

## Michele George Workshop: A Refreshing Alternative

By Elizabeth Dancoes

From April 19 to 23 I participated in Michele George's Re:SOUND intensive workshop. I had seen her perform at the WOMEN IN VIEW Festival and found her vocal skills and choice of material unique. If this woman was willing to impart her inspiration and knowledge, I was more than willing to be on the receiving end. I was not disappointed.

The workshop structure I have become accustomed to is a relaxed version of the teacher-student relationship: the group operating as a single unit with each individual attempting to accomplish a similar goal or learn and perfect a particular skill; the focus primarily physical. For me, Ms. George's approach was a refreshing alternative to this standard. She operated much more as a guide than a teacher and there was a sense of shared responsibility for the outcome of each session. Since one of her desires is "for everyone to recognize in themselves a storyteller" as much emphasis was placed on the ability to listen as to speak. Because of this, during the five days I found myself in the privileged position of witnessing 16 unique stories unfolding as well as experiencing an emotional journey of my own.

Woven throughout the workshop was a wonderful blend of the spiritual, psychological and physical. We learned songs and chants in languages we could not understand, but the joy inherent in the action of their singing, the celebration of life and living often moved my spirit. The sense of communing it inspired prepared me emotionally for the act of sharing in which I was about to partake.

We were asked to write a song, four lines expressing our dark side. For most, this task was much more difficult than anticipated. The difficulty was specific to each individual but the magic of hearing a person sing a song that was their own never paled as the days struggled by. Ms. George bases her work on the belief that our voices are trapped high within our heads, busy accommodating our doing rather than our being, and that, "to breathe fully, deeply and with resonance means that I am vulnerable". Fear of that vulnerability, fear of the "I", was almost unanimous and when that fear was walked through, the depth in the exposed voice was stunning.

The physicality of the workshop was for me directly related to this experience. To hear a voice released from myself that I had never heard was a body experience without compare — yet all of the action took place within.

I am told that all of Michele's workshops are unique, a reflection of the group participating. Driving them all, I would think, is her belief that we are all born to sing. The most moving songs in the world are songs of liberation. We are accustomed to being moved by faith in a nation of faith in an ideology, but we seldom hear a voice rise to liberate itself. In this particular workshop I was given the gift of both. ○

*Elizabeth Dancoes is a writer and actress. Her play "Dancing in the Garden...Like Momma" was produced in Vancouver in June and most recently at the Vancouver Fringe.*

### Songs for the Road

*Before I was born, he called me Sam  
At the age of two, the loving man began  
Ssh boy, ssh boy, you got to be a man  
That's why I'm known as Silent Sam.  
— Kenn Walker*

*Didi lives inside a photograph  
A girl-child, an image of the past.  
She's alone, unprotected yet too proud to show  
Didi doesn't want anyone to know.  
— C. Hay*

*She stands to watch the sea at night  
Her devils dancing black on white  
She'll stare, she'll wait, till morning breaks  
immovable, mad angel.  
— Elizabeth Dancoes*

*Little girl named Duff: a tyrant  
Jungle lighter with a gun: bated life.  
Judging even sunshine, wary with fear  
Clutching her so tightly she cannot breathe;  
imitating death.  
— M. W.*

*VIEW offers ongoing programming which includes a calendar of workshops and readings. For further information, please call the View office at 875-6695.*