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## Roar hard, fly high: Dancing into the Year of the Dragon

by JIRATCHAYA PIAMKULVANICH

With the 2024 Lunar New Year coming up, the Vancouver Chinese Lion & Dragon Dance Association is preparing to bring the Chinese community prosperity and luck with their lion and dragon dance. This year, the team will deliver public performances between Feb. 3 to 19 throughout the Greater Vancouver area.

Behind the success of these performances is Eugenia Chau, the coach and founder of the Vancouver Chinese Lion & Dragon Dance Team. She began to dive into this art form more than 20 years ago, driven back then by the colourful and fun animal mimicry that characterizes these dances. While her passion for the lion and dragon dance is still going strong up to this day, her reason for performing the dance has expanded into something bigger.

“I want to let other people know and learn about our culture, heritage and the meaning and symbolism of the dance, so they will have a better understanding and celebrate our holiday together,” says Chau.

### Rising from the history

Chau explains that both lions and dragons are important creatures in Chinese history. Whereas the dragon symbolizes authority and the emperor, the lion – specifically the lion dance – has many origin stories. The one that Chau likes



Photo by Jiratchaya Piamkulvanich

the most took place in ancient times when a god sent down the lion to protect the villagers from a monster called ‘Nian’ that had been eating all their crops every year.

“After that, the villagers made a costume to mimic the lion,” says Chau. “They used bamboo and papier mâché to make the

frame of the lion. They also used firecrackers, drums, cymbals and gongs to make loud noises to scare the monster away.”

Fast forward to today, the lion and dragon dance is performed during special events, including the Lunar New Year, to provide luck and protection from evil spirits. The association usu-

ally performs the lion dance on birthdays and wedding days, while the dragon dance appears more at larger events.

### Bringing the creatures to life

The number of performers needed for each dance differs. The lion dance involves two people, each embodying the

movement of the head and the tail. On the contrary, the number of performers for the dragon dance varies, depending on the length of the dragon’s body. It can be as long as 18 metres and therefore can require up to nine performers. Chau says this is where challenges arise.

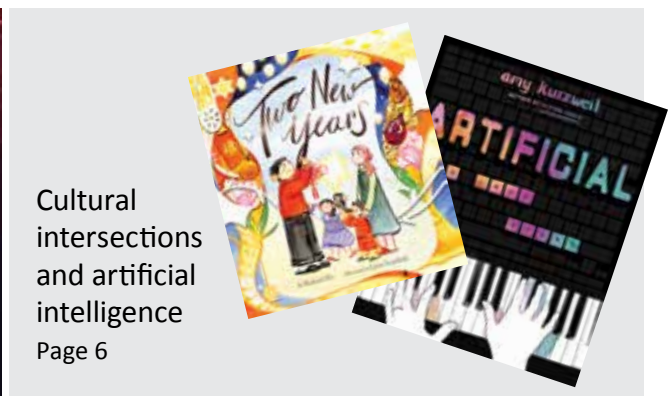
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# The building blocks of a good life

BC non-profit MOSAIC brings the issue of newcomer immigrant wellbeing to Parliament

by **CHERIE TAY**

**As a B.C. and Lower Mainland-based organization that has been providing Canadian newcomer-immigrants with settlement services for 45+ years, MOSAIC has had a long and storied history. Yet, the organization is still venturing to shuffle government priorities for improved support regarding immigrant welfare.**

On Nov. 17 2023, MOSAIC CEO Olga Stachova spoke at the House of Commons in Ontario, giving three key recommendations on ways to enhance immigrant well-being. These recommendations pave the way for the organization's future, including suggestions to invest in affordable housing for newcomers, Canadian work experience training programs and longer-term core funding for nonprofits.

Stachova says prioritizing immigrant well-being is important because newcomers who face culture shock and lack a strong support system in Canada will eventually leave, posing labor issues for the economy and stemming population growth.

"We are a country that is dependent on immigration, our population growth almost entirely depends on immigration. If we want immigrants to come, they should feel welcome and should feel that they can find meaningful employment and build good lives in Canada," Stachova says.

**Housing, employer partnerships and non-profit funding**

2022 saw a surge of immigrants arriving in Canada, with over approximately 430,000 permanent

residents landing on its shores along with a 20% increase in foreign workers. In response, MOSAIC's first recommendation was for the federal government to provide affordable Rent-Geared-to-Income housing units for newcomers.

"The federal government is working with municipalities to create incentives to build faster but we see a lot of developments going up that are just market housing. That's not af-

fordable," says Stachova. "It is not affordable for newcomers when they arrive but for many Canadians too." MOSAIC's second proposal is for long-term funding for programs that provide Canadian work experience. At present, MOSAIC is nearing the tail-end of their three-year pilot program in April 2024 that pairs immigrants with companies to pursue on-the-job training, but

*Olga Stachova, CEO of MOSAIC*

this also belies a need to carry on these partnerships beyond the program's duration.

