

Newsletter of the Vancouver International Writers Festival

*ink*  
WINTER 2011

**2011 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE ALAN CUMYN**

**READING WITH WRITERS**

**LITERATI GALA**

**MEMBER PROFILE: LORENZ VON FERSEN**

*&  
Thank You!*

# FESTIVAL WRAP MESSAGE



John Pass, Nino Ricci, Joan MacLeod, John Vaillant and Hal Wake on stage at the GG Award Party.

The 24th annual Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival wrapped up with more than 12,000 people in the audiences over the six days of the Festival.

“I suppose it would be easy to think of this Festival past as the year of Canadian fiction, the Scottish crime writer invasion, or an intriguing exploration of Africa. But one of the things I enjoy every year are the surprises, the revelations and the events that sweep you into something you couldn’t have expected,” says Hal Wake, the Festival’s Artistic Director. “I had one of those moments when I dropped in on Montreal, *Mystery and Music* with the writer **John Farrow** (aka Trevor Ferguson) accompanied by the incomparable musician David Gossage. John was reading a chase scene set in the time of the Iroquois wars and his sonorous delivery boomed out the drama. Underneath, or rather alongside, David was providing an electronic sound bed overlaid by a pennywhistle that spurred everything along until a crashing crescendo, followed by breathtaking silence. Not your ordinary reading. Your discovery might have been **Kate Beaton**, the twenty-something cartoonist who matched wits with Bill Richardson and whose quirky take on historical figures mixes fact with ingenious and hilarious fantasy. Or perhaps you found yourself on Sunday afternoon captivated by one of Canada’s finest poets **Don McKay**, as he explained in poetic form how our propensity to divide the world into us (humans) and the rest (objects) was sowing the seeds of humankind’s eventual demise. So I’d suggest that when you pick up your program for next year’s 25th anniversary, read the event blurbs and author bios and then take a chance on the unknown, you might have an experience you’ll never forget.”

Close to 100 national and international authors appeared at the Festival, travelling to Vancouver from across Canada, the US, the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. This year’s Festival brought acclaimed Scottish crime writer **Ian Rankin** to Vancouver. He appeared in three sold out events alongside crime fiction compatriots, **Peter Robinson**, **Denise Mina** and **Stuart MacBride**, to name a few. As always the Literary Cabaret, the Afternoon Tea and the Sunday Brunch were sold out, with guests at the Sunday Brunch treated to a surprise poetry reading from Australian author **Cate Kennedy**.

The Festival attracted nominees and winners of all the major literary prizes, including the Man Booker Prize, the Commonwealth Writers Prize, the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Griffin Poetry Prize. This year’s Festival featured a special event for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Governor General’s Literary Awards and past prize-winners **Joan MacLeod**, **John Pass**, **Nino Ricci** and **John Vaillant** took to the stage to discuss how the award has impacted their careers.

The Writers Festival offered 33 events for school groups through our Spreading the Word education program. This year, we were able to offer three times the number of subsidized tickets to schools who may not normally have the means to attend the Festival. Our ability to offer several schools free tickets to events gave teachers the opportunity to “see each of their student’s eyes light up under the spell of an author,” as one teacher put it, and both teachers and students enjoyed the exciting and insightful events they attended.

# FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS



## THE VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS FESTIVAL

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# FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

## AUTHOR FEEDBACK

“I so enjoyed being in Vancouver. The Vancouver International Writers Festival is an extraordinary Festival and it was a wonderful way to end what was a very long book tour. The highlight—as I’d been promised—was the Literary Cabaret. It was one of the most exciting things I’ve ever done as a writer. I grew up around the Sun Valley Writers’ Conference—my parents founded it—and as a result have very high standards when it comes to events like these. VIWF is an impeccably run festival and I was honoured to be part of it.”

ALEXANDER MAKSIK

“I flew back to Calgary late this afternoon, inspired and energized from participating in the Vancouver International Writers Festival. What a gift for writers, this opportunity, in its gorgeous setting, to share our creative works and ideas with the public and with each other. This morning I participated in my last panel, with Marsha Lederman as moderator. She created a session where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. People lined up to speak of how moved they were. Marsha lifted the panel to another level with her intricate knowledge of the books, her recognition of their subtle resonances, and her ability to seize those significant moments that presented themselves, even if they weren’t part of her prepared script. We felt in such good hands, able to hone in on and discuss those universal moments in story and in life that make an audience feel a community experience.”

