

performers

Volume 12 • Issue 2



ACTRA AWARD Winners!

KRISTEN THOMSON GORDON PINSENT SHAWN DOYLE

Casting Directors Answer Your Questions
Political Action: Your Career is in Jeopardy!



Message from the Publisher

By David Macniven

You may notice a few changes in this issue of performers magazine.

The first most obvious change is that we have retired the “Branch Line” moniker. Our new title more accurately represents what we’re about. We are the magazine for ACTRA Toronto Performers. Your magazine from your union. For you, about you; dealing with issues that concern, inform and entertain you.

We’ve also made it a little thicker (we’ve added eight pages) and we’ve glossed up the cover a bit. We’re adding quality and quantity to provide a value added service for all the wonderful members of our strong and healthy union.

Your council has decided that you should be more informed on what your union is doing for you, and on events that impact your career. So, on top of the three issues a year that you receive of *performers*, three 2 to 4 page newsletters will be sent out between issues of the magazine. These newsletters will keep you up to speed on specific important issues, like the IPA negotiations, what ACTRA is doing to help save our industry, and other time sensitive topics that can’t wait for the next magazine and that directly affect your life.

If you want to stay up to the minute on current affairs, and be a well informed actor, you should register with us by sending an email with your name, email address and membership number to info@actratoronto.com 

“Bad luck, and worse timing.” That’s the answer given by Dr. Sheela Basrur, Toronto’s admirable Medical Officer of Health, when, at the time of lowest morale during the SARS crisis this spring, a downcast politician asked what we did wrong.


We might say the same fortune befell our industry this spring... In truth, it was the second wallop of a double whammy for those of us who attempt to eke out a living as essential creative workers in film and television.

I am not, for an instant, unaware that this health crisis has hit and devastated many families, and we at ACTRA wish to offer those affected by it our deepest compassion.

Just weeks prior to the impact of SARS on our industry, (undoubtedly we have lost substantial foreign service production) we began to take strategic political action in response to the devastation that the ruling party in Ottawa, wreaked upon our home-grown television production. They axed 25% of the seed money that comes from the Canadian Television Fund (CTF). Paul Gross referred to our industry at that point as being in catastrophic free-fall. Read more about that and the campaign that ACTRA Toronto initiated with our coalition of production partners in the article by Vice President Christie MacFadyen.

So, on a sunny evening on the last Monday in April, 200 ACTRA members, directors, writers and creative technicians demonstrated to Finance Minister John Manley, that we wanted those funds restored. Many of us, united like that, could not be ignored by ambitious politicians. Some of our best-known actors, (Sonja Smits, Alberta Watson, Julie Stewart, Shawn Doyle and Aidan Devine, among others), spoke up and joined their fellow actors, directors (including Sturla Gunnarson), writers (such as John Krizanc) and supportive technicians in a rousing “O Canada” for the Minister’s benefit. Manley had to stop, listen and respond. If I may be so bold, I think it was one of our proudest moments. That day, even though we’re not sure he really wanted to listen, we did our best to get through his political posturing.

Actors are some of the most driven, courageous people on the face of the earth. They deal with more day-to-day rejection in one year than most people do in a lifetime. But, to plagiarize a fellow artist — actors in their own hearts know that to dedicate oneself to a moment is worth a thousand lifetimes.

Some of us recognized our moment on that April evening, and we took it. I ask all of you now, my colleagues, my fellow actors: Join the growing movement in your union and take back our rights to a Canadian industry. It will be a long but, if we work together, a completely winnable struggle. 



COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

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Kristen Thomson,
Gordon Pinsent
and Shawn Doyle

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PUBLISHER

David Macniven
dmacniven@council.actratoronto.com

EDITOR

Brad Borbridge
editor@actratoronto.com

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Brad Borbridge, Richard Hardacre, Dan Mackenzie,
David Macniven, Carol Taverner, Brian Topp

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Erick Querci
creativeprocess@sympatico.ca

ADVERTISING SALES

Nardina Grande
arc.com@rogers.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Brad Borbridge • Ferne Downey • Richard Hardacre
Christie MacFadyen • David Macniven
Elizabeth McCallum • Anne Marie Scheffler
Chris Owens

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PLEASE ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Performers Magazine
c/o ACTRA Toronto Performers
625 Church Street
Toronto, ON M4Y 2G1
Fax: (416) 928-2852
editor@actratoronto.com

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If you're an ACTRA member or apprentice and want to
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www.actratoronto.com

HOT LINE: 416-642-6755 voiced by Michael Stevens



ATP Council - WHO'S WHO

PRESIDENT

Richard Hardacre (1, 2) • E: rhardacre@actra.ca, ext: 6780

VICE-PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

David Macniven (1, 2) • E: dmacniven@council.actratoronto.com, ext: 6610

VICE-PRESIDENT, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Christie MacFadyen (1, 2) • E: cmacfadyen@council.actratoronto.com, ext: 6609

