

Kwagiulth Dancers perform at museum

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Weekend Edition

Look inside Mungo Martin House on the grounds of the Royal B.C. Museum and see a performance that hasn't been witnessed by many in more than 50 years.

Three days a week until Sept. 30 the Kwagiulth Dancers are sharing a rare slice of their culture with the public. Within the walls of the Wawadit'l'a big house, the 15-member troupe is enacting traditional dances that embody the legends and mythology of the KwaKwaKa'Wakw first nation.

"Each family has a different history with different dances," dancer George Shaughnessy said. "That's our way of learning who you are and where you came from."

The performances are the brainchild of Peter Knox, hereditary chief of Fort Rupert first nation and grandson of renowned carver Mungo Martin. Considered one of the Northwest Coast's most significant artists and mentors, Martin served as chief carver at the Royal B.C. Museum's Thunderbird Park for years.

In 1953 he supervised the completion of Wawadit'l'a, the half-scale replica of a Fort Rupert big house built in the mid-19th century. That year it became the site of a public potlatch, the first since the government ban on the aboriginal tradition was rescinded.

Knox inherited the big house upon Martin's death in 1963 after his own father predeceased his grandfather. Now half a century later he has flung open the doors of the traditional house and welcomed the public inside once again.

"A lot of people saw the big house but had never been inside because it was closed for 51 years. He wanted to show people we're still alive and here are what our practices are," said Shaughnessy, a close friend.

Drawing on the museum's cache of Martin artwork and transcripts, Knox has recreated a series of dances to honour his grandfather and his heritage. He has also carved replicas of the original masks, now housed in the museum, which are worn by the dancers.

The hour-long performance includes a dance called the Animal Kingdom, based on a legend recalled by Martin. Performed at the potlatch in 1953 and again this year, it tells the tale of a



SHARON TIFFIN/WEEKEND EDITION FILES

Masked Kwagiulth Dancer performs traditional longhouse dance.

young boy who peered into a cave on Guildford Island to see animals shedding their skins and dancing like humans.

"There are 14 masks in one dance. All are different animals - the wolf, the squirrel, the wren," Shaughnessy said. "Mungo remembered that story when he was growing up."

Now in their second year the Kwagiulth Dancers are sharing their talents with locals as well as tourists from the U.S. and Europe. With troupe members as young as three, Shaughnessy anticipates the traditions will continue for many more generations.

Performances take place at 1 to 2 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and 7 to 8 p.m. Thursdays and Saturdays. Admission is by donation.

Art and poetry shared

A collection of artist friends have gathered to show their work this week at the CAC Gallery.

Points of View opens tonight with a reception at 7 to 9 p.m. at the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria, G-6 1001 Douglas St.

The mixed media exhibition, organized by Elizabeth Mayne, will feature the works of Fran Ertle, Heler Grolle, Dorothy Haegert, Lorraine Heret, Sybille Leimbiger, Rosalind Margolis, Mary Mason, Penelope Stockley, Miriam Thorn, Margaret Travis and Jeanette Walker.

A poetry reading and book launch by the Gadrian Group will also be held at 3 p.m. Sunday. The show runs to Aug. 24, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Gallery History Retold

Studio 16 1/2 is assembling local photographers and a few out-of-town stragglers for a photographic extravaganza opening with a reception tonight.

The show Photo-Graphics will feature the photo-documentation of Studio 16 1/2 and its growth since opening nine months ago.

The show runs to Aug. 29. Tonight's reception kicks off at 7 p.m. at the gallery, 16 1/2 Fan Tan Alley.

Strings on stage

Banjo, bass and violin music will fill the Royal Theatre on Wednesday as Trio! claims the stage in a one-night-only performance.

Trio! brings together the critically acclaimed and award-winning performers Bela Fleck, Stanley Clarke and Jean-Luc Ponty in a genre-crossing collaboration.

Fleck has been nominated for a Grammy award 20 times, has taken home eight statues and has been nominated in more categories than anyone in Grammy history. Clarke has won many prestigious awards, including Grammys and Emmys, and has sold multiple gold and platinum albums.

Ponty is a master of violin in jazz and rock and has toured the world many times over, working with the likes of Frank Zappa, Elton John and the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$45 to \$55 in advance at the McPherson box office at 386-6121.