

Culture

Canadian artists take the Americas by storm

Canada's political and economic relations with the Americas are expanding steadily—and so are our cultural relations, particularly with Mexico and the United States.

An example is the Canada/Mexico Creative Artists Program, operated under the International Cultural Relations Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Leading Canadian artists spend six to eight weeks in Mexico, where they work in collaboration with their Mexican colleagues. In this time they learn about new developments in their field, exchange ideas, consult with master teachers and create new works.

For professional Canadian artists active in the performing arts, visual and media arts, literature, film, video and television, the Department provides assistance so that they can travel abroad. This has helped many artists perform in Mexico, including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Robert Lepage's theatre company Ex Machina, rock bands, dance troupes and classical musicians. A very popular event was the exhibit of paintings by the Group of Seven last year in Mexico City.

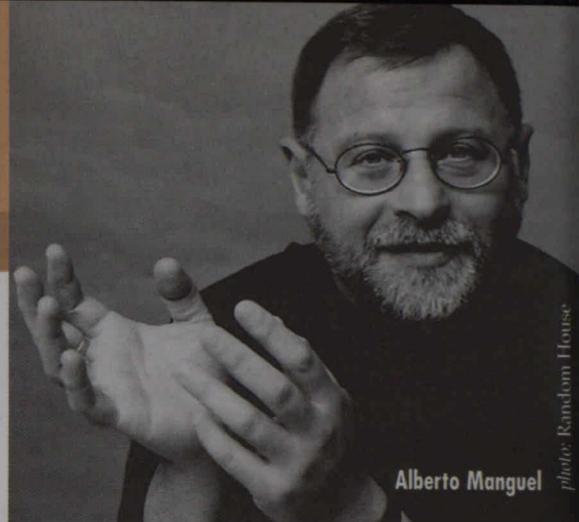
In the United States, Canada's Consulate General in New York actively promotes Canadian talent through its Upper North Side program.

Its most recent success was "Blame Canada!"—the first all-Canadian film festival ever staged by the Film Society of Lincoln Center. Organized by the Consulate, "Blame Canada!" featured 31 films and documentaries, including Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*, Peter Mettler's *Picture of Light*, Claude Jutra's *Mon oncle Antoine* and Catherine Annau's *Just Watch Me: Trudeau and the '70s Generation*, to name just a few of the works shown.

The festival caught the attention of all the media—even the venerable *New York Times*, which said, "Just Watch Me, like almost everything else in the series, is evidence that Canada's bland cultural image is undeserved."

But New York is only one stop for our artists. In June, Chicago welcomes virtuoso violinist Jasper Wood, as well as musician and filmmaker Michael Snow; Juno and Grammy award winner Diana Krall will tour several cities before a planned tour of Latin America; and several of Robert Lepage's plays are scheduled to be performed throughout the United States.

Elsewhere in the Americas, the Buenos Aires Independent Film Festival will feature Canadian movies; the Cirque



Alberto Manguel

photo: Random House

Éloize has performed in Bogotá; pianist Irene Wong is to appear at the Festival Bravissimo in Guatemala; and pianist Minna Re Shin will perform in Mexico in the fall.

Argentinian-born Canadian writer Alberto Manguel says, "Culture is what identifies a nation. This is your passport to the rest of the world." Manguel adds that what brings Canadian and Latin American cultures closer together is their "common fear of American cultural domination. It forces us to be more creative to survive and to assert ourselves." Whatever the cause, Canadian culture shows greater diversity and dynamism than ever before. And with our ever-closer ties with hemispheric neighbours, Canada's culture is bound to leave a strong imprint on the Americas. ●

Kevin O'Shea, head of Public Affairs, Canadian Consulate General, New York, at the launch of the "Blame Canada!" film festival

The Film Society of Lincoln Center presents

BLAME CANADA!

photo: DFAIT

Members of Robert Lepage's theatre company Ex Machina, performing in *The Seven Streams of the River Ota*

photo: CANAPRESS

To learn more about DFAIT's Cultural Program, visit our Web site: www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/arts