

Top 10 standout (somewhat random) arts events of 2014

by [Janet Smith](#) on Jan 2, 2015 at 12:24 pm



Here are some—but not all—of the big and small works and events that stood out on the past year's arts scene. Feel free to add some more.

GIANTS BY OSGEMEOS Granville Island's towering cement silos came to hip new life in the hands of the famed Brazilian street-art duo in a project as ambitious for its scale (360 degrees, 75 feet tall, and 7,500 square metres of painted surface) as for its three-dimensional "canvas". The Vancouver Biennale–sponsored project took 1,400 spray cans of paint—much of it in a sunny Sao Paulo hue that instantly brightened up our grey harbour: "Yellow is a very magic colour, a very strong colour. We believe it can make a lot of change in a good way," an impassioned Gustavo Pandolfo told the Straight at the site. We couldn't agree more.

VANCOUVER OPERA'S STICKBOY You might have noticed that new operas don't get

created everyday, thanks to the enormous risk and expense involved. So Vancouver Opera was taking a big chance commissioning *Stickboy*, based on a story by spoken-word poet Shane Koyczan on the loaded subject of bullying. But thanks to cool, graffiti-like projected animation by Giant Ant, Koyczan's soul-baring confessions, accessible but complex music, and a solid cast, the show hit a chord with a new generation and standing-o audiences—and is now set to travel to the schools and communities where it needs to be seen.

JOCELYN MORLOCK NAMED COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE AT THE VSO The city's thriving new-music scene merges with the grand dame of classical music in a cool two-year appointment that kicked off officially in September. (The post came right after Morlock finished a term as inaugural composer-in-residence for Vancouver's Music on Main.) In her new role, Morlock programs the symphony's January New Music Festival and its annex series, but also works on compositions to be premiered by the orchestra.



Presentation House Gallery's new location, to be called the Polygon Gallery.
LUMA RENDERINGS

PRESENTATION HOUSE GALLERY'S NEW SITE Primo digs for a deserving gallery: the space-crunched North Shore facility known for its stunning photo exhibitions got the go-ahead this year for a sleek, modern new building on a stunning slice of Lonsdale waterfront. The plan is to move from its current Chesterfield and 3rd Avenue location in a 1902 former schoolhouse into a 19,000-square-foot new facility designed by Patkau Architects as early as spring 2017. "It's all glass," architect John Patkau told the *Straight* at an event in November. "You can look through it. You can look into it. You'll see the lobby, the gallery shop, some of the exhibits. And you could see through the ground floor to the water and across to Lonsdale Quay. So the transparency will make the building very open, welcoming, and accessible, which is a hard thing for an art gallery because an art gallery is basically about closed rooms and walls."

THE NEW CULTURAL HUB AT THE CBC BUILDING In an unprecedented act of cultural alliance, the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Touchstone Theatre, the DOXA Documentary Film Festival, and Music on Main moved into an 8,500-square-foot community amenity space in the CBC building on Hamilton Street late last year. The facility provides much-needed new office, rehearsal, and meeting rooms in the heart of the downtown for four much-respected arts organizations that were once squeezed, helter-skelter, into small spaces around town. There's power in numbers. As PuSh's executive director Norman Armour said of the announcement, "To put a performing arts organization in the centre of the city that is both local, national, and international in its mandate, that is dance and theatre and music and multi-disciplinary, is to make a statement about the arts being at the centre of the city's future,

and the centre of our civic economy and our civic life.”



Kyle Rideout in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Bard on the Beach.
David Blue

BARD ON THE BEACH'S RECORD ATTENDANCE It was a nice birthday present: for its 25th anniversary, the Shakespeare festival in Vanier Park broke audience records, with almost 101,000 tickets sold for the Festival's silver-anniversary lineup of plays, concerts, and special events—up significantly from the previous record of 91,000 in 2009. Amid the offerings were productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The next year promises even more growth for the fest, with Bard on the Beach and the Arts Club slated to move into a new “theatrical hub” at 162 West 1st Avenue, where there will also be a performance space.

VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD STRINGS AND BAND PROGRAM SAVED Amid a year of picket-line strife at local schools, there was at least one piece of good news: the board's music-performance programs would be saved from the budgetary axe. Advocates included the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra maestro Bramwell Tovey, who joined the fight for the program with these words: “The social benefits of music are extraordinary. If a student holds a musical instrument then he or she can't hold a knife, or a joint, or a needle or a crack pipe—or a gun. If a student is in a choir or a band or an orchestra, they are communicating through the universal art of music at the heart of our community. Please support the children who play music as one Grade 8 student said this week, because its something they can do for their entire life.” He and countless others were heard. And the bands play on.

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY'S ARCHITECT SELECTION In 2014, we learned the much-debated new VAG site will be designed by Herzog & de Meuron—the wildly creative Swiss architecture firm behind the Tate Modern in London and the “Bird's Nest” Olympic stadium in Beijing. It's an exciting international choice, and not just because a firm at the top of the museum-design field is going to create the destination-gallery the VAG wants; the team also wants to revitalize the area at West Georgia and Cambie Streets. “We have to do something that is highly attractive public space,” senior partner Christine Binswanger told a sold-out event at the Vogue Theatre earlier this year. “We must make a place that is an interesting place for anybody in the city. The Tate, of course, has been a successful example of this, as much outside as inside.”

LOVE YOUR BEANS Sweet: three gigantic jelly beans in yellow, blue, and red were the main attraction on the South False Creek seawall this summer. And who couldn't resist touching or climbing around the supersized candy? The Vancouver Biennale public artwork was designed by Canadian sculptor and filmmaker Cosimo Cavallaro. It's like the shiny, fun antithesis of Ai Weiwei's spiky new E Grass--which is also a standout work of public art (though a much more provocative, politically loaded one), organized by the biennale as well.

THE RETURN OF KEYS TO THE STREETS Across town, from a tiny East Side park to the False Creek seawall, brightly painted pianos were being played by passersby for the second year in a row. The initiative led by CityStudio expanded from four to 10 pianos this year, bringing music to public spaces throughout the summer.

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