MEMORIES OF SUMMER 2016

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Canada Day: Oh Canada!

Canadian Citizenship Ceremony
By Lynn Allen

For the last several years, Harbourfront Centre has hosted a citizenship ceremony and reception on Canada Day. It is really a pleasure to help out at this event. I asked the volunteers who supported the ceremony and reception what their favourite moments of the day were.

Tom enjoyed the performance of the opera singer who was being sworn in as a new Canadian and agreed to sing the national anthem from the stage.

Terry enjoyed conversations with the individuals who knew that a new life was starting for them. They would have opportunities in Canada that they would never have in their home countries—particularly the artists and writers.

Jennifer enjoyed the vibe of the day and the excitement in the room. Kelly also enjoyed the excitement and the lovely flowers decorating the reception room.

Lidia enjoyed that it was an entirely positive event. No matter what had happened to the new citizens before that day, or what the future has in store for them, that moment was pure joy.

What does Canada Mean to Harbourfront Centre Volunteers?

Canada is singing!
Canada is the Rocky Mountains
Canada is too large for explanation
Canada is caring for others.
Canada is a welcoming nation
Canada is freedom and the ability to express our opinions without fear of reprisal from the government
Canada is a place to stand, a place to grow … Wait a minute, that’s Ontario!
Canada is the most obliging country in accepting people from all walks of life
Canada is canoe country.

Canada is fabulous!
Summer Music in the Garden

By Susan Stewart

For volunteers at Harbourfront Centre, one of the most enchanting outdoor venues is the delightful Toronto Music Garden, located at 479 Queens Quay West, on the waterfront between Bathurst Street and Spadina Avenue.

Did you know that the Music Garden was designed in 1999 by internationally renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma and landscape designer Julie Moir Messervy, in collaboration with landscape architects from City of Toronto's Parks and Recreation department? This beautiful natural environment was designed to interpret the music of Bach's Suite No. 1 for cello and correspond to its dance movements.

In this exquisite Music Garden, volunteers are surrounded by a flowing stream, hackberry trees a thick birch forest, an upward spiraling swirl of lush grass, and “the gigue”, a series of giant grass steps, which provides a view of the harbour and includes a sophisticated amphitheatre for spectacular performances.

Pam, articulates this beautifully: “The setting is heavenly, like the Garden of Eden... The stage is directly under the weeping willow, which is flanked by huge rocks. The garden sits just by the water’s edge and is tucked away from the road by tall bushes. Who wouldn't enjoy themselves in a pretty setting as described above?”

What a benefit for volunteers to be able to enjoy the music of Ventanas (a Mediterranean ensemble), Passagi (early Baroque Italian music) and Wood, Metal, Skin, (Toronto’s beloved taiko drumming ensemble).

Music Garden volunteers are culturally diverse and passionate about their work. For high-school student Saina, “the reward of volunteering at the Music Garden is watching the diverse performances every week during the summer. It is a great opportunity to see and hear music from different cultures and eras with a variety of instruments.”

Sybil with more than 35 years with Harbourfront Centre told me, “I thoroughly enjoy meeting with the community, feeling their joy as they listen to the music of diverse cultural forms across generations in this natural waterfront environment.”

Michael, a retired classically-trained pianist, “prefers to not only communicate with patrons who linger after concerts to discuss the music and environment, but also to organize the crowd and provide comfortable seating arrangements.” This summer, Michael volunteered at many Music Garden concerts including Persian and Indian music ensembles, the Sadie Buck show, the fabulous Mozart's String Quartet, folk and Celtic music, as well as Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) sounds.

In my view as a volunteer, it is a rewarding and rich environment, not only to engage with the community, but to support local music. I am so fortunate to volunteer on the lakeshore in such an incredible, quaint and picturesque area of Toronto.

Thanks again to Yo-Yo Ma and his team for creating such a beautiful venue that brings peace and beauty to the Harbourfront community. Also a big “shout out” to Tamara Berstein, the brilliant artistic director who brings the Music Garden to life and makes the magic happen.
Dancing on the Pier

By Sean McCluskey

This past summer, Thursday evenings at Harbourfront Centre were for dancing. Volunteers like John and Paula have named this their favourite event; you could find them there pretty much every week. They love to dance and meet people. The Toronto All-Star Big Band (a surprisingly youthful ensemble, given the repertoire) performed swing music and vocals from the jazz era, with occasional ventures into ‘50s doo-wop. This year, other bands helped to provide varied programming, including Celtic, mariachi and salsa.

John noted that this is an event where adult visitors are active participants, while so many of Harbourfront Centre activities are aimed at kids. Volunteers not only act as greeters, but get to encourage participation by dancing themselves. As John put it, he gets, “the opportunity to help lonely ladies looking for a partner.”

