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forum of diversity

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Learning with languages – An Italian celebration of language, culture and community

by CURTIS SEUFERT

June marks the start of Italian Heritage month, an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on Italian culture across the country. With Italian-Canadian communities and groups to be found in Vancouver, and throughout the province, individuals and cultural organizations – such as the Dante Alighieri Society of B.C. – encourage Italian-Canadians, and anyone interested in Italian culture, to explore and engage with its language, food, music and more in B.C.

For Renato Zane, president of the society's B.C. branch, the language courses and various events on offer with the club allow British Columbians the opportunity to engage with Italian culture, both past and present.

"It's a place of constant connection with... Italian culture that is very outward-looking. We want to learn about other cultures," says Zane. "We see it as a way to reflect not just where Italy came from, but where Italy is going."

Reconnecting to the roots

While Zane was born and lived his early childhood in Italy, his intercontinental upbringing saw him growing up in South Africa and, eventually, southern Ontario. While it meant little



Photo courtesy of the Dante Alighieri Society of British Columbia

▲ The Dante Alighieri Society of British Columbia has helped showcase Italian culture through its language classes and various cultural events.

opportunity to engage with his Italian cultural roots in early life, it was a chance for both him and his parents to learn about and understand other cultures and languages outside of Italy.

"When we immigrated to Africa, my parents were very focused on learning about other cultures and integrating in other cultures," says Zane. "We jumped right in and learned English. I remember my mother

learned English at home... When we were doing our homework she was looking over our shoulder and learning as well."

While he spent many years of his career in multicultural and multilingual broadcasting, including even a brief stint in producing Italian daily news programming, Zane says that an exploration of his Italian roots wasn't a huge priority when he moved to the West Coast.

But after coming across and attending a Dante Alighieri webinar, Zane says his curiosity was piqued. As he eventually became more involved within the club, an opportunity came about to draw on his experience with non-profits to become its president, which he accepted.

"What interested me was the modern connection with Italian culture," says Zane. "I'm very interested in sort of how Italy fits

into modern Europe and into the global arena."

For Zane and others, the club looks to provide such opportunities, with various events, book clubs and documentary screenings. One such event, earlier this year, involved a webinar with Italian diplomat Fabrizio Nava, whose talk offered a perspective on Canadian identity, but from a distinctly Italian perspective.

"That was so interesting because it generated a lot of discussion about what it is that we are proud of as Canadians," he says. "What is it that makes us Canadians? How has our sense of identity changed over the years?"

As such, Zane says events like this look to reach out both to the Italian-Canadian community itself and beyond, and ensure anyone who's interested has the chance to gain some perspective and satiate curiosity about Italian culture.

Community through classes

Such is the case with the club's language classes, open to all levels of language learning ability. Zane says that while some first-generation Italian-Canadians might not feel the need to keep up with the language through classes with the club, many find a real benefit in taking Italian classes in Canada in order to practice a less regional, more

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Photo courtesy of Dani Merrithew



Creating space in the games industry

by PRISCA TANG

Diversity in Games (DIG) is a Vancouver-based organization that's looking to build spaces to promote talent diversity and the advancement of underrepresented people in the video game development industry.

Dani Merrithew, co-organizer of DIG and a lead game designer at Blizzard Entertainment, says that the organization started in Vancouver 12 years ago out of the need for a safe space for women in the games industry to meet other like-minded individuals.

More recently, the organization has rebranded itself and begun leading more in-person events to that aim, including workshops, industry events, school talks, and video game pitch competitions to connect a wide variety of genders and cultural backgrounds. Merrithew says the goal is to help game developers find and share their voice in this uniquely interactive story-telling medium.

"We provide a platform for marginalized game developers to share their stories and insight, as well as being vulnerable too," Merrithew says.

DIG is hosting an in-person event on June 15 called Power Up Networking. The industry event will allow career-driven games-makers to meet with other developers and members of the games industry.

A changing games-making landscape

Merrithew remembers that when they first started working in the games industry, it was uncommon to find anyone other than men within the workforce. The lead game designer for the popular online role-playing game World of Warcraft says they've seen a great deal of change in the years since.

However, even though there is more diversity in the workforce now, Merrithew believes there is still much work to be

done to make the games industry more inclusive.

