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LiterAsian

Asian Canadian stories: from page to screen

by XI CHEN

With a theme of “Finding our voices, telling our stories,” this year’s LiterAsian Festival will present a number of talented Asian storytellers who have mastered multiple mediums from books to screenplays.

Running from May 7 to May 15, the festival will feature panel discussions, writing workshops, literary book talks, manuscript development sessions and will end with a film screening that showcases the artistic creations of the featured speakers.

Helping writers transition to screen

“We have successfully established ourselves over the last

10 years. We launched some outrageously talented Asian writers and some of them have won the Governor General’s Awards. Now we need to show that we can transition into

“ I would like to see stories that talk about Asian people as real people, show us with our talents, with our issues, and with our opportunities.

Cindy Chan Piper, festival coordinator and artistic director of LiterAsian

other areas of artistry. This year I launched this idea of a festival that would highlight some Asian writers who have actually made that transition from books to screen so that the world would know that we have this pool of talent,” says

Cindy Chan Piper, festival coordinator and artistic director.

Piper is also a retired architect, urban planner, actor and photographer. She started acting after retirement and her film

she says. “So I thought since we have all these talented Asian writers, why don’t we encourage them to start writing meaningful and culturally relevant scripts that portray

in North America, but more needs to be done.

“I would like to see stories that talk about Asian people as real people, show us with our talents, with our issues

credits include an appearance in *Deadpool* among others.

“There are still a lot of stereotypes in the film industry and there are no good roles for Asians. We are always cast as Kung Fu masters or shopkeepers, never as real people,”

Asians as three-dimensional people?”

She adds that there has been a shift in the film and TV industry in recent years thanks to popular shows with Asian leads such as *Kim’s Convenience* as well as to general anti-racism movements

and with our opportunities,” Piper says.

A focus on anti-racism

A fourth-generation Chinese in her 70s, Piper grew up in a different era in Canada and

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Sharing stories, down the generations

by ELAHA AMANI

Tsimshian artist and storyteller Roy Henry Vickers weaves a beautiful and simplistic tale inspired by his childhood in the Indigenous village of Kitkatla through *Ben the Sea Lion*, a children's picture book that will also delight any age group.

"My childhood outside of school was connected to nature. My work has always been influenced by my relationship to the land and the people who live on the land," Vickers says.

Set to be released on Apr. 30, *Ben the Sea Lion* retells an adventure from Vickers' childhood. The book contains fifteen original illustrations, made by the author, that encapsulate the splendour of B.C.'s West Coast.

A fun, chaotic adventure

Ben the Sea Lion details young Vickers and his cousin, Bussy, befriending an orphaned sea lion pup after it was accidentally caught by his uncle. They name the sea lion pup Ben, and under the boys' care, Ben quickly grows into a full-fledged adult sea lion. The three of them embark upon a fun, and perhaps amusingly chaotic, adventure in the Indigenous village of Kitkatla, including having Ben help tow the boys' skiffs and standing up to local dogs.

Soon enough, it is time for Ben to return to the wild, forcing him

tween his time in Kitkatla and the time of previous generations. He aims to demonstrate how even though time passes, the stories of the land and the people of the land remain immortal in the tales passed down

works and community involvement, among them being the first artist ever featured in Maclean magazine's Annual Honour Roll of Extraordinary Canadian Achievers, and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal. In addition, in

“ My work has always been influenced by my relationship to the land and the people who live on the land.

Roy Henry Vickers, artist and storyteller

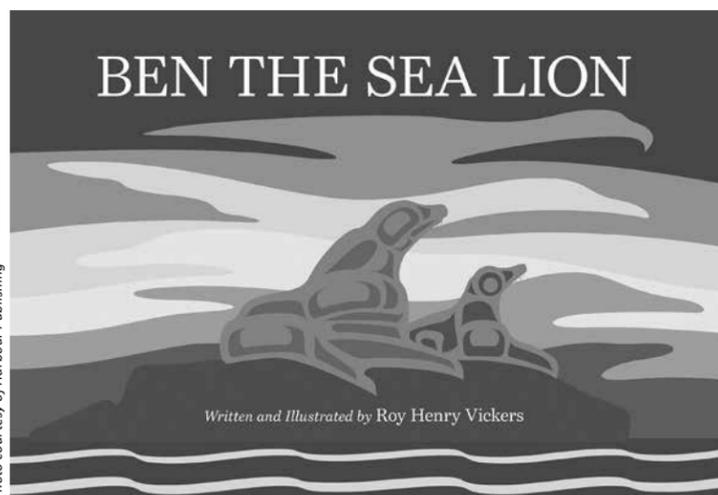
and shared from generation to generation.