Stachova, who herself worked at the bookstore chain Chapters when she first arrived in Canada 25 years ago, is aware of how much more they have to do to see results.

"You finally get traction, you have momentum, you've built those relationships with employers, they start talking to each other, [but now] we're done. We are just getting to the partnership we built. You don't accomplish change in a year or two," she explains.

Lastly, this propels MOSAIC to call for a permanent long-term funding envelope for further work placement programs, building on ongoing accomplishments in a sustainable manner. This is in addition to other forms of funding for core costs that nonprofit organizations like MOSAIC require.

"We have the same expenses as any corporation, there are many obligations [such as] data security, infrastructure and risk management. Let's give longer-term funding so that we don't have to chase every year and write grants. Let's allocate a standard core cost [for] stability to build infrastructure," Stachova says.

**MOSAIC's future plans**

In regards to why immigrant wellbeing is an important priority for Canada at large, the answers range from boosting the economy to good old-fashioned human decency. Thousands of highly-skilled professionals arrive in Canada yearly but are unable to find jobs that match their skill level, leaving them bereft of a solid income and good career prospects.

"We shouldn't think that we don't have to invest a lot into immigrant wellbeing and it's okay that they struggle and are hardly able to make ends meet

because they will go elsewhere. It's not okay, especially if we're attracting highly skilled talent. Even in a personal way, it's not the right way to treat people," Stachova says.

Recent Parliamentary announcements have impacted MOSAIC greatly as well, with Immigration Minister Mark Miller announcing a 35% decrease of Ontario's student visas for the year 2024 to focus on

strengthening existing services for current students. As it is, international students approach MOSAIC often for aid pertaining to issues such as job hunting after graduation and mental health support.

Stachova is hopeful that this move will result in less strain on MOSAIC's services.

"We are hoping that with fewer international students and more encouragement for the post-secondary institutions to build housing and services for students, there will be less needs that students come to us with," she says.

*Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots*

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**Horizontally**

- 1. great surprise
- 2. rythm – unfilled spaces
- 3. easier alternative – personal
- 4. energies
- 5. big plant – in motion – impersonal pronoun
- 6. use to compare – functions
- 7. holding – greek letter
- 8. morning – sex appeal – American indigenous
- 9. sacred bird – in contact with a surface – fishs eggs
- 10. Jewish ritual – winter vehicle
- 11. experiments – bone
- 12. agreement – Los Angeles - evaluations

**verticalement**

- A. arriverais à ton terme
- B. possessif – dérange
- C. compressent – milieu du mois
- D. mal d'oreille – crochets
- E. fleuve de France – livre pour rire – média d'information
- F. pronom – ce qu'il y a de mieux – ni à toi, ni à moi
- G. tachés – atomes chargés
- H. hors-concours – empereur romain
- I. déplaça – cher
- J. exprime la matière – vieux matériel de poterie – fis des vocalises
- K. son qui identifie Dieu – étire – nanomètre
- L. utiles au golfeur – perdus de l'eau – champion

For answers, see page 8

Photo Courtesy of MOSAIC



▲ MOSAIC CEO Olga Stachova.

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# Unleashing potential: Vancouver Adapted Music Society's innovative approach to music inclusivity

by BONNIE GILL

Part 2 in a series highlighting the intersection between disability and arts in Metro Vancouver.

What started with two musicians looking to find a way back into music after suffering sports-related injuries, has become a foundation through which artists of all abilities are encouraged to create music. The Vancouver Adapted Music Society is a space where adaptive technology is used to give those living with disabilities the opportunity to learn, record and perform music.

VAMS Program Manager Graeme Wyman says VAMS prioritizes helping clients by creating solutions to the physical barriers standing between artists living with disabilities and the production of music.

"It could be something as easy as raising power inputs, just having them low on the ground. Someone in a wheelchair might not be able to access those," he points out.

## An adaptive approach

Co-founded in 1988 by musicians Sam Sullivan and Dave Symington, VAMS has long relied on advances in adaptive music technology for its success. Having both experienced tetraplegia due to sports-related injuries, they founded the society with the intention of using electronic or MIDI instruments to reintegrate into the world of music.

It is these same instruments that are adapted for VAMS programs today.

"The thing is, a lot of these solutions are fairly simple," says Wyman.

While the studio is fully accessible to wheelchairs and mobility vehicles, a range of instruments have also been adapted for those with various abilities. With drumming, for example,



▲ The Vancouver Adapted Music Society works with artists like Jeff Stanfield to support their musical endeavours.

the instrument can be made accessible to those unable to hold drumsticks by a Velcro attach-



▲ Rachael Ransom has been working with VAMS since 2018, and has an album due out this year.

ment to wheelchair gloves. Pianos can be raised, lowered or tilted to the individual needs of their clients.

