extension of this idea of the diversity of languages. When we are trying to come together, how

“ This production does a remarkable job of questioning vocal language and reinforces the practicality and reliability of gestural language.

Jim Smith, the artistic and executive director, DanceHouse

In the biblical tale, God creates multiple languages to prevent man from building a tower to get closer to God. To some, the Tower of Babel represents the gates to enlightenment, but to others it symbolises chaos, confusion, and conflict.

Seventeen different languages are used on stage in *Babel 7.16* according to the creators. The creators themselves, despite being fellow countrymen, speak Flemish and French respectively, reflecting two of Belgium's three official languages.

"We see the cast that has been pulled together, it is very di-

it can become an obstacle," says Smith.

Spoken language vs gestural language

The dance performance brings to the surface some of the challenges of diversity caused by language, and how we can't always rely on it, says Smith.

"One point that the production makes, it talks about before there is language, there is the gesture. The gesture has this reliability that we could all trust. We all understand what a shrug is. Physical gestures have this foundational way for us to be able to communicate," he adds.

Smith further explains that the ensemble cast try to use vocal language to communicate first, but the underpinning gestural language becomes more dominant and reliable.



Photo by Christophe Reynaud de Lage

▲ Seventeen different languages are used on stage in *Babel 7.16*.

verse. We see it visibly, but we also see it stylistically, in terms of the physical languages they speak. There is a range of hip-hop artists, some more classically trained dancers, dancers in contemporary idioms, as well as a number of forms of street dance." Smith explains. "Both choreographers are recognized for being very open to creative gestural languages that are well beyond the confines of traditional training of dancers."

The music score is also as diverse as the dancers themselves. Within the production, one can find a fusion of eastern and western sounds from Japanese taiko drums to the voice of Italian Soprano Patrizia Bovi.

A dance performance with diverse languages

With the stage set of five huge three-dimensional movable frames

have access to view it will do so. It shines a light on how vast the world is, how different we all are, and how much we are connected and need one another, that is a very timely theme," says Jim Smith, the artistic and executive director of DanceHouse.

He adds that even in normal circumstances, it will be difficult to present this particular production on stage in Vancouver given the size of the work, the scale of the venue, and the resources that need to be marshalled for it to happen.



Photo courtesy of Jim Smith

▲ Jim Smith, the artistic and executive director of DanceHouse.

"We lost connection with our bodies as a means to communicate in modern society. This production does a remarkable job of questioning vocal language and reinforces the practicality and reliability of gestural language," he adds. ✍

For more information, please go to: www.dancehouse.ca

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LJ MOUNTENEY



VAN DJANGO (TRIO)



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December 7, 2021–January 11, 2022

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Another year has gone by, and while we are all ready for this global pandemic to be over, with the rise of the Omicron variant, remember to observe provincial health measures as you celebrate the holidays with your friends and family. Have a safe and happy holiday and an amazing new year to come.

* * *

Riopelle: The Call of Northern Landscapes and Indigenous Cultures
Oct. 23, 2021–Feb. 21, 2022
www.audainartmuseum.com

If you and your family or friends are heading up to Whistler for the winter season, why not check out the Audain Art Museum's current exhibit on Quebec painter Jean Paul Riopelle, *The Call of Northern Landscapes and Indigenous Cultures*. The exhibit focuses on the artist's engagement with Canada's northern landscape and emblematic use of Indigenous motifs to construct highly complex paintings, prints and sculptures. On his frequent trips back to Quebec, Riopelle immersed himself in the province's rugged northern terrain, while continuing a long held respect for contemporary and historic Indigenous art from British Columbia, Alaska, Quebec and Nunavut. The core of this exhibition and accompanying publication will examine Riopelle's expansive production from the 1950s onward, with an emphasis on his rarely studied practice of the 1970s.

* * *

East Van Panto: Alice in Wonderland
Nov. 24, 2021–Jan. 2, 2022
www.thecultch.com

The Cultch is currently performing live in theatre and online, playwright Sonja Bennett's East Van Panto's *Alice in Wonderland*. When Alice follows the White Rabbit onto the Skytrain she finds herself lost in a Grandview-Woodlands Wonderland! Can she track down that elusive bunny and find her way home? She'll have to keep her head, even after she meets the dastardly Queen of Hearts. Peppered with tons of East Van references throughout, this panto is an amazingly funny and entertaining love letter to Commercial Drive and liberal causes which will make you cheer for The Drive. For tickets and showtimes, please visit The Cultch's website.

* * *

Young, Single and Black
Premiering Dec. 5
www.youtube.com/channel/UCb9Eq910wgmsm-N6pghTzw

Premiering Sunday, December 5th, 2021 on YouTube, the web series *Young, Single and Black* showcases six self-contained stories about Black millennials navigating love, sex, relationships and identity in Vancouver. *Young, Single and Black* can be characterized as a dramedy as it doesn't stop at talking about being single but touches on mental health, divorce, sexuality, interracial dating and much more. The show features a very diverse cast of 17 and challenges tropes and stereotypes of Blackness while highlighting a need for more in-



▲ *Alice in Wonderland* is an amazingly funny and entertaining love letter to Commercial Drive.

clusive storytelling. Check out their channel on YouTube with the link above.