VICE-PRESIDENT, FINANCE

Austin Schatz (1, 2) • E: aschatz@council.actratoronto.com, ext: 6607

VICE-PRESIDENT, INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Elizabeth McCallum (2) • E: emccallum@council.actratoronto.com, ext: 6608

VICE-PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Eric Murphy (1, 2) • E: clarinda@sympatico.ca, ext: 6606

EXECUTIVE MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Jackie Laidlaw (2) • E: laidlaw@interlog.com, ext: 6611

PAST PRESIDENT

Robert Collins (1, 2) • E: rcollins@council.actratoronto.com

COUNCILLORS

Heather Allin (2) • E: itsjustastage@globalserve.net

Emanuel Arruda (2) • E: earruda@sympatico.ca

John Connolly (2) • E: john_p_connolly@hotmail.com

Aidan Devine (1, 2)

Ferne Downey (1, 2) • E: fdowney@council.actratoronto.com

Todd Dulmage (2) • E: tdulmage@council.actratoronto.com

Dom Fiore (2) • E: domenicofiore@hotmail.com

Karen Ivany (2) • E: karenivany@hotmail.com

Don Lamoreux (2) • E: dlamoreux@council.actratoronto.com

Julie Mcleod (2) • E: jmcleod@council.actratoronto.com

Michael Miranda (1, 2) • E: michaelmiranda@sympatico.ca

Sean Mulcahy (1, 2)

Anne Marie Scheffler (1, 2) • E: amscheffler@council.actratoronto.com

Michael Stevens (2) • E: mstevens@council.actratoronto.com

Jennifer Wigmore (1, 2) • E: jwigmore@council.actratoronto.com

Theresa Tova, Children's Advocate • E: ttova@actratoronto.com, ext. 6605

John Henley, ACTRA Apprentice Acting Chair • E: jhenley@actratoronto.com, ext. 6616

James Finnerty, ACTRA Apprentice Vice-Chair • E: jfinnerty@actratoronto.com, ext. 6615

Cheryl Hancock, ACTRA Apprentice Secretary • E: chancock@actratoronto.com, ext. 6617

Sistah Lois, Apprentice Executive Member at Large • E: slois@actratoronto.com, ext. 6625

David Gray, Apprentice Executive Member at Large • E: dgray@actratoronto.com, ext. 6626

Leesa Levinson, Diversity Advocate • E: llevinson@actratoronto.com ext. 6619

Priya Rao, Diversity Advocate • E: prao@actratoronto.com, ext. 6618

Wayne McMahon, ACTRA Extra Caucus Chair • E: wmcMahon@actratoronto.com ext. 6620

Shereen Airth, ACTRA Extra Vice-Chair • E: sairth@actratoronto.com, ext. 6621

Peter Lukasal, ACTRA Extra Secretary • E: pmlukactra@hotmail.com, ext. 6622

Shawn Lawrence, Ombudsperson ext. 6604

Legend: 1- ACTRA National Councillor; 2- ACTRA Toronto Councillor

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Contents

Your Career is in Jeopardy! By Christie MacFadyen pg. 5

Casting Directors on the Hot Seat By Brad Borbridge pg. 8

EXPECTING: A Recipe for Success By Ann-Marie Scheffler pg. 13

The ACTRA Toronto Awards Gala pg. 16

Winner: Shawn Doyle pg. 18

Winner: Kristen Thomson pg. 19

Winner: Gordon Pinsent pg. 20

Last Conference pg. 22

Members' News pg. 25

Next Meeting pg. 27

The Casting Process:
the Five Toughest Issues pg. 28

ACTRA Storms Ottawa! pg. 30



Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from readers. To allow for as many letters as possible, please limit your letter to 300 words or less. Letters may be edited. Please direct all editorial inquiries and letters to the editor: editor@actratoronto.com

The views expressed in the "Letters to the Editor" are not necessarily the views of ACTRA Toronto Performers, its Council or the Editorial Committee.

Dear Editor,

My name is Mary Pitt and I am an ACTRA member living in Toronto. I am also on the Steering Committee of the Artists' Health Centre Foundation (AHCF), an organization that has helped design and launch the Al and Malka Green Artists' Health Centre.

The Artists' Health Centre is located within the Healthy Connections Program at Toronto Western Hospital. Designed by artists in collaboration with medical and alternative/complementary practitioners, as well as other professionals, the Centre is designed to provide an innovative, integrated, inter-disciplinary approach to service and delivery of health care.

The Centre will serve both creative and performing artists, providing a combination of complementary/alternative and conventional health-care service.

The Foundation is also working on developing a Subsidy Program dedicated to helping clients in need finance some alternative/complementary treatments, as we realize it's important for artists to have access to quality health care not covered by OHIP.

The AHC's philosophy of care recognizes the unique healthcare and psycho-social needs of professional artists. Care and treatment are provided by specifically trained practitioners with expertise working with creative and performing artists.