There's also what Wyman calls a "guitar table," which lays flat so that those who are unable to hold a standard guitar can play it.

With all their studio employees being trained audio engineers, Wyman and his colleagues' role is often to act as assistant producers for non-verbal clients who might also be physically unable to play an instrument. During this process, the client directs the musical piece while team members like Wyman assist in recording a song's various elements.

"We play a few samples and a client, even though they're non-verbal, can still communicate through different technologies...I would say, 'client X, do you like this drumbeat? Okay, no, how about this one?'" explains Wyman. "We'd find a place where we're like, yeah, that's great... And then we move

on from there and kind of build a track."

## All about the music

According to Wyman, a common misconception about VAMS is the difference between music therapy and the work that they carry out.

"We're not music therapists," says Wyman, whose background is in music engineering and production.

He explains that the program focuses on a three-tiered system of music lessons, recordings and live performances, and says their emphasis is on supporting each of their artists on their musical journey.

Rachael Ransom has been a client of VAMS since 2018 and echoes this sentiment.

"People think 'oh, it's a non-profit for people with disabilities, it's more of a charity thing,'" says Ransom. "I think the biggest thing is that music comes first here."

Ransom, who was discovered by Dave Symington while per-

forming in 2018, is currently in the process of recording an album with VAMS, alongside program coordinator Bryden Veinot and program assistant Noah Stolte. Ransom recalls being apprehensive about embarking on recording an album but agreed after persistent encouragement from Veinot.

"They've taken my songs that were just chord progressions, lyrics and melodies and turned it into something much bigger," says Ransom. "It's going to be out in a couple of months; that's how persuasive they can be over there."

Speaking on her experience in VAMS studio, Ransom says there is a culture of understanding.

"They understand disability because they work with disabled clients already," says Ransom. "It kind of takes that awkwardness away and we can just focus on the music." ✍

For more information on VAMS lessons, recording sessions and live shows visit: [www.vams.org](http://www.vams.org)

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"There are some lifting and acrobatic moves involved in the lion dance. Also, for the dragon dance, there are different positions and each person will have to know where they have to stand exactly for different poses and movements," explains Chau. "So, that will be challenging just to make sure everyone can be there to practice at the same time, learn different individual parts and work together as a team."

The ages of the performers at the Vancouver Chinese Lion & Dragon Dance Association are also very diverse. Chau says that the team has performers from as young as seven up to around 60 years old. Many of them see the lion and dragon dance as a great opportunity for them to exercise and learn about the culture. Howard Hui, a 60-year-old born in Hong Kong, is one of the senior performers at the association who shares this sentiment.

"One good thing is that it is a kind of exercise," says Hui. "I also like Chinese culture a lot. I like to dig deep into the meaning

of what the lion dance is, what the dragon dance is and what they are for. It's very interesting because every move has its own meaning. It's not just a dance."

## Roaring for the people

Chau explains that each of the two performances aim to showcase different kinds of stories, including through different types of movement.

"For the dragon dance, it's normally to show how the dragon is going to move and float around. The performance has both powerful and slow parts to make the dragon look alive," says Chau.

On the other hand, the lion dance that Chau and her team perform normally follows a story of the lion waking up and searching for food. Therefore, the audience at the store or the event will have to prepare some lettuce for the hesitant lion to eat.

"The lion is scared of whether the food is poisonous or safe, so the lion will eat it and spit it back out," says Chau. "But because the word 'lettuce' rhymes with the word 'prosperity,' you want to catch the lettuce to catch the

prosperity and good luck for the coming year."

This interaction with the audience ends up being one of the most memorable moments Chau has about the lion performance.

People sometimes get creative with the food they prepare for the lion, and Chau recalls seeing them tie spinach to a long rope or mix lettuce with carrots and other vegetables. The most

striking one, however, is what she called the 'live lettuce.'

"There was a store putting up a washbasin with water with live crab and fish swimming in there, and then they put the lettuce and the red envelope on top. So we have to get the lettuce from the basin. But then when the kid [who was the performer] was getting it, the crab suddenly moved its claws," she says.

Hui's favorite part is also being able to perform in front of the audience. He says that practicing inside the studio and doing a live performance are totally different.

"You have the audience cheering for you. And the music is so ripened and exciting, so everybody's getting excited and laughing," says Hui. "For one performance we performed in front of the seniors at a senior home and they were so happy with it. When they smiled, you know that we did a good job." ✍

For more information on their upcoming Lunar New Year performances, visit: [www.vclda.com](http://www.vclda.com)



▲ The Vancouver Chinese Lion and Dragon Dance Association is bringing creatures and their folklore to life for Lunar New Year.

# SFU panel aims to counter misinformation and give a more accurate perspective on SOGI

by PRISCA TANG

**It's important to clarify the real purpose of SOGI is to protect children, says Travers, a professor of Sociology at Simon Fraser University. SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) resources provide information with the intention of teaching children inclusivity.**

"Our goal is to keep children safe from sexual violence and sexual harm, and not talking to them about it is not the answer," Travers says.

