

The Magazine from ACTRA Toronto

performers

Spring • Volume 20 • Issue 1

Diversity

Sharing the Spotlight

by *Andrew Moodie*

The 9th Annual

ACTRA Awards in Toronto

The Nominees

Pointing to the Moon

Christian Potenza

on producing a TIP film

*Fiona
Reid*

2011

ACTRA Toronto
Award of Excellence

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Performers

The magazine from ACTRA Toronto
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President's message | Looking ahead

We've accomplished a great deal in the two years I've been your President. A new IPA negotiated in record time provided us a modest pay increase and peace in the industry. So we put that peace to good use. We launched the I Work ACTRA campaign, raising members' awareness about the importance of keeping the promises we make with each other. We looked at our membership rules asking: if we want all career minded performers inside "the house we built for ourselves", do our rules prevent a healthy, growing union? 82.1% of you voted to reduce initiation credits from six to three, removing a significant barrier for folks who belong in our union.

I am honoured to have been elected President for a second term by council and I look forward to the work ahead where there is much we can and will address. Below are six key priorities I want to talk about.

Bargaining:

This spring we bargain the NCA. Commercials for internet and the SOC category will likely be key issues. Standing together in solidarity will prove invaluable to negotiating a fair contract. We invite your input.

Inclusion:

In 2010, we assisted NBC with two open calls specifically for diverse performers. They were astonished at the talent we have here. Being one of the most diverse film centres in the world puts us in the minds of filmmakers. Casting calls explicitly are asking for "any ethnicity". Our shows are becoming diversified. But there is more to do until our big and small screens reflect the world we see.

Membership Rules:

We need to steward the new membership rules, making sure they fit the

goals of your union. A healthy union is one that grows and includes those who are dedicated to developing a performer's career.

I Work ACTRA:

In 1943, a band of performers organized for fair pay, proper working conditions and an organization they could call their own. Sixty-seven years later, the promises we have with each other remain: promises to defend our pay, benefits, retirement, to always work on an ACTRA contract and to uphold the values of our union. These promises guarantee support when things go wrong and a union that fights for a future for our industry.

Canadian Drama Campaign:

In 1999, the disastrous CRTC ruling relaxed regulations on broadcasters causing the domestic industry to collapse from 13 to 3 hour-long dramatic series. It's taken us 11 years and lots of letters and trips to Ottawa, where many of you performed key roles, to return to producing at near 1999 levels. This is a battle we can never stop fighting. A future with Canadian stories on big and small screens, with Canadian performers, nay stars, means work for us. It also holds the mirror up to Canadians and invites the world to know us too.

Public Policy:

This spring a Federal election is likely; a provincial election will happen this fall. We need to ensure all parties have film friendly policies and support the growth of media excellence. We'll continue to speak at the CRTC on all things related to broadcasting and creative content. We'll continue the fight only Toronto can fight - that the Canadian Media Fund plays fair with Toronto rather than incentivizing work to leave our province. Our Provincial

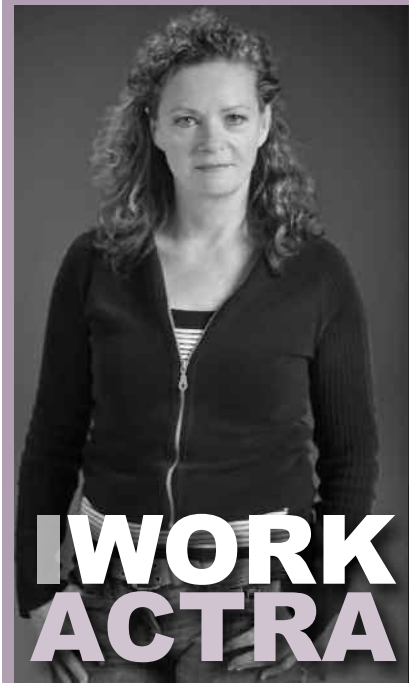


Photo by: Jag Gundu

government has been very supportive with tax credits, helping to bring back foreign production but Status of the Artist issues are still unrequited. And we have new files that need work. We have a new Toronto Mayor. We need to work closely with his office to ensure they understand and promote our industry in this town.

There is much to do in the coming months and years. I hope you're up for the challenge. I know I am. I invite you to participate and help make our cultural and economic contribution understood.

In solidarity,

**Heather Allin
President, ACTRA Toronto**



Nominees

9th Annual ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2011

By Chris Owens

We are pleased to announce the nominees for this year's awards.

ACTRA Award for

Outstanding Performance – Voice

London Angelis in *You Are Here* (feature film)

Sean Cullen in *Jimmy Two-Shoes* (animated TV series)

Cory Doran in *Jimmy Two-Shoes* (animated TV series)

Billy MacLellan in *Afghanada* (radio series)

Maurice Dean Wint in *Beasts of the Bible* (documentary)

ACTRA Award for

Outstanding Performance – Male

Maury Chaykin in *Less Than Kind* (TV series)

Mark McKinney in *Death Comes to Town* (TV series)

Noah Reid in *Score: A Hockey Musical* (feature film)

Nicholas Rose in *New Year* (feature film)

Chuck Shamata in *Break a Leg* (short film)

ACTRA Award for

Outstanding Performance – Female

Sarah Manninen in *Keep Your Head Up Kid: The Don Cherry Story* (mini series)

Zoie Palmer in *The Untitled Work of Paul Shepard* (feature film)

Molly Parker in *Trigger* (feature film)

Liisa Repo-Martell in *Flashpoint* (TV series)

Tracy Wright in *Trigger* (feature film)



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LONDON ANGELIS

You Are Here

Youngest performer nominated this year; television appearances include: *The Rick Mercer Report*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Howie Do It*; film appearances include: *Flash of Genius*, *Sundays at Tiffany's*.

“My mother handed me the phone...I was so excited to be nominated, what an honour! And with that kind of news, there was no way she could turn down my request for homemade chocolate chip waffles that morning.”



London Angelis

SEAN CULLEN

Jimmy Two-Shoes

Founding member of musical comedy group, *Corky and the Juice Pigs*; Gemini Awards for Best Performance or Host in a Variety Program, *Just For Laughs*, 17th Annual Gemini Awards, *What Were They Thinking*; author of novel trilogy for young adults; finalist of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*; Canadian Comedy Award, *Phil The Alien*; feature films include: *The Love Guru*, *Saint Ralph*, *Where the Truth Lies*.

“The best thing about working on *J2S* is the incredible freedom of the storylines and the range of challenges for a vocal performer. When I got the news of my nomination I was shocked, delighted, angry, grateful, dazed, itchy and damp. I dried myself and wept.”



Sean Cullen

CORY DORAN

Jimmy Two-Shoes

Series regular (voice) on *Stoked*; guest appearance on *Degrassi: The Next Generation*.

“What I love most about working on *Jimmy* are the people. **Mark Evestaff** and **Merle Anne Ridley** are the faces we actors work with every recording session. They're great. They allow us so much freedom to play, to create alternate lines and jokes. It's a real treat coming to work. My fellow cast mates raise the bar very high on the performance side so I'm always trying to raise my game to match.”



Cory Doran



Billy MacLellan

BILLY MacLELLAN

Afghanada

Born in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; Nominated for a Gemini for Best Performance by an Actor in a Guest Role in a Dramatic Series, *ReGenesis*; played 'Laertes' on *Slings and Arrows*; writer/director of documentary, *Between the Mountain and the Shore*; Guest appearances on: *Murdoch Mysteries*, *The Border*, *Flashpoint*, *Rookie Blue*.

“I flew into Scotland this week and on the paperwork when I crossed the border, I had to fill in the 'profession' line. I got to write 'actor' on that blank and, for me, that is as cool as it gets. I love what I do and at the end of the day, the worst day acting is better than the best day in a coal mine. I got no complaints.”

MAURICE DEAN WINT

Beasts of the Bible

Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama, York University; Gemini nomination Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Dramatic Role, *Blue Murder*; other television appearances include: *PSI Factor*, *Traders*, *ReGenesis*, *The Border*, *Haven*; film credits include: *Cube*, *Curtis's Charm*, *Rude*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*; extensive voice work includes: *Razzberry Jazzberry Jam*, narration for The Discovery Channel, CBC, Vision TV; Dora Award, *Courageous*.

“Not only was I blessed with forty pages of incredibly delicious text to consume but I was also spoiled with a wealth of stunning live action and computer animated footage from which to work. I find narration as a performance format engaging to begin with. I love watching documentary films as much as I love voicing them.”



Maurice Dean Wint

Outstanding Performance – Male

MAURY CHAYKIN

Less Than Kind

Late Canadian-American character actor born in Brooklyn, NY; Genie Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role, *Whale Music*; Genie nominations, *Cold Comfort* and *Iron Eagle II*; Gemini awards, *At the Hotel* and *Nikita*; Canadian Comedy Award, *Less Than Kind*; film appearances include: *Dances With Wolves*, *The Adjuster*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, *Adoration*, *Blindness*, *Barney's Version*; extensive television appearances include: *A Nero Wolfe Mystery*, *Seeing Things*, *Entourage*, *Boston Legal*.

“Doing *Less Than Kind* was such a positive, wonderful experience for Maury. He just couldn't wait to get there and couldn't wait to work. It made him forget when he wasn't feeling great health-wise to have this amazing, amazing support system of people he loved.” — **Susannah Hoffmann**



Maury Chaykin

MARK MCKINNEY

Death Comes to Town

Founding member of sketch comedy troupe, *Kids in the Hall*; appeared on *Saturday Night Live* 1995-97; co-created, wrote and starred in *Slings and Arrows*; television appearances include: *Twitich City*, *Robson Arms*, *Corner Gas*, *Hatching, Matching & Dispatching*, *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*; film appearances include: *Brain Candy*, *A Night at the Roxbury*, *New Waterford Girl*, *The Saddest Music in the World*; executive producer, writer and show-runner, *Less Than Kind*.