For further information check out the AHCF website at www.ahcf.ca. To book an appointment please call 416-603-5263.

Mary Pitt

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Dear Editor,

As an ACTRA member for the last several years I was happy to hear about the reintroduction of the ACTRA Awards as a celebration of Canadian talent in television and film. I am familiar with the work of all the nominees and I congratulate the winners for their continued pursuit of excellence in our field.

However, reading the nomination list I have to admit I was saddened. It was yet another clear indicator of how under-represented non-white actors are when it comes to leading roles in this country.

I have always believed that the survival (and perhaps growth) of the Canadian entertainment market lies in the inclusion of a large portion of our population who see few familiar faces on their cinema and television screens. It's easy enough to do from an industry point of view. It doesn't require legislation. Just open that often-closed door, open your mind and let the talent speak for itself.

Raoul Bhaneja

Your Career is in Jeopardy!

By Christie MacFadyen

“
*Ottawa drops
 \$25 million the way
 you and I spend nickels
 and dimes.
 It's pocket change...
 cutting the CTF might
 have struck Mr. Manley
 as a clever little dig
 at the heart of
 Ms. Copp's political
 support in the
 cultural community.*”

Jeffery Simpson,
 The Globe and Mail

You and I may never have met but, if you're an actor in this country, your career may be in trouble. The Canadian government has apparently ceased to believe that Canadian television is an important part of this country's cultural life. Contrary to trends in Europe and the rest of the world to protect and increase indigenous television production, the Liberal government in Canada is in the process of annihilating our industry.

The CRTC's 1999 changes to the television policy have caused almost all of our hour-long dramas to disappear from the screen. Then in February of this year the Minister of Finance John Manley cut \$25 million from the Canadian Television Fund — even though the government had a huge budget surplus. This \$25 million cut threatened all but a few of our remaining shows. In early May it looked like the government was going to put some money back, but as I write it is not yet clear whether we are getting new money or money is just being shifted around. The question is, do they realize the damage they are doing by creating all this uncertainty?

To fight this "catastrophic collapse" of our industry, as Paul Gross put it, ACTRA has banded together with fellow unions from the film and television industry to form The Canadian Coalition of Audio-Visual Unions (CCAUI). Representing over 50,000 workers in Canada's film and television industry, the CCAUI has produced an extraordinary document entitled *The Crisis in Canadian English-Language Drama* that was released at a March press conference. This report provides intelligent solutions and recommendations and is being circulated to government policy makers, producers, broadcasters and the public. I recommend you read it at www.actratoronto.com

"This unique report is not just another round of criticism," said Stephen Waddell, ACTRA's National Executive Director, "It is a thorough review of our industry and in it we offer reasonable funding alternatives to a system which is failing Canadian talent and audiences." Canadian content reviews are underway in all our major government cultural agencies and they need our input and help to understand what needs to be done.



"...to suggest that the Canadian television business is in peril is a hilarious understatement, this is a catastrophic collapse – we are in a free-fall" – Paul Gross

In response to the shocking \$25 million cut to the Canadian Television Fund (CTF), ACTRA joined again with other industry colleagues, including broadcasters, at a press conference to protest this ruinous loss of funding for many of our most popular Canadian television shows. This cut to the CTF resulted in a 65% rejection rate for shows that applied to the fund. Great Canadian programs such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and *The Eleventh Hour* were just two of the approximately 130 productions that would not receive CTF funding. Also facing extinction were dozens of movie-of-the-week proposals, new children's shows, performing arts, variety programs and new drama series. This represents a possible loss of 550 hours of Canadian programming, jobs numbering in the thousands, talent migration to the U.S. and more U.S. programming on our screens than ever. Just to rub salt into the wounds, the Minister also elected to give foreign producers a raise by hiking their tax credit up from 11% to 16%. Does that seem fair to you?


At the press conference denouncing the CTF cuts, actor Peter Keleghan noted, "...our government is helping to fund foreign-location shooting while cutting dollars for domestic product." A healthy foreign service industry seems to be their plan, but this gambit may not work if pestilence, war and a rising Canadian dollar keep the Americans at home.

In his recorded message from the production set of *Slings and Arrows* actor/writer/director Paul Gross had this to say about

the collapse of Canadian television:

"This issue strikes at the very heart of what it means to be a nation. And I find it inconceivable that this government, with its long history of supporting the arts, is willing to abandon that now. Is this really the legacy that Sheila Copps wants to leave at Heritage? Is this honestly the kind of country that John Manley seeks to govern? And perhaps most importantly, is the destruction of the cultural fabric something that Jean Chrétien would like to have as the centerpiece of his legacy?"

You need to let the government know how you feel about this.

Your government representatives, federal Members of Parliament and Cabinet Ministers, need to know that you care about Canadian drama programming and its importance to Canadian culture. Unfortunately, they are no more knowledgeable about the entertainment industry than your friendly local grocer — and they do not hear from average Canadians that care. So why should they do anything about it? Our government must decide to take a leadership position on culture but they need a cue from the public and guidance from those of us who work in the business. 



