

ACTRA
TORONTO

Summer 2011 Volume 20 • Issue 2

THE MAGAZINE FROM

performers

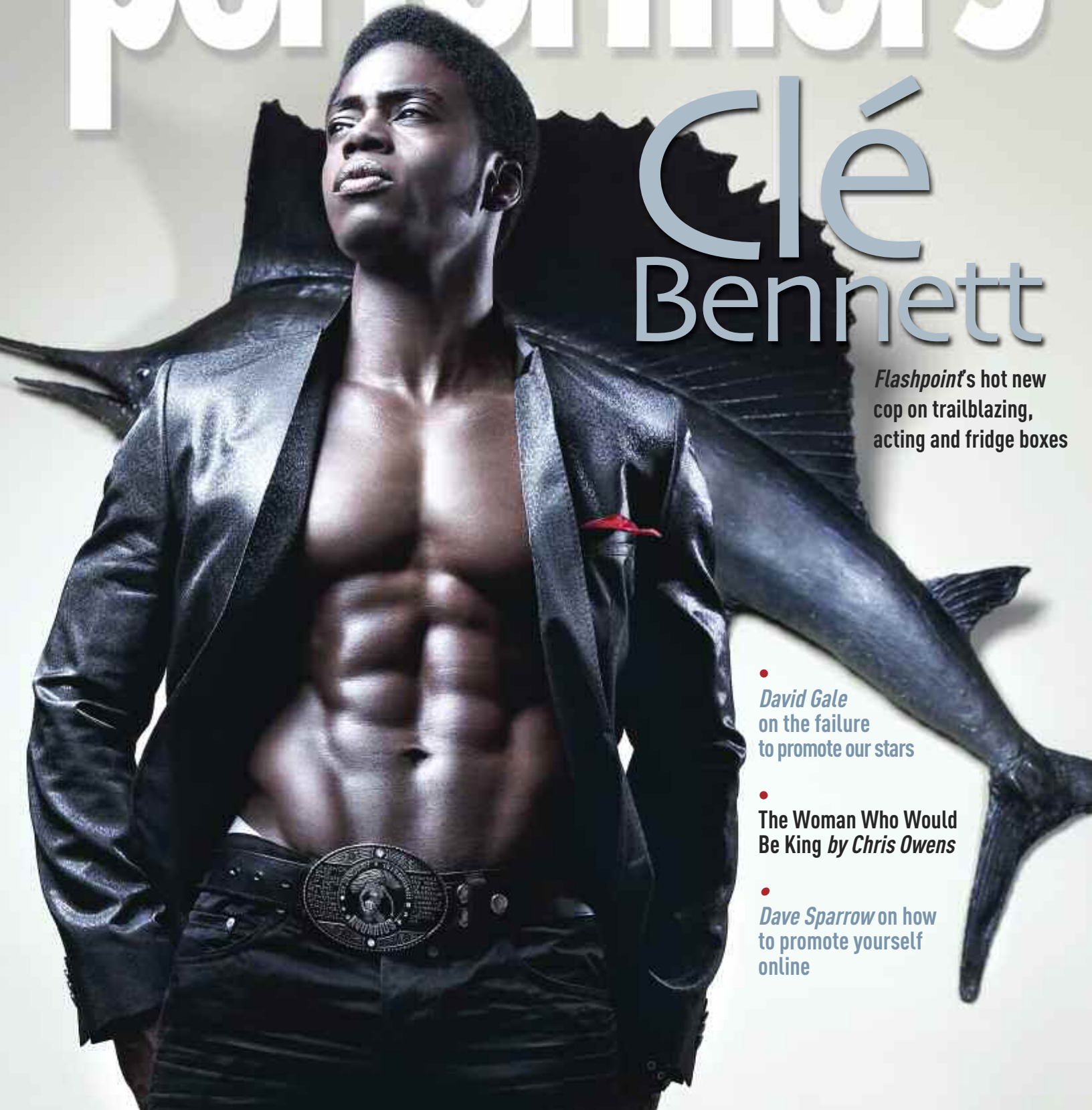
Clé Bennett

Flashpoint's hot new cop on trailblazing, acting and fridge boxes

• *David Gale* on the failure to promote our stars

• *The Woman Who Would Be King* by *Chris Owens*

• *Dave Sparrow* on how to promote yourself online



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ACTRA
TORONTO



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Performers

The magazine from ACTRA Toronto

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**Heather Allin**

President, ACTRA Toronto

Let me tell you where I've been.

To begin, back in bargaining: my fourth time.

I'll set the stage and bring you into the room as we open negotiations on the National Commercial Agreement (NCA). Ours is a smart and seasoned team. I nominated a Toronto team that has depth in bargaining previous contracts, broad and varied experience working under the commercial contract, and awareness of social media. These folks are observant and dedicated. We join equally savvy folks: our National President and UBCP and Montreal members. Together, well-researched and supported by experienced staff, we are ready. The opening salvos from us are what we heard from you: dignity, respect and working conditions on set; new media terms; unit weighting and residual payment structure; and an appropriate increase in our rates. From across the table we're hearing: large cast production costs, unit weighting, new media, and a direct run at our jurisdiction. We listen to their proposals, our faces a blank slate, as protocol requires. When they leave the room, we get to be as outraged as we deserve to be. Like the opening moves in a game of chess, we have to evaluate the board, the plays and strategize accordingly. Members' work opportunities and pay are at stake. It is impossible to predict what may happen. But I am confident in the team and in our ability to think through the proposals and stand together on behalf of all performers.

In a pause in bargaining, I went to Vancouver for an historic event. For the first time, ACTRA UBCP hosted National council. It was a terrific opportunity to spend time getting to know our brothers and sisters from Vancouver and to build union relationships. We honoured **Tantoo Cardinal**, recognized by the ACTRA National Women's Committee on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, for her body of work, her contributions to her community and for being an inspirational role model for women. She spoke insightfully and passionately, "The Cree word for fire is, *iskotew*. It is made up of two words – *iskwew*, woman; and *mitih*, heart. Fire – women's heart... no wonder our language was outlawed eh?" She stirred a room filled with friends, councillors and members.

And finally, also in Vancouver, ACTRA stepped up to take its place in the House of Labour at the Canadian Labour Congress convention. Toronto councillors joined councillors and members from across the country for this six-day event. Following a majority Conservative government with a first time NDP opposition, folks opened the week a touch fearful but we were soon emboldened with skill sets to help each of us fight for workers' rights.

Speaking through the resolutions, we identified ourselves as workers with jobs which need protecting. We built bridges and made comparisons with



Some of our NCA Bargaining Team Left to Right:
Maurice Dean Wint, Jackson Davies, Ian Finlay, Sheila Victor, Dave Sparrow.

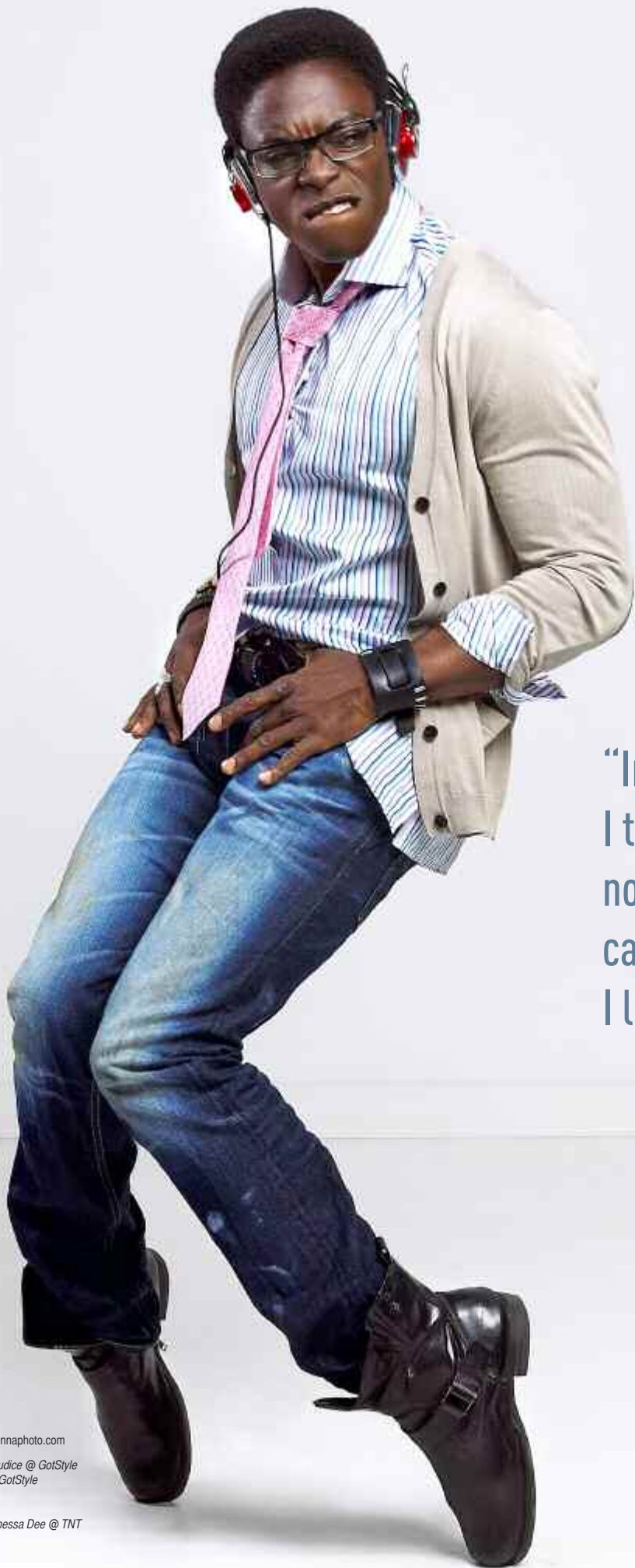
other delegates on labour issues. We impressed them with our passion, eloquence, and commitment to this country and to the needs and issues of working Canadians. We spoke against increased foreign ownership, on the need for organized labour to be involved in directing public policy, on maintaining collective bargaining rights, against two-tiered incomes, on women's rights, on the rights of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and people living with disabilities, and on the impact 'migrant workers' have on our work opportunities. A small but mighty team, we amazed, becoming the talk of the delegates, who were at first confused, then surprised, and soon impressed by our solidarity, wit and, above all, our dedication.

