

Local musicians launch CDs

Michael Hughes and the Sultans of String release latest work

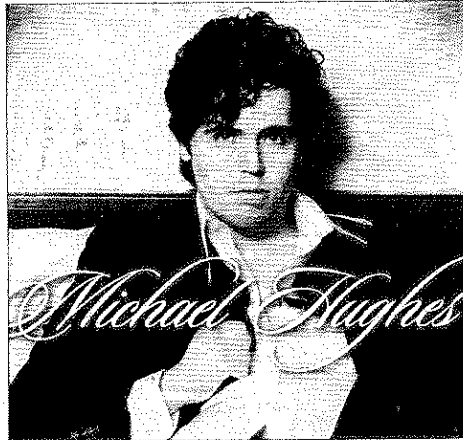
by Bill MacLean

Because of time constraints, and the various other duties that I perform here at the paper, I don't often get out to see or hear the performers I write about in the Entertainment column. Last week though, in an effort to tear myself out of the cozy cocoon I wrap myself in at night, I caught two CD releases by two very different Beach performers.

Tuesday, May 26 saw the release of Michael Hughes' debut, self-titled CD release at the Mod Club. Michael grew up in

companies that he was a bankable star. And it seems to have paid off handsomely. Not only is the CD getting airplay across the country, but Hughes was cast in the role of Gilbert Blythe in the musical *Anne & Gilbert* this summer at the Harbourfront Jubilee Theatre in PEI.

You can buy Michael Hughes' CD at HMV, through Amazon, or by visiting his website at www.mickehughes.com.

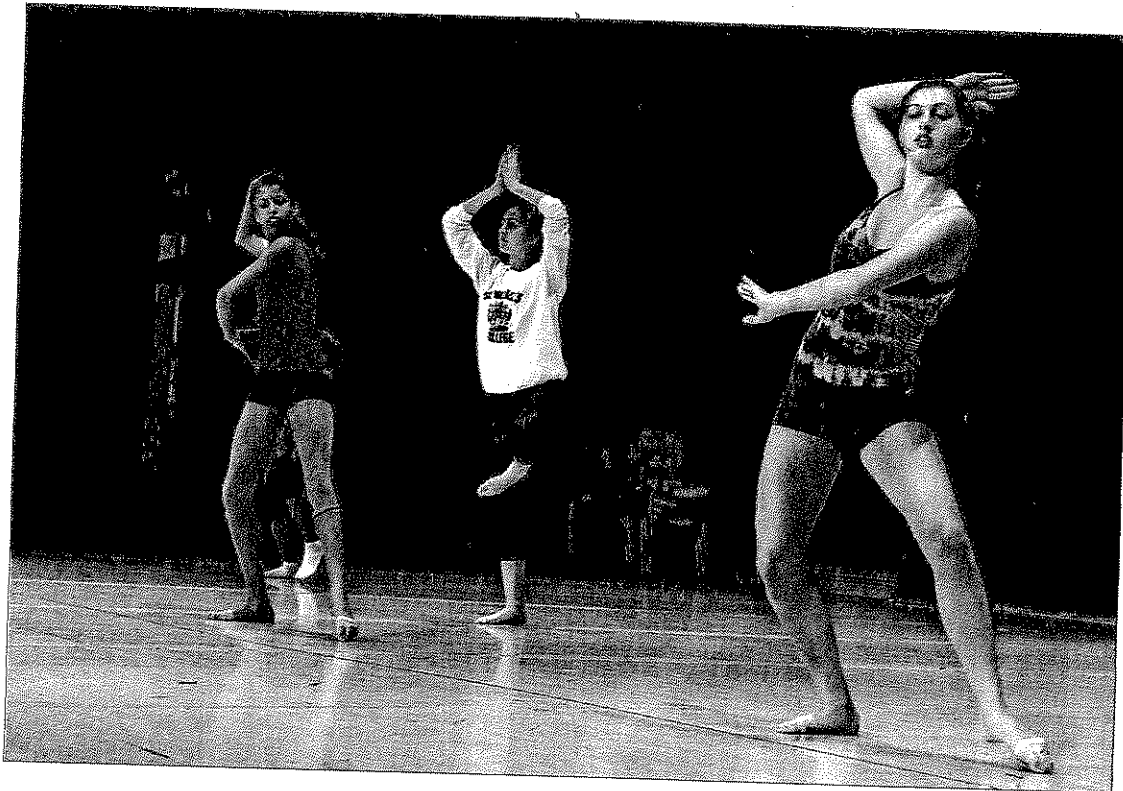


the Beach and began singing at age three and, because of his obvious talent, got involved almost immediately in musical theatre. He studied music at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts, and then at Sheridan College where he trained in the prestigious Music Theatre Performance Program. Since then he has gone on to various musical theatre productions, and ended up singing with Disney in Japan for two years. Through 2007 and 2008 he worked with producer Alan Poaps and Shawn Dandlin to record his debut CD, a collection of pop, jazz and R&B standards which showcase his exceptional vocal styling.