Actors Aidan Devine, Sonja Smits (*The Eleventh Hour*) and Julie Stewart (*Cold Squad*) along with over 200 ACTRA members, directors and writers protest the \$25-million cut from the Canadian Television Fund.

Below: ACTRA Toronto President Richard Hardacre lets his feelings be known loud and clear.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Now is the time to speak out. Write a letter to Copps and Manley, call your MP, scream and yell, jump up and down and get your friends to join you. Tell them Canadians have the right to create and watch their own stories and programs.

Get on our email mailing list to get updates regularly by sending an email with your name and membership number to: info@actratoronto.com

Go to www.actratoronto.com for more information and instructions on writing or calling your representatives (by the way, you don't even need to pay for the stamp — it's free).

Let them know you care about your industry and your job.



Liberal leadership candidate John Manley met our picketers outside a fundraising dinner at the Old Mill restaurant in Toronto.

WHO TO VOICE YOUR CONCERNS TO:

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ACTRA Website: www.actratoronto.com

HOW TO FIND YOUR LOCAL MP: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/senmemb/house/members/>

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You can send your comments by E-mail to pm@pm.gc.ca, or write or fax the Prime Minister's office at:

Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons, Parliament Building, Ottawa ON K1A 0A6 Fax: 613-941-6900

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BY BRAD BORBRIDGE

Four casting directors answer your questions

Casting Directors are an enigmatic and poorly understood group. We all know that they're important, but ask actors to define exactly how and the answers get fuzzy. All we know for sure is that they make the initial decision to bring us into the room, that they're generally friendly, and that we all desperately want to impress them. And, unless you're in the position where producers and directors know you, they are more important to our careers than any one job.

In an effort to pull back the curtain, close the comprehension gap and de-mystify casting directors, I have randomly picked four of them to answer a few questions. This is meant to be a sample of the over 20 principal casting directors in Toronto and in no way implies any particular endorsements. I am hoping to get other casting directors involved in future articles.

If you have any questions for casting directors that you would like to see answered, please email me at editor@actratoronto.com and I will print the responses in future issues of *Performers*.

In my conversations with these four, I was impressed by their commitment to us actors; By how much respect they hold for us, and their willingness to push for us Canadians. My thanks and gratitude go out to them for agreeing to do this. Here are the questions and responses from, in no particular order, Tina Gerussi (TG), Stephanie Gorin (SG), John Comerford (JC) and Robin Cook (RC):

CASTING DIRECTORS ON THE HOT SEAT

What are some common mistakes made by actors when they come in and audition?

TG - I don't know if there's a common mistake. Actors are now pretty informed when it comes to auditions. I think the biggest problem is the misconceptions about the casting process. Actors seem to think if they don't get the role it means they did a poor audition or we don't "like" them and somehow have snatched the role from them. In fact, there are lots of reasons why they may not get the part which is beyond their control. However, there are a couple of things that personally drive me crazy. One is when a performer arrives with no picture or resume. The other is when their sides are incomplete and they don't let anyone know until they're in the room. But all in all I think there is a high level of professional conduct here which doesn't go unnoticed.

SG - They haven't really looked at their lines or they start the audition with an apology.

JC - I would say one of the common mistakes for TV is that they try to do too much. And I think that for TV you keep it simple. Here's my big thing. You can act on film but you really have to talk on TV. In film you have much more opportunity to actually play a character and do more acting. In TV you really just have to bring yourself to the table. Therefore when you cast an actor on TV it's better to find one who has those traits and characteristics that the character has.

RC - Canadian accents are the biggest problem - American producers and directors comment about this all the time. Also not listening. When you ask for or are given direction, often an actor will say "yes, OK" before the director has finished talking. Listen and let the director finish.

Does doing commercial work hurt the development of your acting career? Background work?

TG - I don't think it hurts at all. Work is work and the more experience you can get on a set the better.

SG - I personally think the more performing you do, the better. If you use each situation to learn by watching others and how the director works, it can only help you in the future.

JC - Not at all. It doesn't influence me at all.

RC - Often I'll be at home setting up a session and see a commercial and be reminded of a particular actor. For me I've never had a problem with it.

In your opinion, what is the difference between a "good" casting director and a "bad" one? (i.e. what talents must a casting director possess?)

TG - That's a loaded question! I think a good casting director is someone who is creative, yet able to see the story

through the director's eyes. The casting director should have the confidence to take chances and risk getting it wrong rather than get stuck seeing things the same way all the time. The landscape of our society changes constantly and if we're not observant things can get very dull.

SG - I consider a "good" casting director one who knows the talent well, isn't afraid to take chances and try new actors, can help direct an actor if he/she has chosen the wrong approach for the audition, one who respects actors and knows that if the actor does well, it will be best for everyone involved. A "bad" one isn't someone you want to spend any time in the room with.