“What I enjoyed most on *DCTT* was the chance to play a bunch of different roles – real people, Death, and a ladyperson. It was fun. And it had been a while.”



Mark McKinney



Noah Reid

NOAH REID

Score: A Hockey Musical

Graduate of the National Theatre School; began doing voice work at age 10; 'Tommy Settergren' in *Pippi Longstocking*, 'Franklin the turtle' in *Franklin*, 'Gunther Breech' in *Jane and the Dragon*. Series regular on *Strange Days at Blake Holsey High*. Guest appearances on *Naturally*, *Sadie* and *Degrassi: The Next Generation*.

“We had a blast making this movie and **Mike McGowan** has this great sense of humour that really set the tone. He was facilitating jam sessions between takes and we played hockey at lunch with the cast and crew when were shooting at the arena. It was nuts! A great working environment.”

NICHOLAS ROSE

New Year

Born in Grande Prairie, Alberta; series regular on *Instant Star*; guest appearance on *Rookie Blue*; sings and plays guitar in the band, *Sweet Thing*; singer/songwriter of country/folk album, *Oxbow Lake*.

“*New Year* was a really comfortable, easy going set with lots of familiar faces. **Julian Dezotti**, who co-wrote and stars in the film, is an old friend of mine from U of T. I'm so grateful to him and to **Phil Borg** (co-writer, director) for giving me this role. Ultimately, it was just a bunch of friends making a movie in the basement of their parent's house in Burlington. Isn't that how *Jaws* was made?”



Nicholas Rose

CHUCK SHAMATA

Break A Leg

Career spans over four decades in film, television, theatre and voice; Genie nomination for **Don Shebib's** *Between Friends*; other films include: *One Week*, *Cinderella Man*, *Joshua Then and Now*, *The Sentinel*; Gemini nomination, *The Running Man*; series regular, *Kojak*; founding member of Actors Repertory Company.

“The best thing about working on *Break A Leg* was collaborating with my son, Jesse, again. It's our second short film together. We work in a way that I think most actors would like to work all the time – as equal voices in the creative process from inception.”



Chuck Shamata

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Sarah Manninen

Graduate of George Brown Theatre School; Gemini nomination as Best Leading Actress in the BBC/Alliance production *AKA Albert Walker*; series regular on George F. Walkers' *The Line*, MTV's *Live Through This*, UPN's *Platinum*; recurring character on Showcase's *Naked Josh*; guest appearances include: *The Republic of Doyle*, *This is Wonderland*, *The Eleventh Hour*.

"My experience working on *Keep Your Head Up, Kid* was remarkable. The Cherry family, specifically Tim and Cindy, graciously answered every question I had about their mother. I appreciated the opportunity to play a character over many years, thinking about how one's body feels or moves differently over time. I loved every second of playing Rose."

SARAH MANNINEN

Keep Your Head Up, Kid:
The Don Cherry Story



Zoie Palmer

BFA from York University; series regular on *Instant Star*, *Search and Rescue*, *Lost Girl*; played Patti Reagan in the critically acclaimed *MOW*, *The Reagans*; Awarded Best Actor at the Baja California Film Festival for *Terminal Venus*; supporting role in M. Shyamalan's thriller, *Devil*.

"On set there was this great atmosphere that allowed for a lot of play and discovery and risk taking, which for me means so much as an actor. Feeling free to discover and rehearse and find moments is a gift...I would like to do more comedy, comedy and, occasionally, comedy."

ZOIE PALMER

The Untitled Work of Paul Shepard



Molly Parker

Genie Awards for *Kissed* and *Last Wedding*; Genie nominations: *Who Loves the Sun*, *Marion Bridge*, *The War Bride*, *Men With Brooms*; Gemini nomination, *Paris or Somewhere*; series regular on *Twitch City*, *Deadwood*, *Swingtown*, *Shattered*; other feature films include: *The Road*, *Looking For Leonard*, *Rare Birds*, *Suspicious River*.

"I don't know how this movie got made. I mean that. I have worked on dozens of independent films, produced some, been married to a filmmaker, just seen it enough times to know that you don't make a movie without any prep, or any money, or a script that is totally ready, and do it starting next weekend. It is not possible. But it happened, and it felt, the whole time, like a miracle. It is, without a doubt, one of the most profound experiences that I have ever had as an actor."

MOLLY PARKER

Trigger



Liisa Repo-Martell

Gemini Award for *Nights Below Station Street*; Gemini nominations for *This Is Wonderland* and *Spoken Art*; guest television appearances include: *Puppets Who Kill*, *ReGenesis*, *The Listener*, *Republic of Doyle*; film appearances include: *Unforgiven*, *The English Patient*, *Lars and the Real Girl*; Indie Dora nomination: *Eternal Hydra*.

"On one level, of course, it's a police procedural but they have created such a humane, complex, dare I say, Canadian universe, where compromise, diplomacy and consensus building is king – and where people's madness and terrible acts are always explored in the context of their pain...It was also pretty cool to run around the empty ROM with a gun in the middle of the night."

LIISA REPO-MARTELL

Flashpoint



Tracy Wright

Founding member of Toronto's Augusta Company; television appearances include: *The Kids in the Hall*, *Dice*, *Twitch City*, *Slings & Arrows*; films include: *Highway 61*, *When Night is Falling*, *Last Night*, *Picture Claire*, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, *Monkey Warfare*, *Childstar*, *Blindness*, *This Movie is Broken*, *You Are Here*; frequently collaborated with husband, **Don McKellar**, as well as with **Daniel MacIvor**, **Daniel Brooks**, and **Bruce McDonald**.

"Just watching her work on these last things, especially *Trigger*, was an inspiration. She always really believed in her art – it was the most important thing to her in the end. To see how everyone rallied together and dropped what they were doing and came to help was very moving." - **Don McKellar**

TRACY WRIGHT

Trigger

Interview with Fiona Reid by Mary Ashton

2011 Award of Excellence



Fabulous Fiona



*“What’s on the outside is more like the appetizer;
the soul is the main course of who the person is.
If you ain’t got that, you ain’t got nothin’.”*

MA: Fi! I'm honoured and giddy that I get to interview you for your Award of Excellence. Congratulations! If it's not too much trouble, I'm hoping you'll shed a tear for me like in a Barbara Walters special. How does it feel to be honoured by your fellow ACTRA colleagues?

FR: Well, I play into Canadian stereotypes here, but my first reaction, when Heather Allin telephoned me, was absolute astonishment and humility. Then I thought, "Oh, you must mean the other Fiona Reid." And then I eventually worked my way through to genuinely feeling honoured to have been recognized by my peers.

MA: Where did you train?

FR: I got my B.A. from McGill and in the summers I went to the Banff School of Fine Arts. I knew when I graduated I wasn't ready for prime time. I had been accepted at a small theatre school in the U.K. but then I began getting work – summer stock theatre, a school tour in Saskatchewan – and never showed up. I knew I needed more training, and took classes whenever I could in movement, acting, and voice.

MA: How did you get your first job?

FR: It was way easier than it is now. I have huge respect for today's young actor, surviving in an environment that's become so lean and mean. I auditioned, plain and simple. My first job was as an apprentice at the Muskoka Summer Theatre. **Sean McCann** was one of the leading lights there and I was very much in awe of him – still am. In true cliché fashion, the lead actor broke her arm and I went on for her. Two weeks summer stock.

MA: You have a strong comedy background, right? What led you down that path?

FR: It just kind of happened, without any effort on my part. It came as a surprise to me that the more seriously I took myself the funnier it seemed to be for everyone else. I replaced **Jayne Eastwood** at Second City but later opted to do a play at Tarragon instead. I was always pursuing 'serious drama'. I find that sort of laughable now – how intent I was at proving myself as a dramatic actor.


MA: Didn't you say that **John Candy** teased you about your passion for serious theatre?

FR: We worked together on a show called *Coming up Rosie*. I played Mona Zwicker, a telephone operator who wore white go-go boots. He would say, "Hey Fi, wanna do a little Chekov?" But he had a bit of that going on too. He spoke to me once of wanting to do King Lear. He called me Miss La Touche: "Oh, Miss La Touche, are we a little cranky? Didn't we get our nap today?" He was such a beautiful guy.



Photo: www.mckennaphoto.com

Photo clothing and accessories credit:
Aubergine vintage **Herve Leger** gown,
Vintage earrings and smaller bracelet, **The Cat's Meow** (www.thecatmeowcouture.com)
Large Bracelet, **Carla Wax** (www.carlawax.com)
Shoes, **Valentino, Davids**



*“I was always pursuing ‘serious drama’.
I find that sort of laughable now - how intent
I was at proving myself as a dramatic actor.”*



photo: Tim Leyes



With Bruce Gray in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*



As Deirdre in *P.R.* (Sullivan Films)



The Time Traveller's Wife (New Line Cinema)



With Terry Bradshaw in *Relative Chaos*



Fiona Reid invested to the Order of Canada by then Governor General Michaëlle Jean



King of Kensington (CBC)

MA: Do you have a preference for comedy over drama?

FR: I think in the heart of most comedians lurks the actor who wants to be taken seriously. I'd trust a comedian with the serious stuff much more than the other way round. Comedic actors get tragedy big time. It is the underbelly of what they do. When my dad had his stroke, I learned that laughter and tears come from the same part of the brain. That made a lot of sense to me. We laugh so that we don't cry. Or, in the midst of a tearful outbreak we find ourselves laughing. It's false to separate the two, really.

MA: I feel like you're one of the most in-work actors in Canada. How do you choose your roles?

FR: Well, sometimes there is no choosing! It's more like, 'Oh thank god I have a job and a paycheque.' I have had to learn how to weather the fallow periods and not feel sorry for myself. In my 30s I used to go to bed for days at a time when work was scarce. Having mummy wallowing in self pity as she boiled the pasta water wasn't much fun for my kids, so I think I've improved with the years on that front. I can't resist a challenge. On those rare occasions when I have a choice, it's always about the play for me.

