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## PuSh Fest



### “Aalaapi”

# Experiencing Inuit life through the art of listening

by XI CHEN

**“The audience will feel they are foreigners thrown into a northern village. Not everything is given to them right away. It is a show about the art of listening. If people slow down their rhythm, they can get access to the culture,”** says Laurence Dauphinais, director of *Aalaapi*.

*Aalaapi* is a collaborative multilingual radio-theatre project that takes the audience on a rare sonic trip to experience modern Inuit life. In Inuktitut, ‘aalaapi’

means creating silence so beauty can be heard.

The show will be presented both live and through streaming as part of the ongoing PuSh Festival that runs until Feb. 6.

#### Radio documentary meets live theatre

The show is a hybrid between a sound documentary of the daily lives of five Inuit women and the live performance of two plus the multimedia component that allows the audience to understand it in their own language – Inuktitut, English or French.

“The soundscape is completely 360. The audience will be really immersed in the North. The medium of sound leaves a lot of space for imagination, particularly in delicate areas where people might have a lot of preconceived ideas. Sound is a great way to open new territories for understanding,” Dauphinais explains.

She and fellow sound artist Marie-Laurence Rancourt started working on the project in 2018, first creating the sound documentary and then extending it to stage performance.

“It took maybe a year and a half. It is a challenge to have non-Inuit

and Inuit collaborators working together. I also have to rethink radio and theatre-making to not recreate relationships about dominations that have existed historically,” Dauphinais says.

She adds that she tried her best to make sure there is narrative sovereignty, that the young Inuit women could really have a say in the creation.

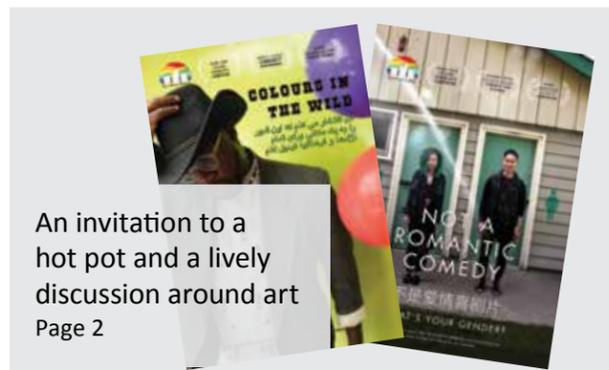
“The tone of the documentary is the tone of everyday lives. We are not there to bring up the trauma of the past or the trauma they are still experiencing,” says Dauphinais. “We want to give them space to say what

they care about. It is a portrait of their modern community today.”

According to the director, radio holds a central role in communication in the North. The Inuit communities created a vast radio network in their own language in the 1970s, and it became the social link within the community and between the different communities.

“It is in every household. Radio is where people communicate about their daily lives. They play bingo and they even have their political meetings on the radio,” she says.

See “PuSh Fest” page 4 ➤



An invitation to a hot pot and a lively discussion around art  
Page 2



Middle Eastern actors face lack of casting  
Page 5



Collages to reflect life and the world  
Page 6



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Photo courtesy of Love Intersections



# Bitter Orientals – where love & advocacy coincide

by ISHA OHRI

**Love Intersections is a media arts collective which is comprised of queer artists of colour. Artists who are a part of the collective are dedicated to using their passion for art to challenge systemic racism and advocate for underrepresented communities.**

David Ng and Jen Sungshine, co-artistic directors at Love Intersections, have created the virtual talk show, *Hot Pot Talks*, which focuses on the mission of the collective: to represent and target key issues. The show's first episode of the third season is being released shortly after the Lunar New Year on Feb. 11, 2022.

### Beginnings

The show stemmed from a long-term collaboration with the Lim Association, an association rooted in history, founded in 1908 with the intent of creating a thriving community in Chinatown. In 2019 & 2020, Ng and Sungshine were planning to digitize the Lim Association's archives to portray a visual art exhibit, yet, due to COVID, this was put on pause.

The point of this project was to engage the population outside of Chinatown and to show the history of Chinatown which involves segregation, systemic racism and racial marginalization, Ng, who is also a PhD student at the Social Justice Institute at UBC, points out.

Because of this delay, Ng and Sungshine innovated and created an alternative, *Hot Pot Talks*, which is aligned with the purpose and mission of the virtual art exhibit. Since they both are also part of VALU CO-OP, the Vancouver Artist Labor Union, they had plenty of support from these organizations to create this talk show.

### Hot pot invitation

Hot pot is used as a metaphor in this show.