JC - I think good casting directors are very specific about who they choose to show. As opposed to showing the producers and directors a lot of people and hoping that they pick somebody.

RC - A good casting director must be open to new suggestions, respect the talent and go to bat for the actors. It's all about the actor.

What should/can an actor do to get an audition with you?

TG - I like to look at demos. I try to get to as much theatre as I can and having a good agent doesn't hurt!

SG - They can write a letter, send a demo, invite myself or someone from my office to their show or let their agent call and do a push.

JC - I look at all suggestions. I try to know as many actors as I can. If you do audition and it's good — you may not get the role but I like to bring back people who audition well.

RC - Get his/her agent to call me. Cards are great, as are notices about being in a play. If I was an actor and was really proud of the work I did on a project, I would send out notices to all the casting directors.

Do you ever audition actors to fit a "quota" knowing there is no chance of him/her getting the role?

TG - I try not to. It's a waste of everyone's time. If a role is already on offer, I tell the agent so the performer can make the decision whether or not they want to audition.

SG - That sounds ridiculous. Sometimes I'll bring in an actor I don't think is perfect for the part, or may not be as experienced, but sometimes they surprise you and this could just be the role that fits them best.

JC - I think it does happen but I never do that. I fight to get Canadians. When Americans say "we're going to bring these people from the States," I will always fight to try to get to see Canadians for the role first.

RC - It's been known to happen. But it is always worthwhile to come in and audition because you may be offered another role — this happens all the time.

Should actors have the sides memorized when they come in to see you?

TG - It's a plus but not a requirement. It really depends on what makes the actor comfortable and the amount of time an actor has had to prepare. When it's a line or two, most directors and producers expect it to be memorized. (I know this sounds obvious but you'd be surprised!) If it's late notice I don't expect people to have it memorized. I find most actors know their limit and don't take the audition if they feel they can't prepare.

SG - I find it always helps the actor. They are more in touch with the character in the scene; they act more naturally. When we're shooting tight, we don't have to keep looking at the top of their head while their face is in the paper.

JC - It's not a memorization contest but if you're off book and know the material well, it really helps.

RC - Yes, they should be memorized. I think that the actors who consistently give the best auditions are always off book. If they have eight pages and got them the night before, I understand if they're not off book. You should also read the script. Full copies of the script are often available, you just have to ask.

What are you looking for in an actor, what impresses you?

TG - Uncluttered performance. Ease, confidence and simplicity. I want to be drawn in and held. Eyes are very important!

SG - An actor who is versatile and comes in well prepared. It is also impressive if they are willing and capable of taking direction.

JC - That it's well prepared. That they focus their attention on the scene and the reader and that they keep it simple. Come in, read, and if the director asks for an adjustment listen to what they're asking for and do it. Don't hang around. Do the work, say thank you and leave. You don't want to talk yourself out of getting a job. Don't ask to do it again. Good directors and producers can see what good actors do.

RC - It's all about being natural. You have to understand the role. If you're a good actor and you understand the role, you're going to give a good audition. The one line auditions are harder and the biggest mistake is that actors make way too much out of it.

What do you enjoy most about your job? Least?

TG - I think I have the best job in the business! It's where a script comes alive for the first time. I get to watch actors create characters from bare bones and I find it very exciting. I also enjoy the business-side of the job. Things can get stressful, but people are passionate about this business and I enjoy that.

SG - I love reading scripts, working with all sorts of interesting directors and producers, watching the magic as the performer comes alive at the auditions. I like the diversity and the joy of discovering a new performer. I suppose my least favourite thing is the late night, weekend and early morning calls. I'm also not keen on the phone call that comes in at 6 p.m. to tell you that your 6-year-old boy is now a 50-year-old woman and you have to cast tomorrow!

JC - I particularly like doing a series because I get to see lots of actors. When I did *Earth: Final Conflict* for five years, I think there were three or four people that did the show twice — so every week you're doing something absolutely new, that's what I like. I hate the politics of the Americans.

RC - I love it when the actor gets the job. It makes my day when an actor gets a great role through me. It's even better when you've brought in somebody that's totally different from what the script calls for and they end up getting the role. That means I've made a huge creative contribution. I hate pulling sides.

How do you feel about Canadian actors in general?

TG - I think we have a great wealth of talent in this country. I'm proud of the actors in this country and am always gratified when producers and directors from other countries recognize it — and that happens on a regular basis. Canadian actors are well trained, versatile and can claim high standards in all areas of entertainment.

SG - I think Canadian actors are fantastic. I love the diversity and all the wonderful characters. Some of them don't come off as polished but that's what makes them seem real.

JC - I love Canadian actors. They are, in general, a lot better than American actors. The thing that I don't think Canadian actors realize is, because of the amount of service production from the Americans, Canadian actors work the most in North America. They've really honed their craft on TV and film. We've got great technique and come from a great theatre background.

