

Herald Arts & Life



Olympian Clara Hughes' documentary on mental health airs on CTV E3

5 SHOWS TO WATCH TONIGHT

STALKER

My Hero
Global, 8 p.m.

ARROW

Midnight City
CTV, 9 p.m.

THE BOOK OF NEGROES

New episode
CBC, 9 p.m.

SUITS

Premiere
Bravo, 11 p.m.

GROUND FLOOR

Season 2 premiere
Comedy, 11:30 p.m.

BOOK OF NEGROES



Lyriq Bent and Aunjanue Ellis star as star-crossed lovers Chekura and Aminata in the epic TV miniseries *The Book of Negroes* airing Wednesdays at 9 p.m. on CBC-TV. Bent, Ellis, author Lawrence Hill, who wrote the 2007 bestseller on which the miniseries is based, producer Damon D'Oliviera and director Clement Virgo are all slated to attend an invitation-only red carpet event at the Spatz Theatre at Citadel High School in Halifax on Wednesday beginning at 6 p.m. **JOE ALBLAS**

Actor hails 'incredible love story'

Arts editor **Andrea Nemetz** spoke with Canadian actor Lyriq Bent in Shelburne in May on the set of the CBC miniseries

The *Book of Negroes* tells the heart-wrenching tale of Aminata Diallo, captured as a child in her African homeland, sold into slavery in South Carolina and her long, hard-fought journey to freedom.

But for Lyriq Bent, it is a love story.

"When you read the title, *The Book of Negroes*, you think it's something to do with slavery, a story about the struggles and hardships of black people during slavery," says Bent, who stars as Chekura, husband of Aminata (Aunjanue Ellis), in the epic six-part CBC miniseries, airing Wednesdays through Feb. 11.

"It is, but is that the nucleus? After reading it, I thought what an incredible love story. Two people have such an incredible love for each other they survive slavery simply because of that love."

Relaxing by the water on a rare sunny day on the Shelburne set last May, Bent mused that Chekura would have been a simpler man if circumstances didn't separate the lovers time and time again.

"You follow their story from adolescence to adulthood and what they've gone through with the backdrop of slavery . . . the sacrifice that was made for love, that was their freedom."

Lyriq Bent
Star, *Book of Negroes*

"He's very charismatic. He would have been a fun-loving kind of guy where everything was entertaining. But his travels opened his eyes to so many cultures. He became worldly."

"You saw the playful nature of Aminata come out only when he was around. Any other time, she was too busy fending off, fighting off, trying to hide who she really was. It could have been the death of her to expose her true self."

"You follow their story from adolescence to adulthood and what they've gone through with the backdrop of slavery . . . the sacrifice that was made for love, that was their freedom."

The love story is why Lawrence Hill's 2007 novel was a bestseller, said Bent, who has read it four times.

"And that's why the movie will be such a great movie. We captured that essence, we captured those emotions."

The miniseries, which will also air on BET in the United States, spent 44 days shooting in South

CONTINUED ON E2

JUNO AWARDS

N.S. nominees include Grant, Andersen, Amber

STEPHEN COOKE
ARTS REPORTER

scooke@herald.ca
@CH_scooke

Several Nova Scotia musicians were celebrating in the middle of a winter storm on Tuesday after learning they were in the running for the Juno Awards.

Nominations for the Canadian music prize were announced in Toronto, and Lake Echo-based singer-songwriter Jenn Grant got the news of her two nominations the day after returning from a tour of Australia. Her latest release, *Compostela*, chalks up nods for



Jenn Grant



Ryan Hemsworth



Matt Andersen

songwriter and adult alternative album of the year.

"It's the best news possible," said Grant, fresh from the non-Australian activity of shovelling her driveway. "I've been working really hard this past year, we worked really hard on the record and it's the most thoughtful, patient kind of work I've ever done on a record."

"It feels really good, and being in the same category as Leonard Cohen is pretty cool."

The roots/traditional solo category leaned heavily toward the East Coast, with four out of the

CONTINUED ON E2

HOROSCOPES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Jan. 28, 2015

It's necessary to remain realistic and grounded in the next 6-8 weeks, as you may be prone to flights of fancy. Avoid self-deception and wishful thinking between now and April. Like a box of chocolates, you can't tell what's going on inside from the outside. In May, your business acumen is in top form so that's a great time to review your financial situation and make astute job and business decisions. You must work twice as hard as anyone else to get a nod of approval in June, so don't start anything of importance or vie for favours. By September, your life will make a definite change for the better. Whatever you truly need could be offered on a silver platter and you can put your most heartfelt desires into motion.