"[Hot pots signifies] community, nourishment and communal food sharing which, in Jen and my respective cultures, are big, important things, and it is also shared in other BIPOC communities as well," says Ng.

They are using this metaphor to invite guests in a comfortable environment to share their experiences about the themes they wanted to talk about. Of major importance are "Chinatown, diaspora, migration and colonialism."

Ng and Sungshine mention that a part of the curation of the show is to sort through the themes and bring guests "from various disciplines to sort of collapse the distinction of the themes that we're trying to explore."

For example, in the first episode, they talked to Johnny Sapachuk, co-founder of VALU CO-OP. In the following episodes, they paired local artists Paul Wong and Dana Claxton to discuss "intergenerational mentorship and the evolution of antiracism and decolonization of the arts."

These three different episodes were interlinked as the topics were interconnected with each other. The point of this type of approach is to disintegrate the distinction of such topics and open up different ways people view the topics being discussed.

### Negativity and a call to action

Ng states the topic regarding increased antiracism and how that impacts their feedback will be addressed in the third season of the show. He mentions that it is an interesting time to discuss "really doubling down on talking about our identity as Asian people, especially during the increase of anti-Asian violence."

Ng's reflection stems from the anti-Asian vandalism in early 2020 during an exhibit at a gallery in Chinatown, and, with this personal experience on hand, both co-directors are aiming to build an ongoing conversation about what it means to be Asian in a time like this and how to "organize around antiracism and transform systemic racism."

See "Bitter Orientals" page 5 ➔

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# Envisioning a feminist city of Surrey

by ISHA JAIN

**In July 2021, as part of their COVID-19 recovery initiative, the Government of Canada announced 237 projects that will be receiving funding under the \$100-million Feminist Response and Recovery Fund.**

One such project called ‘Moving towards a feminist city of Surrey’ is spearheaded by the City in Colour Cooperative, a multidisciplinary consultancy co-founded by alumni from SFU’s urban studies program.

Established in 2020, the City in Colour Cooperative is composed of six immigrant women with varied professional backgrounds in architecture, design, communication, community engagement as well as arts and culture.

“We work on issues related to racialized people in urban areas, be it social equity, community engagement, design or participatory planning. We want to bring the perspective of women of colour into urban planning, which is an otherwise white male dominated field,” says Rahil Adeli, co-founder of the cooperative.

Fiorella Pinillos, who is also a co-founder, hopes that the cooperative can help other people feel like they belong in the city. City in Colour wants to create spaces of equity, belonging and joy.

## The story behind the co-op’s creation

“We were brought together by our goal to create a space for women like us where we could make a difference by applying our skills, while also engaging with people who are often left out of the planning processes,” says Pinillos.

Adeli shares that the co-founders are all alumni of SFU’s urban studies program and were part of a BIPOC group, which is how they were introduced.

“When I first started my masters in urban studies, I couldn’t really envision myself doing this work. It seemed very foreign and inaccessible to me,” says Aman

While they started off as a resource group, the members later decided to formalize it into a co-op with the help of Solid State Community Industries, a non-profit that supports young firms and startups.

“We approached Matt Hern, co-director of Solid State and faculty at our program, and he was very receptive and open to us starting the cooperative,” says Chandi. “From there, it just grew and snowballed into something bigger.”

## City of Surrey project and plans for the future

“So far, we have focused more on establishing the co-op and applying for grants,” says Pinillos.

“We want to bring the perspective of women of colour into urban planning...”

*Rahil Adeli,  
co-founder of City in  
Colour Cooperative*

The co-op has recently been awarded a three-year grant with WAGE (Women and Gender Equality Canada) to work in the city of Surrey. Pinillos is excited at the opportunity to start the real work.

“Our goal is to look at the upward mobility of racialized women,” she says.

The project is taking place in partnership with local community organizations like the city of Surrey, SFU Surrey, DiverseCity and the Surrey library. Although the team is still in the early stages of this project, they hope to create some tools that can be used by their community partners. This toolkit will include workshops, ideas for public engagement and also a set of recommendations developed after researching gaps in policies.



▲ City in Colour Team.

Chandi, a co-founder of the cooperative. “I haven’t had people who looked like me as examples or role models excel in this work, so it just seemed really out of reach.”

Pinillos and Chandi both had feelings of imposter syndrome, which was something that they bonded over. They saw themselves as part of the field but questioned how to get in.

“However, soon we found other folks that were feeling the same way and decided to come together as a BIPOC resource group,” continues Chandi.

“We’re directly impacted by these policies, and we have a greater stake in getting things right. There is a lot of emotional labour that goes into doing this work. It’s very personal, and it is attached to our experiences and identity,” says Chandi.

