

HOLIDAYS THROUGH THE EYES OF CAMOSUN STUDENTS

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NEXUS

camosun's student voice since 1990

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editor's letter Alone but okay

I recently had the unique experience of going to two different events on my own in one week. This—I'm almost embarrassed to say—terrified me. The thought of going anywhere alone, without my comfort blanket of friends and family, was something that I wouldn't have considered before.

In anticipation of attending two events solo—The Beaches concert I was reviewing for *Nexus* (see nexusnewspaper.com to read the review) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* play being held at University of Victoria for a class assignment—I started asking around to see if anyone felt the same way. I was surprised by the mixture of responses I received, and the group I polled seemed to be divided right down the middle in opinion.

Half of my friends said they almost prefer going to events alone: I had one friend say that she often takes herself out for dinner and a movie, another friend said that she loves the experience of attending concerts alone, and another insisted that I do it more often for my own good, because going to events alone helped them grow as a person.

I immediately started to compare myself to others, which caused jealousy to creep in. How was I going to let go and just enjoy myself without feeling so perceived and vulnerable?

My embarrassment was eased by the remaining people I spoke to. They shared similar sentiments to mine, which were mainly fears around personal safety and social anxiety.

I realize I'm speaking about my fears in the past tense, which isn't completely accurate: going places alone still scares me. I did conquer a large part of my fear by taking the first step, however, I'm still a work in progress. Still, I thought that sharing my experience and what helped me could be useful for my fellow anxious humans.

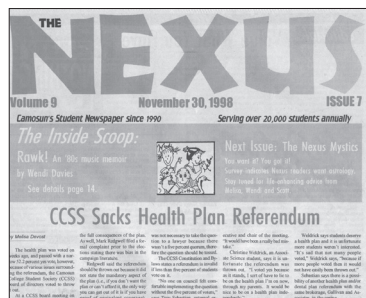
Firstly, no one cares. Part of me already knew this, but after experiencing it firsthand, I can confirm that no one cares that you're alone. I wasn't judged, and no one called me a loser or threw their drink at my face in a fit of disgust (I know, I was surprised too). When I was standing in line for The Beaches concert, I could feel my heart beating, but I kept repeating to myself "I deserve to be here," which, oddly, helped soothe me. Once I entered the venue and found my seat, I relaxed; everything was fine, and once the theatre went dark I was able to fully let go and enjoy the concert.

After the show, I knew I was going to be anxious walking the few blocks to my car, especially because it was late at night and downtown. So, I shared my location with a few close friends before I left and called my boyfriend for the duration of the walk to my car. Those safety measures always make me feel more confident, but if a situation doesn't feel right for you because of safety reasons, foregoing it will always be better than taking the risk.

In the end, I survived both experiences, and I actually was able to enjoy myself. Over the holidays, in between semesters, I plan on taking myself to a movie because, apparently, in this case, exposure therapy works. I invite you to take yourself on a solo date as well—you might be just as surprised as I was.

Jordyn Haukaas, student editor
jordyn@nexusnewspaper.com

flashback 25 Years Ago in Nexus



JORDYN HAUKAAS
STUDENT EDITOR

Wellness at Wilna: In *Nexus*' November 30, 1998 issue, contributor Priya Vohora wrote about Camosun College's Alternative Health Fair '98, which was held in the Wilna Thomas Cultural Centre on November 19. Some of the exhibits on display included acupuncture, chiropractic posture check, herbal medicine, vitamins and supplements, and organic produce. Vohora reported feeling relief after a session of acupuncture at the fair, which, honestly, would be nice right about now as finals loom closer.

Hell on wheels: Parking issues at Camosun seem to be a tale as old as time. An article regarding public upset about students parking in residential areas was covered by *Nexus* writer Venetia Fletcher—and let me tell you, I'm excited by the 25-year-old drama. Local resident

Josie Manule said that dangerous student drivers were taking over her street and caused her son to get into a car accident. Apparently, students in cars were a terror that plagued the neighbourhoods surrounding Camosun, because on November 18, 1998, a community meeting was held in Fisher 100 to address the too-fast and too-furious student body. The solutions weren't as entertaining as the drama, though, and I'll cut to the chase for you by saying: speed bumps.

Trade cancellations concern: Also in this issue, *Nexus* writer John Overall reported on concerns over trades programs being cut at Camosun. Overall seemed to have suspicions regarding the School of Trades and Technology's budget and where money was being allocated and into what programs. At the time of writing the article Overall had put in a Freedom of Information request to obtain the breakdown of the budget so he could track the flow of money. However, the request would take up to 90 days to come in, so the remainder of the article was mostly speculation. Some of the factors leading to the cancellations were thought to be caused by a lack of student interest, a lack of jobs, or the cost to run a particular program being too high.

open space

Camosun needs to be more accepting of AI

CAYDEN GILL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

While being one of the biggest challenges for educators in decades, artificial intelligence also provides us with a unique opportunity to enhance the quality of our education. Just as we did with the emergence of computers and then the internet, Camosun College and educators in general are taking a close-minded approach to the adoption of AI in the classroom. We now have a

even analyzing a student's work and giving feedback in real time on how they can improve their work based on their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, AI will give all students access to quality educational resources regardless of their economic or social background, closing the skill gap and making education more accessible for more students at Camosun.

As students, we know that there is nothing more frustrating than

Just as we did with the emergence of computers and then the internet, Camosun College and educators in general are taking a close-minded approach to the adoption of AI in the classroom.

unique opportunity not seen since the widespread adoption of computers to personalize education to help each student close the skill gap at Camosun.

Educators and institutions have been struggling to find an answer to the question of how to handle the rapid rise of AI and how to integrate it into their courses, if at all. There's no denying that many questions need to be answered before AI becomes a part of our learning experience, including how to tackle the genuine risks of technological dependency, depersonalization, and memory weakening. But we have a tremendous opportunity to improve the learning environment for all students.

Using AI tools in the classroom will improve learning for all students, particularly those with learning disabilities, by matching the study material to the skill level of each student. This will allow students to learn at their own pace and complete assignments in the easiest way for them, and to produce their best work. These tools can also help students strengthen their weak areas of study and advance further in the areas in which they succeed,

asking your instructor something only to wait hours—perhaps even days—for an answer. Instructors are busy people and are often swamped with questions daily. AI tools can help lighten their load and help students find answers to the most commonly asked questions within seconds, even using conversational English, making students feel like they are having a conversation with their instructors. This gives educators much-needed free time, allowing them to improve their courses and giving them well-needed rest, improving their ability to do their jobs effectively. Additionally, AI tools allow students to learn at their own pace, anywhere, anytime, without having to wait for their peers and educators.

Yes, artificial intelligence presents great risks to the future of education. But, it also presents the opportunity for a great reward: monumental improvements in education. Over the next few years, educational institutions around the world will begin to figure out how to integrate artificial intelligence tools into the classroom, and Camosun should ensure that its students are not left behind.

Something on your mind? If you're a Camosun student, get in touch with us with your *Open Space* idea! Email editor@nexusnewspaper.com. Include your student number. Thanks!

NEXUS

Got something to say?

Letters to the editor:
editor@nexusnewspaper.com



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Greg Pratt/*Nexus*

OVERHEARD AT NEXUS: "Jordyn's been talking about death a lot."

college

Camosun College Student Society concerned over Student Experience changes

“If you look at this purely from an optical perspective, going from having a vice president of Student Experience to having something, either an associate vice president or something that is different, looks like it could be a diminishment of importance of the above Student Experience.”

MICHEL TURCOTTE
CAMOSUN COLLEGE STUDENT SOCIETY



FILE PHOTO

JORDYN HAUKAAS
STUDENT EDITOR

Camosun College recently dissolved its Student Experience division, allocating most of its workload to its Education and Innovation division, a decision that has raised concerns with the Camosun College Student Society (CCSS).

Domestic and international registration will now be under the Partnerships division of the college, while the other duties that were under Student Experience will now fall under Education and Innovation.

The CCSS had a good working relationship with former vice president of Student Experience Heather Cummings, who no longer works at the college after the changes.

CCSS external executive Jagjeet Singh says that there is some concern regarding the quality of Student Experience going forward.

“What we are concerned about now is with Student Experience not being under the VP, it’s a step backward towards Student Experience in all,” says Singh, “because... there were a lot of collaborations that were underway with Heather.”

But Camosun vice president of Education John Boraas says the Student Experience duties won’t be neglected because of the changes.

“Given that the Education division is the biggest and the most central to the mission of the college, I would say that members of the Student Experience have been lifted up,” says Boraas. “There certainly is no diminishment.”

Boraas says that the argument was made that the divisions would work better if they were together.

“And that perspective won out in terms of the going-forward plans,” he says.