MA: How do you prepare for a role? Is your preparation much different for TV and film than for theatre?

FR: Very generally speaking, I go through the script and ask 'why' a lot. The types of roles I tend to land on TV and film are different from what I do onstage. TV and film cast more 'to type'. That's just the way it is. And as one ages (ughh, don't get me started), the roles for women become more peripheral. Since I take everything from the page, there can be some unanswered questions when researching a TV or film role. It takes a boldness of character to fill in those blanks which aren't in the script. I'm not hard-wired to be that confident about making arbitrary choices. Nevertheless, you're expected to show up and strut your stuff, usually with minimal time for discussion. I prefer collaboration where possible. I love the rehearsal process, being challenged by a director and feeling I'm in synch with his or her wishes as well as those of my fellow actors.

MA: What has been your favourite role so far?

FR: I tend to fall in love with the character I'm playing at any given time. But certainly, Mrs. Lovett, in *Sweeney Todd*, Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*, and Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* were roles I adored playing.

MA: Who are your idols?

FR: **Jennifer Phipps** is an actor I've admired since I was a university student. I first saw her in *The Entertainer* with **Gerard Parkes** at the Centaur Theatre in Montreal. She was so alive and incandescent. And to this day, she is a performer who changes one's notion of time whenever she's on stage. She transforms the air she inhabits. She's our **Judi Dench**. **Martha Henry**. **Shirley Douglas**... And then there's **Meryl**. To see her become so many completely



“Canadian ownership of our airwaves is essential if we want to retain any sense of our culture and who we are.”

different personas so seamlessly is an experience in alchemy. Such versatility. That's always been the name of the game for me. And she seems to find real joy in every role she plays, and that draws us to the character instantly. There is huge charm, intelligence and ease in her craft. And, finally, **Maggie Smith**, for her mastery of the word. She makes the English language delicious. Her sense of irony gives any sentence its requisite due of pain and comedy.

MA: You have been an ACTRA advocate for performers on a number of issues. Which issues are you most passionate about?

FR: I can't really point to one issue being more important than another.

My father taught me to believe in government and the political process. To meet politicians who know their brief and understand where the arts fit into society is inspirational. Unfortunately, there are also those whose ignorance about what we do is fairly jaw-dropping. I remember one such MP whose notions of 'arts appreciation' seemed to be listening to satellite radio in his car ("wow, all those stations").

Canadian ownership of our airwaves is essential if we want to retain any sense of our culture and who we are. The creative output of any country is how others see us and define us. And a country's treatment of its artists is a good bell-weather of its health as a nation. Copyright is what gives the artist status, in terms of owning his or her work. Rapidly changing technology makes that a hot issue. There's always been a revenue stream that worked and it meant that artists were remunerated; the sums may have been really modest, but it worked. Now, with the proliferation of web driven content, that's all up for grabs. And we know that the broadcasters, ISPs and advertisers do just fine, no matter what. I get so frustrated when we have to justify ourselves in economic

terms, because it always begs the question, 'if you're so good, how come you're not rich?' I think the culture of celebrity has done such damage to artists. There's the perception that we're absurdly well paid and do nothing but sit in our director's chairs, bitching over our lattes. When the reality is more often than not, an actor struggles to get by, just to make a living.

Governments need to understand that the idea of supporting risk and diversity in the arts and nurturing young artists is vital. Diversity is part of what makes Canada such an interesting place to live. And yes, it is a really good investment.

MA: If you had any advice for thirsty, curious actors out there, what would it be?

FR: When I was younger I'd work so hard to remove any personal idiosyncrasies that might give a lie to a certain character. I relaxed that over time because I realized some were peeking through anyway. Something told me to take some of the pressure off myself - perhaps that wasn't the most important aspect of a performance. Being true to a character is more about finding her soul. What's on the outside is more like the appetizer; the soul is the main course of who the person is. If you ain't got that, you ain't got nothin'.

As someone who has always taken herself way too seriously, I can confidently advise young actors: DON'T. Be curious about others. Help someone. That's ALL that matters, really.



Mary Ashton is one of the stars on *Dan for Mayor*, a CTV sitcom going into its second season. She proudly calls Toronto her home and ACTRA her union.



Pointing

ACTRA member Christian Potenza produces a TIP film

ACTRA members know what it's like to step onto a feature film set filled with massive HMI's, unlimited dolly track, and traditional 35mm Arriflex cameras. So when veteran heavy-weight actors like **Jayne Eastwood** and **Art Hindle** walked onto the set of *Moon Point* for the first time, we were a little apprehensive in revealing our production camera of choice: the tiny Canon 7D. Armed with only a tiny DSLR, some sound recording gear, a few unique locations and a modest-sized crew, our production team was able to take an ambitious 95-page script and turn it into something magical.

"It was like the perfect storm of filmmaking," says Hindle reflecting on *Moon Point*, currently in post-production. "Everything came together — a perfect script, perfect cast, and perfect crew who were all unfailingly sacrificial to the final product. I was truly excited and appreciative of Christian's organizing efforts. He is an example of how organizing is every member's responsibility and how much better a product you can get when you insist that something goes union."

That product, from the mind of director **Sean Cisterna**, concerns a lethargic young man named Darryl (**Nick McKinlay**) who decides to seek out his childhood crush, Sarah (**Kristen Gutoskie**). With only an electric scooter, operated by his disabled friend Femur (**Kyle Mac**), and a garden wagon attached to its rear, the unlikely duo embark on a coming-of-age journey that sees them face countless trials and tribulations. Along the way, the boys picks up Kristen (played by the über-talented **Paula Brancati**), and encounter a variety of bizarre characters along the open road.

Fantastic concept, right? And to think, 3 weeks before production, this project was scheduled to go the dreaded non-union route.

It all started with a Facebook message. "Hey Christian, I'm making a movie in a few weeks and would love to pick your brain on a few things." Cisterna met me for coffee shortly thereafter, asking if I knew any talented up-and-comers in the non-union world. "Why do you want to go non-union?"

I asked. Sean wondered if he could manage union paperwork and rules. As an ACTRA member, I thought, 'no better time to try my hand at this producing thing'. I suggested — well, maybe tempted is a better word — him with a list of names of actor colleagues that I was sure I could pull a favour from. And from that point on, there was no turning back. It was at that moment, I took off my 'actor' hat and donned one that read 'producer'.

We went into the ACTRA Toronto offices to meet with Toronto Indie Production coordinator **Tasso Lakas**, and even he was skeptical about our ability to pull this off. After sharing our production strategy, our resources and our financing scenario, Tasso bought into what we were selling and gave us his stamp of approval to go forward with whatever ACTRA talent we could access. Let me remind you, at this point we're only 14 days from day one of principal photography and, at this point, we have zero cast and 30 speaking roles to fill. This, my friends, is what even the wackiest dragons den participants would call a hope and a prayer.

We're now only a week away from our first day of principal photography and we've finally got some names on paper. **Art Hindle**, yes, **Jayne Eastwood**, yes, **Linda Kash**, yes, **Boyd Banks**, yes — these great names were all falling into place. People were rallying around this project and all wanted to come in and do their part, even if it was just one line. That is where the magic of this project really grew. People were allowed to come in and just act. They had free range to interpret as they wished and they killed it every time! We had single lines grow to 5 minute monologues, 2 pages shrink to blank stares. People were bringing their all and putting their mark on this film.

Actors have it easy. I can say this now that I've been on both sides of the filmmaking line. Actors have to memorize lines, deliver performances to the best of their abilities and ask questions of their director. Producers, on the other hand, have to field questions from actors all the way down the chain to the eager production assistants, while ensuring that

to the Moon

by Christian Potenza

the production stays on budget and on schedule... and deal with the multitude of tiny issues that come up every day. Like acting, it involves some quick thinking on your feet... however, there are no second takes when you're producing.

But while producing a film is difficult work, it is manageable. I ain't joshin' you. I, Christian Potenza, just produced a real feature film! As ACTRA members, we have the benefit of a being a part of a tight-knit, supportive community. If you want to make a film of your own, you need nothing but a little bit of equity investment and the resources immediately surrounding you.

Moon Point utilized a small but determined crew, and shooting on DSLRs allowed us to set up quickly and have time to focus on actors' performances. Comedian **Jessica Holmes** agreed to do a cameo in our film as the leader of an alcoholics' anonymous meeting that our lead characters stumble in on. Her character had one or two lines in the script... but thanks to the ease of the Canon 7D's set up, Jessica was encouraged to do what she does best: improv. Her two lines in the script have evolved into a 5 minute monologue filled with comedic gold in the finished film. Actors and crew members had to bite their hands to control their laughter. Jessica just killed it. "I'm comedically at my best when there are zero boundaries or walls," explains Holmes, who went on a improvisational tirade in the film about her husband Hank (played by real-life husband **Scott Yaphe**) and his drunken relationship with squirrels. "This stuff is in my mind all the time, but this is the first time I was allowed to use it!"

We didn't have a massive crew but that was part of the fun, as Production Manager **Alex Verdurmen** pointed out. "We fostered an atmosphere of creative collaboration; everyone was pitching in and the film was only better for it." It was this atmosphere that really helped our young leads grow as performers. It was "an amazing experience with the challenge of playing off the veteran actors," says **Paula Brancati**. The old guys were coming in and teaching these young kids some things about the business they were just getting started in. And the excitement for producing quality material of their own grew with other ACTRA members who appear in *Moon Point*. Comedian **James Hartnett** (of YTV's *That's So Weird*) was particularly interested in our production workflow. "I didn't think a movie could look that good on that kind of camera," says Hartnett, who produces his own series of funny viral videos. "You don't need a huge crew or crazy equipment to make something look really cool as long as you have funny performances and great writing."

