



DECEMBER 2010

There's
no place
like home



Stuff

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3. Point | 21. News of Note |
| 4. Counterpoint | 22. Sights – Matt LeBlanc |
| 5. First Word | 23. Syllables – Laurie Brinklow |
| 6. Sights – Gerald Squires | 24. Sounds |
| 7. Cover Story | 25. On the Page |
| 10. Syllables – Zach Wells | 27. On the Stage |
| 11. Performance PEI | 28. Taste |
| 12. Performance NB | 29. Sights – Heather Rushton |
| 13. Performance NL | 30. Showcase NS |
| 14. Sights – Bridgette Morrissey | 31. Showcase NL |
| 15. Spotlight – Peter Togni | 32. Showcase NB |
| 16. Scoop – Sheree Fitch | 33. Showcase PEI |
| 19. Community | 34. Sights – Jacqueline Steudler |
| 20. Click | 35. Last Word |
| | 36. Coda |

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Point

**Of course it is happening inside your head . . .
but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?"**

~Albus Dumbledore



Christmas Eve, 2010

Dear Santa

This letter is long overdue. I thought about messaging you on Facebook, but I wasn't sure if you'd remember me. It has been quite a few years since my last letter. Obviously, I'm not a kid anymore. (Well, at least, I think that's obvious.)

Back around 1976, I promised you (and myself!) that one day I would work for you, remember? I wanted to work with the elves, to make toys for kids, to spread hope and some Christmas joy. But, that position seems redundant now. Kids don't really play with handmade toys anymore, do they?

Still, I haven't forgotten my promise to you. These days, I work in ideas—education, books, plays, that sort of thing. (I had to give up the baton twirling career in October 1979, after we moved!) As I see it, I work in the business of HOPE now, and I'm hoping to get some ideas from you about sustainability.

Yes. Sustainability is the key issue. You see, on the one hand, many of us thoroughly understand that at an important human level "we are all lights burning bright." (That's BEST if SUNG by the way! Thank you, David Francey.) On the other hand, we encounter large and small obstacles daily and forget our brilliance almost the very instant anything goes amiss. ~~Do we all have dementia?!~~ Er... so I'm wondering, how can we keep the light of this season burning? Is there a chapter on Sustainability in the Elf Training Manual? Could I have a look at it?

I don't mean to pry into official North Pole business, and I know it's very late, but I'm just hoping it isn't too late to join you and the elves. Officially, I mean. As it is, I'm one flicker of light in a blustery world, so I do get busy and overwhelmed. (You understand.) I find myself rationing my time and energy. (I hope you won't hold that against me in considering this application!) That's just circumstances, Santa. Yanno?

I'm writing to you tonight for the same reason I wrote to you all those years ago, not only to offer my services, but to confirm that you are, beyond any doubt, the very spirit of Christmas—joy and hope! If you should need me in the New Year, I'm ready.

Would you look over the attached document, at your earliest convenience? I have quite a few Nice-List skills that transfer well to any position. As for my short comings, well, those are on file with the Naughty-List administrators. (Don't forget I can twirl baton too!) I trust you've got the full picture. I guess I'll always be eight years old at heart.

For tonight, I wish you the very merriest of Christmas Eves, Santa, with toasty-warm fingers and toes, steamy cocoa, soft cookies, the twinkling of stars and the singing of sweet seraphim in the heavens to light your way.

*With great hope,
Tina Capalbo*



Counter Point

Art for life...

I volunteer with a non-profit organization here in Halifax. It's not a big commitment – I put in 60-90 minutes each month working with individuals in crisis. It seems to have made a difference in a few people's lives, and it certainly has had a positive influence upon mine. I am truly the richer man for the experience.

I am always (pleasantly) surprised with the generosity of people, especially here in Atlantic Canada where I witness our world-renowned hospitality come-to-life on an almost daily basis. And it doesn't take much; a few kind words, a small gesture, simple respect and civility.

Artists across the region are among the most philanthropic of our population, with many of them donating their time, effort and money to charitable causes. It is as inspiring as their work.

In particular, I am impressed with the munificence of one of this month's Spotlight artists, Matt LeBlanc of Dieppe, New Brunswick.

LeBlanc's Art For Life campaign has set a new standard for giving amongst the arts community. Last March, the brilliant abstractionist set out to create 200 paintings in 6 months with the aim of raising \$25,000 for the Tree of Hope Campaign, an annual event hosted by the Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital Foundation in Moncton.

By the end of September, LeBlanc had sold all 200 paintings and exceeded his financial target. Subsequent donations to silent auctions, as well as portions of the sales of his paintings, pushed that total to over \$35,000.

Impressive indeed, and more than inspiring.

LeBlanc's "hands-on" philanthropy points to the power of how one individual with a vision can effect social change and to make a profound difference in society. Politicians, business leaders and the like would be wise to heed his example.

I invite you to explore LeBlanc's painting and his Art For Life campaign via his website - www.mattleblancart.com - and to allow yourself to be infused with a spirit of generosity that is bound by no season.

Happy Holidays Everyone.

Stephen Patrick Clare
Publisher



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Getting Between the Covers

By Peter Moreira

Let's start with applause for those who appreciate and perpetuate the intrinsic beauty of books.

I'm not talking about the words and paragraphs, but the paper, the binding, the illustrations, type and dustcover. One of the joys of reading history and biography is that sometimes major publishing houses rise to the occasion in these genres and produce volumes so lovely you don't want to read them for fear of damaging the binding.

Overall, modern publishers that respect books are rare, and Atlantic Canada is lucky to have Gaspereau Press of Kentville, N.S.

For 13 years, Andrew Steeves' and Gary Dunfield's tiny press has painstakingly turned out handcrafted books, one of which garnered a lot of attention this month. Novelist Johanna Skibsrud won the Giller Prize for her first novel *The Sentimentalists*, which was published by Gaspereau, and the publisher at first refused to lower its standards to get the book out faster to meet the sudden demand. It has since compromised, and newly printed volumes will be in the bookstores by Christmas.

Much as I admire Steeves and Dunfield for upholding their standards, I wish they had responded immediately to their good fortune.

The theme of this column has been a call to develop the arts economy in Atlantic Canada, and for government and business to back the artists who bless this region. But the converse also holds true.

The arts community is an industry and it has an obligation to behave like an industry. That means they have to seek higher revenues each year, and when they see an opportunity they have to grab it.

Publishers – and you can add in gallery owners, theatre producers and other cultural business people – have a responsibility to their clients and society to help artists nurture the best work possible and then to maximize distribution.

Their responsibilities are not only cultural but also economic. They have a duty to grow their business wherever possible, so that they can nurture more great art and employ more people. They have a duty to create wealth.

Am I arguing we should lower standards to increase sales? Absolutely not! I'm writing this article because Gaspereau published a book of such merit that people from around the world want to read it. We need people in the arts who strive for great work, and when they achieve it, we should sell it as widely as possible, thereby enriching artists, intermediaries and society. Johanna Skibsrud's success is further evidence – as if any were needed – that the cultural community in Atlantic Canada is strong enough to attract a global audience. And like all arts communities around the world, ours needs public funding.

There are two reasons for that funding – one cultural and the other economic. But we can only sustain the economic arguments in favour of arts funding if our impresarios and publishers maximize the returns for the superb work they produce.

Peter Moreira is the author of *Backwater: Nova Scotia's Economic Decline*, published by Nimbus Publishing.



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sights



Gerald Squires

Gerald Squires is one of Canada's foremost visual artists. He lives and works in St. John's, NL.

AWAY FROM EVERYWHERE

A NOVEL | CHAD PELLEY

A Heart-stomping Pageturner about the Flipside of Love and the Complexities of Identity.

- Winner of NLAC's CBC Emerging Artist Award
- Shortlisted for CAA's Emerging Writer Award
- Shortlisted for the 2010 ReLit Award





By Stephen Patrick Clare

It is a warm and drizzly Saturday night in downtown Halifax – hardly the snowy start to the Holiday Season that usually covers the city in a blanket of soft white powder by early December.

Outside of the Neptune Theatre on Argyle St, however, the mood is merry as scores of men, women and children of all ages mull about, waiting to see Dorothy, Toto, the Tin Man, the Lion and the Scarecrow in a surprising and spirited

production of the an all-time classic tale of togetherness, The Wizard of Oz.

“I honestly have no idea what to expect,” says Richard Hart, a 22 year-old Dalhousie University student who is taking his longtime girlfriend Melodie to the evening performance. “It’s not exactly a Christmas theme, but I can see how it might work.”

"I think it's a great idea," shares 36 year-old Belinda Myles, who holds the hands of her two youngsters Ben, 9, and Bettina, 7. "This time of the year should be all about family and friends, tradition and sharing – these are the things that matter the most in our lives. Like Dorothy says, there's no place like home."

George Pothitos agrees.

