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forum of diversity

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## New year, new tools: Geering Up ignites children's passion for quantum science



Photo by Justin Yoon, UBC Geering Up Engineering Outreach

by LILLIAN LIAO

**Big science, small science, and a whole lot of numbers. The United Nations (UN) has declared 2025 as the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology, recognizing 100 years of quantum mechanics development. For Ella Meyer of Geering Up, a University of British Columbia (UBC) science and engineering outreach program, quantum concepts are more accessible to children than one would think – all it takes is a little faith in their intuitive understanding of the world.**

“One of the best parts about teaching kids, and particularly younger kids, is that when you don't have a preconception of ‘This is exactly how the world should work,’ you are way more open to ideas of how the world does work,” she says.

For Geering Up, the UN's timing is serendipitous, as 2025 also marks the program's 30th birthday and fifth year of delivering quantum mechanics programs. In addition to its usual programming of workshops and summer camps, Geering Up plans to commemorate quantum science and technology through a new afterschool quantum club, as well as collaborations with the Surrey-based Quantum Algorithms Institute to support additional

networking and community initiatives.

### The heart of science

Meyer first joined Geering Up during her undergraduate studies in astronomy and physics at UBC. Driven by a passion for science education, she returned to Geering Up when the program was looking for a quantum com-

puting outreach coordinator, where she now works with other educators teaching quantum concepts to children and youth across the province. A key part of her work is figuring out how to make complex quantum ideas accessible – a task that begins with definitions.

“I'm sure researchers would object to some of the analogies there,” she adds. “But it did mean

“It almost feels like the second time we figured out how to light, and store, and put out, and relight fires.

*Ella Meyer, Quantum Computing Outreach Coordinator*

puting outreach coordinator, where she now works with other educators teaching quantum concepts to children and youth across the province. A key part of her work is figuring out how to make complex quantum ideas accessible – a task that begins with definitions.

“Quantum technology is us figuring out what the new quantum rules are,” she explains. “And the ways we can utilize those behaviours to create something new.”

To make these principles more accessible, Meyer draws on analogies to familiar situations while relying on the basics of logical reasoning. Even though she is aware analogies may challenge

I had a whole bunch of fifth graders understanding the idea of parallel computing.”

### A language game

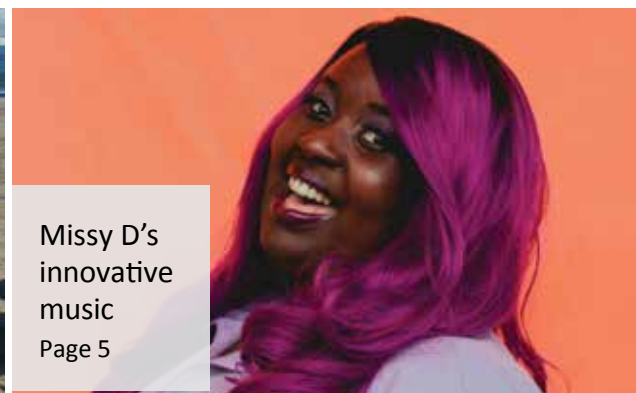
When it comes to using the language of quantum science in classrooms, Meyer advocates for an intention approach – one that considers how words are explained. Her tips are to never take for granted that children know the concepts and to avoid introducing new vocabulary with jargon or other unfamiliar language.

“Can we explain everything we're about to do without ever saying this word?” she explains. “If we're going to talk about

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Photo by Gary Kripps

## Volleyball BC's community initiatives

# Bringing newcomers into the game

by FAIZ AHMED

**Inclusion is a journey, not a destination, says Emma Gibbons, chief executive officer at Volleyball BC. Gibbons has been spearheading Volleyball BC's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which has led to a successful bridging of local volleyball communities representing 25 different countries over the past two years.**

"What we heard from the youth when we surveyed them was that their confidence in their ability to try something [including volleyball], and then keep going with it massively increased after the program," says Gibbons of their initiatives' impacts.

Volleyball BC is the premier sports organization that arranges professional volleyball events across the province.

### Community connections

According to Gibbons, volleyball doesn't have the barrier of buying expensive equipment which makes it easier to play for newcomers.

"We have 72 registered clubs across the province," she says. "It's easy to put up a net, or even a string, and play a ball across it."

Building a strategic plan to expand the sport, Gibbons started to steer the governing body towards DEI initiatives as she saw a growing community of immigrants coming to British Columbia.

With the help of a colleague who spearheaded the initiatives by conducting data research into the origins of newcomers, Gibbons notes that they were able to identify specific communities and partner agencies. These partner agencies were gateways for Gibbons' organization to connect with the new communities.

"[The partner agencies] had connections with the newcomer youth, and they knew what the needs of the community were," she adds. "They were able to communicate with the families and explain, in some cases, some families being more open to physical activity than others,

and the cultural sensitivities that we had to address in each situation."

Over the past two and a half years, Volleyball BC has run a dozen programs partnering with five different community agencies in locations such as South Vancouver, Surrey, South Okanagan, Richmond, Victoria and Abbotsford.