A multimedia artist

Vickers was born in 1946 in northern British Columbia, residing at various times in Kitkatla, Tofino, and Victoria. He draws inspiration not only from his heritage, but also from the magnificent natural beauty sur-

rounding him as he was growing up, as evident in his work. In his other books, such as *Storyteller* and *Voices from the Skeena*, readers can expect the same amount of literary charm that Vickers can deliver.

1987, Vickers' original painting *A Meeting of Chiefs* was the official gift of the Province of British Columbia to Queen Elizabeth II. Vickers is one of Canada's most successful and prolific artists, and his passion for expressing stories through numerous artistic mediums will continue to move his fans across the country and elsewhere.



▲ Two youths and a sea lion's adventures in the Indigenous village of Kitkatla.

rounding him as he was growing up, as evident in his work. In his other books, such as *Storyteller* and *Voices from the Skeena*, readers can expect the same amount of literary charm that Vickers can deliver.

Vickers has been an author for 34 years, and is greatly inspired by friends who are also authors. Wilson Duff, Hilary Stewart and George Clutesiare among others, are writers who have influenced him.

Aside from writing, Vickers is also a painter, carver and printmaker. His creative endeavours have enabled him to become a well-known and respected member of both the artistic community and the First Nations community. In addition to being a recognized Indigenous leader, he is also a spokesperson for recovery from addictions and abuse.

Vickers has received many awards and honours for his

"I love creating images that have been in my head for over 65 years," he says.

More stories on the horizon

Vickers' previous and current works promise a future full of art and beauty showcased with traditional Indigenous mediums. Seeing as his childhood and heritage are major inspiration points for him, readers can hope for many more stories of his adventures in Tofino, Victoria and Kitkatla, as well as look forward to many more art pieces motivated by his culture.

His followers will be delighted to know that Vickers will persist in his artistic journey.

"I will continue to share the stories I am inspired to share, he vows. ✍️

For more information, please visit www.harbourpublishing.com/products/9781550179736

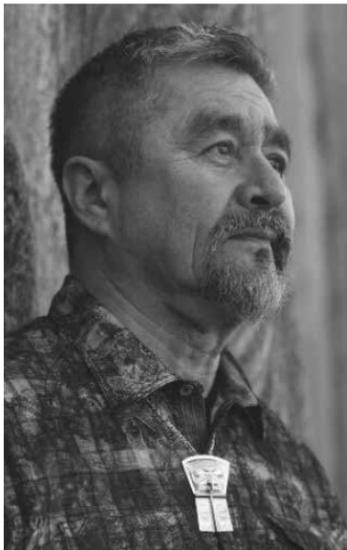


Photo courtesy of Roy Henry Vickers

▲ Tsimshian artist and storyteller Roy Henry Vickers.

to part with his human friends. Vickers and Bussy are not dismayed or saddened by Ben's leaving, rather, they look back on their time with him fondly.

In his books, Vickers would like to draw a connection be-



THE SOURCE – LA SOURCE MEDIA INC.

THE SOURCE NEWSPAPER

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Photo credits for front cover
Page 3: Photo courtesy of Bannock Queen
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Creating culture with bannocks

by GEORGE SUN

Looking to connect with her Métis roots, Donna Lee started Bannock Queen Bakery in 2016 to share her culture. Alongside her husband Ray and son Michael, the family-run business operates from Lee's home in Surrey, where her knowledge of baking bannocks takes her from one farmers' market to another.

"I learned so much about Métis culture," she says, reflecting on what this business has taught her.

Since starting Bannock Queen, not only has Lee made more Métis friends, but she has also been able to promote and share her culture.

Michael Thompson from Bannock Queen will be part of the Speakers Series at Party for the Planet in Surrey on April 30.

Reclaiming her past

At a young age, Lee moved from Winnipeg to Esquimalt where her father served in the Navy; she lived on a naval base there until she turned 12. Lee was largely unfamiliar with her heritage, as her Indigenous grandmother rarely spoke of their history.

"Many Métis people did not speak of their ancestry in those days as they would accomplish a better status in the community," says Lee.

It was not until 2014 when Lee began to search for her own ancestry after hearing of an important Métis lineage. In fact, she uncovered history she never expected.

"My biggest find was that my distant grandfather was Andrew McDermot, who helped establish the fur trade at the Forks-Red Riv-

er and Assiniboine area of Winnipeg," says Lee.