CCSS executive director Michel Turcotte says that the relationship between the CCSS and the Student Experience division was going exceptionally well while Student Experience was being run by Cummings. Turcotte says the loss of Cummings, someone he felt was extremely dedicated to the students of Camosun, saddens him.

“We’re going to deeply miss the former vice president of Student Experience, because Heather Cummings was probably the most passionate and dedicated advocate

Camosun College recently restructured its Student Experience division.

for student fairness and wellness that I’ve really ever had the privilege of working with in my 20-plus years around this place,” says Turcotte. “Camosun is a wonderful place—both the Student Society and the college are a wonderful place to work and everybody tries to help students in the way they can. But the bonds that Heather had created with the CCSS, and even with individual board members, were unparalleled in terms of the history with the college.”

Singh says that the amount of work that Cummings was doing greatly benefitted Camosun students.

“One of the big concern[s] is the Student Experience because Heather was doing a lot in that department in general, like reviewing the policies, making sure that they are up to date,” says Singh. “Doing things like regular check-ins with the Student Society was another thing that she was doing. So, if any

concerns that we had about Student Experience... they were pretty quick to get an answer regarding that or saying what can be done or what cannot be done. Plus, having that independence for Student Experience as a vice president, that won’t exist anymore... especially with it becoming part of a vice president who is already handling academics.”

To help integrate Student Experience into the Education and Innovation division, temporary measures are in place until an associate vice president is hired, says Boraas.

“The former director of learning services in the library who’s retired, I brought her back for three months to support the reports that have been added,” says Boraas. “And I’ll use that time to get a posting up for an associate vice president of Education and students.”

Boraas says that the Student Services division used to be under the Education division, and when

that separation happened, people were also skeptical about it.

“It’s interesting, I’ve been here for quite a while—when the Student Services was moved from Education to a new division, there were people who felt the same way, that they were being diminished, that, you know, they weren’t going to be as high a priority because they weren’t in Education,” says Boraas. “So, no matter what the change, people can... struggle with the change.”

Singh and Turcotte say they are hopeful and looking forward to future collaborations with the college. However, that doesn’t diminish the concern that they share.

“If you look at this purely from an optical perspective,” says Turcotte, “going from having a vice president of Student Experience to having something, either an associate vice president or something that is different, looks like it could be a diminishment of importance of the above Student Experience.”

NEWS BRIEFS

Dress sculptures for awareness

Interactive dress sculptures will be popping up around Camosun College for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, taking place until Monday, December 11. Students are invited to attach notes and stories to the dress sculptures, which can be found at both campuses. At Interurban, look for the sculptures at the Alex and Jo Campbell Centre for Health and Wellness, the Centre for Trades Education and Innovation, and the Cafeteria; at Lansdowne, they’ll be in the Library, Fisher building, and The Coffee Shop in Wilna Thomas.

Acts amended to exclude post-secondary institutions

On November 21, the federal government announced that the *Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act* and the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* will be amended to exclude public

universities and colleges. This means that public post-secondary institutions will not be allowed to use the acts as means to deal with financial difficulties—a loophole that was used in the 2021 financial crisis at Laurentian University that led to 69 graduate and undergraduate programs closing and the termination of 195 faculty and staff.

Open Space closed for renovations

Open Space Artist-Run Centre, located downtown on Fort Street, has closed for six months for a renovation project that aims to increase the accessibility and safety of the building. The centre’s renovations will include an elevator, a seismic shear wall, a new stairwell, a foyer for elevator access, an automatic front door, and universal washrooms with gender-neutral stalls.

-JORDYN HAUKAAS,
STUDENT EDITOR
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campaigns

BCFS campaign recommends tuition freeze, more government funding

“We want the government to provide the funding that they have not for years.”

JAGJEET SINGH
CAMOSUN COLLEGE STUDENT SOCIETY

JORDYN HAUKAAS
STUDENT EDITOR

The British Columbia Federation of Students (BCFS) is aiming to freeze student tuition with its Fund It, Fix It campaign. The campaign also recommends that the provincial government invest an additional \$500 million annually for post-secondary-institution operational costs so the institutions don't have an over-reliance on domestic and international student tuition.

Camosun College Student Society (CCSS) external executive Jagjeet Singh has been working to spread awareness about the campaign and its benefits to students.

Singh points out that Camosun students might be unaware that the provincial government is supplying 41.1 percent of the funding for post-secondary institutions when, in 1980, they provided 80 percent. Singh says that the Fund It, Fix It campaign wants to see tuition become more affordable for students, and the solution is more government funding.

“We want the government to provide the funding that they have not for years, that's one of the things. We would like the tuition to be frozen where it is right now... Because it's not sustainable for a lot of our students,” says Singh.

Because the provincial government has decoupled funding from inflation, Singh says many students are experiencing financial hardships while trying to gain an education.

“We hear all the time stories about students not having food,” says Singh. “Last year, we were doing a food drive, and a student showed up saying, ‘Oh, the only thing I've been having for the past few months is popcorn because that's cheap.’ So, they were just living off popcorn... Some of them live in their cars, they cannot afford rentals. And you know how the market right now is, it's really, really expensive for a student to sustain in these markets.”

Additionally, the Fund It, Fix It campaign suggests a cap on international student tuition increases

(domestic students currently have an annual two-percent cap, but there isn't one for international students). The campaign also calls for a better strategy for welcoming international students into Canada.

“The importance of international education strategies,” says Singh, “is that it sets guidelines for post-secondary institutions, so that when they are bringing in new students, how do you treat them? How do you make sure that they get a home when they're here? How do you make sure that they come prepared to live their life in a whole new world, right? A lot of them come in from very different societies, which have a really, really different culture... So having those things around having a set guideline for that.”

To bring more awareness to the campaign, Singh attended the BCFS Advocacy Week in October, where he spoke with local MLAs and informed them about the students struggling in their municipalities.

“Fund It, Fix It, we have been doing it for a few years now,” says Singh. “Obviously, putting in these asks, we created a lobby document for every year. So, we had the capacity to present it in October this year when we did our BC Federation of Students lobby week. So we were down at the parliament, meeting the local MLAs.”

The government issued a funding review in response to the current funding model not supplying sufficient financial support for students.

“The most important recom-



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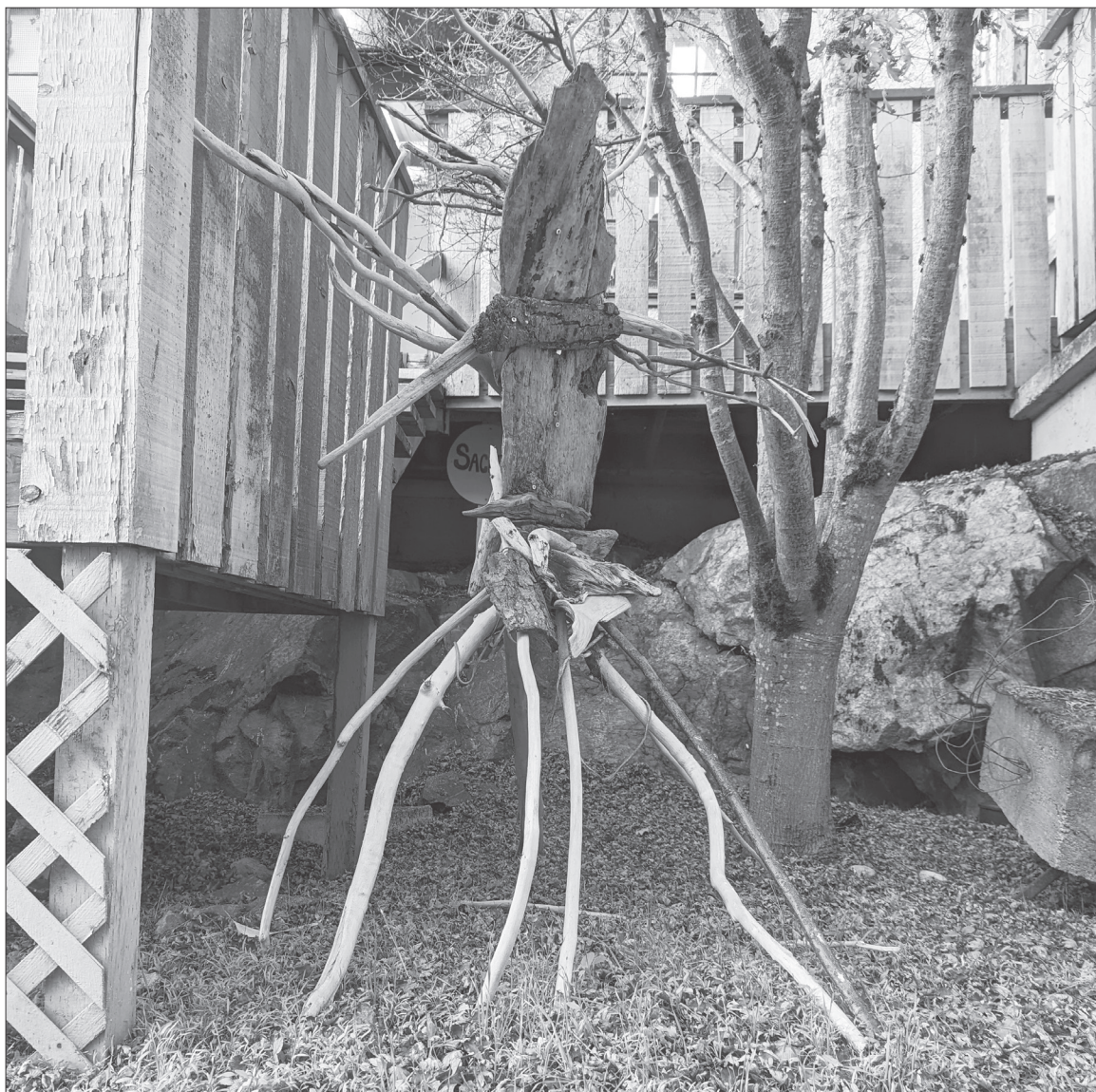
Camosun students are all members of The British Columbia Federation of Students.