ROSEMARY NIXON

“Thank you so much for inviting me to participate in the Festival. I truly enjoyed myself, and am now settled back at home with a trove of happy memories. I met so many warm people and had so many laughs over the weekend, and it was wonderful to connect with readers and writers. Unfortunately though, I think I’ve developed a little crush on Vancouver. Ah, well, I knew the risk going in.”

NICOLE LUNDRIGAN

## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

“A fantastic Festival this year, as always, it just keeps getting better and better! The Ian Rankin and Peter Robinson combo was brilliant—a format to be repeated. I loved the casual but very interesting conversation between two authors who obviously clicked.”

MARJAN SZLIVKA

“My first experience at the Vancouver International Writers Festival was delightful and enlightening. It was a pleasure to hear the selected authors speak about their works and their personal histories. I thoroughly enjoyed it and will be returning next year for more events. PS. I have now become a reader!”

JOYCE LAM



With over 2.2 million books, magazines and newspapers to choose from, as well as 100 pre-loaded classic reads, the Kobo ereader is the clear choice for avid readers. This year, Festival-goers had the chance to win their very own, lightweight and compact Kobo ereader touch edition, just like reading a book with real touch capabilities.

Congratulations to Festival-goer Annette Horton for winning her very own Kobo ereader touch edition!



# SPREADING THE WORD



Photo credit: Ilona Beiks

“It was a fabulous week! Alan’s readings from *The Secret Life of Owen Skye* brought chuckles and knowing smiles from staff and students. His passion for writing was contagious and even the imaginations of reluctant writers were ignited. Stories filled with drama and humour filled page after page as ideas poured from the students. A week of writing and reading with Alan was truly inspirational and so motivating.”

GAIL HENDERSON  
TEACHER, SEA VIEW SCHOOL

## WRITER IN RESIDENCE

**Alan Cumyn**, author of 11 novels, winner of the Mr. Christie’s Book Award for Children’s Literature and nominee for the Governor General’s Literary Award and the Scotiabank Giller Prize, wove his word magic in Port Alice, BC as this fall’s Writer in Residence from October 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>.

Sea View teacher Gail Henderson says, “Having Alan Cumyn as Writer in Residence was a wonderful opportunity for the students at Sea View to develop their literacy skills from a published author. How fantastic to write, read and tell stories with an author of his calibre. It was an exciting, entertaining and creative week that has further promoted literacy skills among my students. Thank you to the Vancouver International Writers Festival for providing Sea View with a week-long residency.”

Cumyn is an Ottawa-based writer who teaches through the prestigious Writing for Children and Young Adults Master of Fine Arts program at the Vermont College of Fine Arts and is a past chair of the Writers Union of

Canada. During his time in Port Alice, Cumyn mentored a class of students in grade six, seven, eight and nine, conducted a writing workshop for students in grade three, four and five, gave a reading to students in kindergarten and grades one and two, and will continue mentoring four students online through a five week mentorship program, thanks to the support of Amazon.ca.

Of his time in Port Alice, Cumyn writes, “I really enjoyed sharing my passion for stories with the students at Sea View. Long ago, when I was in high school, writer Judith Merrill gave a reading at my school and inspired me to change the direction of my life. I hope I was able to do the same for a student in Port Alice.”

The Vancouver International Writers Festival’s Spreading the Word education program offers two Writer-in-Residence programs each year to communities that cannot attend the Festival because of geographic and/or economic limitations.



*The perfect gift for book lovers!*

Ignite a passion for reading and writing in your loved ones this holiday season. Gift certificates, in increments of \$20, are now available for the 2012 Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival.

To purchase gift certificates, valid towards events during the 2012 Festival from October 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, please call 604-681-6330 ext. 0. Gift certificates are available for purchase until December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Some restrictions apply.

# SPREADING THE WORD



Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark with young fans at Franklin's Birthday Party

**“Édith Bourget was animated and had the students very involved in making sounds, words and gestures for a few of her poems. My students found her very receptive, friendly and funny. Thank you so much for including us. The small class setting was also very personal and allowed for a high level of interaction.”**

GLORIA NYSTROM  
TEACHER, HASTINGS ELEMENTARY



## READING WITH WRITERS

This fall's Reading with Writers authors Deborah Hodge (Britannia Elementary), Margriet Ruurs (Lord Selkirk Annex), Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton (Grandview/ᑕᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ Elementary), Janet Willen (Minnekadha Middle School), Alan Cumyn (Florence Nightingale Elementary), Tanya Davis (Britannia Secondary), Moira Young (North Burnaby Secondary) and Sheri D-Wilson (Gladstone Secondary) engaged and excited students, inspiring them to check out books, visit school libraries and get writing.