### Striking down challenges

Gibbons recalls that there were financial restraints in the programs, including those involving logistics like transporta-

For Gibbons, implementing DEI initiatives requires a keen awareness of cultural differences and adapting the conditions of play accordingly. An example is one of Volleyball BC's first programs with the Surrey Schools Welcome Centre, which featured mostly Afghan girls.

"We had to put up paper to cover the windows at the gym and make sure that no male could see inside and be very mindful about a lot of different restrictions about their clothing and what they are able to do," Gibbons explains.

“...their confidence in their ability to try something and then keep going with it massively increased after the program.

*Emma Gibbons, Chief Executive Officer, Volleyball BC*

tion. She notes a particular case where beach volleyball players required transportation from South Vancouver to the Spanish Banks – a financial gap that was filled by Volleyball BC's governing body and their partner agency, the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

"In some programs, we've helped provide food," she adds. "During the programs at Surrey, we provided a t-shirt, trainers and even money because they didn't have access or their own supplies to be able to do it."



▲ Emma Gibbons.

Following the success of the program, the organization is headed towards launching its third program at this Surrey welcome centre. Another DEI concern is the availability of coaches belonging to various ethnic communities. Gibbons notes that this challenge is also a gendered one, as some communities prefer having their female participants taught by a women-identifying coach.

"At the start, recruiting coaches was probably the most challenging piece, but we had great success after reaching out to the adult recreational players," she says.

The recreational players were trained to become coaches, even if they lacked experience, as the merit of their selection was to know the language that the specific community speaks.

Gibbons believes that DEI's end goal is not related to completing an objective and abandoning it once the program concludes.

"I don't think you can say, 'okay, I've done that, Check!' and then it's off," she reflects. "You're constantly learning, changing and adapting." ✍️

For more information, see [www.volleyballbc.org](http://www.volleyballbc.org)

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Mailing Address  
Denman Place PO Box 47020  
Vancouver, BC V6G 3E1

Office  
204-825 Granville St., Vancouver, BC

Telephone (604) 682-5545  
Email [info@thelasoource.com](mailto:info@thelasoource.com)  
[www.thelasoource.com](http://www.thelasoource.com)

Founding Publisher and Editor-in-Chief  
**Mamadou Gangué**  
Deputy Editor (English section) **Lillian Liao**  
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Illustrator **Joseph Laquerre**  
Writers **Faiz Ahmed, Marc Béliveau, Marie-Paule Berthiaume, Ashley Kim, Natalia Kutsenko, Hassan Laghcha, Amélie Lebrun, Xiao Qing Wan, Simon Yee, Robert Zajtmann**

Translation **Barry Brisebois, Louise Dawson**  
Distribution **Joseph Laquerre, Kevin Paré**

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# In service of community: Embracing old and new frontiers at the Danish Church

by LILLIAN LIAO

**Showcasing culture and creating an area of openness for people is at the heart of a local church rooted in over 500 years of Danish tradition. For Knud and Doris Nielsen, longstanding members of the Danish Lutheran Church of Vancouver (DCV), the church is a source of pride reflecting the immigrant stories of Vancouver's Danish community.**

"Sometimes we are accused of being more Danish than the Danes are," says Doris, "and I think sometimes we're quite guilty of it, too."

For more than eight decades, the church has provided local Danes with a tangible connection to their heritage.

### Fulfilling community needs

From the 1950s to the early 1960s, Canada experienced a wave of young Danish immigrants looking to build new lives in what was seen as a land of opportunity. For these newcomers, like Knud in 1969, the church not only fulfilled a spiritual need; it also provided settlement services through housing support, employment guidance, and socialization opportunities.

"I said, 'I just arrived from Calgary, can you help me find a place to stay for a couple of days till I can find an apartment?'" Knud recalls calling the Danish

pastor from a phone booth. "And he said, 'Come on over.'"

Other Danes, like Doris' family who immigrated in 1958, were already connected to the church through their Danish social circles. The church works with the Danish Church Abroad / Danish Seamen's Church (DSUK), and follows the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark's order of service.

As for the selection of pastors, it is a shared obligation between the churches: Denmark hires the pastors and acts as their employer, while DCV provides input during the selection process. Knud notes that with the bishop being far away, they often look for an experienced pastor.

"[We also] look for someone who has a fair amount of knowledge in English," adds Doris. "That sort of thing is not a problem today, but it certainly was years ago."

Its current pastor – Carsten Hansen – started in 2022 and has taken on a more modern approach by expanding the congregation's reach through podcasts and social media. Throughout the decades, as the congregation began to consist of younger Danish Canadians, the church has also transitioned into using more English in its programming, while retaining its Danish roots.

### Preserving traditions

"We do Danish hymns, and it's important to the first and sec-



▲ The Danish Church's Kom Sammen (Come Together) event.

ond generation," says Doris. "In the songs and hymns and so on, the culture comes out of that."

