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Sarah Smith**

Lynette Richards

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Out of darkness, light

By Beth Stewart

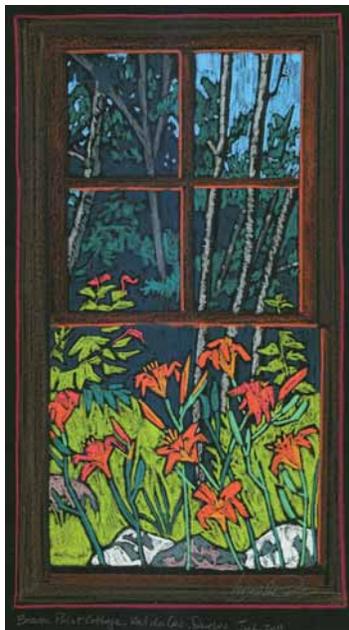
“Bluebirds in Tulip Trees” (detail) by Lynette Richards, stained glass.

As an artist and tradesperson, Londoner Lynette Richards creates original designs in stained glass, repairs and restores damaged windows, and teaches classes to students of all skill levels. She is also an accomplished coloured pencil artist.

Richards says the common denominator in her work is black – a surprising revelation from an artist whose primary medium relies on light. But, as she explains, her work has always been about the “dance” of darkness with light.

“I draw with pencil and black ink. I paint black on glass. I make linoprints with black ink. I use coloured pencil on black paper, and pastels on black board,” says Richards.

“I use darkness and light metaphorically to represent all physical and spiritual dualities. Painting shadow onto glass extends and accentuates our awareness of light in just the same way that sorrow reveals what we love.”



“Beaver Point Cottage” by Lynette Richards, coloured pencil.

On glass, Richards is a meticulous painter who uses the traditional techniques perfected by medieval artisans.

It is a painstaking process in which she applies successive layers of black and brown vitreous paints to clear or coloured glass which is then kiln-fired. Once the paint and glass have fused, she may add embellishments through staining, etching or engraving.

This process allows Richards to include very fine detail in her work.

While Richards’ glass art has a familiar “church” look, her subject matter is new and gives her work a special character. “I usually draw and paint what I love and what is in front of me, so birds and fragments of landscapes dominate my themes,” Richards says.

She typically works from life first, but then returns to her studio to rework what she has captured in her sketchbook or on black paper. She may rework an

idea over and over again in order to clarify her vision.

“I like the way things deconstruct by drawing from a drawing,” Richards comments. “It feels like I and chance make art together.”

It is this reworking and refinement that gives her work a decorative quality akin to that of British Arts and Crafts artists like William Morris and Arthur Rackham.

In contrast, Richards’ coloured pencil work tends to be much less formal. In doing it, she shies away from pure illustration in favour of loose and expressive strokes that let her hand and heart shine through.

Ultimately, Richards thrives as an artist when she has a number of irons in the fire and she tries not to finish one project until she has another on the go. “If I allow too large a gap after finishing things, I can enter a dry spell,” she explains.

She describes her art making as a form of meditation, saying: “Art helps me understand myself and what really matters to me.”

“I want people to know that my art is bittersweet. It embodies the light, and the darkness in its very materials, but also speaks to inevitable human experience. It pays homage to historical craftsmanship but invites change and new inspiration. I want every piece I offer to be a love letter.”

Lynette Richards’ work is regularly available at Gift of Art and by commission. You can get an extra taste this month during the *Square Foot Show* at The Art Exchange (247 Wortley Road) July 4 to 28.

Beth Stewart is a secondary school teacher, visual artist and writer.

Contact: www.rose-window.com

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Summer Shakespeare at Western

By Daniela DiStefano

Western University becomes a Renaissance utopia for Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

Jo Devereux was a first-year student when Western Summer Shakespeare staged its inaugural production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the summer of 1981. Now an English professor at the university, Devereux is directing the company's 31st edition, *The Winter's Tale*, to be performed this month on campus.

As a student Devereux spent her summers acting in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, and in 2008 she returned to the company to direct a new generation of students in performances of some of Shakespeare's most popular plays.

"This year's production of *The Winter's Tale* will feature possibly the largest group in our history, with 23 cast and seven crew members as young as seven years-old," she says.

Audiences can expect a magical and comedic theatre experience that includes actors, dancers, musicians, singers and a real live bear. "To see how we are staging the bear that eats [the character] Antigonus, you will have to come and see the show," Devereux says.

A play about love, loss, transformation and forgiveness, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is the story of the mistakenly jealous King Leontes of Sicilia who learns to see beyond his own selfish obsession. First performed in 1611 at the Globe Theatre in London, England, the play is one of Shakespeare's late Romances.

Since 1981, Western Summer Shakespeare's productions have been staged outdoors and this year is no exception.

"It was very likely first performed outdoors in Shakespeare's time because of the pastoral nature of the second half," notes Devereux. "The beautiful backdrop of the University College courtyard is an ideal setting to transport audiences back to the medieval period."