To quote Sean Cisterna, "This was designed to be a fun, gritty road movie shot with non-union talent, but thanks to

Christian Potenza and the helpful staff at the ACTRA Toronto office, it's become something much bigger than I ever anticipated." Director Cisterna admitted that "at first I was apprehensive about signing with ACTRA because I didn't want to deal with the rules that come along with being signatory to the IPA. But after the experience on *Moon Point* — the passion and talent that each actor brought — I'll never go do another non-union film. **Linda Kash** said it best on her last day on set - 'we come with paperwork... but we're worth it'. And she's right."

"We are very proud of the film and what we have been able to achieve with a limited budget," says *Moon Point*'s Executive Producer **Avi Federgreen** (of the box-office hit *One Week* and the recent TIFF-opener *Score: A Hockey Musical*). "It is our hope that we will be able to take this sweet, funny, and wonderfully special film and have it become a festival darling at TIFF and festivals around the world."

Yes, producing a film is difficult, strenuous, stressful work... but the journey through production is much easier with the help of your fellow ACTRA members and the union as a whole. *Moon Point* isn't just a film - it's an example of the reach and community within our wonderful industry. People gave the project everything they had, we worked long hours and pushed ourselves harder than ever imaginable but even on the last day everyone was coming to work with the same enthusiasm and vigor they had on day 1, and we hope it shows. I can't wait to share *Moon Point* with you, my friends and colleagues, who helped make this the little film that could.

Cast with crew of *Moon Point*. From left to right: Kyle Mac, Paula Brancati, Nick McKinlay, Kristen Gutoskie, director Sean Cisterna, Christian Potenza, Production Manager Alex Verdurmen. Photo courtesy of Mythic Productions Inc.





NOT
AS SEEN ON
TV

“There are not only racial diversity issues. There are gender diversity issues, sexual orientation issues, diverse abilities issues.”
- Zaib Shaikh

SHARING THE SPOTLIGHT

By Andrew Moodie

In November of 2010, the 25th annual Gemini awards were held at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre, and for me, it will be the awards ceremony that changed everything. There was the touching win for *Less Than Kind*. There was also, however, the 2 Gemini wins for **Clé Bennett**. Clé is an enigmatic young black actor who not only gave a riveting performance in the Hungry Eyes production of *Guns*, but also beat out some heavy competition to win a 2nd Gemini for *The Line*. Damn. Wow.

In the days after the awards I was actually expecting more... well, I don't know what I was expecting, but when a young black actor beats **Christopher Plummer** for a Gemini I guess I was expecting the media to recognize what an incredible milestone it is for people of colour in the Canadian film industry. But maybe that's a good thing. I honestly don't know.

I, like many actors of colour, have struggled with the issue of diversity in film and television. But what does that mean exactly? For instance, I know many MANY white actors who are freaking BRILLIANT who struggle as much as I do for work, if not more so. I'm thinking of a couple right now who are probably reading this article, thinking, 'Andrew, dude, you may be black but you've got a sweet gig at TVO, and I don't know how the hell I'm gonna pay the mortgage next month'. The sad truth is that, in this country, nobody is



given a free ride, no matter what your colour. However, there are certain possibilities that are less likely for one person than another because of their race. It's impossible to quantify a possibility, but in acting, that's all we got. It's what we live for. It's what keeps us going into that next audition, self-hypnotizing ourselves with a determined, 'Can DO! I'm gonna get this one!' attitude. And when those possibilities are reduced, well, it makes the 'Can DO! I'm gonna get this one' harder to believe in.

So where are we at now? Have the barriers to diversity truly been broken? I decided to talk to a couple of people in the industry who are in the know.

"We are in a good place, but we can't

rest on our laurels." **Zaib Shaikh** is a writer, director, producer, freakishly handsome star of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. A self-described 'Brown Canadian', he is acutely aware of the challenges that his race plays in casting. "I've been looked over because of my skin, but I've been blessed because the show I'm on needs me to be the colour, religion and person that I am." Zaib is aware that his role on one of Canada's hit sitcoms has made him one of the fortunate few, but he is also aware that there are not only racial diversity issues, "There are gender diversity issues, sexual orientation issues, diverse abilities issues. [We] must celebrate and recognize the wins, and those that are working to



Clé Bennett wins two 2010 Performance Gemini awards
Photo: John White Photography

achieve equality on all fronts. A lot of good stuff going on, but if the goal is to not have these articles then there is still a lot of work to be done.”

When NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox sent executives to Toronto for a casting session in August, Productions Without Borders partnered with them for the “Making Diversity Matter Mixer” to showcase diverse talent behind the scenes. **Karen King-Chigbo**, the Chair of PWB, and a Production Executive for Drama Content at Shaw Media, brought together some of Canada’s top diverse writers, directors and producers of drama series to meet the American and Canadian broadcasters.

A former feature film and NFB producer, she’s one of the most experienced people of colour in mainstream television in Canada, and she has developed a step by step system for experiencing the benefits of diversity in film and television production.

“This is a fantastic year for diversity and the Academy needs to be recognized for that”, King-Chigbo says. “*Hungry Eyes* raised the bar on what’s coming out of the black community with *Guns* winning five of their eight nominations. Huge year for male black actors: three actors nominated in one category. We’ve never seen that before. **Sun Li** wins Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a miniseries for *Iron Road* for her first English-speaking role. It speaks to the growth and the talent. The academy needs to be given huge props for recognizing diverse talent.” When I asked her about the challenges that still remain in the industry, she made a very good point about inclusion behind the camera needing to catch up with the changing demographics. “ACTRA is 45% diverse, because the whole industry made colour-blind casting a reality. It’s time to build on that and get the whole industry to appreciate the benefits of inclusion off-camera too.”

Diversity on-camera wasn’t always the case. **Brenda Kamino** is an actor and teacher of Asian descent, and she remembers a time when commercials on television didn’t reflect the Canadian cultural reality. “Commercials are much more interesting now. They don’t make you go, ‘What’s wrong with this picture?’ Even white people were saying what’s wrong with this picture.” Brenda has been a diversity activist for years, and she remembers a time when producers ‘just didn’t know what to do with you’. “Film and TV professes to be real, not like theatre. And so they must have an array of faces from different cultures; but the faces are still more background and less major. They populate their world with diversity but not the main characters.”

One of the reasons why Karen King-Chigbo is so passionate about diversity is because she sees how easily we could be enhancing our programs and our

bottom lines with diversity and inclusion if the industry all got on the same page. And as film director **Clement Virgo** points out, there are other factors. “With the economic downturn of 2008, they want to maintain their audience and there’s less room when there’s hard economic times. It’s harder in a time of economic stress, as opposed to better times. There is a retrenching.” I asked Clement about the future. Will we ever see a program starring someone like **Arnold Pinnock**? The guy is uber-talented, uber-handsome, painfully so. Why can’t he be the face of Canadian television? “It’s a matter of the people at the network,” says Clement. “There could be improvement. Americans do a better job because the population is different; people on streets represent people on the show.”

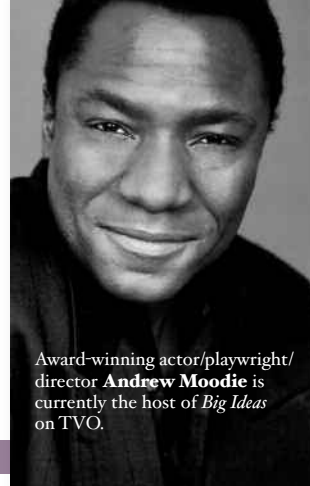
Brenda is convinced that we have to return to activism. “We who are in the front lines should take back the reins. My perspective comes from a disgruntled perspective, but we’re the only ones who benefit, so we have to get back in the game, make more noise.”

Karen King-Chigbo, not surprisingly, has taken on a leadership role in the future of diversity in Canadian film and television. She has founded Productions Without Borders and you must check out their website www.productionswithoutborders.com. It’s an organization that is dedicated to getting the film industry to ‘Do it better with Diversity’. “At Productions Without Borders, we take diversity to the next level. Our market has changed in the same way that the banks’ market has changed. Networks cater to a mainstream audience. Well, the mainstream looks different from 20 years ago. A diverse marketplace can be a real factor at winning that ratings game. But writers’ rooms are still very white. If we are able to do a better job of making a Korean viewer feel like we are tapping into the little things that matter in his or her life, then that’s going to make them stop and stay on the dial.”

Zaib has taken a leadership role as well, using his star power to create Governor Films. “Governor Films is not only about diversity in front of the camera,

it's about diversity of personnel, business model, formats, it's about giving back. It's our responsibility to help, to create opportunities. We're at a great place, but we don't have to stop. We will be in a great place when we don't need diversity committees."

So things have definitely changed from the days of *Night Heat* and *Road to Avonlea*. Clé has proved that the possibilities of what an actor of colour can accomplish have expanded. I've always said, diversity is not about taking the spotlight away from anyone, it's about sharing the spotlight together. And it looks like the spotlight has gotten just a little bit bigger, and a little bit brighter.



Award-winning actor/playwright/director **Andrew Moodie** is currently the host of *Big Ideas* on TVO.

Is it **OUR** turn yet?

ACTRA Toronto's Diversity Committee dares to hope

When **Heather Allin** was elected President of ACTRA Toronto, one of the key planks in her platform was Diversity. And ACTRA Toronto's Diversity Committee, under the helm of **Jani Lauzon**, has been very busy indeed. In less than a year they have managed three major initiatives and have more planned.

First up, they launched **CastingDiversity.ca**, a talent database for ACTRA Toronto's physically and culturally diverse performers. An easy to find, unique URL, CastingDiversity.ca is a free service to signatory producers and Casting Directors. Last fall, on its annual trip to promote Toronto to L.A., ACTRA Toronto introduced network executives to the database and they found it beautiful and simple.

Then NBC came calling, saying that they wanted to do an open call for Diversity in Toronto in the summer. They wanted to scout a wide range of diverse Toronto talent for their productions currently and tentatively shooting here. The Diversity Committee worked closely with the City of Toronto Film and Television Office to secure a Leslieville location for the event. On a scorching summer day, ACTRA provided performers with chairs, water and snacks. Over 500 performers were seen, over 100 called back and many more submitted reels. Local Casting Director, **Millie Tom**, who was brought in by NBC for the event, says she too found talent through the process that she hadn't previously known.