Different understandings of the SOGI resources have raised concerns, and even substantial protests, amongst parents and religious groups as they worry the program encourages chil-

by boys and men. They explain that if people continue to not talk about gender and sexuality issues, this can have a negative impact on the queer and trans student population.

"There are always queer and trans students in school. What we have to decide as a society is what is their experience going to be like? Are we going to let them remain silent and invisible? These attitudes tend to lead to self-hatred, self-harm and self-destructive behaviors," Travers points out.

Travers says the other main challenge that SOGI policies face is politicians trying to "manipulate fear by stoking a moral panic."

Travers says the research about the positive role of SOGI

“Our goal is to keep children safe from sexual violence and sexual harm...

*Travers, professor of Sociology, SFU*

dren to change genders or undergo gender-affirming surgery.

In response to the recent anti-SOGI movement, Simon Fraser University will be hosting a forum on February 7 titled, "Mobilizing Fear and Misinformation: Anti-SOGI and 'Parent's Rights' Movements," aiming to counter people's concerns and give them a more accurate perspective.

Travers will be one of the panellists at the talk.

## Two reasons for misinformation

Travers says one of the two main reasons why misinformation about SOGI is being spread is because of a conservative push to "drive queer and trans people out of public life."



▲ SFU Sociology professor Travers says it's important to counter misinformation about B.C.'s SOGI-inclusive curricula and policies.

"Children do not arrive on this Earth thinking that being queer or trans is bad. They're taught really systematically. So, I do think there are lots of opportunities for unlearning hateful attitudes," they explain.

Travers says research shows if cisgender children are exposed to gender as a spectrum, it is less likely girls and young women are going to be victimized by gender-based violence

is unequivocal; however, politicians who are mobilizing fear have ulterior motives.

"The politicians who are mobilizing this fear aren't interested in the research. They haven't done their homework. They have no intention of doing their homework and they cannot be convinced otherwise because they're not actually interested in the truth. They're interested in power," Travers says.

## No linear pattern to social change

Travers notes, broadly speaking, there has been a social progression on issues of gender identity and sexual orientation.

"I was born in 1962. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine I would have a life where I could be as authentic and successful as I am today. I have a great life that I wouldn't have anticipated," Travers says.

However, when it comes to social change Travers says social progression is not a "linear" event.

In addition to very recent pushback against SOGI-inclusive policies, Travers also points to a recent example of how, in the U.S. Obama administration-era trans issues moved forward, but then faced more pushback when Trump was elected.

As such, they believe SOGI education is helpful to push for social change through education: better allowing trans and queer students to be themselves in school or society.

"Our real purpose is to be really proactive in letting people understand why SOGI education is good for all kids and that there are conservative politicians who are trying to create fear around marginalized groups of people," Travers says.

SOGI has been around and used in BC schools since 2016. ✉

For more information about the talk, visit <http://events.sfu.ca/event/38613-mobilizing-fear-and-misinformation-anti-sogi-and>

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▲ Scene from *Fields of Endless Day*.

Photo courtesy of National Film Board

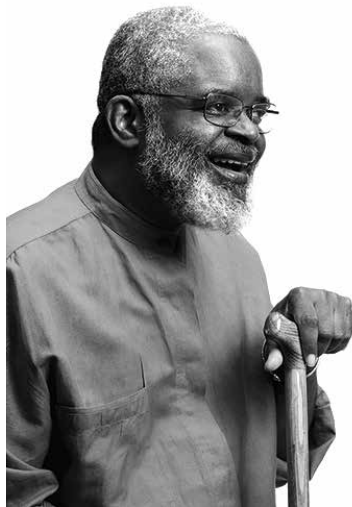
# A Canadian history of Black filmmaking – Three key artists

by STAFF WRITER

In celebration of Black History Month, the National Film Board is shining a spotlight on three crucial artists that brought Black stories and perspectives to the big screen in the 1970s and 1980s. Claire Prieto, Roger McTair, and Jennifer Hodge de Silva all made their mark on Canadian cinema as leading directorial figures, putting a camera to perspectives which were seldom seen at the time, and are as important as ever today.

## Claire Prieto and Roger McTair

Claire Prieto immigrated to Toronto from Trinidad along with her spouse and creative partner



▲ Roger McTair.

Photo courtesy of National Film Board

Roger McTair, in 1970. Together they created *Some Black Women*, with McTair as director and Prieto as producer, a 1975 film which the NFB cites as the very first film directed by a Black Canadian about the Black community in Canada.

The film was the first of a handful of short documentaries directed and produced by Prieto and McTair, either individually or, often, as a pair, which followed the lives of Black Canadians in Ontario, highlighting their sociocultural experiences and history.