Staging a play outdoors gives the cast a sense of freedom, and festive relaxation for the audience, but rain and mosquitoes must always be taken into consideration. In Western Summer Shakespeare's 31-year history Devereux says they've only been forced to take the performance indoors a handful of times.

"It is a fabulous late tragicomedy of Shakespeare's that has the power to uplift and delight audiences of all ages," says Devereux. "We hope they will enjoy seeing it as much as we love performing it for them, and that they will feel it was a great way to spend a summer evening."

Daniela DiStefano is a freelance writer and editor. Check out her work at www.danieladistefano.com

What: Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*
Where: Western University (University College courtyard)
When: July 3 & 7
Contact: uwosummershakespeare.webs.com.

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The women at London's Ant Firm take a collaborative approach to video game testing.

Photo by Deborah Zuskan

Rooting out the bugs

By Jay Menard

To paraphrase Annie Lennox and Aretha Franklin, when it comes to video game testing, the sisters are doing it for themselves.

The Ant Firm was founded by a trio of female quality assurance testers who met working for a now-defunct game development company. Established two years ago, the company's focus is on the arduous task of testing video games in development and rooting out the bugs.

"We chose the name because we believe in working with colony thinking," co-founder Tanya Constant explained. "We employ teamwork as opposed to other companies that foster competition amongst their employees."

Instead of quotas, The Ant Firm focuses on quality and collaboration. And whereas the quota system can encourage hoarding bugs to report later, on slow days, The Ant Firm believes in reporting bugs as they arise, understanding that the earlier the bug is caught, the sooner the developer can fix it.

Employee-wise, The Ant Firm is between 60 and 80 per cent female. "It's not by design," Constant explained, adding that many males who enter the industry tend to be competitive gamers. "With all due respect to the dudes who I love, some will see other [testers] at Level 20, while they're at Level 12. They'll feel they need to catch up and they'll miss stuff."

Nintendo first noticed the crew when they described their work as being the cleanest first pass ever.

The Ant Firm started out with Nintendo DS games, but now finds the majority of their work comes in the form of mobile and casual games.

Although testing video games may sound like a dream job, it takes a special person to succeed.

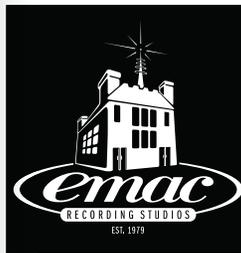
"You have to have an attention to detail, as well as the patience and the willingness to withstand the drudgery," Constant said, adding that those who believe that *Call of Duty* is the be-all-and-end-all tend not to last. "They're deluding themselves. They need to be OK with testing a My Pretty Pony game on the Nintendo DS for months."

Currently, The Ant Firm is a small operation, but Constant said she can see the company growing and joining the burgeoning tech community downtown.

"We'd like to think we have no competition out there," Constant semi-joked. "No other company is [almost] all-female and focuses solely on QA and consulting. We're mostly middle-aged woman that kick ass!"

Jay Menard is a corporate communications writer; freelancer, consultant, and multi-media man-of-all trades. See more of his work at www.jaymenard.com.

Contact: www.antfirm.com



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Q&A

with Sarah Smith

By Dawn Lyons



Photo by Gene Schilling

Sarah Smith is striking out as a solo artist after 10 years with The Joys.

Q. You're recognized as the lead singer for The Joys. Why have you decided to pursue a solo career?

A. The Joys decided to take a hiatus after touring North America for 10 years. After working so hard for so long, we decided that everyone needed to take a break to live our own lives.

Q. "Stronger Now" was released June 22. What can people expect from this new album?

A. True, honest, inspired-by-life music ... a mix between Bonnie Raitt, Melissa Etheridge and Bruce Springsteen. I hope fans of folk, rock and country will all enjoy it. I am hoping that my music will be enjoyed by all ages and genders.

Q. Did you find your writing and/or style to be different as you created this CD?

A. This music is true and honest me. I co-wrote many of these songs with amazing and talented Canadian artists. I worked very hard to create more of a storyline in my lyrics and worked on different melody structures. I am so grateful that I was able to work on this CD with producer Kevin Doyle. He has been an outstanding supporter [and] has really helped to jump-start my solo career.

Q. What do you enjoy about expressing yourself musically?

A. I enjoy getting my feelings out through

song, and it makes everything even better when people tell me they can relate to my words, or that the melody makes them emote in some way. I have always felt a bit misunderstood, and turned to music at a young age as my communication outlet. It is how I best express myself. I enjoy interacting with a live audience, feeling people's energy and giving it back.

