



Festival Accès Asie presents Panj

Description

A touching solo performance that combines video, live music and storytelling

By Jacqueline van de Geer

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This year, **Festival Accès Asie** celebrates its **27th anniversary**, marking a milestone as the oldest



is the Punjabi word for five and the performance is built around five chapters of the history of the family of Himmat Singh Shinhat. It follows the journey of Himmat's Punjabi Sikh family from the aftermath of the

decolonization of the British Empire to the emergence of Himmat's identity.

Being the first-born grandchild on his mother's side, Himmat's journey across the so-called Commonwealth starts in Agra in post-Partition India. While he plays his electric guitar, we see a video with old footage of the migration of thousands searching for safety and new beginnings.

His father and mother meet, marry and decide to make the big move to Wolverhampton, England. We see old family pictures with their children, and we follow the story of this fierce immigrant family, starting out with only ten dollars in their pocket.

Being the only 'people of colour' in a small town, his father, an engineer not acknowledged for this qualification, spends years working in a small garage. His mother, a teacher, decides to put her ambition aside and start an Indian shop.

Festival Accès Asie celebrates its 27th anniversary, marking a milestone as the oldest uninterrupted Asian Heritage Month Festival in Canada. It runs until May 29 and has an interesting lineup this edition...

Then the family takes the big jump to Montreal, Canada, and there in his adolescence Himmat realizes he is 'different,' a fact that causes a silence between him and his father.

He finds the love of his life, Rene, and life goes on.



Then his father passes. Himmat struggles to accept the sudden and unexpected death of his father and turns to his mother for support. She reveals the confidences she has carried all her life about her husband and the history of her family. A deeper mutual understanding starts to emerge.

As Himmat recalls his 40th birthday and the *peti*, a traditional Indian wooden chest that his father had made for him, he finds the answers to his questions.



'I was very touched by this performance... Himmat is a wonderful performer, and I look forward to following his work.'

I was very touched by this performance, adoring the combination of video, live music and storytelling, the soft humour, the emotional story and the intimate revelations. Himmat is a wonderful performer, and I look forward to following his work.

Panj was presented by Festival Accès Asie, Groupe Herencias, at the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) on May 19 and 20.

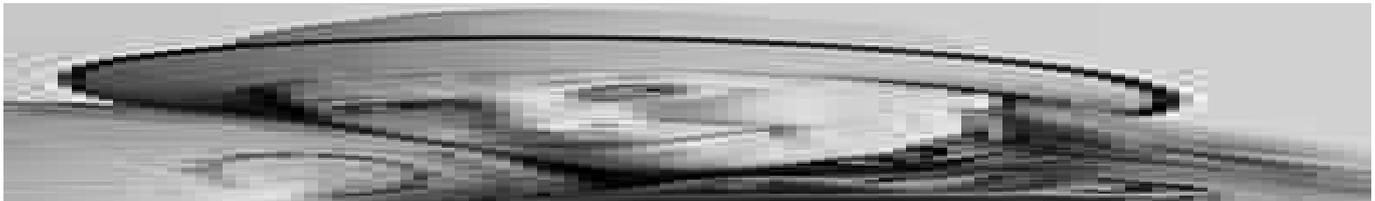
The Festival has more treasures to share, so if you want to explore their programme for their last week, check out their website: accesasie.com/en

Images: Laurence Ly

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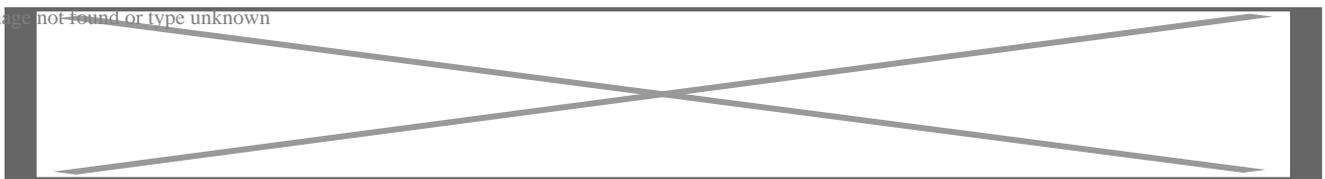
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Originally from the Netherlands, **Jacqueline van de Geer** crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 2005 to live and work in Montréal. She has a bachelor's degree in visual arts and performance arts.

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