These include *Home to Buxton* (1980, Dir. Prieto, McTair) highlighting the lives of Black Canadians in Buxton, Ontario; *Different Timbres* (1980, Dir. McTair, Prod. Prieto), a documentary about

Black Ontarian steel drum producers and performers; *Black Mother, Black Daughter* (1989, Dir. Prieto), an exploration of the lives of Black women in Nova Scotia, and the first NFB production ever created by an all-female crew; and *Older, Stronger, Wiser* (1989, Dir. Prieto) featuring stories told by older Black women about their life experiences in the first half of the century.

In more recent years, Prieto served as producer on the first Black Canadian sitcom, 2003's *Lord Have Mercy!*, a critically-acclaimed show featuring a diverse Canadian and Caribbean cast. She would go on to earn a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Caribbean Tales Film Festival 2010 for her own pioneering work and activism.

Meanwhile McTair would go on to direct various films including *Journey to Justice* (2000) a feature-length documentary telling the stories of various Black Canadians that fought for their civil rights, featuring the stories of citizens that became anti-seg-



▲ Claire Prieto.

regationist activists like Viola Desmond and Fred Christie.

regationist activists like Viola Desmond and Fred Christie.

## Jennifer Hodge de Silva

Montreal-born Jennifer Hodge de Silva's film career started around the same time as Prieto and McTair's, in the 1970s. And like Prieto and McTair, her influential early career comprises documentaries focussed on diverse Canadian experiences. After working as an assistant producer on *Fields of Endless Day* (1979, Dir. Terrence Macartney-

Filgate), a docudrama tracing the deep roots of Black Canadians, she directed *Toronto's Ethnic Police Squad* (1979), *Myself, Yourself* (1980) and *Joe David: Spirit of the Mask* (1982), highlighting the lives and struggles of various racialized individuals and artists in Canada.

Her most popular and influential film, however, is *Home Feeling: A Struggle for Community* (1983), which she co-directed with McTair. The feature-length documentary details the fraught relationship between Toronto police and the Caribbean-Ca-



▲ Jennifer Hodge de Silva.

nadian residents of a small, six square block neighbourhood in the city.

While Hodge de Silva passed away in 1989, just 10 years after her film career began, *Home Feeling* continues to have an impact, being shown and taught in film studies classes years later. Prieto and McTair would pay tribute to Hodge de Silva in a manner befitting of her legacy with the release of *Jennifer Hodge: The Glory and the Pain* (1992), a documentary about her life and work. ✍

In celebration of Black History Month, the University of British Columbia's Public Humanities Hub will be airing a screening of McTair's *Journey to Justice* on Feb. 29 at Robson Square. For more information about the screening, visit <https://publichumanities.ubc.ca/events/event/black-history-month-film-screening>

Source: NFB Blog

Photo courtesy of National Film Board

# Jewish Book Festival

# A conversation space for multiculturalism, art and AI

by MEGAVARSHINI G. SOMASUNDARAM

The 39th annual Cherie Smith Jewish Book Festival at the Jewish Community Centre (JCC) of Greater Vancouver runs from Jan. 28 to Feb. 25. It includes events such as author talks and book launches from authors around the world, and seeks to foster unity, resilience and community by sharing conversations around books and ideas.

Among the featured writers sharing their works are Amy Kurzweil, author of *Artificial: A Love Story* (Feb. 12), and Richard Ho, author of *Two New Years* (Feb. 14). They hope to inspire budding artists to pursue their creative aspirations and connect with audiences to share conversations around books and ideas.

### Art and artificial intelligence

Kurzweil, an American cartoonist and author, began writing stories to understand how the past affects the present. From the beginning, the concept of family memoir appealed to her so she might understand how her family's stories affect her current life.

"I felt I was living in the shadow of dramatic and tragic Holocaust stories lived through my ancestors," she says.

Her first book, *Flying Couch*, tells the stories of three women – her own coming-of-age as a Jewish artist, her psychologist mother and her grandmother, a World War II survivor who escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto by disguising herself as a gentile.

Finishing *Flying Couch*, led her to think of other family stories she could tell, resulting in *Artificial: A Love Story*. It is the

tale of three generations in the Kurzweil family, each navigating their life and preserving intergenerational memory in their own unique way.

"My father was working on a project to collect my grandfather's works to build an AI

the sketches and that's how the book came to being."

Kurzweil's grandfather escaped Vienna by seeking help from an American woman impressed by his art. She sees this central story of escaping by the skin of his teeth as a family in-

they can deepen their relationships," she adds.

### Multiculturalism matters

Richard Ho, whose background was in journalism, published his first book, *Red Rover: Curiosity on Mars*, in 2019. He converted

Ho believes writing what you know is the best advice an aspiring author could get from anyone. He draws story ideas from his background and experiences to connect with readers.