mendation that we have is the funding model review to be published,” he says. “So universities, colleges, the administration of these universities and colleges, student societies, everyone participated in the funding review that hasn't been released. They are reviewing it at this point... We have been

patiently waiting for the funding review to be published. Once that has been published, obviously, we would hope that government starts on working towards a new funding model or fixing the things that are missing in the funding.”

See funditfixit.ca for more information on the campaign.

eyed on campus



GREG PRATT/NEXUS

A fantastical piece of art spotted at Camosun's Lansdowne campus on Wednesday, November 15.

contest

Find the hidden Nexus and win



JORDYN HAUKAAS/NEXUS

We've hidden this copy of our last issue somewhere on the Lansdowne campus. Find it and bring it in to our office for a prize: a book

courtesy of contest sponsors Arsenal Pulp Press! Nexus HQ is located at Richmond House 201 on Camosun's Lansdowne campus.

stage

Lenin's Embalmers uses gallows humour to make statement

"The gallows humour is actually fairly similar to a lot of the very modern doom humour in terms of, like, it's a way of coping and laughing when everything sucks."

ELIJAH BELL
LENIN'S EMBALMERS

MACKENZIE GIBSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

What would you do if Joseph Stalin asked you to come up with a way to preserve Vladimir Lenin's corpse for all time? Success would change your life forever; failure would end your life abruptly. This is the high-pressure scenario two Jewish scientists found themselves facing in 1920s Russia, and the stage play of this true story is being brought to life at The Canadian College of Performing Arts (CCPA) with *Lenin's Embalmers*.

Elijah Bell, who plays one of the two scientists, Vladimir Vorobiov, is excited to share the play's quick wit with audiences.

"What really interested me was the pace of it all," says Bell. "Because it's so quick, and it's so snapping. There can be two scenes happening at the same time, but the writing is constructed in a way that it all just kind of makes sense."

Despite the high stakes, the

story cuts its teeth by using pervasive and morbid comedy.

"During the Soviet Union, there was this special type of joke that kind of helps people cope, that points out the difference in how things should be and how they are," says Bell. "It takes place... under the kind of totalitarianism of Joseph Stalin and it highlights the hypocrisy and the the kind of imbalance of power... This idea of a communist joke is very present throughout, so it was definitely very mocking and poking fun at the structural integrity of these ideas."

While the jokes are based on a format which is 100 years old, Bell feels that the comedy may be familiar to today's audiences given our current social climate.

"The gallows humour is actually fairly similar to a lot of the very modern doom humour in terms of, like, it's a way of coping and laughing when everything sucks," says Bell.

The ideas explored in *Lenin's*



PHOTO PROVIDED

Lenin's Embalmers debuted in 2010 but has changed to remain contemporary; it runs from November 30 to December 3.

Embalmers are primed for this type of humour.

"One of the biggest themes of the play is definitely power, and this idea of how power changes hands, as well as this idea of legacy, and what you are leaving behind, what you will be remembered for."

Written by one of Canada's most produced playwrights, Vern Thiessen, *Lenin's Embalmers* debuted in 2010, with the ending taking place in modern day. Thirteen years later, Thiessen is aware that the world has changed a lot since he wrote it. Because of this, he's given CCPA the chance to create something entirely unique.

"It's very contemporary, it's very new," says Bell. "But along with our licence for this production, Vern has said, 'Hey, if you guys want to change the ending, feel free.'"

The cast and director worked together with Thiessen to present something more fitting to today's world. But one thing remains the same: no matter what, the world needs art. Not just art that deals with the abstract, but art that's self-aware about the time and space it's existing in, art that takes responsibility for what it's saying and what it implies. Bell, for one, takes that responsibility head on.

"Something that we have talked

quite a lot about is, no matter what you do, as an artist, you're always making a statement. With a play with the subject matter of Russian leaders—and corrupt Russian leaders on top of that—there's definitely a statement we're making, for sure."

Lenin's Embalmers
Various times, Thursday,
November 30 until Sunday,
December 3
Various prices,
Canadian College of
Performing Arts
ccpacanada.com

magic

Illusionist brings magic to art at UVic performance



PHOTO PROVIDED

Illusionist Vitaly Beckman will be performing at the University of Victoria on December 9.

ADRIANE DEWEY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For New Westminister-based illusionist Vitaly Beckman, the art of magic is exactly that: art. *Vitaly: An Evening of Wonders* is an interactive magical performance that showcases visual art, aiming to engage and connect the audience.

"It's really about bringing art to life, I would say, and that includes art such as paintings, sculptures, and even photographs," says Beckman. "My goal is to inspire [the audience] and make them experience something profound and magical at the same time."

Describing himself as a visual

person, Beckman uses his craft to express an appreciation for the important role art plays in the human experience.

"You can call it visual poetry, what I do, I try to express myself visually... and create visuals that are striking and moving, and at the same time seem to defy the laws of physics," he says.

Beckman's particular brand of magic tells stories and elicits emotions with illusions, a similarity that he feels extends to other performers.

"I also think that artists in general create illusions," he says. "We're using various mediums to create something that's not happening or

to tell a story that's happening, but only in our minds."

A fundamental feature of his work is originality, with all illusions in the show invented from scratch, rather than adapted or updated versions of previously attempted material.

"I really try and come up with something genuine as a form of expression and something that also hasn't been done before," he says. "I feel that I have something to say with magic, I have something to innovate rather than just entertain... The foundation is to have something fresh and new to say with magic."

He is, however, inspired by other

"I try to express myself visually... and create visuals that are striking and moving, and at the same time seem to defy the laws of physics."

VITALY BECKMAN
ILLUSIONIST

artists' work, such as films by his favourite director, Alfred Hitchcock.

"There is actually a very interesting correlation between mystery movies and magic because in both you have the suspense... and you're trying to uncover the layers of mystery in both," he says.

Beckman invites his audience to get involved in the production for the full effect.

"I do encourage people to come up on stage or just to participate from their own seat... The idea behind the interaction is that they're not just watching it on stage but they're actually experiencing it personally."

This participation is likely one of the reasons that Beckman's happy to be back in front of a live audience.

"All of us within this industry are so grateful to be back to perform for live audiences. I think it's key—people have to experience theatre in person," he says. "It's wonderful; I hope it continues."

Having brought this show to audiences in many parts of the

world, including recent American and upcoming Caribbean tours, Beckman says it will be enjoyed by all ages (although it is targeted at those eight years old and up).

"It's one of those rare instances where it crosses the age barrier, as well as language barrier. That's what's lovely to perform for international audiences as well, and it's so visual people really relate to it almost no matter what age they are."

Highlighting the unifying aspects of magic is important to Beckman.

"I'm hoping that the show connects all of us to our humanity and creativity more... and declutter from all the technology we're surrounded by day by day," he says. "It's so important to get back to our childlike sense of wonder that we all possess."

Vitaly: An Evening of Wonders
7 pm Saturday, December 9
Various prices, Farquhar
Auditorium, UVic
uvic.ca/farquhar

Holidays through the eyes of

Have we gone through some strange time warp or is it really the holiday season again? My editor is confirming that December is, in fact, inevitable, and in response to the upcoming holidays, *Nexus* writers have gathered together to share our stories, thoughts, and beliefs—and, of course, because we're journalists, the occasional challenge to consumerism.

