



Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 1

April 2006

Giant Birthday Card Presented to The Man Himself By Cohen Night Participants

By: Kim Solez

Edmonton's Leonard Cohen Night is many things: It is a multi-faceted celebration of Canadian music, art, and culture, but it is also a birthday party for Leonard Cohen. For our 2005 event we decided to create a giant birthday card for participants to inscribe and sign and which could be presented directly to Mr. Cohen. The card was designed by volunteer Nikki Olson and Cohenights Arts Society President Kim Solez. It featured pictures of a fig leaf and of Leonard's favorite animal, the hummingbird, with text which read: "The 2005 Leonard Cohen Night celebrants send best wishes to you Leonard! From Downtown Edmonton which you must remember well! ('66. '84. '92)" "If your life is a leaf that the seasons tear off and condemn. They will bind you with love that is graceful and green as a stem." (a line from Sisters of Mercy composed in Edmonton during Leonard's 1966 visit).

The card was available both during the lecture of Ira Nadel and throughout the main event. Ninety people signed it. Many of the inscriptions were very inspiring: "You've got a way", "Thanks for all the perfect moments you've brought us", "It's all going to be fine - for a while.", "So we connect again" etc. Many of the inscriptions quoted Cohen lyrics or mentioned particular events of interconnection; several different languages were represented.

The card was presented to Mr. Cohen personally some weeks later in mid November by Kim Solez, Nikki Olson, and Netanya Bushewski, the youngest active participant in Leonard Cohen Night. Mr. Cohen was very grateful not only for the card itself but also for the activities of Cohenights Arts Society and those celebrating his birthday with such splendid musical and cultural events. He spent some time pouring over the wonderful inscriptions and posed for pictures with his visitors. The card now is mounted in a prominent place in his home and will eventually find its way to the Leonard Cohen archives at the University of Toronto.

Leonard Cohen Night, 2005

By: Jerome Martin

I had heard about the annual Leonard Cohen celebration in Edmonton but had never attended. However, in the fall of 2005 I heard an interview with Kim Solez about how the idea of the event had come to him and how the event had evolved since then. I thought that I would like to be part of this, but was not sure if I had the time to attend.

I have been a fan of Cohen for many years and had the privilege of seeing him perform at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton in 1995. My daughter had insisted that I go to hear Leonard: "You just have to go, Dad." My wife and I went and were delighted with Leonard's performance and his close relationship with his audience. My wife Merle and I finally decided just days before the 2005 Leonard Cohen Night that we should attend and were fortunate to get tickets. The event, held at the Westin Hotel on September 24, was described as "An evening of music, poetry, food and drink and for the first time a video contest celebrating the 71st birthday of Canadian icon Leonard Cohen." Performers included Vicky Hynes, Dale Ladouceur, Craig Shafer, and Ann Vriend.

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THE LEONARD COHEN VIDEO SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

The goal of the Leonard Cohen Video Scholarship Competition is to engage young film makers in the creative interpretation of Leonard Cohen's re-recorded music in order to widen the appreciation of his music with young listeners and viewers and to further their artistic development. This scholarship competition is sponsored by the Cohenights Arts Society, a non-profit organization that supports the development of community-based cultural initiatives influenced by Montreal-born Canadian icon Leonard Cohen. Leonard Cohen's work as novelist, poet, singer and songwriter crosses national and cultural divides and connects a diverse community of supporters around the world. The Cohenights Arts Society wishes to extend this community to high school students by encouraging them to listen to Leonard Cohen's songs. A special group of high school students, those aged 15 to 17 who have an interest in video-making, are invited to create a video based on the interpretation of a Leonard Cohen song of their choice.

The video submitted must use as its only sound track an unaltered original Leonard Cohen song as sung and recorded by Leonard Cohen himself. No covers, other artists singing Leonard Cohen's songs are permitted.

This scholarship competition has the approval of Leonard Cohen and Sony BMG Music Canada, the owner of Leonard Cohen's music rights.

All video content must be the original work done by the student submitting the video interpretation. The video must be produced by and directed by a student, aged 15 to 17, who is registered in a high school in Alberta, Canada. The student directing and producing the video will be eligible for the scholarships.

The video content must not contravene acceptable standards of public decency and legality.

Videos will be judged on artistic merit, clarity and creativity in the interpretation of the Leonard Cohen song, production value, overall impact and vision expressed.

The jury is not compelled to make an award if videos submitted do not meet minimum standards.

