

## festivals

by Louise Aird

West Vancouver will soon be notably enlivened by the numerous activities and exhibits offered by the Harmony Arts Festival. The increasingly popular ten-day festival, which runs from August 7 to 16, is now in its eighth year. The concept was brought to West Vancouver in 1990 by then-mayor Mark Sager, who had seen a similar festival in Carmel, California, and thought it would work here. He was right—last year, over 15,000 people attended and, this year, that figure is expected to rise dramatically.

The Harmony Arts Festival is a multidisciplinary festival which supports and promotes established and emerging North Shore artists, including visual artists, artisans, dancers, actors, musicians, and even skateboarders. The festival brings together local businesses with the arts and helps build a healthy cultural community, all while providing a forum to educate the public about the arts and the value of the arts to community spirit.

The festival is West Van's flagship cultural event, popular with residents and visitors alike. This year, the efforts of 300 volunteers and 175 individual and corporate supporters have organized exhibits by 275 visual artists and 220 performance artists. Everything is free of charge, and there really is something for everyone.

The centrepiece of the festival is a juried Group Art Show which features mixed-media works by North Shore artists. In addition to highlighting the work of the late renowned local painter Sam Black, there will be various demonstrations, slide shows, and lectures. The Group Art Show is at the Ferry Building Gallery (on Argyle at 15th Street). Its hours are 10 am–8 pm, and everyone is invited to attend the opening reception on August 10 at 6 pm.

At 7 o'clock that same evening, there will be a performance by one

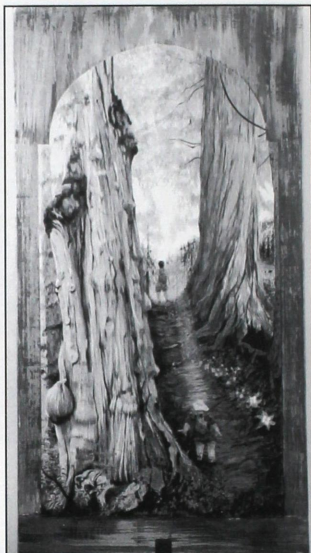
# The Harmony Arts Festival

*Celebrating the artists and arts that flourish on the North Shore*

particularly interesting group: Equinoscio. This is a six-piece Latin-American band headed by North Vancouver singer/composer Marez, who moved here from Guatemala in 1989. Equinoscio, which you may have seen performing at various night spots and community events over the last three years, plays jazz and bossa nova classics.

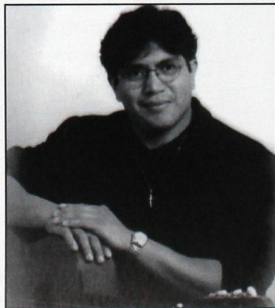
Another event of note takes place at Ambleside Beach on Sunday, August 16, from 1–5 pm. This is the Harmony Arts Festival Skateboard Ballet. It won't be *Swan Lake*, but you'll be amazed to see what can be done on skateboards—and the way in which the skateboarders interpret their music. The ballet features North Vancouver's Alex Chalmers, a Collingwood graduate who took up skateboarding at age ten and became so good at it that he realized he could take it to the professional level. He now does stunt work for film and television, and he started competing in national competitions this year. In January, Chalmers entered the North American Amateur Finals in Tampa, placed ninth in a field of 170, and has just been signed to a professional arrangement with a California skateboard company.

Chalmers is now one of a handful of Vancouver skateboarding stars, and he hopes that his appearance at the Harmony Arts Festival will make an important point. "We want to show people that skateboarders aren't bad kids or punks. Skateboarding is a sport and a hobby and it helps keep kids off the streets," he says passionately. "Vancouver is a mecca for skateboarding already—there are more skateboarding parks here within a three-hour drive than there are in California. But we'd like to work towards getting a larger park in West Vancouver. There are a lot of North Shore kids who take skateboarding seriously and it's a healthy lifestyle. So we'd like all communities to support skateboarders and give them good parks and areas to skate at."



Ancient Yellow Cedar Snag & the Happy Wanderer.  
Egg Tempera on canvas board with copper leaf.  
120 cm x 61 cm. By Ursula Medley.

The skateboarding demonstration fits in with this year's festival theme *Living In Our Landscape*—which, in turn, is tied to the current International Year of the Ocean. Festival organizers have encouraged a wide interpretation of the theme, and festival-goers will see these interpretations all over West Van, particularly at the various ArtBeat locations.



North Vancouver singer/composer Marez, band leader of Equinoscio.