But the highlight of the week in Vancouver was the election of Toronto councillor and co-chair of Young Emerging Actors Assembly (YEAA), **Eli Goree** to the position of VP, Young Workers at the CLC Executive.

A union's power grows when its members stand together and stand proud. **And that we do.**

Heather Allin
President, ACTRA Toronto





“In my first Gemini speech, I thanked my parents for not throwing out the old cardboard fridge box that I learned to act in.”

Photo: www.mckennaphoto.com
Wardrobe:
Shirt, *Without Prejudice* @ *GotStyle*
Tie, *Ted Baker* @ *GotStyle*
Cardigan, *H & M*
Jeans, *Diesel*
Bone bracelet, *Vanessa Dee* @ *TNT*



In the Key of Bennett

Don't throw out the fridge box

By Andrew Moodie

What do you want to be when you grow up? It's a question that is the bedrock of every child's experience. And if you were to have asked **Clé Bennett** when he was growing up, he would have probably said he wanted to be a cop, "But a TV cop, you know?"

When I caught up with Clé he was talking to me from the set of his latest series, playing a cop on *Flashpoint*. He had to steal a few moments while the crew was working on other scenes. But in talking with him, you get a sense that he's far more comfortable being a character than talking about himself at length. "Recently I received a ReelWorld Festival Trailblazer award and someone once asked what you're most proud of and I would say it's that. It's funny to think that I can be a trailblazer even though I still feel that I have a way to go."

Clé was born in East York in Toronto, and grew up as a self-described imaginative kid. "What I'm doing now is a graduation of that. I loved to play. In my first Gemini speech, I thanked my parents for not throwing out the old cardboard fridge box that I learned to act in."

Clé is quick to point out that he's not trained, but I pointed out that neither am I, nor was Shakespeare, or Noel Coward, and that perhaps can allow for a unique approach to our work. Clé describes his approach as The Fridgebox

Method. Don't act. Just BE. He explains that its foundation is based on the way children play make-believe. "When a kid is playing *Star Wars*, they don't say I'm acting the role of Luke Skywalker. They say I AM Luke Skywalker."

Regardless of whether he's playing Carlos Powell in HBO's *The Line*, Det. John Holland on *Shattered*, or his latest role as Rafik Rousseau, the new permanent member of SRU Team One on the hit CTV/CBS series *Flashpoint*, Bennett is always mesmerizing in his truthfulness and powerful in his confidence. I asked for his secret. "It's a by-product of my preparation. I love to prepare for a shoot. The majority of our work is done off-set. I literally dedicate hours upon hours working on that. When I arrive on a shoot, I'm super confident because I've gone over it a million times." Every actor has been confronted by that civilian who asks that perennial question, "How do you learn all those lines?" But Bennett compares learning lines to skating for a hockey player. And I thought to myself, 'that's a great metaphor.' After all, no one asks, "How do you move so fast on those two little blades?" For Bennett, the real work is not the lines, it's something else. "It's in characterization, and motivation, or what I like to call 'vibes'. I ask a lot of questions: WHO is this person, and WHY do they say what they say, and do what they do? WHAT is the feeling, or vibe behind these words, and actions? WHERE are these vibes coming from? We aren't given instructions on to how to play these roles, all we get is a script, and we're expected to show up on-set in-character. Our work is defined by the choices we make, and it is the making of these choices that separates the true actors from the line-memorizers."

“I don’t wait around for the black roles. I go for the roles that I want. Many of the roles I play weren’t written as black characters, and I give credit to all casting directors, directors and producers who have the open minds and courage to cast the best actor for the role – period.”



Photo: www.mckennaphoto.com
Wardrobe: Black Jeans, Diesel Tank, Belt, shoes, Jewellery, Clé's own

And so I ask the question that every successful Canadian actor has to confront at some point. Are you going to go down to the States? “I don’t think I have a choice but to go down. I think I’ve done as well as I can do up here, but I don’t think I would be doing myself justice to not go down.” And I agree. I’m a big old nationalist, but there comes a time when we have to look south of the border, when you have to look beyond your achievements and try for something new. And Clé is ready for the challenge. “You have to be able to put in the work to master your craft and have incredible focus. That’s the only way I can sustain this career. If it was easy, more would be doing this.” When asked about what seems to be the limited number of black roles, Clé explains, “I don’t wait around for the black roles, I go for the roles that I want. Many of the roles I play weren’t written as black characters, and I give credit to all casting directors, directors and producers who have the open minds and courage to cast the best actor for the role – period.”

In talking with Clé for any amount of time, you can tell his drive to succeed also comes with a sense of responsibility to the young people who watch him in his work. “I do speak to kids every now and then. I tell them to channel their energy into something positive. It’s not lost on me that I’ve played a lot of gangsters and criminals. A screenwriter’s job is to come up with the most ingenious way to break the law. And kids watch and learn from that. They learn from me. I try to remedy that by going to the schools and talking to kids. One thing that surprised me is that some kids are actually disappointed that I’m not like the gangsters that I appear as on screen. I tell them that it’s not cool to play a gangster all the time, as some of them do. What’s cool is to be a gangster, then a cop then something else completely different.” Clé also encourages kids to think outside the box and consider career opportunities that they may have never thought of. “I do a lot of animation voices, and kids often become excited as I explain to them that if they really wanted to

they could actually be the voice of their own favourite cartoons. My main message overall, is to follow your passion. Some kids make the mistake of following money, not realizing that if they focus on doing the one thing they’re most passionate about, one day they’ll become so good at it, that someone’s gonna want to pay them to do it.”

Bennett also understands that it’s important to be in control of telling your own story. “When I talk to kids, I challenge them to become writers, not just actors.” And so I ask the obvious question, have you thought about writing yourself? “I am starting to play at that. I studied screenwriting to become a better actor, and through this, I am able to suggest changes to a script that reflect that knowledge.”

From playing around in fridge boxes to awards to working with some of the greatest actors and directors in the industry, Clé Bennett has blazed a trail from childhood dreams to become an actor of great versatility, power and imagination. ■

Photos left to right:

- With Ron White in *The Line*
- As Det. John Holland with Martin Cummins and Karen LeBlanc in *Shattered*
- Chef Hatchet from *Total Drama Island*



Photo:
www.mckennaphoto.com

Wardrobe:
Jacket, *Ezra Constantine*
Tee, *Ezra Constantine*
Jeans, *Diesel*
Hat, *Clé's own*

Selected Filmography

Film

- Barney's Version* – Cedric
- How She Move* – Garvey
- Treed Murray* – Shark

Television

- Flashpoint* – Rafik Rousseau
- Shattered* – Det. John Holland
- Lost Girl* – The Ash
- Guns* – Conrad
- Instant Star* – Thurman
- The Line* – Carlos
- Odyssey 5* – Dr. Leshawn

Voice

- Razzyberry Jazzberry Jam* – Louis, the Trumpet
- Total Drama Island* – Chef Hatchet

Flashpoint Trivia

Series Creators:
ACTRA Toronto members
and partners **Mark Ellis**
and **Stephanie Morgenstern**



Original pilot titles:
Sniper; *Critical Incident*

First Canadian series to air in a
U.S. primetime slot since *Due South*

First Canadian series set entirely in Canada
to air in the U.S.

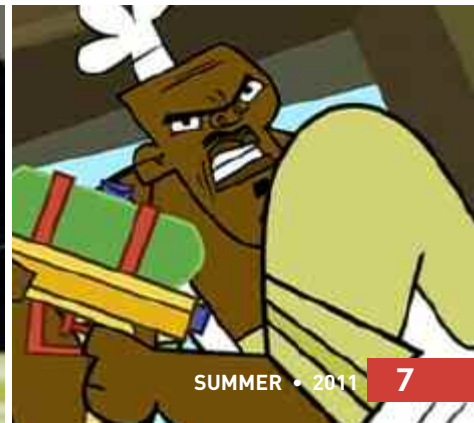
ION to broadcast all 51 episodes in syndication.
ION also airs 3 other CDN series: *Durham County*,
The Border, and *The Guard*

Season 2, Episode 2 – first time the word
“Toronto” is uttered

Pilot episode viewer numbers: 1.11 million

Sold to 50 countries outside Canada

23 Award nominations, 4 wins





Star Symptoms

by David Gale

“On the one hand you have broadcasters who say it’s hard to make television in this country because we don’t have a star system and simultaneously they will do nothing to promote people who are truly popular and who have some sort of engagement with the audience.”

– John Doyle

Ask almost any Canuck on the streets of Toronto to name ten Canadian acting stars working primarily in Canada and they probably couldn’t come up with five. Ask the same person to name American stars and they could easily name fifty. They could probably name ten Canadian actors working in Hollywood. Why? We know our sports stars, our Lifestyle TV stars and our pop stars, but our acting stars... not so much. Does a star system exist in Canada and, if not, is one possible in our current film and television landscape?

