

the beat magazine

Issue 36 | Fall 2012

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Rose Cora Perry

**The Grand Theatre's
High School Project**

**London's Cultural
Prosperity Plan**





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EDITORIAL

Publisher/Managing Editor
Richard Young
ryoung@thebeatmagazine.ca

Editor
Nicole Laidler
nlaidler@thebeatmagazine.ca

Online Theatre Editor
Donald D'Haene
ddhaene@thebeatmagazine.ca

Copy Editor
Beth Stewart

Art Director
Lionel Morise
lmorise@thebeatmagazine.ca

Photography
Deborah Zuskan
Paul Miszczyk

Website
Renaissance Monkey Design

Printing
Wonderland Printing Ltd.

Arts Calendar
Valerie Cavallini
vcavallini@thebeatmagazine.ca
519 870-0846

ADVERTISING/MARKETING

Advertising Manager
Richard Young
ryoung@thebeatmagazine.ca
519-870-2328

CONTACT INFORMATION
The Beat Magazine
PO Box 25294
London, Ontario N6C 6B1

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Editor's Beat

► If time flies when you're having fun, then I'm having a blast editing *The Beat*. I can hardly believe almost three years have passed since our first issue hit the streets – featuring a top-hatted skull courtesy of London's Lost Soul Stroll.

Born out of idealistic enthusiasm rather than hard-nosed business sense, it's been an adventure only made possible by publisher Richard Young's boundless energy and personal commitment to sharing the stories of London's creative community.

I'm proud to say that we've published by the first of every month for the past 35 months, attracting some of London's top freelance writers and a loyal readership along the way.

This issue marks a new era for *The Beat*, one that we believe will solidify our place as London's go-to publication for arts coverage both in print, and online.

The magazine is now a quarterly publication, with a renewed focus on local arts and culture. We'll continue to cover London's visual arts, theatre, and music scenes with in-depth stories that are both timely and noteworthy.

In this issue, writer and theatre veteran Caroline Dolny Guerin, takes a behind-the-scenes look at one of London's most-anticipated fall events, The Grand Theatre's annual High School Project. What is expected of the young actors, and how has the program developed over the years?

We've also invited Andrea Halwa of the London Arts Council and Andrea Hallam of the London Heritage Council to share their inside perspective on London's new Cultural Prosperity Plan. As one of the people who responded to the initiative's public launch with rolled eyeballs, I sincerely hope that the four consulting firms involved produce a roadmap that will be followed rather than shelved for future discussion.

As if to prove that London culture is already alive and kicking, poet R L Raymond has allowed us to share some of his new work alongside a profile written by Patricia Paterson.

More great content can be found online at www.thebeatmagazine.ca

If you're not already one of the thousands of Londoners who checks in on a regular basis, what are you waiting for?

Our redesigned website is now easier to navigate, and is updated daily with reviews, breaking arts news, feature stories that you won't find in print, and your favourite Beat columnists like Bob Pegg, Art Fidler, and Donald D'Haene. Join our Facebook or Twitter community for real-time updates.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank our team of Beat writers for joining us on this remarkable journey, the hundreds of cultural workers who have already trusted us to tell their stories, and our advertisers who continue to make it all possible.

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



Photo by Ben G

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Othello in Afghanistan

By Jay Menard

Shakespeare's *Othello* has not been performed in London since 1981.

► Bringing *Othello* to the London stage was delayed for about a decade courtesy of a traditional challenge – casting the lead.

"It all came down to finding the right actor for the role of Othello," explained Theatre Nemesis director Jason Rip. "When I saw Demis Odanga, I knew he was right."

Instead of Venetian armies and the threat of invading Turks, Rip's version of *Othello* is set in modern-day Kandahar, and the protagonists are all Canadian. The traditional themes of ambition and jealousy are played out amongst a military hierarchy, with the key character of Iago, in this version, played as a woman, feeling slighted for being passed over for a military appointment.

"Having a female Iago adds a whole bunch of things to the play," Rip said. "[This] Iago brings a different bag of tricks in terms of entrapping Othello."

By embracing these new motivations and tactics, Rip hopes to move Iago out of the stereotypical villain caricature. "The moustache-twirling villain is not what I see here," he explained.

Even the role of Othello has to be revised.

Murdering one's wife over an alleged affair wouldn't be acceptable in today's world, so to explain Othello's actions Rip felt the character would have to be pushed to the point of desperation where murder-suicide would be the only escape.

"The way we're portraying Othello is that he's essentially a respectable man with anger management issues," Rip said.

Rip has been mulling over this version of *Othello* for the better part of a decade, initially conceptualizing it using a native setting. The play itself has not been performed in London since 1981, despite its upper-echelon status amongst the Shakespearean pantheon.

The director is hoping that a modern spin on a classic play will appeal to a younger demographic, while still engaging Shakespeare fans who will appreciate that the essence and dialogue has remained faithful to the original.

"I could be perceived as disrespectful, but I honestly believe that he's the greatest writer in the English language," Rip said. "There are millions of ways to do Shakespeare wrong, but I'm trying something new, hopefully to make it relevant, especially to youth. We have to engage that next generation of theatre-goers and hopefully they come out to see theatre in general."

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

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Cape Dorset comes south

By Susan Scott



Bird Fanfare by Kenojuak Ashevak, lithograph 2012, 56.5 x 76.8 cm.

► For those who love Inuit art, the Cape Dorset Print Show is as eagerly anticipated as any rock star. On opening night at London's Innuity Gallery, people line up before the show starts. To keep order, the gallery hands out numbered tickets to waiting patrons.

"First in line gets the number one choice and they can only buy one print until we've gone through all the ticketholders," explains gallery founder, Howard Isaacs.

The annual show, now in its 53rd year, is noted for the quality of its prints. Usually only 50 of each image are available worldwide. In the gallery's show, which opens October 19, there will be just one copy of 28 images.

"If people want a print that isn't available, we try to locate one elsewhere," says Isaacs.

Cape Dorset is Canada's oldest still-thriving Inuit arts community, and it has produced many renowned printmakers and sculptors. One of the most famous is Kenojuak Ashevak. In 2005, her iconic print *Enchanted Owl* was auctioned for \$70,000, which stands as the highest price paid for a Canadian print.