"The holidays are all about coming together as a family and as a community," explains the theatre's artistic director, now in his second season with the company.

"To me, The Wizard of Oz embodies the spirit of togetherness more than any other story. It's timeless that way – everyone can relate to it on a deeply emotional level."

The decision to produce a non-holiday play, he admits, was a risky one,

"Call it a calculated risk," he laughs. "Sure, it is a break from what Neptune normally does at this time of the year, but it's not like we've gone off the deep end into uncharted waters. This is very familiar territory for most of us."

To that end, Pothitos and his peers have remained as faithful as possible to the original script.

"It's not easy to take a movie of that caliber and renowned off the big-screen and bring it to the stage. You never want to stray too far from the story, but you don't want to end up being a carbon-copy either – it's important for the cast and crew to leave their own personality on the production. And it took a lot of work for us to find that balance."

"George had his hands-full with this one right from the get-go," agrees Jennie King, Neptune's Sales and Marketing Manager.

"There were a number of issues that had to be addressed. Casting was a major challenge, if only in terms of sheer numbers. There were so many roles to fill, and he wanted the perfect fit for each character."

Working with a large technical team was also a test, adds King.

"The set design, costume design, special effects, lighting and music all had to be coordinated down to the last details to make the production as seamless as possible."



"You have to give him credit though – he's pulled it all off in spectacular fashion."

"Well, that's my job," grins Pothitos. "Audiences aren't supposed to see the blood, sweat, tears and heart palpitations that go on behind the scenes now are they?"

If ticket sales are any indication of success, then all of those efforts appear to have paid off.

"Our attendance is up from last year," points out King, citing the company's variety of ticket packages as one of several reasons for the increase.

"The reviews have been great and that has certainly helped a lot also. Mostly, though, it has been word of mouth. People who have seen the production are spreading the word quickly, and, at the end of the day, you can't beat that kind of publicity."

Indeed, later that night, after the performance, the appraisals are unanimous.

"It was fantastic," exudes Richard Hart, wrapping his arm around his girlfriend. "The acting was excellent, the music was great and the stage set made you feel like you were right there in Oz. The whole thing was really, really well done."

Belinda Myles echoes the sentiment.

"It was wonderful," she smiles. "And it brought up all sorts of warm and special memories for me of my childhood. It is such a treat to be able to share this with my own children and for them to have these kinds of memories for themselves – something that they can maybe pass along to their own children one day."

For Pothitos, that is what it is all about.

"The speed of life today is so fast and everyone is so busy with work, school or whatever that we seldom take the time to do things together - especially with all of these new-fangled digital devices at our fingertips. We're all off in our own little worlds.

"Family and friends should be a refuge from all of that, a safe space to relax and connect with what's real and important to us. And for that, there's no place like home."

The Wizard of Oz at the Neptune Theatre, until January 9, 2011. Information and tickets are available online at www.neptunetheatre.com



syllables

A WINTER

It was a winter of atmospheric depressions
 It was a winter of anhedonic ennui
 It was a winter of dumb indecision
 It was a winter of her, a winter of me

It was a winter of silt in the Fraser
 It was a winter of tugboats and freight trains
 It was a winter of rust on the razor
 It was a winter of nightmares and rain

It was a winter of dull unemployment
 It was a winter of landlords and in-laws
 It was a winter of ill-planned deployments
 It was a winter of hammers and saws

It was a winter of wrongheaded answers
 It was a winter in which nothing clicked
 It was the winter the cat died of cancer
 It was the winter you quickened and kicked

Born and raised on PEI, **Zachariah Wells** has lived in seven provinces and territories over the past fifteen years. He now finds himself in Halifax (for the third time), where he works as a freelance writer and editor and seasonally for Via Rail Canada, on board The Ocean Ltd. Wells is the author of the poetry collections *Unsettled* (Insomniac Press, 2004) and *Track & Trace* (Biblioasis, 2009), co-author of the illustrated children's story *Anything But Hank!* (Biblioasis, 2008) and editor of *Jailbreaks: Canadian Sonnets* (Biblioasis, 2008) and *The Essential Kenneth Leslie* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2010). Poems have appeared recently, or are forthcoming, in *The Best Canadian Poetry 2010* and *The Walrus*. www.zachariah Wells.com

Performance

Credit Prince Edward Island author **Jeff Bursey** for always keeping his audience top-of-mind.

"Reading, and then acting, made me think it would be fun to do things with words. Being a terrible actor, I realized writing the words to a play might be more fulfilling, and would definitely be less painful for the audience."

The theatre's loss proved to be a boon for readers however, with the Newfoundland-born and bred Bursey producing a number of critically-acclaimed plays, essays and critiques over the next years.

His latest effort is *Verbatim: A Novel* (Enfield & Wizenty / 320 pp / \$29.95), an innovative and insightful narrative that is both an uproarious read and a scathing exposé of parliamentary practice in Atlantic Canada.

The book's origins can be traced back to the fall of 1992 when the writer plied his trade as a transcriber in the Newfoundland and Labrador Hansard.

"Every day, looking at the finished document - the public record of what's said in the House that's open to everyone to read - thoughts came to me about how to capture the way we govern ourselves, and how discussion goes on in a legislature," he recalls.

"What gets into any day's Hansard is a massive number of issues," he continues, "some with the life of a firefly, some that are perennial. The stuff I drew from, as well as from Hansards elsewhere in the country, shows the language being debased, and that people we vote in don't always address the topic in the most fruitful ways. Anyone would have a reaction of some kind if they visited their legislature several days a year."

The author explains that the challenges and rewards of piecing the work together were one-and-the-same.

"I'd set up obstacles to jump over, to keep myself interested. Two examples will do, the first of which was to write a book filled with the talk of over 70 characters without once representing their inner thoughts. We've had novels, movies, television shows and plays where the minds of politicians and bureaucrats are explored, so why do that again?"

"Second, often in books you get sentences like 'The sun set amidst darkening clouds, and Charles felt misgivings about tomorrow's stockholders' meeting,' or dialogue tags such as 'she said knowingly.' Let me be clear, it wasn't hard to leave those things behind, but I wanted to get points across in an entertaining way about a subject that many think dull without having a narrator guide the reader, as if he's an idiot, through the events."

To date, response to the creative chronicle has been encouraging.

"Most people didn't think the subject matter would be workable," confides Bursey. "Now that the book is out, some folks find it a lot more enjoyable than they expected. Not necessarily hopeful, but funnier. An early reader called it relentless, and that pleased me, as does its lack of resolution."

Reaction at readings has also been excellent.

"There's the opportunity for audience participation," he notes. "They're encouraged to call out 'Hear, hear!' and 'Oh, oh!' when they agree or disagree with what's said - and they've gotten into it. Theatrically speaking, the rules of legislatures sustain the role of the chorus."



"Why not get the audience to take that part? It may be the closest they'll come to being legislators, and it might even be cathartic to call out in agreement or disagreement."

www.jeffbursey.com

Performance

“It’s the cutest thing.”

Suzanne Bourque is grinning through the phone from her office in Moncton.

“They all look so sweet dressed-up in their little tutus,” smiles the Artistic Director of the Academy of Classical Ballet and Modern Dance. “It’s pretty irresistible.”

It appears that the bitty-ballerinas are finding the fun and focus irresistible also. Since founding the school in 1996, Bourque has seen enrollment rise from 30 students to over 400.

“We started with ballet, but have since expanded into other forms of dance; jazz, modern, hip-hop, step and even belly-dancing. And we now have learners of all ages – as young as 3 years-old, right up to people in their 50s and 60s.”

Many of those students will be taking centre stage on Sunday, December 12 at the Capitol Theatre in Moncton as the Academy presents its yearly showcase.

“It’s actually a bi-annual event,” explains Bourque, who still dances herself. “We do another one each June also.”

“It’s fun and light and gives the families and friends of our students the chance to see what we do. I find it really rewarding to hear from the parents, especially – they’re always so excited and enthusiastic for their children.”

The performances also speak to the growing interest in dance across the Atlantic region.

“When we first started out there were a few dance companies scattered here and there along the East Coast,” says Bourque. “But today you will find them in almost every corner of each province. And we now have several very prominent organizations like the Atlantic Ballet Theatre of Canada in place here.”

While that’s good news for those looking to establish a career in the field – an opportunity that Bourque admits wasn’t there even a decade ago – it also means greater challenges for the industry.

“Public funding gets spread out a little more now,” she concedes. “The government has done a good job supporting our development, but we’ve also had to take on a number of corporate sponsors to keep things running.”

It is a story that is not uncommon to arts organizations both here at home and across the country.

“I don’t think it’s a bad thing,” shares Bourque. “Everybody benefits from these arrangements; the troupes, our sponsors, the audience, but most importantly, the students.”

Watching those students grow, she notes, is what keeps her doing what she does.

