



The Palette



LAURENCE RITCHIE

One of the founders
of the Georgina Arts
Centre & Gallery and
former chairman
passed away

On 17 September
2014.

He will be greatly
missed



Important Messages

Notes From the Curator



As I anticipated in my previous editorial, the summer at our gallery proved to be very exciting! We had four amazing shows, and two extraordinary concerts. We hosted outstanding First Nations artists: Jackie Traverse, Nathalie Bertin, Summer Faith-Garcia, Joeann Argue, Duke Redbird, Jay Redbird and Halina Stopyra. Our August Inaugural Exhibition of York Wilson's painting, donated by The York Wilson Foundation for the Visual Arts attracted hundreds of guests from near and far! A comprehensive catalogue of this exhibition is now available on line.

While chatting with Barbara Mitchell, Director of Collections and Donations at the Foundation (who was instrumental in donating Wilson's works) I remarked to her that I very much wanted a female artist in our Permanent Collection to balance our four male artists. A few days later Barbara telephoned me, and informed me that she would donate three lithographs by the renowned Canadian artist Kay Murray Weber! The next week she personally delivered them to the gallery. An exhibition of Kay Murray Weber's works will be held at the gallery next summer.

Summers are busy here in Georgina because of the tourists; and many of us Georginians also enjoy spending vacation here, so the gallery has a lot of work.

Summer months at the gallery were full of music. Michelle Vacca kicked off her series *An Evening With...* in July. She invited Bernadette Connors and Joseph Piilonen, for the first evening, then in August Noel Johnson – both shows sold out! There are more to come in the next few months. Watch our web site and Facebook for details.

The other music series at the gallery is called *Performance!* Read the article about this series below. I would like to point out that this *Performance!* series is made possible by dedicated volunteers, and by donations. The spirit of giving!!! The gallery is so fortunate to have a wonderful team of people who are willing to give their time and their talent!

All summer the gallery was buzzing with children's voices, and the sound of the creation of fantastic art! Some of their creations were a part of the KidzArt show. The kids were so proud of their works that they didn't want to part with them, to let them be hung in the gallery! Big *thank you* to those who shared their amazing works of art. You can see photos from the opening in this edition of the Palette.

2014 continues with two more shows: the Juried Art Show *Inspired by Poetry* and the show that will take us into 2015, called *With the First Snows of Winter*. I will write about these two shows in the next edition of *The Palette*.

Finally, some sad news. Laurence Ritchie, a former chairman of the Board of Directors and treasurer passed away on September 17, 2014. He was one of the founders of the gallery, and devoted so much of his time and energy to making the gallery expand and flourish.

He arrived at the reception of the Inaugural Exhibition of the York Wilson collection in August 2014, and looked around him. He told me that he didn't like modern art, then after a moment he corrected himself, saying "I don't understand abstract art." I suggested that he read the extensive catalogue that I had written, which he proceeded to do. Half an hour later, he stood up, his face beaming. "Now I understand!" he exclaimed. He was so open minded. We shall all miss his presence at the gallery. His laughter and his energy always pushed us to achieve more!

I will always have this image of him, sitting in the main Gallery, carefully studying the catalogue. I discreetly took a photograph. You can see it on the front page.

Ewa Chwojko, Curator

To the memory of Laurence...



We are deeply saddened by the sudden passing of our former Chairman of the Board, Laurence Ritchie.

He was a dedicated and generous volunteer whose support for everything at the gallery was immense. He would enter the Arts Centre, a twinkle in his eye, and a big smile, and slowly walk around the Galleries, admiring each piece of art. When there was something to be done, he was always one of the first to volunteer and to encourage others to help.

He was such a vibrant man. He will be greatly missed by the team here, and by the community he served so well.