"Kenojuak is the oldest surviving artist who still takes part in the Dorset show," notes Isaacs. "She's got the Order of Canada, she's done murals in the Montreal airport, and her work is on stamps."

Creativity and a willingness to employ new techniques explain Cape Dorset's success. Prints

were originally made using stonecut and stencil. Now artists produce lithographs, etchings, and aquatints. The images have also changed, evolving from simple shapes to detailed and colourful ones. Today, the younger artists are open to contemporary influences and experimentation.

Having hosted the print show for 26 years, the Innuity Gallery has welcomed these changes. But their love of native art doesn't stop with the Inuit. Isaacs and his partner Janet Evans also offer art from the Six Nations Reserve, gift items from the North West Coast, and jewellery from Zuni tribes in the U.S.

Isaacs opened the Innuity Gallery after working at his uncle Avrom's like-minded gallery in Toronto.

Customers include collectors, people who want to buy authentic Canadian art as gifts, and those who simply desire something unique. "The good thing about art is it doesn't go bad. If anything it goes up in price," says Isaacs. "We're in our 29th year, and we're still here!"

As are – thankfully – the magnificent Cape Dorset printmakers.

Susan Scott is an arts writer and visual artist.

Cape Dorset Print Show
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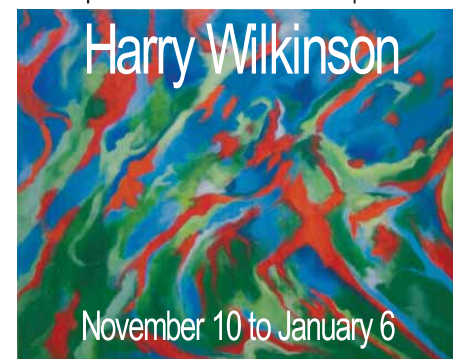


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A plan for cultural prosperity

By Andrea Halwa
& Andrea Hallam



Photos by Wendy Saby (Penn Kemp) & Richard Gilmore (TAP)

London's cultural infrastructure is already ahead of many other Canadian communities.

► Earlier this year, London embarked on a Cultural Prosperity Plan. But what is the plan all about, and why does London need one?

Municipal Cultural Planning Inc. (MCPI) – a coalition of provincial government agencies, municipalities, cultural service organizations, post-secondary institutions and others dedicated to promoting municipal cultural planning across the province – defines municipal cultural planning as: “the strategic and integrated planning and use of cultural resources for economic and community development across all facets of local planning and decision-making.”

And as a trend that has grown over the last 10 years, municipal cultural planning is now a must-have in any city's tool kit.

London embarked on a new culture plan in early 2012, and quickly discovered that the city's cultural infrastructure was already ahead of most Canadian communities.

Many desirable structures are already a reality in London, including local funding programs to support arts organizations and professional artists (Community Arts Investment Program) and museums and cultural heritage (Community Heritage Investment Program) and festivals; emerging Public Art and Poet

Laureate Programs, as well as a professional museum, theatre and orchestra; a growing theatre sector; professional visual artists and musicians; 13 museums, a dedication to preserving architectural heritage, and a vibrant education sector dedicated to enhancing the local community.

London's multicultural sector has also grown significantly with increased participation in most facets of the culture scene.

What has been the greatest challenge for Dialog, the lead consultant on the plan?

To capitalize on our current assets and identify London's future opportunities in order to create a plan for the next five years that does not simply turn the ground that has already been tilled.

In fact, four different firms are working on various aspects of the plan: Sierra Plan Management is measuring the financial impact of culture in London, Novita is assessing our cultural facilities requirements, Canadian Urban Institute is mapping what we have and where it's located, and Dialog is producing the final report which includes feedback from over 75 stakeholder interviews and more than 200 discussion guides.

The discussion guides, completed by organizations and individuals from all over the city, produced in-depth responses to questions like: What does culture mean to you? What does it include? What do you feel are the City of London's most important assets that this Cultural Prosperity Plan must build upon?

Artists attending Forest City Gallery's discussion guide session stated: “Culture is what makes a city interesting ... The discussion cannot just be about economic development, but how to make the city unique. There is a difference between culture and creativity. As artists, we are more concerned with the creative. Culture can also mean consumerism and sprawl and box-stores. But what kind of culture do we want?”

Hoteliers attending Tourism London's discussion guide session noted: “The city rolls up its carpet and shuts its doors too early. London needs to raise its profile as a strong regional city in order to attract more tourists.”

A public cultural planning fair hosted by Dialog in April 2012 was somewhat lack lustre as attendees craved the opportunity to give feedback beyond post-it notes.

“One thing that was particularly frustrating was the comments shown in the power point presentation by Dialog. It was evident that most people recognized that London already has a very vibrant and growing cultural community,” stated artist Kevin Bice. “The problem isn't one of growing the culture of the city but of letting the city and the world outside London know what is already here.”

The Cultural Prosperity Plan process will be complete by December. A few key ingredients to its success will be strong, proactive political leadership, risk taking, and a united culture sector working for the betterment of London.

Andrea Halwa is the executive director of The London Arts Council. Andrea Hallam is the executive director of The London Heritage Council.

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Homeland

By Beth Stewart

► London artist Thelma Rosner is well known for her distinctly female point of view and visually engaging work. Although her interests are diverse, one can easily tease out common threads that demonstrate continuity of thought over time. As the artist explains, in her line of work “one thing leads naturally to another.”

It was work she did about Andalusia [mediaeval Spain] that led Rosner to consider what she calls “contemporary issues between Jews and Muslims particularly in the Middle East.”