RC - I wouldn't have a job without them. Our actors rock! I've worked with directors who can't believe how great our talent pool is.

How do you feel about actors bringing in props, costumes and/or miming?

TG - Personally, I don't pay much attention to props etc. I'm watching their eyes.

SG - I think props and costumes generally are a very bad idea. We want to see the actor not the camouflage. Knowing to dress funky or wear a suit for a certain role is a good idea. Miming is a very tricky thing. It can really make the scene feel fake.

JC - It's kind of a commercial thing. In film and TV you've done your work and you come in dressed appropriately but props are never good. We focus on text. Miming hurts you too.

RC - Miming is fine if you're on the phone but don't mime sitting on a chair or eating dinner. Be careful of props too. You also don't have to "dress the character" (i.e. cop or nurse) for features. I would like to think that a director has an imagination for that.

How important is the actor's agency in your selecting who comes in to see you?

TG - Having a good reputable agent is always a very good thing. As our industry grows, so do the number of actors out there. There seem to be hundreds of new faces every day and I don't care how good a casting director you are, you are never going to know every actor out there so the agents job is a vital one.

SG - I bring in whoever I feel fits the role regardless of the agency. However, in all fairness, some of the older more established agencies have very experienced actors who are more comfortable with a lot of dialogue.

CASTING DIRECTORS ON THE HOT SEAT

JC - It's got nothing to do with it.

RC - It can make a difference but ultimately it's who's right for the role and who's available. I use all the agencies. There are times I've called a specific agency at 7:30 p.m. because I know someone will be there and I'm desperate to get some people in for the next day. But I use all of them.


What jobs are coming up for you?

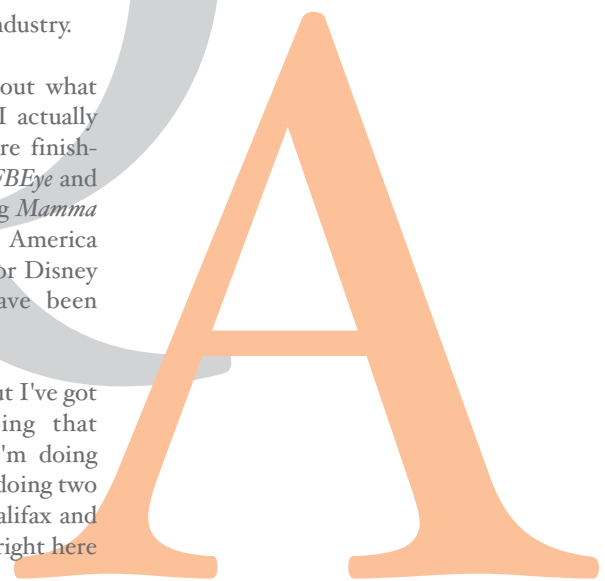
How busy are you going to be this year relative to past years?

TG - First of all I would like to put rumours to rest. I am not retiring! Right now I have a project that shoots here in June. American work is starting to come in for the spring and summer but I don't know how much there will be throughout next year. I am devastated by the state of the Canadian Industry.

SG - I don't like to talk about what jobs may be coming up until I actually do them. At the moment we're finishing up a season of *Sue Thomas, FBEye* and we're in the middle of recasting *Mamma Mia* for 3 companies in North America and have just begun a movie for Disney where our Canadian kids have been doing just great.

JC - It's been a little slower but I've got a new series and I'm hoping that *Platinum* will be picked up. I'm doing *The Red Zone* for ABC and I'm doing two movies that are shooting in Halifax and we'll cast a significant amount right here in Toronto.


RC - I think the summer is going to be steady but with this SARS paranoia who knows. I'm certainly busy right now and I hope it continues. 



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How do you go from having a really great film idea to having an award-winning film?



A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

By Ann-Marie Scheffler

Here's the recipe, according to Angela Gei, one of the stars, and also one of the producers, of *Expecting*.

You take a place where people with different skill sets might meet.

Career actress Angela Gei, (who generously let me interview her), was doing a master class with Jim Pasternak at WIFT in November 2000, with her friend and fellow actress Barbara Radecki and another fine actress Valerie Buhagiar. The director was Deborah Day, and they knew they wanted to work together again.

“Deborah Day had been planning this huge feature, but she wanted to do something now!” so the four women began brainstorming on what they could do together.

Angie emphasized that it was important to share creative ideas with other experienced professionals in the film industry. She believes that there should be more places and opportunities for actors to meet writers, producers and directors, not just on set or in negotiations “across the table”.



You add time.

These industrious women met weekly (starting January 2001) mostly in Angie's kitchen, shaping the ideal film that they could bring into the world.

Add a writer. Or six.

While the women were forming the movie, Deborah Day brought some writers to help with story and characters. First came Karen Hill, who soon got a gig on a TV series, and had to leave. Then came Cindy Stone, who soon got a book deal, and had to leave. But the four gals kept developing — they weren't allowed to leave!

