

# The Source

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## Celebrating poetry that revolutionizes and heals

by LILLIAN LIAO

**“Even before language, there was a language that we don’t speak, and after language, a new language will arise,” says the 7th Poet Laureate of Toronto, Lillian Allen, highlighting spoken word poets’ innate right to experiment with language.**

Just in time for National Poetry Month, Vancouver Poetry House’s Verses Festival of Words, a spoken word festival for which Allen will deliver the keynote address, returns for its 14th rendition from April 18 to 27. Bringing together artists from across Canada, this year’s Verses festival will showcase poetic power through the theme of “Learning and Remembering.”

### Historicized poetics

“The university should be as much about learning as about unlearning,” says Allen. “We learn a lot of things in the colonized society ... that needs

to be unlearned, and I think that’s part of what the new voices are doing.”

Allen adds that this unlearning should recognize the historical context of those who have made space for other voices and pushed for positive change. Well-known for her dub poetry, Allen remains cognizant of those who have paved the way for her work, most notably the Jamaican poet Louise Bennett-Coverley who, Allen says, gave the Jamaican vernacular back to its people by treating it as an art.

“It was important for me to be part of a historic journey,” says Allen, while noting how art forms created by Black people can become genericized after being consumed by the dominant society. “I wanted to make sure that my folks could have something that says, ‘we created this, this is ours.’”

Having grown up in Jamaica under a British school curriculum, Allen then studied in the United States where she was influenced by the development of a Black poetics practice. For Allen, poetry encourages activism in its ability to engage people through a shared culture. To that end, Allen hopes to see more young spoken word poets involved in municipal politics.

“People keep speaking their truth, social critique, coming from the heart, demanding their humanity, demanding a better world, and taking that into action – it’s just going to be a different kind of revolution that



▲ Johnny Trinh, artistic director of the Vancouver Poetry House.

will be loving and transformative and part of the new world coming,” says Allen.

### Coming into the room

For Johnny Trinh, artistic director of Vancouver Poetry House, the theme of this year’s festival highlights the importance of mentorship in the arts community. Having been involved in spoken word for the past 11 years, Trinh approaches this communi-

ty as a safe space where stories can be heard.

“Part of the theme is learning from each other and remembering together – I think it’s really important to retain the knowledge and call back to the teachers,” says Trinh. “It takes a community to build an artist whether we resist against it or are nurtured by it.”

To this end, this year’s featured poets were chosen not only for

their artistic contributions, but their educational and community work as well. The lineup was also curated with attention to artists who combine disciplines, including poet, filmmaker and educator Patrick de Belen who also recognizes the power of community.

“That’s something I needed as a young artist, and something I still need today,” says de Belen, while crediting his mentor

See “Poetry” page 7



▲ Toronto poet laureate Lillian Allen.



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A colourful punk rebellion  
Page 7

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**STAY WITH US**  
Monday, April 8 at 4pm • Fifth Avenue Cinemas (19+)  
Director: Gad Elmaleh  
Cast: Gad Elmaleh, Regine Elmaleh, David Elmaleh  
90 min | France | 2022 | comedy | English subtitles



**ROSE**  
Thursday, April 11 at 1pm • Fifth Avenue Cinemas (19+)  
Director: Aurélie Saada  
Cast: Françoise Fabian, Auro Atika, Pascal Elbe  
102 min | France | 2021 | comedy | English subtitles

# B.C. non-profit network could help with labour shortage in charitable sector

Non-profits say they're struggling to keep quality volunteers and staff due to high burn-out – a problem that's getting worse with inadequate funding for competitive benefits and wages.

In an industry report conducted by Vantage Point, approximately 230 survey respondents say they're spending more time or money on staff recruitment and retention. As the charitable sector faces a labour shortage,

"These are proactive measures the board and I have been trying to provide staff as a way to honour their time, experiences and choice to work with us," he says.

### The need for a B.C. non-profit network

Huang managed to provide health benefits through a small business program at Vancity, but he hasn't been able to find an insurer for their pension.

Huang says it's not easy for small organizations to fundraise and secure the money they need, but they continue to provide services. That's why multi-year, sustainable funding can help non-profits alleviate the burn-out and staffing shortages they face, he says. It's a solution that can be advocated through the network, says Huang. It's also a solution that's been identified by Vantage Point in its report.

"That provides an opportunity for organizations to breathe a little, to test ideas... instead of this mentality of always chasing your grant," he says. "It gives you the opportunity to be like, 'Hey, what can we do differently?'"

### Vantage Point building the network

In 2023, Vantage Point conducted a feasibility study with 655 non-profit leaders across the province. They found a majority want to create a non-profit network to deal with systemic issues and they're excited by the idea.

They identified four major potential benefits it can have: sharing resources and best practices, collective advocacy, creating learning opportunities and improving funding and support from government and foundations.

"I feel the sector often is saddled with the idea that it's lower pay."

Kevin Huang, executive director of hua foundation

community organizations like hua foundation say creating a province-wide non-profit network can help.

Kevin Huang, hua foundation's executive director, is familiar with this problem. He's also a community advisor with Vancouver Foundation, helping it identify where best to direct funding.

"I feel the sector often is saddled with the idea that it's lower pay. Benefits, especially for smaller organizations, are not always offered," says Huang.

Huang has been working hard to provide employees with benefits and learning opportunities. He says when there's a high turnover of staff and volunteers, institutional knowledge and key relationships built upon trust with community members are lost.

"That history and track record: where we started, how far we've come, where we can go next," he explains.

Staff at hua foundation have basic benefits, a living wage and a four-day work week, but Huang also wants to give them pension and subsidies for working from home.

"A lot of insurers or pension plans don't want to deal with three people. They want to do the math for 100 or 1000," he says.

Huang says that's a structural problem that can be solved by a B.C. non-profit network, where people can come together for a common need.

"I'm not the only one who's been pushing for more accessible benefits for the nonprofit sector," he says.