Through reading our shared stories, it becomes evident that the holidays aren't some picture-perfect, poorly acted Hallmark movie, filled to the brim with whatever the hell Christmas cheer is (I'll stick to my Baileys and coffee, thanks). Instead, we offer a realistic insight into what the holidays mean to seven students who are navigating traditions, the ghosts of holidays past, Scrooge-like tendencies, and, of course, cherishing those we love. Whatever your holiday traditions are, we hope that you have a happy and rejuvenating break. We'll see you next semester.

Jordyn Haukaas, student editor

MACKENZIE GIBSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In the western world, Christmas is dominant and unavoidable. Even people with no religious inclination tend to default to it, simply because it's already everywhere. But while I enjoy my friends' Christmas festivities and the less-advertised but equally wonderful Hanukkah celebrations I've been invited to, I don't actually celebrate either tradition.

I'm a Pagan. I come by it naturally, with a long family history of practicing witches. (No, none of us think we can fly or transfigure objects, and, yes, I'm a firm defender of science.) Our focus is on finding spiritual fulfilment through a cyclical relationship with the Earth and her changing seasons. During the holiday season, I celebrate the longest nights of the year: the winter solstice.

On December 21, the sun will set after only eight hours of daylight. This pattern continues for three days, after which the days will start to become longer and we begin the light half of the year. Through the solstice, I celebrate the rebirth of the cycle of the sun.

It's almost impulsive to seek comfort through this long night, and we all have our rituals to generate that comfort. Most of these involve creating light and gathering our loved ones close to make sure we're all well-fed. In a lot of ways my celebration is no different, especially since many Christmas traditions were incorporated from Pagan traditions that villages of recent converts weren't quite willing to give up. The Christmas tree, for one; kissing under the mistletoe, for another.

For me, the solstice is a time to tell all our best stories to make each other laugh, light a fire with offerings of pine, and spend intentional time with my home. It's important to me to make food from scratch—preferably with local ingredients—so I can spend the time full of attention toward and gratitude for the harvest of the year.

When it comes to gifts, I'm necessarily split. For large family gatherings with my partner's family, the gifts are curated to their needs, but when I can openly share my own holiday with those close to me, the gifts I give are all created. The function is to give something with a little bit of myself in it. Gifts also aren't limited to the people around me, but include giving to the environment I call home, or reconnecting with my ancestors. Seed ornaments are left outside for travelling birds, our cats are treated to a long brush by the fire, and offerings of oranges, candles, and hot food are left on my family altar.

I feel lucky that I get to spend my holidays this way, in such deep connection.

DANIEL ELLERTON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Christmas is magic.

I like to reminisce of my childhood on the farm around Christmas, with its warm mix of wood smoke, fresh baked bread, and cider. Us kids would be outside catching fat snowflakes on our tongues, our coats and toques covered in a thick white blanket of fluff, the adults laughing at us through the window as I got smoked in the face by a snowball. My grandma always had hot cocoa for us when we came in from the cold. The crackle of the fire was disturbed by a sudden loud pop as a log released its steam and us kids charging inside, our noses leaking from the frosty air outside.

Christmas morning greeted us with the aroma of bacon and eggs as we all jumped out of bed not bothering to even wipe the crust from our eyes. Granddad would sit at the table cool-as-a-cucumber dipping his toast in warm milk and pretending it was just another day. After threatening to start chores—to the many protests from us kids—we followed him upstairs to the treasure that Santa brought.

Those times are especially dear to me as it was one of the few times when our family would gather. My cousins, aunts, and uncles were always there for Christmas. This was the best time of the year. We took them on adventures through the waist-high snow to toboggan, built snow forts, and made snow angels everywhere. We had the most epic snowball fights, and when we were done pelting each other with snow, we rolled the balls into a snowman or two.

As I get older, Christmas has taken on a different meaning. As a young man, Christmas was all about the parties, the glam, and the consumerism. Now that I have kids, I find Christmas to be the most wonderful time of the year again. Seeing the reactions of children around Christmas is magic in itself. The ear-to-ear grin my son had with his new skateboard or the slack-jawed expression my daughter had at getting the Sonic the Hedgehog backpack she wanted from Santa were priceless.

I enjoy taking the kids to see the lights through town singing Christmas song remakes as we drive from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. It's like Halloween—they race from light display to light display as if trick-or-treating. I love when the kids ask "Is that Santa?" when they see a plane in the night sky.

Most of all, I love the spirit of Christmas. Christmas may have started as a religious holiday, but for many it has transcended religion to become a spirit of giving and happiness. There's something special about seeing a couple stroll hand-in-hand down a snowy walkway lit by the glowing yellow globes hanging off decorative poles. The magic of Christmas lies within the spirit of each person's heart.

So, this year, I will sit with my cider as the fire log crackles on the TV and my kids rip open paper like demons and enjoy the magic we all share with our families and friends. This year, I will again be at Our Place volunteering my time for those that have lost that spirit of love in their hearts. This year, I will share the love that was blessed to me with everyone and share the magic of Christmas. This is what Christmas means to me.

The yearly holiday season brings with it "Christmases" and "holidays," with tidings abound. But why? Christians celebrate Christmas, as well as a magical, body-positive holiday.

The idea seems to be rooted in rote tradition: as Christmas is a holiday, it's a worldly differences aside and be nice to one another. The idea of Christmas norms, while the starry-eyed me recognizes that regular people should embrace a culturally excusable reason to not be asshole.

Growing up, Christmas was my favourite holiday, but it was cut down into the tepid reality of torn paper, cheap toys, and a long drive home.

As I grew older and more jaded, I began to see the same old other happy holidays on Christmas Eve go right back to the same old Blowout. One perspective is to wonder why we bother to celebrate if we can put the effort into being nice for three weeks of the year.

Perhaps our pleasantries are disingenuous in the first place, treating back into our fretful ruminations. Perhaps the sugar crash, we cannot help but return to baseline levels of happiness as humans, if the concept of "goodwill toward men" were to be taken seriously.

We live in fear of the stranger in the shadows, of the unknown. We can't seem to spare the energy. What this reveals is a lack of rest easy, assured that even if we don't know the person, we can't lower our defenses and daring to see the stranger in the shadows.

JORDYN HAUKAAS
STUDENT EDITOR

Looking back on my childhood, Christmas was complete and utter ecstasy. Is there any drug on the market as powerful as waking up on Christmas morning as a kid? (If there is, please don't give it to me—it sounds addictive.)

It wasn't that my family was rich and I was showered in lavish gifts or whisked away to expensive vacations. Instead, my Christmas revolved around our large family unit, and nothing made me happier than full living rooms filled with loud voices and the perfect level of family chaos that would scare any outsider away.

While Christmas Day was the main event, I now realize that I loved the lead-up even more as a kid. I loved how, throughout December, the house would smell of pine from the humble tree we carefully selected from the old Langford tree market.

I can feel the excitement now, remembering how my siblings, cousins, and I would sit by the front window and pray for snow so we could take our crazy carpets down the big hill on our street. When it finally did, our parents would have to drag our nearly frozen and bruised bodies into our respective homes; we would've stayed out there all night if we could.

Things have changed a lot since I was kid, and I used to get sad about family traditions fading into obscurity. I'm realizing that yes, of course, a lot of the magic of Christmas has died (cue Cindy-Lou Who: "Christmas, Why Can't I Find You?").

To offset the Christmas blues, I've decided to sprinkle some magic back into my life by doing the traditions that make me happy. For example, using the holiday season to celebrate the people closest to me—that could mean making them a card, a homemade gift, or carving out time for a dinner or a movie night.

And some traditions that I created on my own since leaving my family home are regulars now, like making myself a rum and eggnog and throwing on my favourite Christmas movie, *Gremlins*, while I wrap presents. Or decorating my apartment with as many fairy lights as possible.

Whatever the year or season, I'm learning that creating my own traditions is just as fun as reminiscing about my old ones. While it's bittersweet to admit that this holiday season I won't be waiting by my front window praying for snow, I will, however, be at my front door eagerly awaiting the arrival of friends for a board-game night. My house won't smell like a fresh pine tree that I picked out with my family, but this year my boyfriend and I will go to the store and choose the perfect faux tree for our first Christmas living together.

I think the most important thing I've learned about traditions is that they grow and evolve as I do, and that's okay. I can't wait to see what new traditions I create this year.

f Camosun College students

Background photo by Greg Pratt/Nexus

EMILY WELCH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I grew up in a split family, switching week from week from my mom's to my dad's. The two houses could not have been more different. My dad had a beautiful house in south Fairfield with all the comforts of home. My mom and step-dad had a piece of property in the Highlands, which they worked for years building a house on. There were many years in the Highlands where our family struggled; the house was being built so we lived in the workshop. We went without electricity for two years, running water for four. We ate a great deal of rice and beans; the household money was paying off the mortgage and the building supplies. We had a wood stove and kerosene lamps. Even without the normal amenities, though, our household was filled with love.