“They study much more than dance here. They learn about discipline, hard work, self-respect – those are important life lessons.”

“And it’s just so cute to see them doing that in their little tutus.”

www.plie.ca



Performance

If you live in St. John's, you might think twice before answering the front door this holiday season.

"Ach, we're not so bad dontcha' know," grins "Sean" (not his real name), who along with 8 of his peers are one of several troupes who carry-on the centuries-old tradition of Mumming in the "grande olde townes" and outposts across the Rock.

"I wouldn't say we're harmless exactly – ya' might be out a dash or too of spirits and food by the time we're done with ya' – but we'll surely make it worth your while."

Sometimes called "Jannies", Mummers have been licking their lips in Newfoundland since the early 17th century, when English settlers brought the tradition with them during colonization. The word finds its origins in the French momer, meaning someone who wears a mask during festive times.

Disguising themselves in old clothing, scarves, hoods and hats, Mummers go from door-to-door entertaining families for upwards of an hour with their merry mix of antics, dancing and live music.

"Its watcha' call nowadays a win-win scenario," laughs Sean. "We provide the song and dance and they provide the food and drink."

"The best part is watching people try and guess who we are. Most of us know each other – we're all from the same neighbourhood - so the silliness usually all ends up with us on the floor, laughing until we can't breath."

"Ah it's all a great hoot," agrees Michael Daley, a St. John's resident who has been hosting Mummers each year for over a decade. "Of course the more we all drink, the better it all gets."

While the custom and all of its trimmings never fully disappeared from the area, it did lie fallow for well-over a century. In 1982, the popular St. John's music duo Simini wrote and released "The Mummer's Song" and the ritual was reborn to a new generation of revelers.

"It is another way for us to celebrate and honour our history and heritage," notes Daley. "And I would contend that it's now as much a part of our present as it is a part of our past."

Some of the costumes, he continues, can be quite creative.

"One year we had a couple glued together like Siamese twins, and last year we had an entire family dressed up in one outfit."

While the tradition of Mumming finds its footing in Pagan times, no-one seems to know what it all means or why it continues.

"Ach, who cares," argues Sean. "The point is that it brings folks together at Christmas time. Of course, that's so long as they're willing open the door."

Watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D80Py7De3bk>

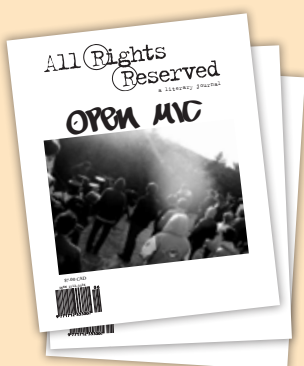


sights



Bridgette Morrissey

Bridgette Morrissey is a graduate of NSCAD University. Currently, she works as a painter and illustrator in Halifax, NS.



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Spotlight

Peter-Anthony Togni relates to that transformation

By Carol Moreira

When a snake sheds its skin it goes blind for a while.

Peter-Anthony Togni relates to that transformation. At 51, the Halifax-based composer is refining his life, beliefs and art.

It's hard to avoid "a mid-life crisis" Togni jokes although times are good for him. He's a respected composer, musician and veteran broadcaster for CBC's Radio 2 and, as his fifties open up, he's focusing on his primary love; writing music.

"You get to a time when you're shedding skin," Togni said as he sipped a mug of Earl Grey in a Halifax coffee shop.

"I write six days a week. I have to because I have so many commissions, but also I want to. I feel my own mortality. I'm 51, for a composer that's young, but..."

Inspiration comes easily to him and, with three of his four sons flown the nest there's lots of time, but writing is work.

"You've got to chisel away," he said. "It's also a game. I love fiddling with detail."

A Catholic, Togni said his writing is "filtered" through his spiritual practice. His commissions have included choral and chamber music, string orchestra pieces, concertos and film scores. He's traveled the world as a solo performer and as one of the trio Sanctuary with whom he plays the pipe organ alongside Jeff Reilly on bass clarinet and Christoph Both on cello.

In 2007, his Lamentations of Jeremiah, a concerto for choir and bass clarinet, debuted to international praise. Reilly and the Elmer Iseler Singers recorded the work for the prestigious label, ECM.

Reilly, a fellow CBC veteran, has talent Togni finds inspirational. The composer's now working on another concerto piece to feature Reilly. When composing Jeremiah, Togni wrote for Reilly's ability to simultaneously play notes that are divinely lyrical and earthily rough.

"Jeff's a great player and a fantastic improviser," Togni said. "He can make the horn sound divine and human at the same time."



In Jeremiah, Reilly's improvisation soars, but blends with the notated music. "You don't want people saying, 'Oh, there's the improvised part,'" Togni said, "But Jeff's so good I get great credit for stuff I didn't write."

The story of the ignored prophet Jeremiah is sadly appropriate to our times, Togni said, but there's always hope. "I love the idea of grief meeting hope. It's the theme of a lot of my music."

He's often on the road. Next year, he'll give the Christianity and the Arts Lecture at the University of Toronto.

"I'm honoured but it's funny considering I'm a university drop-out," he grinned.

December finds him in Halifax where on December 14th the Sanctuary Trio

will play their Concert of 100 Candles at St. Paul's Church. "It's mystical," Togni said, "Entirely non-tinsel."

Catch Peter Togni with his trio Sanctuary performing their annual "Concert of 100 Candles" at St. Paul's Church in Halifax on December 14.

www.petertogni.com

Hear here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGtcPn-JOQo>



SCOOP

Award-winning writer Sheree Fitch is no stranger to readers of all ages both here at home and around the world. At 50-something, the educator, literacy advocate, social activist, speaker writer of verse, poetry, picture books, nonfiction, plays and novels is still going strong lives. Recently she spoke with Arts East about her latest narrative *Pluto's Ghost*.

AE: *What inspired you to write Pluto's Ghost?*

SF: The voice. Jake started talking. I listened. Amy Black, my editor at Doubleday was interested, too, even though Jake was about as far away from Cinnamon Hotchkiss in *The Gravesavers* as you can get. That helped...knowing I had a reader who was not forcing me into a box. And yes, a contract. A bit of money up front can do wonders to urge you onward. It can buy me time I'd otherwise spend teaching or travelling or reading to get paid work. Sometimes I think I would have given up on Jake had I not had a contract. I went way over deadline. Amy waited. There is still some sanity in the publishing world, not always a bottom line spit out the book factory mentality. I am slow and she waited. Patiently. Maybe, too, this was a story that was a result of a lifetime of knowing and working with a lot of Jakes. The process is mysterious. Characters whisper. Stories appear. Hopefully, we choose to tell the ones we are meant to tell. On a technical level, I also was interested in what happened in a quest story, one where the time frame is short and you have to travel backwards and forwards in the telling...very technically challenging.

AE: *Did the book come together quickly or did you really need to work at it?*

SF: Well, as above. I joke that I bled for this one. Not such a joke - I am slow always. Six years on and off. I took breaks and wrote other things in between the time I first "heard" Jake in 2003, committed to this book in 2006 and the time I completed a draft in 2008 - which of course was the tenth draft. So, no, not quickly - ever. Not easy either. Hard work is the given. Excruciating joy!

AE: *What was the most challenging aspect of the process?*

SF: Letting go of me and letting his voice take over. Being inside the head of an angry hurting frustrated guy for so long. Feeling his wounded heart. Yep. Getting out the way. Still, I like the process or I would not do it. Writing the violent scene was really hard. Deeply imagining it. And trying to portray teenage love and sexuality truthfully but tenderly and not wanting the sensational, gratuitous or "gimme' a break" moment. Just the passion and intensity.

AE: *What was the most rewarding part of the experience?*

SF: Despite what I just said, learning to hear and understand my character, being with him in his the rage and desperation and passion, and letting the story funnel through. Finding the humour in the darkness. And of course - Now! After it is done and the readers weigh in and you think some are getting it. Also, working with my editor Amy Black. That

is a joy - when you are no longer alone on the voyage.

AE: *What did you learn during the process?*

SF: That I am still and will forever be learning how to tell stories. That the human heart is the human heart. That in the telling of the story - Jake tells his tale to a narrative therapist - a healing, a step towards more wholeness can happen. That Rage comes from powerlessness and in not having a voice or choice. And Language. Language. Language. The magic of words still boggles my mind.

AE: *Did you go through some sort of mourning or grieving process once you were done?*

SF: Penetrating question! Okay. There is always a wonky depleted space after a big project is over - um yeah, I had a very unbalanced feeling for while this year after a few years of feeling grounded, even while writing. But the energy shifting - I think that has as much to do with the fact that I moved last year and that my father died in March. To be honest, I'm going to be happy for a little rest soon. Take my vitamins, get back to the gym on a more regular basis. Yes, time to let Jake go. It was an intense um...relationship if you want to call it that. I need to recharge and feel I'm in a gentler, routine space again.