Ho is a practicing orthodox Jew. Seeing his kids growing up

“Most of all, representation matters. It is important for kids and families who look like them to see them as it validates their feelings and experiences.

Richard Ho, author

chatbot that would write in my grandfather's voice. I was intrigued by his idea as it employed a different way of preservation – technology and AI," says Kurzweil. "My grandfather was a Viennese Jew and had a story of escaping the Holocaust. I spent much of my time with [his] artifacts, looking at his journals, notes and documents from Vienna. I worked on the images, did

heritance of life and death relationship to art and success.

"In my family, Jewishness is more of a historical legacy connected to the Holocaust. It is connected to loss, constant wandering, not having a safe homeland and identifying with

to Judaism in his twenties and cherishes the exciting intersection of the Jewish and Chinese cultures in his family.

"I grew up as a Chinese American without inclination towards any religion. In college, I developed an interest in religion and spirituality and quickly discovered Judaism was my calling," he says. "I resonated with Judaism as it focuses on rules, laws and rational derivation of things...I try to see the meaning and purpose of life from the Jewish perspective, from seemingly mundane things to rational decisions in life."

in a multicultural environment, celebrating different holidays and drawing common themes was the beginning of the idea for him to write *Two New Years*, an intersection of Chinese and Jewish cultures.

"I think multicultural books are essential as more kids are growing up in families who follow three or even more cultures depending on their backgrounds," Ho says. "Most of all, representation matters. It is important for kids and



Photo courtesy of Amy Kurzweil

▲ Amy Kurzweil.



Photo courtesy of Amy Kurzweil

that kind of diasporic experience," says Kurzweil.

Kurzweil hopes the book can contribute to a broadening sense of Jewish culture, identity and possibilities of AI in serving human creative and artistic needs.

"Through this book, I hope my readers slow down and think about their own lives, who they can spend time with and how



Photo by Wing Ho

▲ Richard Ho.

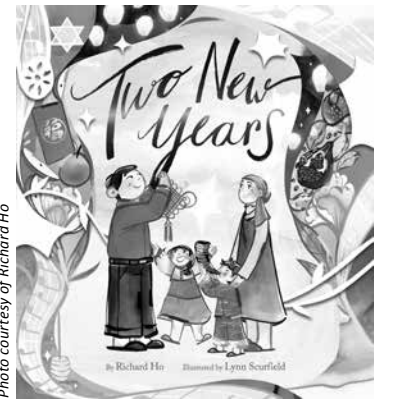


Photo courtesy of Richard Ho

families who look like them to see them as it validates their feelings and experiences." ✍️

For more information about the festival, please visit [www.jccgv.com/jewish-book-festival](http://www.jccgv.com/jewish-book-festival)

**Black History Month**

**Art Show**

February 3rd - 24th

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# Ebony Roots break ground in Yaletown

by DREW STEWART

**Promoting awareness and understanding of the history of Black communities in Vancouver is what inspires Brandon Thornhill. Ebony Roots (part two), with Thornhill as the show's producer and vocalist, is a curated musical display of Black history in Vancouver. The concert, to be performed at the Yaletown Roundhouse Performance Centre on Feb. 9, takes attendees on a profound auditory journey through different eras of Black music.**

"We want to give some information to the community that might not have any idea about the Black history here in Vancouver," says Thornhill.

According to Thornhill, the solution to conquering these genre gaps was to rely on the different musical backgrounds of the band members. Thornhill is a trained opera singer and Leo D.E. Johnson, another singer and guitarist, sports a blues and gospel background.

This diversity in skills and experiences means the group has been able to adapt their sound to accurately reflect the qualities of different types of music like musical theatre and blues, to name a few.

"It was just so important for us to be able to touch on each of these genres," he says.

### Spreading roots around Vancouver and beyond

Ebony Roots (part two) will es-



▲ *Ebony Roots concert looks to showcase a history of Black music and its ties to Vancouver.*

This second entry in the series links itself more strongly to Black History Month.

### The challenge of summarising a century

The show's music was carefully considered to determine what would most effectively represent different eras of Black history. Focus was given to the early 1900s leading all the way up to the modern day with stops being made in almost every decade along the way.

"It was a welcome challenge," says Thornhill, "it was very important that we make sure that we represent as many genres as we possibly can to tell the full story."

The technically challenging show – making intimidating leaps between multiple musical genres while maintaining an authentic sound – encompasses everything from prison work songs, to opera, to modern-day R&B.

"These songs are rooted in a very deep history of struggle, despair, hope, freedom and of course liberty. So that's what we're really trying to make sure we convey by performing these songs," explains Thornhill.