Christmas meant something different in each house. I remember presents and stockings in both places, but shockingly different atmospheres. It seemed, looking back, to be more traditionally commercial in the Fairfield house. It also seemed stressful and pressure-filled—my sister got sick every year. The Highlands house had fewer gifts, but there was a huge tree, cut from the property. The glow from the kerosene lamps cast a golden sheen over us all as we sang Christmas carols, making the entire scene seem truly holy.

There's one more piece to add, though. I've written before about my time on the streets in the Vancouver Eastside when I was a young adult. Christmas was a distant memory, something I knew I wasn't going to experience except for going to a local food bank where I stood in line to eat a fairly sparse and tasteless form of Christmas dinner while a Christian rock band played, singing about the importance of gratitude and finding Jesus. During these dark times my head filled with memories of the glow of kerosene lamps, and it gave me strength to carry on another year.

Christmas is a time for hope, I believe. All my vastly different holiday experiences help me truly understand the meanings behind the carols we sing. The memories I have of my childhood and, later, the darkness I felt during my years on the Eastside help fill me with empathy and hope for those of us less fortunate. It's helped me realize over the years that Christmas isn't just something we experience, but something we have to discover. The true meaning of it lies within.

LANE CHEVRIER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Christmas spirit," wherein people wish goodwill to their fellow man, and cheer and gladness at the birth of Christ, but everyone else only rejoices in the spirit of rampant consumerism. The Dutchman with a claustrophobia fetish, neither of which embodies gregariousness. Children we learn that Christmas is a time where people are supposed to put their best foot forward. A cynic in me assumes that people are mindless drones who blindly follow cultural traditions regardless of whether or not there's a logical reason to do so, people tend to eagerly embrace each other all of the time.

Because for some reason, my family stopped fighting for three weeks. This period of peace on Christmas Day, when the unearthly hype of unopened gifts had jarringly collapsed and nausea from too much Pot of Gold chocolate.

The senselessness of the Christmas spirit, observing the same people who wished each other well, yelling and leaning on their car horns in crowded parking lots during Boxing Day, trying to be nice to each other for such a short period of time, but I prefer to wonder this: Why, out of the year, why can't we wish each other goodwill during the other 49 weeks? First place, like the brief forced smile we give strangers in the elevator before re-energizing. The extra energy required to be effusive to strangers is too great to sustain, and, like a lack of energy. Or, perhaps Christmas spirit actually shows what we're capable of when we're culturally encouraged more than once a year.

Love goes beyond our trusted circle, because compassion takes conscious work, and we lack of community. With community comes familiarity and trust, because we can't be next to us in the elevator, they surely have our best interests in mind. We are safe. It can easily become a year-long reality if we decide, as a community, to put the effort into it, and the shadows as merely a reflection of ourself.

AJ AIKEN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Growing up, my family had two sets of Christmas traditions, depending on whether we were with my mom's or my dad's family. My mom is German, and her family celebrates on Christmas Eve. We would go to church then come home to a cocktail-style spread of food and open our presents. My dad's side is British—on Christmas Day at my grandparents' house, we'd wait for everyone to arrive, then we'd open presents. When I was about seven years old, my cousins and I started playing darts (the '80s were dangerous times) while we waited for the traditional turkey dinner to be served.

At home we did the typical decorating of the tree and hanging of stockings that my grandma crocheted. The tree had to be perfect, coloured ornaments evenly distributed among the handmade ones. My mom's perfectionism was a tad annoying.

Baking was more fun; decorating sugar cookies was my favourite part of Christmas. My mom still bakes enough for multiple families without any plans for company. Thankfully, the Christmas baking travels well, and she ships some to me from Regina.

Now that I'm a mom, our traditions have changed significantly. First off, we celebrate St. Nicholas Day, a German holiday, on December 6. St. Nicholas gave gold coins to poor families with daughters so they'd have dowries to offer potential husbands.

We don't have a Christmas tree at home. Neither my son nor I enjoy decorating Christmas trees, so we skip it. To appease my mom one Christmas when she was here, we flipped a green tomato cage upside down, tied the top together, and put lights and a star on it. That's the closest we'll get to a Christmas tree.

Another twist is that we don't exchange gifts; we have "silly stockings." We prefer making memories and feel Christmas has become too materialistic. The meaning of Christmas, to me, is a reminder that family needs to stick together and press forward when the world tells you there's no room for you.

So instead of gifts, we agree on a set amount of money to spend on stockings, usually around \$20, and buy stuff for the sole purpose of a good laugh or to tease each other. For example, because I leave dirty coffee spoons on the kitchen counter, my son bought me plastic spoons. I bought my son paper straws because he hates them. My mom got a can of "milk drink" due to a funny cartoon boy on the label. Of course, St. Nicholas puts gold coins in our stockings.

Christmas dinner isn't turkey; it's BBQ ribs. My kid doesn't like turkey and cooking a turkey for myself isn't appealing. We order in BBQ ribs from our favourite BBQ joint; no cooking for me.

We often get quizzical looks from family and friends when explaining our traditions, but we simply smile and shrug our shoulders. There are no rules to making traditions; our traditions follow our values and make Christmas fun for us, and that's what counts.

DOMINIQUE ATHERTON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I've always loved Christmas more than any other holiday—even more than my birthday. That's thanks to my family, especially my parents, who always made Christmas the best time of the year.

Growing up in England with a household of six kids and two parents, the holidays were full of laughter, food, songs, chaos, and so much love it was cheesy. It still is. We may have not had much, but my parents never made us kids feel like that. We were flush with joy, something no amount of money can buy.

One of my fondest memories was each of us decorating the outside of a black garbage bag with tinsel, glitter, and whatever else we could find and sticking it under the tree for Father Christmas to fill up with presents. It sounds ridiculous now, but I have nothing but happiness around the memory. Every Christmas morning, us kids would wake up early, sneak into the eldest sibling's room, and sit and talk while mum and dad made sure Father Christmas had been with the gifts. Of course, we know now this was just clever lying. (Thanks, parents, for teaching me how to lie so well.)

While present pandemonium was happening, my dad was in the kitchen whipping up bacon butties (also known as... sandwiches) for everyone, a tradition that's still a must to this day. Christmas without a bacon butty is like a rainy day without a cuppa tea... it just doesn't happen.

Leading up to Christmas we always had a Christmas tree decorating party. Mum would make finger foods, and no one could eat until they helped decorate the tree, because otherwise, according to my mum, everyone would bugger off after eating and the tree would remain bare. Along with decorations, our tree was always adorned with tree chocolate, and leading up to December 25 we were allowed one tree chocolate a day. But we were little shits and would sneak a chocolate when no one was looking, or hide them in the middle of the tree so no one could find them. We still do this... So, yeah, "little shits" is still accurate.

Our traditions today are much the same: tree party, bacon butty, and just a really good time, with a few adjustments. My partner and I always order Indian food on the 24th and enjoy *Die Hard* (well, he enjoys... I tolerate). And during New Year's we get more Indian food and enjoy the *Top Gun* movies (these I actually like). But one thing never changes for my family: the love and joy we get from just hanging out is the best tradition and one I'm so grateful to have.

One of the things I've noticed with the holidays nowadays is how complicated people try to make it. Gifts are plentiful and people stress themselves out with finding the finances and the time to make it all happen. If I could give anyone one piece of advice, it would be to keep it simple. Spending time with those you love is a much fuller gift than anything you could buy at a store.

stage

Stupid Fucking Bird more than a stupid fucking play



MORGAN GADD/THEATRE INCONNU

Stupid Fucking Bird runs until December 16 at Theatre Inconnu.

MACKENZIE GIBSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With a provocative title and a deep connection to classical theatre, *Stupid Fucking Bird* is taking over Theatre Inconnu. The play is a modern retelling of Chekhov's *The Seagull* that remains quite faithful to the original plot. Director Morgan Gadd's appreciation for the source material deeply inspired the direction taken for the play.

"*The Seagull* was a story about a group of people, mostly family, who are estate owners in Russia at the turn of the century," says Gadd. "And Chekhov himself... a person who was really in tune with the people and the times of his day, he was aware that society was breaking up, coming apart at the seams, and that there were big social changes coming. And, of course, this is the turn of the 19th century into the

20th century. And the Russian Revolution is just a few years away. I think he sensed it was coming. Because the characters in that play, who are all landowners, they feel that something's coming, but they don't know what it is. But they're very unsettled. They're trying to figure it out. They're trying to find out ways to kind of cope with the changes that are hitting them and tearing their lives apart, basically."

For the story's main character, Con (from the original character Konstantin), the main goal is to create art that can soothe the imminent transitions in life.

"Con is a struggling young playwright," says Gadd. "He's trying to find new forms of art that will address the issues that he's got. Things like identity issues, who are we as people, social issues like how do we cope when the government doesn't work? How do we cope when we're surrounded by situations outside of our control, like climate change, things that reach into and affect our lives?"

