

Arts festivals



West Van Hosting 2nd Annual Harmony Arts Festival

by Judy Gosney

ArtBeat...Art in the Park...Concerts in the Park...What's it all about? It's the second annual Harmony Arts Festival which will once again be highlighting some of the North Shore's most talented performing and visual artists during the week of August 10-16.

As well as being a showcase for our artists, Harmony brought business, the arts, and, indeed, all the citizens of the community together for a highly successful, many-faceted cultural event last year. And it promises to repeat its success again this year.

Adding to the interest of the event this year will be Arts Alley, a juried show of crafts which will be on sale outdoors at Ambleside Landing, adjacent to the Ferry Building. Another addition to this year's festival will be street performers.

ArtBeat, which will be even bigger this year, will feature the work of North Shore artists in 80 shop windows in Ambleside and Dundarave. Guided tours of this streetfront gallery will be conducted daily.

Once again we'll be able to catch artists at work in the parks creating works of art for the final day of Art Auction. Also, live music will drift across the sands of Ambleside and Dundarave beaches in the evenings; everything from reggae to big-band sounds will delight young and old alike.

Back again this year will be Creative Kids Day, a hands-on arts and musical experience for children. If it's anything like it was last year, the kids will have a great time making kites, masks, and imaginative works of art.

All this just doesn't happen without a lot of staff and volunteer support. West Van's cultural services supervisor Cathy Matheson, festival manager Colleen Reed and Ferry Building curator Susan Aoki are all working hard, along with the Harmony Committee chaired by Betsy Waterbury.

As the event draws near, hundreds of volunteers will be called upon to do such tasks as set up ArtBeat windows, act as ArtBeat guides and assist at various events. Nor does this happen without money. The

Harmony Committee is working hard to raise the \$32,000 required to stage the festival. The District of West Vancouver is contributing \$16,000 towards the festival and to date, the Royal Bank, Peppi's and The Sporting Look have offered to contribute generously as sponsors. There is still a considerable shortfall and individual citizens are urged to make large or small tax-deductible donations to ensure that the "show will go on."

Cheques made out to the District of West Vancouver, Harmony Committee, and sent to 750 17th St., West Vancouver, B.C., V7V 3T3, would be a welcome indication of your support of this exciting and worthwhile festival.

Last year 10,000 people came out to the festival; this year the organizers expect that number to double. Last year the Harmony Arts Festival was hailed as an unqualified success; this year it is expected to be even bigger and better.

So be sure to mark the week of August 10th on your calendar as an opportunity to stroll the streets, parks and beaches of West Vancouver and celebrate and support the arts on the North Shore.

For further information about the festival or about participating as an artist, volunteer or donor, please phone 925-3605 or drop by the Ferry Building at the foot of 14th Street in West Vancouver.

Since retiring from her job as Corporate Relations Manager at Canadian Helicopter Ltd., Judy Gosney has been lending her public relations expertise to the Harmony Committee.



Trust Me, I'm Telling You Stories*

by Helen O'Brian

The age-old tradition of storytelling is being revived. Once an integral part of all cultures, storytelling for many people has taken a back seat to television, film, radio and even the printed word. But try putting yourself into the trust of an artful storyteller whose skill it is to titillate all the senses of her or his listeners, both young and old. Do this, and I assure you, you will not only hear the story, but you will see, feel, taste and smell the story.

Appropriately focussed around the Spring Equinox, a time of rebirth and new

beginnings, Vancouver's First Storytelling Festival was held over two weekends in March with more than 30 tellers participating. The site of the first weekend was the beautiful Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. In the Main Pavilion, ten different sessions were held over two days, each featuring tellers from some of Vancouver's diverse cultural communities. There were Chinese, Japanese and French Canadian tales, tales from a Canadian girlhood, Central American, Yiddish, Sikh and Tsimshian Wisdom tales, as well as a traditional Estonian wedding tale. North Shore participants included Abigail Fisher-Lang and Eric Gordon, both of whom are members of Roots & Wings Storytellers.

Like the event itself, the warm spring sun sparked as listeners gathered to the point of overflowing. Both the tellers and the audience represented many ethnic backgrounds and through their shared stories there was a warm and wonderful crossing over of the cultures.

On the following weekend the storytelling activity moved to Vancouver's West End for two nights and a day's worth of stories. Possibly the only church in Vancouver with padded pews, both bottom and back, St. John's United Church proved to be not only an extremely comfortable site for the two evening concerts, but a visual treat as well, bedecked with spring flowers and decorated with the colourful storytelling banner.

Saturday offered a smorgasbord of storytelling with twenty different events taking place throughout the day in St. John's United Church, Gordon Neighbourhood House and Barclay Manor. Unlike the community focus of the previous weekend, tellers were invited from the North Pole (Alaska), Seattle, Prince George, Toronto, the Gulf Islands, Victoria and the Lower Mainland. One could hear Native, Sufi, Siberian, Chinese, Yiddish, traditional folk and personal tales, tales from the North and tales from the South. Three different open stages invited the audience to come forward to tell their stories and one workshop was offered to those interested in discovering the stories of their family. Both storytellers and audience made new contacts and renewed old acquaintances and, like most smorgasbords, all participants ended the day well filled!

Stories galore. Stories for one and all. Whether we realize and accept it or not, stories are a part of all of us. Stories define our lives and explain the physical and emotional world around us. So, "trust me," and come for more stories at the Second Annual Storytelling Festival next spring. In the meantime, join us at the monthly storytelling gatherings of the Vancouver Storytelling Circle.

For more information or to put your name on the mailing list of the Vancouver Society of Storytellers, call 228-1274.

*Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion*, New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987.

Helen O'Brian is the coordinator of the Vancouver Storytelling Festival.