Tribune

ARIES

March 21-April 19

Take only calculated risks. Knowing the difference between facts and fiction can prevent you from wasting your pennies on a worthless trinket. Don't exaggerate your abilities and talents.

TAURUS

April 20-May 20

Obscure observations can cause mix-ups. A lack of honesty might be employed to maintain the peace. Achieve better results by being straightforward about a problematic situation.

GEMINI

May 21-June 20

Focus on fostering fine family values. Put long-term goals and career aspirations on the back burner. Keep up the good work, but don't start new ventures, take risks, or sign contracts.

CANCER

June 21-July 22

Imagination could work overtime, but not to your advantage. Don't make false assumptions that could cause costly misunderstandings. Check facts from more than one source to avoid embarrassment.

LEO

July 23-Aug. 22

Avoid the shams and charlatans. In business, or even at home, there's a tendency to see only what you want to see. Hold off on making decisions or starting new projects or relationships.

VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

Paint by numbers and get the numbers all lined up. Originality might not be your most prominent skill under these stars, but you can be a genius about petty economies.

LIBRA

Sept. 23-Oct. 22

The tail might wag the dog. A good friend might not be shy about showing firm support, even when you've shown poor judgment. Appreciate and cultivate unconditional friendships.

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Keep a steady hand on the tiller. Misunderstandings and misleading information might set off a ripple of waves that rock your boat. It's best not to start anything of consequence today.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Sit on the sidelines, as this isn't the day to push your agenda or let your fantasies bleed over and affect business decisions. A loved one will surely kiss it and make it better.

CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

If wishes were horses, then beggars would ride. It's difficult to be clear about your financial status. Wishful thinking won't pay the bills, so steer clear of doubtful investments or purchases.

AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Every passing attraction is not an opportunity. A casual new relationship that fascinates you today might be less appetizing by the weekend. Ignore the draw of something that seems to too good to be true.

PISCES

Feb. 19-March 20

Playfulness and flirtations could get out of hand. Your appealing looks or attractive personality may result in envious glances or a twang of jealousy from disapproving people.

That's a lot of fabric



Models wear creations for Stephane Rolland's Haute Couture Spring-Summer fashion collection presented in Paris on Tuesday. **FRANCOIS MORI ■ AP**

WRITING PRIZE

Nods include book by Nova Scotia's Steele

TORONTO (CP) — Books about “slow politics,” the 1995 Quebec referendum, climate change, the voices of aboriginals, and Nova Scotia's recent one-term NDP government have been nominated for the \$25,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing.

The winner of the award, administered by the Writers' Trust of Canada, will be announced at a gala in Ottawa on March 11.

The five finalists, chosen by prize jurors Denise Chong, Terry Glavin and Jane Taber, are:

Joseph Heath for *Enlightenment 2.0: Restoring Sanity to Our Politics, Our Economy, and Our Lives* (HarperCollins Publishers)

Chantal Hebert with Jean Lapierre for *The Morning After: The 1995 Quebec Referendum and the Day that Almost Was* (Knopf Canada)

Naomi Klein for *This Changes*

Everything: *Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Knopf Canada)

John Ralston Saul for *The Comeback: How Aboriginals Are Reclaiming Power and Influence* (Viking Canada)

Graham Steele for *What I Learned About Politics: Inside the Rise — and Collapse — of Nova Scotia's NDP Government* (Nimbus Publishing)

Each author receives \$2,500 for making the final list of contenders.

In its 15th year, the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing is awarded each year to a literary non-fiction book on politics.

TELEVISION

Holmes to perform in Ray Donovan

NEW YORK (AP) — Actress Katie Holmes is joining the Showtime drama *Ray Donovan* for its upcoming third season.

The former Dawson's Creek star will play businesswoman Paige, a daughter of billionaire producer Andrew Finney, who is portrayed by Ian McShane. Finney enlists the services of the show's title character, a Hollywood fixer played by Liev Schreiber.

Ray Donovan started production this week for its third season, which is expected to begin sometime this summer.

Holmes recently played Jackie Kennedy in the television miniseries *The Kennedys*, and has been in several films.

FROM PAGE E1: LYRIQ BENT

Africa before a 19-day Nova Scotia shoot in Louisbourg, Shelburne, Lunenburg, Cole Harbour, Oakfield Park and a Dartmouth studio, with two final days of interiors in Hamilton, Ont.

Being in South Africa, “shooting this film, meeting Mandela's family, going to Robben Island, seeing the conditions he lived in, seeing how he came out of all of that and said to the world ‘all is forgiven but not forgotten and we need to move forward’ ” helped Bent understand Chekura and the world of *The Book of Negroes*.