Scholarship Competition Specifications:

1. Product: a video submitted on DVD
2. Scholarship competition participants: 15 to 17-year-old, Alberta high school students
3. Subject matter: The interpretation of a Leonard Cohen pre-recorded song
4. Length Limit: The length of the pre-recorded song, plus additional time for the title and the credits.
5. Deadline: Videos must be post-marked no later than midnight June 16, 2006
6. For more information contact Karen Slevinsky, Director, Cohenights Arts Society by e-mail at Slevinsky@shaw.ca
7. Mail DVD to: Karen Slevinsky, Director, Cohenights Arts Society
32 Blue Quill Crescent
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J 6C4
8. Scholarships Awarded:

First Award:

... Teen Video Intensive I and II July 2 to 15, 2006 at Red Deer College
Covers Tuition, supplies, accommodation, and food
VALUE: \$1050.00 + GST.
... Showing of video at the Leonard Cohen Night 2006, September 23, 2006
Tickets for two to the Leonard Cohen Night 2006 celebration

Second Award:

... Teen Video Intensive I July 2 to 8, 2006
Covers Tuition, supplied, accommodation, and food
VALUE: \$525.00 + GST.
... Showing of video at the Leonard Cohen Night 2006, September 23, 2006
Tickets for two to the Leonard Cohen Night 2006 celebration

Third Award:

... Showing of video at the Leonard Cohen Night 2006, September 23, 2006
Tickets for two to the Leonard Cohen Night 2006 celebration

Cohen Night 2005

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We also attended a lecture by Cohen biographer Ira Nadel earlier that day. The lecture was held in the Macdonald Hotel, famous to Cohen fans as the hotel in which Cohen wrote "Sisters of Mercy." One of the strengths of Cohen's music is that performers other than Leonard can interpret it and make it their own while the music is still clearly Cohen's. For example, Jennifer Warnes performed Cohen's songs in her 1986 album "Famous Blue Raincoat" in a way that attracted new fans to his music and writing. The performers at the Leonard Cohen Night also interpreted Cohen effectively. We in the audience (approximately 200 people) sang along quietly and, in some cases, not so quietly. We loved the songs and enjoyed the live performances; most of us have not heard Cohen's music live other than at a Cohen concert. We also enjoyed the open mike session which followed. Bob Chelmick, the affable MC, read some of Cohen's poems aloud and convinced some members of the audience to do the same.

One of the strengths of this evening was providing an opportunity for an interesting and eclectic audience to gather and discuss Leonard's poetry and music. This was not a meeting of academics, but rather a gathering of people who were interested in Cohen's work.

As a result of attending this event and expressing interest in helping with the next event I am now on the board of the Cohenights Art Society, working with a small group of dedicated volunteers, learning more about Leonard, and enjoying his work even more than I did earlier.

The 2006 event will be held on September 23, 2006. Don't miss it.

Spotlight: Anne Vriend

By: Jennifer H inchcliffe

Edmontonian Ann Vriend was the headline performer at our last Leonard Cohen Night. In her earlier years she spent many hours absorbed in playing the piano in her parent's basement. Continuing this interest she graduated from the music program at Grant MacEwan College with a major in vocal performance. She then focused on becoming a professional musician, winning first prize in the Sidetrack Cafe's Songwriting contest. This resulted in a trip to Nashville and subsequent commissions. Her debut album entitled *Soul Unravelling* came out in 2003. She's equally comfortable at Folk Festivals, jazz venues, cafes or concert halls. Claiming Leonard Cohen as one of her earliest influences she sang a quartet of Cohen's songs headlining Leonard Cohen Night 2005.

However she's infinitely more than merely a singer of other people's songs. Her true talents are best displayed in singing vocal compositions which like that earlier influence - Leonard Cohen - containing poetic, thought provoking lyrics featuring her own blend of jazz, blues, R and B and pop. She ably ac-

companies herself on the piano so she's effortlessly able to convey her thoughts through her evocative voice, thoughtful lyrics accompanied by her piano stylings.

She will be singing at the Berlin International Leonard Cohen Festival this August and hopefully will be part of many more Leonard Cohen Nights.



Become a member of Cohenights Arts Society today!

Membership: \$5.00

As a member you will receive:

- * the newsletter, produced to inform members of current events, opportunities and developments in the arts community
- * invitations to openings and events
- * a vote at the Annual General Meeting
- * opportunity to participate in organizing events

We are working to increase our membership program, and provide enhanced services in the future. If you have any comments or suggestions, to receive a sample newsletter, or to sign up for membership, please contact Marilyn Wiens, 9702-89 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6E 2S2, Email: wiens_marilyn@hotmail.com, phone: 433-1486.

The Cohenights Arts Society produces an annual interdisciplinary arts festival highlighting and honouring Cohen's diverse achievements. His subtle influence, evident in numerous interpretations transcending both music and poetry, encourages artistic range in interpretation and use of new media, as well as film, theatre, dance, and the visual arts.

The Society focuses on educating the public and emerging talents to the importance of all disciplines in appreciating Leonard Cohen's diversity, encouraging imaginative interpretations and innovative approaches in art making that is influenced by Cohen's work. By promoting experimentation and collaboration through workshop opportunities, the Society promotes the exchange of ideas between professionals and emerging artists as well as students.

Return form with remittance to:

*Marilyn Wiens, 9702-89 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6E 2S2*

*Email: wiens_marilyn@hotmail.com
Phone 433-1486*

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