AE: *What has the response to the work been like so far?*

SF: Gratifying. Humbling. Fifteen stars out of five one reader said. A young man told me I got the guy part. I was really happy about that. The "reviews" have only started coming out. Excellent so far. But there will be one that gouges me I suspect. So, it really is the readers I like to hear from. A lot of teachers - the ones who know a Jake in real life - are getting it. It's rare someone comes up to you and says your book is awful or not my cupper' tea - but it does happen. So the first few weeks are normally a weird vulnerable, out there time, a kind of gird your loins time. You know you cannot please everyone. I know why I did what I did, how hard I worked and that is all I can do - on to the next.

AE: *Do these opinions matter to you?*

SF: Well they do and they don't. Give the negative ones a day but not a week is a good rule of thumb. When *Kiss the Joy As it Flies* came out it had some great reviews and then one "bad" one. I obsessed. My husband printed it out and we burned it in the back yard. It was gone! Poof. When it was shortlisted for the Leacock Award for literary humour, I was thrilled because the intention I set out for the work was achieved; a funny, well told tale is all I wanted. But not every likes or understands satire. Like I said, you do what you do and have to tell the story you do and the way you tell it and write on regardless. As for other kinds of opinions - I'm still surprised when people are surprised that a writer of happy kid's books can also have other voices and stories to tell. That throws me - that people sometimes prefer I write "nice" or in one kind of genre. There is also, sometimes, a bit of an attitude that funny or playful is less "literary". Not an opinion I share but I do not want to waste time thinking too much about perception or reception. The books I love best often offer stories that reflect the mixed-ness of life. I like what William Blake said: "I will not reason and compare, my business is to create."

AE: *What happens now?*

SF: After the readings and signings and flogging - "nading" as Jake might say. This year seems like book world is more commercial and writers really are wearing sandwich boards on their backs like in that New Yorker cartoon a few years back. Yucky yucky biz part of the job. For example, I caved and joined facebook and twitter - not sure if I sold my soul yet or not, even if it helps sell the book - I am not so sure I want my energy to go there - after December 19th, my last reading for a while, I think I'll go into hibernation. There is no guarantee of sales no matter how good the book or how hard you work. Or get addicted to facebook! So, really. Time to retreat (not retweet - HA!)

AE: *Are you working on something new?*

SF: Did I just say rumination time? But of course - still many bubbling pots. Usually one bubbles over and the lid falls off and I try that ...but sometimes it is pot number three that's simmered forever that is the NEXT thing. I'd love to work with my husband to finish building the house and with him, do a documentary, some day. He's a retired cameraman editor. Plus play with my grandkids!

AE: *What made you want to be a writer?*

SF: Who. Beatrice Goodwin, my grade two teacher. Fed Cogswell the poet. Alistair McLeod and other short story writers. Even my father too.

AE: *What makes a good book?*

SF: Do you really think I can answer this? I have opinions about what makes excellence to me but I think literary taste is subjective and standards of excellence shift and evolve. But here is a part of a mini essay I just wrote for someone about what I want a book to "do." Ultimately, however, I crave stories that leave me reeling. Or maybe realising is a better spelling. I want to have that aha feeling that, however briefly, makes me think I've seen deeper into the heart of things because the storyteller told a tale from that yearning place in the centre of themselves. They've dug into the mine pit (mind pit?) from which a vibrant truth of theirs blasts forth and an authentic voice shines. Soul-changing shape-shifting fiction. I want the book to vibrate in my hands. I want to feel the undistorted spirit of the writer present, while they are absent. Oh, yes, the creation should appear effortless not overwrought. No tell tale scrubbing of the eraser.

AE: *What are your thoughts on the current state of Canadian literature?*

SF: Scary, but interesting times - as everything is in a sea of change. I love the fact that lately small presses are being appreciated and winning awards and for the first time authors are getting platform and visibility and readership. Whenever I get really depressed and pessimistic about anything I go back to De Chardin: "The ills of this present world are, above all else, but growing pains." I think if I didn't hold that as my big picture vision, well, I'd never get out of bed ..

AE: *Who are your favourite Canadian authors?*

SF: The usual suspects; Mordecai Richler, John Irving, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Carol Shields, Jack Hodgins, Alistair McLeod and his son Alexander. Wow. What a writer. Also writ-

ers like Marina Endicott, Mary Swann, Andrew Pyper, Lynn Coady, Carol Bruneau, Nancy Bauer, Joan Clark and Bernice Morgan, Lisa Moore, Michael Crummey, Jeanette Lynes, Brian Doyle and Martha Brooks...and the list goes on - writers who seem to me like miracle makers.

AE: *Why do you think that Atlantic Canadians enjoys such a vibrant literary culture?*

SF: It's in the air, the water, the soot, the mud, our genes, our jeans, the beer? We have a tradition of oral culture and storytellers. Plus we are coastal - the eastern "edge" of Canada - living on the edge, we find ways not to fall off.

AE: *Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?*

SF: Since you asked - ahem - besides the usual read, read, read, write, write, write, here are today's tips;

1. What do you care about? Write about that.
2. Who are writing for? Write for them.
3. Why? Yes, know why you are writing.
4. Know thyself, do your homework (as in studying the tradition in which you write) and seek authentic voice. Ask what that means.
5. Forget about making piles of money with writing. It most likely won't happen.
6. Forget about fame. Oprah won't call. Visibility equals vulnerability anyhow.
7. Forget about awards or accolades - just one or two more lines extra in your obituary..
8. Have friends besides writers.
9. Repeat. My life is my most important work in progress.
10. Serve the work not yourself, but know what you think "the Work" means.
11. Tend your spirit first but try to nurture a generous spirit not a competitive one. "Right Intention" matters.
12. Keep asking what means excellence. Know you could be wrong.
13. Limit facebook and twitter time! Energy and breath - we only have so much.
14. With regards to number 13, do as I say not as I do.
15. Be grateful. If you are lucky enough to be writing and persist and find readers - wow. Be grateful. What a gift. But...really try not to get your knickers in a knot about selling and publishing what you create. Easy for me to say after many years, I know, but process of creation matters. I have way more pieces rejected and in un-finished file folders than I do published works. Explore. Risk. Create. Go for walks.

www.shereefitch.com

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F87Y1h6siY>



Community

Patrons

Formed in 2006, artsScene is a group of leading young business professionals dedicated to fostering the growth of the arts in Canada through patronage and support. As a creative hub, artsScene connects young business professionals across Canada to the arts by offering members unique encounters with the arts through its Behind the Scenes programming; connecting young business professionals to board, committee and other patronage opportunities in the arts through BoardLink; providing mentor opportunities with senior business leaders in the arts; and recognizing young business professionals who demonstrate leadership as patrons of the arts.

www.businessforthearts.org

Volunteers

The Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society is a volunteer-driven organization. From the year-round committees that carry out the Society's objectives to the folks who pitch in during the Folk Harbour Festival, volunteers make it all happen. We are looking for enthusiastic, friendly and responsible music lovers to join our team. Punctuality and commitment to the task you've undertaken, as well as a cheerful and co-operative manner with festival-goers and other volunteers are a must! In return, you'll have the fun and satisfaction of being a part of the Festival and meeting lots of like-minded people. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for this year's Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival please visit www.folkharbour.com

CONTEST

There's lots of great stuff for us to give away as we head into the holiday season; David Myles' new CD Turn Time Off, Laura Peek's latest recording Key, Sheree Fitch's most recent narrative Pluto's Ghost and a brand-spankin' new copy of Johanna Skibsrud's Giller Prize-winning narrative The Sentimentalists. Send us an email at artseastonline@gmail.com with the name of the gift you'd like to find in your Christmas stocking in the subject line. We'll draw randomly for prizes on December 17th and contact the winners directly via email.



Shambhala

The human mind is by nature joyous, calm and very clear. In meditation we aren't creating a peaceful state - we're letting our mind be as it is to begin with.

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Click

Wiki Word: Theatre

Theatre is a branch of the performing arts. While any performance may be considered theatre, as a performing art, it focuses almost exclusively on live performers creating a self-contained drama.[1] A performance qualifies as dramatic by creating a representational illusion. By this broad definition, theatre had existed since the dawn of man, as a result of the human tendency for storytelling. Since its inception, theatre has come to take on many forms, utilizing speech, gesture, music, dance, and spectacle, combining the other performing arts, often as well as the visual arts, into a single artistic form. The word derives from the Ancient Greek theatron (θέατρον) meaning "the seeing place." - (Wikipedia)

Website of the Month: www.artslinknb.com

Artslinknb.com aims to advance the arts in New Brunswick by linking and unifying artists and arts organizations and promoting their value to the community. They list their objectives as organizing forums, workshops, meetings and other educational programs and activities for the purpose of educating and advancing the public's understanding and appreciation of the arts; educating artists through participation in such exhibitions, forums and related workshops; publishing newsletters and online material containing resources and training material for general open access to improve access to arts resource material, arts events listings, available arts grants, public workshops and forums from all arts disciplines in New Brunswick; and actively promoting the growth and development of New Brunswick arts by representing the arts community through participation in provincial, regional and national programs in association with Government, business and cultural stakeholders.