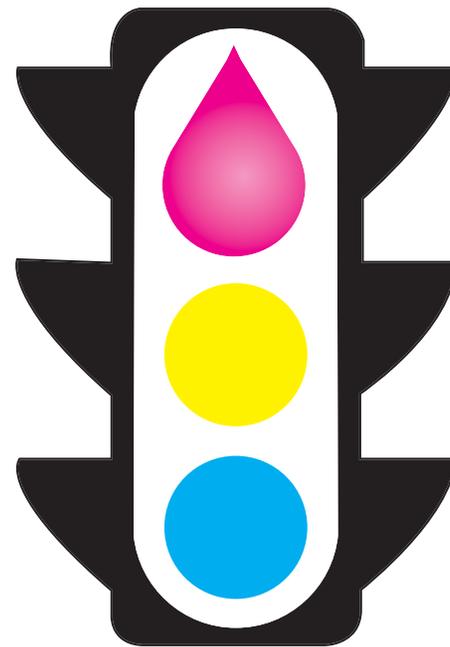
Q. What are your plans for the summer and the rest of this year?

A. I will be playing shows as a duo with a drummer and with my full band, and may do some touring. I want to get my music out there and hopefully stop by some radio shows along the way.

I'm thinking of another west coast tour before Christmas and may even try to squeeze in an eastern tour as well. I will continue to write music and collaborate with other artists as much as possible and will also perform at as many charity shows as I can. These shows feed my heart and soul. Performance and appearance details are always on my website.

Dawn Lyons is a London-based writer and editor. Visit her online at www.linesbylyons.com

Contact: www.sarahsmithmusic.com



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Luthier Geoff Stubbs

By Susan Scott

London luthier, Geoff Stubbs.

Photo by Susan Scott

Tucked away in his Dundas Street studio in East London, Geoff Stubbs hones a craft as old as recorded time. Surrounded by other artists and artisans, the 42-year-old musician custom-builds acoustic instruments such as classical, flamenco, and steel-string guitars and lutes. And instrument-by-instrument, his reputation is spreading.

“Word-of-mouth has always been my best seller. I build an instrument for somebody and his friend usually emails me the next day,” says Stubbs. “The bulk of my clients are in Toronto, but I also have shipped to the U.S. and Australia.”

The journey to building classical instruments was not a straight line for Stubbs. Born into an artistic family (his father is London painter Maurice Stubbs), he was interested in both painting and music.

“My dad had a huge influence on me as he understands what it is to pursue a life of creativity. He gave me the courage and insight to do what I wanted to do, and both my parents gave me the space to develop,” he says.

While Stubbs loved to paint, he found music was his calling. At 12 he started playing the electric guitar, studying with local musician Ben Heywood. After going to Bealart, Stubbs spent two years in Western University’s music program for classical guitar. There he was introduced to the flamenco guitar and lute.

Stubbs has played in rock bands, performed classical and flamenco music, and taught

music. Gradually, though, a love of instrument making that started in 1997 turned from a hobby to a full-time career.

“I made a classical guitar for myself because I couldn’t afford a decent instrument,” Stubbs says. “My first one actually sounded not bad, but it looked like hell. The result encouraged me to keep going and over the years, with trial and error, I learned how to make a really good instrument.”

Custom-building a classical guitar or lute is not for the quasi-committed. It is a solitary activity with each taking about 300 hours to make.



A classical guitar under construction. Macassar ebony & flamed maple from a tree in London.

The materials can also be expensive. Although Stubbs mainly uses exotic woods, he also tries unconventional ones, sometimes even utilizing domestic wood. He recently crafted a successful classical guitar using wood from a London Maple tree.

“As long as the wood is well seasoned, mostly quartersawn, and resonant to what I need to hear for a particular instrument, I’m willing to use it,” he explains. “Contrary to the marketing hype, a good guitar can be built with almost anything. It just depends on what the client wants and the luthier’s ability to make an educated guess as to the outcome.”

Stubbs tailors his instruments to the type of sound his clients are looking for and fits them “like a glove” to a client’s playing style and needs. They discuss every detail, including shape, string length, action, finish, feel, and appearance, each of which affects the sound.

“The main thing with regard to building a fine musical instrument is patience. You

learn to know when and when not to work on something,” he says. “Many luthiers talk of luthiery as a spiritual development. I’m definitely of that school.”

Although guitars are still the dominant instrument in the world, there has been a resurging interest in early music, making lutes popular again. While Stubbs intends to continue building all types of custom orders, he also plans to branch out and build more types of lutes, baroque guitars, and vihuelas.

“It took me a while to decide whether I was going to choose visual arts or play music, and building instruments allows me to do both,” he says. “I love the fact I can make something that not only looks beautiful, but also sounds beautiful, and which can be passed on to different hands that can play it and share their vision of beauty. It’s a win-win all around.”

Susan Scott is an arts writer and visual artist.

Contact: gstubbsguitar@hotmail.com

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stripped down running

Reviewed by Simone Graham

Novels make my heart sing and to read one like *stripped down running* – just as it was on cusp of being published – was really a nice treat. Londoner Andrea Nair is a highly creative and inspiring person who wears many hats, most recently adding “published author” to her list of credits.