Sigrid, who has volunteered a few times, enjoys the way the evening progresses. People are reserved at first; then, after the first hour or so—with help from an entertaining emcee, and a few instructions on the steps—things pick up.

Harmanpreet, a new volunteer to this event, shared her thoughts, describing the atmosphere as “magical”: “All of it happens right next to the shores of the Great Lakes under a beautiful starry sky and on the beats of a live band playing for the pleasure of anyone who wishes to join us.”
Island Soul

By Susan Stewart

My first day volunteering at Harbourfront Centre was one of anticipation and curiosity. Picture this: it’s the last Sunday of July, clouds lay ahead—there was a sprinkle of precipitation—yet the buzz of Island Soul music and activities on Queens Quay still attracted a flock of visitors! My role? To interview volunteers at the Boulevard Tent who were going to partake in a cooking demo called “Haitian Marinade”, spicing up dishes with Chef Gabriela Lauture!

I arrived promptly at 1 pm with a planned questionnaire, eager to engage with volunteers and participate in Haitian cooking. That said, I quickly learned that the event would be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. No worries, I thought to myself, since I received wonderful news: I would be attending an amazing event at 2:30 pm—a performance by Melorize, a music ensemble from Montreal that promotes AfrokCaribbean culture through music and dance!

Well, to say I was lucky to see Melorize is no exaggeration! It was sincerely one of the most exciting hours of my life! First, the dance and music were absolutely incredible, as a myriad of people of diverse cultures and ages danced together under the tent. Second, I was able to meet and interview some fascinating individuals, including Rozie Goolam—originally from Mozambique—who was dancing her heart out! This vivacious senior confided, “I come here to Harbourfront Centre, and my life is just happy. Here I can dance, pray and meditate. I come all the way from Pickering just to enjoy myself.”

I was also fortunate to interview Melorize’s lead dance instructor, Darley, who literally mesmerized me as he enthusiastically led his ensemble and the community with so much positive energy. According to Darley, teaching dance at Harbourfront Centre is very special to him:

“When I see people dancing with us at Harbourfront Centre, it totally feels amazing. This is the goal for Melorize, and I want to thank Toronto for allowing us to come!”

Yes, Darley is indeed correct! Harbourfront Centre IS where the action and positive energy occurs, through music, dance and cultural events for all ages and ethnicities. It definitely reflects an inclusive community! As a first-time volunteer at Harbourfront Centre and a resident of Queens Quay, I really felt joyful and inspired to be a part of this day! I look forward to more events this year as a volunteer and as a resident!
Scott’s Adventures

By Scott Uminga

Oh Canada! A weekend festival celebrating our home. At this Canada Day weekend festival, I volunteered at the HarbourKIDS crafts table where the children created crafts with an iconic maple leaf motif. One memorable experience was when a mother and child who were visiting Canada could not find a working red marker for their maple leaf; instead they used another colour. The mother remarked that since they had arrived in Canada, they’d seen how multicultural the country was. This experience resonated with me, like a symbolic reminder of the different colours that create diversity. I felt proud that some of the things that we appreciate as Canadian values, like diversity and tolerance, are visible to guests from abroad.

Ritmo y Color, a festival that celebrates Latin cultures in general, focused on the streets of Mexico this year. Though skylines and landmarks are iconic, what kind of experience of getting to know a city could be more authentic than walking along its bustling streets? As a volunteer, I helped children and parents craft a traditional piñata using a paper bag and coloured tissue paper. Throughout the weekend, kids also got to collectively paint a mural. These interactive activities and the sight of painted hands and colourful bags of candy, not to mention the diverse yet uniquely Mexican music, made the event vibrant. They also brought the sense that Harbourfront Centre had really become a street in Mexico City.

When I volunteered at Habari Africa Festival, the sounds of griots (West African bards) and Congolese rumba serenaded the lawn, and people bathing in the sun got up to dance to the pounding of the drums. Even the children at the crafts tables joined in. It was as if the music brought everyone nearby under a magic spell. It’s always memorable to see people experience sounds from a different place and really get into the rhythm and tempo of the band. The sounds permeated throughout Harbourfront Centre, making it feel like a different continent.
Fun and Games

Come Out to the Games!
By Lidia Jarmasz

Every summer weekend, visitors to Harbourfront Centre are invited to play games. Sometimes, these are giant versions of classic games like checkers, chess, Jenga, and Connect 4. Game Assistant volunteers encourage visitors to play, occasionally explain the game to potential players, and sometimes even get to play a few rounds (I always get beaten at checkers!).

These familiar games attract children and adults alike, as well as participants from diverse backgrounds. However, visitors are equally eager to try out completely new games, like the imaginative physical games the Hand Eye Society brought to Beats, Breaks & Culture (August 5 to 7).

