

# Arts prizes bridge solitudes

## Governor General salutes performers

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY  
Special to The Globe and Mail

OTTAWA — Faced with a social calendar of embassy parties and government receptions, the annual Governor-General's Performing Arts Awards offer Ottawans a chance to don black tie and formal gown.

Guests paid more than \$100 to attend a 2½-hour long show at the National Arts Centre on Saturday night which honoured the work of such Canadian performers as singer-songwriter **Joni Mitchell** and pianist Jon Kimura Parker. Among the notables in attendance were Justice Minister Allan Rock, singer Sarah McLachlan and 1992 award recipient Oscar Peterson.

The night before, an elite crowd watched Governor General Romeo LeBlanc present the prizes to this year's eight recipients at Rideau Hall: **Joni Mitchell**, Jon Kimura Parker, actress Martha Henry, costume designer François Barbeau, filmmaker Michel Brault, songwriter Luc Plamondon, choreographer Grant Strate and arts patron Martha Lou Henley.

Most of the 2,000 seats available at the NAC were sold — about half to corporate sponsors and half to the general public.

National in scope, under the patronage of the Governor General and based in the capital city, the bilingual, bicultural component is a reflection of the awards' mandate, says Peter Herrndorf, co-chairman of the Governor General's Performing Arts Foundation. He said that in addition to recognizing artists across Canada, the awards are an opportunity for anglophones to get to know francophones. "One of the best examples of this was three years ago, when Leonard Cohen and Gilles Vigneault were honoured," said Herrndorf. "Although they both lived in Montreal for most of their lives, they had never met until the night they received their awards."

Plamondon, 54, who is revered in Quebec but who remains relatively unknown in the rest of Canada, said the awards are important for francophone artists. "It's an event where we're being treated on exactly the same level as English Canadians. Most of the time, English Canadians expect us to know them, but that we shouldn't expect to be known by them."

Plamondon said that an incident at the Rideau Hall awards presentation drove his point home. "[Foundation co-chairwoman] Monique Mercure, probably Quebec's most famous actress, was sitting at a table and someone leaned over to her and said, 'And what do you do?'"

Four-time Grammy award winner **Joni Mitchell** said that receiving the award made her feel like Canada had "claimed" her back, adding they remain a recognition of artistic excellence.

An edited version of the awards presentation will be televised in French on Radio-Canada, Dec. 1 at 8 p.m., and in English on CBC, Dec. 29 at 8 p.m.