▲ Kevin Huang (far right) pictured at hua foundation's "Reimagine Work" fundraiser in 2019.



▲ Kevin Huang (far left) with hua foundation's past and current board members.

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

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												

### Horizontally

1. planning
2. sets free – don't say the truth
3. sun-dried brick – latin country
4. part of a church – ruins
5. Greek letter – help! – chemical gold – possibility
6. international – dawn
7. high woman
8. city of Nevada – Tanzania currency
9. comparison – sounds – exists
10. waters – professional
11. girl's name – negation
12. religious congregation members

### verticalement

- A- structure interne
- B- île – grondées – actinium
- C- cloche funèbre – écorce de chêne – arme féodale
- D- anciens poètes – négation – pronom
- E- chèvre africaine – possèdent – tentée
- F- maisons russes – observe
- G- poissons – champion – vêtement indien
- H- vieille monnaie romaine – montées
- I- crainte – existes – nous
- J- terres – tournoi de tennis – contenant
- K- entendre – richesse – lancer
- J- arrêtons

For answers, see page 8

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Vantage Point is now developing a three-year workplan for the network. That includes a governance model, a steering committee or advisory council and a sustainable funding model. During this critical stage of development, it's seeking partners to make this vision a reality.

Vancouver Foundation is a proud supporter of the project, contributing \$100,000 per year for three years.

For more information, visit [www.thevantagepoint.ca/join/bc-nonprofit-network](http://www.thevantagepoint.ca/join/bc-nonprofit-network)

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# Nurturing community and revitalizing heritage

by ELAHA AMANI

**Embracing the spirit of community and sustainability, the Community Education on Environment & Development (CEED) Centre Society is a non-profit and neighborhood house fostering connections and sparking positive change. It was also recently recognized by the Maple Ridge Heritage Awards for their efforts.**

The CEED Centre Society won the 2024 Stewardship of a Community Cultural Asset award, which recognizes projects or initiatives that promote heritage conservation and awareness within communities. In the society's case, that is the historic Japanese-Canadian building in Port Haney, which is now the CEED Centre Neighbourhood House.

For CEED executive director Christian Cowley, their mission

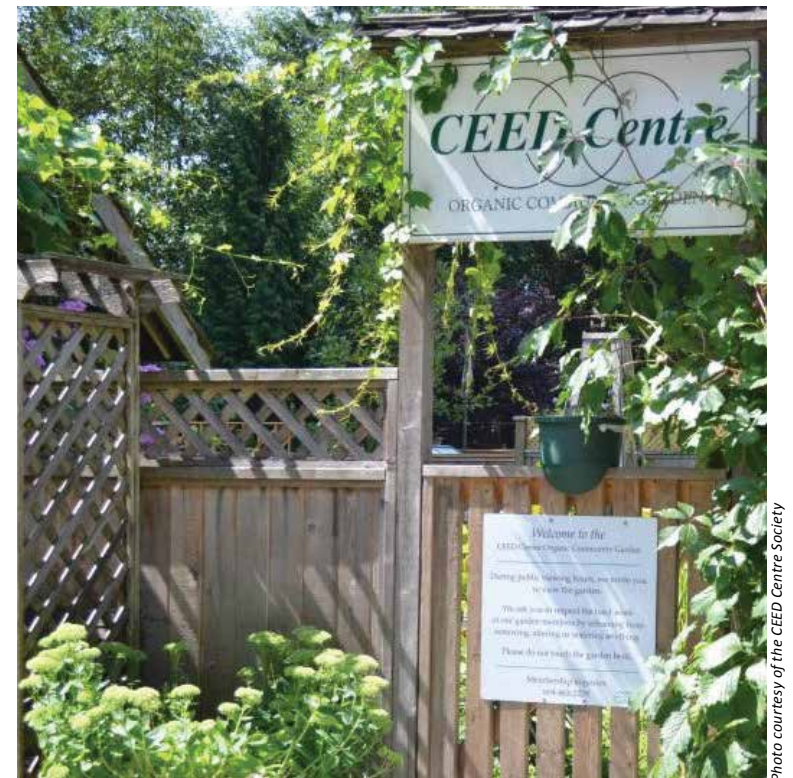
Cowley says that CEED is committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming space for all.

"The programs we offer are all about building community and sharing camaraderie," Cowley explains. "We make sure to look after every person and creature."

### Preserving heritage


With environmental sustainability at its forefront, CEED also highlights the vibrant history of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows with projects like the *CEED Pod* podcast. Originally initiated by two highschool students on the topic of insomnia, the *CEED Pod* has since evolved into a multi-segmented informational series covering a diverse range of topics, including its most recent series on decimated marine ecosystems.

For example, one series titled 100 Year War on Alouette Salmon is dedicated to the memory



▲ The CEED Centre community garden offers an environmentally conscious project with a focus on community.