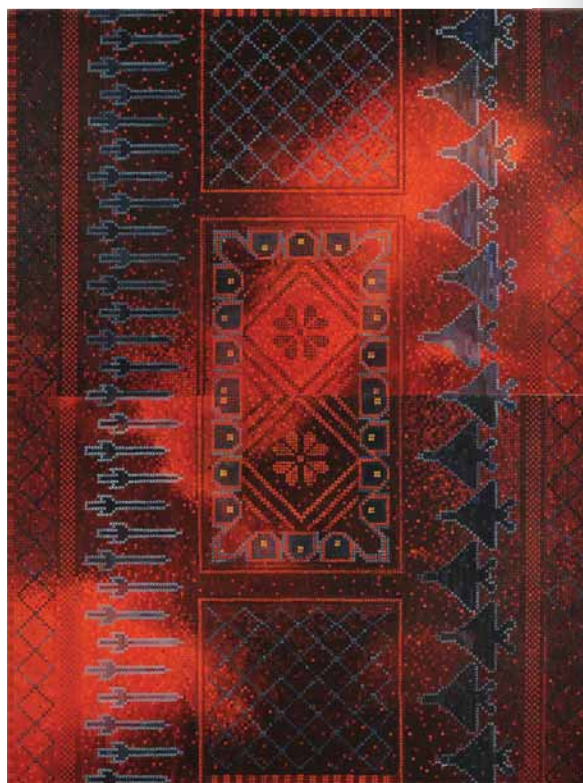
The resulting body of work – *Thelma Rosner: Homeland* – deals not with the differences, but rather with the connections between Israeli and Palestinian communities that seemingly defy their continuing conflict.

The point of Rosner’s *Homeland* seems to be that culture doesn’t end at a fixed border drawn on a map.

Nestled as it is in Museum London’s Forum gallery, *Homeland* can be appreciated from above and within. While it can be consumed quickly, it deserves to be digested slowly. This is an exhibit that begs the viewer to look, and then look again.

One wall is occupied by three large pieces that appear to be tapestries but upon closer inspection are oil-on-canvas paintings in which Rosner has painstakingly applied paint to resemble stitches.

Tatreez, or cross-stitch embroidery, is a traditional Palestinian handicraft practised by generations of women. Early examples feature geometric patterns such as triangles, stars, and lozenges; over time, in response to historical events, other motifs have crept in.



Thelma Rosner, *Cross-Stitch*, oil on canvas, 2011, collection of the artist.

Rosner’s paintings are subtly infused with bombs and fighter jets.

“Incorporating weapons into the surface suggests the idea of trying to live basic lives during a state of war,” Rosner says.

In the center of the gallery are two freestanding pieces. One, a giant accordion-fold book called the *Israeli Palestine Dictionary* is presented at eye-level; the other called *Border* sits directly on the ground.

Dictionary presents meticulously rendered objects such as olive leaves, rope, and stones that are universal in their usage and serve to point out the similarities and shared experiences of these two groups.

Each image began as a painting from which two digital archival prints were made. One

print is the mirror image of the other. Mounted back-to-back, each image is accompanied by Hebrew-Arabic words.

Many of the objects invoke concrete as well as symbolic associations. Pomegranates for example figure in Judaism, Christianity and Islam as symbols of fruitfulness.

Border is a double sided installation of 22 black and white images based on a 1930s souvenir book of pressed flowers from the Holy Land. Such booklets, says Rosner, were collected by Christian tourists who made the pilgrimage to Palestine in the early part of the 20th century.

The work echoes the duality of *Dictionary* but in a slightly different way. A positive image is mounted on one side of the border and a negative on the other. Each negative image is a total inversion of its positive counterpart: light areas appear dark and dark areas appear light. It’s the same, but not.

The fourth and final piece, *Homeland*, is a mixed media installation depicting the River Jordan and the lands it runs through. Here Rosner’s use of metal, glass, sand and other materials appear in stark contrast to those she has used in the other pieces. *Homeland* sheds the humanity of the rest of the exhibit to focus attention on the land itself.

“The issues I work with suggest materials,” Rosner explains. “I don’t use materials as the subject of my work.”

Rosner’s observations on the situation in the Middle East are as balanced as her artwork. “Both Arabs and Jews are entitled to justice and a homeland,” she says. “It’s just a question of negotiation.”

Beth Stewart is a secondary school teacher, visual artist and writer. She is one of the core organizers of the London Artists’ Studio Tour and a champion of the VisualFringe.

Thelma Rosner: Homeland
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R L Raymond's poetic punch

By Patricia Paterson

R L Raymond's poetry leaves the back story for the reader to decipher.

► London Poet R L Raymond is a man with a mission. "Some modern poems sound the same and I want to have a voice," he says. "I want someone to read a poem and say that is an R L Raymond or Raymondesque poem. My mission is to develop that voice."

Raymond also wants to reach and engage his audience.

In 2011, he released a 49-page collection, *Sonofabitch Poems*, through his publishing company Pigeonbike Press, and dedicated it "to all the non-poets." From the title to a no-holds-barred dialogue, Raymond delivered a tale about life, death and points in between with "a well-placed punch."

Weakdays, a 22-page chapbook, published by Corrupt Press, was released in Europe in 2012 with Pigeon Bike Press handling North American distribution.

It explores the narrative tension in "everyday life and relationships" where the potential for argument is always simmering beneath the surface. Raymond's mission is to "capture the moment, the picture, and leave the rest to you."

Raymond believes that "poetry should be like photography, whereas fiction or prose should be like a movie." Four of the poems in his first collection were, in fact, called "Five Snapshots." One was published in *Carousel Magazine* and consisted of this image: "a bistro, a latte cup, a lipstick and bloodstained

napkin." Raymond leaves the back story for the reader to decipher.

Raymond will delve deeper into his craft with *Half Myths and Quarter Legends* released this fall by Epic Rites Press. In it, he honed down four hundred pieces of prose and poetry to create a narrative arc of obscure Spanish, Christian and English mythology and legend. Wolf Carstens, Epic Rites' publisher, notes that Raymond "draws on all five senses to explore unsettling situations, real and imagined to create an atmosphere of horror."

Raymond contends that while darkness may inform his poetry and that the likes of Samuel Beckett, Cormac McCarthy, Ezra Pound and William Faulkner may have influenced him, "I don't ever want to be taken seriously. I don't want to be niche writer. I want everybody to get something out of my work."

For Raymond, it's all about perception. He believes that "the purpose of art is to lie and make it sound like the truth."

R L Raymond will participate in 100,000 Poets for Change for Culture Days at the Landon Public Library on Saturday, September 29.

Patricia Paterson is a freelance writer and owner of Oracle Consulting, and a former teacher/consultant with the Thames Valley District School Board.