The team is not sure when these initiatives might come to fruition, but their website indicates that more information is coming soon. ✉

Learn more here:  
[www.cityincolourcoop.com](http://www.cityincolourcoop.com)

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## Welcome to Our Homelands

# Fostering dialogue between Indigenous peoples and newcomers

by EGEMEN DOĞUKAN ONGUN

**The Immigrant Services Society of B.C. (ISSofBC) is celebrating five decades of community engagement this year. And, in order to provide newcomers with tools to learn more about Canada's First Peoples, ISSofBC developed in 2020 a seven-minute video called *Welcome to our Homelands* as well as a study guide with Kamala Todd, writer, director and editor.**

"ISSofBC thought it is very important to introduce First Nation culture to newcomers," says Chris Friesen, chief operating officer of ISSofBC. "Most immigrants com-

ing to Canada will eventually be Canadian citizens. From a tangible perspective, increasing the awareness will create greater understanding of what the Indigenous people had in this country. It would also make newcomers understand the background of the country that they want to settle in."

The video and study guide are geared to introduce viewers – especially newcomers – to Indigenous people's values and views, providing helpful information, links and terminology. The translation of the resources, the organization believes, will make the crucial information more accessible to a wider range of newcomers in British Columbia.

"Working very closely with an Indigenous filmmaker, our community appreciated and had a greater understanding not only of the historical background but also the tremendous diversity. As an organization with a Canadian-born producer, these materials and people gave me the opportunity to deeply reflect on my role in this society," says Friesen.

Launching their next phase of the resources last December, ISSofBC included translations into Spanish, Farsi, Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Punjabi as part of their commitment to increase newcomer educa-

tion and awareness on Truth and Reconciliation.

### A necessary lesson in history

When asked about the importance of reaching out to newcomers, Friesen says that Canada,

UBC – for teacher training, or in companies to adapt employees," he says.

When asked if the migration experience that immigrants go through helps them to better understand Indigenous com-

ment and [other] organizations. Vancity Credit Union provided us with the fund for this project. We are also fortunate after some challenges to reach out to some Indigenous filmmakers and artists to contribute to the video

“ISSofBC thought it is very important to introduce First Nation culture to newcomers.

*Chris Friesen, chief operating officer of ISSofBC*

unlike other countries, relies on immigration as part of the country's economic growth both pre and post pandemic.

"Permanent Resident seekers don't understand the Indigenous experience and their history, which is absolutely normal because they've never taught back in their countries... For their adaptation process and for a better Canadian community, it is in everyone's interest to introduce them to the First Peoples of Canada and their culture," he says.

Friesen is happy about the public response to the multilingual video, adding that the material is also being used for other purposes.

"[The video] also has been used for certain universities –

munities' problems better than Canada-born citizens, Friesen answers by an affirmative.

"It does, because many immigrants, particularly refugees, who are settled in Canada have also experienced displacement and abuse [or] torture, so bringing refugees with Indigenous people would create a better understanding by sharing both their experiences and how they dealt with the situations," he says.

### Community support

Developing the project was smooth sailing for the association, says Friesen.

"Fortunately, we are a blessed organization supported by the Canadian community, govern-

projects. Having Indigenous people working towards this project was very meaningful," he adds.

Working hand-in-hand with First Nations was also somewhat revelatory for Friesen, and he was grateful for their willingness and participation.

"[The Indigenous societies] really saw the importance of this project and the cruciality of reaching out to newcomers. They were very excited and ready to help in any way," he says.

For more information please visit [www.issbc.org/blog/welcome-to-our-homelands-multilingual-resources](http://www.issbc.org/blog/welcome-to-our-homelands-multilingual-resources)



Photo courtesy of ISSofBC

▲ *Welcome to Our Homelands Study Guide.*

### ► "PuSh Fest" from page 1

Dauphinais adds that she learnt so much of the Inuit culture through their voices, and also through what they don't say.

"They are less confrontational about certain things. That is part of the work dominant culture needs to do, towards cultures that are not," she says.

### A curious and probing artist

For Dauphinais, it was curiosity as well as a great ignorance towards the North that motivated her to create this project.

"As Canadians, we say we are people of the North but are we? We live in this tiny sliver of land, and the rest we don't even know much. We don't know about the people who live there. We have ideas that are very often stereotypes," she says.

As a multidisciplinary creator, Dauphinais wears many hats and keeps evolving. She is an actor, author, director as well as a musician. Her previous theatre

projects, *In order to join me in the cloud* and *Siri*, explored bigger questions about technology, identity and humanity.