Blog of the Month: www.thereader.ca

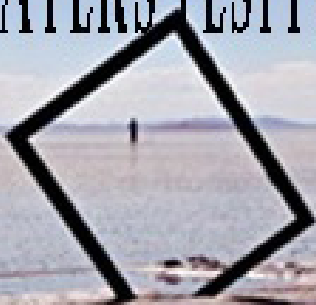
"Our goal is to create a forum for book news and related discussion among leisure readers - a place for Halifax leisure readers to interact with their library and the larger community of leisure readers."

Facebook Friend of the Month: Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society

Linked:

www.theplayhouse.nb.ca
www.thirdspacegallery.ca
www.novascotiabellydance.com
www.musicpei.com
www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca

OPEN WATERS FESTIVAL



A celebration of the fine art of listening
 Dal Arts Centre January 6-7-8

Tickets

Box Office (902) 494-3820

<http://artscentre.dal.ca>

Info: <http://www.upstreammusic.org>

News of Note

NS: City hall is eyeing the future display of public art at the planned \$55-million central library in Halifax. According to a proposal request, the municipality is seeking help from qualified individuals or firms for consulting services hooked to presentation of paintings, sculptures and other artworks at the building to be constructed on the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street. The budget for the public art component of the five-storey library replacement project is \$450,000, says the request for proposals, which is available on the city's website. The competition closes at 2 p.m. on Jan. 25. Construction of the new library should start next year and the building is to be open by early 2014. At 109,000 square feet, the site will house a book collection that's 50 per cent larger than its predecessor's. It is also being promoted as a community centre. Planners and architects have hosted a handful of public meetings on the project's design. "Given some of the more prominent themes that have emerged out of the consultation sessions in relation to the overall building design - dynamic, awe-inspiring, distinctive, innovative - this process will favour public art proposals that employ contemporary approaches to material and media," the proposal request says. The building will replace the venerable library across from Halifax provincial court.

PEI: Turnstone Press is proud to announce *Fatted Calf Blues* by Steven Mayoff has been awarded the Prince Edward Island fiction award for 2009-2010. The PEI Book Awards were handed out in the categories of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction at an awards ceremony held November 24 at the Confederation Centre Public Library in Charlottetown. The awards are presented every two years to residents of the province.

PEI: A generous donation to The Culinary Institute of Canada has put a collection of more than 10,000 recipe books into the hands of culinary students, giving them additional insight not only into the dishes of other countries, but an historical perspective on traditional food preparation and recipes spanning nine decades, from the 1930s to the present day. The collection belonged to Marion Patterson of Sackville, NB, who began collecting recipes in 1930.

NL: The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council's (NLAC) Professional Artists' Travel Fund (PATF) continues to be one of the organization's most popular programs. During the most recent granting session (August - November 2010) all available money was awarded within a week. Twelve Newfoundland and Labrador artists were funded a total of \$11,000 in travel grants, most of them traveling during the month of August. The PATF provides travel grants to professional artists to take part in unexpected activities that will enhance their artistic careers. They may travel within the province, throughout Canada, or internationally. Such activities include the presentation, development, or celebration of the artist's work. The fund, which renews every four months, typically awards \$10,000 each session for a total of \$30,000 a year. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis, but once funds are exhausted no new

applications can be considered until the next granting session. The PATF recently renewed on December 1, 2010; the NLAC is currently accepting applications.

NB: Internationally acclaimed soprano Measha Bruegggosman of Fredericton has also been nominated for a Grammy Award for best classical vocal performance. This is her second Grammy nomination. In 2004, she was one of six soloists on the award-winning William Bolcom: Songs of Innocence and of Experience. She has been recognized by Canada's music industry with multiple East Coast Music Awards and Juno Awards. Currently based in Toronto, Bruegggosman says she often visits her brother in Sussex, N.B., and her sister and parents - Sterling and Ann - in Kentville.

NL: Canadian playwright David French has died in Toronto at the age of 71 after a long battle with brain cancer. Originally from Coley's Point, Newfoundland, French is highly recognized in Canadian theatre for his translations of famous titles such as "Miss Julie" by August Strindberg and "The Seagull" by Anton Chekov. However, he is best known for his original Mercer family series. The five plays on the Mercer family - "Leaving Home," "Of the Fields, Lately," "Salt-Water Moon," "1949" and "Soldier's Heart" - are set in Newfoundland and Labrador, between 1924 and the early 1960s. French was a member of the Order of Canada and had also been awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal. He was named to the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council's Hall of Honour in 1988.

NS: The Halifax and Dartmouth-shot feature *Hobo With a Shotgun* will blast its way through the competition at the world famous 2011 Sundance Film Festival in January. The blood-soaked tale of a wanderer's revenge is one of six Canadian feature films selected to screen at the annual independent film celebration in Park City, Utah, through a partnership between Sundance and Telefilm Canada. Directed by Jason Eisener, written by John Davies and produced by Rob Cotterill, *Hobo With a Shotgun*'s Sundance screening will be its world premiere. Its fellow Canadian titles include Quebec features *Le Vendeur* and *Incendies*, *Family Portrait* in Black and White, the Japanese-Canadian co-venture *Vampire* and the U.S.-Canadian

PE: Cirque du Soleil won't pitch its tent in Charlottetown next summer. The popular Quebec circus troupe has finalized a deal with Tourism Charlottetown to prematurely end a three-year agreement with the city because of poor ticket sales the first year. Tourism Charlottetown announced last week that it had an agreement in principle to terminate the deal and said this week it had been finalized. P.E.I. taxpayers pumped \$250,000 into bringing Cirque to the province while the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency contributed \$450,000. The City of Charlottetown kicked in another \$10,000. It cost between \$1 million to \$2 million to bring Cirque du Soleil to the city last summer but tickets were a difficult sell.



Matt LeBlanc

Dieppe artist Matt LeBlanc creates modern abstract painting in a variety of shapes and sizes.
www.mattleblancart.com

sights



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syllables

Living at Sea Level

I hold the Island in the palm of my hand
 my story a lifeline stitched into the loam like
 ripple sand patterns
 on waved-carved dunes
 my love line the
 zigs
 and

 zags
 of potato drills
 new-mown hay
 stripes
 of red and yellow
 and always the green

clapboard walls
 plumb-lined roofs
 mounds of hills, lawns and fields edged
 by fences, curbs
 stippled with lupins and phlox and Queen Anne's lace

patches sewn together with hedgerows
 bumping up against a cloak of blue
 fabric a whorl and eddy, capped in white

wide angle lens narrows
 palm lines deepen with my staying

Laurie Brinklow is a poet, editor, and book publisher from Prince Edward Island. She founded Acorn Press (<http://www.acornpresscanada.com>) in 1993, and published dozens of books about Prince Edward Island/by PEI Islanders before selling the press in August (to another islander!) so she could pursue her dream of doing a PhD at the University of Tasmania's School of Geography and Environmental Studies. She is an award-winning poet, a singer in choirs, a regular contributor to CBC Radio, mother to two daughters, and mistress to a golden retriever. Her PhD research explores people's attachment to islands by examining "islandness" in Tasmanian and Newfoundland artists. She is keeping a blog of her adventures at <http://www.tasmania-bound.blogspot.com>.