There is no question that Québec has a vibrant star system. French Canadians go to Québécois films in enviable numbers. They watch French-Canadian television (29 out of the 30 most watched TV shows in Québec, are produced there). They indulge in Québécois celebrity magazines and gaze at their stars on a myriad of chat shows including the hugely popular *Tout Le Monde En Parle*. They fervently embrace and celebrate their distinctive culture on every screen they can.

We should be so lucky. For decades, Canadian actors have been passing easily as Americans, even on our own soil. From **Mary Pickford** to **Ellen Page**, from **Christopher Plummer** to **Ryan Reynolds**, our most famous actors achieved stardom through the Hollywood system. If there had been a star system in Canada would these actors have gone to the U.S.?

Wendy Crewson doesn’t think so. Early in her career, the ACTRA Award of Excellence winner realized that she might have to relocate to L.A. to make a living. Then she landed the lead in CBC’s *Home Fires* which ran for four years. When the successful series ended, Crewson assumed she would be offered more work, but to her dismay she “couldn’t get arrested.” Recalling her dilemma Crewson says, “It was like the industry was saying, ‘Oh you’ve had

your turn; time for the next gal.” She felt our industry wasn’t able to advance her career so she had to move to a bigger market. The system hasn’t changed that much. Where are the next shows for **Cara Pifko** (*This Is Wonderland*), **Christopher Bolton** (*Rent-a-Goalie*) or any of the *Air Farce* cast?

Globe and Mail television critic, **John Doyle** is clear about why he believes we remain star ‘system-less’ on Canadian TV. “It is a pathetic excuse on the part of some people in private broadcasting... to not make Canadian-made comedy and drama. It’s a self-defeating attitude. On the one hand you have broadcasters who say it’s hard to make television in this country because we don’t have a star system and simultaneously they will do nothing to promote people who are truly popular and who have some sort of engagement with the audience.”

“It’s kind of a no-name star system,” quips **Eric Peterson**. “It’s an oxymoron.” Peterson, recently made a Member of the Order of Canada, starred in *Street Legal* and *Corner Gas*, two long-running hit television series and yet some fans don’t know his real name. “I’ve had people come up and ask, ‘Aren’t you R. H. Thompson?’” Peterson sees our industry exploiting its stars without having to promote them or pay them above-minimum fees. This way producers “can get us on a scale contract.” He says the lack of exposure for our product in Canada “is an incredible problem both on TV and in movie theatres.” Doyle agrees. “We need stronger content laws. I think the biggest mistake was when Sheila Copps gave in to broadcasters... to replace more expensive dramas and comedies with glorified entertainment news, infomercials, to allow all kinds of itsy bitsy things to count in the same way that the production of Canadian drama did. That was a key moment in the decline in English Canadian drama in this country. We went from 12 dramas to no dramas.”

We have a few more dramas today. But are we building on the visibility of their stars? **Shirley Douglas** thinks not. Addressing 500 members

at the ACTRA Toronto February plenary, the venerable Douglas lamented the lack of a Canadian star system. “I don’t know the name of the woman in *Being Erica*! I don’t know the name of anybody... I see that horse and the blonde-haired young woman (referring to CBC’s *Heartland* star **Amber Marshall**) and I haven’t a clue who they are.” But she offered a solution. “If [the broadcasters] are willing to pay for [billboard] ads, trust me, it costs nothing more to put the names of the actors in the part [of the ad] that is totally empty.” She urges that ‘billing’ be in our agreement. “If a performer is in the top three or four [roles], their names must go on all publicity - and in large print!”

Perhaps we can learn from the successful stars of Lifestyle television. **Steven and Chris, Debbie Travis, and Mike Holmes** are beloved by their fans, and their names are in the title of their show. These stars and their names are a brand. They move with their brand from show to show. Even if you’ve never watched their shows, you know who they are.

The Rick Mercer Report got it right too, finally. *The Monday Report* moved to Tuesdays but became *The Rick Mercer Report* - same show - better publicity. Not surprisingly, *The Hour* became *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*. (We should all get our own show!)

Lifestyle and ‘name-in-the-title’ performers aside, how is the industry doing at promoting its television acting stars? **Rob Salem**, TV critic for the *Toronto Star*, is optimistic. He found it remarkable watching fans at the Geminis clamour for autographs of the cast of the very dark and un-*Corner Gas*-like *Less Than Kind*. They may not know the actors’ names but they love their work. It’s a start.

What about our film stars? Doyle sees very little correlation between the Canadian film and the Canadian television industry when it comes to stars. He makes the point that far more people have seen one episode of *Da Vinci’s Inquest* than any **Atom Egoyan** film. “If two million people



A new Canadian Series. Fantastic! WHO'S IN IT?

From Left to Right: Terry Chen, Michelle Borth, Elias Koteas, Deborah Kara Unger, Arnold Pinnock, Luke Mably

went out to see an Atom Egoyan film in the movie theatres,” Doyle ventures, “it would be a Canadian blockbuster.”

Maclean's Magazine film critic, **Brian D. Johnson** was brutally frank in his assessment. “The lack of [a] recognizable galaxy of Canadian movie stars can be linked to the failure of English Canadian cinema, although it's not necessarily the cause but maybe more a symptom of a deeper problem. If you are a successful actor or director,” he goes on, “there's a huge draw to Hollywood. It's a world market and that's where the money is. And a lot of people would say there is a thriving English Canadian film industry and it exists in Los Angeles.” Ouch.

There have been many attempts to explain why our film industry (and, in turn, its stars) are not more widely known. U.S. films can have marketing budgets greater than the entire production budget of Canadian films. Canadian movie theatres are, by and large, controlled by the U.S. studios, and Canada has the unique distinction of being the only foreign country considered by Hollywood to be a part of the U.S. domestic market. We're forced to race out to see our film at the rep theatre before it closes after one week and if we live in a small town – forget it.

How can we have Canadian film stars when there are so few outlets for our films? One possible solution is screen quotas. Countries including Brazil, France, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Pakistan, and the U.K., have policies that guarantee domestic films be shown in their movie houses for a minimum number of days. Cultural sovereignty, however, is often at odds with trade agreements. Not surprisingly, the American

government asserts continued pressure to reduce or repeal foreign screen quotas.

Even when films have distinctly Canuck stories, Canadian actors are not guaranteed to play their own countrymen. At this year's Genie Awards, **Minnie Driver**, **Dustin Hoffman** and **Paul Giamatti** took home Best Performance Genies for starring in the film adaptation of Canadian author **Mordecai Richler's** best-seller *Barney's Version*. (None of these winners attended the ceremony so they didn't actually 'take home' anything.)

At an Academy sponsored interview during TIFF 2010, ACTRA Toronto President **Heather Allin** pointedly asked **Robert Lantos**, Executive Producer of *Barney's Version*, why he didn't use more Canadian stars in the main roles of his Canadian movies. Mr. Lantos answered, “To sell films internationally, one must use international stars.” When *Barney's Version* (a good film indeed) has made back only \$15 million of its \$30 million budget to date, despite its numerous awards, is it not fair to ask whether Lantos is getting a satisfactory return on his investment in American stars?

Imagine the Canadian star system if producers like Lantos saved the money they spent on American film stars and invested it in promoting indigenous stars. Would we even have the forums to promote them? Aside from **Strombo's** show and **Jian Ghomeshi's** Q, not really. As for repurposed American entertainment shows, don't get me started. Doyle again puts the blame on nervous broadcasters for the lack of talk shows to bolster a star system. Since **Mike Bullard** went off the air in 2004

(coincidentally the same year the celebrity interviewer **Brian Linehan** died) there has been a dearth of celebrity-focused Canadian talk shows. Bullard's show showcased countless Canadian performers, giving our stars a consistent, national exposure that ended abruptly seven years ago. *Factual Television* producer **Allan Novak** suggests tax credits for talk shows would reinvigorate the arena and promote Canadian stars.

Despite a history of ambivalence, a Canadian star system is by no means impossible. Canada has world class actors, directors, writers, and a mature production industry. It is a business and, like the most successful businesses, it needs a marketing plan. We would do well to remember that the U.S. star system began as a corporate strategy of the studios, designed to protect their investments. Canadians, when they can see them, hold their stars close to their hearts. When our industry commits to celebrating and promoting its own, our stars won't need to flee to Hollywood to make a living and a name for themselves. Canucks will know that it is **Yannick Bisson** who plays Inspector Murdoch in *Murdoch Mysteries* and that Erica is played by **Erin Karpluk**.

And that could only benefit our entire industry. ■



NAME THE STAR QUIZ

Can you name all the Canadian actors on this page?



Top row: Graham Greene, Rachelle Lefevre, Tré Armstrong
Second row: Mary Pickford, Daniel Kash, Kristin Booth, Jay Baruchel, Elisha Cuthbert
Third row: Fab Filippo, Ellen Page, Joe Motiki, Naomi Snieckus
Bottom row: Natalie Lisinska, Sean Cullen, Sugith Varughese, Raymond Burr

You missed the Conference!?

Here's what you missed.

by Nicole St. Martin



Masterclass workshop
Recasting the Romantic Lead

In his hands-on workshop, **Charles Taylor** taught members how to safely handle firearms on set. Everyone who attended walked out believing they were right for that next *Flashpoint* casting call.

Over a hundred members had lunch with **Art Hindle**, **Theresa Tova** and their co-stars from one of the most celebrated Canadian T.V. series of all time, *E.N.G.* The chemistry was still apparent as **Karl Pruner**, **Jim Millington**, **George Robertson**, **Mary Beth Rubens** and **Sherry Miller** inspired members with stories from their 'boom time'. Later, members also got the chance to read scenes from the show with the former *E.N.G.* cast.