However, those worried about the story being more of a lecture have nothing to fear. While the political motivations for the character's art are present, Con is also motivated by love. He writes this new play for Nina, the woman he's pining for—but, as always in drama, it's more complicated than that.

"Almost every character is in love with someone who doesn't love them back."

MORGAN GADD
STUPID FUCKING BIRD

"In both plays, there is a pentangle of unrequited love among the characters—each character, almost every character, is in love with someone who doesn't love them back," says Gadd.

The original play, however, brings some complications to the stage—namely the large cast. Despite Gadd's love for *The Seagull*, he says it wouldn't be accessible for the theatre.

"We were not in a position to perform the original. And the main reason, I guess, you could say is that the cast is huge, like 14, or something like that. Back in the day, they had large productions, with lots of people in their shows; now this play only has seven."

Despite the reduced cast, *Stupid Fucking Bird* is still ambitious for its scope.

"By modern community theatre standards, [seven] is a pretty large cast," says Gadd.

Gadd speaks warmly about the atmosphere of community theatre—and this production brings in

the best of the actors they've already worked with.

"Very often, and especially in community theatre, you end up with plays with many new people that don't really know each other, haven't worked before... It's often an entry point for new young and aspiring actors. So what we have in this play, is that all of the characters in *Stupid Fucking Bird*, I would call them... veterans of Theatre Inconnu."

For Gadd, the magic of community theatre is about just that: community.

"It's about ensemble," he says, "it's not about ego."

Stupid Fucking Bird
Various days and times,
Wednesday, November 29
until Saturday, December 16
Various prices
(student tickets \$10),
Theatre Inconnu
theatreinconnu.com

review

The Importance of Being Earnest a creative success

Although written more than a century ago, the stylings of Wilde's farcical comedy still translate to today's audience, able to make even the most bitter, maritally-obliged attendees chuckle sensibly.

LYDIA ZULETA JOHNSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I arrived to a packed house at opening night of the University of Victoria's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* on Thursday, November 9. The Phoenix Theatre was abuzz with anticipatory chatter as we waited for the red curtain to be drawn.

With programmes in hand, we educated ourselves on the cultural zeitgeist of the mid-'90s—1890s, that is.

The Importance of Being Earnest, originally written in 1895 by Irish playwright Oscar Wilde, has been lent a new light by guest director Alistair Newton. The play follows John Worthing and his good friend Algernon Moncrieff as they navigate through a tangled web of lies in attempts to break free from social obligations and woo two eligible bachelorettes all the while.

The three acts are divided into simplistic monochrome colour schemes, starting with green, fol-

lowed by yellow, and ending with red, each as vibrant as the last. This choice, realized by set designer Zoe Bechtold, was particularly pleasing and unique. The three saturated locations were colour-coordinated with matching Victorian wardrobes, complete with bustles, feather fascinators, ascot ties and fans—many, many fans.

The humour in Wilde's writing is among *The Importance's* strong suits, executed sharply here by the talented cast of performers. Jack Storwick in the role of Algernon sank into his character seamlessly and proved to be especially amusing to watch. Although written more than a century ago, the stylings of Wilde's farcical comedy still translate to today's audience, able to make even the most bitter, maritally-obliged attendees chuckle sensibly.

During its two-and-a-half-hour runtime, the cast maintained impressive continuous energy, comedic timing and synchronicity. I



DEAN KALYAN

The Importance of Being Earnest was recently performed at UVic.

commend all cast and crew for what must have been a meticulous rehearsing process to achieve such precise delivery of fast-paced Victorian English.

Spliced in among Wilde's original script, atop the show and following the 15-minute intermission, were two stand-alone drag musical acts portraying historical Victorian-era drag performers Lady Stella Clinton and Vesta Tilley. Played by Claudia Fraser, Tilley was brought into the eyes and ears of the audience through a captivating single-song concert. Fraser took charge of the stage and even

audience members, with comedy, poise, and boldness. Although it was key to Newton that *The Importance* stay true to its original script, liberties such as this bring forward his creative voice.

When the curtain lowered, and claps and cheers for the thespians faded out, the lobby then filled with the familiar faces of intermissions—a soundscape of pleased audience members earnestly conversing amidst \$2 cash-only treats and beverages.

The night was a success for those involved and audience members alike.

New Music Revue



Clowns

Endless

(Fat Wreck Chords)

4.5/5

Good hardcore punk rock shocks a person into existence. Melbourne-based Clowns' latest album *Endless* effectively achieves this through its thematic approach—the underlying concept being immortality—and by drawing on the genre's many influences.

After a brief intro featuring a primal scream, the band dives into opening track "Formaldehyde," a declaration of thematic intention over a skate-punk-style shout-chorus. The tracks that follow provide similar catharsis, notably "Bisexual Awakening," exploring the power of self-actualization, or "Z3r0s&0n3s," which touches on the album's theme through a fictional notion of uploading one's consciousness digitally.

Lyrical the album is varied, and while exhibiting death-metal-style growling on tracks like "Death Wish," it remains audible and accessible. The instrumentation strikes a balance between the simplicity of punk and the more involved metal-esque guitar and keyboard work.

Endless is an epic representation of immortality in its many forms.

-Stephen Fincham

stage
Peter and the Star Catcher brings adventure to stage

“It’s really interesting, it’s fun, kind of a fascinating adventure play that I think a lot of people will resonate [with] if they know the Peter Pan story.”

EVAN FRAYNE
 PETER AND THE STAR CATCHER

NICOLAS IHMELS
 STAFF WRITER

This holiday season, the Canadian College of Performing Arts (CCPA) is bringing *Peter and the Star Catcher* to the stage. The play will be directed by CCPA chair of acting Evan Frayne, who says it will take audiences on a fun adventure with all of their favourite characters from the original story.

“*Peter and the Star Catcher*, it’s based on Dave Barry’s novel *Peter and the Starcatchers*,” he says. “So, it’s essentially like a backstory or a prequel to *Peter Pan*, so it gives a backstory for some of the characters from that original story. It’s essentially about a boy who is sort of sold off to some merchants and is stowed away on a ship and we meet all of the characters, or who will become the characters, from the Peter Pan story throughout the play. It’s really interesting, it’s fun, kind of a fascinating adventure play that I think a lot of people will

resonate [with] if they know the Peter Pan story.”

Frayne says that some of the themes in this play are about finding your own identity and the definition of community and leadership.

“Some of the themes of *Peter and the Star Catcher* are really about community,” he says. “Finding community, finding a home, themes about identity and also themes about leadership and who should be leaders, and what are the qualities of a leader.”

In 2012, Frayne saw *Peter and the Star Catcher* on Broadway, which inspired him when it came time to choose a production for CCPA’s second year students.

“I think the original impulse was actually seeing the production of it, seeing a really outstanding production of the play, and then thinking about what would be a great experience for these actors that are in a training program,” he says. “For a lot of them it’s among

the first show that they’ll do so we thought it would be a really good challenge for them. It’s a big ensemble piece—there were 12 actors in the original production, but we have 20 in ours. It’ll be a really fun production for people to watch. Essentially for a lot of the play the whole cast will be on stage. They’ll, you know, create things. It’s essentially story theatre so it’s using your body and simple props to tell the story...it’s [a] very multifaceted, multimedia kind of show.”

One of the challenges of directing a play for students is juggling the rehearsal process, but Frayne believes it’s going well so far regardless.

“Typically in a rehearsal period, we’ll work for three weeks, full-time, you know, six days a week,” he says. “So you can really build up momentum and see the piece come together because you’re with it every day. In this process the students are doing classes eight hours a day... So that’s, I’d say, the biggest challenge is just really getting that sense of momentum and getting everybody feeling like they’re working towards that goal and having that goal in mind as we go to rehearsals.”

The students performing in the play are in their second year of training at CCPA and are hard at work.

“We’re still rehearsing, so we’ll continue rehearsing until we open in December,” says Frayne. “So it’s been very spread out, which is an interesting process... In a way it’s been really good because that



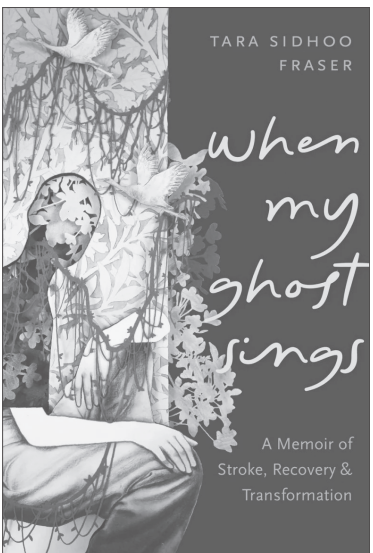
PHOTO PROVIDED

Peter and the Star Catcher director Evan Frayne.

gives the actors time to learn some things away from the rehearsal hall. It’s been fun, it’s been a really positive experience. I think having all the actors there for pretty much the whole rehearsal period has been great, lots of people in the room, lots of energy, lots of ideas.”