On days when Lee attends farmers' markets, she will bake around 1,000 pieces of bannock while her husband and son set up their stall. Even after successful careers in accounting and community healthcare, Lee has continued to grow her business – Bannock Queen has been a staple in Lee's life.

"It means celebration of not only my own ancestry but a chance to bring forth historical information relating to the contribution of the Métis people to Canada," says Lee, explaining how much Bannock Queen means to her.

The origins of bannocks

Bannocks, originally from Scotland, made their way to Canada during the fur trade in the 1600s. At the time, bannocks were simply coarse flour mixed with water and animal fat and baked near an open flame. It was a very simple and sustainable carbohydrate that many working-class people ate.

"Through trade for furs, many items such as grains and flours made it to the Indigenous population, along with the Indigenous pemmican–dried and pulverized bison meat, mixed with fat and berries," says Lee.

These items became provisional fast food as they provided ample protein and nutrients to workers in the harsh Canadian winters. Then, in the mid 19th century, baking powder was invented, which made bread more popular and better tasting. After the sale of various provinces by the Hudson's Bay Company to England, Indigenous communities were forced onto reservations. Their main food source, bison, was over-harvested, so food handouts came into existence.



▲ Donna Lee, the Bannock Queen.

er and Assiniboine area of Winnipeg," says Lee.

McDermot was an incredible man who served as a Hudson's Bay Company employee during the 19th century.

After uncovering this history, Lee hoped to share her Métis culture with her community. So, after visiting many farmers' markets, Bannock Queen was born. She wanted the bakery to share her Métis heritage with a broader audience. Today, Lee specializes in Indigenous bannock, such as original bannock and cinnamon sugar. Her audiences at farmers' markets love the homemade bannocks.

"It's important to me that our baked goods are as fresh as possible," she says.

"A typical month's rations would be 50 per cent wheat flour. This forced Indigenous peoples into a carbohydrate-rich diet from their previous meat and vegetable diets. Bannock, through necessity, innovation and just plain making do with what you have, came out of this," says Lee.

Today, Lee makes bannocks with mainly household ingredients: flour, baking soda and more. She not only has a passion for starting a bakery, but Lee has the drive to spread her Métis heritage with others. ✍

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Xicanx: merging social movements' history and political activism with dreams and trailblazing

by RAFAEL ZEN

Merging social movements' history and political activism begins with dreams and the willingness to change. For the first time in Canada, 33 Xicanx artists are being showcased at UBC's Museum of Anthropology (MOA).

"I believe where art does its activist work is by insisting that we stop, look, and reflect about what we see; ask what we think the artists' intentions are; and ask ourselves questions about the relationship between art and the ideas it leads us to consider," says Jill Baird, curator of education at MOA.

Jointly curated by Baird and by Greta de León, MOA's upcoming show celebrates activism and the fight for social justice with *Xicanx: Dreamers + Changemakers / Soñadores + creadores del cambio* and runs May 12, 2022–Jan. 2023.

Provocative response

Visitors can expect provocative and visually interesting creative manifestations, says Baird, that address the rich traditions of Xicanx artists. Xicanx practices draw on their Mexican-American heritage and generations of activism that began as part of the Chicano civil rights movement El Movimiento.



Photo courtesy of Judith F. Baca

▲ *Tres Marias (detail)* by Judith F. Baca.

"Each work will insight different responses – some may be puzzling, some may be emotional, some may align with our own worldviews or challenge our perceptions," she says.

Art has always been part of activist and revolutionary movements, points out Baird, and is braided together to allow a deeper connection between creative and political expressions.

"Although it is unfair to highlight only one piece, when as curators we have selected over 40 works, I think *Salon de los ilegales* by Carlos Fresquez is a provocative example: using ready-mades, found paintings from thrift shops, with painted silhouettes on them of a fleeing family. Hung salon style, in front of an outline of the United States, I think pictorially hits the mark of a contemporary political issue from the perspective of a Chicano artist," she says.