"Diversity is so important because we want to hear these diverse stories from different people," they say. "And we also want those diverse perspectives and how we make decisions. You can't get that when it's just a group of similar people."

But Merrithew notes that having a diversity of perspectives and people in the industry is not an easy target to achieve. Getting a foothold in the games industry can be challenging at the best of

times, often requiring financial security, backing and resources. In addition to networking events, they've also held workshops with the aim of educating people on how they can be allies to support others in the game industry.

Additionally Merrithew has had the opportunity to inspire youth looking to enter into game development. In late May of this year, Merrithew had a chance to talk to a group of Grade 8 students that had just started to learn how to code.

“We provide a platform for marginalized game developers to share their stories and insight, as well as being vulnerable too.”

Dani Merrithew, co-organizer of DIG

times, often requiring financial security, backing and resources.

The past 18 months have been particularly challenging for the games industry, with major development teams, even successful ones, seeing substantial waves of layoffs.

"Over COVID we saw a huge increase of people playing games. Therefore, game studios were really ramping up hiring," Merrithew recalls. "Now that things are settled back to normal, and people are travelling again and aren't spending as much on games. We're seeing this trickle effect from COVID [where] a lot of people have been laid off."

However, due to those challenges, Merrithew and their co-organiser partner Anastasiia Kovaleva, a Game Producer at AdHoc Studio, think that it is more important than ever to create an inclusive community for people in the industry.

"A warm hug that can hold them"

Merrithew says the organization has recently been able to con-

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- defends excessively
- 2- to decay – relating to hearing
- 3- very tall – very black
- 4- having an interest to imitate – decorates
- 5- Spain airlines – cow sound
- 6- something taken as being true – movies awards
- 7- state investigator – use to give a location – had food
- 8- express pleasure – silver ductile metal
- 9- pair working together – suggestions
- 10- other – evening – something received for other object
- 11- Utah – Swiss mathematician – multiuse pot
- 12- to cook meat – vegetables

verticalement

- A) apte à mettre au point
- B) capter par les yeux – note – violon
- C) transférons à l'État
- D) rien – chiffrées
- E) défaites – hélium – vieux do
- F) ni gros, ni abondant – adresse de village – en désordre
- G) poème – très petit – n'aime pas la pêche
- H) os de la jambe – unir
- I) danger maritime – ceci
- J) entrepôt du cinéma
- K) fenêtre sur le monde – groupe de graines – atmosphère
- L) sans décorations – charpente humaine – tentons

For answers, see page 8



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Supporting LGBTQI+ refugees in finding their new homes

by LILLIAN LIAO

“Being a trans refugee and working with other trans refugees is something not to be taken for granted,” says Norma Lize, the communications manager of Rainbow Refugee, a local organization providing support to those fleeing from persecution because of their LGBTQI+ identity.

Since 2000, Rainbow Refugee has been helping LGBTQI+ refugee claimants with their applications and resettlement in Canada in addition to building community and government partnerships. According to Lize, the personal experience of their staff members, which often resembles those of their clients, is one of Rainbow Refugee’s most valuable assets.

The power of shared experience

“Thirteen out of 15 staff at Rainbow Refugee have lived experiences either through immigration or being refugees,” she says. “We believe that our members who went through the system know exactly how to support newcomers and people who are struggling to navigate it.”

Lize herself received support from the organization to navigate the refugee system in 2019. At the time, she had only been in Vancouver for a month. Prior to her current role, she was a volunteer for the organization, then a sponsorship coordinator. Lize says she deeply resonates with the organization’s values, particularly those that highlight the importance of understanding and caring for others.

“I can say that I lead with empathy and compassion in everything I do in life,” she says, while noting that working with other LGBTQI+ refugees with similar life experiences has been the most meaningful part of her job.

A first-hand understanding of immigration struggles, particularly for LGBTQI+ people, was also what prompted Rainbow Refugee’s founder, Chris Morrissey, to establish the organization. During the 90s, Morrissey took the Canadian government to court after they denied her partner permanent residence by refusing the legitimacy of same-sex partnerships. Lize recounts that as their cause grew and their partnership eventually legally recognized, Morrissey started a website which received requests from people around the world faced with persecution.

