

Arts & Entertainment

ArtBeat



By Michael Gurney

Voices and instruments ring across the Coast

The Inspirato Vocal Ensemble inaugurated the Advent season with two performances for capacity audiences on Nov. 26 and 27 at Calvary Baptist Church in Gibsons. Under the direction of Saron Mynhardt, the 25-voice choir was accompanied by pianist Toby

Aldren and flautist Bernard Blary.

The choir performed 16 numbers ranging from the reverent *Adoramus te* to a tongue-in-cheek arrangement of *The Nutcracker In About Three Minutes*. Three soloists — Corrine Thorsell, Jane Osborne and Roberta Cuthbert — were featured in the ensemble's toe-tapping rendition of Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*. Anita Couvrette delivered a heartfelt performance of Maya Angelou's poem *Amazing Peace*.

Many musical performances are scheduled for the upcoming weeks. On Dec. 2 and 3 at 7 p.m., A Cappella Strait and Choralations Children's Choir, under the direction of Janice Brunson, will present *Winter Songs* with special guests Grace Notes Youth Strings under the direction of Sarah Poon.

Friday's performance takes place at St. Hilda's Anglican Church in Sechelt, and Saturday's is at St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church in Gibsons. Tickets can be purchased in advance (with cash) at Strait Music in Sechelt, or by emailing ACStrait21@gmail.com.

On December 11, harpist Janelle Nadeau brings an intimate portrait of Christmas on the Canadian prairies to the Pender Harbour School of Music. Nadeau will be joined by medieval instrumentalist Joaquin Ayala for the 2 p.m. performance. Details and tickets are available at penderharbourmusic.ca. On December 16 at 7 p.m., the Pender Harbour Choir will present a selection of seasonal numbers at the same location.

On Dec. 10, The Wild Voices and the Sunshine Coast Youth Choir will present *Solstice Songs* at the Camp Sunrise Chapel in Gibsons. Tickets are available via synergyatplay.ca.

The Sunshine Coast Community Orchestra Association's annual Christmas Concert takes place on Dec. 11. The Coast Symphony Orchestra (conducted by José Ceron-Ortega) and the Suncoast Concert Band (conducted by Tak Maeda) will present a program of traditional and contemporary Christmas favourites, accompanied by the Choralations Children's Choir. The concert takes place on Dec. 11 at 2:30 p.m.; tickets are available at Strait Music and at the door.

See ARTBEAT page 39

HEALING

Film captures performance where art is medicine

MICHAEL GURNEY
Arts & Culture Writer

A spellbinding live performance at the shíshálh Nation Longhouse crowned a week of filmmaking for a forthcoming documentary about communities healing through the power of stories.

An audience of over 100, including many children, gathered on Nov. 26 in the cedar-lined ceremonial centre east of Sechelt, filled with haze and warmth from its pot-bellied cast-iron stove. Alfonso Salinas, of the shíshálh Nation and swiya, shared anecdotes and drummed a journey song before introducing Ecko Aleck, of the Nlaka'pamux Nation.

Aleck delivered an hour-long fusion of spoken-word narratives, dance and music, tracing a path across the earthen floor in bare feet. She was accompanied by video projections she single-handedly shot, edited and scored as part of a growing multimedia repository called *Legacy of the Land*.

Salinas and Aleck are collaborating with Charlene SanJenko, of Splatsin in the Secwépemc Nation, to produce a feature-length film that will collect and share traditional teachings of Indigenous Elders.

In late September, telecommunications provider Telus announced funding for the project through its TELUS originals program, which since 2014 has financed more than 250 documentaries and series. Saturday's live performance was filmed by a team of three camera operators for inclusion in the 90-minute film, tentatively titled *Elders' Project*.

"Practicing our culture, something we've done for thousands of years, and keeping it alive, is so important," said Salinas. "Being proud of it, being proud of who we are, [comes with] knowing our identity. For me, it's helped me find purpose in my life. This is what I'm here for. This is why Creator put



MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO

Ecko Aleck, performing as sacRED, delivered hard truths through song and story at the shíshálh Nation Longhouse on November 26.

me here."

"And to be a dad, of course," he added, chuckling.

Aleck will serve as the documentary's composer. As Saturday's featured artist, Aleck's live vocals and rhythmically-rendered narratives paid tribute to her father Terry Coyote Aleck, a residential school survivor who reported his abuser to the RCMP in 1987.

"This is probably the most emotional I've felt in a show," said Aleck. "Normally I carry these gifts out there in the world, but this is a very special place to me. This longhouse is where I found my voice, and where I learned to stand strong in who I am. To bring my medicine and gifts back to this sacred

space feels very special."

Aleck's words chronicled the emotional and cultural wounds left by the forced attendance of Indigenous children at church- and government-run residential schools, where abuse occurred regularly. Through verse, she described the complexity of her inherited identity: "My very existence is political / My blood quantum is measurable / Down to the percentage / I want to grow pieces of the history and language I do not speak / I'm caged in the ways / The system put in place / to eliminate my people."

Admission proceeds from the longhouse presentation will support an initiative being led by Salinas to establish a traditional Indigenous Canoe Family. He is working with Elder Barbara Higgins to create a group that will paddle to traditional shíshálh homelands in Sechelt Inlet.

Salinas concluded the program with a song composed by his brother, Robert Higgins, titled *We Are Here*. Several young audience members beat their drums to accompany a full-bodied chorus that Salinas admitted "takes my breath away."

"There must be a word for this whole experience other than 'performance,'" Aleck reflected after the event. "It's way deeper than that. But I'm still searching for that word."

The *Elders' Project* film is being co-produced by documentarian Liz Marshall, who was recognized as Best Director by the International Science Film Festival World of Knowledge for her 2020 movie *Meat the Future*.

"During a time of climate emergency, the world needs Indigenous land-based and medicine teachings more than ever before," said Marshall. "It's an honour to be a learner on this journey with the shared intentions of our equally Indigenous and settler film team."

The *Elders' Project* film is scheduled for release in August 2023.



SUNSHINE COAST COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION

Christmas Concert

❄️ COAST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ❄️ SUNCOAST CONCERT BAND ❄️
❄️ with special guests CHORALATIONS CHILDREN'S CHOIR ❄️

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11
2:30 pm



CHATELECH SECONDARY SCHOOL THEATRE

TICKETS Adults \$20, Children 12 & under free,
must be accompanied by an adult
SEHEL T Strait Music ❄️ or at the door