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Excerpts from *Half Myths & Quarter Legends*

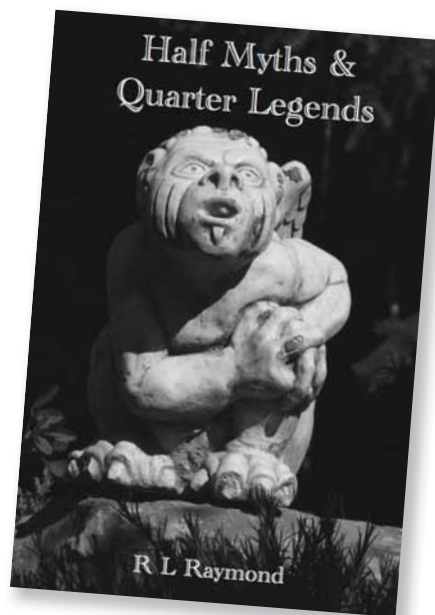
By R L Raymond

The old ones

travel west
their arcana
in leather totes
the young
quickly forget
their words and wisdom
making up new truths
through art
and mythologies
about what they took
and why they left
until one day
the not-so-young-anymore
feel the arthritic kiss in their joints
understanding that the old ones
only travelled west
for the warm moist air
with nothing but pocketbooks and sudoku

I, Gabble Retchet

the mongrel paws
shortbread snow
piled at the drive's end
his bay fades
in a frozen huff
halfway to the door
inside she bakes cookies
humming a lullaby
in which she still believes
again he slinks to his rocky haunt
to wait for spring
the feel of water on his face forgotten



La bruja

isn't really
just hunchbacked and stinking
of cabbage
boiled in the cast iron pot
seasoned and tempered
over the ages
with those herbs
and spices
that make the soup
all the more pungent
she eats alone
happy in her solitude
her mystery
her stench
keeps the *niños* off her lawn
or scared enough
to pull the weeds
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they never collect



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A grand project

By Caroline Dolny Guerin



Photo by Deborah Zuskan

My Fair Lady - 2012

► The Grand Theatre's High School Project is the only program of its kind in North America – an exceptional opportunity for local high school students to receive training and experience, free of charge, with theatre professionals both on stage and behind the scenes.

All registered high school students in the area have the opportunity to audition or interview for either or both of the two yearly productions.

The buzz begins when Grand representatives visit area schools to talk about the fascinating opportunities available for those interested in being members of the production crew. Successful candidates with an aptitude for their chosen area shadow “behind the scenes” professionals, creating an integrated design for the show: visual art (props and sets); fashion (wardrobe and design); technology (sound and lighting).

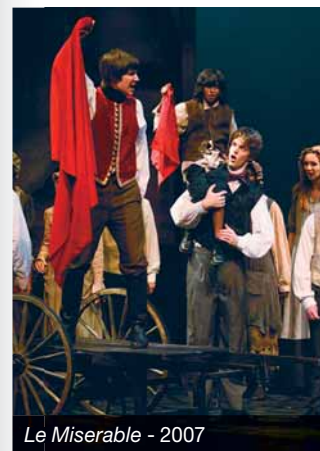
Other opportunities exist for those interested in directing and stage management, while those with strengths in writing and photography may work in marketing, creating videos and photos or a blog to record the process.

If students are interested in being in the cast they must show strength in at least two of the triple threat categories: singing, dancing, and acting.

Director Susan Ferley's words are an encouragement for those reticent to audition.



The Sound of Music - 2005



Le Miserable - 2007



Creating cars for *Grease* - 2009



Footloose - 2011

“Many of us in the profession would describe ourselves as very shy,” she says. “I became involved in theatre because I felt that shyness might become a disability for me in the future. I wanted something that took me out of myself. Theatre provided that.”

In 2006 Ferley expanded the vision of the Project to include a Shakespearean or Canadian play in the McManus Studio Theatre. Some students are involved in both production venues, either in the same year, or year to year. “It is exhilarating to have students return as they bring maturity, understanding, and leadership, and at the same time to ensure that new people are provided with this opportunity to experience theatre in such a very immediate, personal, and visceral way,” she says.

The time demands are considerable. From the start of musical rehearsals in the last week of July, work continues five days a week for the rest of the summer, moving to evenings once school begins. One week in the summer is “Equity Week,” when students work the same hours as the pros in order to experience the commitment and stamina necessary.

“We are always looking to provide a range of experiences whether on stage or behind the scenes,” says Ferley, and this fall's *My Fair Lady* offers just that.

As a contrast to last year's *Footloose* the range of design in costumes – especially the hats – and scenic art is staggering, while for the performers the challenge is of a radically different style of music and dance. As in previous years, the number of young people involved is between 60 and 70.

Those participating never forget their experiences and it marks them in various ways.

Some go on to professional careers in the arts while others become lifelong supporters of live theatre. All have their lives enriched, becoming more creative, collaborative, and forming wonderful friendships.

From its inception in 1998 – with Michael Shamata's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – to the memorable *Guys and Dolls* of Kelly Handerek – to Susan Ferley's 10 years of musicals and studio productions, the High School project is a highlight of the theatre season. Londoners should be very proud.

Caroline Dolny Guerin is a London based actor. She will next be seen as Claire in “A Delicate Balance.”

Grand Theatre High School Project 2012/13
My Fair Lady (Sept 18-29)
 High School Playwrights Cabaret (January, 2013)
Taming of the Shrew (April, 2013)
www.grandtheatre.com

Q&A

with Rick Kish

By Robyn Israel



Rick Kish's A Missing Link Theatre Company hopes to fill a gap in the London theatre scene.

► Tell me about your new company, A Missing Link. What prompted you to establish it?

A Missing Link Theatre Company (AMLTC) was born out of a need to work professionally and thrive creatively and artistically in my own city, a need to bring work and creative opportunities to other like-minded individuals and to entertain the community of London and surrounding area.

What is its mission?

Our goal is to produce quality professional theatre in London, using primarily local Canadian Actors Equity Association (CAEA) members as well professionals from other communities. We wish to attract individual artists who are CAEA members within our community who often have to leave London in order to work.

