

Culture: Canadians make their mark in Europe

On June 9, the jury of the Venice Biennale awarded a Special Prize to artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller for their multimedia work *The Paradise Institute*. On May 20, at the Cannes Film Festival in France, Igloolik-based filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk won the *Caméra d'or* prize for first-time directors; his *Atanarjuat* ("The Fast Runner") is the first feature-length film written, directed and acted in Inuktitut. On May 14, Alistair MacLeod was named winner of the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award for his novel *No Great Mischief*. And the previous November Margaret Atwood captured Britain's Booker Prize for her novel *The Blind Assassin*.

Across Europe the Canadians are coming in ever-larger numbers. Very often, Europe is where young Canadian artists launch an international career. An example is young Quebec contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux, who last year took home the first prize from Belgium's prestigious Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition. Her win opened the doors to all the major stages in Europe.

Our cultural ambassadors

For generations Canadian artists have won acclaim abroad, but more than ever before there is a systematic effort to encourage and support a Canadian cultural presence in Europe. The 1996 Canada-EU Joint Action Plan called for "new bridges . . . to be built between the peoples of Canada and the EU," particularly by "strengthening educational and cultural links." Within the past year a long list of projects received assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Here are some examples:

- In October 2000, Ottawa's National Arts Centre Orchestra toured Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France and Britain, performing to full houses and rave reviews.
- From last August, Robert Lepage has been appearing in *The Far Side of the Moon* in nine countries of Western Europe. The one-man show uses contemporary stage electronics to investigate space and space exploration.
- At the Festival d'Avignon in France last summer, Théâtre Ubu presented *Le Petit Köchel*, by Quebec playwright Normand Chaurette.
- Last fall the Cirque Éloize brought its *Excentricus* to Britain and Spain. This is a stunningly innovative combination of theatre, circus, dance and music.

Promoting Canadian culture in Europe

Canadian missions in Europe play an essential role in helping our artists reach the European public. Cultural attachés create links between Canadian artists and European cultural programmers, and promote Canada's rich cultural diversity in all areas, including voice and instrumental music, film, literature, theatre, and the visual arts. In Paris, London, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Rome, Madrid and other capitals, embassies develop networks of contacts for our artists and feature them in cultural bulletins carefully targeted at the right audiences.

At the Venice Biennale on June 9, 2001, artists George Bures Miller (left) and Janet Cardiff (right) receive their award from jury member Christov Bakargiev.



Ottawa's National Arts Centre Orchestra in rehearsal with their music director, conductor-violinist Pinchas Zukerman