YEAA held a kick-ass workshop where casting director **Jenny Lewis**, Shaw Media and EI executives, **Susan Morgan** and **MacKenzie Lush** screened members' reels and gave honest and sometimes tough feedback.

“Actors really are the most wonderful people in the world... Our community is something that every other organization should envy. We fight together, we work together,” exclaimed **Shirley Douglas** to a capacity crowd at ACTRA Toronto's Annual General Meeting, during the February 2011 Conference.

We also play together...

At this year's three-day Conference, almost 600 members mingled with a plethora of Canadian television industry powerhouses, such as **Clé Bennett**, **Shawn Alex Thompson**, **Jennifer Holness**, **Stephanie Gorin**, and **Carl Liberman**.

There was an embarrassment of workshop riches over the three days. Here are some highlights:

Over breakfast, **Linda Kash** interviewed multiple Gemini winner **Clé Bennett** who let members into his process, reminding them to always believe they are right for the role when they walk into the casting room.

It was standing room only for the *Television Writers' Workshop*, a sign that many ACTRA members aren't just waiting by the phone for their agents to call. Ironically, veteran writer **Carl Liberman's** advice was: get a literary agent. Also well attended was *Recasting the Romantic Lead* where **Millie Tom** and **Salvatore Antonio** recast some steamy scenes 'against type'.

Our next Members' Conference is in September. If you've never participated it's time to discover what Shirley Douglas and thousands of members already know: the ACTRA Toronto Conferences are unparalleled for networking, connecting with your community, keeping up to date with the industry, fine tuning your skills and finding out what your union is up to. **And they're absolutely free.** ■



Nicole with son Luc at the Conference.

We Laughed, We Cried

The 9th Annual ACTRA Awards in Toronto

By David Gale

Well we did it again. On February 25th, cut off an awe-inspiring three-day ACTRA Members' Conference, nearly 1300 members, spouses, sponsors, politicians and industry folk dolled up in their finery and gathered at the Carlu to schmooze, cruise and bust a move at the best industry party in town. This year's crowd seemed especially eager to feel the bonds of our union and party.

After some pre-show power-networking (**Arlene Perly Rae** and **Bob Rae** rubbed elbows with **Leah Pinsent** and **Peter Keleghan**), host **Ennis Esmer** kick-started the Awards with house rock band **Boys Who Say No**. Esmer got some good laughs complaining about the lack of 'bad boy Canadian stars. Referring to **Nicholas Campbell**, Esmer challenged, "You can't be a bad boy and a grandpa!"

President **Heather Allin**, elegant in Canadian designer Tess Roman (Price-Roman), welcomed the crowd, thanked the generous sponsors, and then threw to the awards. The Outstanding Voice Performance went to **Sean Cullen** for *Jimmy Two-Shoes*. Cullen's extemporaneous



comments were some of the funniest and most irreverent of the evening. Outstanding Performance – Female was a bittersweet award shared by the co-stars of Bruce McDonald's *Trigger*: the late **Tracy Wright** (in her final screen performance) and **Molly Parker**. Wright's husband **Don McKellar** accepted the award on behalf of his wife, saying that it mattered more to him than any he had won for himself. With the audience already choked up, the award for Outstanding Performance – Male was awarded to the late **Maury Chaykin** for *Less Than Kind*. His partner, actor **Susannah Hoffmann**, with their daughter **Rosie** by her side, accepted for Chaykin, saying how proud he'd been that *Less Than Kind* doesn't hide that it is a Canadian show - but rather, celebrates it. Then she meaningfully passed the Award onstage to Rosie.

Eric Peterson, clearly affected by the proceedings, began his introduction of **Fiona Reid**, ACTRA Toronto's 2011 Award of Excellence recipient, by expressing his gratitude at being a part of such a wonderful community. Reid accepted her award with aplomb and self-effacing humour, thanking the many colleagues who had helped her along the way, including **Christopher Newton**, **Gina Wilkinson** and **Peter Donaldson**. Speaking about actors' royalties for all media she firmly cautioned, "Actors do not and must not work for free. We survive on royalty cheques, as much as producers on syndication revenues, as much as ISPs on usage fees... If actors don't share in the bounty they helped create, there simply won't be anything to create or share or celebrate for anybody!"

Four well-deserved awards handed out amid laughter and tears, we stayed on to dance the night away to DJ **Vladimir Jon Cubrt**.

Thanks to **Karen Ivany** and the Awards committee for setting the bar so high. The 10th Awards will be spectacular! ■

Host **Ennis Esmer**
with Awards Chair,
Karen Ivany



Past winner **Eric Peterson** presented the Award of Excellence to **Fiona Reid**.



Sean Cullen in *Jimmy Two-Shoes*

Molly Parker in *Trigger*

Tracy Wright in *Trigger*

Maury Chaykin in *Less Than Kind*

Fiona Reid - Award of Excellence

ACTRA Toronto congratulates the winners of the 2011 ACTRA Awards in Toronto



Diamond Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



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Photos below, Top Row, Left to Right:

- Jennifer Jonas and Don McKellar accept Molly Parker and Tracy Wright's awards for Outstanding Performance - Female
- Band members from *Boys Who Say No* with Ennis Esmer

Bottom Row, Left to Right:

- Leah Pinsent and Peter Keleghan
- Clé Bennett takes questions from the media
- Susannah Hoffmann presents Maury Chaykin's award for Outstanding Performance - Male to daughter Rosie
- Sean Cullen wins Outstanding Performance - Voice



Reflections of a Nominee

by Sarah Manninen



Arlene Perty Rae and Bob Rae
photo: Steve Blackburn



Ennis Esmer, Craig Olejnik and David Gale
JAG Photography



Kris Holden-Reid with President Heather Allin
JAG Photography



Having been nominated for this year's 9th Annual ACTRA Awards in Toronto was, and still is, an unimaginable delight and honour. To receive the news that my work was to be mentioned alongside Canadian actors I most admire was surreal.

On day two of the ACTRA Conference, I participated in a workshop "Take the Lead" moderated by Art Hindle alongside *Rookie Blue* cast members Matt Gordon and

Eric Johnson and fellow nominee Noah Reid. That afternoon, we made our way to the Annual General Meeting and witnessed the remarkable Shirley Douglas receive her University of Regina honorary degree and the Bernard Cowan award. I found her speech that day to be very impactful. Ms Douglas' spirited delivery was contagious. She spoke eloquently on healthcare and her stance regarding actors' billing also stayed with me. I've never felt this was an essential deal point but she helped me understand why it's worth fighting for.

The awards the following night were held at the Carlu and host Ennis Esmer did an incredible job. Ennis pulled off being charming and hilarious yet was grounded when necessary which was appropriate for such an emotional night. The family and colleagues of much deserved winners Tracy Wright and Maury Chaykin, accepted their loved one's awards: a moving tribute to two extraordinary and dearly beloved Canadian performers. It was also memorable to witness the enormously talented Fiona Reid accept her Award of Excellence.

My parents came to the awards along with a few of my former classmates from George Brown Theatre School, Christian Lloyd, Pragna Desai and Iona Mackay (all ACTRA members) to share the night with me. My friends and I try to take advantage of every opportunity to celebrate each other in a business that sometimes feels like a lonely uphill climb. I'm so thankful for their and my family's encouragement.

As well, the experience provided me with an opportunity to reflect. Being nominated has emphasized how fortunate I am to be part of this vibrant community. I was reminded that ACTRA is there for me and that perhaps I could afford to be there for it and help out in any way I can. ■



Cyberspace...The Actor's Frontier



PROMOTING YOURSELF ONLINE

by Dave Sparrow

As actors we often feel we have little control over the direction or advancement of our careers. This was certainly true in the past when waiting patiently by the phone was the key to being available. Nowadays, we carry the phone with us, and the email, and the whole internet. I'm available 24/7/52... "Call me." I'm also online. I'm socially networking, making connections, blogging and advertising. But is all this connectivity actually getting me anywhere? Am I just spinning my wheels? What exactly are these networks and should actors invest their valuable time in the black hole of cyberspace?

Facebook (FB) is by far the most used social networking site. Some use it to talk to friends and family; some use it to promote themselves, their show, their opinions, and their cat pictures. I have just under 1000 "Friends". I love them all, but I've only actually met half of them.

The positives of FB are many. It is a less "stalkable" form of email; you can unfriend anyone at any time. It's a way to track your fan base. You can even create a Fan Page for yourself and annoy your friends with invites to your latest one-person show. You can create an event page and invite everyone you know to check it out. You tell 1100 friends and then they tell 1100 friends and pretty soon, you've filled your 45 seat venue. FB is also a great forum for you to vent the thoughts that rattle around your head all day... just remember your friends are listening.

On the down side, to really stay on top of FB, you'll have to visit five or six times a day and invest at least an hour reading the 'News Feed' (your friends' latest postings). You'll ROTFL*. And everything you post on FB, even the cute picture of how drunk you were at the ACTRA Awards, will be on the internet for life.

Twitter is also very popular. **Colin Mochrie** has over 22,000 followers. Luckily, he's on our side. Twitter is a great way to build a following or a fan base, but you can't do that by just opening an account. You have to offer something that people are interested in following: witty banter, sage advice or links to funny cat pictures. Content is king. People will not care what you had for breakfast... unless it was a famous celebrity. So start Twittering when you have something to 'sell'. It could be a book or your new TV show or your own celebrity.