We would fill the gap between the well-established large venue professional theatre (The Grand Theatre) and amateur community theatre. We intend to pay our actors and provide remuneration for all aspects of the production. We also intend to form mentorship programs which would allow interested individuals, of all ages, the opportunity to work side by side with professionals and allow learning and growth within each discipline.

How will it be different from other local companies?

Most companies in London, other than the Grand, are for the most part unable to engage under the terms of CAEA. I will attempt,

whenever possible, to engage the professional community that lives here in the area.

My company will create opportunities for artists to get professional experience here in London and not necessarily have to leave town to get it.

Tell me more about your own background.

My background is 8 years combined experience as Artistic Director at Port Stanley Festival Theatre in Port Stanley and The Bluewater Summer Playhouse in Kincardine. I've been working in the theatre industry as an artistic director, producer, director, actor and teacher for 20 years and have been an active member of CAEA since 2001.

What productions do you have planned for 2012-2013?

A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline, by Dean Regan (Oct 30 – Nov 11) followed by the world premiere production of *The Great Kooshog Lake Hollis McCauley Fishing Derby*, by Norm Foster (April 16 to May 4).

What are your future goals?

My future goals for this company are to continue to produce professional theatre in London and to engage and entertain for many years to come. To create opportunities to work, learn and flourish as artists in the City of London.

Robyn Israel is an award-winning playwright, performer, and star of "Jewish Girls Don't Kayak." Learn more at robynisrael.com

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Mark Payne

By Kathy Rumleski

► From the disparate worlds of international opera in Paris to square dancing on the boards in Southwestern Ontario, Londoner Mark Payne's career this past year has been anything but routine.

He was Western University's opera program music director and head vocal coach, an Orchestra London pianist and a soloist with various opera companies, but Payne has also turned his attention to theatre in the last few years.

Payne has recently been given a three-year contract as music director at Victoria Playhouse Petrolia, where he also music-directed a successful season that closed with a show he helped create, *The Songs of Sinatra*. The production has been extended by popular demand, and now runs to September 23.

This fall, he will be writing a Christmas show and serving as the music director/pianist for London's Anglican Church of the Ascension. Payne says his theatre work has really changed his approach to directing a church choir.

"It's hard to keep track of everything I'm doing," Payne said, but his smile conveyed he loves every minute of it. "I'm not able to say no to a good thing."

Payne, who wrote and performed a sold-out one-man show *Simply Grand* at the Imperial Theatre in Sarnia last year, is a native of Newfoundland and that is where he returned this summer for a quick break with his wife and three girls in between projects.

It's his family that gives him inspiration, he said, starting with his parents and grandparents as they introduced him to country music and Newfoundland folk.

Although he said he was a "snob" as a prodigy, studying classical piano and turning his back



Mark Payne returned to his Newfoundland roots in *Country Sunshine* at the Victoria Playhouse Petrolia.

for a time on the music he was raised on, he has never forgotten his Newfoundland roots.

So it turns out the VPP show *Country Sunshine* was a good fit, right down to the square dancing and Hank Snow solo number "I've Been Everywhere." Payne drew inspiration from reflections on his grandmother when he performed.

"I wish she was alive to come see it," he said.

Like the sweet harmony he created in the *Country Sunshine* number, "The River," Payne, who sang tenor in a gala at the old opera house in Paris last year, adds depth to any collaborations he's asked to join.

Now adding theatre to the mix only makes his notes better, he said. "It changes the way I approach everything in music."

Kathy Rumleski is a London writer and journalist. Read her blog at <http://kathyrumleski.wordpress.com> or contact her at kathy.rumleski@gmail.com

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The new Oxford Book Shop

By Victoria Purcell

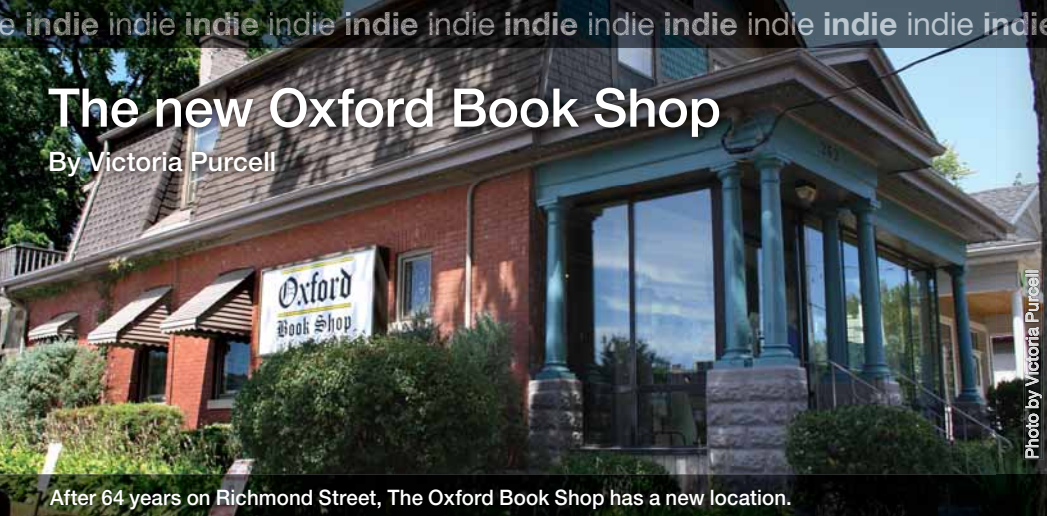


Photo by Victoria Purcell

After 64 years on Richmond Street, The Oxford Book Shop has a new location.

► Opened in 1948, the Oxford Book Shop is London's oldest independent book store. And earlier this year, the long-time Richmond Street resident moved to a new location just around the corner on Piccadilly Street.

Co-owners Mark Pittman and Hilary Thomas are thrilled about their new location. "It feels like home," says Thomas. "It has given us a new lease on life."

Pittman's parents, Robert and Eileen, opened the first store and it has remained in family hands ever since. At its peak, Oxford Book Shop had three locations in London, with stores in Stratford and Woodstock as well. But by the early 1990s all locations, except the Richmond Street store, had closed.

Thomas credits their large loyal customer base as one of the main reason for the store's longevity, though surviving in retail for 64 years has not been without its challenges.