You make a pact.

"We made a deal around the table — the four of us — that we are going to do this—no matter what!" Angie's contagious energy inspired me to believe in my own future film success. I remembered that when I first talked to her about *Expecting* Angie emphatically believed that "we can all do it!"

Season with advice. (Add more producers).

Deb Day had worked with Kirk Johnson and brought him aboard. I had to ask Angie how to attract the financial and business experts and she said you really have to ask for help and get them excited about your project. So how about C.A. and financial consult-

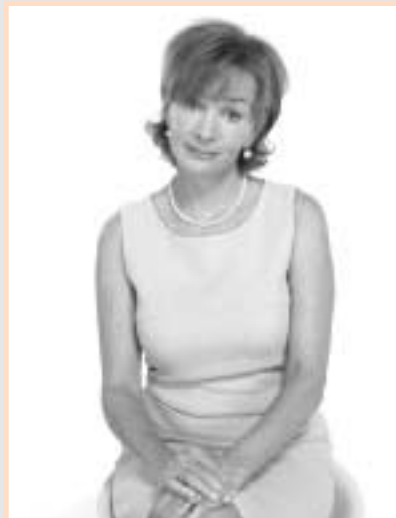
ant Tom Walden? He's actually Angie Gei's husband... "There we were at the kitchen table, Deb Day said: 'Can't Tom help us?' And he did." His experience was invaluable.

Add more pressure, with a very real time-line.

In April 2001, Valerie Buhagiar announced to the group that she was pregnant. Perfect timing for the role of the pregnant woman, but now they'd have to shoot by September! (Remember the "no matter what" pact?)

Remove script and fold in improv.

"So then, Deb Day turned to us and said, 'Let's do it improv.'" And everyone agreed. When you see *Expecting*, if you haven't already, the dialogue is so rich and side splittingly funny, it's unbelievable that they ever expected to do it any other way.



Add rest of cast (with strong improv skills).

Once "Improv" was on the menu, Angie thought of her old theatre school chum, *Second City* legend Debra McGrath.



Add generous amounts of handsome and talented men.

With Deb McGrath on board, in came McGrath's husband, the equally talented Colin Mochrie. (Not to mention famous!) Tom Melissis, Karl Pruner, and Derwin Jordan, were also added to the wonderful ensemble cast.

Bond with your cast and crew in the most unexpected way.

The first day of shooting was September 11, 2001. There was a sombre decision that the best thing to do was to stay together on set, and work hard at their labour of love. Times of crisis bring people together and working through this terrible day actually helped them get through it.

Keep everyone "Yes, And"-ing...!

The actors and crew had to hone their improv skills. "I call it an Improv Dance!" Angie laughed. "We shot in sequence. The crew and the cast didn't know what was going to happen next. Two camera opera-



tors and two boom guys, trying to understand the silent signals from DOP James Griffin. Sometimes scenes would last 15 minutes.” You think the crew would be exhausted, but instead everyone could hardly wait to see the next scene magically unfold.



Get accepted into the Montreal Film Festival.

When Angie and the gang found out that they were in the Montreal Film Festival, they were thrilled. Montreal became a central social place and the group turned their hotel room into a press

Reduce the recipe and shape

With 50 hours of footage, take a wonderful editor, Genie Award winner Lara Mazur, and let her do her magic. Lara says she just “looks for the truth.”

Get the best crew and respect them.

“We all believed it was important that everyone on set got paid the same amount. We knew we were dealing with experienced professionals. There was a strong feeling of mutual respect, common commitment and dedication to this film. And it didn't hurt that everyone was really well fed!”

Give yourself the credit you deserve.

“Actors are the best, but they underestimate themselves,” Angie told me, “Actors tend to work very hard and learn very quickly. Give yourself credit as producer. Taking something and running with it empowers you. It filled me with a purpose. You've got to create your own vehicles.”


Use the newly formed Norma Dell' Agnese-inspired ACTRA agreement.

“We couldn't have done it without CLIPP.” Angie stated. “There's got to be a way in which we can make it easy for us to make films in this country, and to protect and nurture this growing industry.” CLIPP has now become the Toronto Indie Production agreement (TIP) (AIP nationally), important ACTRA agreements that make movie making possible for the little guy. In comparison to *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, which cost \$5 million (U.S.) to make, *Expecting* cost significantly less than a million.

office. Producer Tom Walden struck up an enthusiastic conversation with a *Variety* reporter in the elevator, who came to the screening and loved the film. He ended up writing a great article. Also, in Montreal, their distributor, Equinox, came on board – the same distributor as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

Garnish with luck, and wonderful champions, and it's on its way.

To date, the film's success and the awards are impressive, to say the least. They won a jury mention for Best First Feature at The Montreal World Film Festival; tied for the Audience Choice Award at The Vancouver International Film Festival Fedex; received The Victoria Independent Film and Video award, a Chum City award, and the Cinequest San Jose Best First Feature, to name a few. They've been to Spain and Italy and they just found out that they have been invited to the Manchester Commonwealth Film Festival in June.