* * *

Vancouver International Black Film Festival
Dec. 9–12
www.vancouverblackfilmfest.com

The inaugural Vancouver International Black Film Festival, created by the Fabienne Colas Foundation will be hosting its official programming running entirely online from Dec. 9 to 12. Through films and impactful panels, this first edition promises to unite us all to celebrate Black artists who otherwise would remain invisible. The VIBFF will open with Erika Cohn's *Belly of the Beast*, which tells the story of Central California Women's Facility, the world's largest women's prison, which helped conceal the reproductive and human rights violations transpiring inside its walls. The festival will close with Ignacio Márquez's

feature film *The Special*, a narrative feature about a profoundly charming young man who must navigate the challenges of early adulthood with Down Syndrome as he seeks to build a life of independence from his troubled father. For a complete list of films, please check out their website.

* * *

Goh Ballet's The Nutcracker: The Reality of a Dream
Dec. 10, 2021–Jan. 10, 2022
www.gohnutcracker.com

What is a holiday cultural calendar without at least one mention of *The Nutcracker*, even if it's an online documentary? *The Nutcracker* is the brass ring of the ballet world, which young dancers everywhere seek to grasp on their way to the top. In the documentary "The Reality of a Dream," five teen hopefuls prepare to participate in the biggest performance of the year, guided by prima ballerina Chan Hon Goh,

their mentor at Canada's world-renowned Goh Ballet Academy. This thrilling documentary goes behind the scenes to show what it takes to be extraordinary. The documentary will be available to stream online at the Goh Ballet's website from Dec. 10 to Jan. 10.

* * *

NEXT: New Dance in Development
Dec. 15, 4 p.m.
www.dancehouse.ca/event/next-new-dance-in-development

DanceHouse, 149 Arts Society and the National Arts Centre will virtually present NEXT: New Dance in Development – a residency and live stream sharing of works in progress from four emerging Canadian choreographers. All Bodies Dance Project artists romham pádraig gallacher and Lance Lim, Shion Skye Carter, Ralph Escamillan and Zahra Shahab will livestream a 75-minute performance of their works in progress. To register to watch their livestream, check out DanceHouse's website.

* * *

Festive Cantatas: Bach's Christmas Oratorio
Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m.
www.earlymusic.bc.ca

This year, Early Music Vancouver's Festive Cantatas features some of the most popular Christmas music of Germany in the 18th century by Johann Kuhnau and J.S. Bach. Kuhnau was cantor in the Thomaskirche of Leipzig before Bach and only recently has Kuhnau's church music been given a bit of the attention it deserves. The quality of his work is an excellent argument for exploring more deeply the musical culture that preceded and influenced J.S. Bach. This cantata contains some of the earliest orchestral writing for natural horns and this may have inspired Bach to do the same in his cantata by the same name. Check out the Early Music Vancouver's website for more tickets and more information.

* * *

Christmas with Chor Leoni
Dec. 17, 18, 20
www.chorleoni.org

No one does Christmas like Chor Leoni, with an essential mix

of holiday music to touch both the heart and the funny bone. Six brand new arrangements meet your holiday favourites, all wrapped up in the bow of guest fiddler, Cam Wilson. The spectacularly restored St. Andrew's-Wesley United is the perfect venue to host this magical highlight of the holiday season where the soaring voices of Chor Leoni promise to fill you with comfort and joy. For tickets and more information, please check out their website.

* * *

Hara Setsuko Centenary: The Noriko Trilogy
Dec. 23, 2021–Jan. 3, 2022
www.thecinematheque.ca

In celebration of the 100th birthday of beloved Japanese actress and icon Hara Setsuko, The Cinematheque and the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre will be presenting Ozu Yasujiro's so-called "Noriko Trilogy," the cycle of immortal masterworks, informally named after Hara's onscreen counterparts, that endeared the luminous talent to movielovers the world over. Hara was one of the key architects of a new, more progressive woman in Japanese cinema. Her role in Kurosawa Akira's first postwar film, *No Regrets for Our Youth* (1946) was groundbreaking in its positive portrayal of female agency over familial obligation. But it was her 12-year collaboration with Ozu Yasujiro, starting with 1949's exquisite *Late Spring*, that cemented her legend and indeli-



▲ Scene from *Late Spring*.

bly linked Hara with the nuanced, tenderhearted women she embodied in the Japanese master's sublime domestic dramas. Check out The Cinematheque for showtimes and more information.

VIBFF BLACK MARKET

SATURDAY
DEC. 11, 2021
4PM PST

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Ruth Unaegbu
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ADHEL AROP
Director, Producer & Writer



LILLIAN MELO
Production Designer
& Set Decorator



SIMONE BLAIS
Dancer, Director & Doula



SIA FORYOH
Actress & Voice Over Actress

f ONLINE

VancouverBlackFilmFest.com

Aligned Festivals