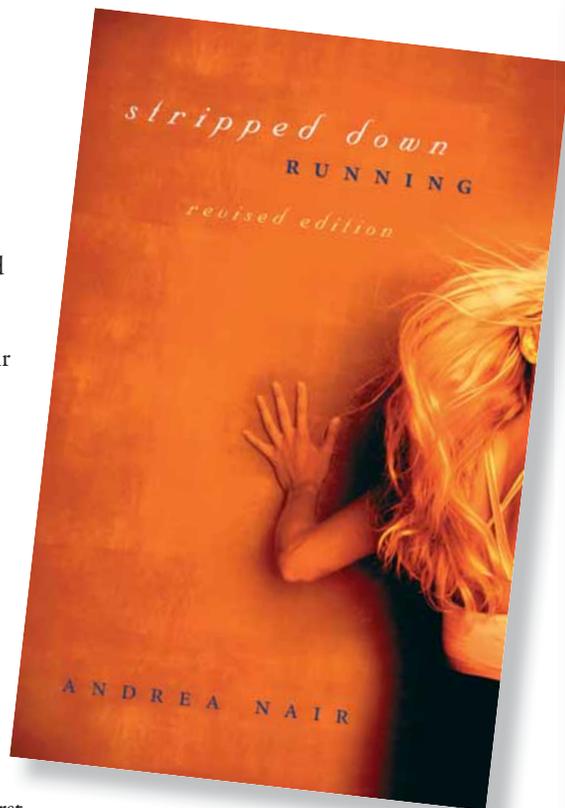
I met Nair last year through a networking meeting, where she talked about her work as a psychotherapist; namely her focus on working with parents. But once we discovered we were both writers we easily connected through our mutual love of words and books.

Being a business writer, I was thrilled when Nair offered to have me read her first fictional novel, *stripped down running*, which she was then preparing for publication with the help of editor, Louise Fagan.

Stripped down running is a tale of awakening, as the young heroine Hannah struggles to figure out her place in the world, and why her life seems to be mired in such difficulty and hopelessness.

The narrative moves along at a breakneck speed, as Hannah tries to outrun her past, but she finds that no amount of distance covered can let her escape what she ultimately must face.

The story of Hannah is one of fiction, but is based in reality. Hannah’s life story is a composite of many real stories that Nair has encountered in her work as a psychotherapist. All personal elements have been changed of course, but the struggles of this young woman convey very real lessons to the reader about how disconnection can lead to heartbreak – but



how reintegration is still possible for those willing to try.

This novel was so engaging I could not put it down. The easy narrative style drew me in almost immediately and I wanted to know what made this character tick. As Hannah’s life unfolded throughout the book – artfully shared with us in past and present tense – I grew more and more intrigued about this woman’s path, her choices and her mental state.

The full read jolted me in a good way – leaving me thoughtful about the fragile nature of our intimate lives and the delicate balance we walk from childhood to maturity.

The novel *stripped down running* is available at Oxford Bookshops, as well as online at www.andreanair.com.

Simone Graham is an accomplished business writer and editor.

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Not your parents' folk festival

By Bob Klanac

Performer Liam Titcomb describes himself as a “Home County rug-rat.”

Look at it again. You missed it the first time. I guarantee it.

It's the familiar green logo and it says Home County. Somewhere on there are the dates of July 20 to 22 and the venue, Victoria Park. But the green circle is different somehow.

The words say “Home County Music and Art Festival.” Did you catch the change? The word “folk” is absent but you don't notice it at first. As Home County artistic director Catherine McInnes makes clear, the missing word is part of the “music” in the new name in the same way that folk music is still part of Home County.

“The festival is now presenting quite a diverse range of music much of which could still arguably fit under the folk banner,” McInnes notes.

“Folk has become a bit of a misunderstood word. It's associated with a particular kind of guitar and vocal sound but it's far more than that. So we just don't want to limit ourselves to only presenting folk music.”

In short, the word is simply not an accurate reflection of what Home County has become.

“Maybe we should have called it the Home County ‘song’ festival,” McInnes laughs. “Really the song is at the core of what the festival does and certainly contemporary songwriters have always performed at folk festivals. They're just clothing those songs in more contemporary ways, which involve electronic instruments.”

The name change pales in comparison to the gamble the festival made last year.

Given that the musicians who took to the Home County stage also performed at similar festivals for paying customers, Home County organizers decided to pass the hat to see if patrons would kick in a few bucks toward the event.

McInnes describes the response as “fantastic,” noting that many patrons – especially out-of-towners – were effusive in their praise for the programming and delighted to assist.

The \$50,000 that filled the collection buckets has gone directly into this year's festival, and a \$5 “suggested donation” will be repeated again this summer.

If this year's slate of performers is anything to go by, that \$50,000 could more than double given both the talent and special programs on the various stages throughout Victoria Park.



This year's Home County line-up includes current and eclectic bands like Olenka and the Autumn Lovers.

Photo by Patrick Schmitt

“Our headliners are Kathleen Edwards on Friday night with Bahamas and Jim Bryson,” says McInnes. “Ian Thomas acts as opening night host Friday and returns Saturday night with his own set along with Cuff The Duke and headliner Joel Plaskett Emergency.”