YouTube is a great way to put off what needs doing. The great thing about YouTube is it's a broadcast medium that's available for free to all content producers. In the old days you could have a great idea, you could mortgage your house, you could shoot your film and then, unless a broadcaster liked it, you could show it to people

in your basement. Now you can shoot a video in the morning and send it out to the world that afternoon. The tools of production are really in the hands of the workers. Hazzah!

The last numbers I heard suggested that every minute, forty-eight hours of new material is uploaded to YouTube. That's a lot. This means that your material will have to stand out if it's going to be noticed. One funny video will probably not go anywhere. **Christian Potenza**, an ACTRA member who's really good at this stuff, asks, "What's in the hopper?" He advises you have ten plus videos ready to go before you start uploading content. Roll them out one every week or so and shoot more as you go. Keep them under three minutes as people have short attention spans. It would be great if they had a similar theme too. You can start your own **YouTube Channel** where all your videos can be viewed together. The idea of having multiple videos is that, if one takes off, the others will be viewed by the folks who visit to watch the popular one. If you get enough hits, YouTube may even ask you to partner with them to receive a percentage of the revenue they generate by posting ads around your videos.

Personal Web Page - Every professional actor should have a personal web page. It's a way for the folks who hire us to find us, download our picture and résumé or view our demo reel. It doesn't have to be complicated. You can find cheap hosting online and most sites provide easy templates to create a simple, unique web site.

If you can, you should also get your own name as your URL. Then if you become famous, the porn sites won't steal it. My site is www.davesparrow.com - I also own www.davidsparrow.com ...just in case.

Personal Blog - If you've got a lot to say, or you've written a book or you're trying to get a one-person show off the ground, a blog may be the best way to deliver regular content to your fans. The key is being consistent. If you only post every three months, people will become bored and will stop following you. The

*ROTFL - roll on the floor laughing



Christian Potenza delivers a workshop on online promotion to a sold-out crowd at the February Members Conference. (JAG Photography)

blogosphere is, quite frankly, overpopulated. You should blog with purpose and because you're happy just putting it out there. If someone actually reads it, that's a bonus. There are many free blog sites. ACTRA member **Mairlyn Smith**, a wonderful cookbook author, blogs at www.mairlynsmith.com

CastingDiversity.ca is ACTRA Toronto's diverse casting talent database. It's online. It's free! If you identify as diverse, you should be on it. www.castingdiversity.ca

Casting Workbook is how submissions are made by agents for roles in film & TV and commercials. If you want to work, you must join. There is an annual fee. They will also host your demo reel and personal website for an additional amount. www.castingworkbook.com

Face-To-Face is ACTRA's talent database. It's free with membership and is being updated as part of our Information Services redesign.

Internet Movie Database (IMDB) - You can get a password and update your profile and filmography for free. You can post your picture and résumé and agent contact for an annual fee.

These days, being available means being connected. People will look for you online at any time of the day or night. You better be there. That said, there are a lot of people online. We're in competition with every professional, unionized actor, every non-union #\$\$&*%! and every wannabe superstar out there. How will you stand out?

You'll hear a lot of people brag about how many people are following them as if the numbers mean something. In general, numbers online do not equal bookings or cash. Comics, who are some of the most active performers online, still ask me, "Ya but Dave, how do I get paid for this?" The answer: create something unique and then offer it in a format that must be paid for... a show, a book, a DVD. Use social networking as a set of tools to advertise yourself and to connect with colleagues, and if you end up getting a show from it, well, good on ya.

The big stars of yesterday were often more than just actors. Charlie Chaplin was an innovative writer and producer. Orson Welles - the same. Like it or not, as an actor, you are a business person. You work in sales. Your company sells just one product: you. So market yourself. Brand yourself. Adapt to and adopt changing technology and the changing marketplace.

Be an actor. Be a writer. Be a one person show. Write a book. Start a band. Put up a play. And then network it online! Cyberspace is very competitive and I may be spinning my wheels, but when it comes to my career, on the internet, I'm actually in the driver's seat. ■

David Sparrow is online...
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dave@davesparrow.com
www.dontgetyourhopesup.com
 Twitter - @selfhelplessguy

Shameless Self-Promotion

How to do it ACTRA

ACTRA Toronto understands that self-employed performers need to promote themselves and sometimes want to create their own work. Here are some of the ways that you can promote yourself online without jeopardizing your membership or the rights and rates upon which you and your peers rely.

The Digital Self-Promotion Registry

The DSP registry permits ACTRA Toronto members to register an unlimited number of promotional clips or demo reels. If your promotional material incorporates any content which you do not own, it's your responsibility to obtain permission from the copyright holder and all underlying rights holders. ACTRA members treat songwriters, writers, fellow actors, and copyright holders with the same respect we demand. Questions about the DSP registry may be directed to Steward, **Noreen Murphy**.

TIP

The Toronto Indie Production Program offers the lowest minimum rates under which ACTRA members may be engaged. The program is available to ACTRA member-producers and non-member producers alike. The TIP Guideline may be found on our website. TIP is designed for dramatic shorts and features and provides developing producers working with very low budgets the opportunity to work with professional performers. Questions about the TIP Program may be directed to TIP Coordinator, **Tasso Lakas**.

Self-promotion does NOT mean working for free!



Noreen Murphy



Tasso Lakas.

Young Emerging Actors Assembly

Young Emerging Activists

By Bryn McAuley

YEAA, the newly formed Young Emerging Actors Assembly, celebrated its official launch at the February members' conference. YEAA invited **Jenny Lewis** and executives from E1 and Shaw Media to screen our members' reels and provide constructive feedback. Through our well-attended events, YEAA reached out to ACTRA Toronto members who play between 17-27 and found many new recruits.

Subsequently, we've held three monthly meetings at the ACTRA Toronto offices. We've seen our members being featured in *Metro* daily magazine, and had a strong presence at the **ReelWorld Film Festival**, interviewing actors and filmmakers. We have created a wide-ranging list of resources available to ACTRA Toronto's young actors, and continue to create networking events and opportunities for YEAA members.

We currently have members creating YEAA video content: pieces on union advocacy and interviews with power players in the industry. Our media team is working with a variety of Toronto publications to get our actors' faces in their pages! We will be hosting a Co-op production information night to teach young ACTRA members about the requirements to create a Co-op film.

On July 27th, YEAA will be hosting our website launch party! This event will be held in a yet unnamed fabulous downtown location and will feature screenings of our members' work.

YEAA is also liaising with TIFF to create an event focused on Toronto's up-and-coming talent during the festival. YEAA members will have a strong presence throughout the festival's happenings.

Information about all of these efforts and events is available to YEAA members. To become a YEAA member, head to yeaa.ca to sign up for invites to our meetings and access to our mail-outs.

Eli Goree (left) and **Bryn McAuley** (right) are the chairs and creators of YEAA. We have already accomplished so much in three short months thanks to the efforts of our current members. We are always looking for new members who play between 17-27 to join and take initiative within YEAA. ■





Amy Price-Francis plays Detective Jessica King in *King*

CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER **CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER**

The Woman Who Would Be King

by Chris Owens

CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER

CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER

There's a new cop show in town and audiences are taking notice. Airing on Showcase (9pm Sunday nights), *King* is building a steady fan base. What makes it different? Well, for one thing it has a female lead. That's pretty unusual in the world of television crime. For another, it's Canadian. Through and through. Written by Canadians, produced by Canadians, starring Canadians. It even takes place in Toronto. And Toronto, thankfully, plays Toronto. (Although we've proven our talents at playing other cities over the years, sometimes it's nice just to be ourselves.)

Amy Price-Francis (*The Cleaner*, 24, *Californication*) plays Detective Jessica King. As the newly appointed leader of Toronto's Major Crimes Task Force (M.C.T.F.), King has her hands full, but after surviving eight years in Homicide, multiple stab wounds and two marriages, she is hardly the type to back down.

Take this as an example. When a known sex offender is granted bail against her wishes, King takes it upon herself to hang posters of him outside his house. When he storms out to confront her, claiming her actions are illegal, she calmly replies, "Not really, no. It's edgy for sure but, well, freedom of speech and I'm off shift so..."

ACTRA member **Greg Spottiswood** created *King* with producer, **Bernard Zukerman**. Greg is a seasoned actor who began performing in his teens. In 1990, he won a Daytime Emmy Award for *Looking for Miracles*.

"The first season of *King* represented a culmination for me of things that I learned over 15 years as an actor on set, directing two short films, writing MOW's and producing a television show (*Shattered*). This past year has been an intense process of consolidating my experiences and sort of metabolizing them into practical knowledge."

When he graduated from the National Theatre School, Greg had not anticipated that he would transition into writing/producing. What began as a desire to direct a movie with a friend ended with him co-writing a TV series that, though it stayed in development for a number of years and ultimately didn't get made, was a catalyst to Greg discovering he had an interest and aptitude for writing. Soon it began to take up more and more of his time.



ACTRA member
Greg Spottiswood,
creator of *King*



Alan Van Sprang plays
Derek Spears



Amy Price-Francis and Tony Nardi



Gabriel Hogan, Alan Van Sprang and Amy Price-Francis

CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER CRIME SCENE-DO NOT ENTER

“I do think people underestimate how much knowledge actors absorb on set about making movies and television. If you’re in the business long enough and you do enough work with enough different people, you pretty much see all the mistakes and victories that people make on a show.” Having said that, he acknowledges it’s never easy to make a good television show and there are no guarantees. “Even when you have a phenomenal group of talent and great people on screen – some of it’s alchemy and some of it’s luck - it’s always hard.”