To Baird, rather than trying to give a history lesson, this exhibition's main objective is to hold the microphone, allow-

See "Xicanx" page 7 ➤



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Dr. Ulrike al-Khamis
CEO & Director,
Aga Khan Museum
Ismaili Centre Vancouver,
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Dr. Anver Emon
Professor of Law and History, University of Toronto
SFU Harbour Centre,
May 14, 11:30 am



Dr. Mohammad Fadel
Professor of Law & Religion, University of Toronto
Ismaili Centre Toronto,
June 18, 11:00 am



Dr. Jasmin Zine
Professor of Sociology & Muslim Studies, Wilfred Laurier University
Ismaili Centre Toronto,
September 17, 11:00 am



Dr. Kamal Al-Solaylee
Director, UBC School of Journalism, Writing & Media
Ismaili Centre Vancouver,
October 22, 11:00 am

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Special thanks to:
Simon Fraser University's
Office of the Vice-President,
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RACISM AND HATE HURT US ALL



CITY OF
VANCOUVER

An experiment in optimism

by RAMAN KANG

The importance of valuing young people, by addressing their hidden fears, is an idea Valerie Methot, executive director at Some Assembly Theatre company, supports. Methot, who overcame being an at-risk youth herself, presents the play *The Wait List Experiment* because she knows even today youth are not being taken seriously.

“We’re all unique individuals and we all have our different lives. But I recognize for at-risk youth, it’s a big struggle to live life with everything that they’re dealing with; and I know it makes a huge difference when they’re provided an opportunity to talk about what is important to them,” says Methot.

The Wait List Experiment will be performed Apr. 29–

May 3 at the Roundhouse Performance Centre.

Starting with a conversation

Created by diverse Metro Vancouver youth, with playwright and director Methot, and several industry professionals, *The Wait*

“It’s really quite a special gift to work on projects with young people and witness them getting empowered,” says Methot.

After a dear friend of hers passed away from AIDS, Methot focused her thesis project at UBC on developing an artistic meth-

designs – including masks the characters wear, the writing is quite strong and the acting is moving,” says Methot.

The play started with conversations Methot was having with diverse youth who were burdened by the pressure of trying

mental pandemic peer support group program, they all try to run away from their fears.

Although the audience never sees their facilitator, Iris, they see a 36 ft wide, 16 ft tall eye.

The eye, part of the experimental process, shows how

“It’s really quite a special gift to work on projects with young people and witness them getting empowered.”

Valerie Methot, executive director at Some Assembly Theatre

List Experiment is a play about eight diverse youth on wait lists to see therapists who are recommended for an experimental pandemic peer support group program that none of them want to go to.

Will they be able to work through their fears to see a brighter future ahead?

odology using theatre to work through trauma.

She took that same methodology and used it for working with youth.

“Theatre encompasses so many different artistic expressions and in *The Wait List Experiment* there is original live music, stunning visuals and costume

to envision their future during a pandemic.

“For a lot of the young people I was talking to, the future seemed so pointless, and a lot of them were just trying to survive the day. I knew this production really needed to focus on that,” says Methot.

She began script research with about 60 diverse youth at various schools and alternative education centres, asking them what they needed to feel optimistic about their futures.

After sharing these conversations with her team of youth writers and getting their input, they realized the key to feeling optimistic about the future was to address the fears youth had stuck inside them, says Methot.

“If we understand what’s going on with young people it will help our communities become healthier and more supportive, because youth are the future,” she adds.

A great art form

“A lot of the time when we’re stuck in our fears, we’re not able to see around or ahead of us and that’s definitely what this play opens their eyes to,” says Methot.

When eight young people are recommended for an experi-

when we really look into someone’s eyes, we can see the truth about that person. When they’re ready to face their fears, the youth are pulled into it, says Methot.

“That’s when their eyes can open and really see around them,” she explains.

Although the play grapples with serious subject matter, it’s also a comedy.

Listening to youth speak their truth is very moving, inspiring, funny and people are going to walk away from this just feeling better, says Methot.

By the end of the experiment none of the kids want to leave.

“The biggest change happens within each individual. Even with the pandemic going on, they found peace within themselves and connected with others; and I think that’s important for people to witness and experience especially with this never-ending pandemic,” says Methot.

The Wait List Experiment is a free play, with a 10-minute Q and A afterward. Vancouver Coastal Health counselors will be in attendance for anything audience members may need. ✉

Learn more here:

www.someassembly.ca



▲ Actors Mitch Broome and Nghi Nguyen.

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has her own life story that she says she intends to write one day. It shows the ugly face of racism and the resilient spirit of immigrants.

“My grandparents paid the head tax to come to Canada. The Exclusion Act affected my family. As a child, I grew up in a segregated town in B.C., because there was a company policy that Asians could not live in the town where the whites live. I suffered extreme racism. I remember I came home from my first day at school covered in blood because I was beaten up for being a chink,” Piper says.