"In the past, I kind of positioned myself as a counterpoint. If the pendulum has gone so far in one direction, I want to go the other direction. As I get older, my motor becomes more and more intimate," she says. "There is something in my work that always comes back, which is identity. The way I approach it, I am going to try to find a way that is not expected or in a terminology that we don't hear every day."

*Aalaapi*, she says, is an encounter that they want to create for the audience and they can draw whatever message they want, and that is the closest representation of the diversity of people and their experiences.

### PuSh Festival – interdisciplinary and diverse at heart

Diversity in language, experience and perspective is at the

heart of this year's PuSh Festival, with a special focus on multilingual performance works.

"We have a panel discussion on the theme of multilingual creations. We also have a residence program called DBLSPK which we co-produce with the local rice & beans theatre. We are hosting an artist, Howard Dai. The focus is for multilingual creation, and we will be showcasing his piece, *Pineapple Bun*," says Gabrielle Martin, director of programming for the festival.

According to Martin, PuSh Festival is curated internationally in scope and serves as an interdisciplinary artistic platform.

"We don't try to box artists into dance or theatre. We want to embrace what could happen in the in-between spaces," she says. "The festival really has a goal to be a cultural accelerator, to be presenting the kind of work that gets people thinking, that gets people to have the kind of the

conversation that needs to happen, and that gives insights to different perspectives."

Martin adds that each performance this year offers a unique experience: *Violette* combines theatre and VR for multi-dimen-

sional storytelling; *I swallowed a moon made of iron* mixes music and poetry for deep emotional impacts; and *How to fail as a pop star* is a funny and uplifting biographic work by trans artist Vivek Shraya.

The festival will also present an exciting dance performance from the UK, *Born to Manifest*, which features an all-black cast and a mix of krump and urban dance styles.

"It is definitely a challenging time to be presenting live performing arts, but we do believe that art is essential, and we continue to work to create the opportunities for artists to do what they do best," says Martin. "We offer shows streaming on-demand as well as with selected time slots, whether people are more comfortable viewing at home or go with their own bubble." ✂

For more information visit: [www.pushfestival.ca](http://www.pushfestival.ca)



Photo by Anne-Marie Barbeau

▲ *Laurence Dauphinais, director of Aalaapi.*



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## RACISM AND HATE HURT US ALL



# Middle Eastern actors face substantial barriers in the film industry

by DAPHNÉ DOSSIOS

**Although the North American film industry has been recently evolving toward being more inclusive, there is still a long way to go, especially for Middle Eastern actors. Vancouver-based actors Hani Mefti, Panta Mosleh and Mostafa Shaker discuss the daily challenges they face in their acting careers.**

The number of auditions and callbacks Middle Eastern actors get are significantly lower than others from racialized communities, Egyptian actor Mostafa Shaker declares. He says Middle Eastern actors have fewer acting opportunities, not only because they are insufficiently represented in movies and TV shows, but also because they are not appropriately depicted.

### Distorted representation

Shaker says Middle Eastern roles often portray negative clichés as the people in the writers' room are rarely from that region.

"The other day, I auditioned for a Middle Eastern role and it was a terrorist. They didn't even bother to write in the script what Arabic they wanted. They just want the Arabic language, because that still symbolizes terrorism", he points out.

Syrian actor Hani Mefti also attests to these stereotypical depictions of Middle Eastern people, stating that the casting directors often choose Indian and Pakistani actors to play Middle Eastern roles.

"They think we all have darker skin, full beards, representing that one cliché of Middle Eastern people," Mefti says.

Iranian actress Panta Mosleh points out that the Middle East is an extremely diverse region, where people come in a "ray of colors".

"In Iran, we have people that are Black and others that look East Asian because if you go way back in history, the region was taken over by Mongolia," Mosleh explains.

She adds that the depiction of Middle Eastern people is distorted regarding the languages required for the roles.

"They assume that the only language spoken there is Arabic, but there are many others such as Farsi, Kurdish, Turkish, or Hebrew", she illustrates.

Mefti hopes North American film directors will soon be better educated about this part of the world, as they are

starting to be for other racialized communities.

"It's like thinking of all Asians in one box. Imagine Disney gave the role of Mulan to a Filipino girl: that would cause a huge controversy! So then, why is that okay for us?"

This stereotypical way of seeing Middle Eastern people closes



▲ Panta Mosleh has appeared in shows such as *Flash*, *Arrow* and *Supernatural*.

the door for many actors like Mefti, who is certain of being rejected for roles because of his lighter skin tone.

"Walking the line is difficult because I will never be enough for the casting directors – not white enough... but also not Middle Eastern enough," he shares.