"There have been many changes in the retail world," she explains. "Big box stores, on-line shopping and e-readers have changed people's shopping habits." However, Thomas says the significant downturn in the economy in 2008 had the biggest impact on the shop. In an effort to reduce operating and maintenance costs, the search for a new location began.

When the property on Piccadilly Street became available, it seemed a perfect fit. After a slightly hectic move, the doors to the new location opened in March 2012.

The new site, though somewhat smaller, possesses the charm of an old-fashioned book store. Stained glass windows, antique light fixtures and architectural details lend to the shop's overall ambiance. "It's an ideal space for us," Thomas comments. "Customer feedback has been very positive."

Despite all the changes, many things remain the same.

Providing customers with a high standard of personal service is still top priority. The shop continues to offer a wide selection of books in all genres, including new releases, a unique collection of children's books, and something you won't find in the big chain stores – an area dedicated to publications by local authors.

Also very popular is their large assortment of greeting cards, office stationery supplies, and calendars. The shop carries topographical and nautical maps as well.

In 2013, the Oxford Book Shop will celebrate its 65th anniversary. Though details remain under wraps for now, "plans to mark the special event are in the works," says Thomas.

Victoria Purcell is a London based freelance writer and author of "Wilberforce Beginnings: The Wilberforce Colony & Butler Family Legacy."

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Kim Adams, *Truck Container II*, 2009, HO plastic models (1/87), 5.5" x 7" x 7" Courtesy of Diaz Contemporary, Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid

Britown Music

By Dawn Lyons

Live performances offer Britown Music students a real industry experience.



► It started out as a small after school program that offered a unique approach to music instruction.

With a focus on performance and fun that resonated with students and parents alike, Britown Music quickly outgrew its space in a rented portable, found a new home at 384 William Street, and officially opened in January 2012.

"I was frustrated with the traditional method of teaching music," explained program director and Britown Music owner, Brian Nelles. "I'm a big believer that performance is a vital part of what gives learning music meaning."

Student Ben Schmidt cited the different methods used at Britown as the reason he has continued to study music after experiencing his own disappointments with "traditional" instruction.

"Other places don't give you much freedom but at Britown, you can do what you're interested in and that helps you increase your musical skills," the 13-year-old said. "If you have a difficult piece, they approach it differently ... they make music fun to listen to and fun to make."

Enrollment in the original after school Rock Band program in 2010 exploded from eight students to 50 within just three months.

The popular program is now offered alongside private lessons, as well as two other programs: Songsmith and Sound Advice.

A songwriting program, Songsmith allows students to write and record their own songs

that can be shared online. Sound Advice is the only program of its kind in London geared toward teenagers who are interested in the technical side of audio production. It uses a hands-on approach to teach the theory and tricks of the trade of audio recording.

"It's a great primer for someone who may be interested in pursuing music production at the post-secondary level and as a profession," Nelles said. "The recordings they create can be used in their portfolios to apply to schools."

Britown currently employs six instructors, who all have post-secondary degrees or diplomas in music and are involved in London's music scene. This supports the strong connection that the teachers are able to build with their students.

Performances are also staged at local establishments, offering kids a true industry experience. "We create performance opportunities that support goal accomplishment and reinforce self-esteem," Nelles said, while explaining the school's mission to provide "simply amazing music lessons."

They succeed at achieving just that according to students like Schmidt, who consistently used one word to describe his experience at Britown: "Awesome."

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

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Jeans 'n Classics rocks on

By Kym Wolfe

► When you hear “Jeans ‘n Classics” do you automatically think “Orchestra London?” The two organizations successfully melded rock and orchestral music for so many years that many Londoners don’t realize they are separate entities.

Although the two parted company at the end of last season, Jeans ‘n Classics will perform in London again this year.

In fact, Londoners will be able to enjoy four different Jeans ‘n Classics performances in the newly created symphonic rock series. Proceeds from all shows will support A Rose in My Book, a local initiative dedicated to raising money for breast cancer research. In the past three years the group has raised \$400,000, with all funds staying in London and supporting research at London Health Sciences Centre.

All performances will be held at the London Convention Centre, and Jeans ‘n Classics founder Peter Brennan is clearly thrilled with the venue. “There will be table seating, with incredible sight lines and first class audio and lighting,” he says.

Brennan launched Jeans ‘n Classics in the early 1990s, creating an orchestral rock show that was completely different from the status quo. “The concept was not original. For example, Emerson, Lake and Palmer toured with an orchestra in the 1970s,” he says. However, the concept was certainly not common, and with no sheet music available Brennan wrote his own symphonic scores.

“Our focus is to really feature the orchestra,” he says. In fact all of the musicians involved in Jeans ‘n Classics are interested in helping to attract and build the next generation of orchestral audiences.

By the mid-90s Jeans ‘n Classics was getting calls from outside London. The group now



Jeans ‘n Classics founder, Peter Brennan, is looking forward to launching a new symphonic rock series at the London Convention Centre.

offers more than 50 different shows, each performed by members of a core group of musicians, conductors and singers, as well as a few headliners and special guests who come out for specific events.

Last season Jeans ‘n Classics performed 84 shows across Canada and the U.S.; this season is just as busy, with performances booked as far away as Anchorage, Alaska and Tucson, Arizona.

But Jeans ‘n Classics’ roots are in London, and the group is pleased to continue to play here. “It is important to us to keep a London profile,” says Brennan. “We love our audience here; it’s a rather wonderful crowd.”

Kym Wolfe is a freelance writer based in London, Ontario and an avid arts supporter. Visit her at www.kymwolfe.com

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Fine young fiddlers

By Nicole Laidler

The Jeffery Concerts kick off their 25th season with violin superstar, James Ehnes



Photo by Benjamin Ealovega

► String fans are in for a delightful earful this fall as two of Canada's leading violinists make rare stops in London. First up is James Ehnes who performs a solo recital with The Jeffery Concerts, September 25, followed by Jonathan Crow with Orchestra London on October 10.

The 2012/13 season marks a milestone for The Jeffery Concerts, as the popular series celebrates 25 years of bringing chamber music to London. "It's a big year and we decided to go out on a limb to make a special celebration of it," says series spokesperson and violist Ralph Aldrich.