There were times where up to twenty participants of all ages ran around the North Orchard playing Turtle Wushu, a game in which participants tried to knock a turtle figurine off the hand of their opponents while protecting their own turtle.

In another extremely popular game, four competitors armed with foam swords formed a rectangle and took turns trying to bring down the player in the middle. At closing time on Sunday afternoon, four kids had ganged up on their dad in this way and succeeded in defeating him.

Though these games were new to all players, they have as much appeal as more traditional games. Two Italian children who spoke no English were initially shy to join in, but eventually turned into Turtle Wushu champions.

Volunteers were equally delighted to learn these new games. Kevin Chow was so comfortable with Turtle Wushu, he took the initiative of organizing games on his own. He summed up his experience in terms everybody would agree with: “It was fun.” Saina Saeedpour added, “It was a really unique experience.”
Fun and Games

Crafts at Shield to Shore
By Sean McCluskey

This festival celebrated the culture of the region along the St. Lawrence. Performers included Acadian musicians and dancers, Francophone performers, and an East Coast Comedy Review. First Nations representatives included singer-songwriter Logan Staats, and Halifax's newest Poet Laureate, Rebecca Thomas.

In the HarbourKIDS tent, reflecting the weekend’s theme, families decorated pet rocks (Shield) and made lobster hats (Shore). I asked Su: “Now that you know how to make a lobster hat, do you think you will ever make one again?” “Sure!”

How many of you remember Pet Rocks wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_Rock the novelty gift rage of the seventies?

Play Zone
By Lynn Allen

Play Zone is a collection of bright blue, oversized building blocks located on the North Exhibition Common. The activity is intended for children eight years old and younger, but it is a favourite with all ages. Volunteers often need to keep a closer eye on the parents than on the children!

The blocks provide an imagination playground for learning, problem-solving and social development. There are frequently as many as 16 to 20 children building structures all at the same time!

Most children make towers, forts or abstract shapes. On July 1, three unique structures were created. One young girl made a moveable truck on which she could push her little brother. A sister-and-brother team made models of themselves and took them for a walk. Two brothers made a cannon and fought off the pirates coming from the lake!

If you are looking for a slower paced shift, Play Zone provides an excellent opportunity to watch creativity at work.
A Day in the Life of a Floater

By Lidia Jarmasz

When volunteers sign up for a floater shift, they have no idea what they are in for—and that is what makes this position so much fun! Sometimes floaters are assigned to a single position for their entire shift, say, if an activity is busier than expected. Other times they move from position to position, covering for other volunteers during their breaks.

I was first dispatched to the HarbourKIDS arts and crafts tent, where I joined the team of hardworking volunteers helping children and their parents make personal piñatas and Mexican wrestler masks. It was hard to keep up with demand, but I was inspired by the commitment of the other Crafts Assistants.

I next went to relieve the volunteers at the Play Zone. During my time there, I made new friends and witnessed first-hand the extraordinary imagination of our younger visitors.

My next stop was at the Boulevard Tent, which had been transformed into a Mexico City-style café. The music was winding down and the cooking demo had not yet started, but I did arrive in time for the full-size piñata!

I ended my shift at the Big Games, where I helped kids play Connect 4 and tried (very hard!) to keep the play area tidy.

There was never a dull moment during my fast-paced and exciting floater shift. If you can’t decide between volunteer positions, try being a floater. You may get to try them all!
The Grand Tea Reception at TAIWANfest
By Lynn Allen

**Wei-Chen** explained that most of the TAIWANfest volunteers signed up on line at the TAIWANfest website or came down to the event and offered their services.

**Jeff** said that some of the volunteers came down with their families and joined their relatives at events.

Another volunteer explained that she was from Taiwan and that she wanted to meet other Taiwanese people. She misses her home.

The four TAIWANfest volunteers working at the **Grand Tea Reception** worked mostly with their TAIWANfest coordinators, except when they needed help with sinks and electrical outlets. Harbourfront Centre staff helped them right away.

“I learned that every type of tea comes from the same leaf. The different teas are created through the brewing method. The session at the North Orchard was like a wine tasting, as we were learning the distinctions among various teas.”

— **Amelia**

“I didn’t know about serving tea—and now I am a pro!”

— **Marilyn**

Can. You. Read. Festival
By Lynn Allen

The **Can. You. Read. Festival** was hosted by **Culchahworks Arts Collective**. This is a not-for-profit arts organization that celebrates and disseminates compelling stories. It also aims to entertain, educate and inspire a broad range of audiences. Social justice activism runs as a thread through all Culchahworks projects. At the Can. You. Read. Festival, Culchahworks celebrated literacy while asking the public to donate non-perishable canned proteins for the **Canadian Red Cross Food Bank**.