McInnes trots out the names of what seem to be every rising Canadian artist as well as some established ones: Kinnie Starr, The Kramdens, Pryden, Quartette, Maz, Olenka and the Autumn Lovers, Liam Titcomb, Peter Katz, Anabelle Chvostek, Bahamas, Carlos del Junco, Paul Langille, Cuff The Duke, Jayme Stone, Dave Gunning, Eve Goldberg, Sarah Smith and The Allens (aka The Woody Allens), Corey Cameron, Celine Murray and The Marrieds.

The line-up is current, vibrant, eclectic, and as far from the commercial mainstream as one could imagine. Not quite folk but as you know by now, this isn't your parents' folk festival.

Liam Titcomb knows this well. The son of Home County veteran Brent Titcomb, Liam describes himself as a “Home County rug-rat” for the number of festivals he took in as a youngster.

Titcomb is one of several Home County veterans whose kids went into the family business. “We've had Nathan Rogers, son of Stan Rogers, and Canadian songwriting legend Gene McLellan's daughter Catherine has played for us,” notes McInnes. “There's been quite a few.”

Noting that one of Home County's mandates is to sustain and grow Canadian culture McInnes speaks proudly of one of the Festival's unique projects – The Canadian Fowke Revival.

“It's Fowke as in Edith Fowke,” she explains. “She was one of those responsible for collecting and archiving hundreds of Canadian folk songs from the mid 1800s to the 1970s.”

McInnes and organizers have lined up some artists to musically exhume the all-but-forgotten songs from Edith Fowke's song anthology books and give them new life.

The project, curated by Henry Svec of Western University, is important because “these songs

will be lost if they're not performed,” she explains.

Another side stage project dubbed Neil Young's Canadiana (consciously aping Neil's latest disc of American heritage songs) will see The Kramdens and Cuff The Duke tackle the Neil Young canon.

As if to dispel any notion that Home County has entirely unchained itself from folk orthodoxy, McInnes points to the New Music Stage funded by Celebrate Ontario which sees the premiere of a banjo concerto, commissioned for the festival by London Composer Andrew Downing accompanied by no less than nine musicians from Orchestra London.



Kathleen Edwards headlines on the opening night.

Read that one more time: Orchestra London musicians at the Home County Music and Art Festival. Then come down to the park and hear it for yourself.

Bob Klanac has been scribbling about music since he was young enough to know better. For more, go to klanac.blogspot.com

What: Home County Music & Art Festival
Where: Victoria Park
When: July 20-22
Contact: www.homecounty.ca

In need of repair

By Phil McLeod



CITY HALL

Does City Hall need to rethink London's governance model?

This certainly isn't the sexiest thing to be worrying about in the middle of summer, but city council's governance model, if not completely broken, at least remains in serious need of repair.

Governance model is the term applied to the way council and its various committees operate. It includes rules of conduct, form of meetings, its physical structure and meeting times, places and conditions.

All of that has been in some disarray since the beginning of this council term, back in December, 2010.

But don't jump to conclusions and heap all the blame on Mayor Joe Fontana who, as London's highest paid and only full-time elected official, most often gets the abuse when anything city council is or does goes awry. In this case he inherited the first iteration of the new governance model. And although he didn't seem to try very hard to make it work, neither did many others.

The genesis of governance woes began late in 2007 when the previous city council, determined to get rid of Board of Control, established a task force to study how civic affairs should be conducted instead. It was the first extensive review of London's governance model since the 1970s.

At its first meeting the task force established these principles of good governance: Citizen engagement, open and accountable government, respect and integrity in the way civic government worked and interacted with the community, fiscal responsibility, vision and strategy, and an holistic perspective – all of it aimed at fostering a caring, responsive community committed to the health and well-being of all Londoners. It set out to craft a governance system that would emulate those principles.

After 14 months of deliberations and public consultations, the task force made 39 recommendations on everything from new names and agenda content for three council standing committees, to changes in the look of the council chambers at City Hall, to new technology to improve public access to council deliberations.

There have been several outcomes. Almost \$1.5 million was spent renovating the second floor of City Hall where the council chambers and committee meeting rooms are located. The council horseshoe was turned around to face the public. A new sound system was installed.

New technology was introduced, first for electronic council votes with the results displayed on large screens and then gradually

to link committee agenda items to council decisions so the public could easily access an entire package on the internet. Starting in September, all council and committee meetings will be streamed online. Video of all debates will be archived and linked to agenda items.

Although the various installations have been slow, the technology has worked – and the public has benefited through improved access to information.

Not so other recommendations which covered how council itself was to function without Board of Control. The basic change was three standing committees – one for anything to do with planning and development, a second for community and neighbourhood issues, and a third for financial and administrative matters.

The new council – four seats smaller to start with and with six of the remaining 15 seats including the mayor's chair filled by newcomers – didn't share the same understanding of, nor enthusiasm for, the changes held by the previous council.

The first months of the new council were confusing, indeed tortuous. Mayor Fontana in particular, a council veteran from the 1980s when things ran much differently, seemed exasperated by the workload expectations imposed by the new system. He wasn't alone. By year's end an ad hoc council committee had crafted a new version.