Landing such a big star for opening night was a bit of a coup. "We were lucky to catch him. He's giving a recital in Toronto the night before," notes Aldrich, who has fond memories of adjudicating a young Ehnes in Brandon, Manitoba.

"He was a serious little boy who used to play in a black suit, rather formally," Aldrich recalls. "He'd put the violin up and the hair would rise on your head."

Today Ehnes is widely considered one of the most dynamic and exciting performers in classical music. He has performed in more than 30 countries, appears regularly with many of the world's best-known orchestras, and has released more than 25 recordings.

Ehnes' technical prowess and musicality will take centre stage in London with a program of unaccompanied repertoire: Bach's *Partita No.*

2 in D minor, Bartok's *Sonata for Solo Violin*, and a selection of Paganini's virtuosic *Caprices*.

"They have this wild technique that makes your mouth fall open, but they still have these beautiful Italianate melodies," Aldrich says of Paganini's virtuosic showpiece.

While The Jeffery Concerts once had the pleasant misfortune of selling-out by subscription, Aldrich wants Londoners to know that this is no longer the case. "We're not the only series presenting chamber music now as we were when Gordon [Jeffery's] mandate was developed," he explains, adding: "It's hard to imagine that it's been 25 years. It's been a voyage of discovery."

Orchestra London is also pulling out all the stops, kicking off this season's Classics & Beyond [formerly Cathedral Series] with an all-Beethoven program featuring violinist Jonathan Crow.

A native of Prince George, BC, Crow joined the Montreal Symphony Orchestra at the age of 19, becoming North America's youngest concertmaster in 2002. Last year, the 35-year-old joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the same position; he is also an avid chamber musician, soloist, and teacher.

"I've known Jonathan a very long time. We've played many concertos together, and now it's time to do the Beethoven. This is my favourite violin concerto ... it has something completely

hypnotic," says Orchestra London conductor, Alain Trudel.

"Jonathan is such a star," Trudel continues. "He has major-league chops, and he's also a nice person. It's really exciting to have him come and spend some time with us."

Crow will join Trudel at the pre-concert chat, where members of the audience can hear insights into the night's repertoire, and ask questions. It's all part of Trudel's plan to make classical music accessible and exciting to a broad audience.

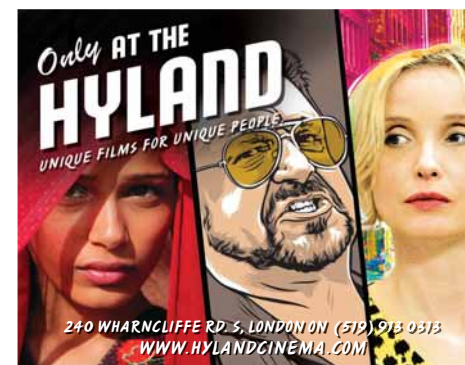
Beethoven's popular *Symphony No. 7* completes the opening-night program.

"There's nothing wrong with listening again to music that we love," notes Trudel, who is looking forward to his first full season as the orchestra's music director. "I want to create events where people come and meet an old friend again."

Nicole Laidler is the editor of *The Beat* and a freelance writer and business communicator. Visit her at spilledink.ca

The Jeffery Concerts, James Ehnes
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www.jefferyconcerts.com

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Driven to succeed

By Bob Klanac

Musician, model, insurance temp and actor, Rose Cora Perry reinvents herself as a Rogers TV host this fall.

► Rose Cora Perry is going to need new business cards. Again.

The 28-year-old Londoner has popped up in a number of guises over the past decade -from snarky punk-popper to model, writer, insurance agency temp (helping out at her father's company) to actor and now TV-show host.

Perry can currently be found Wednesday nights on Rogers13 as the host of London's Driven, a program profiling this city's young entrepreneurs.

Perry is something of an entrepreneur herself, having founded her record label at an age when most kids are getting their beginners' license. Always a high-achiever she made top grades in high school, and pushed her bands Anti-Hero and HER to support gigs on prestigious tours.

In short, she'll never be tagged as a slacker. In fact, the woman just doesn't stop. Reading her website bio is a potentially daunting bit of business in that she seems to get more done in a morning than many do in a decade.

She may have found her ideal gig at her new gig with London's Driven. If someone is to promote this city's young energetic business-minded youth, it absolutely should be Rose Cora Perry.

"There are so many young talented people in this city and the program will give them some good exposure," she explains.

The TV gig comes on the heels of her musical theatre debut in Simply Theatre's production of *Legally Blonde*, an experience that left her exhilarated and rather exhausted. "We had several hours of rehearsals four days a week," she explains.

The truth is Rose Cora Perry is an experience junkie. She confesses to the tag readily, adding that "it's all part of personal growth, of trying new things."

It would all seem so darned self-involved if not for Perry's saving grace. She laughs. A lot.

Her website shows a self-possessed, pensive young woman. Maybe she's like that sometimes. But in conversation she's engaging, funny and opinionated. And she knows how to rant quite nicely.

The topic of the day is Aerosmith front man Steve Tyler's autobiography, a fatuous tome according to Perry wherein the one-time junkie essays a life wasted, with few regrets about the apparently horrid things he did.

"It's really disappointing to read," she says with a laugh. "I mean who looks up to someone like that? He did all these things,

hurt some people, and he just laughs about it."

Reminding her that it is only Steve Tyler, a talent with a very low hit-per-year ratio doesn't cheer her up much. She sees him as pointless because this is someone who never learned anything from his career as a junkie and occasional musician.

Perry explains that it brings to mind her days as a young rocker, and the wastrels she dealt with.

"I have had it with people doing the drugs and music crap," she says. "These people being drugged out of their minds thinking they're playing amazing and they can't even stay in tune."

Perry sidled away from her rocker past as she saw her contemporaries



Photo by Fred Boylen

putting more effort into the purported "rock and roll lifestyle" than the music.

But she insists that we haven't heard the last of her. "I'm working on an album that should be out later in the year," she explains. "I grew up listening to Frank Sinatra for example, so that sort of thing will be there."

"It'll really be a whole bunch of things that I like, and yes I'm playing with actual musicians," she laughs.

Bob Klanac is a London based music journalist who's penned hundreds of features and reviews, sat on a Juno Awards jury, and is currently a member of the Polaris Music Prize jury.

