

VANCOUVER GOES LIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ART FEST >>>



➡ The funny thing about organizing a performance-art festival is you're never quite sure what you're going to get. That's the position Glenn Alteen finds himself in as he prepares for the latest installment of the LIVE Biennial of Performance Art (which runs Saturday [October 15] to November 26)—or prepares as much as can be expected. "I was in theatre years ago, and if all goes well there, you know exactly what's going to happen, whereas with performance art you only have a vague parameter," the chair of the event says over the phone from the grunt gallery, where he is director.

Adding to the element of surprise is the fact that performance

art can take so many forms. In this, the biggest biennial yet, there are 50 acts—almost double the number of the event's first year in 1999—and they span everything from music to processions to reading rooms. They range from big touring productions like Mexican cabaret singer Astrid Hadad and American musician and interdisciplinary artist Meredith Monk to smaller, site-specific and interactive projects. The latter includes Irene Loughlin's November 16 presentation of *Nadia*, where she and the Renfrew Gymnastics Club, in the Waterfront Station lobby, explore the darker side of Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci's life. Then there's the Hal Winkler Project's

The Nova Library at the Vancouver Public Library's downtown branch: a public reading room of books, chosen by addicts from the Downtown Eastside, that opens October 17. In contrast to that relatively small setting, visitors are taking over the cemetery grounds at East 41st Avenue and Fraser Street for Paula Jardine's *A Night for All Souls* on October 29. (See story on page 41.) And all month, LIVE celebrates Vancouver jazz, performance, writing, and visual-art innovator Al Neil as a father of the form; he takes the stage at the Western Front (October 15) and the Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre (November 10).

Believe it or not, there is a link-

ing theme to all the work. The last fest was called Performance Art and the Academy, and it centred around pieces that helped legitimize the form. This year, LIVE dubs itself *Altered States* and takes a swing in the opposite direction: the curatorial statement declared that the fourth installment would centre on "performance art incorporating the irrational, the subversive, the spiritual, the intuitive, the confrontational and the traumatic. It focuses on the artist as prophet, as shaman, as masochist, as addict, as anarchist."

In other words, the lineup promises to shake things up around town. Still, Alteen expects the fest's turnout to continue to grow: "Vancouver

is such a performance-art town. It has a role in the cultural life of the city that you just don't see anywhere else, and there's always been a lot of it," he says. "A lot of other art forms are envious of performance art because of its freedom."

LIVE has played a big role in bringing performance art, if not exactly into the mainstream, then out from the under-underground. "What's exciting is that, for a lot of traditional venues, they wouldn't look at performance art as a form that would be viable to present," Alteen says. "But when LIVE comes in, it becomes more of an event."

View the entire schedule at www.livevancouver.bc.ca/.

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