Laurence was a devoted Husband and Father, and the GAC supporter for over 15 years. His love for the gallery and the arts in Georgina was often larger than life. His passion for success was always felt in all meetings and events. Laurence left a legacy of hard work and determination to see the Georgina Arts Center and Gallery grow and flourish for generations to come. He was nothing less than an inspiration for all that knew him. *he will be missed by all*



York Wilson August 3 - September 28, 2014



The music series **Performance!** Was the brain-child of Dr. Steeve Chwojko, violinist, composer, and conductor, who now lives in Georgina. Palette editor Ewa Chwojko went to see him (in fact, he was just sitting in the next room...) and asked him to explain himself.



E.C.: What made you think of putting music into an Art Gallery?

S.C.: about a year ago, I was walking around the Main Gallery admiring the exhibition when I dropped my pen. The Arts Centre was pretty silent at that moment, and the noise the pen made resounded in the Gallery. As I stooped to pick it up, I got to thinking about the sound it had made, and it dawned on me that the Main Gallery has an excellent acoustic for music: reverberant and spacious. If only there were a piano! I talked about this idea, and soon many people were saying, 'if only we had enough money for a piano.'

Then one day, a miracle happened: through fundraising efforts of Lori Mitchell generous sponsors donated the money! The piano was purchased, and the only thing remaining was to find musicians willing to play.

E.C.: What sort of music did you have in mind for the performances?

S.C.: Well, my training is in what is usually termed 'classical' music, and so that was my first thought. But I soon started to review my thinking on this; [*laughs*] in fact it was you who told me to think outside of my musical box! Why not have the three different types of music – classical, jazz, and popular? Actually, these categories are entirely erroneous, and I shouldn't use the terms, but that is a whole other discussion...

A committee was formed, and Michelle Vacca from the Board of Directors joined us. She offered to create a series (she calls it *An Evening With...*) that would feature both local talent and well-known musicians who play folk music, country music, a wide range of styles that are usually grouped together as 'popular' (isn't Beethoven's 9th symphony 'popular'? Like I said, a whole other discussion...).

We therefore started to design a series that would feature classical music and jazz. I had two guiding principles: the music that is played must be interesting for the audience we are likely to get at the Gallery, and the musicians should be young professionals who would like the opportunity to play in public, and local teachers who don't get that much chance to perform. We then fixed a date for the first concert: November 2.

E.C.: Who will be performing at the November 2 concert?

S.C.: Concert? Well, I guess it is that, in a way. In fact, it is more than that. The musicians will talk about the pieces they are playing, give the audience some background such as when it was written, who it was written for, some anecdote, anything that will engage the listeners. If the performer does not feel comfortable about speaking in public, I do the presentation part! I prefer to think of these events as performances, and that is where the title for the series comes from.

E.C.: So – who is playing at the November 2 performance?

S.C.: Ah, right, I didn't answer your question! There are two singers, a pianist, and a violinist. The singers are Linda Condy and Cynthia Wallbank. Linda performs classical music and musical theatre throughout York Region and is a prominent teacher. She is an executive member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Cynthia has won many awards for her performances, and in 2013 she received First Place Honours as well as the "Most Promising Singer" award in the N.A.T.S. competition. Mimi Chiu is a pianist, and she is active both as soloist – for example she performed recently with the Richmond Hill

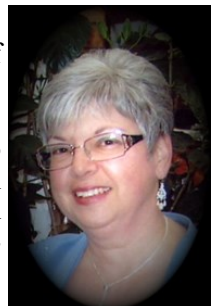
Symphony Orchestra – and as a teacher. The violinist is me! I studied musical composition and violin in Europe. I'm not going to brag about myself here – go look at my web site.

E.C.: And for the future?

S.C.: It all depends on funding; in other words, finding grants. I want to produce 4 to 6 concerts per year, but that requires a lot of money. A young professional musician, just starting out on a career, must be paid. And a singer requires a pianist to accompany them, who must also be paid. Add to that all the other Gallery costs, as well as tuning the piano, and you can see that each event needs a lot of money. But it is not impossible! Nothing is impossible, if you decide that it is possible.