During a time where international phone calls were expensive, the church was often their sole connection to a Danish community. Knud notes that this immigration trend has changed, as the Danish newcomers today are usually here for business and have access to online resources.

The core aspects of Danish culture – such as eating open-faced sandwiches at bazaars, having duck on *Mortensaften* (Nov. 10), and learning about mischievous elves – continue to be preserved by the church.

"You tell the children there's a bad, black cat in that [barrel], so

you have to hit it," Doris shares of their Sunday tradition where children dress in Halloween-like costumes. "But he magically disappears the more you hit it, then the [barrel] drops apart and there's candy inside."

Following a relocation from East Vancouver to Burnaby, the current (built in 1984) church's architecture also preserves tradition. A replica of the Danish Church, it includes classical Danish elements such as facing East-West and ships hanging from the ceiling.

It has also been the site of Danish royal visits – including one by the then crowned Princess Margrethe of Denmark in 1967 who delivered greetings from her parents.

"There wasn't a dry eye in the church," Doris says. "It was just very, very special. Especially for some of these people who have left Denmark when they were in their 20s back in 1940."

In recent years, other Canada-based Danish churches, such as the Granly Danish Church in Surrey, have shut their doors, struggling to maintain congregation numbers. Robert Taylor, president of the DCV, sees the church as a welcoming space for all.

"We'll show them the Danish culture," he says. "They can come and join us, and we'll help where we can." ✉

For more information, see [www.danishchurch.vancouver.bc.ca](http://www.danishchurch.vancouver.bc.ca)

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# A language rich in tradition: Learning Greek with the Hellenic Community

by AMÉLIE LEBRUN

**“As in every large Greek community and many smaller ones around the world, it is a given that there will be a Greek school,” says Dimitris Andriopoulos, the principal of the Hellenic Community of Vancouver’s Greek School.**

Located in the Arbutus neighbourhood, the school brings new blood to the beating heart of Vancouver’s Greek community, providing a learning opportunity for Vancouverites interested in Greek culture or planning a trip to the Hellenic Republic.

“Here in Vancouver, where the Greek community has been thriving for almost 100 years, the school, which is the only one in British Columbia officially recognized by the Greek state, exists to preserve our tradition [and] teach our history and language to new generations of Greeks and those interested in learning it,” adds Andriopoulos.

## A timeless language

Greek culture is not only rich in history, traditions, myths and music, it is also closely attached to its language. The Greek school shares in this cultural celebration with its dedicated space and devoted teachers, growing new generations of Greek-speakers. Aside from the young Greek Canadians learn-

ing their language and building stronger ties with their culture, the Greek school is also attracting a new demographic.

“The majority of our students are of Greek descent,” says Andriopoulos. “However, we’ve seen an increase in the number of students who don’t have any connection to Greece.”

According to the principal, some students are inspired by their travels to Greece; others want to communicate with Greek-speaking family members. The school also attracts students looking for an intellectual challenge.

“Our language is one of the oldest in the world, and it has influenced many other languages, especially in science, philosophy and art,” the principal adds. “Ancient Greek philosophers taught important ideas that still shape how we think today.”

No matter what motivates students to enter the Greek school’s doors, learning the Greek language has its challenges. The principal notes that one challenge is the grammar. Another challenge for the teachers is motivating young learners to invest in mastering this beautiful and historical language. Andriopoulos states that the school addresses this challenge by making the language accessible and relevant.

“Once they start to understand Greek, they’re shocked to find that many of the words



Photo courtesy of the Hellenic Community of Vancouver

▲ Children at the Greek school.

they use every day are actually Greek,” he adds.

## Sharing of traditions

Classes at the Greek school begin with a warm-up, allowing students to practice the language by discussing their weekends or other general topics. Following these updates, the class proceeds with reviewing the home-

work, then moves to the main lesson of the day. Andriopoulos notes that, while the lessons include translation, vocabulary, pronunciation and other language interactions, speaking and reading comprehension are the prioritized skills.

“[A highlight of my work] is when I see the children at school who have become good

friends while, not long ago, they were strangers to each other,” says the principal. “[Or] when they start using Greek words and expressions in their communication.”

Using a wide selection of on-line publications and books from Greece, but also videos and songs, the Greek school offers various supports to learn the language. The school now benefits from the work of other institutions, including a partnership with Simon Fraser University that grants access to *Stella ellinika*, an online Greek language education platform. With the new year starting, many traditions from Greece can also be seen in Vancouver, providing opportunities to practice the language and engage with its culture.

“On New Year’s Day, Greeks celebrate the feast day of Saint Basil with a delicious cake called *Vasilopita*,” he explains. “They bake a coin into the cake and whoever finds it in their slice is believed to have good luck for the year ahead.”