And when Middle Eastern actors are finally chosen, it's almost always actors from Egypt or other North African countries.

"They are afraid to cast somebody from countries that are politically controversial, like Iraq, Lebanon, or Syria, because people might not watch the movie," he states.

### Conforming to white standards

Hoping to book more roles, Iranian actress Panta Mosleh straightened, waved and lightened her hair in order to appear more white. Recently, she decided to go back to her natural, dark, curly hair, which seems to have negatively impacted her acting career.

"Since I started to have my natural hair again, I have booked the least, even though I have auditioned the most. Now I'm wondering, should I go back to doing the 'TV hair' and matching the look the industry wants? Or should I honor my identity and be who I am?" Mosleh shares.

On a similar note, Mefti explains that a couple years back he changed his acting name to Henry, but quickly returned to his original name.



▲ Hani Mefti has appeared in several shows such as *Arrow*, *Prison Break* and *iZombie*.



▲ Fully trained abroad and in Vancouver, Mostafa Shaker has never landed any major roles.

"Every actor dreams of the time they see their name on the screen. But when I saw it, I felt like it was someone else's name," he says. "I should be proud of my name and my culture because that made me who I am!"

All three actors concur that these barriers have been emotionally challenging, but they remain hopeful.

Mefti encourages other Middle Eastern actors to refuse stereotypical roles in order to stop the distorted narratives.

"When you put your foot down and say 'I'm not going to do this for you,' that's when things will change," he stresses.

Mosleh feels if not enough roles exist for Middle Eastern actors, then they should create opportunities themselves. She has therefore directed several short films and is currently developing a series called *Pass the Salt*; projects in which she often appears in leading roles.

Shaker agrees the resilience of his community will persevere in this industry and encourages his fellow actors to keep going: "Hang in there. Change is coming. It's just a matter of time," he says. ✎

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### ► "Bitter Orientals" from page 2

In season three, Ng and Sunshine hope to emphasize an actionable plan as well as explore more intense themes mentioned above. A big theme they want to explore further is abolition. Dylan Rodriguez was one of the guests in season two, and he wrote an article around the "necessity and obligation that have when we organize as Asians in terms of abolition of the police and prisons," which was featured in the publication *Abolition Now!*: Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex.

The first guest of season three is Angela MacDougall, the executive director of the Battered Women's Support Services, who will speak of this theme as you cannot speak about the anti-Asian violence Asians face without speaking about prisons and police.

Ng and Sunshine are challenging the status quo in hopes of empowering everyone to engage in these types of conversations and change the world for the better. *Hot Pot Talks* is a much needed bridge that people need in Vancouver. ✎

For more information, visit [www.loveintersections.com](http://www.loveintersections.com)

# Bringing a new perspective to art

by GEORGE SUN

**Panchal Mansaram (P. Mansaram) is an artist of his generation. The diasporic artist created new perspectives, taken from his local every-day life and mixed with his global experiences, and was inspired to create art by everything around him taking anything small and creating something admirable out of it.**

"I love the life and joy in his work," says Indu Vashist, curator and executive director at the South Asian Visual Arts Center (SAVAC).

P.Mansaram passed away in December 2020 at the age of 86. The contemporary art audience recognizes him largely from the

must've taken years to make a single one.

P.Mansaram was able to captivate audiences with each intricate detail of his artwork. To him, his most famous medium, collage, best describes how the world is experienced.

"Collage was like jazz – highly improvisational and always in want of intervention," says Vashist.

Laying eyes on the many works of P.Mansaram, Vashist knew she had to curate a solo exhibition so he could make his way into Canadian art history.

## Indu's Inspiration

Vashist's efforts in curating exhibitions portraying P.Mansaram's works have enabled her to develop a greater understanding of his life and inspiration as an artist.



Photo courtesy of AGB Life

▲ Maharana Pratap Hero.

exhibition *The Medium is the Medium is the Medium*, curated by Vashist and Toleen Touq. The exhibition will be featured at the Surrey Art Gallery from Jan. 22–Mar. 20.

## Mansaram's Legacy

P.Mansaram was born in 1934 and grew up in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India. His love and growing interest in the arts spearheaded his motivation to seek education at the Sir J.J. School of Art. Later on, he studied in Amsterdam, where he produced more experimental artwork.

P.Mansaram's artwork includes a production through a variety of medium including painting, drawing, silkscreen printmaking, film, text, and most famously, collage. His work invokes unending feelings of travel throughout time.

"I love how it is impossible to tell when the work was made because it always looks so contemporary," says Vashist.