But NBC wasn't finished yet. They wanted to come back for another chance to look specifically at First Nations talent. Performers travelled from across Canada for the event which was scheduled to coincide with the imagineNATIVE Film Festival. Network Execs attended screenings at the festival and ACTRA Toronto hosted and staffed the audition call in our boardroom.

NBC Diversity Executives say NBC is fully committed to Diversity and they say that this season's primetime series are the proof. Interestingly, it was a civil rights protest which spurred the American studios to make a corporate commitment to diversity. In 1999/2000,



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It's free. It's all you. castingdiversity.ca

under the leadership of then CEO **Kweisi Mfume**, the NAACP, together with a coalition of Hispanic, Asian Pacific American and American Indian groups, threatened a boycott and legal action against the major networks if they didn't start seeing themselves on TV. In January 2000, Memorandums of Understandings were signed with NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox committing the networks to actively promote diversity on screen.

Here in Canada, our national public broadcaster is singing the same tune. **Jason Knight**, Casting Consultant for CBC, reports that CBC is communicating to producers and Casting Directors a serious commitment to reflecting Canada's diverse population in all their shows. Knight recently signed on to CastingDiversity.ca. You're on it, right?

The Committee is now brainstorming their 2011 initiatives. We're not there yet. We know that. Diverse performers are tired of playing pimps, maids, terrorists and computer programmers. But with all this positive news on the diversity file, is it too much to hope that it may finally be our turn?

The Diversity Committee



Jani Lauzon, chair of ACTRA Toronto Diversity Committee, addresses awaiting performers at NBC open call. Photo: Janesse Leung



National Commercial Agreement

Heading to the bargaining table

Brian Topp

After a relatively quiet period in negotiations, ACTRA is gearing up to go back to the bargaining table on our major agreements. First up is the National Commercial Agreement (NCA), due to expire this year. What are the issues? What's the process? And how can you get involved?

As with every agreement, we'll be thinking about the economics of the NCA and what an appropriate pay settlement might be. The commercial industry will recover strongly during the term of the next NCA (2011-2014, likely) as Canada emerges from recession – possibly with much of the new growth occurring in new digital markets. Performers should share in that growth.

On the other hand, today's bargaining environment is not a great one for pay settlements, and most unions are been careful to keep their pay proposals fairly modest. We'll be asking you for your views about that.

Some significant changes were made to the last NCA. Two that remain on the minds of both parties are changes to the definition of the "silent on camera" work category, and rates and terms that apply to new media.

With regard to the "SOC" category, the NCA was amended

to bring our job definitions somewhat more in line with those you find under the Screen Actors' Guild commercial agreement. This change was made in response to representations from advertising agencies that our old rules were creating a compelling incentive for agencies to shoot commercials overseas, and were also a strong disincentive against large-cast commercials. We don't like losing commercial shoots to overseas locations. And we do like large-cast productions, since they represent more work opportunity for members. So we updated the definition.

ACTRA's old rules governing new media productions were clearly untenable for a number of persuasive technical reasons (for example, we had terms that charge a full session fee for each website a commercial would appear on. In modern new media advertising, commercials can appear on hundreds of blogs and other sites).

We therefore modernized the new media rules, broadly speaking bringing them into line with the new media approach agreed to with studios and Canadian producers after the 2007 ACTRA IPA strike. Again, we were on the hunt for terms and conditions that would work in the industry and therefore create more work opportunities for members.

How did these two measures work out?

That could prove to be the focus of the coming negotiations. We're going to be consulting members about what their experiences have been under the new rules here. And we'll be researching what the overall economic effects have been (we already know that new media production under the NCA has almost tripled since these rules were rewritten).

We know our counterparties (two trade associations representing advertisers and agencies) are also out consulting their members on these issues.

So what's the process?

As you read this, ACTRA Toronto will be consulting members who have worked under the NCA about its terms. We'll also be speaking to other stakeholders, like our agent community. Ultimately, feedback will be considered by ACTRA Toronto council; we'll formulate our proposals; we'll discuss them with colleagues from the rest of the union across Canada; and then, likely in early spring, discussions will begin with the engagers aiming at a new agreement.

How can you take part?

Check out ACTRA Toronto's website. There will be a questionnaire inviting you to comment on the issues around this agreement. Watch for emails – we'll be writing to members asking for their views. Attend the members' conference – we'll be inviting comment at a workshop there. And watch for news – we'll be regularly reporting on progress.



Brian Topp is the Executive Director of ACTRA Toronto and the author of *How We Almost Gave the Tories the Boot: The Inside Story Behind the Coalition*.

ACTRA Toronto Members'



Joe Dinicol serves Wayne Robson and Jayne Eastwood
Photo courtesy of ServiTude Productions Inc.

ServiTude

Telefilm Canada Features Comedy Lab has its first project out of the gate. *ServiTude*, starring **Joe Dinicol**, recently wrapped shooting in Toronto. The low-budget feature, written by **Michael Sparaga** and directed by **Warren Sonoda**, is billed as a high “steaks” comedy of revenge. The story follows a group of frustrated waiters who band together and take over their restaurant for one glorious, revenge-filled night when they discover that they are all about to be fired. Recognizing that Canada exports comedy, Telefilm started its three-year Comedy Lab program in 2009. The Comedy Lab, chaired by **Eugene Levy** and funded by Telefilm Canada through the Canada Feature Film Fund, the CFC and Just For Laughs, brings together Canadian producers and their creative teams and comedy scripts with leading international comedic mentors to develop and package five English-language theatrical feature comedies. Participants spend some time in L.A. with top comedy mentors. *ServiTude*, for example, was mentored by **Ivan Reitman**, among others. *ServiTude* is tentatively scheduled for theatrical release in Canada in fall 2011.

Telefilm recently announced the participants for the second year of its Comedy Lab. They include 3 Ontario projects, 2 of which have ACTRA Toronto members as writers: El Duo Motion Pictures’ buddy comedy *The Wild Society*: producers **Robert Scarborough** and **Shawn Myrick**, writer/director **Matthew Atkinson** and writer **Brendan Gall** and Project 10 Productions’ horror comedy *The House They Screamed In*: producer **Andrew Barnsley**, writer/director **Vivieno Caldinelli** and writer **Bob Kerr**.

ACTRA Toronto
congratulates its members
honoured with Performance
Gemini Awards in 2010

Charlotte Arnold
Clé Bennett
Kim Cattrall
Caroline Cave
Gavin Crawford
Catherine Disher
Geri Hall
Debra Lynne-McCabe
Shaun Majumder
Tatiana Maslany
Michael Riley



Shaun Majumder Photo courtesy of CBC Television



My agency doesn't ask me to work for free!

Last fall, at Toronto Fashion Week, models and their agents joined together to protest the practice of designers and top retailers booking models to work runway shows for free. **Brandon Hall**, women's agent at Sutherland Models, put together a protest campaign with agencies Elite, Push, Spot 6 and B & M and with the support of the Fashion Design Council of Canada. The agents dressed their models backstage in T-shirts which read: "My agency doesn't ask me to work for free!" The aim of the campaign was to send a message to the models whose agents purportedly justified the lack of a fair wage as an opportunity for new models to gain experience and clients. **Alicia Bell**, president of Elite Models, said it's all about the principle. "Models have a skill and they should be paid," she was quoted as saying. "Undercutting really hurts the industry", says Brandon Hall, "At Sutherland, we fight for our models to get the best rate." ACTRA covers models working in its jurisdiction of recorded media. "ACTRA is great," says Hall, "Too bad we don't have a union for print and runway!"



Model Addison Gill of Sutherland Models joined the protest.
PHOTO: ERWIN LOEWEN



Eric Peterson, Tabby Johnson, Fiona Reid, Art Hindle, Peter Tabuns, John de Klein, Chris Gaultier and Heather Allin celebrate the bill passing second reading.

Labour Stability in the Film and Television Industry Act

ACTRA Toronto members came out in support of a private member's bill which would bring labour stability to the film and television sector. The bill, introduced by **Peter Tabuns** (NDP MPP for Toronto Danforth), would ensure that any unresolved disputes arising out of long standing collective agreements would be heard by The Ontario Labour Relations Board, the appropriate body to resolve labour disputes. President **Heather Allin** spoke at the press conference together with **Jim Biros** from the Toronto Musicians' Association and **Jonathon Ahee**, President of Nabet 700 CEP who together with The Directors Guild of Canada all support the proposed bill. ACTRA Toronto members were out in force to line the viewers' gallery at second reading, and were thrilled to see it pass.

Equity Showcase's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Fundraising Party

ACTRA Toronto was delighted to support and attend the fundraising party for our friends at Equity Showcase which took place at Bistro 990 in November. The evening was organized by **Karen Ivany** (our own ACTRA Awards in Toronto producer) and hosted by ACTRA Toronto councillors **Colin Mochrie** and **David Macniven** (Equity Showcase President). Artwork by **Jennifer Wigmore** formed part of the silent auction. **Gordon Pinsent**, honorary chair of Equity Showcase Theatre, spoke at the event which announced a season named after his wife and founding member **Charmion King**. Musical entertainment was provided by **Kathryn Rose**.



Heather Allin re-elected as President of ACTRA Toronto

Heather Allin received a ringing endorsement from Governing Council in January. Having led the union for a two-year term, Council voted to re-elect Allin for a second term. According to ACTRA Toronto's By-laws, all Councilors are elected for a term of two years and the President may not sit for more than two consecutive terms. "I am honoured to have the confidence of the Governing Council and to be re-elected for a second term," says Heather. "I look forward to continuing the work we have begun."