She emphasizes that racism hasn’t changed much and that it didn’t take much during the pandemic for it to rear its ugly head. She hopes one of the things that can come out of this year’s festival is anti-racism.

Have you eaten yet?

Anti-racism starts with understanding and empathy and there is no better way to achieve it than telling relatable personal stories.

Have you eaten yet?, a book written by Cheuk Kwan and published just this year, is a cultural meditation on food, family, Chinese migration history, the complexity of Chinese diaspora

and the resilient spirit of immigrants. The phrase ‘Have you eaten yet?’ is a common greeting when Chinese people meet each other again.

The book is a continuation of Kwan’s previous documentary work, where he travelled for four years in 13 different countries documenting Chinese restaurants abroad, sometimes in exotic and faraway locations such as Istanbul, Madagascar

and Cuba. His documentary *Chinese Restaurants: Latin Passions* won the Special Jury Prize at the 24th San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival.

Calling himself a card-carrying member of the Chinese diaspora, Kwan was born in Hong Kong but has lived in Singapore, Japan, the United States, Saudi Arabia and finally settled in Canada.



▲ Author Cheuk Kwan.

“Every time I moved, I would transition from different cultures and different languages. So in that sense, I am used to kind of a floating life. I have a lot of identification with these people who are out of China, maybe



for a few generations but they still carry on with that Chinese culture and a love for Chinese food,” Kwan says.

His remarkable journey through food has landed him some incredible encounters. In Madagascar, he found out that about 95 per cent of the Chinese diaspora are from this one village in China, his own ancestral village.

“I’ve never been to my village but here’s my grandfather’s village. I even met somebody who went to the same school as my father. A lot of the Chinese have intermarried with locals so they have dark skin, but they still speak and write Chinese and keep the traditions. I even found a woman who makes Chinese mooncakes,” Kwan says.

Food holds central importance in Chinese culture. As a sharing experience, it glues the family and the community together. Through the stories of these Chinese diaspora restaurant owners, Kwan also explores the hardships of new immigrants in a foreign land and their resilient spirit to fight for a better life for the next generation.

“I purposely dealt with anti-Asian racism in my epilogue even though my stories were in the past. I argue that everything I wrote relates to what is happening now with immigrants or refugees. Now we have Afghan or Ukrainian people coming over to Canada with one suitcase and starting all over again. It is the same thing with the people in my stories,” Kwan says. ✉

For more information on the festival, please visit: <https://literasian.com>

Lampedusa – Fable or Truth?

by ISHA OHRI

Denise and Stefano live parallel lives as they are forced to sacrifice human qualities to survive in a place that is controlled by the one per cent. The characters in *Lampedusa* create a friendship with a perceived 'outsider' which leads to their salvation in a sense.

Lampedusa is a play produced by the Pi Theatre and directed by Richard Wolfe. Although political in nature, everyone can resonate with the characters: Denise and Stefano, played by Melissa Oei and Robert Garry Haackewh, portray different facets of the

backs and panels on various topics including human migration and the gig-economy. We'll have the specifics posted on our website," he adds.

The Canadian premiere

Although the play is set in the United Kingdom, Wolfe decided to perform it for Canadian audiences because of the issues and their relevance to Canadians. He wanted to keep "human migration and the blunt fist of austerity in the minds of Canadians."

Wolfe also recognizes that the play's origin is in the United Kingdom, however the issues are global and can resonate with anyone despite their back-



Photo by Emily Cooper

▲ Characters Denise and Stefano embody human struggles shared by many.

human struggle. Denise is struggling with poverty, and Stefano is a migrant. Both have uncertain futures. The play is being performed from May 5 to May 21 at the VanCity Culture Lab.

The origin of *Lampedusa*

Wolfe, who directs the play originally written by award-winning playwright Anders Lustgarten, shares poignant remarks and details about his journey. For the director, the material itself is a reward as Lustgarten is a unique voice in his approach to the political theatre.

Wolfe states that even if the play deals with bitter truths, in the end, he wants the audience to understand that by recognizing the humanity in others, we can find it in ourselves. He adds that although the play deals with hard subjects, it does not render the play cynical or disheartening. Rather, it shows the impacts of systemic oppression through characters such as Denise and Stefano.

"If we are able to see the person behind the label, we can strengthen our own sense of humanity and how we feel about living in the world," says Wolfe.

These issues that *Lampedusa* explores are properly researched to ensure they have merit and standing.