It has six standing committees. To fit them all into a schedule, city council now meets every three weeks instead of two. More committees, though, tends to mean more decisions for council, which in turn has lengthened their evening meetings sometimes to six or seven hours.

That doesn't work either. So look for another revision within the coming year.

Phil McLeod writes regularly on civic affairs at www.themcleodreport.ca. You can email him at phil@philipmcleod.ca

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Cultural Pride

By Chris Loblaw

“Continuum,” Cindi Talbot, Mixed Media, 29 x 36

Art has long been a way for people to express their emotions and memories, and to share their life’s journey with an audience. For the LGBTQ2 (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered, queer, two-spirited) community, the annual Pride London Festival is an opportunity to showcase their art and celebrate that journey.

Now in its third decade, Pride London has included cultural activities for many years. The annual Pride Art Exhibit has been part of the festivities since 1992, and has remained a foundational element throughout the festivals many incarnations.

In 2003, local artist Ben Benedict made the transition from participant to curator, and has been remained in the role ever since. “Under my guidance the art exhibition has grown to a provincially recognized juried exhibition that pays fees to professional artists,” says Benedict.

“I have worked with art professionals and community members locally to build the jury pool, as well as having developed an extensive list of LGBTQ2 artists within Ontario. In 2011, we saw the largest exhibition in my history for the 20th anniversary including an international video component from an artist from England. Other artists have come from Cambridge, Guelph, Hamilton, Ingersoll, Mitchell, St. Marys, Stratford, Toronto, and even Ottawa in past.”

Featured artists are a diverse group, comprised of both professional artists from across Canada with long and impressive careers, and students who are just at the beginning of their artistic exploration.

One of the most intriguing participants in this year’s show – which hangs at The Arts Project July 24 to August 4 – is Steven Kato, a visual and hearing impaired artist from the London area. His particular perspective on the world he interacts with should spark interesting discussions about the way we each see the world.

This year, Pride Festival Literary Night takes place in conjunction with the exhibition opening, July 24.

The evening’s headliner is novelist, poet, playwright, filmmaker, and professor Sky Gilbert. Gilbert is also one of the co-founders of the nationally renowned *Buddies in Bad Times* theatre company, a professional group dedicated to the promotion of “queer theatrical expression.”

With decades of experience as a queer writer, and as a professor of Creative Writing and Theatre Studies, Gilbert is well-positioned to lead the discussion about diversity and inclusion in the artistic world.

The other two speakers, Mel Bossa and Alison Wearing, have travelled different roads in

their writing careers, giving the evening a truly diverse appeal.

Wearing’s most recent work is a memoir of growing up with a father who revealed he was gay when she was 12 years old. Her story of understanding and support will be a familiar narrative for many families in the LGBTQ2 community.

“This event stems from passion and a commitment to change for future generations,” notes Benedict who praises the team of dedicated volunteers who make the annual event possible.

“Pride is about introducing London to the world-wide LGBTQ2 culture. We’re part of every other ethno-cultural and religious



“30 Years of Pride,” Ben Benedict, Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24

group within London. We are 1 in 10 of every community and as such we want to, and need to be, welcoming and inclusive to all others, even those whose eyes and minds are blinded to difference for whatever reason.”

Chris Loblaw is a freelance journalist and author. He’s currently working on the sequel to his novel “WitchKids” which is available online and at Oxford Books.

What: Pride London Festival

When: July 27-29

Contact: www.pridelondon.ca

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Doodling through

By Beth Stewart

Waldoodles are quirky little beings that appeal to child and adult alike.

Waldoodles burst onto the London art scene in the summer of 2010 during the London Fringe Festival. It was then that graphic designer Walter Sayers, owner of Sayers Design, “outed” himself to an appreciative public.

Sayers has always been a doodler; he finds it is a great way to get his creative juices flowing. “When I was a kid, I drew on everything,” he recalls. “For me it was a way to focus.”

In fact the original Waldoodle was born when Sayers was in grade 5.

“A friend of mine would draw a random doodle on my page and I would turn it into a robot or monster. It would entertain us and I enjoyed the challenge,” he explains

Since then, Sayers’ Waldoodles have evolved into quirky little beings that appeal to child and adult alike.

Sayers’ Waldoodle paintings are a natural extension of his Waldoodle work to date. “It’s

about taking my doodles and making them into something real,” the artist says.

Each Waldoodle is named and profiled by Sayers. For instance Lewis, a blue skinned critter that sports an eye mask and red Mohawk (Waldoodle #53), lives on a diet of Hero sandwiches, inhabits comic book stores, and has a special talent for speed reading.

In addition to his paintings, Sayers now has a book that celebrates his critters. *Waldoodles: An alphabet field guide* is a clever presentation of Sayers’ menagerie. It concludes with a special

“how to” section called “Unleash Your Creative Waldoodle” that just may get you hooked on doing the doodle yourself.

Beth Stewart is a secondary school teacher, visual artist and writer.