Sounds



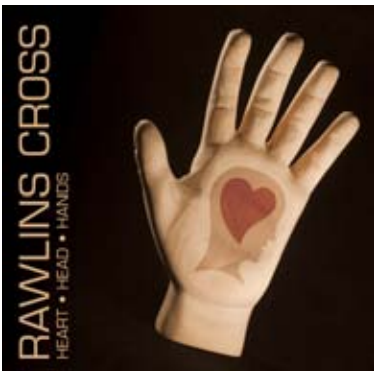
Laura Peek

Key

Just Friends Music

With such a swarming of singer/songwriters now splattered across the Canadian musical landscape it is easy to see how some might slip through the cracks. Not here however, as the creative tour-de-force that is Halifax's indie-darling extraordinaire Laura Peek pushes and pulls at hearts and minds with the snared Stay Sharp, the poppy-soft On the Shelf and the lazy charm of the Neil Young-esque Away From the Harbour. Key is an excellent collection of finely-fused works and an important addition to the Atlantic Canadian musical canon.

www.myspace.com/laurapeek ~ SPC



Rawlins Cross

Heart, Head, Hands

Ground Swell Music

The wait is over. After a 12 year absence Rawlins Cross is back with Heart, Head, Hands. The disc is full of what you would expect from Rawlins Cross, Scottish, Celtic and bluegrass feels, blended perfectly. While it seemed to lack the rock edge found in some previous albums, the effort was great, and resulted in an easy listening experience. In my opinion, none of the tracks really stood up and grabbed you, I wasn't really compelled to sing along, but I never skipped any tracks either. Heart, Head, Hands is a light listen, and could be easily enjoyed by anyone. www.rawlinscross.com ~ Anthony Arsenault



Kim Wempe

Painting with Tides

Ground Swell Music

i remember being at a house party years ago in the GLEBE district of ottawa and there was this beautiful girl there named KELLY sitting by herself on the couch just playing the guitar and singing her own SONGS. her voice was smooth and strong and her music was wonderfully CRAFTED and i kept thinking WOW someone should sign this girl to a recording contract because she is so damn TALENTED and SOULFUL. i never saw kelly again and hadn't thought of her in YEARS until two weeks ago when i listened to KIM WEMPE for the first time. She is the REAL DEAL. www.kimwempe.com ~ SPC



Urban Surf Kings

Retro Sonic

Reverb Ranch

If you are looking for a good 70's rock style beat, then the new offering, Retro-Sonic by the Urban Surf Kings may be what you're looking for. They hit the nail on the head as far as capturing the 70's feel, and it reminded me a lot of the beach, and the Beach Boys with a Doors feel added in. The disc was enjoyable, however there was not a lot of variation between tracks, and it was hard to tell some of them apart. That aside, the catchy beats and light feel make it a disc worth owning. www.urbansurfkings.com ~ Anthony Arsenault

On the Page



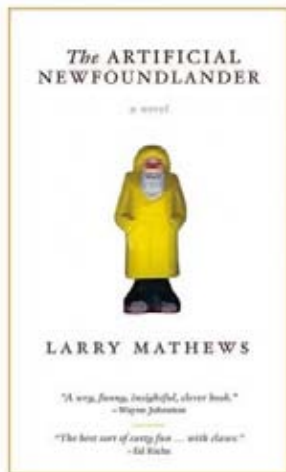
Punishing Ugly Children

By Darryl Joel Berger

Killick Press / 153 pp / \$17.95

Berger's exceptional collection of strange, artful short stories offers the kind of instant gratification readers are hungry for in a time-starved world. Every school kid's fantasy comes vividly true in 'An Arsonist's Guide to Physics' - in a miraculous two and a half pages. Berger's economy is his genius: he gets to the heart faster than a gamma ray. In 'Free Rein', a history professor and his mistress gamble the last of the children's savings bonds with mixed success. 'Red Horse Leader' reads like a micro novel. 'The Kingdom of Chicken' is a surprisingly poignant portrait of the single girl's dilemma and 'Big Head' is the literary equivalent of an episode of The Office, complete with email exchanges which make the reader cringe and grin, often in the same sentence.

~ Megan Power



The Artificial Newfoundlander

By Larry Mathews

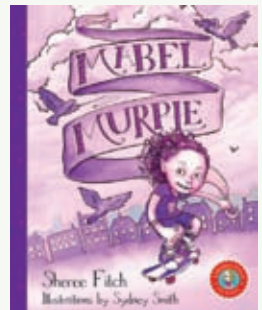
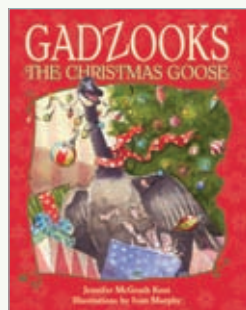
Breakwater Books / 244 pp / \$18.95

The Artificial Newfoundlander is a fast-paced and vibrant story, filled with a cast of off kilter yet entirely realistic characters, from Foley, a well-meaning womanizer and somehow endearing halfwit, to Cleary, an obscure novelist and Salingeresque priest. This is a great, gut-busting read, with a rare abundance of laugh-out-loud moments, thanks to the book's likeably cheeky, amusingly over-contemplative protagonist, Hugh Norman. Hugh's daughter barges in on him unannounced, her children in tow, fleeing her home in Vancouver, telling him she's leaving her husband. It quickly becomes apparent that there's more to her sudden, unexpected arrival than a dissolving marriage, and this subplot is but one of many plotlines woven seamlessly together in this great novel. Mathews' witty diction deserves applause, and so does his smooth, edgeless transition from one storyline to another. Each plotline in this novel is grounds for a novel in itself, but instead, each subplot is pared down, sharpened to a point and stitched into the other, and as a result, there is far less filler in this novel than most, and far more punch. Mathews' constant wit, his unforgettable characters, and his multi-layered plot prevent the story from growing stale and linear, as even the best of novels often do. ~ Chad Pelley

East Coast
Books
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On the Page

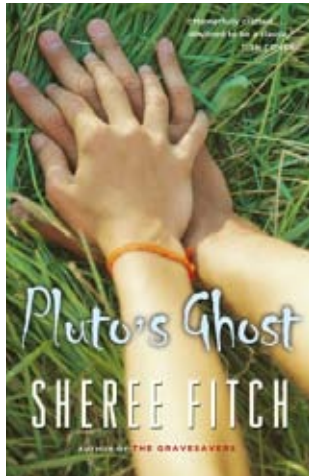
Sharon McCartney



For and Against **By Sharon McCartney**

Goose Lane Editions / 96 pp / \$17.95

Poetry can be fierce or beautiful, and at its best, as in McCartney's *For and Against*, it can be both. This collection of poems not only blends those opposing attributes, doing so is what makes it blaze. This collection has its fists out and its heart on its sleeve. In its finer moments, lines are pelted from the page and felt by the reader, or, as George Elliott Clarke has said, "You don't read these poems, you feel them." Its poems are anger with its mask off, or vulnerability with its heart on its sleeve, and sometimes there's no difference. These poems are the sound a scissors through the threads of human relationships, and the prose is tight and snaps in all the right places. These poems roar where most pine or whine, and offer insight where most would ruminate on longing. I am not knocking the latter types of poems in those statements, but simply marvelling in McCartney's engaging exorcism of fleeting moments. The most meaningful connections between poetry and its reader emerge through moments of honesty on the page, and *For and Against* demonstrates that beauty doesn't need to be pretty, just honest and raw. McCartney is a damn good poet, and *For and Against* is a best collection of 2010. It's a showcase of all the heart, fist, fury, fire and ice of human emotion played off of a visceral exploration of love: that one strange force that makes and breaks us, and marionettes all other emotions. ~ Chad Pelley



Pluto's Ghost **By Sheree Fitch**

Doubleday Canada / 254 pp / \$14.95

Sheree Fitch's new novel, *Pluto's Ghost*, is a full-fisted coming-of-age narrative with surprising power and purpose. Fitch tackles current issues and prevailing themes head on: the death of a parent, a chaotic coming of age, teenage dyslexia and illiteracy, the turbulence of intense passion and issues of truth, gossip, authority and justice in an all-out battle of good versus evil. Renowned Atlantic Canadian author Sheree Fitch has created a gripping first-person narrative with an unexpectedly sympathetic teenage protagonist in Jake Upshore. Chronically misunderstood, Jake can be disagreeable and inappropriate at the best of times. The reader is not only privy to Jake's inner struggles but captivated by his take on things, his floundering determination and unfailing humour. Jake's alarmingly short fuse is tempered by a cavernous mutual affection between him and the beautiful Skye Derucci. Just as Jake cannot stay out of trouble, Skye seems to have everything going for her. Mismatched, they begin a secret relationship that blossoms underground until Skye suddenly disappears. Fitch's novel is divided into four main sections that move forward and backward through time, memory, and the alphabet, as Jake does in his quest for understanding and his search for Skye. The reader is constrained by Jake's dyslexia and his frustrated attempts to de-code the diary Skye left behind to "explain everything" and by Jake's hyperactivity too as the story progresses in short narrative bursts. Unanswered questions hang over him like jagged rock formations in the caverns of Virginia, like *Pluto's Ghost*, and the story races to an unexpected conclusion. Like Jake, the reader is left with questions to ponder, not the least of which may be: How does a "Jake" overcome the anger, frustration and powerlessness of illiteracy? What do you do when the good guys are bad and the bad guys are good? Can love heal all? At the helm, Sheree Fitch channels Jake Upshore's story with depth of spirit and purpose, shining a steady light into the cavernous heart of matters. *Pluto's Ghost* is an exciting read for teens and adults alike.

~ Tina Capalbo

THEIR MOTHER IS DEAD. THEIR FATHER IS CHARGED WITH HER MURDER.

INDEFENSIBLE

PAMELA CALLOW

ON SALE DECEMBER 28!