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Behind the scenes with Faith Coates

By Nicole Laidler

► Faith Coates joined The Palace Theatre as marketing director in 2010. "My role is to promote the Palace and to help Londoners understand what a hidden gem this venue is," she says.

Where she's worked before: Heritage London Foundation and Fanshawe Pioneer Village. Prior to that I had my own business, Sun & Sky Foods.

Her first memory of the theatre: In the late 60s my family moved to Canada. We never had a TV or had seen a movie so my parents took me to see *Fantasia* at the Park Theatre (now known as the Palace). It was the first movie I had ever seen.

My first theatre experiences in London were at Oakridge high school where I fell in love with live theatre and blame it all on Art Fidler.

Drama, comedy, tragedy, or musical: All of the above but particularly black comedy.

Dream production: *Calendar Girls*. I am a complete sap for anything British. Second to that would be anything Shakespearean.

Book, magazine, or e-reader: Books. I read at least three a week.

What she's reading now: *Life: Keith Richards*, *Jann Arden: Falling Backwards* and *Game of Thrones*.

Guilty pleasure: Gruyere Croissants from Lindsay's Bakery at the Western Fair Farmer's Market. But I keep telling everyone about them and they keep selling out, so in a pinch Lindsay's Cinnamon Brioche.

Text message, email, phone call, or face-to-face: Email if I can't do face-to-face.

The perfect night out in London: Dinner at The Only and theatre at The Palace.

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Finally, that we need help from Londoners to support this beautiful heritage building so future generations can continue the tradition of community theatre "where Londoners play a part."


Nicole Laidler is editor of *The Beat*. Visit her at spilledink.ca

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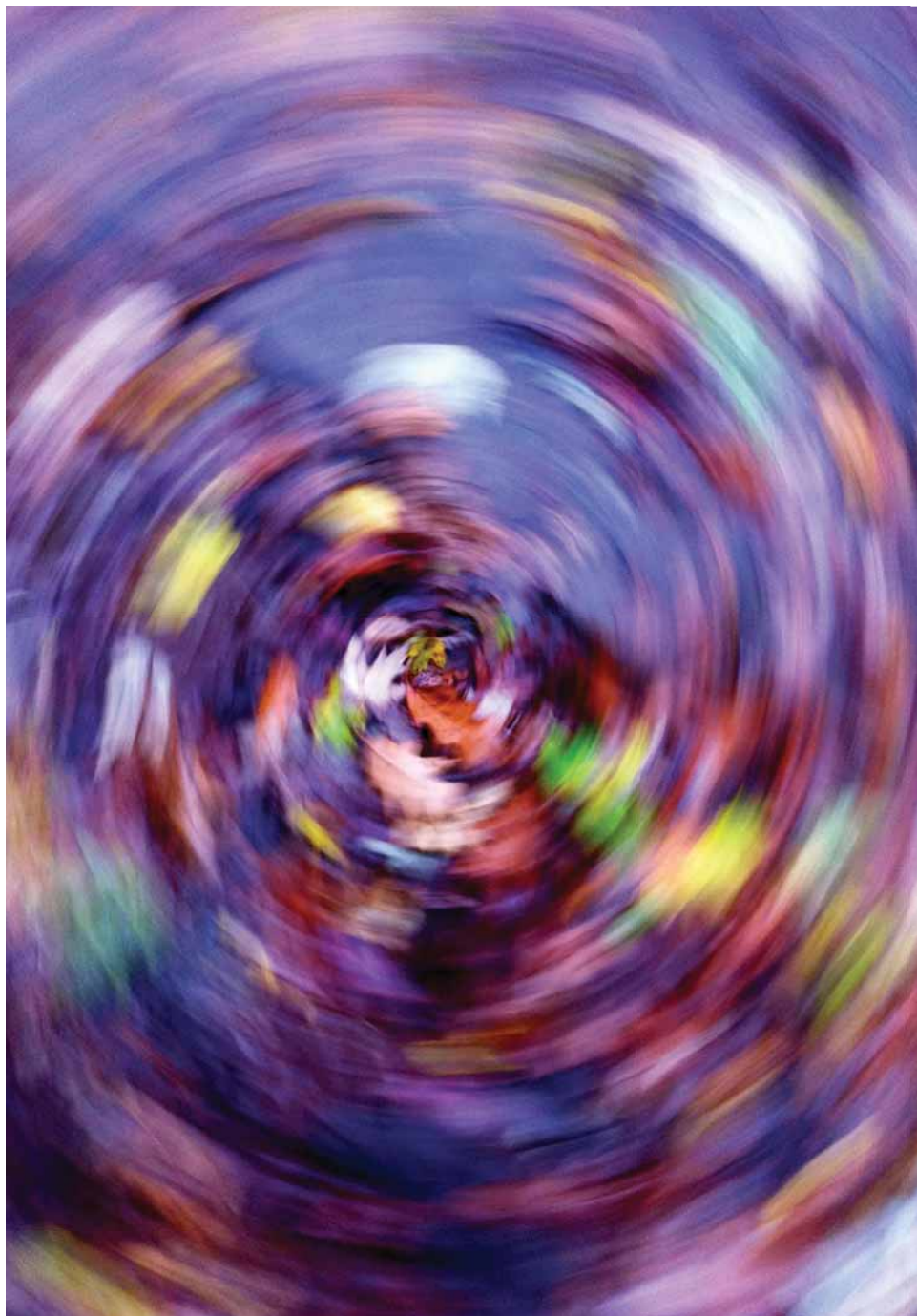
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London photographer and freelance writer Evelyn Symons captures the colours of fall with September Swirl. View more of her work at www.evelynsymons.com

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ADAPTED FROM GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S PLAY AND
GABRIEL PASCAL'S MOTION PICTURE 'PYGMALION'

SEPT 18 - 29

Enjoy lively dance numbers and memorable music as London's talented teens bring to life this story of the Cockney flower seller who is transformed into a lady. Musical favourites include "I Could Have Danced All Night," "Get Me to the Church on Time" and "On the Street Where You Live."



CALENDAR GIRLS

BY TIM FIRTH

OCT 16 - NOV 10

Hilarious, fun and big-hearted, this is a true story of a courageous group of women who bare all for a worthy cause.



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