E.C.: How did you fund the first concert – I mean, performance?

S.C.: I approached some professional musicians in the York area, and asked whether they would be willing to give their time for our inaugural concert. I want to thank them here for their enthusiasm and their generosity in performing without fee! Thus I managed to avoid the Catch-22 situation of "no concert without money", and "no money until you have proved yourself with a concert". Of course, I don't mean concert, I mean performance...





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An Interview With... Event Organizer Michelle Vacca chats with Magoo!

Michelle: *An Evening With...* Magoo! Very excited to have you perform on THE RUG October 17th! So, tell me- what should kids and their grown up accompaniments anticipate that night?!

Magoo: I think they should look forward to an evening of songs and stories for the whole family. I am a songwriter, I write songs for everyone, there are 'Children's Songs' that are about some of the things that really interest kids, there are songs that the grownups will appreciate. The song is the thing and for me it has to be good for it to work no matter who is in the audience. Oh...and I like having fun.

Michelle: As I was compiling a list of questions for this interview, I became very curious about your childhood, and wanted to know ALL about Magoo as a boy! As a child, I suspect that you played A LOT! Can you share snippets of your childhood?

Magoo: I had a memorable childhood, I still have a number of close friends from that time and I consider myself very lucky to have that connection to those years. Rambling outdoors, summer camp, hockey on frozen ponds, building various contraptions and forts, sometimes with crazy results, singing around campfires, ...all of those things were a big part growing up, as a matter of fact, they still are.

Michelle: The Kids Art Exhibit will be on display during your performance at the GAC, which features works created by children that participated in the Kidz Art Kamps this summer- works of art that burst with imaginative genius. Similarly, the songs that you write are all so perfectly attributed, capturing ideas and moments about wondering, curiosity and discovering. Can you tell me about your writing process and how you incorporate your inspirations?

Magoo: Well they always say, 'Write what you know' so, for example, let's take the song 'There Goes the Sun', from Kirk and Magoo's Mars Rocks! I wanted to write a song about the sun, so I did a little research and wrote down a list of facts about the sun. Then I grabbed the guitar and worked up a chord progression and tempo that I liked. While playing those chords I started randomly singing the facts that I had written down and came up with the melody. From there I started to think about the sun from my own perspective...personal thoughts and ideas that start to interact with what I had written down. It's a little dance between the fact and the fanciful; you trust the muse and see where it takes you. Once the bare bones were in place, the work began in terms of fitting the meter to the rhyme scheme, but that is a fun little puzzle in itself.

Michelle: When and/or what was the defining moment in your life that made music and performance an integral part of who you are today, in particular to music geared to children?

Magoo: I always liked singing, but for some reason it never occurred to me that I might be able to also accompany myself on an instrument. I could organise events, and be the roadie for the band and sing along, but playing was another story, somebody else did that. Then one day I was hanging out with a guy (I was 20 by then) who showed me how to play an Em chord...I was dumbstruck...I couldn't believe what I had been missing. The short story is that I bought a guitar two days later and was working as a singer/songwriter two years later. As for music geared to kids, I have always enjoyed hanging out with kids. When I was just starting to play in clubs and concerts, I would occasionally play for a school or camp group. In 1987 a friend at Scholastic Publications asked us (Kirk and Magoo) to record the music for the book *Sing a Song of Mother Goose*. We did more writing for Harper Collins and before we knew it we had enough original material for an official Kid's Show. I suppose having 3 little kids at home at the time to provide immediate inspiration and feedback didn't hurt the cause either.

Michelle: You also teach music privately. Students must flock to you, and I wonder what a typical music lesson with Magoo would be like, what it would consist of, and what is your methodology when teaching music, and where and how can I sign up?!