Peter and the Star Catcher
 Various times,
 Thursday, December 14 to
 Sunday, December 17
 Various prices,
 Canadian College
 of Performing Arts
 ccpacanada.com

review
When My Ghost Sings descriptive exploration of stroke recovery and love



ALEXANDRA MAXWELL
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Upon first reading *When My Ghost Sings* by Tara Sidhoo Fraser, I expected a story describing the author’s experience before and after recovering from a brain injury, but what I didn’t expect was the beautiful, vivid imagery that places the reader in the story and hurls a variety of emotions at them.

When My Ghost Sings, Fraser’s debut book, is a compelling memoir that explores her life after suffering from a stroke caused by a rare brain mutation called arteriovenous malformation, or AVM. The stroke also caused Fraser to lose all memories of her former life.

Through her Ghost (who she

used to be before her stroke), Fraser attempts to piece together her past with the help of fragmented memories that Ghost presents to her in a slideshow or a misty movie. The story switches focus between Fraser’s life with her partner Jude, and documents their combined struggles of Fraser’s effort to uncover her past. The story is juxtaposed by sweet, happy moments with Jude and sorrowful, hollow moments of the past.

With the help of The Boy, Ghost’s former boyfriend, Fraser is able to come to a hazy understanding of the events that occurred before her stroke took place. Despite being present for the entirety of Ghost’s death, The Boy often provides Fraser with vague descriptions of what happened that morning in November. The Boy is surrounded with a sense of mystery, as Ghost wails her song and wishes to be with him, despite the fact that Fraser has found her own love away from her forgotten past.

By uncovering and reliving the memories of Ghost’s past, Fraser is able to come to a better understanding of the events that led to Ghost’s death. By understanding and accepting the events of her past, Fraser provides Ghost with closure and Ghost knows that she will not be forgotten.

Fraser uses her gift of imagery

and descriptive language to paint a picture of her story, whether it be the tall trees of Vancouver Island, the quaint coffee shops of Seattle, or even the hospital where Ghost died. Fraser’s gift of language makes Ghost’s hazy, distant memories feel as though the reader is a part of this strange dream-like sequence of events. The use of descriptive language makes people within her story more life-like—you can feel the love she holds for them within each description.

The book would be best for those who would like to have a better understanding of strokes

The use of descriptive language makes people within Fraser’s story more life-like—you can feel the love she holds for them within each description.

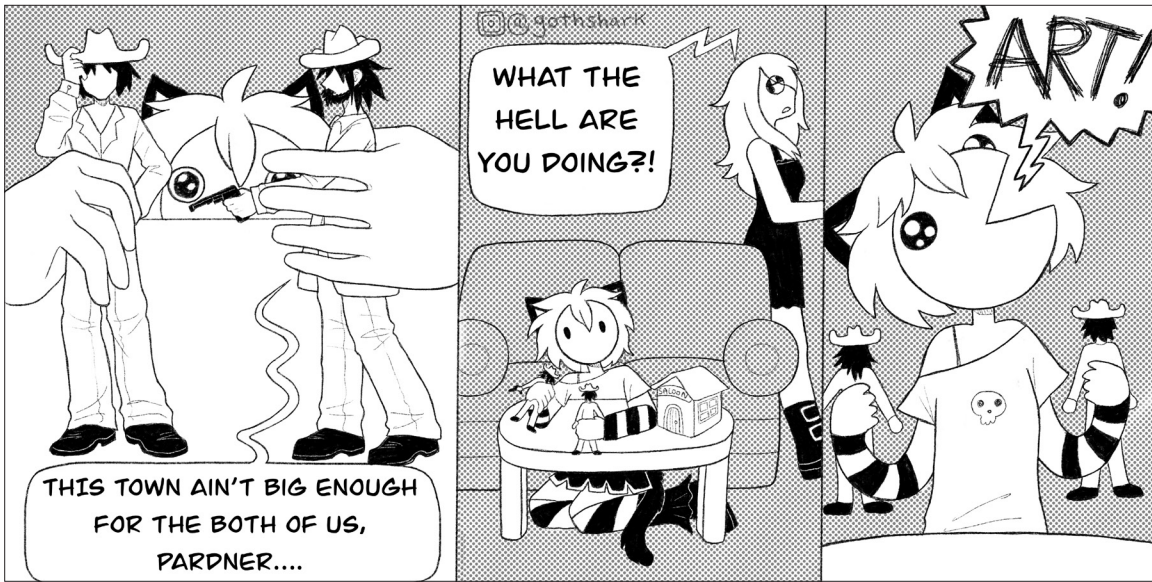
and brain injuries and how it affects those who have them. The story would also be great for someone who enjoys vivid, cinematic imagery that takes you on a unique and powerful journey.

When My Ghost Sings presents the themes of recovery and living with the aftermath of a stroke, but, most importantly, presents an overall theme of love and creating a love that is wholly your own.

Takwak Comics - Recla Ker



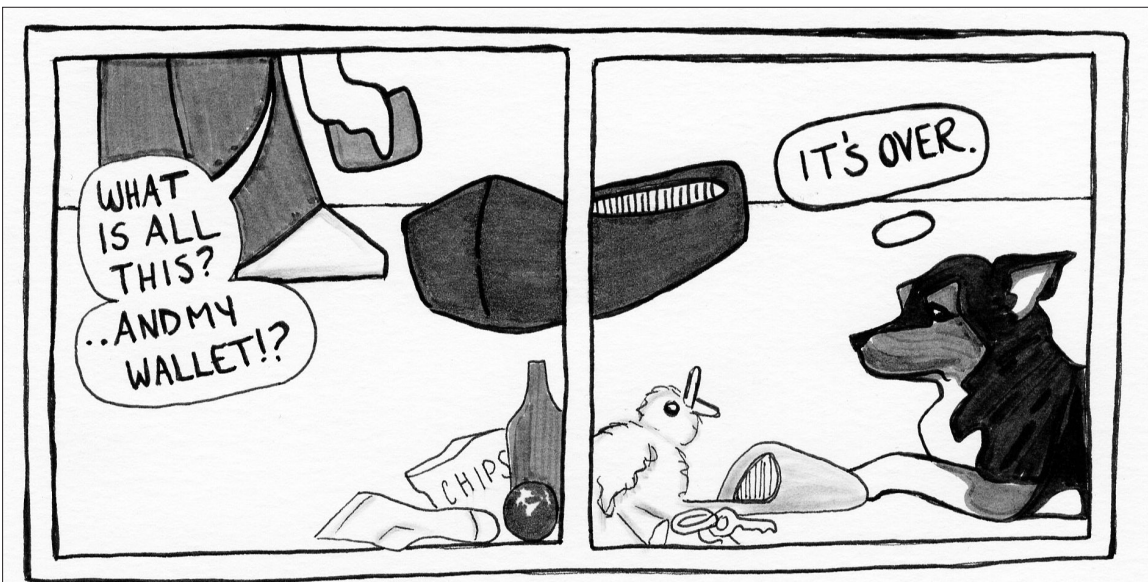
Ruby Rioux and the Bats from Saturn - Ray Nufer



Brainrot - Kit Miller



Mateo - Jade Greive



wildthings - Finnegan Sinclair Howes



Things That Happen - Jaiden Fowler



Creature Feature - Jenna Victoria



What's This? A College Meme? - Naomi Fisher



NEXUS

Got something to say?

Letters to the editor:
editor@nexusnewspaper.com





Kiryn's Wellness Corner

by Kiryn Quinn

Brussels sprouts and deep camel pose

If you grew up in North America, you probably experienced the occasional appearance of Brussels sprouts, particularly at Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts, and vowed as child that when you grew up, you'd never eat another one. Most likely, your Brussels sprouts were served boiled, soggy, and plain. Frankly, I feel like this otherwise delicious, nutritious, and crunchy cruciferous deserves better.

Chock full of antioxidants and fibre, this little globe of snug green leaves, when prepared properly, should be a welcome addition to your weekly meal plan. Chopped in halves or quarters, then baked or lightly sauteed with fresh cloves of garlic and a bit of sesame oil and, voila, your relationship to Brussels sprouts will be forever changed.

One of my favourite ways to enjoy them is halved and added

into a large pot of tomato and root vegetable soup. Wait to add them until the last 15 minutes of simmering, and you'll be delighted by the crunchy contrast they provide to your soup. The cruciferous family of vegetables includes a wide range of veggies: kale, bok choy, cauliflower, broccoli, arugula, collard greens, and radishes, for example. These are all known to provide similar benefits that help combat heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

My last article introduced you to an easy modification of camel pose, performed while sitting in your chair.