While sharing *Vasilopita*, stories and jokes with their community, younger generations can enjoy the fruits of their efforts. These moments are not only the students’ reward, but also the highlight of the teacher’s work. ✉

For more information on the Hellenic Community of Vancouver’s Greek School, see: [www.vancouverhellenicschool.com](http://www.vancouverhellenicschool.com)

## World Braille Day

# Increasing accessibility for the visually impaired

by XIAO QING WAN

**“In an ideal world, whatever is available in print should be available in braille,” says Betty Nobel, a long-time advocate for blind accessibility and retired braille educator. The United Nations commemorates World Braille Day annually on Jan. 4, and this year marked the 201st anniversary of the invention of braille. While Nobel acknowledges the steps being made to help the visually impaired in Canada, there are still many gaps.**

“If we had more signage in braille, that would be wonderful,” says Nobel, the current chair of federal organization Accessibility Standards Canada’s (ASC) Wayfinding and Signage committee. “Braille in elevators is really important, [but] there are still lots of elevators that don’t have braille.”

## The path to teaching

Nobel first started teaching at the Vancouver Community College (VCC) where she taught French for continuing education and pioneered the Visually Impaired Adult Program. She noticed that the school had a program for the deaf and hard of hearing, but not for the blind and visually impaired. Launched in 1981, her program included learning braille and technology skills as well as



▲ Braille signage, TransLink.

helping adults who lost their vision regain independence.

“I thought, there really isn’t a lot going on for adults who lose vision,” she says. “[So], I thought it would be a great idea to start a program for adults who were blind or visually impaired.”

As the program often received international students who had English as a second language (ESL) but were not always literate in braille, or did not have any literacy skills at all, she rose to the challenge creatively.

“We didn’t have any artificial intelligence programs to help us translate,” she says. “So, I would take the student’s hand and put it on the table, and say, ‘This is a table.’ We would feel the top and the legs of the table, and then we would spell the word out in braille.”

Nobel recalls that the biggest challenge was teaching ESL

students the various contractions used in braille. Contracted braille, which uses shorthand for frequently occurring words, varies between languages.

“We start teaching contractions [to English speaking students] after [they] have learned alphabetic braille (uncontracted braille),” says Nobel. “With an ESL student, however, I prefer to teach contractions for words that come up frequently in early lessons such as [the word] ‘name.’”

## Accessibility concerns

Although steps have been taken to improve accessibility, Nobel acknowledges that there is still more work to be done. In 2023, TransLink implemented braille and tactile signage at over 8000 bus stops across Metro Vancouver. Currently, ASC is developing wayfinding

and signage standards for federal buildings.

However, everyday items like medication and shampoo bottles often lack braille labels that she recalls seeing in Europe, where braille is written on medication boxes and even wine bottles.

“I wish we had braille labels on products like shampoo [in Canada],” she says. “I can make the labels myself to put on things, but it would be nice if I could buy it that way like you can in Europe.”

Besides inaccessibility, she notices a lack of communication to the visually impaired community about accessibility initiatives. For example, Canadian banks like CIBC and TD offer debit and credit card sleeves that are labelled in braille – initiatives she only recently discovered.

“They don’t publicize these things, so how [would we] know?” she says. “Because it’s great to have things more accessible, but if you don’t know [what] they are, then how do you know?”

Although Nobel is uncertain about future progress on inclusivity, she notes that the absence of tactile markers on touch screens has made accessibility more prominent.

“I just know that braille is very alive and very needed,” she says. “It will be needed when you decide that you don’t need print, and you can only use technology.” ✉

For more information, see [www.un.org/en/observances/braille-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/braille-day)

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## Sounding like Missy D: Making space for all voices at the Chan Centre

by LILLIAN LIAO

**Music is medicine, communication, a toolkit, and sometimes the mat one lays on at a picnic, says local rapper and femcee Missy D. A French English bilingual artist, Missy will bring her eclectic tastes – including those of reggae, rock, and classical music – to the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Chan Centre on Jan. 18 in a collaborative concert with fellow Vancouver-based musician Tonye Aganaba.**

“When rap and soul is live, you might hear elements of reggae, elements of rock, elements

“Because of that curiosity of the feeling you catch, you might even be keen to go look up the lyrics and translate it for yourself,” she says.

### Finding an authentic voice

Missy’s understanding of inclusive spaces is also rooted in her experience as a female emcee (‘femcee’). Often the only femcee at events, she recognizes how minority identities – including race, gender, and even choice of expression – intersect with one another. She advises aspiring musicians and femcees to have patience, be resourceful, define success for themselves, and most importantly, take the mic.

“You have to learn how to take up space.”

*Missy D, rapper*

of classical music,” Missy says of her upcoming performance. “People might call it hip-hop, but it is hip-hop with some soul and some rap, in French and in English, for all ages.”

### Never-ending homework

Missy’s interest in rapping arose from a homework assignment on hip-hop’s history. Asked to write and perform a rap, she soon realized how the genre bridges two of her lifelong passions – music and poetry – through rhythm. The assignment also included learning about French rapper MC Solaar, who remains one of her musical influences, alongside Missy Elliott, Lauryn Hill and, more recently, J. Cole.

“[MC Solaar] is not just a rapper, he’s a poet when he writes,” she says. “And I’ve always thought about how do I become more of a poet even in my rapping.”