Contact: www.waldoodles.com



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Sounds like summer

By Nicole Laidler

Stratford Summer Music starts with free fireworks and music by the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

This year, Stratford Summer Music commemorates the 80th anniversary of Glenn Gould's birth with an expanded festival line-up that includes five world-renowned Canadian and international pianists, and an August residency by Toronto's Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.

"This year we take a major leap to present the most renowned names and series we have ever offered," says Stratford Summer Music founder and artistic producer John Miller. "We're adding a week and offering special programs in tribute to Glen Gould ... who in the 1950s and 60s was a strong proponent of the place of music among the arts in our city."

The festival starts with a bang, July 16, when the 100-member National Youth Orchestra of Canada performs a free outdoor concert featuring Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* – complete with live canon fire courtesy of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Teen phenomenon, Jan Lisiecki, lights up the stage with three noon-hour recitals, July 19, 20 and 21. "I don't think there's been a



Photo by Andras Schram

Teen phenomenon Jan Lisiecki makes his third appearance at Stratford Summer Music.

Photo by Irene Miller

Canadian pianist about whom there's been so much excitement since Gould," notes Miller. Already a veteran of international tours, the 17-year-old Alberta native has New York management and a recording deal with Deutsche Grammophon. Stratford is the only summer festival on his busy schedule.

Canadian duo Ted Dykstra and Richard Greenblatt wrap up the festival's first week with a performance of the unique musical comedy *Two Pianos, Four Hands* July 22. Described as a play about music, the piano, and how music relates to the lives of everyday people, the show has toured internationally since 1996.

"To have the original creators who wrote the show come to Stratford is a wonderful honour," says Miller. "One of the reasons they are coming is Glen Gould. He was such an influence on both of them as young pianists."

The tradition of presenting free afternoon concerts on the MusicBarge continues with performances by London's Home Cookin' Dixieland Band (July 26, 27 and 28) and Bells in Motion handbell choir from the U.S. (July 29).

The month wraps up with Organ Week, featuring three young Canadian organists – Stratford native Andrew Adair (July 26), Sarah Svendsen from Nova Scotia (July 27), and Bracebridge's Ryan Jackson (July 28). Each will pay tribute to Gould the organist by performing a portion of the only organ work Gould recorded, *Bach's Art of Fugue*.

Nicole Laidler is the editor of *The Beat* and a London freelance writer and copywriter. Visit her at www.spilledink.ca

What: Stratford Summer Music
Where: Stratford, Ontario
When: July 16-August 26
Contact: www.stratfordsummermusic.ca

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Outdoor theatre: past, present, and future

By Art Fidler

This month, Original Kids presents *Robin Hood and His Merry Outdoor Adventures*.

It is summer in the city and I'm thinking of London outdoor theatre, then, now and yet to come.

Audiences don't really know it until they try it, but my experience is that they all enjoy al fresco theatre. It just feels good. I know – there is wind, there is rain, there are mosquitoes, there are seating issues, but once people are part of the ambience they feel happy, eyes wide open.

I once directed *Oliver!* and *The Music Man* in the now sadly underused Victoria Park band shell. Huge audiences adored those summer musicals with London Sinfonia accompanying local casts. And I have very fond memories of a highly professional production of *Into the Woods* on an island in the stream that runs through Storybook Gardens.

For a few short years, until their funding grants dried up, a group presented Shakespeare in Gibbons Park. We sat on a gentle hillside to watch *As You Like It* and other plays and left down a path alight with real torches.

More recently, Original Kids has presented several family musicals in the London Public Library's Rotary Reading Garden, including a Fringe festival production of *The Wiz*. One London Place loomed behind the actors – their Emerald City (if only I could have convinced the city to bathe it in green light!)

This month, outdoor theatre is making a bit

of a comeback in London. Original Kids is presenting *Robin Hood and His Merry Outdoor Adventures* on the wooded grounds behind Huron University College. And Western University's English department will once again perform Shakespeare, this time *The Winter's Tale*, on campus. And maybe there are more.

So much for the past and present. Here are my thoughts for London outdoor theatre in the future.