"In terms of exploring the real-world issues, we used documentary films, news stories and a series of cultural consultants to talk about life as they know it. This kind of contact always adds insight and nuance to the conversations we have when building a production," he says.

Lustgarten is a structuralist, thus, if his work succeeds, then it can inspire action. Wolfe also mentions that there will be after show pieces called *Encounters*.

"We'll also be doing a series of Encounter pieces after the show that will include speakers, talk-

ground. Many Canadians are also suffering from poverty and debt, he points out.

"There are millions of people in this country living in poverty, existing paycheck to paycheck with no savings and a staggering amount of debt," he says.

Lampedusa and COVID-19 lockdowns

The play was originally going to be produced and shown in May 2020, but only one week of preparations were able to happen before the first lockdown took effect. There was rescheduling and adjustments made to try to show it in 2021, but then there was another mandated lockdown. It is now the team's third attempt in trying to perform the play but the issues are becoming increasingly relevant in this day and age. It will be the Canadian premiere despite the time passed.

"I've been working with such a talented team of artists, consultants and production staff to breathe life into this piece for our audience. We're looking forward to seeing them in the theatre," says Wolfe.

Besides the ongoing struggle with COVID-19, the director stresses that every production has unique demands, but hard work, integrity and honesty are what make it bearable. He stresses that, although the production is amazing, it will be hard for an audience to attend such challenging theatre as it does touch heavy topics. However, he has faith that this play serves everyone in Vancouver.

"We hope people leave the theatre looking at the strangers they pass by in their day to day lives in a more open, kind and connected way," says Wolfe. ☞

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Vietgone

BY QUI NGUYEN
ORIGINAL MUSIC BY SHANE RETTIG
CO-DIRECTED BY KELTIE FORSYTH & LOUISA PHUNG

JUN 3-26 2022

Vietgone is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. | concordtheatricals.com

INFO: UNITEDPLAYERS.COM

Dance and poetry meet to narrate the internment and dispossession of Japanese-Canadians

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Kunji Mark Ikeda uses family stories and artistic expression to navigate challenging life experiences in *Sansei: The Storyteller* at the Chan Centre Apr. 28–29. The show follows Ikeda as he brings the audience through his family's experiences in Canada's Japanese internment camps during World War II.

Drawing on interviews with family members and his own experiences, Ikeda uses multiple art forms, and a healthy dose of levity, to allow the audience to connect and empathise with these challenging stories.

"Because of the nature of the content, I really needed to lighten the mood. Looking for silver linings, looking at the brighter side, that's what it's doing," he says.

Humour as an artistic tool

In *Sansei: The Storyteller*, Ikeda shares the very personal story about how he and his fam-



▲ Kunji Mark Ikeda uses dance, theatre, spoken word, poetry and music to manifest family history.

ily were affected by Japanese internment camps. It's a discussion that is as important as it is challenging, especially as Canada reckons with its continuing history of colonialism and marginalisation.

While there's no getting around the darkness of the subject matter that *Sansei* navigates, Ikeda brings these

family stories to the stage with a surprising level of levity, and even humour, for such a difficult subject.

Rather than using it as any kind of sugar-coating, however, Ikeda says the humour is used as a kind of tool for a very human approach to story-telling.

"Their descriptions of what they went through, what it was like, everything from the climate to the shacks at the internment site: it's pretty bleak," says Ikeda. "So there's a couple times that, even within the show, where I say 'Uh Oh, this is a pretty dark moment. Let's see if we can, uh, shift the energy a little bit.'"

In this way, it allows Ikeda himself to flesh out these experiences fully, and it allows the audience to connect with the stories on an even deeper level.

"It's the kind of content that I wouldn't want to continually give a Ted talk about. It's too heavy," he says. "We've heard Ted talks. We know the basic form. We can read Wikipedia articles, all these different access points. [This performance]

is like coming back to an old friend and being able to speak to them in different ways about different things."

The best of dance and theatre

With Ikeda coming from both a theatre and dance background, *Sansei: The Storyteller* allows him to dip into two of his favourite worlds of performance. Ikeda says that the result is a show that allows each artistic form to play off of the strengths and weaknesses of the other.

"[Canadian choreographer] Crystal Pite has this beautiful line that 'dance is really inefficient at telling stories, but really efficient at showing emotion,'" says Ikeda. "So that's what I've done in this, is being able to set up a story and set up the experience, and then slip into dance to really have something resonate to you."

For Ikeda, the result of pairing together these artistic worlds, as well as incorporating spoken word poetry and music, allow for even more opportunities for audiences to really connect and empathise with the stories being told.