The need for music spanning multiple decades of history and culture means that Thornhill and the rest of the band (which includes Carlos Joe Costa, Leo D.E. Johnson, Olaf de Shield, Russell Jackson and Wayne Stewart) have been faced with a daunting task: perfect several vastly different musical styles to ensure the show, which is designed to accurately display and celebrate these works of art, lives up to its premise.

essentially be an expansion of its predecessor. Along with a few rearrangements and some entirely new material, the original show's songs will be performed. This will include tributes to iconic Black Vancouver-based musicians such as the Crump Twins, Jason Hoover and even the legendary Jimi Hendrix (whose Vancouver connection comes from his grandmother, Nora Hendrix, a community leader in Vancouver).

"I think it'll be different for audiences from what they typically experience here in Vancouver," says Thornhill. "It's going to be quite the experience to be able to listen to this music, but it also has some of this information about the history of the African descent people of Vancouver as well, which we think is important."

The "part two" in the concert's title is in reference to the fact this is the second show in what Thornhill hopes will be a long-running series that will tour around BC and beyond. The concert is a kind of historical record which has relevance to people all over Canada.

"I think we need to be performing this music and exposing audiences to this type of music anywhere and anytime we can," says Thornhill.

The first show was held back in December at Strathcona Church. Thornhill says it was created to help reclaim Strathcona and the surrounding area by telling the Black community's story through historic music.

For more information visit [www.soundthealarm.ca/ebony-roots](http://www.soundthealarm.ca/ebony-roots)



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February 6–20, 2024

# Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The Lunar New Year ushering in the Year of the Dragon happens on Feb. 10. Hopefully you have a chance to partake in some of the month-long new year festivities! Also, Family Day takes place on Feb. 19 this year. Why not take some time to check out some of the music and choir performances, film screenings and theatre showings happening around town?

\*\*\*

**Send Me No Flowers**

Feb. 2–24  
[www.metrotheatre.com/send-me-no-flowers](http://www.metrotheatre.com/send-me-no-flowers)

George Kimball is a healthy middle-aged man with a beautiful home and a happy marriage. The problem? He is a raving hypochondriac! Mistaking a doctor's phone conversation, he is convinced he is dying. He decides to set his wife up with an old beau so she won't be lonely after his passing. His plan backfires badly. The story was made into a hit film with a popular trio – Rock Hudson, Doris Day and Tony Randall. Check out the Metro Theatre website for more information.

\*\*\*

**Chelsea Hotel: The Songs of Leonard Cohen**

Feb. 3–March 3  
[www.firehallartscentre.ca](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca)

A crowd favourite when it first opened at the Firehall in 2012 and went on to tour Canada, Chelsea Hotel is back. Celebrating the life and work of the late Mr. Cohen, *Chelsea Hotel* follows a writer with a tumultuous love life haunted by the memories of the past. He checks into New York's infamous titular hotel, desperate to find the words and inspiration for his next song. Told through song and old relationships, the production is an inventive fusion of music, dance and drama embodied as a poetic musical journey of the creative mind, set in a hotel room. Visit the arts centre's website for tickets and more information.

\*\*\*

**Bunny**  
Feb. 8–18  
[www.anviltheatre.ca](http://www.anviltheatre.ca)

The Anvil Theatre will be hosting a performance of *Bunny* this month.



▲ Bunny at the Anvil Theatre.

Moving from object towards agent, Sorrel discovers the power of her own desire. Armed only with Victorian Literature and an unconventional upbringing, she struggles to find her way. From the newly formed company, The Search Party, comes Hannah Moscovitch's *Bunny*. Starring Emma Slipp, Bunny dives into societal inhibitions, desire and sex. For cast information and showtimes, check out the theatre's website.

\*\*\*

**Juliet: A Revenge Comedy**

Feb. 8–18  
[www.thecultch.com/event/juliet-a-revenge-comedy](http://www.thecultch.com/event/juliet-a-revenge-comedy)

Juliet: A Revenge Comedy is an award-winning, fast-paced, action-adventure comedy that follows Juliet on the literary adventure of a lifetime! Stuck in an endless loop of turning a dagger on herself, Juliet (played by Lili Beaudoin) tears herself from the fabric of her tragedy in search of a reason for her untimely demise. On the way, Juliet recruits a team of the Bard's most famous female characters (all played by Jessie Award-winner Carly Pokoradi) to find out why they've been forced to die! Together, they embark on an uproarious adventure through the canon, pursued by Shakespeare himself (played by Ryan Gladstone). Can they alter their fate, or are they doomed to play out the same tragic tales for the rest of eternity?

\*\*\*

**Every Brilliant Thing**

Feb. 8–March 3  
[www.artsclub.com/shows/2023-2024/every-brilliant-thing](http://www.artsclub.com/shows/2023-2024/every-brilliant-thing)

What do you do when you're just seven years old and mum finds

it hard to be happy? Start writing down for her every brilliant thing worth living for – ice cream, water fights, rollercoasters – and then never stop. #315 The smell of old books. #994 Hairdressers who listen to what you want. #2000 Coffee. #9996 Sex. Watch this list take on a life of its own in this unusually funny show about depression and love. Award-winning actor Naomi Wright gently invites the audience to participate in this journey that exhibits the power of community.