In Amy Price-Francis, Greg is thankful to have found a strong lead who can anchor the show. “Amy is a gifted actor. She’s got remarkable dexterity. She has a skill set where she can move from a comic or ironic beat to a dramatic beat on a dime. And that was a prerequisite for the character and the show to work. We needed an actor who could do that and was appealing to the audience and was credible as a cop. Amy brings all that and more to the show. We’re very fortunate to have her.”

Born in England and raised in Canada, Amy Price-Francis is also a graduate of the National Theatre School. As detective Jessica King, she has found a complex role to her liking. “It’s the most fun I’ve ever had. She’s such an extraordinary character - the writing is so good, she just jumps off the page. Her tenacity, her wit, the fact that she loves her work, her drive, that she embraces being a woman, she’s super smart and she’s got a sense of humour. She doesn’t apologize for who she is and she won’t alter herself for somebody else.”

How does Amy feel about taking on the responsibilities of a being a series lead? “Of course, it’s an amazing gig and there are so many positive things that come with it but fatigue comes along with it too. The stamina that’s required for the long days can be challenging. One thing about Jess is she has such a sharp brain. It was a really interesting lesson to learn as an actor that it’s hard to play ‘sharp brain’ when you’re tired,” she says with a laugh. “But everyone in every department works very hard on this show. It’s a testament to their good work that we’re going into a second season.”

Not only has Showcase ordered a full slate of 13 episodes but *King* has also been sold to French broadcaster M6 and Astral specialty channel Series+, so it appears that Detective King will continue to solve crimes while she copes with the challenge of her third marriage and the possibility of starting a family.

And she will do this with the help of a wonderfully solid cast including **Alan Van Sprang, Gabriel Hogan, Aaron Poole, Suzanne Coy, Tony Nardi** and **Zoe Doyle**.

With a budget that doesn’t allow for a succession of big action sequences, Spottiswood knew that the strength of the show would have to come from “the character work, the performances. We decided early on that the characters we wrote needed to be interesting and the actors we hired needed to have a lot of the same skills that Amy has - the dexterity to move from humour to drama.” One glance at the cast list and you know the producers made good on that decision.

Amy is happy to be back in Toronto. In 1998, she lived in the same building as **Greg** and **Van Sprang** in the Broadview/Danforth area. Now, thirteen years later, they’re all working together. “This city feels like home. I love that the show takes place here, that it represents itself. It’s a beautiful place: the energy on the streets, the great locations. When else are you going to be in the middle of High Park in winter with nobody else there at three o’clock in the morning? You might be a little tired, you might be a little cold but it was one of the most beautiful things ever – just stunning - with all this untouched snow and we were in the middle of it. No one else there. It was lovely.”

With *King* joining the ranks of successful cop shows now produced out of Toronto (*Flashpoint*, *Rookie Blue*) and performers continuing to taking the reins to create local work, will things get any easier for Canadian show-runners? “Telling stories in Canada for a mass audience is never *not* going to be a challenge,” observes Spottiswood. “But there are some really good smart people at the networks dedicated to telling stories from a Canadian point of view and who really believe in that and want to continue to find a way to get those stories on the air and make it economically viable.” Greg is grateful for the opportunity to produce a show here at home. “I’ve had so much support here. It’s an incredible privilege. The motto for this year that I wrote on the board outside my office was: ‘An hour of television every week that we can be proud of’. That’s our goal.” ■

This print ad, part of a Belgian campaign from CAP48 to get people to see the person not the disability, is a play on an old Wonderbra ad with the cutline “Look me in the eyes...I said the eyes.” CAP48’s campaign went viral, making an overnight star out of model Tanja Kiewitz. (image courtesy of CAP48)

Physically Diverse

By Lisa Jai

Four years ago the outlook on my acting career was very bleak; there were virtually no Canadian dramas on television telling our richly diverse stories. As well, being an ethnic and physically diverse actress left me feeling defeated every time I went to the movies or turned on the television and hardly ever saw what I believed to be a true and fair representation of Toronto’s ethnic and physically diverse population. I told myself to be realistic and accept that there was nothing I could do to promote the inclusion of diverse actors among what society and the media regard as marketable... Then I got involved.

Joining ACTRA Toronto’s Diversity Committee was the best decision I made professionally. My involvement gave me more insight into how this industry works and the understanding that change requires dedication, time, and energy. Merely hoping for change in our media is not enough.

The Diversity Committee has been very busy. We have created a database for diverse performers at castingdiversity.ca. We have developed partnerships and conducted industry workshops with culturally and physically diverse film festivals including one for **Abilities Arts** in June. Most recently ACTRA joined **I AM PWD** (Inclusion in the Arts & Media of People with Disabilities). A global civil rights campaign seeking equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities throughout the entertainment and news media, I AM PWD seeks to bring media and public attention to the issues of media access, inclusion and accuracy for people with disabilities. I AM PWD has the support of Actor’s Equity Association, ACTRA,

SAG and AFTRA and is endorsed by FIA (Fédération Internationale des Acteurs). “Trade unions must be on the forefront of social inclusion and the battle against all discrimination,” said FIA President Agnete Haaland. “This is perhaps even truer for those unions that operate in the entertainment business, which plays such an important role in moulding social behaviour and generating role models today.” ACTRA National then produced and promoted the first advocacy video for I AM PWD, starring ACTRA Toronto’s **Spirit Synott**, bringing attention to inaccessible casting facilities. Look for more from ACTRA Toronto’s Diversity Committee on this hot file in the coming summer months.

I am now a proud advocate for physically diverse performers and recently I was elected an ACTRA Toronto Councillor. All of which, I believe, are the direct results of getting involved and working hard at fighting for the change I wish to see on stage, film, and television. My hope is that one day our airwaves and cinemas will reflect

our culture - both Canadian and worldwide until there is no longer a need for Committees to advocate for pockets of society who feel under-represented in the mainstream media.

Until then, the Diversity Committee will continue its work.

After all: **Diversity is Our Strength.** ■



REGARDEZ-MOI DANS LES YEUX...
... J'AI DIT LES YEUX.

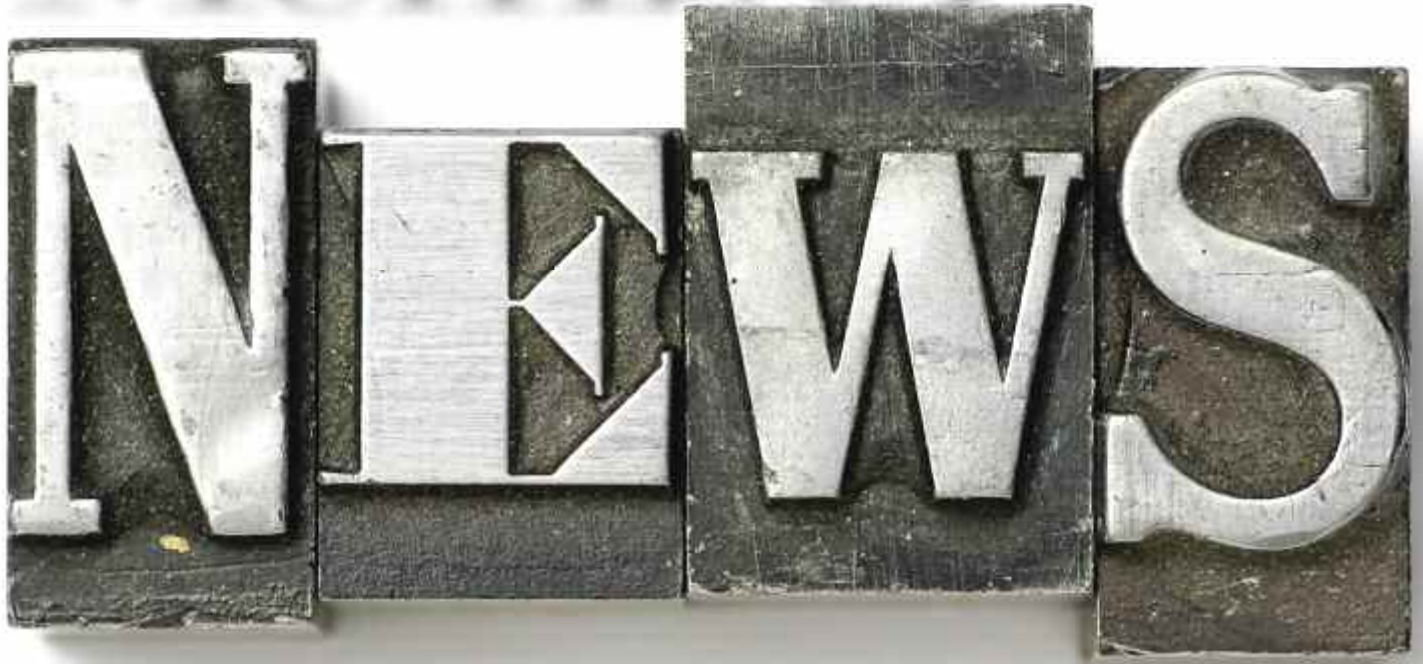


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Lisa Jai

Member



A speech to swell your heart

Shirley Douglas gave a barnburner of a speech to the ACTRA Toronto General Meeting on February 24, 2011. Douglas spoke live to the ACTRA membership in attendance as well as by video to the graduating class of the University of Regina. The university had taken the opportunity to formally present Ms. Douglas with an Honorary Degree.

Douglas spoke on a few subjects close to her heart. She railed at the Canadian production and distribution community for their failure to raise enough money to pay actors decently and for failing to exhibit and broadcast Canadian film and television. She took the CBC to task for not identifying the leading stars of their series on billboard ads.

