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## Bringing Iran to Toronto

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More than 100,000 people are expected to attend a mostly free four-day festival celebrating the culture of Iran at Harbourfront this weekend .

The city's first Tirgan Festival, which starts tonight, showcases Persian artists in music, dance, theatre, film, visual arts and literature, including filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, and composer and setar player Mohammad Reza Lotfi.

"This is the biggest Iranian cultural show ever to exist outside of Iran," says festival CEO Mehrdad Ariannejad. Tirgan is organized by the Iranian Canadian Centre for Art and Culture.

Besides more than 50 performances by more than 100 artists, more than 90 per cent of them free, the fest features food and merchants selling Iranian artifacts.

"Toronto has a growing Iranian community as well as people who have a Persian background from various central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Republic of Azerbaijan," said Kerri MacDonald, community and education programmer at Harbourfront.

"We don't know a lot about Persian culture in the mainstream, and it's really important to have such a festival to share the culture and history with Toronto."

The Iranian Canadian community in Toronto numbers 121,505, according to the 2006 census.

*For more information, see the Night & Day listings, page E7, and [harbourfrontcentre.com](http://harbourfrontcentre.com).*

*Shabnam Janet Janani, special to the Star*