Spanning over five decades, P.Mansaram's selection of works highlights both material and spiritual elements of his surroundings. He would practice art every day and would even tinker with his previous works. In addition, his oeuvre included the latest technological innovations to create something incredible.

"In the show, you will see the Delwara Columns which are columns created out of collaged xeroxes," says Vashist. "At the time that photocopy shops were just opening, [P.]Mansaram made friends with an owner of a copy shop and asked him if he could play with the machines overnight."

He made thousands of photocopies of stone carvings and each one is so detailed that it

Vashist, a Punjabi Canadian from Vancouver Island, was raised in a diverse town and was exposed to the religions and backgrounds of everybody in her community. Her bonds with her family and friends still remain strong.

"Since the Punjabi community where I grew up was close knit, I grew up surrounded by the language, food, and culture of my community. I feel privileged to have such a strong cultural foundation from which to draw," she says.

Curating for the engagement of others has been a regular in Vashist's life; moreover, in museums, she has constructed meaningful exhibits from diverse artists, and has enjoyed the plethora of freedom for creativity.

"I enjoy bringing various elements together in unpredictable and novel ways to spark a feeling, thought, or experience for others," says Vashist. "That is the ethos of curation for me."

P.Mansaram moved to Canada in 1966 with his wife Tarunika and his daughter Mila and settled in Burlington, Ontario. Over these years, his style evolved as an artist; he retained an affinity for collage and photography. The vast spectrum of mediums included in each of his artworks is what fascinates his audience. By then, he had exhibitions at numerous galleries in the Ontario region, including the South Asian Gallery of Art, the Royal Ontario Museum, and more. ✍

For more information visit: [www.savac.net](http://www.savac.net)

Article on P.Mansaram's life and art: [www.canadianart.ca/essays/p-mansaram](http://www.canadianart.ca/essays/p-mansaram)

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# Identities celebrated

by CURTIS SEUFERT

**The frank theatre and The Cultch present *Be-Longing*, a production that blends film, theatre, and new media to explore themes ranging from queer identity to immigration and diaspora, as well as the complicated feelings, places, and experiences underlying them.**

According to co-creator Fay Nass, exploring the lives of four queer immigrants is meant to embrace the complexity of identities that are often considered ‘outside’ or ‘in-between’. Themes of the piece include childhood, gender/body, first love, immigration/diaspora and acceptance/belonging.

“The whole piece is about moving between... two worlds: home and a place that one lives in. Home also in terms of queerness and feeling settled in one’s body or gender,” she says.

“The story moves through each scene through some autobiographical, some fictional and some musical acts... Moving from isolation of self, exile, to acceptance, celebration and connection.”

“I think for me, the goal was to celebrate,” says Nass. “I do think

it’s really about embracing individuality and diversity both, you know. A sense of autonomy and difference.”

## Identity and experience

Nass’s experience with creative direction, interdisciplinary arts,

tokenizing, or not given opportunities because of those identity intersections,” she says.

But it is in part because of those experiences, and a resulting desire to challenge norms, that has made her time with The frank theatre as artistic and ex-

casional negative connotations of that term, exploring liminal spaces in media can have a great deal of potential.

“Sometimes when people talk about liminal [spaces], there is a kind of like a negative sense or connotation around it as a

like they’re the drivers of their own scenes, rather than being tokenized or telling them what to write,” she says..

The result is mutually created story that explore queerness and the diaspora, marrying the expertise of film and

“ With both queerness or being a first-generation immigrant, there are many times that I find myself in the liminal space.

*Fay Nass, co-creator of Be-Longing*

theatre, and film studies contributes to a wide-ranging understanding of what it takes to put on a show.

But her identities an Iranian Canadian immigrant and queer artist have been just as important (or perhaps even more important) to her craft and approach. And while those experiences have greatly informed the themes she explores in her work, it has also affected her opportunities and how others have reacted.

“Having the experience of many of those intersections, I always felt that I’m either given opportunities in a way that felt

executive director so valuable in being able to forge a path for her artistic vision and for others.

“I had the tools and the expertise to really highlight those stories and kind of like bring them up. Having that power has helped me to create spaces for the vision that I had,” says Nass.

## Liminal spaces and queer storytelling

Much of the creative work that Nass has done involves discussions about ‘liminal (in between) spaces’: identities, places, and experiences that don’t necessarily fit into one category or another. Nass says that despite the oc-

space that is like, ‘inactive’ and ‘in limbo,’” says Nass. “With both queerness or being a first-generation immigrant, there are many times that I find myself in the liminal space. But that liminal space is charged with my history and with where I am looking forward to going.”