The four Harbourfront Centre volunteers helping at this festival had the following impressions:

“It was really interesting to connect literacy with hunger and food banks. It makes a lot of sense!”

— **Lynn**

“At the festival they presented a wide variety of literacy communities that offered educational opportunities. The YMCA, for example, offers immigrants to Canada French and English language lessons. The Centre for Community Learning and Development delivers programmes in literacy, leadership and civic integration.”

— **Einora**

“Not that I don’t love working with the Harbourfront Centre volunteers—I DO!—but it was so stimulating to work with other volunteers doing interesting work. Today we worked with the Red Cross Food Bank volunteers and Culchahworks Arts Collective, celebrating Caribbean-African stories.”

— **Bobsie**
As the Summer Comes to a Close

Hot & Spicy: Southern Barbeque Competition

*By Lidia Jarmasz*

Torontonians love barbecue and, judging by the turnout at the *Southern Barbeque Competition* during the *Hot & Spicy Food Festival* (August 19 to 21), Harbourfront Centre visitors are no exception. Enthusiastic patrons showed up early to buy tickets to sample pork or beef dishes grilled by three local chefs and one chef from Mexico. After eating, people voted for their favourite dish. It took a large team of volunteers to help run this event smoothly. With guidance from Team Leader *Pauline Beverley*, volunteers controlled the hungry (but remarkably patient and cooperative) crowd, sold hundreds of tickets, handed out as many of plates, directed traffic (it got a bit packed in the North Orchard at times), and, most importantly (and excitingly!), collected ballots and tallied votes. It was very satisfying to see all these different elements come together at the end of the shift, when local caterers *Pork Ninjas* were declared the winners.

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Hot & Spicy: ChiliKids Junior Chef Competition

During Hot & Spicy aspiring young master chefs – ages 6 to 12 – who wanted to explore the wonderful world of food took part in a special cooking competition. Working with Chef Mick, our young chefs and foodies learnt the FUN-damentals of cooking vegetarian chili and worked interactively in teams to present this mouthwatering dish. They learnt the process of making this tasty, nutritious meal from beginning to end.
As the Summer Comes to a Close

Ashkenaz Festival
By Kevin Catalig

Though I had arrived at Harbourfront Centre closer to the end of the day, I could see that the spirit of the Ashkenaz festival was still very much alive. The first thing I noticed all around the site were white fabric banners with beautifully designed, almost mystical symbols representing things like ‘dream’.

The second thing I felt was a welcoming sense of connectedness. I guess this was because of the folks who had joined hands and formed a circle by the Stage in the Round to participate in a Yiddish dance. To top it off, the weather was perfect, and in these colder months, it’s something I sorely miss.

I wish I could have stayed longer, especially since I was impressed with the night time atmosphere of previous Ashkenaz festivals. But instead of rambling on about what I missed, here are some impressions from other volunteers:

Anne-Gaelle remarked that the festival was well organized and had a lot of visitors. Betty, who was volunteering outside the Brigantine Room at the time, made the same observation based on the long lines for concerts and events inside.

Janice had the impression that the festival really reflects the culture and life of various Jewish peoples, and looked forward to some amazing performances after her shift.

Tina, who volunteered at this festival for the first time, enjoyed latkes and concerts, and noted that Leor Zimmerman’s beef briskets were very tender.
Harbourfront Centre Intercept Survey

By Lynn Allen

Did you notice a group of people wandering around the site with iPads, talking to visitors this summer? These were students from George Brown College who were conducting another survey for Harbourfront Centre.

Donors and arts grants provide 70% of Harbourfront Centre’s funding, while government grants account for the remaining 30%. Harbourfront Centre reports to its donors what visitors’ experiences are like, and how visitors rate their satisfaction with their visit.

Over 40 survey volunteers worked more than 500 hours collecting over 3,200 surveys from July 1 through to the Ashkenaz Festival (September 3-5). Many of the volunteers are studying market research and are students of George Brown College professor, Michael Meissner.

Information is collected using a survey on iPads and the questions included “Why did you visit Harbourfront Centre today?” Next, the students will analyze the survey according to several demographics and prepare an analytic report.

Karen Sinotte, the Project Leader teaches at George Brown and is also the Coordinator of the Volunteer Recruitment and Training Committee. The survey application was developed by Youli Kanev and the analytical team includes Karin Gonzales, Melvin Das Clements, Spencer Kyonka, Mark Hui and Carrie Zhang. Valya Michael, the Project Manager and Team Leads Chitsimran Chadha, Valeria Pogoreliova and Karin Gonzales were on site to manage the volunteers.

The analytical team is now working on the final report of the research findings due at the end of November.

We look forward to learning the results of their data collection.

Thank you for all your efforts!