Copy Wrong

Thanks to a last minute shout-out by our VP of Communications, **David Gale**, many ACTRA members were able to attend a Town Hall Meeting organized by Liberal MP **Gerard Kennedy**. Also present was Liberal MP **Pablo Rodriguez**, Opposition Critic for Canadian Heritage. Although Rodriguez said nearly all the right things in his opening remarks, a large group of questioners waited patiently at the audience microphone to put his feet to the fire on Bill C-32. There was a well represented cross-section of Arts & Culture questioners from the Music Industry, Publishing, IATSE, Theatre, Documentary and our own **Lynn Mason Green** voicing actors concerns. The questions tested the knowledge of Mr. Rodriguez who, along with 6 Conservatives and 5 other Opposition MPs, makes up the Committee examining Bill C-32 and (hopefully) recommending amendments. There is no doubt that this bill is completely unsatisfactory and should, in fact, be called the "Copywrong Bill". Much hard work lies ahead and we all must waste no time spreading the word. This Government needs to hear that Arts & Culture is not only a necessary part of the fabric of who we are as a Nation but also an important part of our Gross Domestic Production (60 + Billion Dollars) and employs over a million Canadians. The Conservatives are calling the Levy we want on Digital Audio Recorders to recompense creators, a TAX! They are using the word "tax" to scare the Liberals and the public alike and painting themselves as Tax Resisters. The only tax that would apply is the tax Creators will pay on the income from their creations! - **Art Hindle**

Walking the picket line with Martin Sheen

ACTRA Toronto members and our President **Heather Allin** has joined the likes of **Martin Sheen** and **Danny Glover** in supporting UNITE HERE!, the union for hotel workers. Members walked the picket line with Martin Sheen during the Toronto Film Festival. "Our industry spends a lot of money on hotels and it's frankly shocking to discover that the people who work so hard to make up the rooms we're paying for are being treated so poorly," Heather Allin stated. "My union will support hotel workers in this city and across the continent. They deserve to make a decent living from the work they do. Hotel owners will face a determined boycott if they aren't fair to the hard working people who make their hotels possible."



Heather Allin walks the Unite Here! picket line with Martin Sheen. Photo: Chris Faulkner

news

It Gets Better **Canada**

Several high profile ACTRA Toronto members have shared their stories of life getting better after teenage bullying on the *It Gets Better Canada* video project. *It Gets Better* is the brainchild of syndicated sex columnist, **Dan Savage**. **Ann-Marie Macdonald**, **Rick Mercer**, **Rex Harrington**, **Diane Flacks** and others add their personal stories to the growing chorus of international voices providing hope to LGBT teens. The project began in response to the suicides of young people bullied for their perceived sexual orientation and now has over 5,000 video testimonials.

Rick Mercer from *It Gets Better Canada*



Alisa Palmer and Ann-Marie MacDonald

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Toronto Indie Production

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Contact: Membership Department Tel: 416-928-2278

Karl Pruner, Director

Ask a Steward

What is TIP?



Clare Johnston

Stewards get many questions about TIP films. TIP (Toronto Indie Production) is a guideline for super-low budget theatrical productions, both features and shorts. The main feature of TIP which Performers have questions about is the low minimum fees. Depending on a film's total overall budget, minimum fees can be as low as \$140 for a Principal Actor, \$110 for an Actor and \$90 for a Background performer, for an 8-hour minimum call. Of course, as with all our other collective agreements, Performers have the right to negotiate above minimum rates.

The TIP guidelines were set up, by members, as a way to offer new and emerging filmmakers, who could not afford full IPA rates, an opportunity to work with union talent. Because these rates essentially mean that Performers are donating a large portion of their fee, there are more stringent working condition limitations on TIP Productions. For example, the work day cannot go over 12 hours. Preference of Engagement is more stringent as well – TIP Producers can only engage ACTRA members and Apprentices (and ACTRA Additional Background Performers for Background roles).

If you have been cast in a Principal or Actor role on a TIP film, you may have noticed that your contract is different from the regular IPA contract. For example, the Use Fee provisions are different. Producers do not have the option to elect a Pre-payment or an Advance payment on residuals. Because TIP is specifically for theatrical use, TIP films may be exploited theatrically for one year without further payment to the Performers, but all other exploitation requires a payment of 3.6% of Gross Revenues to Performers' Rights Society who distributes the monies among the cast.

The TIP program has been tremendously successful. The Toronto International Film Festival typically always features a number of TIP shorts and features. As well, TIP films have garnered numerous awards and nominations at international festivals.

If you are a Performer who has been offered a role on a TIP film, or if you are looking to produce a film using the TIP guideline, please check out the info on our website at www.actratoronto.com/produce/TIP.html

Clare Johnston

Welcome New Members!



Daniel Abrahamson	Rosemary Doyle	Steven Lazar	Oliver Sabiston
Alden Adair	Jovan Drakul	Sidney Leeder	Lili Sam
Ali Adatia	Tamara Duarte	Jasmine Leung	Vadim Samokhleb
Kamiran Aldabbagh	Matt Duncan	David Light	Tinika Sampson
Michelle Alexander	Wilma Dyson	Susan A Lock	Mariah Sousa Sampson
Tessa Alves	Julian Elia	Owen Lock	Gia Sandhu
David Amito	Denika Ellis-Dawson	Dennis Long	Daniel Sawh
Rachael Ancheril	Miles Faber	Daryl Lorette	Sarah Scheffer
Tes Andemariam	Pamela Farrauto	Jake Loube	Ryna Schickler
Jordan Andonov	Victor Federico	David Louie	Jeff Schissler
Chase Anthony	Elisabeth Feltaous	David B Love	Daniel Sawh
Aris Athanasopoulos	Britt Fisher	Carmine Lucarelli	Julia Sgarlata
Nicolas Attieh	Patrick Fitzgerald	Jeffrey R Lurie	Shairah
Allison Augustin	Donal Foley	Devon Macdonald	Aidan Shipley
Ramzi Ayash	Matt Foliott	Donnie Macphree	Yaniv Simard
Julia Balais	Dan Fox	Denise Mader	Prem Singh
Keith Bambury	John Allan Fraser	Jeigh Madjus	Elijah Slater
Peter Barrett	John Ghiz	Josh Madryga	Harrison Smith
Michael Bassily	Emma Gibbs	Alex Mallari Jr	Paul Soren
Paul Beer	Martha Girvin	Jasmeen Mandair	Linda Speck
Rob Bennett	Howard Gord	Dylan Mandlsohn	Matthew A Spencer
Sarah Joy Bennett	Tal Gottfried	Elyse Mason	Patricia Stathi
Alexandria Benoit	Azer Greco	Sean Masterson	Marty Stelnick
James Bilik	Aidan Greene	Sabrina Matthews	Jana Stephenson
Brianna Bisson	Jesse Griffiths	Ryan McCallum	Mark Strong
Wade Bogert-O'Brien	Amanda Ha	Allison McCaughey	Lindsay Sullivan
Ryan Bondy	Glenn Hall	Craig Mcdermott	Torren Sylvain
Matthew Bradley	Ken Hall	Norman E Mcisaac	Ryan Taerk
Kyle Harrison Breittkopf	Jarek Hardy	Caleb McMullen	Ashley Tam
Julia Catherine Brown	Michael David Harrison	Jodi Medina	Jonathan Tan
Cherise Brown-Hammill	Sean Hauk	Ari Millen	Jennifer Taverner
Sean Browning	Brendan Heard	Tristan Slade Mitchell	Pete Taylor
Kurt Browning	Charlotte Hegele	Steven Morana	Richard Taylor
Philippe Buckland	Téa Helena-Carini	Thamela Mpuuluaona	Joseph Micheal Taylor
Carlyn Burchell	Sean Henderson	John Mucciacito	Kaiman Tevins
Miranda Calderon	Caprice Chantel Herjavec	Michael Murphy	Gregory Terlecki
Jarett Cale	Steven Holmberg	Megan Murphy	Jacqueline Thair
Matthew Campbell	Avigail Humpreys	Ron Mustafaa	Casimir Theriault
Martine Campbell	Scott Hyde	Scott Napoli	Rachel Thernard
Sabrina Campbell	George Iliadis	Hayley Nault	Anne Thompson
Bryant Caplan	Timmy Ingrassia	Jordyn Negri	Grant Tilly
Kerrigan Carbol	Nick Isabella	June Ng	Artem Timofeyev
Marie Carriere Gleason	Anne Jennings	Kataem O'Connor	David Tommasini
Arden Chan	Will Jester	Britne Oldford	Caroline Torti
May Charters	Christina Jol	Gene Opler	Marvin Trail
Jimmy Chimarios	Natalia Jonas	Etanem Oton	James Traquair
Christopher Chow	Ruby Joy	Ian Page	Yuri Tsvitsvadze
Maximus Lee Clements	Sarah Jurgens	Christine Papatits	Mark Uhre
Vanessa Coelho	Catherine Kaiser	Angela Papatits	Charles Vandervaart
Adina Cohen	Roman Kalatchev	Jean Parker	Shamar Walker
Helen Colliander	Kari	Joey Parro	Jennifer Walls
Wesley Connor	Daryn Karp	Adrian Persad	Torri Webster
Arisa Cox	Joel Katz	Nicole Peters	Mark Taras Wiebe
Sarah Cranmer	Tim Kavander	Lauren Peters	Scott Williams
Cassius Crieghtney	Paula Kaye	Ava Preston	Emily Williams
Adam J Cunningham	Robert C Keele	Lawrence Qiao	Teresa Wilson
Jasmine D'Costa	Dwight K Kelsey	Jordan Race	David Wontner
Peter Dacunha	Amber Kent	Nabil Rajo	Jenny Wright
Rebecca Dalton	Chaz Kent	Cameron Ramsauer	Naomi Wright
Sheel Darbar	Lorrie Kerekes	Glynis Ranney	George E. Yapp
Brooks Darnell	Paul "pk" Kingston	Misha Rasiaah	Richard Young
Zarrin Darnell-Martin	Kevin Kirkham	Joel Redmond	Ethan Young
Kalen Davidson	Ken Kogej	Katrina Reynolds	Emma Young
Sergio De La Rocha	Devin Kornblum	Jacob Richter	Tamila Zaslavsky
John De Marco	Diana Kwon	Deklon Roberts	Bailey Xiang Zhang
Andrea Del Campo	Lindsay Kyte	Alie Romano	Angela Zhao
Louis-Philippe Deslauriers	Genevieve L'Esperance	William Rottman	Eleanor Zichy
Maria Dinn	Cody Scott Lancaster	Joe Rubino	
James Paul Dixon	Matthew Lantz	Brett Ryan	
Leeann Downes	D'Arcy Lapointe	Ernie Ryles	

Lights, Camera... Chatter (Teeth, that is)

by John de Klein



Every member of ACTRA has stories about being uncomfortable while filming outdoors, but usually there's one that sticks out above the rest. Mine is January 17, 2005. I was playing a police officer at a funeral on the set of *Four Brothers*, and I was freezing my - really any body part inserted here will do - off. First my ears were bristling to the biting cold, since my police cap left them totally exposed. An hour later, my nose began to feel like it was going to fall off. I started to fear what would be next.