Photo courtesy of the CEED Centre Society

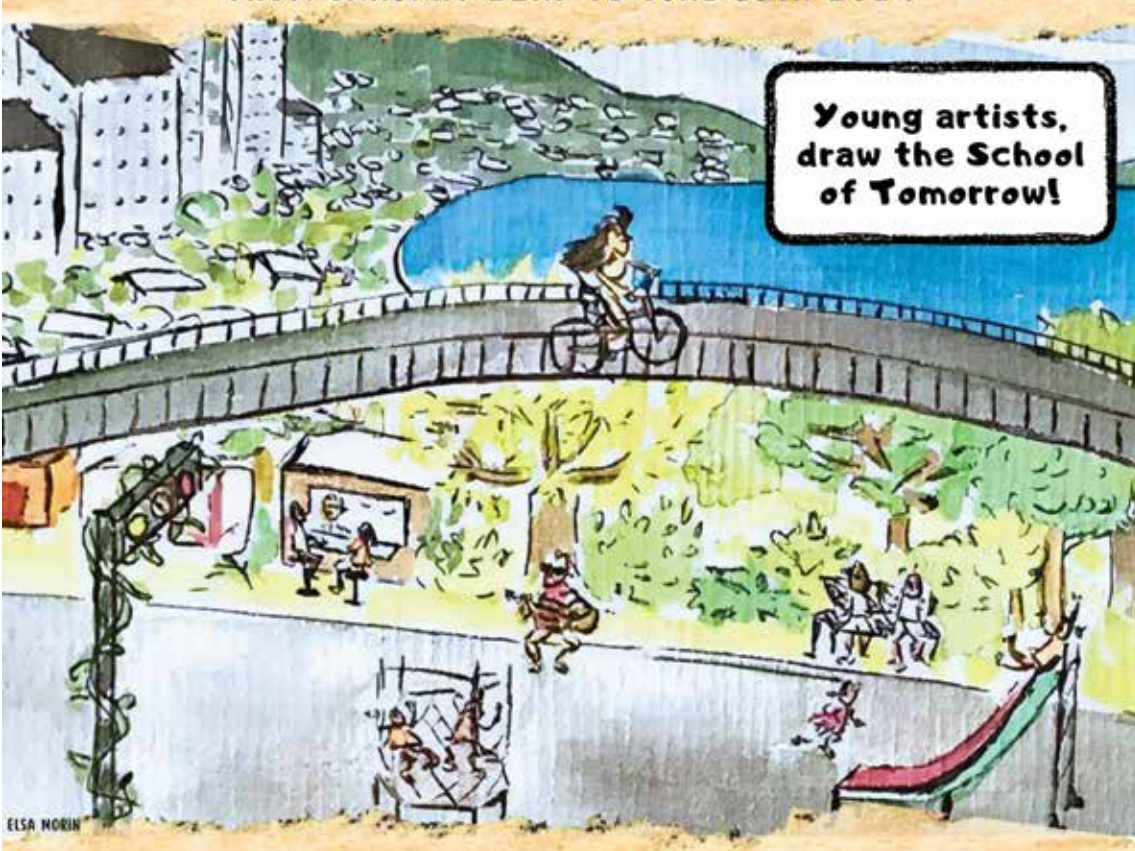


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


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has always been clear.

"Our role is to find what the community wants and needs, and to make it happen," says Cowley.

### A rich history

Established in 1984, the CEED Centre Society, then known as the Fraser Information Society, was founded upon the need to address socio-economic issues, understanding that it takes a community to find solutions and create positive change. One of their key efforts came in the form of rescuing a Japanese schoolhouse.

In 1926, the schoolhouse was erected on the property of the Haney Nokai, the Japanese Agricultural Association and community hub. The schoolhouse, where English was taught to kindergarteners, became at risk for tear-down. In 1989, the society relocated the Old Japanese Schoolhouse from 232nd and Dewdney Trunk Road, saving it from demolition.

Today, this building serves as a drop-in community centre, the main site of operations for the society and a neighborhood house. CEED uses it to host programs and projects for a wide variety of members. From sewing groups to discussion panels to programs tailored for seniors,

of Geoff Clayton, co-founder of Alouette River Management Society (ARMS), and chronicles the destruction of local salmonid runs in favor of electrical power generation.

The society is also about to embark on their new Japanese-Canadian Farming Legacy project, with the aim of giving a voice to marginalized groups within their community and to honor the historical legacy of Japanese-Canadians with the land. CEED also hopes to institute festivals celebrating and sharing the joys of Japanese culture in the future.

As a neighborhood house, Cowley says the society is passionate about not only preserving history on their own, but also in cultivating community and empowering its members to contribute. Cowley is confident that CEED will remain an integral pillar of support within Maple Ridge and embody the decades-long mission of uniting a community dedicated to positive change.

"Our aim is to revitalize narratives in our community and to cast a light on amazing people and their histories," says Cowley. "Our social mandate will always be to foster social connections and teach sustainability so all living things can grow and thrive." ✍️

# Digital repatriation of Tse'k'wa archive democratizes 50 years of archaeological and cultural knowledge

Fifty years of archaeological knowledge and scholarship from one of British Columbia's most significant cultural and archaeological sites is being digitally repatriated to the Dane-zaa people.

Tse'k'wa, or "rock house" in Dane-zaa/Beaver language, is a cave that has been home to the Dane-zaa ancestors for more than 12,500 years. Archaeological excavations at Tse'k'wa were undertaken by Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 1974, 1983, 1990 and 1991, led by SFU's Knut Fladmark and Jon Driver.

The Tse'k'wa digital archive includes primary records from the excavations such as field notes, research materials, maps and photographs; descriptive data sets made by researchers and interpretive documents that use the data from excavations and post-excavation analyses. It aims to widen public and research access to materials related to the original SFU excavations at the site, located about eight kilometres west of Fort St. John.

"I'm very happy to hear that we can finally have access to our digital archival information," says Garry Oker, president of the Tse'k'wa Heritage Society,

which manages the site at Charlie Lake, B.C. "For the Dane-zaa people, Tse'k'wa is more than just a physical location. It is a sacred space that embodies our sense of place and identity. The artifacts and remains discov-

ered at the cave site contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the Dane-zaa people's cultural heritage." Recognizing the cultural and archaeological importance of this site, three Dane-zaa Nations came together in 2012 to purchase the property and form the Tse'k'wa Heritage Society: Doig River, Prophet River and West Moberly First Nations. Tse'k'wa was designated a National Historic Site in 2019.

“As an elder, I’m happy that we can access the digital archive so that we can, in turn, connect that information with our existing language and stories...”

Garry Oker, president, Tse'k'wa Heritage Society

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The site contains artifacts that document human habitation from the end of the last ice age to the construction of the Alaska Highway during the Second World War. SFU archaeologists first vis-

ited Tse'k'wa in the 1970s as part of an assessment on the proposed Site C dam. Materials and artifacts excavated at the site are currently stored at SFU's Burnaby campus. As a first step in returning materials to Tse'k'wa, Driver worked

with SFU Library to create the digital archive. "Tse'k'wa is one of few sacred places in Canada and in North America that house the ancestors' artifacts from their time in the cave," says Oker. "And we are still connected to that. It really gives us a sense of connection to all the places that are sacred."