“They invited community members to come together,” she says, referring to Morrissey’s work with Robb Hughes, the organization’s lawyer at that time. “They were surprised to see that the majority of people who turned up were people who managed to get to Canada somehow and who wanted to stay because they were afraid to go back to their home countries.”

According to Lize, Rainbow Refugee has since outgrown its volunteer-run structure, which started with just six volunteers, to a registered charity with a governance board and 15 employees. The organization has also expanded to work-

ing with community organizations, particularly through its education and advocacy initiatives. Lize notes that this work is carried out through an anti-colonial, anti-racism, and anti-oppressive lens.

Building new communities

“We spearhead many educational initiatives in our communities, providing training and workshops for settlement organizations that are seeking to be LGBTQI+ competent, along with LGBTQI+ organizations that want to deepen their understanding of how to support mostly racialized people with forced displacement experience,” says Lize.

In 2011, the organization collaborated with Canada’s federal government to establish the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership (RRAP), a nationwide, blended sponsorship program for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants. According to Lize, the program brings together those interested in group sponsorship and provides mentorship during both the sponsorship and resettlement processes.



▲ Norma Lize, communications manager of Rainbow Refugee.

“One of the common challenges that our members face is system navigation and processing time in and outside of Canada,” says Lize. “And the challenge once they are here would be finding affordable housing.”

In addition to advocating for their rights, Lize notes that part of Rainbow Refugee’s work involves supporting refugees with resources. One of these resources is their Q-HINNT program, which helps refugees find pathways to secure and affordable housing. Additionally, their Time to Thrive program offers psycho-social assistance to refugees, including mental health care and other service referrals.

Through workshops, support groups, and other social activities, this program also allows Rainbow Refugee’s clients to build social networks, along with a sense of belonging, in Canada.

“Time to Thrive seeks to provide comprehensive support and advocacy for LGBTQI+ refugees and newcomers so that they can be empowered to thrive rather than simply survive,” says Lize.

For more information, see www.rainbowrefugee.com.

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Postcard

How Midsummer taught me about becoming a woman

I've spent my life saying I'm 1/4 Swedish - but the Scandinavian Community Centre taught me why that's important.

Growing up, I was very Swedish. I spent every Christmas singing Swedish folk songs in a choir called Lucia, I had an insatiable desire for herring and gravlax, and I would find any excuse to take a road trip to IKEA. During this time, the Scandinavian Community Centre in Burnaby became a second home, teaching me the value of culture, family and language - and what it means to be a Scandinavian woman.

After immigrating to Vancouver from Stockholm, Sweden, in the late 1960s, my *mormor* and *morfar*, Swedish for grandmother and grandfather, stumbled across the Scandinavian Community Centre - "though, in those days, it was under a Norwegian name," explains my mormor.



Photo courtesy of Katrianna DeSante

▲ Katrianna DeSante and her husband at the 2023 Scandinavian Community Centre's Midsummer celebration.

"It was the Norwegians that owned it but couldn't afford to keep it going," she says. "So, we thought, well, let's make this into a Scandinavian centre and open it up to more cultures."

The Scandinavian Community Centre was founded on October 19, 1996, just a year before yours truly graced the face of this earth. For Scandinavians residing in Metro Vancouver, the centre was a meeting place for families to forge a sense of community and connect about food, music, dance and the history of their Nordic homelands. For my mormor, preserving her relationship with Sweden and attending the centre's annual Midsummer meant everything.

Midsummer - not to be confused with Ari Aster's dark film *Midsommar* - is a joyous annual celebration of summer, taking place on the longest day of the year, typically over the weekend of June 23. Growing up, this day meant doing summersaults across the centre's sprawling lawn and indulging in stacks of waffles covered in delicious gobs of whipped cream. This was the best day of the year for a little sweet-tooth like me.

But, with one Midsummer after another, I noticed how this was more than just a fun weekend frolicking about hunting for Scandinavian troll dolls. I later learned that for Swedes, Midsummer is all about fertility. Dating back to the Middle Ages, Swedes would raise and dance around a pole decorated with flowers and greenery called *maja*, Swedish for maypole.

"Doing this was like asking the Nordic Gods, Frey and Freya, for a good year of birth," explains my mormor.