This evening, after a short opening act, Michael's band took the stage. It consisted of Poaps at the keys, along with a cast of others including bass, drums, and guitar, plus a horn/woodwind section, and three backup singers - a big band for a singer to front, but Hughes looked as comfortable as if he was singing around the piano with his family at home.

Imagine a cross between Michael Buble and Rufus Wainwright. Michael is slim, and stylish, with a voice that has many of the same qualities of both singers. The crowd was really into this performance as Hughes tore into the tunes off his CD: Meaning, 14th Street (a Wainwright tune), Kissing a Fool (George Michael). In between songs he thanked the crowd - a lot of family and friends naturally - for coming, even personally thanking his grandmother who is over 100 years old! Some of the highlights for me were his version of the Elvis standard, Don't Be Cruel, and the encore number, Where Did I Go Wrong, which features Hughes' amazing vocal range.

Michael explained to me that this recording was as much a means of professional promotion as anything. His hope in making the record was to prove to musical theatre



Dance students practise at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts in North York. It's the first time the school has offered summer classes. ANDREW WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

Summer students can dance, sing — even sew

Teens earn credits at elite North York school without having to survive an audition

LOUISE BROWN
EDUCATION REPORTER

They watch *So You Think You Can Dance* as homework.

They create dance routines in the park and plan group choreography for a mystery piece of music.

Not a bad way to earn a high school credit.

The panting, sweating teens working the stage one July afternoon are part of the first crop of students to study in this cutting-edge North York arts school without having to suffer the brutal audition.

In the first summer school ever offered at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts, everyone is welcome and Camila Gamboa is still pinching herself.

"No one believes me that I'm com-

SUMMER SCHOOL 101 SKIPPING THE AUDITION

SECOND OF FIVE PARTS

ing to summer school for dance class and getting the last credit I need to finish high school," said the 17-year-old student at Don Bosco Catholic Secondary School.

"People usually think math is what you do at summer school, but this caught my attention and I said, whoa — yeah!"

From mirrored dance studios to band classrooms and musical computer labs, 310 students from Greater Toronto are earning credits this summer in everything from dance and drama to singing and film, band, photography and composing music, says Carter guidance teacher Blair Duckworth.

He found it heartbreaking to watch hundreds of applicants get turned away every year from the

Catholic board's popular school for the arts on Greenfield Ave., near Yonge St. and Sheppard Ave.

"These programs help kids reach inside themselves and access something creative they often don't get the opportunity to do.

"But this is school, not camp; this is public education," noted Duckworth, weaving his way through the halls among students playing guitar, singing in harmony, stretching their muscles and rehearsing for drama class.

Many say they jumped at the chance to take arts courses, which are being offered at fewer schools under the new four-year high school curriculum. Duckworth said he will have room for nearly twice as many students next summer.

At Cardinal Carter, 670 students audition every year for 150 openings from Grade 7 through 12.

"They're just devastated. They come quaking in their boots but they may have just had a bad day... so we wanted this to be a non-audi-

SUMMER SCHOOL IS SUDDENLY HOT

Yesterday: Why the jump in attendance?

Today: Arts school without an audition

Tomorrow: Summer co-op pays off

Thursday: Why history is hip

Friday: Online, on their own time

tion experience."

The Grade 11 film class this month has written scripts from which three were chosen to be turned into 10-minute movies.

"They're going to be great — especially the one I'm in," joked Sam Naccarato, a Grade 11 student at William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate, who thought a film course for credit sounded "intriguing."

When Grade 11 student Michael Colla couldn't find a summer job in a music store by the end of May, he decided the summer film course "was a good opportunity to get a credit in something they don't offer at my school, St. Michael's Choir School."

Celeana Cyrus-Gibbons is earning a Grade 11 art credit with a course in fashion design and creative expression. She had never sewed before, but is working on a bag.

"It's hard — but I'm getting there."