"I could speak it to you and describe it. And that gives you a certain context. I could dance what it felt like to me, and that gives you a different context. I could put it into a poem form and really play with flowery unique language and tickle your brain in that way," he says.

In the end, Ikeda hopes that the story, in its attempts to resonate with people, allows them to even reflect on their own experience.

"All these different perspectives really give a well rounded view, not only of this experience, but I think it speaks to that feeling that I think is quite common for so many of us: to feel left out, to be not respected or less respected, or looked over because our stories don't align with the stories that get told in the mainstream," says Ikeda. "So anyone who's outside the mainstream or made to feel outside the mainstream, that's showing them respect." ✍

For more information visit: www.chancentre.com

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► "Xicanx" from page 4

ing the selected artists to have their perspectives and vision highlighted. In the curator's vision, the show was thought to actually spark dialogue and debate: about the works exhibited and about the political issues they address.

Vibrant and unapologetic: multiple artistic voices as a fiery place in Xicanx culture

"Trying to present the evolution of a political-social-art movement since the 60s was a very enjoyable challenge," says de León, the executive director of The Americas Research Network and co-curator of the exhibition.

Xicanx artists are quite different now than in the 1960s and 1970s, says de León, allowing other voices (more women, more queer) to emerge and enrich the social and political discussions of the Chicano civil rights movement. However, she adds, the fight for equality,

found glimpse of a Xicanx-queer reality," she says.

There are a few essentials viewers need to know about the Chicano civil rights movement, says de León, before coming to the gallery.

"Three main points. First, the Chicano movement is often overlooked as a key component of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. [It] was and still is absolutely essential in creating labor-agricultural-educational-voting rights. It needs recognition and validation," she says.

Xicanx culture has many artistic manifestations, says de León, including the Xicanx Digital (the digital catalog to be released by MOA) showcasing music, film, literature and cuisine as cultural manifestations.

When coming to the exhibit, de León reminds viewers Xicanx artists are incredibly diverse – and not a stagnate monolithic social movement, but rather a vibrant, unapologetic and bicultural/bilingual movement.



▲ Muneefist Destiny by Alfred Quiroz.

rights and recognitions are still current and alive.

"I think the video performance, a component of the altar installation by David Zamora Casas will engage and confront the audience because his poetry is fantastic. And the glossary he put together, and his characterizations will present and confront the audience to a pro-

"Mexican-Americans are about 40 million people (more than 10 per cent of the population in the U.S.) and a large percentage is reclaiming the Xicanx identity," says de León. "It is safe to say that Xicanx art and culture is here to stay." ✍

For more information please visit: www.moa.ubc.ca

April 26–May 10, 2022

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Spring is in full bloom! Please do enjoy the amazing weather outside, but if you are looking for some events to attend, why not check out some of the following around town? Have a Happy May Day, Cinco de Mayo and Mother's Day everyone!

Super Seniors
Apr. 26, 7:30 p.m.
www.www.phtheatre.org

Ever wonder what it would be like to be alive and kicking at 105? In her new comedy, *Super Seniors* being performed at the Presentation House in North Vancouver, playwright Kathryn Shaw takes you to the Fairfield Residence to meet three women over the age of 105 who have differing responses to their extraordinarily long lives. Based on experience with her own ancient family members, the writer brings insight and humour to the conundrum of extreme old age. Check out the theatre's website for tickets and more information.

Imaginario: An Imaginary Songbook of Renaissance Spanish Music
Apr. 27, 7:30 p.m.
www.earlymusic.bc.ca

Thousands of vihuelas were built and played during the 16th century. Still, only five or six survived and to complicate matters; there are differing opinions about whether these surviving instruments should be called vihuelas or guitars. If so many people played the vihuela in sixteenth-century Spain, why are there so few surviving instruments? The body of surviving books of the vihuela repertoire is very small. From the surviving vihuela books and other manuscript sources, musician Ariel Abramovich has created a new imaginary songbook that provides an essential contribution to the vihuela repertoire with various instrumental and vocal combinations. Imaginario offers a listening experience that blends the real and the imaginary without a discernible line of demarcation.

Auditory Borderlands – sounding The Dusk Meridian
Apr. 28, 8 p.m.
www.newmusic.org/

Taking the sculptural and lighting elements of Keith Langergraber's installation, *The Dusk Meridian*, as a polydimensional score, an ensemble of Vancouver-based musicians will create an ambi-

ent musical reading of the piece. The musicians will be arranged within the gallery plaza to create an immersive spatial experience, and audience members will be encouraged to move through the space to create their own uniquely shifting aural and visual perspectives. Check out the Vancouver New Music website for more information.