Missy’s music is also shaped by her connections to Rwanda, Côte d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe. When songwriting, her understanding of family, place, and people is inspired by childhood memories in her birthplace of Rwanda and her schooling in Côte d’Ivoire.

While the English-speaking Zimbabwe has largely influenced her anglophone music, it is Côte d’Ivoire, where she first learned French, that grounds her Francophone storytelling. For Missy, the two languages naturally lend themselves into different forms of expression.

“Do I want to rap fast? Maybe switch to English,” she explains, noting how it is easier to cut words in English. “Do I want to paint a long picture, make it more poetic, perhaps talk to my childhood self? Maybe do it in French.”

Keenly aware of her anglophone audience, Missy deliberately chose to include French lyrics that were accessible. As Western Canadian Music Awards’ 2024 Francophone Artist of the Year, Missy is committed to creating space for French-speaking artists in Vancouver. She also encourages seeing music as a language beyond words – recalling her own experiences connecting with anglophone songs despite not fully understanding the lyrics at the time.

“You have to learn how to take up space,” she says. “My voice is as important as the person next to you; my story is as important as the person next to you.”

A UBC alumna who walked the graduation stage at Chan Centre around ten years ago, Missy sees her return to the venue as coming full circle: celebrating her artistic identity by sharing new music. Her new project, which includes a song – “Une Chance” – that will be released on Jan. 14, is inspired by a dreamer’s desire to become an artist and touches on themes of self-discovery and perseverance.

“You might be surprised by an upcoming track I have that will come out around the time of the show where I’m just singing, not rapping,” she adds.

For her upcoming performance, she will be joined by a live band, including Sejal Lal on violin and vocals, Nebyu Yohannes on trombone, Dave Taylor on bass, Feven Kidane on trumpet, and others. While Missy hopes that her performance



▲ Missy D.

will bring joy and relief to the audience, she emphasizes that all emotions are welcomed, particularly as she explores her own musical identity.

“I hope that people are still like, that still sounds like Missy D,” she says. “I think the artist’s dream is that you sound like yourself.”

For more on the concert, see [www.chancentre.com/events/missy-d-and-tonye-aganaba](http://www.chancentre.com/events/missy-d-and-tonye-aganaba)  
For more on Missy D, see [www.missydmusic.com](http://www.missydmusic.com)

## An International Improv Showcase Coming together for comedy

by ASHLEY KIM

**Improv troupes from New Zealand, Philippines, Estonia, Zimbabwe and Vancouver are coming together for The Improv Centre's THE HEAT – An International Improv Comedy Showcase from Jan. 28 to Feb. 1 on Granville Island. Among the lineup of troupes, Ruutu10 from Estonia and The Impro Show from Zimbabwe are excited to share their teams' unique styles of improv and collaborate with other comedians across the world.**

"Since we have gathered improv knowledge from different places and added some of our own discoveries to it, it is an interesting blend," says Martin Junna, the CEO of Ruutu10.

Each night will kick off with short form games alongside either international troupes delivering their individual approaches to improv or an "all-play" showcase that sees teams performing together.

"We're largely self-taught, which possibly makes us a bit quirky," says Kevin Hanssen, the director of The Impro Show. "We're looking forward to learning from people who know what they're doing."

### Shaping the scene

Junna shares how Ruutu10 was once a small hobby group that decided to become a professional improv troupe in 2013. Their name reflects the original 10 members who had a unified goal of shaping the Estonian improv scene. Even now as an established theatre company, Ruutu10 has no plans of slowing down.

"We are a big dominant force here, so we influence the Estonian improv [scene] quite a lot," says Junna.

barriers. They are continuously working to grow their theatre and shape the Estonian comedy scene.

"We love being students again," Junna says. "It's the best part of improv."

### Laughing on the go

Hanssen first fell in love with improv after watching the game show *Whose Line Is It Anyway*. Following the disbandment of a Zimbabwean theatre company he participated in, he was left with a desire to continue performing.

"In time, unsuspecting future members of The Impro Show stumbled into the same pothole as me," says Hanssen.

He cites British humour as greatly influencing their improv style – particularly Monty Python and Blackadder. He explains that before satellite television, Zimbabwe only had one station, so everyone watched the same British shows.

Zimbabwe's rich oral culture and comedy culture are also significant to The Impro Show's improv style. Although the improv scene is not big in Zimbabwe, Hanssen shares that spontaneity and humour are at the heart of every Zimbabwean's way of life.

"Zimbabweans are fond of making fun of themselves and situations around them," he adds. "If you can't control it, laugh!"

Hanssen further describes humour as a coping mechanism for frustrated Zimbabweans. Considering the country's economic and political issues, he sees Zimbabweans as experts in improvisation and adaptation in their daily lives.

"You have to be a little bit careful about what you say about who, so humour can also be cloaked, cryptic or metaphorical," he explains.

# CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

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▲ The Heat's The Impro Show.

To grow their improv related activities and advance the art form, the members are expanding their skills by connecting with the international improv community.

