

■ LIVE

Where cabaret and marching bands blend beautifully

The extended celebration stretches the boundaries of performance art

BY PETER BIRNIE
VANCOUVER SUN

Strike up the band, because here comes LIVE. Held every other year, the fourth biennial of performance art from all over the world is a six-week festival kicking off Friday at the grunt gallery. Opening remarks and a welcome to the festival are to be followed by a performance by the band of the 15th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery.

The regimental band will play as it marches from the grunt gallery on East Second Avenue to the Western Front on East Eighth Avenue. If it seems an incongruous fit for a marching band to kick off a festival celebrating some of the most innovative movements in the world of the avant-garde, remember that performance art, by its very nature, plays against convention. In this case the traditional sounds of the *Knightsbridge March* could be heard on the way to its complete opposite, a performance at the Western Front by the Nihilist Spasm Band.

NSB declares itself the world's oldest "noise" band, which means its members play without regard for the traditional conventions of music. As Robert Fulford famously declared in the *National Post* in 2000, "these performances are music with keys, chords, tunes and rhythm omitted."

Formed in London, Ont., 40 years ago, the Nihilist Spasm Band infuriates purists with its utter disregard, if not outright contempt, for standard songs. "These sounds," thundered Fulford, "have no discernible value or meaning." You decide.

Saturday sees the first show in a series dubbed *The Al Neil Project*. Vancouver's beloved jazz legend was a key seed in the growth of jazz in Vancouver, and the pianist and wordsmith is honoured with performances by his many fans. On Saturday that means everyone from Kate Hammett Vaughan and her trio to author Michael Turner, who will read from Neil's texts.

Every facet of LIVE strives to be unique. Monday evening sees the opening of *The Nova Library* in the Alice Mackay Room of the Vancouver Public Library's main branch. Artist Hans Winkler surveyed drug users and ex-addicts on the Downtown Eastside about their reading habits, collated that information with the library's staff and came up with a "social sculpture" about the marginalized community.

■ JUST THE FACTS

WHAT: LIVE Biennial of Performance Art 2005

WHERE: Galleries, theatres and spaces all over town, with focal points at the grunt gallery (350 East Second Ave.) and the Western Front (303 East Eighth Ave.).

WHEN: Friday, Oct. 14 to Friday, Nov. 25.

for more information go to: www.live-vancouver.bc.ca

The project is named after *Nova Express* by William Burroughs, perhaps as well known for his addictions as for his writings.

The unique reading room will also host another facet of *The Al Neil Project* when, on Friday, Oct. 21, Michael Turner also curates and hosts *Under the Influence*. From Malcolm Lowry to such modern equivalents as Bud Osborn, the readings are by and about Vancouver writers walking the high-wire of booze and drugs.

This year's LIVE includes an important pair of concerts at the Chan Centre. On Saturday, Oct. 22, Astrid Hadad roars into town from Mexico with her amazing cabaret, which mixes music from ranchera to rumba with a political fury aimed at the überclass. Expect everything from the Virgin of Guadeloupe to La Malinche, the evil gal who handed the Aztecs over to Spain, in Hadad's wildly colourful rollicking revue.

On Saturday, Nov. 12, the Chan hosts pioneer performance artist Meredith Monk.

Even after 35 years of innovative artistic work she's dubbed a "voice of the future," exploring the amazing ability of the human voice as an instrument for music, language and sound.

From Anthony Schrag's tour of Gas-town in an attempt to both unnerve audiences and promote a phenomenological understanding of the urban environment, to Peter Baren's "performative" pieces "rumoured to include nude performers, molasses, fog, drawing, texts and boomerangs," LIVE promises to be as lively as modern art gets.

Like the weather, it's just too cool.

Sun Theatre Critic
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The Nihilist Spasm Band (above) which will be appearing at the Western Front during LIVE which is held every other year to celebrate performance art from across the world.

Right: Meredith Monk dance will be featured at this year's event.



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"In Mr. Fewer's performance, you could hear....jaws dropping all through the audience."

—Chronicle Herald

VSO Concertmaster Mark Fewer makes his solo debut performing John Adams' *The Dharma at Big Sur*, a unique and extraordinary work for six-string electric fiddle and orchestra! This piece is filled with fascinating soundscapes, and hums with intensity and frenetic energy. An equally exciting second half features a piece that was as much a groundbreaker in its time: Stravinsky's famous *Petrouchka*. Bramwell Tovey conducts this blockbuster concert.

SAT & MON NOVEMBER 5 & 7 8PM ORPHEUM THEATRE

MICHIO KITAZUME
JOHN ADAMS

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The Dharma at Big Sur
(Canadian Première)
Petrouchka (1947)

STRAVINSKY

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Mark Fewer violin

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