Of broader interest, she spoke about the failure of the federal government to adequately fund national healthcare. "One of the reasons I care so much about this subject," she said to the roomful of actors, "is because I watched the suffering in America of people with no health care. And believe me, if we lose this, almost none of you in this room could get insurance."

Ms. Douglas' oratorical skill, reminiscent of her famous father, **Tommy Douglas**, and honed from decades of success as a leading stage and television performer in Britain, Canada and the U.S., moved many to tears. Several of her stories linked the arts with activism. Particularly affecting



were the tales of her involvement in the civil rights movement in the United States, a formative time for Ms. Douglas. "When I think of Times Square, over a hundred thousand people jammed in there in New York. It was a man standing alone on stage with a violin, **Isaac Stern**, and he played with no accompaniment, a

song to break your heart and to give you the courage that if this sound can happen in the world, we can't be that wrong."

President **Heather Allin** presented Ms. Douglas with the Bernard Cowan Award for exceptional service to ACTRA. ■



Eli Goree

“I realized that it was really bigger than just what I was doing. There was a whole movement there based around helping all workers - and with me, specifically, young workers - get to a level of having a respectable career and having opportunities to live comfortably and with dignity.”

Eli Goree elected Vice-President, Young Workers, Canadian Labour Council Executive

One hundred young delegates attended a young workers' forum at the Canadian Labour Congress convention in Vancouver on May 12th where speakers tackled issues from retirement security and child labour to youth involvement in the historic Wisconsin showdown between public union workers and their state government. Our own **Eli Goree** gave an impressive speech resulting in his election as Vice-President, Young Workers of the CLC Executive. Said **Ferne Downey**, ACTRA National President, “I am particularly proud of Eli for stepping forward and being the first-ever performer elected to represent young workers. Eli is not only dedicated to our industry, and to his union ACTRA, but to young people right across the country.” Said Goree, “I realized that it was really bigger than just what I was doing. There was a whole movement there based around helping all workers - and with me, specifically, young workers - get to a level of having a respectable career and having opportunities to live comfortably and with dignity.”

Eli Goree is a member of the ACTRA Toronto Council and Co-Chair of ACTRA Toronto's Young Emerging Actors Assembly (YEAA). He plays a leading role in Showcase's *Pure Pwnage* and has starred in *Soul* and *Da Kink in My Hair*. He hosted the CBC award-winning consumer-affairs show *Street Cents* and in his younger days, appeared on numerous episodes of *Sesame Street*. The Canadian Labour Congress represents the interests of more than three million workers and is the umbrella organization for dozens of affiliated Canadian and international unions, as well as provincial federation of labour and regional labour councils. ■

The Culture Platform

Leading members of ACTRA Toronto spent April 4th at Queen's Park, meeting with MPPs of all parties to encourage them to include the cultural economy as they build their platforms for the coming provincial election in October. President **Heather Allin** spoke at the press conference together with **Dalmar Abuzeid**, **Art Hindle** and **Janet-Laine Green**. Other members who took meetings with MPPs included **Jayne Eastwood**, **Eli Goree**, **Clé Bennett**, **Debra McGrath**, **Jim Codrington**, **Colin Mochrie**, **Jamie Johnston**, **Sarah Manninen**, **Julie Stewart** as well as councillors **John Nelles**, **Don Lamoreaux**, **Tabby Johnson**, **Jack Newman**, **Spirit Synott**, **Dave Sparrow**, **David MacNiven**, **Nicole St. Martin**, **Austin Schatz** and **David Gale**. ■



Heather Allin, Dalmar Abuzeid, Art Hindle and Janet-Laine Green

Help! My kid wants to act!

Theresa Tova and **Tabby Johnson** (Child and Youth Advocate), organized a town hall meeting for parents of children wanting to get into the business. The session was open to parents of both union and non-union performers. Ms. Johnson was inspired to reach out to parents of non-union minors after the abduction of an infant from what was advertised on Craigslist as an audition for a Bollywood film. The event dovetailed with one of ACTRA Toronto's platform pitches to Provincial MPPs: to enact legislation to protect child performers. Topics at the town hall included: how to get started in the business, finding a good agent, protecting your child, parental commitment, and spotting a scam. Toronto Police Officer **Scott Mills** offered valuable tips for protecting your child's identity online. Child star, **Ana Golja** (*What's Up Warthogs*, *Connor Undercover*, *How to be Indie*) and her agent **Shari Quallenberg** of AMI, offered a first-hand account of the level of commitment required for parents of children looking to pursue a career in show business. The event was held at Bickford Centre in Toronto and was followed by an appearance on *Breakfast Television* by Tabby Johnson. Similar events are in the planning stages for other urban centres. ■



Ana Golja

To succeed in our business one must acquire
a balance of craft, inspiration and action



WITH AWARD WINNING ACTOR/DIRECTOR

WALTER ALZA

& AWARD WINNING GUESTS



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Actra Members show this ad and get 10% off!
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SELF-MANAGEMENT FOR ACTORS

Getting Down to
(Show) Business



Bonnie Gillespie

Finally, this LA-based casting director and author of *Self-Management for Actors*, is coming to Toronto with transformational seminars based on her book!

Three ways to experience Bonnie's awesomeosity!

90 Minute Q&A Session: Bring your questions, learn how to tier jump and tackle the THREE BIGGEST career mistakes!

SHOWBIZ KIDS, 2-Hour PARENTS Seminar: Discuss the opportunities, challenges, highs and lows of having a kid in showbiz. Learn how to set and manage expectations to survive and thrive in the entertainment industry.

An immersive 2 Day Class: Build your actor muscles in ways you may not have thought they could be strong. Explore ideas for moving out of stuck places, discovering how to perform within alignment to your true "type", targeting people in this industry that provide the best opportunities for mutual benefit!

Work with Bonnie in Toronto this October!
For details visit: DramaDepartment.ca

Diversity Committee sponsors ReelWorld



The ACTRA Toronto Diversity Committee was a sponsor of ReelWorld and was the official sponsor of Bryn McAuley's *Counting from Ten* and Walter Alza's *Pay in Full*, which aired on the same

evening and brought out one of the biggest crowds at the festival. ACTRA National's disability video, starring new Toronto councillor Spirit Synott, aired before most films. The union video highlights the issue of inaccessible casting facilities and features a brief cameo by the late Wayne Robson. The committee also presented a seminar to producers attending the festival about the wisdom and ease of producing with ACTRA talent. ■



Got a beef? Call me. I'm your Ombudsperson

Shawn Lawrence is ACTRA Toronto's Ombudsperson. "If you have a beef, a problem or a complaint, I will do my very best to help you find a resolution." Shawn hears member complaints about the union in a confidential and non-partisan manner and will advocate and mediate on your behalf. He has been a work-

ing actor for forty years and served on both the ACTRA Toronto and National Council for many years. Due to his extensive experience in the workplace and within ACTRA, your Council appointed Shawn to this position. If you have a problem with your union, call him at 416-928-2278, ext. 6604 or email him at: slawrence@actratoronto.com. ■

New Councillors



Nicole St. Martin (left) was elected to council following Wayne Robson's resignation to work at Stratford, shortly before his death. Ms. St. Martin has been active on the Conference committee.

Spirit Synott (right) was elected to council following the passing of councillor Cayle Chernin. Ms. Synott has been active on the Diversity committee. ■

Member NEWS

Maintaining the union highway

by Art Hindle



left to right: Charles Kerr, Wayne Robson and Cayle Chernin

In the last few weeks a number of seemingly unrelated events have occurred that have made me step back and take a good look at this union of ours. As you might know, as VP External Affairs, two of my files are Lobby Efforts & Archives. The recent passing of three storied actors, **Charles Kerr** and ACTRA Toronto Councillors **Cayle Chernin** and **Wayne Robson**, made me realize once again how transitory our stay is here on earth and how what we do in our time here can be so important.

What many of our members were doing on Monday, April 4th, was lobbying Members of the Provincial Parliament because there is a provincial election fast approaching in October. We were alerting all political parties that they need to pay attention to issues important to ACTRA Toronto and to our film, television and new media industries. We continue to request stronger Status of Ontario's Artists legislation and to improve the welfare of Ontario's creative population.

Once again, there was a superlative turnout by our members to spend the day at Queen's Park spreading our message. One of our staunchest participants over the years was Wayne Robson. He wasn't with us this time, as he was in Stratford doing what he loved, but most times, whenever the call went out for support of our issues or another union's issues, Wayne was always there

with a smile, a pat on the back or to raise our flag. Cayle wasn't there as she usually was, but watched over us from that "untraveled country" having succumbed to serious illness weeks earlier, after the good fight.

Cayle was a fighter for women's rights and an activist in our union. She not only served on Council but participated in and chaired many of the important Committees that help move this union forward. Unions need people like Cayle and Wayne. We know that unions are good for workers, but there are forces out there that would just as soon have collective bargaining go the way of the dinosaurs.

ACTRA's founding year was in another era, when people were tired of a great World War and just wanted to get back to raising and educating their families and having a decent job and home. A small few gathered to create ACTRA. Which brings me to Charles Kerr, ACTRA membership number 5. That's right...5!

Charles was one of the trailblazers of this union and many of the things he did were a first, such as performing in the first Canadian TV commercial for Ford. But for Charles it wasn't about being first at anything, but simply being able to make a decent living for his family, in a profession he loved, with fair wages and respectable working conditions. We've come a long way

baby, from the simple 'trail' that Charles and his kind 'blazed', to the super highway that is ACTRA today.

But like any highway, a union needs maintenance.

Almost 70 years later, our union is one of the strongest and most unique unions in the world and led by its dedicated Councillors like Wayne and Cayle. It is your Council, Executive and superlative staff that is responsible for keeping our issues on the front burners with campaigns such as 'I Work ACTRA', 'Canadian Content' and 'Status of the Artist'.