"To this day, you see us with our notebooks open, writing down every exercise and quote the teacher is saying," he explains.

Junna mentions how the troupe's improv style is impacted by the North American improv scene, citing The Annoyance Theatre, The iO Theater, and The Upright Citizens Brigade as some key influences.

Aside from the North American comedy scene, Junna highlights the unique features of Estonian humour as stemming from its diversity. He mentions that Ruutu10 particularly enjoys absurd comedy and use body language to transcend language

For the troupe, one of the beauties about improv is the audience's ability to laugh at themselves. Hanssen observes that many of the audience member's suggestions for scenes come from their personal experiences. Seeing their experiences through a comedic lens often lightens their feelings of frustration.

"It's a great role for comedy to be able to provide some relief from the very things that seem most heavy and unbearable," he adds.

With regards to their upcoming participation in THE HEAT, Hanssen emphasizes the troupe's anticipation for meeting other comedians, building on their comedic understanding and performing for new audiences.

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

## Delivering on Diversity - Call for Submissions

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport is supporting the 4th Annual Delivering on Diversity Award which will be announced at the upcoming Athlete of the Year Awards on March 6, 2025. The Award is intended to showcase the strong work that our sector is undertaking in this area and even act as an inspiration for future efforts.

The nomination form provides a complete overview of the award and the nomination process, email [info@sportbc.com](mailto:info@sportbc.com) for a form.

The deadline for submission is **February 3, 2025** and the successful nominee will be featured at the Athlete of the Year Awards, including the **\$5,000 prize**.

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## Ballet encounters circus

Reimagining classic fairy tales in Circa's *Duck Pond*

by LILLIAN LIAO

Australian circus company Circa brings *Duck Pond*, a reimagining of *Swan Lake* and *The Ugly Duckling*, to the Vancouver Playhouse from Jan. 22 to 25. Presented by DanceHouse and The Cultch, the performance combines the precision of ballet with the chaos of circus – illuminating a magical, fairytale world where transformation takes centre stage.

“Everything from the staging to the performance quality really help to create a feel of a world you enter into,” says Circa acrobat Maya Davies. “From when the acrobats first step on stage...through the music and the lighting, everything feels very mystical.”

While circus work is primarily done in groups, Davies highlights how *Duck Pond* is notable for its more character-based focus. Inspired by the two fairy tales, the show features four principal characters: the black swan, the white swan, the prince and the fairy godmother. Davies feels that part of the show's magic involves glimpsing into the white swan's inner world, bringing forth themes of transformation and identity.

**An inclusive space**

Growing up between Australia and the United States, Davies' lifelong passion for circus arts



▲ Duck Pond.

began at seven years old in the Adelaide circus school, CirKidz. She then earned a Bachelor's of Circus Arts, specializing in partner acrobatics and Chinese pole, from the National Institute of Circus Arts. Drawn to its history as a welcoming space for outcasts, Davies encourages those looking for a community to seek out the circus.

“[The circus has] always been a safe space for many people to do what they want to do and be who they want to be,” she adds. “No one is ever pitted against each other: it's about what you are capable of and how you can share that with an audience.”

For Davies, circus art is about human interaction – both with the audience and with fellow acrobats. Having been with Circa since Dec. 2023, she currently performs as a member of *Duck Pond*'s acrobat ensemble, showcasing skills such as tower building, group toss, and trapeze construction. One of her favourite *Duck Pond* scenes to perform occurs at the end of the first act, when the prince introduces the black swan to the palace.

“It's the first time we see a full group acrobat, so it's lots of skills one after the other,” she adds. “It's really fun, it's really upbeat, the music is really en-

gaging, there's a disco ball, and we're all wearing sparkling costumes.”

**Embracing chaos**

Playing with transformations of genre, the show's development involved a dramaturg who considered how the precision required in ballet can be combined with circus arts. Davies notes that while performers' dance backgrounds varied within the company, they all worked diligently to honour dance, particularly through attention to musicality.

“[The show] takes some of the original *Swan Lake* music and adds an edge and drama and a

bit of excitement that leans into the acrobatics,” she adds.

Davies points out how *Duck Pond*'s composer and sound designer, Jethro Woodward, was present during their acrobat developments, leading to music that was influenced by the acrobats and vice versa. The performance also incorporates elements of traditional ballet through its costumes, which include leotards and tutus. For Davies, part of being a circus performer is embracing all that the circus has to offer, including its chaos.

“One thing we wanted to do in this piece is show this beautiful fairytale space, and how it can be broken down,” she says. “So, there are some comical moments at the end of the show where we tear it all apart and show a bit of circus grit.”

Another comical moment Davies enjoys is when a duck army arrives on stage, cleaning up the mess caused by a chaotic event. Her favourite part of performing with Circa is the community of staff and other performers – a relationship that she sees as rooted in play.

“Because the show is so fun, we get to play with each other as well,” she says, wishing that this joy is transmitted to the audience. “I hope that they enjoy the sparkles and the joy and learn that everyone can have a happy ending.”