Although research has been published in academic formats, these are largely inaccessible to the First Nations and to the general public, says Jon Driver, professor emeritus. Further, all the material excavated from the site and all of the records about those excavations have only been available to people

who can travel to SFU to access the collections.

"There is a lot more research that could be done on the materials that have already been excavated from the site," says Driver. "However, future researchers

enhance our ability to provide access to the collection and will strengthen, not replace, the physical repatriation process... The newly launched digital archive is an exceptional achievement demonstrating SFU's com-

need to understand how the site was excavated and how to access the records that were made during both excavation and post-excavation analysis. The intent of this archive is to explain what research has been done, how it was done, and how to access the

mitment to reconciliation and open access."

SFU will continue to facilitate access to the digital archive after the physical collection is returned to Tse'k'wa. The Tse'k'wa digital archive has recently been made available to the public

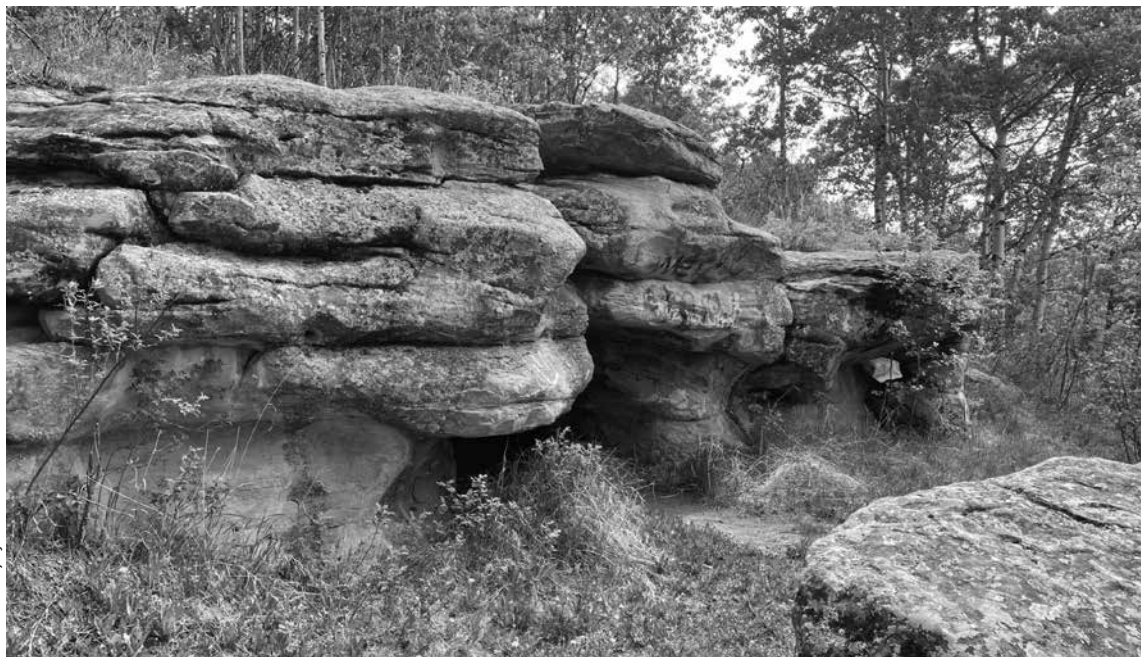


Photo courtesy of SFU News

▲ Tse'k'wa, or "rock house" in Dane-zaa/Beaver language, is a cave that has been home to the Dane-zaa ancestors for more than 12,500 years. Archaeological excavations at Tse'k'wa were undertaken by SFU in 1974, 1983, 1990, and 1991.



Photo courtesy of SFU News

▲ An image taken at the end of the SFU-led excavation of the site in 1991. The digital repatriation is a first step in returning materials to Tse'k'wa.

available information about the site from the excavations carried out in the '70s, '80s and '90s."

The society has spent two years working towards official repository status with the B.C. Archaeology branch and collaborating with the SFU department of archaeology and the SFU Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to repatriate the entire Tse'k'wa collection.

"The digital archive is a triumphant example of digital repatriation," says Alyssa Currie, executive director of the Tse'k'wa Heritage Society. "It will greatly

through Summit, SFU's institutional research repository.

"This information is very important to reconnect our ancestors' information with existing stories and language so that we can have a sense of cohesiveness to the traditional artifacts," says Oker. "As an elder, I'm happy that we can access the digital archive so that we can, in turn, connect that information with our existing language and stories and make those stories come alive for future generations." ✍

Source: SFU News

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Brian Bamanya, aka Afrorack, is known as being the first person to build a DIY modular synthesizer in Africa. While pursuing his interest in modular synths, Bamanya encountered difficulties in accessing the required technology, resorting to scouring computer repair shops in his hometown of Kampala, Uganda, until he was able to build his own instrument - a wall of homemade modules and FX units that he named The Afrorack. Using this technology, Bamanya plays with elements of electronic music such as techno, acid and ambient, infusing them with African musical traditions and polyrhythmic structures, all the while delivering melody and groove. This performance marks Afrorack's North American debut.

The evening will also feature producer and DJ Adam 2 as well as audiovisual artists Goo and Jacob Audrey Taves.