Magoo: I have been teaching here at our home in Udora for the past 20 years. It started when a young friend asked me if I could show him a few things on the guitar. That lead to a friend of his, which lead to a friend of hers which lead to the father of a friend ...you get the picture. I have taught all ages, guitar, ukulele, bass, and a little mandolin. I like to teach the importance of timing and tuning (if you can count and keep it in tune you are well on your way), then work with folks to play a song or instrumental piece that they really like. Most songs can be simplified to a point where even a beginner with the right attitude can come up with a version. It is a very satisfying thing to be able to play something that you like and are interested in...I am always reminded of that day I learned the Em chord, and how it changed everything for me. As for signing up, interested folks can contact me at magoo@magooman.com.

Michelle: You've been performing and writing for almost 40 years now. You certainly have many talents, play a multitude of instruments, written so many original songs both in the genre of folk and children's songs, wear many hats (figuratively and literally!) and are involved with many projects, events, and festivals happening all over. What are some of the highlights of your career so far, and what's next on Magoo's things-to-do list?



Exhibitions & Events

Magoo: Well, I have played venues and events across the country since 1974, and I'm still at it, that to me is the highlight. Mars Rocks! Winning the Canadian Indies Children's Album of the Year in 2003 was a highlight. This country has so many great players; it is always a highlight to work with them when the opportunity arises. I was involved with the formation of Folk Music Ontario 26 years ago, which has helped bolster and develop Folk and Roots Festivals across the province. One of those events, The Blue Skies Festival, has been a source of endless inspiration and renewal and I have had the privilege of hosting it for the past 37 years. Since 2003 I have travelled twice a year to northern Aboriginal communities in Ontario, Labrador and the Arctic with www.ArtsCancircle.ca, an organisation that was formed by virtuoso harmonica player Mike Stevens. Musicians and visual artists volunteer to go to the communities to play and teach. It has been a remarkable ride, I urge you to go to the website and find out more. As for the future, I am always playing about in the Music Room. I am working on a new recording, there is always something to do around the old homestead in beautiful Udora, and I am really looking forward to playing on THE RUG on Oct 17. See you there!

An Evening With...Beams! Performing on THE RUG Friday November 28, 7-10PM.

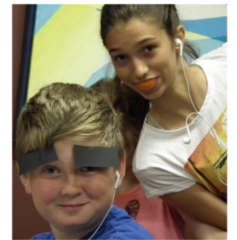
In the middle of the city there is a tree. Surrounded by glass, steel and concrete, the tree grows lush and strong despite its environs. A young woman is sitting under this tree, strumming on her banjo and humming the haunting melodies that will become the songs for her band. This is the world that Toronto's *Beams* dwells in. It's a place that's familiar and comfortable while still being fresh and exciting. A place where old and new combine to create something unique.



KidzArt



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Travis Shilling's paintings tell a story. A filmmaker and playwright, Travis' work reflects a rich imagination and exceptional skill. Travis' recent paintings juxtapose civilization and the animal world in a narrative dreamscape. His short film "Bear Tung", featuring Gary Farmer, was a selection in the 2011 National Museum of American Indian in NYC as well as the Santa Fe independent film festival in October. Travis was born in **Rama, Ontario**: the second

of two artist sons of acclaimed Aboriginal artist Arthur Shilling. Travis has exhibited since age 21 in Canada, Europe and the US. He travels between a studio in Rama and one in Toronto. His works are featured at the GAC!!!

Poignant scene from **One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest** Jack Nicholson, Will Sampson by artist Travis Shilling
McMurphy and the Chief wind up brawling with the orderlies. They are sent up to the "shock shop" for electroconvulsive therapy. While McMurphy and the Chief wait their turn, McMurphy offers Chief a piece of gum, and Chief murmurs "Thank you...Ah, Juicy Fruit." McMurphy is delighted to find that Bromden is neither deaf nor mute, and that he stays silent to deflect attention.

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Please visit www.gacag.com/programming/ regularly for a calendar of upcoming programs as they become available. Or contact the GAC directly at **905-722-9587** or gac@gacag.com.

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