\*\*\*

**CHILD-ish**

Feb. 9–March 9  
[www.pacifictheatre.org](http://www.pacifictheatre.org)

Adults speak children's exact words about love, life and the big questions in this fresh world premiere. Drawn from interviews with over 40 kids, *CHILD-ish* offers insights on everything from the climate crisis to what should really go into a dating profile. These unflinching conversations provide a grown-up audience with surprising insights into the world and our place in it. This show is being hosted by the Pacific Theatre, in collaboration with youth from the Eastside Story Guild.



▲ CHILD-ish at the Pacific Theatre.

\*\*\*

**Laskiainen 2024**

Feb. 11, 5:30 p.m.  
[www.facebook.com/events/306391355609319](http://www.facebook.com/events/306391355609319)

Vancouver Finlandia Club maintains and promotes Finnish culture and Finland in B.C. by organising and supporting Finland related cultural, recreational and sporting events & activities and sponsoring folk dancing and language lessons. The Laskiainen event will feature pea soup, available for takeout or dine-in. The centre will also be open for sauna-goers to socialize, get changed and hang out from 2:30 pm until the last guest is finished. For more information, check out their Facebook page.

\*\*\*

**MOA Unmasked: Afrofuturism and the Black Speculative Arts Movement**

Feb. 15–16  
[www.moa.ubc.ca/event/moa-unmasked-afrofuturism-and-the-black-speculative-arts-movement](http://www.moa.ubc.ca/event/moa-unmasked-afrofuturism-and-the-black-speculative-arts-movement)

In this special tour, meet creative directors from one of the Museum of Anthropology's community partners, Ethos Lab, a

non-profit innovation academy for teens based in Vancouver. With the support of UBC's Community University Engagement Support Fund, MOA has been partnering with Ethos Lab on a creative arts and science project. Tour participants will hear from Ethos Lab creative directors Jazz Groden-Gilchrist and Olúwásolá Kẹhíndé Olówó-Aké, and MOA Curator Nuno Porto for a behind-the-scenes presentation of this collaborative project. Check out MOA's website for tickets and more information.

\*\*\*

**War & Peace**

Feb. 16, 7:30 p.m.  
[www.vancouverchamberchoir.com](http://www.vancouverchamberchoir.com)

The Vancouver Chamber Choir's 2024 Conductors' Symposium focuses on music that reflects the harsh reality of war and the deep desire for peace. Join the five student conductors and Kari for an evening of music that ranges from folk songs to evocative, complex choral works, including Arnold Schönberg's magnificent and seldom performed *Friede auf Erden*. Check out the choir's website for tickets and more information.

\*\*\*

**The Return Voyage**

Feb. 16–17  
[www.chorleoni.org/event/the-return-voyage](http://www.chorleoni.org/event/the-return-voyage)

Witness the collaboration of the season, as two of Canada's most beloved ensembles set sail once more. Chor Leoni reunites with Montreal's famed ensemble La Nef for a concert of shanties and rollicking songs of the sea. Experience the perfect harmony of more than 60 voices, including the iconic sound of Shantyman Seán Dagher. For tickets and showtimes, check out the Chor Leoni website.

\*\*\*

**Fan Expo Vancouver**

Feb. 17–19  
[www.fanexpohq.com/fanexpovancouver](http://www.fanexpohq.com/fanexpovancouver)

Everyone is a fan of something, and Fan Expo Vancouver, happening on Family Day weekend, is a place to celebrate all things pop culture. Get an autograph or a photo with your favourite Guest then get the inside scoop about your favourite movies and TV shows at the celebrity panels! Watch professional comic artists battle it out in popular Sketch Duels, learn from "How To" workshops and take photos with your favourite costumed characters! It's also a great place to buy a unique gift (or treat yourself!) with a huge show floor for shopping madness.

**Answers:**

- |                    |                      |                   |                     |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. ASTONISHMENT    | 7. RETENTION – NU    | A. ABOUTIRAIS     | G. SALIS – IONS     |
| 2. BEAT – LACUNAE  | 8. AM – SA – ONEIDA  | B. SES – EMBÊTES  | H. HC – NÉRON       |
| 3. OSSIA – ME      | 9. IBIS – ON – ROES  | C. TASSENT – IDES | I. MUTA – ONÉREUX   |
| 4. STAMINAS        | 10. SEDER – SLED     | D. OTITE – ESSES  | J. EN – SIL – IODLA |
| 5. TREE – USE – IT | 11. TESTS – ULNA     | E. AA – ANA – RTL | K. NAM – TENDE – NM |
| 6. AS – ROLES      | 12. YES – LA – EXAMS | F. IL – MUST – SA | L. TEES – SUAS – AS |



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