To explore this posture and its benefits on a deeper level, come down to the floor and with something comfortable like a folded towel or yoga mat underneath you, stand on your knees. Your hips and shoulders should initially be stacked

directly over your knees as you place the palms of your hands on your lower back and upper buttocks for support. Fingers can be facing down or out to the sides depending on the flexibility of your wrists. Lift your pelvic floor muscles upwards (think preventing urination), draw your navel towards your spine for core support and slowly begin bending backwards through your mid and upper back without falling backwards from the knees. The head and gaze can stay slightly forward or look up to the sky.

For a deeper experience, allow the head to gently lean back further, tracing the gaze behind you. A slow three to five breaths will help open the whole front of the body, including the deep hip flexors while strengthening the back muscles and improving overall posture.

Until next time, keep it real.



Not the Last Word

by Emily Welch

The fight against stigma

Something that's always on my mind is the stigma that continues to exist in the world. Society as a whole has deposited people into certain roles, and it's a time where people are fighting back against the role they may have been cast in.

What is the role that addicted people have fallen into? People who've lost themselves. People who don't care. People who'll rip you off. People who have no value as people anymore.

When people are devalued, they experience a loss of control over their lives. Addicts have been told for a long time that being addicted is wrong, that it's something to be ashamed of. When someone becomes addicted, it becomes their identity. Whatever they used to enjoy doing—creating art, writing stories, playing sports, acting in plays—gets lost in order for the person to embrace their new addicted lifestyle. Not only do they have to

spend their time trying to find ways to make money and do the next hustle, but whatever changes they might try to make revolves around their addiction. In meetings they stand up and introduce themselves as an addict. The part of them—the artist, the athlete, the actor—that used to be so essential to their identity is discouraged again.

Unless they are rich and famous, people who use drugs are an example of a group of people who have been categorized a certain way and who might not want to be in that role anymore.

Over the years these people have been conveniently deposited into certain areas (the skid rows), or into prisons and forgotten, which promotes more pain and isolation, and leads to heavier drug use and fewer lifestyle options. If some time was spent with these people there would undoubtedly be discoveries made.

Hidden inside their identity of "the addict" will be fine people with all sorts of gifts to offer.

If we can somehow lose the shame that surrounds drug use, and encourage people back into society and help them find their lost identities and passions, I believe that balance could be achieved. If shame is taken away, then so is fear.

We gasp all the time about how people with mental illnesses were treated before the 20th century; they were shamed, locked up, and hidden away from society.

It's my belief that society does the same thing today with people who use drugs.

In order to create a functional society with less deaths, we should be inviting people who use to be part of society, and we should all try to find a way to work together.

We might find that we're not that different from each other after all.



Nature Tongue

by Bo Large

Gender disparity in Engineering

What does an institution that honours differences look like? What does it look like to not just make shallow blanket statements of desired change or welcoming a specific group into a space, but to take action to create systemic change?

Too many times people throw in the flag, deeming something incorrigible, when really not enough effort was made by those who have the power to make a change in the space.

I want to bring forward the topics of patriarchal sexism and gender disparity in the Engineering space and, specifically, how it relates to Camosun College. As someone who is AFAB in the engineering program, I have personally experienced this and listened to what other students have shared with me.

In the Camosun Technology wing, there are photos of past graduating Engineering classes. You'd be correct in guessing that,

due to history's blatant sexism, there are approximately two or three female-presenting people for every 30 or so male-presenting people.

However, I think you'd be shocked to know that, from my experience, these numbers have not drastically changed.

There seems to be still less than a handful of women and gender-diverse people in each classroom of male-presenting people. It leaves me to question how Engineering studies could still have such a drastic imbalance in gender and what actions are being taken at a systemic level to change this.

Did you know that there are free menstruation products at many of the buildings at the Interurban campus, but not in the Centre for Business and Access, the John Drysdale Building, or the Technologies Building? Why is it that the three buildings with areas of study that historically have less women, do

not also provide free menstruation products, a basic human right?

When I look at the future of the field, I would love it be supportive and empowering of the physical realities that having a womb has on one's body and advocating that this isn't a detriment to one's career.

The whole human race exists because people with wombs have grown and birthed it; this should be revered as brilliant and supported. This could look like one or two paid days off monthly for menstruating individuals in the workplace, along with online lectures and test accommodations in educational institutions. These concepts could seem radical only because damaging patriarchal ideologies are present in the collective psyche. Many cis males are not even aware these ideologies exist due to the lack of AFAB people in these spaces, let alone those who feel safe enough to address them.



Nic's Flicks

by Nicolas Ihmels

The best and worst of 2023

It's almost time for winter break, and that means it's time for my top five best and worst movies of the year. Let's start with the best.

5: *Barbie*

I loved this movie. I loved its imperative feminist messages about empowerment. I enjoyed the lead comic performances from Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling as well as the film's meta humour. I was flabbergasted at the design work done on Barbieland, which is Oscar-worthy and totally captures what it was like playing with these dolls.

4: *The Holdovers*

This is easily one of the greatest Christmas holidays movies I've seen in a very long time. Paul Giamatti is fantastic as the universally disliked history teacher who, through one fateful holiday season, becomes a better man and teacher than he thought he ever could be. He does a really great job in portraying his character's care for his students as well as his dark sense of humour.

3: *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*

I love everything about *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. From its amazing story that tackles relatable themes such as self-identity and the importance of writing your own story to its stellar animation styles and its well-voiced cast, this movie is a huge success.

2: *Killers of the Flower Moon*

Martin Scorsese has proven time and time again that he is one of cinema's finest masters. Thanks to Scorsese's masterful handling on the themes and ideas of David Grann's book *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*, and the knockout

performances by Leonardo DiCaprio and Lily Gladstone, this is one of the finest films of the year.

1: *Oppenheimer*

Rounding out the list is the second part of the phenomena known as Barbenheimer: Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*. Cillian Murphy's performance as Robert J. Oppenheimer is spell-binding, as is Robert Downey Jr.'s performance as Lewis Strauss. Both of these actors command the screen during every frame they're in. The production value on this is stunning. This is just a perfect movie to me.

2023 has been such a great year at the cinema that there are only two movies that I saw that deserve to be called out for being so bad. And they are...

2: *Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey*

Have you ever wanted to know what it will feel like to watch your childhood burn right in front of your eyes? There's nothing even remotely interesting or redeemable about this film. It's two sociopaths running around in poor man's Winnie the Pooh and Piglet outfits chopping up people for 88 minutes. That's it.

1: *The Expendables*

I hate this movie with every fibre of my being. The script reads like it was written by a six-year-old's writing class whose parents let their kids stay up all night to play the cheapest version of *Mortal Kombat* they could find. The acting in this film is even worse. The explosions look like they are made out of Lego. I shake my head at everyone who signed off on this final product.

As always... I'll see you at the movies.



Fellas, Let's Figure It Out by Jaxson Smith Peterson

Dude, you're vitamin D deficient

As the fall semester nears its conclusion and winter rears its ugly head, I'm reminded of the masses of Canadians suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

SAD, also known as seasonal depression, affects millions of people across the globe, but it's much more prevalent in countries that experience a proper winter.

Here on Vancouver Island, we typically don't have particularly harsh winters with extreme cold and massive blizzards. What we are stuck with, however, is about five months of grey.

While some may argue that this "meh" weather is not that bad, the issue is that we often go days, or even weeks, without seeing the sun.

When our skin is rarely exposed to sunlight, we absorb little to no vitamin D. If you were to compound this with a vegetarian or vegan diet you could be looking at a serious Vitamin D deficiency.

Several studies have found a link between Vitamin D deficiency and depression, with an even stronger correlation to SAD. I'm not saying that people's experiences with depression aren't real. Your struggles are real and valid, but they might also be preventable.

Vitamin D deficiency also causes reduced testosterone production, leading to low testosterone. Some of the symptoms of low testosterone include fatigue, reduced sex drive, and depression.

No matter what gender you identify as, low levels of vitamin D can cause some serious issues. So how do we address the root cause of the problem?

The first thing you should do is go outside. Whenever there's sun, take advantage of it. Even if it's grey you'll still absorb some vitamin D, and some is better than none.

Secondly, a diet high in animal proteins will do wonders for you. Salmon, tuna fish, cow's milk, and beef liver are so high in nutrients that your body will feel better than ever.

The third step—which is not always necessary, but is always helpful—is Vitamin D supplementation. I recommend finding one paired with K2 for optimal absorption. Anywhere from 1000-5000 IU will have a positive impact.

Go outside, eat some real food, and keep your head up, Camosun students.

The sun will be back out before you know it.

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