In her work, Nass finds that her goal of queer storytelling also has a big overlap with tackling conversations about ‘liminal spaces’. For her, ‘queer storytelling’ means more than simply telling stories through LGBTQ+ issues, although there is much of that as well. How those stories are told can be just as important as the stories themselves.

“When I learned about the word queer, it was not only about my identity, but it was about a way of living, a lifestyle, a way of thinking, which was subverting cultural norms,” says Nass.

In this way, ‘queer’ storytelling means questioning the typical structure and conventions of how a media production is conceived and assembled. In the case of *Be-Longing*, it means embracing non-linear storytelling, blurring the boundaries between film and theatre, and bringing individuals with little story-telling experience, but who have their own experience with immigration and queer identity, directly into the fold of production.

“I work in a collaborative way, with people being able to feel

theatre professionals with the experiences of everyday people, and celebrating it in all its complexity.

“Even how to write it phonetically, “Be-Longing”, was this



▲ Fay Nass.

kind of activating of the “be” since it is a present moment, and “longing” for something, but also wanting to “belong” to where you are standing. Even its title was celebrating all of those complexities. And there’s truth in all of them, for sure,” says Nass. ✍

The production runs March 8–13.

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



▲ khattieQ, Alexandra Lainfiesta, Jackson Wai Chung Tse, and Baraka Rahmani.

9th Annual

# Terminal City Tabletop Convention

March 26 & 27, 2022

Croatian Cultural Centre  
Vancouver, BC

January 25–February 8, 2022

## Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Happy Lunar New Year everyone! The Lunar New Year is Feb. 1 ushering in the Year of the Tiger symbolizing strength, power and prosperity according to the Chinese zodiac. I hope everyone has a prosperous year ahead!

\* \* \*

**Yukon Landscapes**  
Jan. 21–Mar. 2  
[www.lecentreculturel.com](http://www.lecentreculturel.com)

Photographer Caroline Jalbert will present her photo exhibition, *Yukon Landscapes*, at Le Centre. When we think of the Yukon, of course we think of the beauty of the vast landscapes and immense vistas, but we often forget to mention that in the atmosphere of the Far North, people are touched by an almost palpable emotion. Immersed in this place of contrasts, Jalbert spent time contemplating each landscape, even the most familiar scenes, and observing their transformations as the seasons turn. Leaving herself open to being surprised by this ceaselessly renewing territory, accompanied by a feeling of freedom in the face of these wild open spaces, she likes to shrink her frames and compress her perspective to emphasize a certain part of the landscape or focus on a detail. The result is that her compositions resemble graphic images that put forward another vantage point on this unvarnished nature with its many facets.

\* \* \*

**Vancouver Short Film Festival 2022**  
Jan. 28–Feb. 6  
[www.vsfj.eventive.org](http://www.vsfj.eventive.org)

In response to the Omicron variant surge, the VSFF will be a fully online festival experience this year, featuring 51 films, six programmes and three days of Filmmaker-Exclusive Events. Check out the Film Guide on their website to explore the lineup of short films available to watch.

\* \* \*

**Soma Topika**  
Jan. 28–May 1  
[www.contemporaryartgallery.ca](http://www.contemporaryartgallery.ca)

Across her work in painting, wall treatments, writing and sculpture, artist Alison Yip moves between the observational and the speculative. Known for an ongoing concern with the ambiguities and ambivalences of figuration and perception, Yip's works often evoke transitional states, mystical forms and psychic or spiritual phenomena to consider the disconnected ways humans experience time, space, self and relationships. Reflecting on the radical systems failures and temporal shifts of the current moment, Yip's most recent body of work, *Soma Topika*, led the artist to look for ways to envision alternative futures. Undertaking parallel divinatory processes, Yip engaged both a neo-shaman and a psychic, posing to each an identical set of questions about her life, relationships and desires.

\* \* \*

**UBC Opera: Le nozze di Figaro**  
Jan. 29–Feb. 6  
[www.chancentre.com](http://www.chancentre.com)

Based on Beaumarchais' stage comedy, *Le nozze di Figaro* was the first of three collaborations



▲ *Le nozze di Figaro* is a comical story of love and dubious royal entitlement.

between Da Ponte and Mozart. On May 1, 1786, it had its successful premiere in Vienna, receiving its Prague debut that December. *Le nozze di Figaro* is regarded as a cornerstone of the standard operatic repertoire, appearing sixth on the list of the most-performed operas worldwide. Critics reported "a masterpiece... no piece has ever caused such a sensation." This sensation led to the commissioning of another famous Mozart/Da Ponte opera, *Don Giovanni*. The Chan Centre will be hosting an adaptation of this play from Jan. 29 to Feb. 6.