But a union is also a living, breathing entity, made manifest in its membership. From that membership must come the life force that replaces people like Cayle, Charles and Wayne. The uniqueness of this union is that, unlike other unions, we are a union of independent contractors, so we don't have the advantage of all working together in one plant or factory. Consequently, we must galvanize our efforts to remain united through the labours of our members: volunteering for committees, running for council seats and coming out for rallies and lobby events.

To paraphrase a great man...Ask not what your union can do for you. Ask what you can do for your union. ■

Roger Abbott

George Bloomfield

Cayle Chernin

Peter Donaldson

Charles Kerr

Jim Reed

Wayne Robson

Michael Sarrazin

Judy Welch



Cayle Chernin

Cayle Chernin was my best friend, my soul sister, and an honorary Shuster. We met as teenagers in the '60s in Eli Rill's acting class in Toronto. Together we had our consciousness raised by feminism and lowered by sex, drugs, and rock & roll.

In the mid-'70s in L.A. we shared a suite at the fabled Chateau Marmont Hotel. Cayle knew everyone from "Jack" on down the food chain.

With her mad people skills, she bonded easily. Indeed, she got along so famously with my dad, I was sure if my mom went first, Cayle would wind up my stepmom.

Time was elastic for Cayle. How did she pack so much in when she moved at such a leisurely pace? Cayle loved life and she loved art and she took exquisite delight in the blurred boundaries between them.

And she was full of surprises. She read to the blind. She helped smuggle hoards of Jews out of Syria. And then suddenly, she morphed into a blonde gentile actress named Lorraine Sinclair. Lorraine performed a killer one-woman show of Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* in a hole-in-the-wall theatre inside a subway station.

A year ago, when it seemed my mom was dying, Cayle stuck by my terrified jet-lagged side in the ER all night long. When I was told there were absolutely no beds to be had upstairs, Cayle

skillfully schmoozed the beleaguered night nurse, bonding with her over provincial budget cuts and over-worked nurses' schedules. Miraculously a bed appeared.

In June, 2010, Cayle was diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer. Refusing to feel sorry for herself, she kept working. Supported by her husband, actor **Dwight McFee**, Cayle did a play, a feature film sequel which she helped to initiate, a voice-over and a TV show. Then, from her orchid-filled salon in Palliative Care, she taped a podcast, hosted an acting class, recorded a two-hour ACTRA interview and dubbed lines for *Down The Road Again*.

One grim night when the cancer was winning, I came home fried from visiting Cayle in the hospital and flipped on the tube. Eerily, in front of an island of groceries, I saw that beatific Cheshire grin. I lunged for the phone. "Cayle, are you in a commercial?" "Yes," she purred slyly. "Twas me - amidst the meat."

Arguably, Cayle had the best smile ever. A dentist's daughter, she was flossing right up to the end. Cayle, we shall miss who and what we were, when we were with you. Keep grinning down at us from that big bowl of stars. ■

Rosie Shuster wrote for *Saturday Night Live*. She is the daughter of comedian **Frank Shuster** of *Wayne and Shuster* fame.



Peter Donaldson

In William Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, the title character is described thusly: "Every man has his fault and honesty is his." The author could just have easily written these words about the actor who portrayed Timon, hundreds of years later, in one of the finest performances ever seen at the Stratford Festival. The truth that **Peter Donaldson** shared in every performance of every character he portrayed was no different than the truth he lived every day of his life.

Pete was an actor's actor, loved by his colleagues for his professionalism and his seemingly effortless talent. Pete set the bar for everyone he worked with. He thrilled, scared, and inspired audiences. He held dear the craft but never the trappings.

Pete was a golfer's golfer. He had a powerful and beautiful stroke, the envy of anyone who had the pleasure to play with him. He held dear the game but not the trappings of the golf world.

Pete was a man's man. Comfortable whether sailing a boat, building a deck, tinkering in the garage or just sitting back with a drink and telling stories, naughty and nice.

Pete was a passionate family man. And in this passion he was happily caught in the trappings. He adored his girls: wife **Sheila McCarthy**, daughters **Mackenzie Grace** and **Drew Donaldson**. Watching Pete love his girls sometimes made your heart skip a beat, the love was so quietly intense.

There should be a new phrase: a friend's friend. Pete was always there for those in his circle. He would help you when you were down, ground you when your head was too big and fill your heart with pride when you needed it.

We did not know Pete terribly long, but we will keep him close with a lifetime of missing him. ■

Colin Mochrie and Deb McGrath



Judy Welch

Even before I moved to Toronto some 30 years ago, I had heard of **Judy Welch** and her place in Canada's modelling pantheon. She had gone from being a repeat beauty contest winner, to model, to launching and managing the biggest agency that propelled Canadian talent onto the world stage.

As VP of ACTRA Toronto, I chaired the committee that reinstated her membership to our union. We had banned agents from being members to avoid conflict of interests. Judy's agency had closed and she wanted to go back to work and we respectfully granted her request.

My whole family worked on sets and soon my wife got to know her as a gregarious background performer and friend. Eventually Judy and I conducted a series of interviews aimed at writing her memoirs. What a memory and what stories!

She called herself a serial monogamist and had been romantically linked to the likes of **Mickey Mantle**, Argos great **Dick Shatto**, and partied at home with the *Rolling Stones*, **Bobby Orr**, **Lee Majors**, **Richard Burton** and **Burt Reynolds** to name but a few.

When she became an agent, one of her models took up with billionaire arms dealer **Adnan Kashshoggi**. In Paris on a scouting session, Judy was invited to tag along to Monte Carlo in a style most of us don't even read about.

But perhaps the single thing that stands out in my mind was her determination not to let life beat her down and celebrate every positive scintilla. She saw potential in so many that other agencies had passed up and infused so many with belief in their own potential. We've lost a pioneer and a powerhouse for Canadian talent. If you listen closely you'll hear her holding a casting session for the angels. ■

Eric Murphy



Wayne Robson

I've been feeling such a sadness whenever the thought of Wayne's passing returns to the front of the queue for 'the things I worry about'.

It was 1989 when we first met. I was 29 and trying to accumulate ACTRA qualifying credits. I landed a TV commercial that would move me one step closer to becoming a card carrying union pro. I think you needed 1000 credits back then...or maybe it was 6 ...it seemed like 1000. When I arrived on the set the morning of the shoot, I began to talk and take pictures of everyone and thing. As was my custom at that stage of my 'career'. I approached each job with the same thorough process. As a set visit. Sensing, perhaps that I was possibly 'newish to the biz', Wayne acknowledged me with a warm hello. I recognized him. Although I didn't know his name. I knew that face. I tried to stay calm. But inside I was wanting to call people. He was a 'famous guy'. He introduced himself as Wayne. We made some 'actory' conversation and he returned to his newspaper.

I studied him throughout the day, the way he worked. He knew all the 'film set lingo'. He had a calm cool style. An approachable nature. We spoke again. He surrendered the names of some shows he'd appeared in. I hadn't heard of any of them but that was OK because I could only get TV reception by putting my bare foot on the antenna input of my TV. By acting as a grounding source I could enjoy 3 channels. One channel was in Italian. I don't speak Italian but grew to enjoy the sound of it. Anyway none of this could side-track me from knowing he was famous. Wow, such a pro, I thought. So 'famousy', so 'uniony'. I was so happy to have met him.

Many years later, at my first ACTRA gathering, 'famous guy' was the first to greet me and make me feel welcome. He also borrowed money but I had forgotten about that until now. That was me kidding.

Thank you so very much Wayne Robson, for having given us all that feeling of warmth and welcome that was so consistently your good nature over the many years we knew each other. And 1000 ACTRA credits for all of the laughs! You will be fondly remembered. ■

Chris Potter



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 Jess Abramovitch
 Tiago Abreu
 Gayle Ackroyd
 Michelle Adams
 Darren Adderley
 Drew Adkins
 Taso Alexander
 Loren Michelle Amaral
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 Des Anthony
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 Peter Apostolopoulos
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 Jacqueline Burtney
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“Art is a collaboration. The field, the script, the set. The credit union is the epitome of that. Having Creative Arts allows us, as actors, to help each other through cooperative banking.”

Tabby Johnson

Collaboration. With you. For you.

Best known for her roles on *Big Comfy Couch* and *S.W.A.T.*, Swiss-born Tabby Johnson has been acting in theatre and TV in the United States and Canada since she was 12. She has also learned some hard-knocks banking lessons. *“I’m one of those people—actors—who bankers always believe should get a ‘real’ job.”*

One of the credit union’s Founding Members, Tabby has investment shares and chequing and savings accounts at Creative Arts. *“I’m planning on opening a business account, and I’ve been waiting to switch my mortgage there, too. I would rather see the interest I pay generate help for other members than just go into bank profits.”*



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Richard Todd, Steward: IPA, CBC, Global, NFB, TVO,

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Contact: Membership Department Tel: 416-928-2278

Karl Pruner, Director

Labour Day Parade

Monday, Sept. 5

Calling all ACTRA Toronto members!

Come out and march in the annual Toronto Labour Day Parade on Monday, September 5th.

ACTRA Toronto is proud to join other area unions in this parade in celebration of the history and struggle of working people, and the achievements of organized labour.

Meet us on the corner of University Avenue and Queen Street West. The parade marches along Queen Street and south on Dufferin Street to the Canadian National Exhibition.

Don't forget to bring your friends and family along as everyone marching in the parade will get into the Exhibition for free.



For more information, check out www.actratoronto.com



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