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Brian Bamanya is an experimental multidisciplinary artist from Uganda and performs and records under the name Afrorack. He is one of the people pioneering the making of electronic music instruments in Africa. Always finding fascination in tinkering with electronics, building circuits, hacking devices and messing around with microcontrollers, he has completed projects in sound art, electronic music, experimental visuals, renewable energy and kinetic sculptures. He has appeared at several international festivals which include Atlas Electronic, Nyege Nyege, Elevate, Dakar Art Biennale and Sonar among others. In May 2022, Bamanya released his debut self-titled album - The Afrorack - which was received with popular acclaim making it to several music writers' best albums of 2022 including The Wire Magazine's top 50 albums of 2022. He has also been featured on the BBC world service. <https://hakunakulala.bandcamp.com/album/the-afrorack>

### ABOUT VANCOUVER NEW MUSIC

Supporting creativity, innovation, curiosity and a multiplicity of voices and ideas, Vancouver New Music is committed to curating practices, not only works, and embracing the rhizomatic expansion of current modes of sound and music creation. Founded in 1973, Vancouver New Music regularly commissions and premieres new works by Canadian and international composers, presents an annual festival that focuses each year on a theme within the new music landscape and explores the interaction of contemporary music with other disciplines such as theatre, installation, and media arts. Other activities include lectures and workshops with visiting artists, community presentations, and other sound-, art-, and new-music related community events, such as Soundwalks. <https://newmusic.org>



▲ *Less Than Kosher* tells the story of a talented yet chaotic musical talent discovering an unexpected artistic path.

# Vancouver Jewish Film Festival offers a story for everyone

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Robert Albanese is excited to share the best that cinema has to offer without being constrained by some of the more restricting expectations of running a film festival. Above all else, the executive artistic director of the Vancouver Jewish Film Centre wants to showcase the best stories from Jewish culture and community that he and his team can find, both year-round and with each annual iteration of the Vancouver Jewish Film Festival (VJFF).

This April, the festival returns for the 35th time, showing films in person from April 4 to 14 and online from April 15 to 19. For Albanese, it's an opportunity to share touching stories and narratives from around the world, celebrating the richness of Jewish culture and experience.

"I think that what I've always sought to do is to bring universal stories to Vancouver that just happen to be from a Jewish perspective," says Albanese. "Discovering the richness of culture in the Jewish community that can actually support a film festival with more than enough films every year... It's a labour of love for me now, that's for sure."

### Beating premiere pressure with underrated talent

Albanese says film festivals can often put too high a premium on premieres, only showcasing films that haven't been shown

I'm happy to showcase something like that... It's just such a joy to be able to find these gems and to put them up on screen."

Such films include *Kidnapped* - a gripping historical drama about a Jewish boy being removed from his family to be raised as a Catholic - as well as more light-hearted films like *Remembering Gene Wilder* - a biopic about the beloved Jewish American actor, known for his charming and comedic roles in movies like *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*.

The festival will also be sharing films with a Vancouver connection, including one documentary about an artist whose legacy is largely unknown to today's public. *Unsung: The Joan Beckow Story* tells the tale of Jewish-Canadian composer Joan Beckow, whose romantic, dynamic compositions blend the realms of jazz and or-

her whole life. And yet she's composed all of this music and it's never released at all," he says. "So that, to me, is a cause enough to bring the story to Vancouver."

A more comedic tale about an underappreciated artist can be found with *Less Than Kosher*, where the talented, aspiring but endearingly chaotic protagonist Viv, played by Shaina Silver-Baird, finds employment as a cantor in her family's synagogue.

"Shaina herself is a musician, but in this story she comes across as this character who's kind of all over the place, a bit of a risqué adventure-seeker, and ends up having the voice of an angel," says Albanese. "It's very funny, but again we're dealing with an underappreciated artist who finds a different niche and, in that sense, gets recognized."



▲ *UNsung: The Joan Beckow Story* shines a new light on the work and life of an under-appreciated composer.



▲ A scene from *Kidnapped*, one of the many films showing at this year's Vancouver Jewish Film Festival.

anywhere else before. For him and the VJFF, what matters more is sharing with audiences any story worth sharing, regardless of whether it's had a local premiere or not.

"Last year, out of the 30 [films] that we showed, 27 of them were Canadian premieres. We were the first ones to show it. But to be honest, I don't really care about that," says Albanese. "We see a film that had one show in another festival and hasn't really been seen by a lot of people -

chestral music, evoking the works of composers like Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim.

But while her music has likely been performed live hundreds of times, they were never actually recorded until the Joan Beckow Legacy Project did so in 2021 and 2022, in addition to producing this documentary about her legacy. For Albanese, under-appreciated artists like this are very much worth sharing at VJFF.

"We're talking about a major talent who's gone unrecognized

Albanese says audiences of all preferences can find something they're likely to enjoy within the diverse array of stories on offer at the festival.

"You really can't minimize the impact of shared experience going out to the movies, you know? It is the most accessible medium of the day. It's the least expensive [place] where you can get culture, you can get stories and you can share it with your friends and neighbours, or just with the person sitting next to you," says Albanese. ✍️

For more information on the festival, visit [www.vjff.org](http://www.vjff.org)

# Saleem teaches families and children how to heal trauma through stories

by SANDRINE JACQUOT

**It's not often that children's stories depict the realities of being a refugee and healing from trauma. *Saleem*, an animated feature film from Jordan directed by Cynthia Madanat Sharaiha, tackles this difficult yet important story. The film will make its Canadian debut at the 26th annual Reel 2 Real International Film Festival For Youth this April.**

*Saleem* follows the story of its titular protagonist, a young boy who is forced to move after the traumatic loss of his father during a conflict in his hometown. As he struggles to adjust to his new school and changed family life, Saleem discovers a treasure map and a quest ensues. In a journey filled with emotional stories and beautiful songs where he forges friendships, connects with his culture and begins to heal.

story at the end, and see all his life from a wider lens than just the trauma."

The creative inclusion of stories and folk songs reflects the Jordanian culture of storytelling as well, in addition to reflecting Saleem's healing journey.

"We used stories and songs because they help us heal," she adds. "They demonstrate that we are not alone, that others went through this and they made it."

### "A beautiful collaboration"

The themes of grief and trauma ring especially true for Madanat Sharaiha herself, whose brother died while the film was in its production stage.

