

A cultural feast

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'Creative genius' on tap, from left: **Joni Mitchell**, Stephen Sondheim and Lily Tomlin.

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BY MICHAEL POSNER, TORONTO

In what may be the most ambitious cultural program ever mounted in Toronto, the city's Harbourfront Centre yesterday took the wraps off its long-awaited World Leaders: A Festival of Creative Genius.

To be mounted over five weeks this fall (from Sept. 24 to Oct. 30) in the newly refurbished Liberty Grand entertainment complex at the Canadian National Exhibition, the festival will parade a global galaxy of cultural stars.

The full list of pace-setting honourees, each of whom will be awarded a \$25,000 Harbourfront Centre Prize, includes:

- fashion designer Issey Miyake (Sept. 24);
- Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté (Oct. 1);
- interior designer Philippe Starke (Oct. 3);
- architect Frank Gehry (Oct. 5);
- comedienne Lily Tomlin (Oct. 6);
- composer Stephen Sondheim (Oct. 11);

- film director Bernardo Bertolucci (Oct. 13);
- graphic artist Robert Rauschenburg (Oct. 15);
- dramatist and screenwriter Harold Pinter (Oct. 17);
- singer **Joni Mitchell** (Oct. 19);
- stage and film director Robert LePage (Oct. 22);
- composer, performer Peter Gabriel (Oct. 25);
- composer, arranger Quincy Jones (Oct. 26) and
- dancer Pina Bausch (Oct. 30).

Each evening *homage* will begin with a preshow dinner, prepared by some of Canada's most distinguished chefs, and will be followed by a *celebration and exploration* of the artist's work, using film clips, interviews and performances by guest musicians, actors and dancers.

Tickets will cost \$175, and will go on sale to the public from June 2 and to American Express cardholders from May 22.

A satellite cultural agenda of films, discussions, exhibitions, cabarets, lectures and performances

will be held in other Toronto venues, to further honour these icons.

More than two years in development, the program, Harbourfront CEO William Boyle said yesterday, is intended not only to salute some of the greatest creative geniuses of our time, but to "explore the underlying artistic innovation, the nurturing of the creative spirit and the seminal role that individual artists play in shaping the world around us."

The lead sponsor for the Creative Genius festival, which also celebrates Harbourfront's 25th anniversary, is American Express, though a baker's dozen of other corporate backers has signed on as well, from IBM and Cisco Systems to The Globe and Mail and Barrick Gold Corp. In addition, federal and provincial agencies are contributing marketing funds.

To help stage the events, Harbourfront has retained several notable Canadian artists, among them Rhombus Media's Niv Fichman, directors Dennis Garnhum, Duncan Macintosh and Jeannette Lambermont, designers Ken MacDonald and Paul Mathieson, and writers David Macfarlane, Michael Crabb, Laurie Brown and George Jamieson.

Scheduled to reopen next month, the Liberty Grand will have three ballrooms and be able to host audiences of up to 3,000.

For more information, visit
www.worldleadersfestival.com.