The above plays out regularly when we're cast in scenes that are supposed to portray spring, summer or fall but are being filmed in the middle of winter. Even if the scene is set in winter, sometimes it's just unbearably cold outside. As members of the ACTRA Additional Background Performers (AABP), we often get the worst of these situations. And women, whether actors or background usually get the short end of the deal compared to their male counterparts, because the clothes they're asked to wear often leave them even more exposed to the elements.

John de Klein is an active member of the ACTRA Toronto AABP Caucus Executive and a Gemini nominated writer for his work on *Busy Town Mysteries*.

Additional Background Performers

So here's few tips for everybody to keep in mind as the temperature on set drops:

- 1)** Your Agent might tell you in advance that you'll be working outside, but sometimes details are lost in translation. So YOU should always be prepared just in case.
- 2)** Before leaving home, check the weather reports so YOU know what it's going to be like outdoors.
- 3)** Bring a seasonally appropriate coat. Keep the coat with you to put on and take off between takes. Long coats are especially good for women in dresses.
- 4)** Bring a thin sweater that can be easily hid under wardrobe. Layering is an especially good way of keeping warm.
- 5)** Wear appropriate undergarments - long johns, undershirts, stockings... double or even triple them up for winter.
- 6)** Bring a Blanket - Sometimes production will provide them, but they could run out so, if you have space, bring your own.
- 7)** Hot Packs - are small plastic packets that heat up for hours and fit in your gloves or boots. They're inexpensive and available in most hardware stores.
- 8)** Electric (battery operated) socks will keep your feet toasty. Look for them at your favorite camping or sporting goods store.
- 9)** If you feel production is keeping you and other cast in the cold too long, or if the holding area is not warm enough, you should notify an OSLO, the ACTRA steward or call ACTRA at 416-928-2278.

The big thing for all members of ACTRA to remember is, although our agreements hold productions to certain negotiated standards, in the end, it's your body, your health and your comfort. So, be PROFESSIONAL and be PREPARED for the unexpected!

With warmest regards for the chilly seasons,
John de Klein AABP Member

Lives Lived

*Domini Blythe
Richard Curnock
Mark Dailey
Irene Hogan
Elizabeth Mawson
Leslie Nielsen
Billie Mae Richards
Eric Tunney*

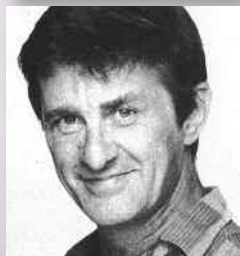
Stunt Tribute

Four stunt performers will be honoured at the February plenary with a special posthumous tribute:

*Chris Lamon • Brent Meyer
Anton Tyukodi • Billy E. Williams*



Chris Lamon



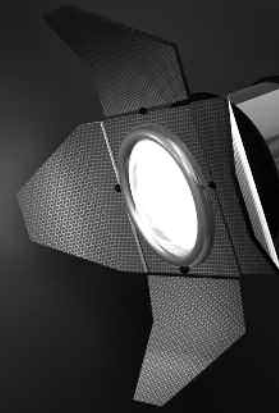
Brent Meyer



Anton Tyukodi



Billy E. Williams



Jackie Burroughs 1939-2010

For almost five decades, Jackie Burroughs maintained a successful acting career in Canada—no mean feat—performing in film, television and theatre. She poured 400% into everything she did, bringing the same wit, intelligence and focus to a one-woman monologue performed for an audience of 25 - her portrayal of Jane Bowles, based on excerpts from the writer's letters, is one of my favourite memories of her on stage - as she did to the roles she is best known for: Kate Flynn, the freespirted photographer who caught Richard Farnsworth's fancy in the 1982 film *The Grey Fox*, and the upright but tenderhearted Hetty King in the CBC's *The Road To Avonlea*.

Jackie cared a LOT about the things she cared about. She preferred rehearsals to performances, journals to overpolished prose, and was a fan of the raw, unguarded moment, in art and life. I met Jackie about 35 years ago, through mutual friends. There was her great charm, of course, and her humour. A conversation with Jackie was always adventurous; you went away from time spent with her feeling intimately understood, valued, challenged, and amused. She was terrific company. My memories of her are almost all non-actor ones: I remember her working like a dog (but not one of her cherished, stew-fed, spoiled dogs) in the vast and beautiful garden she created on the grounds of the house in Mexico where she happily spent part of every year. I can see her bending over, planting rose bushes on the farm near Kingston where her daughter Zoe Yanovksy and family now live. I also have an image of her walking quickly down Parliament St., smoking and underdressed for the winter weather, on her way to a dance class, which she religiously attended all her life. She's straight as an arrow, floating along through the slush on high platform sandals, and frowning slightly — intent on some inner debate. She was a slow, care-

ful reader of books, and was drawn to the writings and letters of women torn between having great loves, and doing great work.

In the course of her career, Jackie enjoyed creative battles with her friend and director Robin Phillips at Stratford. She shared the stage and screen with many talents—Bill Hutt, Peter O'Toole, Sarah Polley, and an army of live rats in the movie *Willard*. She played Maria Callas at the National Arts Centre, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, and batty old ladies too numerous to count; in the last decade alone, in fact, Jackie worked in 24 films.

But the project that she was most proud of, I think, was the 1987 film *A Winter Tan*, which Jackie wrote, co-produced, co-directed, and starred in. Her performance as Maryse Holder, a New York schoolteacher "on vacation from feminism" in Mexico, is breathtaking -vulnerable, quixotic, touching and comic. Jackie based the script on Holder's book *Give Sorrow Words*, the author's account of her sexual pilgrimage in the form of despairing, hilarious letters written to a New York girlfriend. Jackie somehow lifted those rather intellectual, self-conscious lines off the page and fused them into a searing, fearless performance. She was the driving force behind a Canadian film that still feels edgy and original today.

When it was released in 1987, Jackie won the Gemini, for Best Performance. Some critics found *A Winter Tan* a tad too pungent; others didn't know what to make of a film that listed five directors. But one admiring reviewer, Jonathan Rosenbaum, observed that "the film breathes with a single fiery voice and vision".

It still does, thanks to Jackie. *Gracias a su vida*.

Marni Jackson

David French 1939-2010

I was fortunate enough to have been David's life-long close friend. In the seventies, I lived on Bloor Street and he lived on Brunswick Avenue, just a two minute walk away. David got into the habit of coming over practically every morning for a coffee. He would climb up the rickety fire escape up to my apartment every morning like clockwork, the door would be open, he'd come in, we'd have a cup of coffee and we would talk about, theatre, films, books and ... women. As I remember it, we used to talk a lot more about women than art. Then he'd go back to his place and I'd go back to my desk and we'd write for the rest of the day. That used to be our routine for years.

This was a man who knew he wanted to be a playwright when he was in his early teens in the fifties, when no such thing as a Canadian playwright really existed in this country back then. And he was so determined to pursue his dream that he purposely took on dead end jobs to support himself as he started to write his short dramatic pieces. When *Leaving Home* was first done, his job at the time was sweeping floors at Rochdale College.

David was the eternal optimist. He was always so positive about everything and always expected things would work out great. He never missed a single rehearsal of any of his new plays or major remounts. When Soulpepper recently had their revival productions of his four major plays, he was always there. He never interfered with the director's vision, he just enjoyed seeing his plays slowly come to life. Every time I asked him how rehearsals were going, the answer would always be, "Great." Until the final dress rehearsal, when he'd have his usual melt-down and overreact and think it was going to be the biggest disaster of his life. Sure enough, after the final dress rehearsal of the recent Soulpepper production of *Jitters*, I had gone to pick him up and he was screaming his head off in the car about how the actors hadn't even learned their lines yet and the production would be an unmitigated disaster. And then the next day, I picked him up again after the first preview, and it was back to "Great" again as he chuckled away all the way home.

I miss this grouch so much already. He has left such a big hole in our hearts. But we have to remember this when the loss becomes too hard to bear; 'It's not how long we have them, but how much we love them when they're here'. We didn't have David for very long...but we sure loved him.

Hrant Alianak



Graham Harley

1942-2010

I'm grateful for this rare opportunity to proffer a point of view about Graham without fear of being contradicted by him. Graham was, as we all know, a very, very smart guy. Unquestionably, he was the most learned, the most intellectually curious, the quickest study, the most verbally dexterous, and possessed of the most highly detailed memory of anyone I have ever been lucky enough to count as a friend. There were in him those transcendent elements of wit, of warmth, of impatience, of curiosity, of anger—and above all that singular mixture of sweetness and acidity—which made him unlike anybody any of us has ever met.