Later on Midsummer Saturday, young couples compete

in the wife-carrying contest, a fun-loving competition in which men run as fast as possible to the finish while carrying their wives. The male winner is then awarded his weight in beer, so as one can imagine, it has remained one of the weekend's most popular highlights.

Scandinavian women primarily make up the volunteers in the centre's Nordic tents spread across the lawn. These women are responsible for the sale of jewelry, crafts, books or *Marpiosa* decor. My mother and I know this well, having spent a couple of years volunteering at the Swedish tent, braiding flower crowns, also known as *midsommarkrans* (Swedish for "Midsummer Wreath").

Despite it feeling like a chore as a young girl, volunteering in the Swedish tent was an excellent place for learning. Women's active participation in the centre's activities showed me the strength and resilience of Scandinavian women. Still, I remember feeling irritated when it dawned on me what this day represented.

As a young girl, I didn't care for babies or being someone's wife. I was more interested in exploring the world and pursuing my own dreams and ambitions. But with each Midsummer that came and went, my mind eventually opened to the possibility that someday, I may become a wife and a mother.

When I was thirteen, my mormor moved to Ontario. Suddenly, Christmas and birthdays - traditions I once felt were perhaps "too Swedish" - became hollow. When my mother followed suit, moving across the country, my sense of cultural connection vanished. Being Swedish was no longer a norm but a part of my identity that I could work hard to embrace or leave behind altogether.

In 2023, I returned to Midsummer for the first time in five years. As I watched young girls dance along the lawn, their hair full of wildflowers, I thought back to my childhood when the notion of family wasn't a gaping hole in my heart. But then I turned to my husband, who was swallowing a massive heaping of waffles. And something shifted. Later that August, I stood across a similar grass plain as we recited our vows, my hair adorned in wildflowers.

Today, the Scandinavian Community Centre serves as an extension of my family. It is not just a physical space but a beautiful place for emotional connection and growth. For my mormor and my mother, it was a place to cherish their Swedish roots. For me, it will always be the place where I learned what it means to become a woman and to be proud of my identity.

This June 22, my husband and his Italian family will walk to each tent and learn about the history, food and art that each Scandinavian nation is proud to share. Midsummer is no longer just a celebration of my cultural heritage but a testament to the growth and understanding that comes from embracing and sharing different cultures.

KATRIANNA DESANTE, member of the Scandinavian Community Centre

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Culture, unity and pride: Filipino Heritage at Pinoy Festival

by BONNIE GILL

On June 22 at Swangard stadium, a day-long festival will celebrate the third largest visible minority group in B.C. Pinoy Festival, now running for a second year, will bring a celebration of the Philippines to Burnaby for a day of food, dance and games - all to showcase and unite its rich and diverse culture.

"It'll be a packed day where people can see and experience the Philippines without having to leave the Lower Mainland," says Burnaby councillor, Maita Santiago.

As the first Filipino elected to a city council in Metro Vancouver, Santiago says she always makes the effort to promote and help with Filipino initiatives like this one.

The event takes place in June's Filipino Heritage Month, which recognises and celebrates the contributions of Filipino Canadians to the social, economic and cultural fabric of B.C.

Uniting in cultural diversity

The scope of Filipino culture and traditions is wide, with large distinctions between its North-



▲ Burnaby city councillor Maita Santiago hopes to showcase Filipino culture wherever possible.



▲ This year's Pinoy Festival looks to celebrate from across the Philippines, including the Sisiwit dance whose roots lie in the northern Cordillera region.

ern and Southern regions. According to Santiago, awareness of this cultural diversity is limited, with many Filipinos themselves being unaware of each region's own traditions.

Approximately 70 Filipino community organizers will participate in the June 22 event, with the aim of representing culture from the Cordillera region in the north, to Mindanao in the south.

"The purpose of the event is to underline three things: our culture, our unity and our pride," says Santiago.

Each of the community organizers will bring with them dance and traditions from their own region or province, many of which will reflect those performed by Indigenous Filipino communities. Santiago predicts that Sisiwit community dance will be a likely highlight of the day. The dance, which originated from the northern Cordillera region, incorporates gongs and invites participation by anyone

who desires to do so. She welcomes a return of this tradition from last year's festival, which she says was a meaningful moment of the day.