For more information, see [www.dancehouse.ca](http://www.dancehouse.ca)

## ➤ “Quantum” from page 1

quantum entanglement, I'm going to tell them it's 'quantum entanglement,' then we'll spend the next hour exploring how that works together.”

She recalls having to simplify her language when running a demo on superconductors – a material that changes behaviours at different temperatures – with the Quantum Matter Institute at Science World. Instead of explaining the superconductor's functions through scientific jargon to her audience of kids three to four years old, Meyer relied on an age-appropriate phrase: *When it gets cold, it gets superpowers.*

“The thing I want them to know is that sometimes things behave differently when they are cold,” she says.

Geering Up's programming also draws attention to the social context surrounding quantum science. For Meyer, this conversation is one of sustainability – weighing the benefits of quantum technology with the large amount of power it consumes. She notes their programming also touches on artificial intelligence ethics, including plagiarism and data bias.

“It's always really important to think about how what you're learning is going to fit into the broader human picture,” she adds.

**Finding new sparks**

These concerns of accessibility, for Meyer, is more than simplifying complex language. It also involves spreading awareness of the quantum networks in BC and making those resources available across the province, particularly when it comes to working with remote communities.

“We're not going to be able to put 30 laptops in a suitcase and

get it up there, and they're not going to have very good internet connection,” she adds, speaking of Geering Up's work in parts of BC that are difficult to reach. “So, it'd be really cool if kids could learn to code on micro:bits, a really small computer.”

In these remote classrooms, teachers rely on hands-on activities, like tossing a coin or rolling a dice, to teach concepts like probability. Another barrier is age restrictions, as Meyer notes that some quantum resources are only available to those over 18. When it comes to gender barriers, Geering Up works to include a female-identifying staff in each instructor pair, allowing young female scientists to see themselves represented – creating a safe space for children and youth to reach their full potential.

“Their brains are so insanely elastic,” she adds. “If you give them room to be creative and excited, and you haven't told them that the thing they're about to do is radically different than anything they've seen before, they take to it really well.”

Rather than focusing on standardized assessments, Geering Up encourages learners to self-reflect and draw connections to their daily life. Celebrating the year of quantum, Meyer emphasizes that all technologies are tools.

“The really beautiful thing about quantum and quantum technology is that it is an incredibly fundamental thing,” she says. “It almost feels like the second time we figured out how to light, and store, and put out, and relight fires.”

For more information, see [www.geeringup.apsc.ubc.ca](http://www.geeringup.apsc.ubc.ca)

January 7–21, 2025

## Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Welcome to 2025! Wishing you a wonderful new year filled with joy, success and meaningful moments! As we step into this fresh chapter, take a moment to explore the exciting events happening right here in our city. From interesting exhibits to dazzling performances, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

\* \* \*

**Town + Country: Narratives of Property and Capital**Jan. 10–April 13  
[www.belkin.ubc.ca](http://www.belkin.ubc.ca)

*Town + Country: Narratives of Property and Capital* troubles the enduring narrative binary of town and country. Borders between these two terrains have always morphed and slipped around each other theoretically, politically, economically and socially, yet the narrative of the urban/rural divide persists. Indigenous land dispossession and reclamation, capital accumulation in the form of real-estate assets, labour and technological development are all obscured by this persistent fiction. Town and country narratives similarly obscure questions of class, freedom of movement and resource extraction. There will be an opening reception and artist talk on Jan. 9; check out The Belkin's website for more information.



▲ Juniper Tree by Carel Moiseiwitsch.

\* \* \*

**River Basin Days**Jan. 11, 2–3 p.m.  
[www.fraserriverdiscovery.org/rbd](http://www.fraserriverdiscovery.org/rbd)

River Basin Days is a monthly series of outdoor public programs geared towards families. Join the Fraser River Discovery Centre at different locations around the Fraser River Basin as they explore this incredible watershed! Their staff will guide participants through one hour of activities, experiments and art projects to learn about the biodiversity of this great river. For more infor-

▲ Production of *The Three Musketeers*, featuring Daniel Fong, Nadien Chu, Braydon Dowler-Coltman, and Alexander Ariate.

mation and to pre-register, check out the Fraser River Discovery Centre's website.

\* \* \*

**I Remember...**Jan. 15–18  
[www.firehallartscentre.ca/event/i-remember](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca/event/i-remember)

*I Remember...* is a full-length work created and performed by award-winning dancer and choreographer Joe Laughlin. At age 63, Laughlin is a senior Canadian artist who has been performing for over 40 years, and this piece is an exploration of a dancer's aging body and how that informs his art now and into the future. Laughlin is remembering his life in dance, competitive gymnastics, working in South Africa, Move It!, and the many talented artists he has worked with over the years. Combining dance, storytelling and video in an emotional, amusing and relatable reflection on aging, this Joe INK production is inspired by Laughlin's memories and lessons learned from four decades as a dancer. His message: to keep moving and to remember... you are never too old to do what you love.