"It was a very difficult time for my family and me," she says. "We still navigate the journey of grief and loss."

She says that more than 100 artists, animators and scriptwriters from around the globe made up the team behind *Sal-*



Photo courtesy of Reel 2 Real Film Festival

▲ Saleem tells the story of its titular protagonist, a young boy navigating traumatic experiences and new adventures.

Madanat Sharaiha and her team at DigiTales started thinking about the movie five years ago. She says there is a huge need for a story about a child, from a child's perspective, about the effects of war, displacement, trauma and mental health. In doing so, they aimed to create a sensitive and accessible story, one that reflected various cultural aspects of Jordan while doing justice to the themes at hand.

"We wanted a story that is redemptive... not just a story that tells what happens, but gives hope as well and highlights the resilience of those children," says Madanat Sharaiha. "Whether it is stories of refugees, those who have been displaced, victims of conflicts and war or even victims of neglect or bullying... these stories are important now, and have always been important, and will always be."

### Expert input

Since *Saleem* handles sensitive topics, Madanat Sharaiha says the team worked with a child psychologist to understand how Saleem might think and feel, and to understand what coping skills for young refugees and victims of conflict or abuse to include in the film. The creators drew upon narrative exposure therapy, a methodology to help those dealing with trauma, toxic stress and PTSD.

"They can use the story of Saleem as a kind of art therapy or cinema therapy," she says. "Saleem finds healing and regains his narrative, his story, his life by being empowered to tell his

em. Creating the film involved much personal reflection and emotion for all involved.

"We all had to travel down memory lane and each of us had stories to share from our childhood. As a team, we all have our share of grief and trauma," she says. "We have also, as a nation, witnessed many conflicts and wars around us... Jordan has been a safe haven for many refugees for decades, we know the stories of those children and we understand their grief. We feel with them."

In addition to being the first feature-length animated film to come out of Jordan, the show has seen success in winning awards at festivals like the Anancy International Film Festival. Madanat Sharaiha says that making and releasing *Saleem* and seeing the great reaction thus far have stirred emotions of pride and accomplishment for her and the team.

For children and families watching the film, the director hopes they walk away with more empathy and a greater awareness of what children who've experienced trauma deal with.

"For children themselves who identify with Saleem or who are living some sort of Saleem's reality, hold on to hope... look for people who can help and accept people who can help in the community that we live in," says Madanat Sharaiha. ✉

Watch *Saleem* at the Reel 2 Real Festival on April 13th by registering at [www.r2rfestival.org/production/saleem](http://www.r2rfestival.org/production/saleem)

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Photo courtesy of The Polygon Gallery

## Velvet Terrorism: Pussy Riot's Russia

# New exhibit brings a fresh perspective on a bold feminist collective

by CURTIS SEUFERT

**Russian-based feminist art collective Pussy Riot has put the spotlight on government oppression, political silencing and cultural hypocrisy in their country for more than a decade. But while they're known for their boisterous, colourful and attention-grabbing political art, what's less known are the consequences the collective has faced for speaking out.**

*Velvet Terrorism: Pussy Riot's Russia*, a museum survey making its way to North Vancouver from March 22 to June 2 at The Polygon Gallery, aims to highlight those very consequences, as well as the breadth of work the collective has taken on since their inception in 2011. Created by Pussy Riot member Maria "Masha" Alyokhina in collaboration with artists Ragnar Kjartansson and Ingibjörg Sigurjónsdóttir, the show lays out a history of a group whose early alarm bells have only resonated louder over the years.

"It was becoming clear how prescient [Pussy Riot was], how much foresight this group had and how persistent their resistance was," says Polygon chief

curator Monika Szewczyk about the rationale for the show's inception. "I think one of the things that gets missed is that they've been at it for a really long time."

### Bright and bold

The collective's provocative yet measured style is part of what has netted them such attention in recent years. Often donning their signature, brightly-coloured balaclavas, the group is perhaps best known for their *Punk Prayer* performance, a feminist, anti-Putin song performed in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

Other demonstrations include throwing dozens of paper airplanes near a government building to protest Moscow's attempted ban of messaging app Telegram; another involved mounting rainbow Pride flags on government buildings in protest of Russia's repressive laws concerning LGBTQ+ rights.

Pussy Riot's protests are often colourful displays of rebellion on issues that have deep consequences. For Szewczyk, that's very much intentional and a key piece of the rebelliousness the current exhibit aims to highlight. Even part of the exhibit's title itself, *Velvet Terrorism*, ref-

erences a disapproving description of *Punk Prayer's* cultural implications as quoted by Russian bishop and Putin confidante Tikhon Shevkunov.

"Pussy Riot decided to take this exact wording and use it in their own title because they're very good at taking the weapons of this patriarchy and turning it against itself with humour, with a lot of joy, with a lot of gusto," says Szewczyk. "[It's] using humour in the face of a completely humourless regime."

### Keeping up the fight

While there have been various installations highlighting the collective's work over the years,

*Velvet Terrorism* is the first large-scale retrospective survey of the group. And not only does the exhibit showcase the actions of the group, there's a deliberate aim to showcase the consequences as well.

"The media that might show you a little bit of the most publicized action, but it doesn't necessarily always show you the context," says Szewczyk. "At the beginning nothing happened. Second one, nothing happened. Third one, they get rounded up and arrested. And then it just gets more and more and more repressive."

For example, *Punk Prayer* led Alyokhina to be arrested and

sent to work in a penal colony. Another arrest in recent years was likely to lead to another penal colony sentence for Alyokhina, so she fled to Iceland. Szewczyk says the consequences and risks the group takes on is on full display at the exhibit.

"There's the level of sacrifice and commitment that is sometimes underestimated or under-reported. The seriousness of what it means to do this over the course of so many years is not often underscored," she says.

Overall, Szewczyk thinks the exhibit will offer Vancouver audiences great perspective on a group which continues to champion human rights and democracy.