"What was really heartening on the part of the Filipino community was seeing so many people who weren't Filipino participating and joining in," she says.

Prioritizing community engagement

Taking place on the day alongside traditional dance performances, food vendors serving traditional Filipino food, and a market selling Filipino products will be a cultural procession called the Grand Santacruzán. With religious roots in Catholicism, Santiago says the tradition is one celebrated broadly by Filipino communities from north to south. During this procession, young women dressed in traditional Filipino attire partake in a beauty pageant-like competition, in which one is crowned the *Reina Elena*.

Engaging Filipino youth in the event is also something on the minds of Pinoy Festival organizers, according to Santiago. During the evening, a Filipino rock concert will showcase local Filipino bands and artists, aimed at bringing in young people. M.C.-ing the show will be Canadian beatbox champion duo, The Wookieez, consisting of Vancouver local artists CiMaX and Vino.

"The intent is it's going to be youth, high energy," says Santiago.

Keeping objectives in mind

In April of this year, the province announced support for the development of a Filipino cultural centre in B.C., something Santiago says the festival will be highlighting.

"We hope that people also come away from the event seeing the need for the cultural centre," she says.

Over 174,000 people living in B.C. identify as Filipino, according to Statistics Canada's 2021 census, making it the third-largest visible minority group in the province.

The provincial government recently released a website to attract public engagement with the proposed cultural centre. The site includes a survey in which the community has the opportunity to input what they would like to see from the development.

According to Santiago, this has been a desire of the Filipino community for some time.

"[The Filipino community] is fast growing... but there's no physical space... a home that could serve to anchor the community and from which the Filipino community can take root to help ensure their place in BC."

To find out more about Pinoy Festival, visit www.pinoyfestival.ca



▲ A moment from the banga dance at last year's Pinoy Festival, a performance named after the earthen pot which women dancers balance on their head while performing.

For the Pinoy festival, voting on who to crown will be put to the community, even though that particular choice is not traditional.

"Organizers decided it's too hard to decide...but it's community engagement. People are engaged and people are voting," she says.

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Festival d'été francophone de Vancouver

Celebrating diversity and revitalizing culture through music – Ottoman Splendours

by ELAHA AMANI

A rich world of francophone music and culture will be on full display at the 35th annual Festival d'été, or Francophone Summer Festival. This year's festival features the music of Ottoman Splendours, a group that celebrates culturally diverse styles and forms.

"We believe that the programming we are offering you is a beautiful array, coloured with diversity, to mark a 35th anniversary," says artistic director of Le Centre Culturel Francophone de Vancouver Pierre Rivard.

The Festival d'été will take place from June 12 to June 22, where artists and spectators of all backgrounds are invited to over a week of lively concerts and performances. As one of the largest and most significant cultural and musical Francophone events in Western Canada, the festival will highlight over a dozen artists and performers and is free to the public.

Fortifying Francophile culture

This year's Festival d'été marks Rivard's 31st festival. Rivard says he's pleased to have such a diverse lineup of artists from across Canada and wants to show audiences that it isn't necessary to travel to Quebec to ex-

perience francophone culture. He wants to not only highlight the richness of francophone culture but also fortify the widespread existence of communities around British Columbia.

"I want to revive traditional music that is slowly disappearing because of factors such as war.

Lamia Yared, Lebanese-Canadian singer and oud player

In light of recent news demonstrating that the population of fluent French speakers in Canada is diminishing, Rivard hopes the annual Festival d'été both spotlights the francophone community and invites more from abroad.

"We want to spread these wonderful opportunities to celebrate French language culture and music," says Rivard.

Harmonies of diversity

Ottoman Splendours is composed of Lebanese-Canadian singer and oud player Lamia Yared and four fellow Canadians musicians: cellist Sheila Hannigan, clarinetist François Houle, percussionist Hamin Honari and guitarist Gordon Grdina. Predominantly taking inspiration from Turkish, Sephardic and classical Arabic music, Ottoman Splendours explores traditional music styles

and rhythms distinctive to each culture, such as the *maqam*. Yared finds this is one of the driving forces of her passion about reviving traditional Middle Eastern music. Yared will also be singing

an original, innovative way. Yared encourages the audience to not only hear the music, but to listen and allow it to resonate.

