

# BEST OF THE FESTS

VANCOUVER'S ENTERTAINMENT SCENE IS A PARTY ALL YEAR LONG

BY SHERI RADFORD



Allan Morgan in Bard on the Beach



Pride Parade



Martin Sexton, Vancouver Folk Music Festival



HSBC Celebration of Light

This year's sweet-sounding line-up at the **Vancouver Folk Music Festival** (Jul. 18 to 20; 604-602-9798; [www.thefestival.bc.ca](http://www.thefestival.bc.ca)) includes Eneida Marta, John Boutté, Kiran Ahluwalia and Ozomatli, performing in Jericho Beach Park.

At **Festival Vancouver** (Aug. 3 to 17; 604-688-1152; [www.festivalvancouver.ca](http://www.festivalvancouver.ca)), classical, world and jazz musicians perform on nine local stages. This year spotlights "Music of the Americas."

Music is just one attraction at the **Pacific National Exhibition** (Aug. 16 to Sep. 1; 604-253-2311; [www.pne.ca](http://www.pne.ca)). For many Vancouverites, summer isn't complete without a trip to the PNE to see farm animals, watch motocross, enter the prize-home lottery, marvel at the Superdogs and ride the old wooden rollercoaster—then regret having eaten so many of Those Little Donuts.

Dogs, donuts, rollercoasters—each has likely been the subject of a show at the **Vancouver Fringe Festival** (Sep. 3 to 14; [www.vancouverfringe.com](http://www.vancouverfringe.com)). This alternative-theatre festival tackles subjects outside the ordinary, in venues ranging from mainstream to bring-your-own. One popular show took place in a car and could accommodate only two audience members at a time.

## Autumn 2008

In September, the days get shorter and Vancouver's rainy season begins, making it the perfect time to indulge in a movie at the **Vancouver International Film Festival** (Sep. 25 to Oct. 10; 604-683-3456; [www.viff.org](http://www.viff.org)). Local cinephiles have been known to plan their annual vacations for the 16 days of the festival, watching five or six movies per day. The chief hazard? Numb bum. The only known cure is getting up for more popcorn.

Rainy days are ideal for curling up with good books. Meet their authors at the **Vancouver International Writers and Readers Festival** (Oct. 21 to 26; 604-681-6330; [www.writersfest.bc.ca](http://www.writersfest.bc.ca)) on Granville Island. Over the years guests have included Margaret Atwood, Frank McCourt, J.K. Rowling and Salman Rushdie.

If you're determined to brave the weather, the **Parade of Lost Souls** (Oct. 25; [www.publicdreams.org](http://www.publicdreams.org)) on Commercial Drive never lets a little rain dampen spirits. Shrines, fire performances and a torchlit procession honour the dead and wake the living.

## Summer 2008

What's the first sign of summer in Vancouver? The red-and-white tents that spring up in Vanier Park, housing the **Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival** (to Sep. 27; 604-739-0559; [www.bardonthebeach.org](http://www.bardonthebeach.org)). This year, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus* are staged against the stunning backdrop of an English Bay sunset.

Red and white are also apparent at **Canada Day at Canada Place** (Jul. 1; [www.canadaplace.ca/canadaday](http://www.canadaplace.ca/canadaday)), when proud Canucks turn out in full force for a national-anthem singing competition, citizenship ceremony and concerts. The patriotic day ends with a fireworks show.

More pyrotechnics illuminate the city during the **HSBC Celebration of Light** (Jul. 23, 26, 30 and Aug. 2; 604-642-6835; [www.celebration-of-light.com](http://www.celebration-of-light.com)). This year, Canada, China and the USA compete for bragging rights by lighting up the skies over English Bay.

Brightening the city in an entirely different manner, the **Pride Parade** (Aug. 3; 604-687-0955; [www.vancouverpride.ca](http://www.vancouverpride.ca)) celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2008. Members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, with friends and supporters, wend their way around downtown. Expect bare breasts, pink boas, seven-foot-tall drag queens and more than one rendition of "I Will Survive."

PHOTOS: ALLAN MORGAN BY DAVID COOPER; FIREWORKS BY COLIN JEWELL; ALL COURTESY EVENT ORGANIZERS AND TOURISM VANCOUVER



# Winter 2008-2009

Though snow is rare in Vancouver, winter kicks off with a flurry of yuletide activities ranging from the **Rogers Santa Claus Parade**, which winds through downtown in late November, to month-long events such as **Christmas at Canada Place** and **The Peak of Christmas at Grouse Mountain**.

Light displays make spirits bright—and raise money for charities—all over the city: **Festival of Lights** (VanDusen Botanical Garden), Lights of Hope (St. Paul's Hospital), Carol Ships Parade of Lights (False Creek and English Bay) and Bright Nights in Stanley Park.



Festival of Lights



Chinese New Year



CelticFest



Alcan Dragon Boat Festival

Events in six Vancouver neighbourhoods, including the **Winter Solstice Lantern Procession** (Dec. 21; [www.secretlantern.org](http://www.secretlantern.org)), mark the longest night of the year and the return of the sun. It's sometimes sunny for the annual **Polar Bear Swim** (Jan. 1), but that hardly matters when the water averages 7 °C (45 °F). Brave souls in swimsuits, clown costumes or Santa suits, jump into English Bay at 2:30 pm after sleeping off New Year's Eve hangovers. Most exit the ocean by 2:31. Some immediately begin to cultivate a new hangover.

Elaborate costumes involving dragons are common during **Chinese New Year** (Jan. 26; [www.vancouverchinatown.ca](http://www.vancouverchinatown.ca)). Festivities in Chinatown include fortune telling, music, tai chi, lucky red packets and a parade. In 2009, expect to find images of the ox everywhere, too.

## Spring 2009

In spring a young man's fancy turns to... thoughts of wine. At least, that's the case at the **Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival** (late Feb.; 604-872-6622; [www.playhousewinefest.com](http://www.playhousewinefest.com)). Oenophiles swirl, sip and spit to their heart's content at tastings, dinners and seminars.

Tastings of scotch and beer take place at **CelticFest** (Mar. 12 to 15; [www.celticfestvancouver.com](http://www.celticfestvancouver.com)), but more swallowing than spitting occurs. Family-friendly events include concerts, a street market and a parade, complete with jaunty leprechauns handing out gold coins.

No wee Irish elves, but there are plenty of other mischief makers—musicians, authors, clowns, puppeteers and stilt-walkers—at the **Vancouver International Children's Festival** (mid-May; [www.childrensfestival.ca](http://www.childrensfestival.ca)), under red-and-white canvas for a week in Vanier Park.

North America's largest dragon-boat celebration invades the waters of **False Creek at the Alcan Dragon Boat Festival** (mid-Jun.; [www.adbf.com](http://www.adbf.com)). Shore-side celebrations include kids' activities, food from around the world and live music.

Smooth tunes are the norm at the **TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival** (Jun. 26 to Jul. 5; [www.coastaljazz.ca](http://www.coastaljazz.ca)). With more than 1,800 musicians in 400 shows, it's sure to please any fan of jazz, blues, gospel, funk, fusion, electronica or world music. ☐



Polar Bear Swim



Jazz Festival