"I think it's an incredible example of how art and life merge and how politics can be mounted in nonviolent, joyful, very effective ways," says Szewczyk. "The project [has] high value as a political force, as an artistic force and also as a kind of human, civic engaged force."

For more information about the exhibit, visit [www.thepolygon.ca/exhibition/velvet-terrorism-pussy-riots-russia](http://www.thepolygon.ca/exhibition/velvet-terrorism-pussy-riots-russia)



Photo courtesy of The Polygon Gallery

▲ Feminist art collective Pussy Riot has blended performance with activism to protest the most repressive elements of Russian government policy.

### ► "Poetry" from page 1

Dwayne Morgan who helped him break into Toronto's poetry slam scene. "Through mentorship and guidance, the young artists grow up and start taking responsibility in building and maintaining these communities."

Drawn to spoken word for its angsty ability to question the conventional, de Belen says that the genre's directness, honesty,



Photo by Irene Dominguez

▲ Poet, filmmaker and educator Patrick de Belen.

and vulnerability was helpful in developing his filmmaker voice. For Verses, de Belen has prepared poems concerning grief, mental health and resistance against societal oppression, but has also left space to improvise according to the room.

"It's just you on the stage sharing your story. No glitz and glamour, nothing to hide behind," says de Belen, noting how spoken word's authentic expressions make it a unique art form. "I think that's why I believe people need to be in the room to really experience it."

At the *Hullabaloo All Star Slam* on April 19, co-presented by the Vancouver Writers Fest, de Belen will be joined by fellow poets Chris Tse and Erin Dingle. Other Verses events include *Oral Traditions* on April 22, which is held in partnership with the Native Hip Hop Festival Society and features Indigenous artists, and *Mashed Poetics* on April 23, which combines live music with poetry. For Trinh, who is looking forward to welcoming poets to

this community, it is important that attendees bring the knowledge back home.

"Good spoken word poetry has such a clear and powerful intention, and a drive to connect with the audience and that's what transforms us," adds Trinh.

### The healing power of poetry

Daniel Viragh is another local poet who will be celebrating National Poetry Month. Raised in Montreal by Hungarian parents, Viragh is no stranger to linguistic multiplicity. Having published poetry in English and French concerning a range of themes, including spirituality, resilience and immigration, Viragh is currently drawn to writing about a shared humanity beneath personal grievances.

"We're all human beings. Physically, we all express the same emotions, maybe on a different spectrum, and we speak different languages. But a mom cuddling a child is the same child, same mom, in any different culture," says Viragh.

For National Poetry Month, Viragh hopes to release a French version of his podcast, *Poetry of Evil*, where each episode offers a recitation of three poems. Viragh notes that he titled the podcast in recognition of its power as a mental health resource, including in his own life.

"A lot of people go through a lot of trauma and anxiety and it's hard for them to do anything with that anxiety," says



Photo by Grettan Nerinx

▲ Poet and singer Daniel Viragh.

Viragh. "So if we can provide a safe atmosphere for people to process that, then they can begin on the journey of healing for themselves."

While noting how poetry is usually taught in schools from an analytical framework, Viragh emphasizes how his poetic writing process, unlike his songwriting approach, happens on a subconscious level. For Viragh, the most important part of his poetic creation is capturing the emotions or mood – a process that can be freeing.

"I think the most important part of the arts is not that we go to the gallery, albeit the gallery is important and culture programs are important, but that we do art," says Viragh. "The fact that you are creating art gives you a sense of liberation because you are being creative."

For more information about Verses, see [www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com](http://www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com) For more information about Daniel Viragh, see [www.danviragh.com](http://www.danviragh.com)

April 2-23, 2024

## Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I hope everyone is enjoying the spring season so far! Spring in Vancouver is a vibrant time, perfect for exploring the city's cultural scene. With a variety of engaging performances and insightful exhibits, there's something to suit every taste. Whether it's theatre, music, film or dance, the events taking place throughout April provide a fantastic chance to embrace the season's essence and explore something different. Don't forget that Earth Day happens this month (on April 22), so why not think about bussing or walking around the city to these events?

\* \* \*

**Parifam**  
April 4-14  
[www.thecultch.com](http://www.thecultch.com)

Playing at the Historic Theatre this month, The Cultch will present *Parifam* by the Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre and Medusa Theatre. Detached from family and friends, Parifam Mana draws and paints in her private studio in Montréal – a place where memory and inspiration are in a continuous battle. Parifam's world is turned upside down when her childhood friend Ramak re-enters her life. Parifam and Ramak grapple with the hidden truths that linger in their past – soon to be revealed in an exhibition on Persian culture at a museum they built together. Check out The Cultch's website for tickets and more information.

\* \* \*

**Harmonia: The Leonids & Chor Leoni**  
April 11, 7:30 p.m.  
[www.chorleoni.org/event/harmonia](http://www.chorleoni.org/event/harmonia)

In a purely a cappella program, experience the spine-tingling sounds of high harmony as The Leonids return to Vancouver and take the stage alongside Chor Leoni and the singers of our Emerging Choral Artist Program. Time travel across the past millennium in this joyous a cappella feast featuring chant, polyphony, folk songs, pop songs, and world premieres. For tickets and more information, please check out the Chor Leoni website.

\* \* \*

**"Mode" and Meaning in Southern Vietnamese Traditional Music**



▲ SOUNDspace is a dynamic study of the relationship between sound and movement.

April 13, 2-3 p.m.  
[www.vancouverchinesegarden.com](http://www.vancouverchinesegarden.com)

Students of Vietnamese traditional music spend years grappling with the concepts of *điệu* and *điệu thức*, which scholars translate as "mode" and "systemes modaux." These translations are, however, inaccurate. *Điệu* refers to how pitches, hierarchical pitch relationships, ornamentation and subtle tuning adjustments uniquely align in a specific piece of music. These characteristics offer a "model" of creative practice, which is a term used in Vietnamese literature to describe *điệu*. Join Alexander Cannon, professor at the University of Birmingham who will give a talk offering ways to describe the concept as incredibly dynamic for Vietnamese and Vietnamese diasporic music practice at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden on April 13.