“South Africa was phenomenal. It was my first time in Africa, but I felt like I'd been there before. I was born in Jamaica; being Jamaican, I could relate to Africa really easily, the environment,

landscape looks like Jamaica and vice versa,” said the actor, who was raised in Toronto and now lives in Los Angeles.

Bent starred in the *Saw* movies as Daniel Rigg, and as Frank Best on *Global's* *Rookie Blue*, has a recurring role in the new 12 Monkeys series and will be seen this year in the thriller *Pay the Ghost*, starring Nicolas Cage.

He had met Lou Gossett Jr. several times at charity events, but when he shared his first scene with the Oscar winner, who plays Daddy Moses, he was starstruck.

“He assured me I was doing a great job and I was the real deal like the star on my face,” Bent said, gesturing to a small star tattoo on his cheek that is Chekura's tribal mark.

“It was so great to hear coming from such an icon, someone who has been in the business over 50 years. I was going out of my mind

because I couldn't believe I was actually working with such a great man, and he's such a lovely man, so sweet, so giving.”

Bent was happy the producers chose to film in Nova Scotia.

“You can't get more method than that. Shelburne in the 1700s was where the Black Loyalists came. The Black Loyalists were four miles from us in Birchtown, which is also in the script. You feel the spirit of history and the present that is keeping the spirit alive.”

Filming on location gives the audience a sense of the journey these characters went through, he said.

“Being in South Africa, where the land was lush and green and beautiful and so warming, and moving to the ocean, the unknown, something they couldn't comprehend, then getting to

North America, stepping on American soil and seeing other black faces but black people who were walking around, assisting and fetching,” said Bent, his voice resonating with the culture shock the characters felt.

“They saw their breath for the first time because of the cold air and thought their mouth was on fire, but there was no heat, no pain, there was smoke.”

The desire for authenticity by director Clement Virgo, who co-wrote the script with Hill, and the producers from Conquering Lion Pictures, Out of Africa Entertainment and Entertainment One (eOne) Television extended to the meticulously designed costumes.

“1700s clothing was really different, the way of living was extremely different, society was different, the mentality, the way of life was very primitive.

first Juno nomination is amazing. I'm not on a label so I had to painstakingly put a lot of work and care and thought into every step, pulling together the finances to do it. There were some frustrations and a few tears shed, but when it was done, I was very pleased with it.”

Toronto-based indie band Alvays, featuring Cape Bretoners Molly Rankin and Kerri MacLellan, received its first two nominations: breakthrough group and alternative album of the year for its self-titled debut. Halifax's Ryan Hensworth, also based in Toronto, was nominated in the electronic album category for *Alone for the First Time*, while Jordan Croucher's *JRDN* received a nod in the R&B/soul recording of the year category.

Cape Breton saxophonist Kirk MacDonald received a solo jazz album of the year nomination for *Vista Obscura*, while Halifax-born, Los Angeles-based writer and producer Henry (Cirkut) Walter received a songwriter of the year nomination for his contributions to songs by Katy Perry (*Birthday and Dark Horse*) and Pitbull (*Wild Love*).

Sarah McLachlan, who began performing music in Halifax before moving to Vancouver in the late '80s, is in the running for artist of the year, while her album *Shine On* is up for adult contemporary album. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, featuring Halifax-based songwriter Stephen Fearling, is also nominated, with a roots/alternative group nod for its latest, *South*.

There were three nominations for Animism, the Polaris Music Prize-winning album by former Halifax resident and NSCAD University alumnus Tanya Tagaq, including in the aboriginal and alternative album of the year categories, while also earning a producer nod for Jesse Zubot.

The Juno Awards will be handed out March 15, broadcast live on CTV.

Magic! is the leading nominee. The Toronto group's reggae-infused single *Rude* is up for single of the year, and they are also nominated in the Juno Fan Choice, breakthrough group, top songwriter, and pop album of the year categories. Leonard Cohen and Calgary's Kiesza have four nominations apiece.

“And yet it had its own swagger. I have a rawhide three-quarter-length jacket, with leather chaps and boots. It was primitive but very swagalicious,” Bent laughed. “Even then there was a sense of style and identity. As bad as things were, there were a lot of beautiful things.”

And that's how Bent wanted people to see *The Book of Negroes*.

“I don't want people to get caught up in just the slavery aspect; it's not a chip-on-the-shoulder type of movie. Let's not lose the beauty of this film because we're still walking with a chip on the shoulder. This is about something that is greater than the negative deeds of people. What's important is that people understand the power of love to conquer the situation, no matter what.”