"Music should be listened to, heard, understood and received

in a way that resonates with people," she says. Yared's creative process is contingent upon who she plays with, where she works and the insights she receives on her repertoire. Each piece is not only an expression of self but an exploration into the past. Yared says she is impassioned by the emotions she can communicate through her musical mediums, and remains true to her goal of revitalizing tradition.

"I want to revive traditional music that is slowly disappearing because of factors such as war. I intend to keep the music in the memory of everyone while respecting the heritage it originates from," says Yared.

Boundless music

While it is not Yared's first time performing in Canada, it is her first time participating in Festival d'été. Yared says she is thankful for the curiosity and welcoming nature of the event and is excited to share her music with wider audiences. She hopes to continue connecting with artists and musicians internationally and is optimistic about where her musical journey takes her.

"I'm happy to broaden my experiences and exchanges with musicians around the world, and I'm enjoying how my repertoire is reshaped with each exchange to innovate something new," says Yared. ✍

For more information please visit: www.lecentreculturel.com/en/festival-d-ete



Photo courtesy of Lamia Yared

▲ Lebanese-Canadian singer and oud player Lamia Yared.

► "Italian Heritage" from page 1 broadly-used style of the language.

"There are a lot of immigrants who came to Canada from very specific regions in Italy. And many of those community groups speak local dialects," he says. "So we do have some that want to learn how to speak... national Italian."

For those who don't have Italian heritage, the classes can also serve as an opportunity to brush up on their linguistic skills before traveling, and serve as an entry point to Italian culture and community.

"We see a little sense of community that develops when you start as [a] beginner," says Zane. "And if you enjoy the experience, you may want to sign up for the next class. And you think people that were in that class [might be] making that journey with you."

But in between the first-generation Italian-Canadians and those without a bespoke Italian cultural connection, Zane says

there's yet another group that finds a real value to reconnecting with Italy through language and learning.

For second and third generation Italian Canadians, often entering their early adult years, he says there's often something about that period in life which encourages many people to connect with their cultural roots, including Zane's own son.

"When he was growing up, he wasn't that interested in learning Italian, and we never encouraged it. But when he went to university, he decided at that point in his early twenties that he wanted to learn Italian. He signed up for a program, went to Florence, lived [there] for a year," says Zane.

Zane says that, much like his son, many at that age are able to find a sense of cultural connection through the language learning process. As such, he hopes the society can continue to provide that opportunity to any and all who are interested in kindling that cultural curiosity.

"People want to focus on life in Canada, and then when they get to a certain age they yearn for an understanding of their roots. This I'm sure is true of so many communities in Canada. There's a better appreciation at a different phase of one's life, or an interest. And that's true of the language courses too," says Zane. "People come back sometimes because they feel they're missing something and they want to have that more complete connection." ✍

For more information about the Dante Alighieri Society of B.C., visit www.dantesocietybc.ca



Photo courtesy of the Dante Alighieri Society of British Columbia

▲ Renato Zane, president of the Dante Alighieri Society of British Columbia.

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Photo courtesy of Pi Theatre

Unveiling pain and healing A theatrical journey into mental health

by VAISHNAVI DANDEKAR

Pi Theatre is set to close its 2023-2024 season with the Canadian premiere of *Medicine*, by award-winning Irish playwright Enda Walsh. This production delves into the complex and often misunderstood world of mental health and institutionalization.

Medicine tells the story of John, a man living in an institution where local actors are hired annually to perform “drama therapy” by reenacting fragments of his life and trauma. This unique and chaotic setup brings to light the struggles and stigmas faced by those labeled as mentally ill. The play aims to serve as a poignant meditation on how society has historically approached mental health, combining humor and tragedy to explore these deeply human issues.

Richard Wolfe, the director of *Medicine* and artistic director of Pi Theatre, emphasizes the importance of this play in today’s context.

“We all have different situations and challenges, but sometimes it’s easy to detach a little bit emotionally from the urban environment and the social, geographical environment. I think this play will reattach us to the world around us,” says Wolfe. “The play is not really trying to teach us about mental illness per se. It is showing what happens when a person hasn’t been loved or looked after properly.”

