Arts&Culture

ArtBeat



Classical Scot makes Sechelt return

By Michael Gurney

Scottish pianist Steven Osborne will make a return engagement to the Raven's Cry Theatre in Sechelt on Sunday, March 23 at 2:30 p.m. for the final concert of the regular season presented by the Coast Recital Society.

Osborne was previously a guest artist of the society in 2015 and 2017.

Osborne, who was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2022 for his services to music, has recorded 34 albums on the Hyperion Label and has played recitals and concertos all over the world. His program in Sechelt will reflect his wide-ranging musical interests, opening with sensual arabesques by Robert Schumann and the Children's Corner Suite by Claude Debussy. The second half ventures into the world of jazz and includes his own improvisations along with transcriptions of works by Keith Jarrett and Ira Gershwin.

"The first time I improvised it was thrilling," he said in advance of a recent concert of the same program at Wigmore Hall in London. "I was influenced by Keith Jarrett and his unplanned concerts. What happens when you sit down in front of an audience with a completely blank page and you have to play something? I found that something actually happened, and it felt like it was mine — honest and beautiful in its way. The sense of silence becomes very heightened when you don't know what's going to happen and there can be real pleasure if you relax into it."

In addition to the Sunday recital at the Raven's Cry (where he will take part in a pre-concert chat at 1:30 p.m.), Osborne will also perform for the residents of the Silverstone Care Centre as part of the Coast Recital Society outreach program.

For ticket information e-mail office@coastrecitalsociety.org or call 604 885-0991.

The society has added a bonus concert with CBC's Tom Allen (host of CBC Music's "About Time") on Sunday, April 27 at the Raven's Cry Theatre. *JS Bach's Long Walk in the Snow* will feature a lineup of iconic Canadian musicians capturing the life and music of one of the greatest composers of all time. Allen will share the stage with soprano Suzie Leblanc, Joe Phillips on bass and guitar, pianist James Parker and violist David Harding.

See ARTBEAT page 36

SHÍSHÁLH NATION

Sea messenger honoured in museum transformation

MICHAEL GURNEY
Arts & Culture Writer

Three years after the body of a young fin whale was recovered by the shíshálh Nation in Pender Harbour (kalpilin), its carefully-preserved skeleton will be made visible to the public following a major renovation at the Nation's tems swiya Museum.

"He is like our messenger from the sea," said museum assistant Nanika Paul. "We feel very accomplished getting the whale up, because it's been sad having him sitting in a storage container. He is a deep-sea whale, and he has brought so many people together without even knowing it."

The member of the fin whale species — the second-largest mammals in the world — was likely the victim of a collision with a speedboat, said museum curator Irvin Louis. The creature was only two years old at the time. "It will be mounted above people's heads," Louis added. "The whole 46-foot skeleton weighs probably about 1,200 pounds."

In March 2022, reports to the BC Marine Mammal Response Network led to an onsite investigation of the deceased whale by members of the Fisheries and Oceans Canada Marine Mammal Response Team and the shíshálh Nation. The fin whale population in the North Pacific is identified as "threatened" by Canada's Species at Risk Act, and sightings of the cetaceans are rare in the vicinity of the Sunshine Coast. A four-hour scientific necropsy of the young male's body suggested he was healthy and well-nourished before experiencing injury.



MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO

This healthy two-year-old fin whale was likely killed by a boat strike in 2022, but it is being honoured at tems swiya.

Following discovery of the whale within its swiya (territory), the shíshálh Nation observed a ceremony to care for the creature's spiritual journey as a member of the family, then-hiwus (chief) Warren Paull noted at the time.

In preparation for the skeleton's display, tems swiya personnel facilitated 10 weekly meetings with shíshálh Elders. "We sat and talked about genealogy," recollected Paul, "and how much he [the fin whale] brought us all together."

Elders and elected councillors also performed cultural work on March 5, observing a brushing ceremony just hours before specialists from Cetacea Contracting re-assembled the skeleton.

Cetacea Contracting, based on Salt Spring Island, is headed by biologist and skeleton articulator Michael deRoos. deRoos's first project was a sea otter now on display at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre; he has also assembled three blue whale skeletons since launching his full-time practice two decades ago.

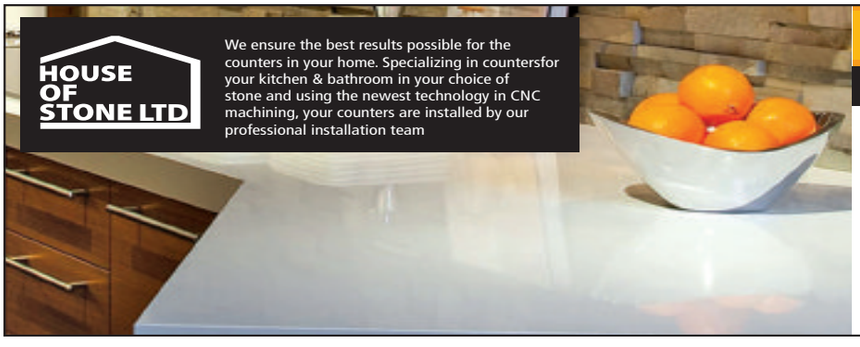
The completed skeleton will be the centrepiece of the renovated museum when it reopens on April 17, appearing alongside bones of an 18-year-old southern resident killer whale first exhibited in 2016 following its death by vessel collision. The killer whale is known as kwentens ?e te sinkwu, or Guardian of the Sea, and was also assembled by deRoos's Cetacea Contracting.

Supplementary exhibits will honour the 100th anniversary of the shíshálh Nation's amalgamation of four clans in the village of ch'atelích (present-day Sechelt). In 1925, despite being forced onto reserve lands with a population decimated by epidemic disease, shíshálh chiefs, matriarchs and citizens declared they would unite as a people.

Louis will curate the forthcoming displays while also spinning wool and undertaking a three-week weaving project: an original blanket to commemorate each of the Nation's four hereditary chiefs.

"I will be using raw natural wool to weave the blankets," he noted, "natural how they were back then for our people. I don't really like to switch up things from their time to our time." Although sheep's wool is used today for traditional blankets, wool from mountain goats and the now-extinct woolly dog was originally used.

A community history walk led by Talaysay Tours is planned for Tuesday, March 18 to commemorate the shíshálh amalgamation. The tour departs from the Tems Swiya Museum at 1:30 p.m.; participation is by donation. The museum reopens to the general public on April 17.



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