The Wizard of Oz November 27, 2010 Neptune Theatre, Halifax

Neptune's big budget holiday spectacular, *The Wizard of Oz* is a mega-production of set design, costuming, special effects and song. Live musicians (some borrowed from Symphony Nova Scotia) play the oft-quoted, undeniably sticky soundtrack with such precision it feels pre-recorded. This 1939 classic about a young orphan who's knocked unconscious during a Kansas cyclone and wakes up in a magical faraway land won three Academy awards in its day and has aged remarkably well. What's new and interesting to watch is how Neptune translates one of the most-watched films of all time to the Halifax stage. As Dorothy, Blair Irwin's soaring voice subdues even small animals: she performs most of the show's two hours with a live Toto cradled obediently against her bright blue gingham pinafore. Andrew Scanlon plays the meaty role of the Cowardly Lion just camp enough and manages never to go over the top. Chronicle Herald columnist Jeremy Webb, in the dual role of Professor Marvel and the Wizard, shows off his monologue chops. On opening night, the audience had a heavy family presence and Munchkins were held rapt by the fog, pyro and strobe effects along with kid-friendly pacing. Is it all just a long, elaborate dream? Scholars claim *Oz* is an allegorical treatise on American industrial capitalism (the deadly poppy field a stand-in for anti-imperialism) but the average spectator may interpret the play simply as an exploration of longing. For heart, courage, wisdom. For home, and loved ones. This is the analysis that clearly fits the Christmas season. ~ Megan Power

Compagnie Marie Chouinard November 17, 2010 Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Halifax.

Presented by Live Art Dance Productions at The Rebecca Cohn theatre in Halifax, Compagnie Marie Chouinard flew in last month with the titillating energy of petite and powerful swifts in May, bringing corporeal poetry to the stage, *"suddenly flickering in sky summit, three or four together ... with a bowing power-thrust to left, then to right, then a flicker they tilt into a slide, a tremble for balance"*. [1] The Compagnie's first contemporary number, "24 Preludes," was accompanied by the music of Chopin. Their many moving sequences in the piece crested on the spiritual and physical force of Chopin's musical imagination, and their droll moments spilled into unanticipated laughter. In the nearly sold out house, we laughed, dabbed at our eyes, and shook our heads and minds in utter amazement as the Compagnie guided our journey. After a spirited intermission in the lobby, the show resumed with the Compagnie's contemporary masterpiece "The Rite of Spring." Suddenly the bucks, birds, and roaming herds of springtime sprang to life on the stage. Fifteen years after it was first created, Chouinard's innovative choreography was still powerful—visually exciting, mentally stimulating, spiritual and hold-your-breath beautiful. The enchanting dancers were conceptually and corporally exquisite head to toe, sculpting images and carving out moments the delighted audience would not soon forget. What a night. Exhausted and elated, the Compagnie obliged us with three curtain calls. I'm not sure we were quite satisfied even then.

~ Tina Capalbo Watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ0iDcAnHVk>

[1] From the poem "Swifts" by Ted Hughes.

Fall in Paris November 17, 2010 Bus Stop Theatre, Halifax

Fall in Paris, a new comedy written/directed by the unfairly talented Scott Burke, stars Matthew Gorman and Kate Lavender as a young Canadian couple on an awkwardly romantic European vacation booked before they broke up. Trying to make the best of things, they tour the sights and read aloud from their guidebooks, offering relatable and amusing commentary. The production relies heavily on two large projection screens to recreate Paris, since The Bus Stop's small, severe performance space is so intimate it verges on claustrophobic. Set limitations do serve to highlight Burke's incisive writing, which is capable of delivering a perfect throat punch with just a few words. Jennifer Overton as Cecilia, a freshly divorced fifty-something solo traveler, is beautifully regal and deliciously sharp. "Stop analyzing, stop ruminating for one second," she berates herself when confounded by modern art at Centre Pompidou. "Just be here." A less accomplished actress could have become shrill but Overton's tartness is expertly wrought, eliciting pathos instead of aversion. Her cabaret rendition of 'Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien' is the most heartbreaking moment in the entire 90 minutes. One wants to watch a whole play of nothing but her. Despite its congested traffic and cultural snobbery, Paris wins the characters over, as the play does the audience. Lively pacing deserves its very own round of applause. ~ Megan Power

The Trews November 19, 2010 Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Halifax.

Sing your Heart out. The opening song or maybe a bold prediction of what was to come. Bold, but right on the money. With a capacity crowd, there was not a silent voice in the place. For 2 hours, The Trews took on a journey spanning 7 years and 3 albums. The Show was part of their "Friends and Total Strangers" Tour. The title holds true as well, as they successfully, for one evening at least, made every one present, friends joined by music. The show was full of hits, like Poor Ol' Broken Hearted Me, So She's Leaving, Fleeting Trust among many others. There were a few songs that were previously unreleased that I thought stole the show. Locked Doors, a song they wrote about coming home to the East Coast, and Sing your Heart out, an empowering song for changing your life that they play only at live shows. From start to finish, the show impressed, and for the encore we were treated to a new track off their album due out next year. One thing is for certain, The Trews play an amazing love show, and I'll openly, and happily admit. I Sang My Heart Out. ~ Anthony Arsenault

Watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tj0LaH4YDAA>



Taste



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Fredericton will never be known as the hot-spot of haute-cuisine. New Brunswick's capital city serves two core populations – university students and civil servants – and, as such, most of the eateries cater to hit-and-run diners.

It was with this marketplace in mind that founder Rivers Corbett first opened the downtown doors of his Relish Gourmet Burgers.

The restaurant's uber-relaxed atmosphere is ideally suited for those looking for an equally easy-going, though better-tasting alternative to the usual fast-food faux-fare. Many eaters order to take out, but a few tables, a short counter and a small sofa set keep things quaint and cozy for the famished that choose to wait for their feast to be served up hot off the in-house grill.

When the moment of truth does arrive, patrons are met with a chorus of "We relish (insert your name here)..." from the friendly staff.

A native Quebecois, I opted for Le Nordique, replete with Brie cheese, back bacon, caramelized onions and gently garnished with grainy Dijon mustard. Tender and tasty - and accompanied by a side of crispy sweet potato fries and a Pop-Shoppe "Black Cherry" – the burger lived up to the billing as epicurean.

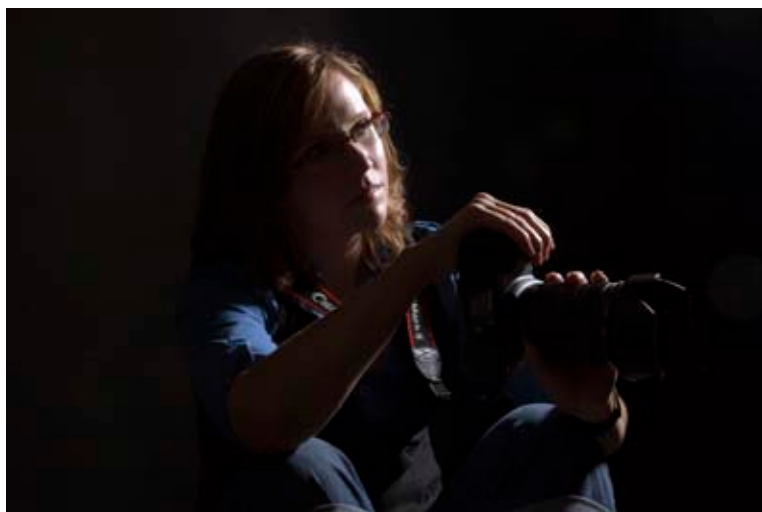
My son, a voracious eater at 14, devoured his Big Texas, a man-sized meal topped with pepper-jack cheese, crispy bacon, onion frites and smothered in smoky BBQ sauce. As is fitting for his age – and a testament to his approval - his only reply was "Can I have another?"

While some might find the fare a tad pricy – meals range from \$8-\$11 on average - the food is fresh and delicious and well worth the extra expense. Indeed, nicely niched in a place where quality meets convenience, Relish should do very well with its newer locations in Oromocto, Saint John, Moncton and Halifax. - SPC





sights



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Showcase Nova Scotia

Seton Cantata Choir / December 12 / Halifax

Seton Cantata Choir presents Seton's Greetings, the choir's annual Christmas concert, 2:30pm at St. Matthew's United Church. Tickets are \$15.

