Arts&Culture

ArtBeat



By Michael Gurney

Coast communities embrace free concerts

A trio of weekend performance series continues all summer long, in Sechelt, Roberts Creek and Sechelt.

This weekend, at Music in the Landing in Gibsons, the Anagram trio (Anna Lumiere, Graham Ord and James Meger) performs in the gazebo starting on Friday, Aug. 1 at 7 p.m. On Saturday in Winegarden Park, the lineup starts at 4:30 p.m. with Celtic trio Two Thistles and a Rose featuring music on fiddle, guitar and bass. The dynamic Mimosa ensemble — playing jazz, Brazilian sambas, French chanson and cabaret music — follows at 6:30 p.m.

In Sechelt on Saturday, Aug. 2, the music starts at noon in Hackett Park. The two-hour performance stars Half Cut & the Slackers, a dynamic four-piece band delivering timeless classic rock hits that span the decades. For the past eight years, the group has been a crowd favorite at local venues and Legions, known for their energetic performances and feel-good vibe.

On Sunday, on the rolling green behind the Roberts Creek Community Library, Slow Sundays in the Creek starts at noon. This weekend, the program includes the Beachcombers Ukulele Group Singers, Matthew Lovegrove performing original folk songs, Heidi Kurz's Jazz Budz and the Monty Montego Reggae Band.

Forecast for hot summer nights

The Gibsons Landing Heritage Society has announced a lineup of three summertime concerts ("Hot Summer Nights") that will benefit its ongoing conservation capital campaign for the historic Heritage Playhouse.

On Friday, Aug. 22 at 7:30 p.m., the Vancouver Flamenco group Calle Verde will present *Volver* (which means "return" in Spanish). This special dance and music performance marks the group's return — not only to Gibsons, but to the heart of their vision as Flamenco artists. Calle Verde will perform dynamic new works that acknowledge the roots that have shaped them as individual artists and fuelled their collective creativity.

Calle Verde — now in their 11th year of performing heart-pounding traditional flamenco — will also integrate unconventional influences such as contemporary dance, classical music, samba, and jazz. The ensemble features Peter Mole (guitar), Maria Avila (dance, singing, percussion) and Michelle Harding (dance, percussion).

Two more performances in the Hot Summer Nights series are scheduled: Van Django and opening guest Kiki Connelly on Friday, Sept. 5 and the Susana Williams Band on Friday, Sept. 12.

Tickets for all shows are available online via heritageplayhouse.ca.

Boats, beats and community

The beloved Gambier Island tradition "Commotion on the Ocean" will return for its sixth year this Saturday, Aug. 2. The all-day performance event brings music, community spirit, and a flotilla of supporters to the saltchuck off the southwest peninsula of Gambier Island.

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MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO

Shirley Fortin, Janet Irwin, Robert MacDonald, Helene McIntosh, and Nettie (Annette) Bob are among the Christenson Village artists whose works are displayed in downtown Gibsons.

GPAG

Christenson collective unveils images with ageless appeal

MICHAEL GURNEY
Arts & Culture Writer

Just 10 days after inhabitants of Christenson Village gathered for a garden party to wind up a Coast-wide research project on aging, a bus bursting with exuberant residents from the uptown Gibsons care facility travelled to the town's public art gallery. Their mission: to venerate eight artists living at Christenson Village, whose paintings were last Saturday unveiled at a first-of-its-kind exhibition.

The Artists of Christenson Village rebuts any pallid stereotypes about age with its explosions of colour, expansive subjects, and keen-eyed observation. Irene Brougham, a retired teacher and flight attendant, began painting at 93. Now three years later, a selection of her watercolours occupies pride of place in the Eve Smart Gallery. Her watercolour floral studies and birds (like the apricot-hued *Western Tanager*) reflect the timeless fecundity that stems from self-expression. English-born Sheila Graham, who once pursued a nursing career, is now using pen and ink to produce renderings of thoughtful beasts and winged creatures (her brilliantly-hued *Humming Bird* thrums toward a spray of blossoms that protrude from beyond the frame).

Christenson art instructors Makiko Kitama and Bruce Devereau curated the show, but the exhibition had its genesis in an in-house display of works by Village resident Helene McIntosh. McIntosh, a lifelong sketcher and painter originally from Montreal, creates in pastels, oils, and acrylics. *In her Childhood Memories II*, cherubic tots draw syrup from a spile under the long shadows of snow-dusted maples; her *Misty* is a photo-realistic chalk portrait of a phlegmatic feline.

"Helene had an amazing show hanging in our third-floor gallery," recollected Devereau, "and a couple of months back we invited the town council. The mayor arrived and the councillors arrived for the opening of Helen's show. Everybody loved the show, and [town councillor] Christi Thompson said: 'I am going to pursue getting this into the Gibsons Public Art Gallery.'"

Kitama and Devereau were skeptical, given the gallery's packed schedule. But gallery manager Christina Symons telephoned two days later, advising of an unexpected opening. Kitama and Devereau had two months to assemble and prepare works from the eight participating artists.

"This is my dream come true," said Kitama, who has provided art instruction at Christenson Village for 19 years. "I'm lucky enough to witness how these artists grow and improve. Some have stuck with it for many years. I hope I can keep doing this work for the next year and as long as possible: it would be great to be able to have a show here again."

Coun. Thompson also attended Saturday's exhibition opening, congratulating the beaming contributors.

Other Christenson artists on display include Lillooet-born Nettie (Annette) Bob, a member of the Xaxli'pmec (Fountain Valley Band) and Wolf Clan. Bob's bold strokes and dazzling colours illuminate landscapes like *The Maritimes* and wildlife scenes: in her *Two Coyotes — Looking for Their Lunch*, the tawny creatures eye each other warily.

Works by Shirley Fortin, who first cultivated her art skills at the Village, spotlight the interplay of birds and their habitats, as in *A Crow in the Flower Field*. Ann Helfer, a transplant from Red Lake, Ontario, creates effervescent depictions of gardens in acrylic, flora ablaze with pinks and crimson. Janet Irwin's fine-lined pen-and-ink drawings are imbued with evocative detail (as in the timeworn chimney-pots of *Clovelly England*); her winsome watercolour portrait of *Grandson Maverick* captures childhood insouciance.

Winnipeg-born Robert MacDonald participated in a 100-day challenge to paint and sketch every day, concluding: "I love the magic of watercolour." His landscape studies portray everyday scenes (including *Gibsons Way — Sunshine Coast Highway*) elevated by dapplings of supernal luminescence.

"This exhibition is a great coming together of like minds," said Stewart Stinson, president of the gallery's board of directors.

The Artists of Christenson Village can be viewed at the Gibsons Public Art Gallery until Aug. 17.