As part of the Reading with Writers program, La Joie de Lire programmer Brenda Berck organized school visits with two Festival authors who were appearing in La Joie de Lire events. These authors visited local elementary schools. Acclaimed author Édith Bourget visited a group of students in grade two at Hastings Elementary and Governor General Award-winning author Michèle Marineau visited a class of grade six and seven students at Bridge Elementary. Students at both schools were inspired by the author visits, with Alison, the teacher at Bridge Elementary, thrilled to see “a list of students signed up to read Michèle's novel”. The teachers at both schools expressed their enthusiasm for the authors and for the opportunity this program gave them to be included in the Festival.

**“Sheri-D was well-received by two English 11 classes here at Gladstone Secondary this afternoon. She used a combination of workshopping and lively presentation. Students were engaged, encouraged to participate and asked some very thoughtful questions. She was wonderful!”**

PAT PARUNGAO  
TEACHER-LIBRARIAN, GLADSTONE SECONDARY



# LITERATI GALA WRAP

Inspired by the Year of India in Canada and our incredible live auction item, which afforded the highest bidder the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the Jaipur Literature Festival, this year's Literati Gala transported guests to a faraway land. Each table sparkled with elaborately beaded overlays, bangles glistened in the flickering flames of tea lights and brightly coloured dahlias were displayed in vintage brass vases.



Board members Sally Harding and Terri-Lynn Brown



Margriet Ruess, Harry Whitehead, Kathryn Shoemaker, Alan Cumyn and Sarah Ellis



Bill Richardson and Sandra Garossino facilitate the live auction



Camille Tibbo and Fred Lee



Ali Caufin and Tavia Audia



Hal Wake, David Bezmozgis and Jen Sookfong Lee



Dennis E. Bolen, Charles Demers, Madeleine Thien and Kevin Chong

Guests at the reception were treated to Honey Basil Collins and the opportunity to have their Bollywood-inspired look captured in a photobooth. The evening began with a lively performance by the Vancouver International Bhangra Celebration Society performers, Punjabi Beat. The humorous and always engaging **Bill Richardson** acted as MC for the evening and guests were entertained by readings from acclaimed author **John Vaillant** and poet **John Glenday**. Attendees at the Literati Gala had the opportunity to mingle with Festival authors, including **Lloyd Jones**, **Linda Grant**, **Timothy Taylor**, **Madeleine Thien** and **David Bezmozgis**.

The support of everyone in attendance, the generosity of our donors and the dedication of the Literati Gala committee provided the Vancouver International Writers Festival with the ability to encourage literacy in BC's students through our Spreading the Word program. This year, the Festival presented 33 events for schools, sent eleven authors on Reading with Writers school visits, and sent **Maggie de Vries** to the Sunshine Coast and **Alan Cumyn** to Port Alice, BC to act as Writers in Residence.