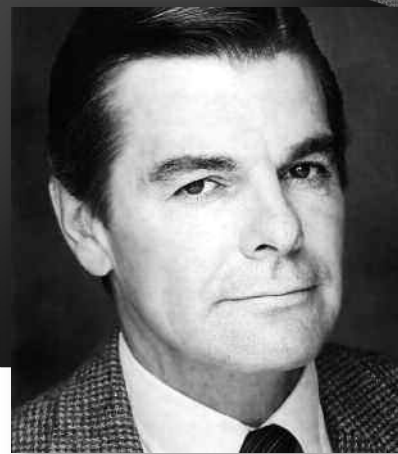
Graham was also startlingly collegial, operating as if he and the rest of us were members of the same troupe of players, and it was up to us all to make the business of waiting backstage and in the green room of life bearable with jokes and ritual exchanges and bits of time-honoured shtick.

But there was nothing perfunctory or mechanistic in the way that he related to his fellow thespians, either in the literal realm of the theatre or on the world-stage. As dry, as droll, or as acerbic as he could be, he was at the same time a person who did everything as if it mattered and treated everyone he encountered as meaningful in the great scheme of things.

He had a passionate attachment to those he perceived as kindred souls, including beloved friends like **Marian Gilsenan** and **Jan MacIntyre**, whose hospital beds he kept vigil at and whose posthumous memorial events he was instrumental in organizing.

The last time I saw Graham, he himself was in a hospital bed. He apologized for not being able to summon the strength for one of his really ferocious trademark hugs. "Never mind," I said to him. "This hug will do." Of course, I didn't say it would have to do because there would be no more where that came from. But Graham knew what I meant. Graham was, as I said, a very, very smart guy. He will be greatly missed.

Erika Ritter



Peter J. McConnell 1938-2010

I met Peter in 1965 in *All My Sons* at the Central Library Theatre. He walked up to me during rehearsal and said, "I'm getting a lot of bad vibes from you." I replied, "I guess it's because you got the part I wanted." We both laughed and became fast friends.

We found we had a lot in common. He had been forced to resign from the Metropolitan Police Department and me from the Toronto Fire Department. It was a macho club in those days. Firefighters and policemen could get time off to play hockey but not for acting, either theatre or film, and we were in a hit play and couldn't miss a performance.

Peter did it all. He was an actor, director, playwright and dramaturge. He founded the Forge with **Carol Bolt** in 1969 and was a co-founder in 1972 and Artistic Director of The Smile Company where many unknown actors and beginners got lots of exposure and experience allowing them to go on to successful careers.

The suffering of a close friend prompted Peter to become one of the leading forces in establishing P.A.L. with **Patty Gale**.

It took four cancers to take Peter away: leukemia, lung, bladder and lymphoma. But he worked out everyday and kept a fabulous garden. He would send visitors home loaded down with fresh vegetables.

His last words to his wife were, "I'd like to have planted one more garden."

Well Peter, you planted a lot of gardens...in the soil and in the theatre and they always produced one hell of a crop! *Farewell "Old Buddy"!*

John Shaw



Denis Simpson

1950-2010

The winter of 1983. There were five of us on stage and we were in the middle of a matinée performance at The Grand Theatre, London, Ontario. At a particularly quiet and sober moment in the play our concentration was briefly broken by a child's voice that came ever so quietly from the darkness of the audience, "Psssst, Denis, Denis, I love you."

Spring. The late 1990's. Walking together down Dundas Street in Toronto. Laughing out loud at some ridiculous story he was regaling me with. A car pulled up alongside us as we waited at an intersection and a guy looking to be in his late twenties rolled down the window and rather raucously called out, "Hey Denis! It was you, wasn't it? You were really Polkeroo weren't you???" Denis just burst out laughing and the stranger gave him a big thumbs up and shouted, "Stay cool, Dude," as the car drove off.

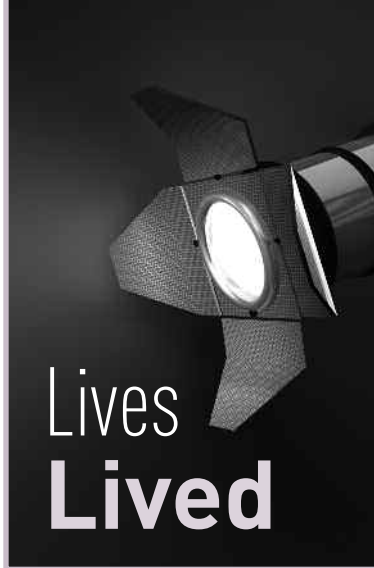
October 2010, within hours of Denis dying - I visited his Facebook page - wanting to see what his own last entry had been. I was stunned to see how many hundreds of entries there were already - notes to Denis he would never read. An outpouring of loving memories that needed to be expressed. And this was hours before his stunning death was announced publicly.

There were stories that made me laugh out loud, and then cry, and then laugh out loud all over again as I know Denis would have too. And I was struck by how completely consistent all these notes from close friends were. How he made us laugh. How outrageous he could be. What a meaningful and forever memorable uncle he was to so many of our children. What a loyal and supportive friend, tremendous talent and a completely gracious, generous man. He was "one vast substantial smile." He was our Denis.

And what I revel in is that Denis not only knew that he was deeply loved by his friends, but that total strangers had been touched by him too.

How many times he said, "Aw, missed him again," as host of *Polka Dot Door*. Well, we'll miss him forever.

Barbara Budd



Ruth Springford

1921-2010

Ruth Springford, the venerable Canadian stage, radio, television and film actor, died November 20. She was 89. Springford began her career at the age of nine when, as she liked to put it, "I began to get paid." From there she became a fixture in Canadian arts and entertainment, mapping out a long and varied career that took her from the studios of CBC to the stages of the Crest and Royal Theatres to film shoots in Hollywood and New Zealand. She was prominent during the CBC's Golden Age of Radio, appearing in hundreds of radio and television productions with stars such as **James Doohan**, **John Drainie**, **Jane Mallett**, **Barry Morse**, **Toby Robins** and many others. Springford's credits include *Maggie Muggins*, *Four's Company*, *Hangin' In*, *A Gift to Last*, *The Frankie Howerd Show* and *The Mystery Maker*, as well as the **Jim Henson** teleplay *The Cube*. She also appeared in the feature films *The Changeling*, with **George C. Scott**, and as Mama Malone (the saloon owner) in *Five Card Stud*, starring **Dean Martin** and **Robert Mitchum**. A long-time member of ACTRA, Springford was the recipient of numerous awards, notably the John Drainie Award in 1979; the Andrew Allan Award for best radio actor; and several Dora Mavor Moore Awards. Springford will be remembered as a talented professional with a wonderful penchant for accents and an unmistakable dramatic voice.



Gina Wilkinson

1960-2010

I first met **Gina Wilkinson** some thirty years ago when we were acting-student-whippersnappers eying the world as our own personal oyster. I was a recent graduate from Studio 58 in Vancouver coming to Montreal to visit my pal **Lindsay Leese** who was attending The National Theatre School with Gina. The first thing I heard about Gina was that she had initiated a plumbing disaster on a date with her boyfriend that involved a bathtub full of chocolate pudding. I was terribly naive and Gina seemed so exotic and exciting. She enjoyed red wine like no one else, wore sarongs, smoked multi-coloured cigarillos and had a father who was an artist. She devoured books like candy, was wickedly funny, had an intimidating intellect, danced like a crazy-woman and was jaw-droppingly, voluptuously gorgeous. Men and women alike fell at her feet in awe. Flash forward to the present and I find myself feeling so utterly bereft at the loss of such a brilliant human yet lucky to have been blessed by her fierce and loyal friendship. Her devotion to her work was unparalleled; whether she was acting, writing, directing or coaching a friend for an audition, her taste was impeccable. In the CBC radio drama studio, in theatres from the Belfry to the Neptune, in guest spots on the best (and worst) TV series and everything in between, Gina had a unique, mesmerizing presence on screen and off. She did nothing in half measures, not even dying. Wearing a hospital gown that she had fashioned into an extraordinary wedding dress, Gina managed a joyous hospital marriage to her great love, **Tom Rooney**, pulling it off with wit and beauty. We shall not look upon her like again.

Beverley Cooper

Donations would be gratefully accepted for the **Gina Wilkinson Fund for Emerging Female Directors**. Please make payable to "Ontario Arts Foundation-in memory of Gina Wilkinson" and mail to **The Ontario Arts Foundation, 151 Bloor Street West, 5th Floor, Toronto Ontario, M5S 1T6, Attention: Alan Walker, Executive Director.**



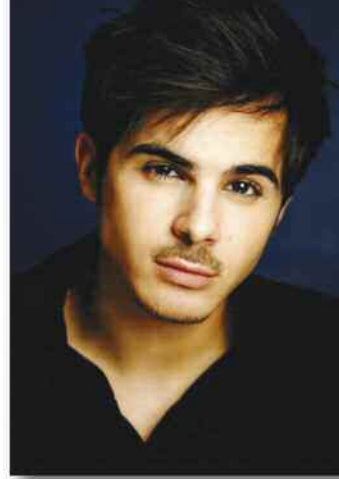
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Adamo Ruggiero

By artists. For artists.

Rising star Adamo Ruggiero has been acting professionally for 14 years. A veteran of *Degrassi: The Next Generation* and now in his third season as host of YTV's *The Next Star*, his accomplished career features stage, film, TV and PSA credits.

Adamo was one of the first performers to join Creative Arts. He has his mortgage with the credit union, as well as a number of other accounts to support his day-to-day banking needs.

"I trust Creative Arts with my finances and thank them for being an ally to the Canadian arts community."



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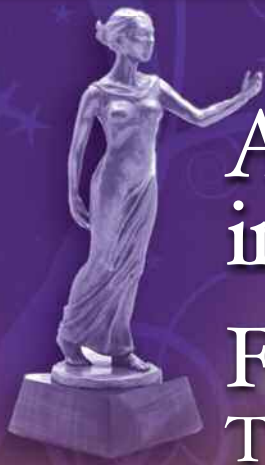
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