Medicine runs from June 14 to June 23 at the Vancity Culture Lab.

The journey of healing through performance

The story of *Medicine* revolves around John’s interaction with local actors hired to conduct drama therapy. However, while this particular therapeutic approach is designed with the intention of helping John confront and process his experiences, it often leads to unpredictable and intense sessions that blur the lines between reality and performance.

Throughout the play, the character of John serves as a powerful voice for those who have been marginalized by their mental health conditions and the institutions meant to care for them.

As Wolfe explains, the themes of the performance aim to speak to the duality of impact that peo-

ple can have on one another, and the impact that can have on their mental health.

“The phrase that I came up with was that “people can often be the poison in other people’s lives, but at the same time, other people can also be the medicine.” It makes our lives beautiful,” he says.

Through John’s interactions and the unfolding narrative, the play highlights the profound impact of human connection and the healing power of empathy.

“We see the character’s history and how people have really hurt him, but then we also see a connection being made with another person, and we see that love, compassion and empathy are the true medicine,” says Wolfe.

Throughout the play, the performance deals with the implications of how society treats and outcasts people with mental illness. Wolfe hopes that this approach can ensure an authentic representation of the issues at hand and fosters a deeper connection with the audience.

Beyond that, Wolfe says that the panel discussion with mental health-focussed community partner, The Kettle Society, following the June 16 matinee per-



Photo courtesy of Pi Theatre

▲ Richard Wolfe, director of *Medicine* and artistic director of Pi Theatre.

formance, will provide an even greater perspective.

“This idea of removing people from society because they’re not well, whether it’s an addiction or mental illness, can be kind of cruel and probably harmful in some ways,” says Wolfe. “I am not a doctor or a psychiatrist, and that’s why we’re having these guests come in to talk about the current state of treatment.”

For more information about *Medicine*, visit www.pitheatre.com.

June 11–25, 2024

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The summer solstice this year starts on June 20, but the weather's been pretty amazing lately; it already feels like summer! Celebrate the start of summer this month by checking out the many events happening around the city, both indoors and outdoors. From festivals and musical performances to art exhibitions and theatrical plays, there is something for everyone. It's time to get out and enjoy what our great city has to offer. Plus, Father's Day is on June 16, so why not take your dad out to some of these places too?

Queer Arts Festival
June 1–30
www.queerartsfestival.com

The Queer Arts Festival returns to Vancouver this month. *The Ties That Bind* examines the bonds and complexities of Family, be it blood or chosen, and how Queer communities continue to survive and thrive alongside, within, and occasionally despite, traditional family constructs. From collectives to choirs, from drag houses to dance troupes, from the community art show to the many partnerships the festival enjoys year after year, QAF 2024 examines the many ways in which "family" manifests itself in Queer and Queer-arts communities.

Third Annual Vancouver Greek Film Festival
June 6–27
www.thecinematheque.ca/series/third-annual-vgff

The Vancouver Greek Film Festival begins this year's event with *Z*, the chef d'oeuvre of internationally renowned auteur Costa-Gavras, which arguably inaugurated the famous cycle of political thrillers based on true events in the 1970s and 1980s. The festival will also celebrate the acclaimed filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos with *The Lobster* and *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, important transitional works between his Greek Weird Wave films and his Oscar-winning *The Favourite* and *Poor Things*. The Greek Film Archive have



▲ After completing new, major structural upgrades, the University of British Columbia (UBC) Museum of Anthropology returns with exhibits highlighting Indigenous perspectives.

Photo courtesy of the UBC Museum of Anthropology

helped to restore *Face to Face*, an important nouvelle vague-inflected film of the 1960s. Cult classic *Singapore Sling* and John Cassavetes's early studio picture *Too Late Blues* round out the program, which concludes with Sofia Exarchou's multiple-award-winning *Animal*, about a wild summer at an all-inclusive resort on an unnamed Greek island.

Barbu
June 12–23, 7:30 p.m.
www.thecultch.com/ticket/barbu

Barbu delves into the birth of the circus in Montréal at the turn of the 20th century. Imagine a fairground where spectators are left spellbound by remarkable performances, outrageous feats and unexpected eccentricities! Music, video, circus and kinds of craziness collide as each performer wows the audience with a showcase of spectacular skills. May the boldest heart and the best beard win! Check out The Cultch's website for tickets, showtimes and more information.