Photo credits: Alison Hart and Butter Photography



## ART RAFFLE

### Washing it All Away

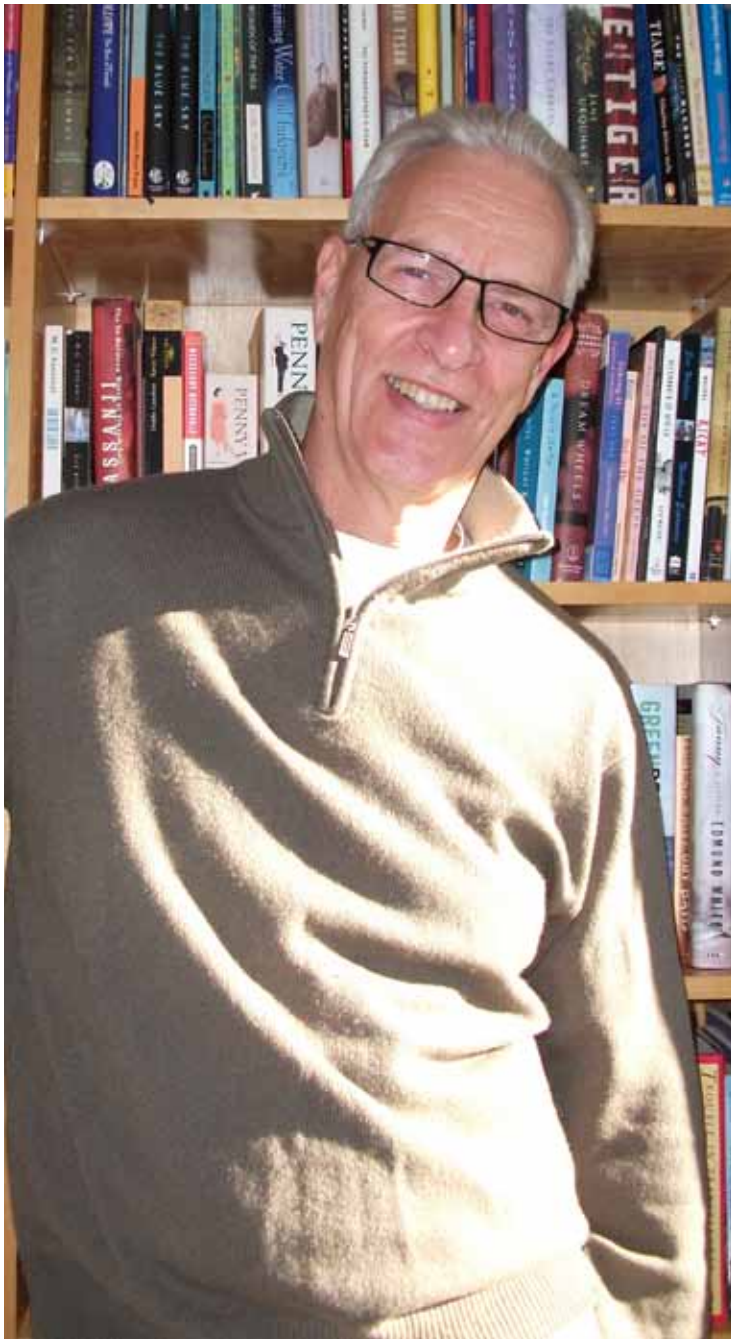
*mixed media on panel with resin*

Donated by artist Steven Nederveen

Steven Nederveen uses painting and photography to draw connections between our natural environment and aspects of spirituality.

Congratulations to Jennifer Arlidge, the winner of *Washing it All Away*. Thank you to everyone who purchased tickets!

# VIWF MEMBER PROFILE: LORENZ VON FERSEN



## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ATTENDING THE WRITERS FESTIVAL?

I've been involved with the Festival since day one. While working at the Children's Festival, I was fortunate enough to meet Alma Lee, who was working as a grants officer at the time. We immediately hit it off and began discussing potential Arts events and activities that would add to Vancouver's cultural scene. Alma and I talked about how good it would be to have more access to ideas and writers in Vancouver. This led to a long discussion during a ferry ride over to Lonsdale Quay, and by the time we returned we'd hatched a plan for a Writers Festival in Vancouver. From there, Alma and I took a research trip to Calgary to check out the Literary Festival at the Calgary Olympic Winter Games and to see what an audience for this type of event looks like. With some start-up help from Canada Council we next tried out a pilot event featuring science fiction authors, just to test the waters. That turned out well and introduced us to Granville Island as a venue. With the confidence that there was an audience out there, and the combination of Alma's connections with Canadian writers and my background with the Children's and Folk Music Festivals we launched the first Writers Festival. I moved on to work as a Cultural Planner for the City, while Alma and now Hal and their colleagues built the Festival we know and love.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE FESTIVAL?

The best part of the Festival is the surprises that you encounter each year and the insights you gain from attending different events. I love the moment when an author takes the stage for the first time and the connection you felt while reading their work becomes even deeper. I also like the fact that it is a Festival, which allows for variety, lets attendees discover new favourite authors and caters to many different tastes.

## WHY DID YOU BECOME A MEMBER AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I am a member because I want the Festival to live forever.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT READING?

I enjoy going to galleries and listening to music.

## WHAT WERE YOUR FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS THIS YEAR?

This year was one of the most exciting Festivals I've experienced. I was thrilled to see David Adams Richards and Russell Banks in their Intimate Evening events, and the Vancouver 125 Legacy Books event featured an incredible panel of speakers.

## WHAT'S CURRENTLY ON YOUR READING LIST/BEDSIDE TABLE?

Italo Calvino and *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal.

## ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

I love reading non-fiction and I was happy to see that the Festival presented several events featuring non-fiction writers this year.

## Alma Lee Legacy Fund

The Alma Lee Legacy Fund was established in 2006 to honour the achievement of the VIWF's founder Alma Lee, who retired in 2005. Revenue from the fund will help us present acclaimed Canadian and international writers to Festival audiences and inspire young readers and writers by offering Spreading the Word programs to schools.

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Donate online using our secure donation form: [www.writersfest.bc.ca](http://www.writersfest.bc.ca). To make a donation by phone, please call (604) 681-6330. If you make a contribution before December 31<sup>st</sup>, you will receive a tax receipt for 2011.

## BY MAIL:

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