\* \* \*

**This Is How We Got Here**  
April 13-28  
[www.firehallartscentre.ca](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca)

Both heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time, *This Is How We Got Here* follows a close-knit family still dealing with the lingering trauma of an unexpected loss. A mother, father, aunt and uncle must learn how to move forward after their shared grief as they re-learn how to interact with one another through humour, forgiveness and love. Playing at the Firehall Arts Centre this month; check out their website for more information.

\* \* \*

**Over the Ridge**  
April 13 at 4pm and 8pm  
[www.masseytheatre.com](http://www.masseytheatre.com)

In 2020, The Fugitives premiered *Ridge*, a musical storytelling show that examined the First World War Canadian soldier experience during the Battle of Vimy. It was named a Top 10 Globe & Mail Arts Event of the year, and spawned the JUNO nominated album *Trench Songs*. In *Over the Ridge*, The Fugitives collaborate with choreographer Jacob Williams to expand this narrative through dance. Developed in partnership with the Massey Theatre Society, with help from Ballet BC and Arts Umbrella, *Over the Ridge* adds original contemporary dance to the storytelling and music, resulting in a kinetic ride through history that delves our strong connection to the past, and passionately argues against the exploitation of young lives. Playing at the Massey Theatre on April 13; check out their website for tickets and more information.

\* \* \*

**You used to call me Marie...**  
April 18-28  
[www.thecultch.com](http://www.thecultch.com)

A love story, a historical epic and a celebration of Metis song and dance, *You used to call me Marie...* paints the stories of the Callihoo women in Alberta. Music plays and ponies dance as the story of Marie Callihoo unfurls through generations and time. We follow Iskwewo, Napew and Mistatim ("horse" in Michif) in eight intertwined stories of love and resilience as the Métis nation emerges across the plains. As we experience the love stories of Alberta's Metis women – through stories of the fur trade, governance and organizing in the 1930s and into the present day – we witness generations of Callihoo women unfold.

Don't miss this beautiful new play featuring era-spanning dance and live music, from French fiddle to contemporary country!

\* \* \*

**National Canadian Film Day**  
April 19  
[www.canfilmday.ca](http://www.canfilmday.ca)

Launched in 2014, CanFilmDay has brought together hundreds of thousands of Canadians, to celebrate our stories and the incredible achievements of our filmmakers. Whether you host a screening or attend one, watch from the comfort of your home or join the party on social media, CanFilmDay is your day to feel connected to our cultures and shared values. The programming spotlight will showcase a broad and diverse cross-section of Canadian films, with ten enticing categories, each featuring ten delectable films. Hundreds of screening partners across the country will once again host free in-person events in communities big and small, with lots of broadcast and streaming options as well. For more information and a list of films, check out the film day website.

\* \* \*

**SOUNDspace**  
April 19-20  
[www.dancehouse.ca/event/dorrance-dance-2024](http://www.dancehouse.ca/event/dorrance-dance-2024)

Originally choreographed for New York City's St. Mark's Church, a historical space that does not allow the use of tap's metal-tipped shoes on its gleaming wood floors, *SOUNDspace* is a dynamic study of the relationship between sound and movement. Percussive rhythms shine bright in this innovative full-length work through the mesmerizing use of bare and socked feet, wooden platforms and the slaps, snaps and slides of hands on the body. *SOUNDspace* reinvents it-

self in each new space acoustically. Through a fluid transition of rotating formations from solos up to full-company ensembles featuring all eight dancers, the work explores the myriad sounds and textures of the feet and pays homage to the rich lineage and history of the tap genre.

\* \* \*

**Surrey Khalsa Day Vaisakhi Parade**  
April 20  
[www.surreyvaisakhiparade.com](http://www.surreyvaisakhiparade.com)

Every April, millions of Sikhs world-wide celebrate Vaisakhi Day, a day that marks the New Year. Considered one of the most important festivals in the Sikh calendar, parades celebrating the event are held in Sikh communities around the world. The largest Vaisakhi Parade in the world occurs in Surrey, where approximately 500,000 people attend the annual Surrey Khalsa Day Vaisakhi Parade. For event day information, check out the parade's website.

\* \* \*

**Land, Sea, Sky**  
April 20, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
[www.vanmaritime.com/earthday](http://www.vanmaritime.com/earthday)

Although Earth Day this year is on April 22, celebrate on the Saturday before Earth Day at Vanier Park – and the traditional village site of Señákw – with three of your favourite spaces! The Museum of Vancouver, the Vancouver Maritime Museum and the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre will join forces as representations of land, sea and sky to honour the Earth on April 20 with kid-friendly activities! Activities and programs will be featured at each site throughout the day. Admission to the MOV and the VMM are by donation. Regular admission is in effect at the Space Centre for scheduled shows, however special activities will be free.

## Answers:

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. ORGANIZATIONS      | 7. GIANTESS         |
| 2. RELEASES - LIE     | 8. RENO - SAUDI     |
| 3. ADOBE - PERU       | 9. AS - NOISES - US |
| 4. APSE - ASHES       | 10. SEAS - PRO      |
| 5. NU - SOS - AU - OR | 11. MARIE - NO      |
| 6. INT - AURORA       | 12. ECCLESIASTES    |

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A- ORGANIGRAMME     | G- ZEES - AS - SARI |
| B- RÉ - PUNIES - AC | H- AS - HAUSSES     |
| C- GLAS - TAN - ARC | I- PEUR - ES - NS   |
| D- AÉDES - NON - IL | J- ÎLES - OBN - POT |
| E- NAO - ONT - OSÉE | K- OIR - OR - TIR   |
| F- ISBAS - ÉPIES    | L- NEUTRALISONS     |



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