\* \* \*

**Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time**  
Jan. 31, 7:30–9:45 p.m.  
[www.kaymeek.com](http://www.kaymeek.com)

*Kurt Vonnegut: Unstuck in Time*, being held at Grosvenor Theatre on Jan. 31, is a dazzling, worthy tribute to American writer Vonnegut and a compelling introduction for the uninitiated. The feature documentary is a deep, immersive dive into the author's upbringing and his creative output. It spans his childhood in Indianapolis, his experience as a Prisoner of War in World War II, his marriage, family and divorce, his early careers as a publicist for General Electric and a car salesman and his long years as a struggling writer, leading to eventual superstardom in 1969 following the publication of his lightning-bolt anti-war novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In the film, past, present and future cease to become linear as filmmaker Robert Weide strives to get an overview of his subject's life and his own role in it. The film documents a filmmaker's odyssey as he examines the impact of a writer's legacy on his own life, extending far beyond the printed page.

\* \* \*

**Care and Crisis in India**  
Feb. 2, 6:30 p.m.  
[www.sfu.ca/publicsquare/events/2022/vaibhav-saria.html](http://www.sfu.ca/publicsquare/events/2022/vaibhav-saria.html)

SFU professor Vaibhav Saria will give a talk at the SFU Public Square on Feb. 2 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in India. India has seen a valorization of the work that health care providers do, but at the same time, increased violence against them. Health care workers were appreciated by a grateful state and public through symbolic gestures, including everybody clapping hands at a decided time, but they were also being attacked in their neighbourhoods and hospitals. This contradiction is not particular to the present crisis, but is a characteristic of health care in India. Studying the figure of the doctor in the history of health care in India reveals the clinical encounter to be a complex moral and ethical negotiation. The recognition of the importance of a robust health

system alongside its vulnerability to violence influences how health and crisis are defined.

\* \* \*

**Mayday: La Goddam Voie Lactée**  
Feb. 4–6  
[www.thedancecentre.ca](http://www.thedancecentre.ca)

An award-winning choreographer and multidisciplinary artist based in Montreal, Mélanie Demers dives into the political and the poetic with audacious works which fuse dance, theatre, literature and music with explosive effect. *La Goddam Voie Lactée* is her response to the harshness of the world: a pagan mass, both celebration and challenge, inspired by the constant mourning that marks our current age. Five charismatic women deploy their bodies, voices and instruments in a series of visceral scenes full of raw physicality and emotion. Re-

flecting on the need for solidarity in the face of adversity, this work is an exercise in self-imagination and creativity, and a means of finding our bearings in this imperfect world. Check out The Dance Centre's website for more information.

\* \* \*

**Online Indigo Dye Demo**  
Feb. 5, 1–3 p.m.  
[www.museumofvancouver.ca](http://www.museumofvancouver.ca)

The Museum of Vancouver will be hosting Musqueam Artist Rita Kompst and Natural Dye Expert Zoe McDonell for an Indigo dye workshop where they will briefly discuss the history of Indigo while dyeing! They will explore the incredible history of Indigo while participants learn how to set up an indigo vat, as well as techniques on dyeing their own animal and plant fibers. Participants will learn how they can

zero in on the perfect shade of blue and how indigo can be used for many more colours. To register and for more information, check out the Museum of Vancouver's website.

\* \* \*

**Lunarfest Vancouver**  
Feb. 5–6  
[www.lunarfestvancouver.ca](http://www.lunarfestvancouver.ca)

Designed to be a festival that celebrates one of the oldest traditions for many Asian cultures – Lunar New Year – LunarFest aims to collaborate with many Asian communities and outreach to other Canadians. For a complete programming list of LunarFest Celebrations, please check out the Lunarfest website.

\* \* \*

**2022 Cherie Smith JCC Jewish Book Festival**  
Feb. 6–10  
[www.jccgv.com](http://www.jccgv.com)

The Cherie Smith JCC Jewish Book Festival is one of Vancouver's leading cultural and literary events, attracting a large and varied audience of over 5,000 people of all ages. This highly popular community-wide event brings together prominent and emerging Jewish writers and non-Jewish writers on Jewish subject matter. This year's festival will be held virtually. For a complete list of events, check out their website.

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Writers of all levels of experience welcome!

Thursdays, 6 pm to 8pm, PST January 27 - March 31, 2022

Location: Online on Zoom  
Cost: Free

For more information and to apply, please visit:  
[www.identitypages.ca/questionnaire/](http://www.identitypages.ca/questionnaire/)

Application deadline:  
January 25, 2022