\* \* \*

**Perfect**Jan. 16, 6:30–7:30 p.m.  
[www.masseytheatre.com/event/barbie-nwss-dance-show](http://www.masseytheatre.com/event/barbie-nwss-dance-show)

Playing at the Massey Theatre is *Perfect* on Jan. 16. BarbeeLand appears perfect at first glance with glittering, flawless Barbees and Kennis living the dream in an endless loop of fabulous parties and perfect poses. But once they begin to malfunction, Perfect Barbee and her closest friends must travel to the real world to discover what is troubling the children that play with them. Follow the NWSS dancers as they bring

you through a journey of self-discovery, empowerment and a whole lot of pink! Check out the theatre's website for tickets and more information.

\* \* \*

**The Three Musketeers**Jan. 16–Feb. 16  
[www.artsclub.com/shows/2024-2025/the-three-musketeers](http://www.artsclub.com/shows/2024-2025/the-three-musketeers)

All for one and one for all! In 17th-century Paris, a daring young d'Artagnan wishes to join the famed trio of musketeers – Athos, Porthos and Aramis. Harnessing the skills of a swordsman and the heart of a warrior, he sets off with them to thwart a plot of the most dangerous man in France, the evil Cardinal Richelieu. Double-crossings, extravagant sword fights and sweeping romance remind us of a time when love and honour ruled the world. Packed with wit and action, *The Three Musketeers* will keep you on the edge of your seat! The play will be held at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage; for tickets and showtimes, check out the website for more information.

\* \* \*

**Interwoven Realms**Jan. 16–March 2  
[www.pomoarts.ca/exhibitions-events-page/interwoven-realms](http://www.pomoarts.ca/exhibitions-events-page/interwoven-realms)

A Journey Through Life, Space and Transcendence, brings together the works of artists Amy Wiebe Lau, Yasir Ali and Stephanie Denz, each exploring presence and connection in unique ways. From the natural cycles of life to the interaction of objects in space and the transcendent beauty of the cosmos, this exhibition invites viewers to reflect on the layers of existence – both tangible and ethereal. Through their exploration of nature, spatial re-

lationships and celestial themes, the artists encourage contemplation of life's interconnectedness and the balance between the earthly and the cosmic. For more information about the exhibit, check out the Port Moody Arts Centre website.

\* \* \*

**Sequentia: Gregorius – The Holy Sinner**Jan. 17, 7:30 p.m.  
[www.earlymusic.bc.ca/events/sequentia-gregorius](http://www.earlymusic.bc.ca/events/sequentia-gregorius)

Benjamin Bagby, known for his performance of Beowulf, returns to Vancouver with the astonishing medieval verse epic *Gregorius*, "The Holy Sinner". A narrative poem of sin and redemption, Gregorius retells the legend of St. Gregory the Great. Bagby is joined by his medieval music ensemble Sequentia, known for their innovative, intimate and enchanting performances of ancient texts ranging from Hildegard von Bingen to the Icelandic Edda. Sequentia's virtuosic performances are compelling, surprising in their immediacy and strike the listener with a timeless emotional connection to our own past musical cultures. Check out the Early Music Vancouver website for more information.

\* \* \*

**The Height of the Storm**Jan. 17–Feb. 9  
[www.jerichoartscentre.com](http://www.jerichoartscentre.com)

*The Height of the Storm* will be performed at the Jericho Arts Centre from Jan. 17 to Feb. 9. André and Madeleine have been in love for over 50 years. This weekend, as their daughters visit, something feels unusual. A bunch of flowers arrives, but who sent it? A woman from the past turns up, but who is she? And why does

André feel like he isn't there at all? For tickets and showtimes, check out the Centre's website.

\* \* \*

**Dear Plastic**Jan. 18–March 23  
[www.richmondartgallery.org/dear-plastic](http://www.richmondartgallery.org/dear-plastic)

The five featured artists of *Dear Plastic*, an exhibit by the Richmond Art Gallery, straddle the divide between what is considered artificial versus natural in their engagement with plastic. They clearly delight in the potential of plastic as artistic material, which they reuse, repurpose or reimagine to fashion visually arresting works. The thought-provoking pieces in this exhibition avoid a straightforward environmentalist stance or nostalgia for untouched landscapes. Displaying an acknowledgement of an existence shaped by plastic and an awareness of its positive and negative legacies alike, they capture the many paradoxes of plastic while provoking us to critically reflect on our irreversible entanglement with plastic. For artist information, please check out the art gallery's website.

\* \* \*

**National Theatre Live: Vanya**Jan. 19, 3 p.m.  
[www.kaymeek.com](http://www.kaymeek.com)

Irish actor Andrew Scott brings multiple characters to life in Simon Stephens' radical new version of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. Hopes, dreams and regrets are thrust into sharp focus in this one-man adaptation which explores the complexities of human emotions. *Vanya* will be playing at the Kay Meek Arts Centre's Grosvenor Theatre on Jan. 19; please visit the theatre's website for tickets and more information.

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