Kim Stockwood; I Love Christmas / December 17 / Truro

An accomplished artist who has been in the public eye for more than a decade, "I Love Santa" is a collection of holiday standards and original music that Kim recorded and released in 2006. www.marigoldcentre.ca

Handel's Messiah / December 17, 18 / Halifax

A moving, electrifying masterpiece, that remains a highlight of the Christmas season for many Nova Scotians. www.symphonymovascotia.ca

'Tis the Season / December 17, 18 / Glace Bay

Bette MacDonald, Maynard Morrison and Ralph Dillon are back and raring to go with their hysterical take on the holiday season. www.savoytheatre.com

Sons of Maxwell Christmas Show / December 18 / Truro

Hot on the heels of his international hit "United Breaks Guitars," Dave Carroll and his band bring the house down in Truro. www.marigoldcentre.ca

The Barra MacNeils / December 19 / Halifax

Atlantic Canada's first musical family brings their annual Christmas extravaganza to the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium for two shows. www.artscentre.dal.ca

A Christmas Carol / December 20, 21 / Antigonish

Jeremy Webb's brilliant adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic tale of Christmas past, present and future will surely put you in the holiday mood. www.bahhumbug.ca

The Trews / December 31 / Halifax

Nova Scotia's premier rockers bring in the New Year with two shows at Casino Nova Scotia's Schooner Showroom. www.casinonovascotia.com

WTCC New Year's Eve 2010 / December 31 / Halifax

Halifax's premier party moves from the Westin, to the heart of downtown at the World Trade and Convention Centre!!

New Year's Eve Celebrations at Grand Parade / December 31 / Halifax

The Annual Breakfast Television New Year's Eve Show celebrates another new year with a blockbuster spectacle in the Grand Parade.

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The Best Little Newfoundland Christmas Pageant Ever

/ December 2-31 / St. John's

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More Munsch! / December 3-19 / St. John's

c2c theatre is back at the Arts and Culture Centre with "More Munsch!" – six more stories by renowned Canadian children's author, Robert Munsch, and adapted for the stage by Kim McCaw. www.c2ctheatre.com

John Michael Montgomery / December 11 / St. John's

John Michael Montgomery has turned an uncanny ability to relate to fans into one of country music's most storied careers. With special guests Sammy Kershaw and David Ball. www.mileonecentre.com

People Get Ready / December 12 / Bonavista

Join Janet Cull and Kelly-Ann Evans for an afternoon of beloved Gospel music and other songs to suit the spirit of the season. www.acinl.ca

Penning the Carol / December 14-23 / St. John's

The Rabbittown Theatre Company presents their annual adaptation of Charles Dickens' all-time classic. www.rabbittowntheatre.com

The Nutcracker / December 17-19 / St. John's

Kittiwake Dance Theatre returns to the Arts and Culture Centre for its twenty-first season with a new production of the Christmas Classic. www.kittiwakedancetheatre.ca

Night Before Christmas / December 18 / St. John's

The classic holiday story featuring Cantus Vocom, with readings by Karl Wells and hosted by Toni-Marie Wiseman. www.thescope.ca

A Country Christmas / December 20 / Stephenville

Stephenville Theatre Festival presents A Country Christmas, featuring Ginger Bennett, Trevor Hinks, Jennifer Dawson Hobbs and many more. www.artsandculturecentre.com

A Feast of Cohen / December 27-30 / St. John's

Songs of Leonard Cohen, sung by: Vicky Hynes, Bryan Hennessey, Colleen Power, Sean Panting, Jill Porter, Des Walsh, Jenny Gear, Liz Solo, Amelia Curran, Maggie Meyer, Matthew Hornell, Jody Richardson & The Beautiful Losers. www.acinl.ca



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Showcase Prince Edward Island

Francelle Maria / December 12 / Summerside

Up and coming Country Music Star Francelle Maria launches her new album in support of the Evangeline Recreation Centre. www.harbourfronttheatre.com

Christmas Blaze / to December 18 / Charlottetown

A Celtic Kitchen Party featuring Stephanie Cadman and Celtic Blaze, and PEI favourites, Catherine O'Brien, Joey Kitson and Wade Lynch. www.charlottetownfestival.com

Slowcoaster / December 18 / Charlottetown

One of Atlantic Canada's finest three-piece bands brings their unique style and sound to the provincial capital. www.huntersalehouse.com

Steven Mayoff / December 18 / Charlottetown

The award-winning author will be reading from his recently released Fatted Calf Blues. www.stevenmayoff.ca

Choral Music Programme - Sing Noel / December 19 / Charlottetown

The Confederation Centre Youth Chorus celebrates the Christmas season by performing classical and contemporary Christmas carols together with guest artists Catherine O'Brien & Joey Kitson hosted by Wade Lynch. www.charlottetownfestival.com

The Truth About Christmas / December 19 / Hunter River

Three well-known entertainers - Cynthia MacLeod, Nils Ling and Gordon Belsher - join forces to present a new version of the popular annual event. www.harmonyhousetheatre.com

Mittentime Revue / December 22 / Charlottetown

A smattering of critically-acclaimed artists, including Catherine MacLellan, Daniel Ledwell, Jenn Grant, Kinley Dowling, Patrick Ledwell, Rose Cousins and Tanya Davis will deliver a rousing dose of holiday cheer. www.theguildpei.com

Food & Warmth Show / December 23 / Charlottetown

Since 2005, The Food and Warmth Show has been the last holiday hoorah before Christmas for the Charlottetown original indie music scene, in a jam-packed night of entertainment in support of The Upper Room. www.theguildpei.com

Dance Your Face Off / December 31 / Charlottetown

Bring in the New Year with musical hosts Rich Aucoin and Windom Earle. www.huntersalehouse.com

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JAN 20 THE SAVOY THEATRE, GLACE BAY NS

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Showcase New Brunswick

Academy of Classical Ballet / December 12 / Moncton

The Academy of Classical Ballet and Modern Dance presents their annual holiday showcase. www.capitol.nb.ca

Christmas Concert / December 13, 14, 15 / Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John

Symphony New Brunswick performs Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf and Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suites as part of their annual holiday offering. www.symphonymb.com

Deck the Hall / December 15-18 / Sackville

Live Bait Theatre presents their annual Christmas dinner performances - fun for the whole family. www.livebaittheatre.com

Noël avec Les Muses, Bélivo et Roland Gauvin / December 17, 18, 19 / Moncton

This holiday extravaganza has quickly become one of the region's most popular annual performances. www.capitol.nb.ca

Robin Hood – The Panto / December 18 / Saint John

InterAction Children's Theatre presents a musical re-telling of the Robin Hood stories, using modern, well-loved musical numbers, audience participation, and physical comedy in the true British Panto style. www.imperialtheatre.nb.ca

A Christmas Experience / December 19 / Saint John

Join the students of Danceability for their Christmas recital, featuring students of Danceability and Dance Encore of all ages, performing dance of all types. www.imperialtheatre.nb.ca

Measha Brueggergosman / December 21 / Fredericton

The world-renowned soprano returns to her roots in this fundraiser for Hospice Fredericton. With special guest David Myles. www.theplayhouse.nb.ca

Cinderella / December 27 / Fredericton

DuffleBag Theatre's hilarious and interactive classic for children of all ages. www.theplayhouse.nb.ca

Champagne! / December 31 / Moncton

With over 25,000 square feet of party space, go-go dancers, VIP lounge and massive sound, lighting and video installation, Casino New Brunswick is excited to host Champagne! - Moncton's Biggest New Year's Bash Ever. www.casoninb.ca



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**One thing is certain to me:
the East Coast has always
required innovation to thrive.
And we're bringing it.**

By Kimberly Walsh

Living in a digital world means a lot of things to different people. Some would argue that with society moving increasingly toward the online realm, we're actually losing our sense of IRL (that's leetspeak for In Real Life) community. I'd like to think of myself as living proof that, in fact, we're growing our social spheres.

My bread and butter is digital media. While I work in Halifax on CBC Books, all of my colleagues are in Toronto. Decades ago this arrangement would have been a near impossibility without frequent (and costly) trips between cities. Today we work in the cloud, collaborating online on shared documents. Instant messaging has become the new water cooler and office pop-in. Business contacts and friends alike can be made across the country because, in the absence of schmoozing at festivals and parties, there's social media.

Although Toronto is where most of the major publishing houses are located - and, let's face it, where many of the notable gala events take place - opportunities for authors and artists to connect with their audiences are ample in the digital world. The LongPen, in conjunction with

video conferencing, allows for virtual signings. Social media platforms like Formspring deliver effective Q&As sourced directly from your audience. CoverItLive produces online events that connect people around the world.

We can even eavesdrop on the larger events that are big-city centric through live-blogging or Twitter hashtags. If that's not enough, DIY. Earlier this year, I brought BookCamp to Halifax with the help of local contacts made online. Thanks to Haligoniac.ca we were able to livestream sessions for anyone with an online connection to attend. We were also the first of these events to Skype in a session (Sean Cranbury of Books on the Radio from Vancouver.) In return, in October I spoke virtually at BookCamp Vancouver along with a colleague in Toronto.

I'm thrilled to be contributing to an arts magazine that's purely digital, sharing our culture within the Atlantic Provinces and beyond. One thing is certain to me: the East Coast has always required innovation to thrive. And we're bringing it.

"IN THE END
WE SHALL HAVE HAD
ENOUGH OF
CYNICISM,
SKEPTICISM
& HUMBUG,
AND WE SHALL WANT TO
LIVE
MORE
MUSICALLY."

(VINCENT VAN GOGH)



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