Museum of Anthropology Reopening
June 13, 5 p.m.
www.moa.ubc.ca

The Museum of Anthropology at UBC will reopen its doors to the public on June 13 at 5 p.m., following an 18-month closure that saw the successful completion of cutting-edge seismic upgrades to its Great Hall, coupled with

the revitalization and reinterpretation of displays of Northwest Coast Indigenous carvings, poles, weavings and other works from the past and present. Along with the Museum's reopening, MOA will present two exhibitions sharing Indigenous perspectives on colonial history: *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (Western Canada premiere) by famed Māori artist, Lisa Reihana and *To Be Seen, To Be Heard: First Nations in Public Spaces, 1900–1965* (world premiere). MOA's reopening this summer coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Museum's opening to the public.

Chapter Two by Neil Simon
June 13–30
www.whiterockplayers.ca

The White Rock Players Club season closes with *Chapter Two*, a comedy-drama from American playwright Neil Simon. This semi-autobiographical play delves into the complexities of past loves coming to haunt the present. The original play premiered on Broadway in 1977, where it ran for 857 performances. Check out the WRPC's website for tickets and more information.

Kärma Sounds
June 14, 7 p.m.
www.bluefrogstudios.ca/store/p160/Karmasounds.html

Karina Morin of Kärma Sounds, known for her role in *Coco Jafro* and chart success with *Jaï*, blends R&B and electro-soul in her new album. With influences like Sade and Prince, she's a dynamic performer captivating audiences in Vancouver and beyond, as featured on CBC and Wave 98.3. Catch her live on June 14 for an unforgettable experience.

92nd British Columbia Highland Games
June 14–15
www.scotfestbc.com

The 92nd British Columbia Highland Games & World Music Festival takes place from June 14–15. This year it's "A Concert of Champions" on the Main Stage overlooking Lafarge Lake. There will be a performance by the Robert Malcolm Memorial Pipe Band, 2nd place Gr. III world champions, plus the SFU Pipe Band Drum Corps, champion highland dancer Marielle Lesperance, Pipe Major Jeff Rowell, our official opening ceremony and of course, the 78th Fraser Highlander's cannon blast. Piping, drumming & pipe bands competitions, highland dancing, the REMAX Scottish heavy events, whisky school, cultural workshops, a multicultural stage, kids activities and chances to try pipes, drumming, dancing or even caber tossing – it's a whole day of entertainment for the whole family.

National Indigenous Peoples Day
June 21
www.indigenoussc.com/2024-national-indigenous-history-month-peoples-day

The Governor General of Canada proclaimed June 21 as National Indigenous Peoples Day in 1996, as an occasion for Canadians to come together, reflect on and celebrate the unique heritage, traditions and knowledge of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. There are many celebrations happening throughout B.C., including events at Edmonds Park in Burnaby, Bill Reid Millennium Amphitheatre in Cloverdale, the

Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler and Ambleside Park in West Vancouver. There will be cultural entertainment, physical activities, arts and crafts, Indigenous vendors and storytelling at many of these events.

Future Memoria
June 22–August 25
www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/surrey-art-gallery/exhibitions/future-memoria

This exhibition traces the spectrum of futurity, a mode of imagining the future in all of its tempting humours and horrors: from lush fantasies of aesthetic splendour and abundance, to the spectres of nuclear apocalypse; from idealistic self-help programs and artificial landscapes, to the dominance of computational thinking and technological solutions; and from the promise of a better life through the democratic nation-state and improved civic infrastructure to the hells of economic scarcity, ecological catastrophe, social breakdown. The worlds of utopia and dystopia coexist, each a dark reflection of the other's excesses.

Greek Day on Broadway
June 23
www.greekday.com

There will be a spectacular celebration on June 23 as Greek Day on Broadway marks its 50th anniversary! This year, the festival organizers are going bigger and bolder, inviting you to immerse yourself in the heart of Greek culture right here in our vibrant city. Dive into a day filled with authentic Greek food, live music, traditional dance performances and interactive activities that promise fun for the entire family.

Answers:

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