In the Distance – Music from Croatia
Apr. 29, 7:30 p.m.
www.turningpointensemble.ca

Turning Point Ensemble will be conducted by leading Croatian composer and conductor Berislav Šipuš in a rare opportunity to experience first-hand the distinctive and colourful contemporary music culture of Croatia. The concert itself is an ambitious and rich collection of work for a large ensemble representing a number of generations of Croatian composers. It will include *In der Ferne (In the Distance)* by Šipuš (with Vancouver soprano Robyn Driedger-Klassen as soloist), as well as works by Srđan Dedić, Marko Ruždjak, Krešimir Seletković and Stanko Horvat.

11th Annual Party for the Planet
Apr. 30, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.
www.surrey.ca/partyfortheplanet

The Party for the Planet returns to the Surrey Civic Plaza on April 30. Sit and learn about various environmental topics in their Speaker Series. The Environmental Workshops encourage active participation and inspire you to learn about different sustainable topics. There will also be many performers, food trucks, exhibitors and a plant sale. For more information about the party, please check out the City of Surrey's website.

HMS Pinafore
Apr. 30–May 8
www.vancouveropera.ca

Gilbert and Sullivan's comedic tale is a delightful combination of forbidden love across class divides and the shenanigans that take place along the way. Poking fun at social hierarchies and packed with absurd characters, this wildly popular operetta delivers plenty of laughs and memorable music. This joyful production is directed by Brenna Corner and conducted by Rosemary Thomson and features the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and Chorus. For cast information, tickets and showtimes, please visit the Vancouver Opera's website.

Start with Art
Apr. 30–June 4
www.seymourartgallery.com

Start with Art is a unique exhibition that focuses on encouraging young people to appreciate, collect and curate their own art collection – with a special price list just for kids 16 and younger! For this 17th annual exhibition The Seymour Art Gallery assembled a fantastic group of established artists who work in a variety of media and artwork in the gallery is hung at “kids-eye-view,” making *Start with Art* truly kid-centric. Through the exhibition publication, exhibiting artists also offer advice for budding artists and frequently spark the idea in kids that one day their work could be shown in a gallery too.

BODYTRAFFIC: Mixed Repertoire
May 5–6
www.dancehouse.ca

BODYTRAFFIC have achieved the rare feat of being chameleon-like and utterly, completely themselves. Under the auspices of Lillian Rose Barbeito and Tina Finkelman Berkett, the company has conquered the contemporary dance world, with stunning per-

formers, technical mastery, and a commitment to the most challenging repertoire. This mixed program includes some of their most celebrated performances – from the rhythmic aggression of Baye & Asa's *The One to Stay With*, to the whimsy and humour of Matthew Neenan's *A Million Voices*, the dreamlike quality in Alejandro Cerrudo's *PACOPEPEP-LUTO and SNAP*, Micaela Taylor's layered take on social pressure and urban diversity. BODYTRAFFIC's ability to embody a multiplicity of choreographic languages in their own style defies easy categorization. Eclectic, virtuosic and unafraid to take on any dance language from hip hop to ballet, they are their own masterwork.

Art Vancouver
May 5–8
www.artvancouver.net

Since the first edition of Art Vancouver was launched in 2015, the fair has played host to over 500 artists and galleries that show their work at the Vancouver Convention Centre each spring. The show strives to bring together the global arts community in a city with young and rapidly growing creative talent. Featuring an array of reputable galleries and artists from Canada and around the world, exhibitors can

showcase their art work on a thriving and prestigious platform to a global audience. For a complete list of artists and exhibitors at this art fair, please check out their website.

DOXA Documentary Film Festival
May 5–15
www.doxafestival.ca

After two years of online presentation, DOXA, Western Canada's largest documentary film festival, returns to present a hybrid 21st edition, screening in theatres and streaming online from May 5–15. In a return to form, DOXA will screen its roster of crucial and thought-provoking documentaries in theatrical venues across the city, bringing filmmakers and audiences together for a long-awaited communal cinema experience. And for folks who prefer to view from the comfort of their own homes, most festival films will be available to stream online for select durations between festival dates. The festival will showcase a total of 55 features and mid-lengths, 24 short films, both pre-recorded and live Q+As, as well as Industry events and multiple opportunities for filmmakers, audiences and industry professionals to connect, both virtually and in person.

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