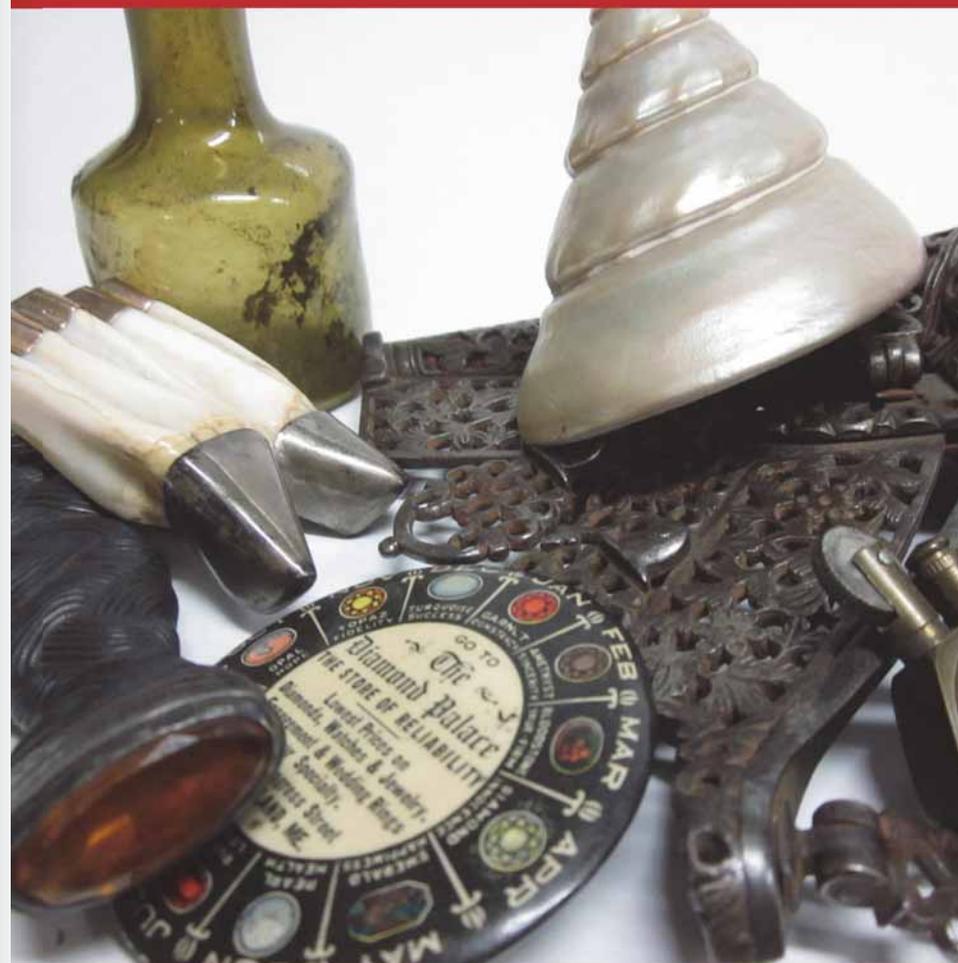
Summer troupes could get together to jointly market and present a playbill of outdoor theatre. Advertise and cross-promote under one umbrella. Then audience members leaving one production would know what outdoor show comes next – maybe having just seen a short live promo and met a cast member or two – and depart clutching a flyer promoting London's entire outdoor theatre season.

The excitement could build until Outdoor Theatre London becomes a special attraction for the Forest City. And then imagine an outdoor theatre and concert amphitheatre built into the eastern slope in Harris Park.

Worth a try?

Art Fidler is a retired but still passionate drama instructor / actor / director, currently Director of Marketing for Original Kids Theatre Company.

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Surprises in Local AM-Radio Ratings

By Robert Pegg



Londoners are still tuning in to local radio.

When I wrote back in January about London radio station Oldies-1410 changing its format to all-comedy and rebranding itself as Funny-1410, I wished them well but truthfully thought the move had disaster written all over it. Having listened to the station a lot in the past six months has done nothing to change that opinion.

Designed for people with short attention-spans, the format is basically 24 hours a day of very short stand-up comedy bits. The average length seems to be less than two minutes and on the rare occasions they run some vintage fare like Bob Newhart or Bill Cosby, those classic routines are often frustratingly cut off midway through the skit.

Before they began, I wondered how they could find any current stand-up comedy that would be suitable for family-friendly AM-radio. Based on what you see on television's Comedy Network or at any comedy night-club, the state

of standup today often borders on hate-crime. And sure to form, Funny 1410 has its share of material sure to offend every group. No minority is exempt from ridicule.

And it's also very funny. So I shouldn't have been surprised to learn that according to the most recent B.B.M. ratings survey the station has tripled their audience since going all-comedy.

I particularly should not have been surprised because I had the same suspicions a few years ago when AM980 changed their format to all-news with local live news updates in a continual rotation throughout their morning and late afternoon peak periods. Except for breaking news, if you tune in for about 15 minutes, you've heard everything you need to know. I assumed that that was no way to build a listener and advertising base.

Wrong again.

AM980 is the highest rated of our three AM-stations. CJBK has always been solidly in the middle even though Steve Garrison's long-running "London in the Morning" has consistently been the best and most balanced source of local political news in all of this town's media.

But in these days of downsized newsrooms, 980 is certainly the best staffed outfit. News-director Nathan Smith has put together a young team of eager beavers and cub reporters. Better yet, Smith himself is one of the finest political bloggers in this town and should be sharing those opinions far more often on the air. Since I'm notoriously wrong about such things, check out his blog for yourself at www.am980.ca.

Robert Pegg is a published author, currently working on his autobiography, "Living in the Past." Visit sonnydrysdalepresents.blogspot.com for more of his musings.

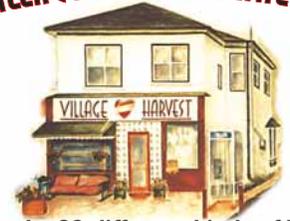
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