Angela Gei says, “We need as actors, directors, writers and producers to share our expertise and to stimulate each other - to build this Canadian film industry from the ground up. It takes a village to raise a film.” There's nothing quite like a little home-made indigenous movie making. 

Catch it on video and DVD and at Showcase and Festival theatres.



WELCOME NEW ACTRA MEMBERS!

Brian Akins
Frank S. Alonzi
Mark Andrada
Denise Andreadachi
Amanda Armagon
T're Armstrong
Steve Ashton
Liane Balaban
Koral Barberic
Slava Baykov
Ivan Beckett
Hazel M. Bennett
Brad Bennett
Jorien Berg
Katie Bergin
Dean Bernard
Angela Besharah
Craig Blair
Troy Blundell
Gordon Bolan
Janet Bourgeois
O. L. Bramble
Roderick Brown
Ginger R. Busch
Ian Busher

Marcello Cabezas
Rory James Campbell
Dallas Chorley
Alexander Xavier Chung
Aaron Cobb
Toroquil Colbo
Daniel Cook
Liane Balaban
Gisele Corinthios
Anthony Cortese
Rachel Crowther
Robin Cunningham
Kingsley Daley
Judith De Boer
Nadia Dawn Dhawan
Karine Dion
Sarah Dort
Ryan Ehrensworth
Jeremy Elder
Jonathan Elliot
Rafael Escobar
Matt John Evans
Roderick Brown
Lucia Favarin
Shani Feldman

Jeremy From
Doug Funk
Agi Gallus
Janet Gigliotti
Keir Gilchrist
Dominic Girard
James Michael Gordon
Charlotte Gowdy
Tresvone Graham
Jean Green
Tynan Grierson
Julio Benitz Guardiola
Elsbeth Harding
Imogen Haworth
Patrick Haye
Stefen Hayes
Wilbert Headley
Sheila Henderson
John Henley
Logan Hoover
Kegan Hoover
Dave Horak
Sharon Hornick
Kenny Hotz
Jonathan Hyatt

Jeff Jordan
Stephen Ren McQuigge
Ryan Kelly
Vera Khuziyeva
Shara Kim
Tanya Kim
Sarah Kim
Diego Klattenhoff
Janet Kompare-fritz
OLENA Krutsenko
J. J. Lavadan
Courtenay Lazorka
Shonagh Lenis
Nikolas Lozzi
Daniel Luff
Mathew Lyons
Adrian MacIntosh
Ade Makindipe
Nicholas Matthew
Tanya Matthews
Scott McCrickard
Maxwell McCabe-Lokos
Eric McClelland
Doug McGrath
Stacey McKenzie

Jamie McKnight
Stephen Ren McQuigge
Belinda Michel
Justin Minns
Billie Mintz
Scott Montgomery
Althea Morgan-Taylor
Jeremy Mortimore
Christine Moulard
Troy Mundle
Gregory Myers
Rob Nardecchia
Alda Neve
Marion Newman
Wesley K. M. Ng
Elie Alex Nile
Rick O'Neill
Damian O'Reilly
Bronte Smith
Paul Oros
Shoshauna Oryema
Gord Osley
Baldeep Parihar
Colleen Park
Salome Persaud-Winston
Rebecca Peters

Todd Peterson
Jah Pong
Michele Popovich
Cristine Prosperi
Teresa Pucci
UmaRamaiah
Faye Rauw
Dolly Reno
Spencer Rice
Jessica Rose
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Shawn Singleton
James Sleigh
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Dave M. Smith
David Sorbara
Frank Spadone
Jason Speck
Brittany Starkman
Megan Starkman

Marissa Steele
Sierra Steele
Bailey Stocker
Kathryn Stockwood
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Tomoko Tamaki
Emily Tate
Matt Frank Thompson
Mike Tracz
Greg Tymoshenko
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Marnie Warren
Nancy Wasilik
Jeffrey Wetsch
Jerome White
Jeff Williams
Douglas A. Wilson
David A. Witte
Peter Ming Wong
Lynval Wynter
Teyas Yewwoon

The ACTRA AWARDS GALA

As part of ACTRA's 60th Anniversary celebrations, ACTRA Toronto reinstited the ACTRA Awards on February 27th. The exciting gala evening event took place at The Royal Ontario Museum. David Huband MC'd and Paul Gross presented the Award of Excellence to Gordon Pinsent. The awards ceremony was an entertaining precursor to a fantastic party

Opposite page — top row: ACTRA Award nominee Rick Roberts (*An American in Canada*) with his wife, Marjorie Campbell; Eric Murphy, Sean Mulchay, and Michael Miranda; nominee Matthew Ferguson and his mother. Second row: Wendy Crewson; Elizabeth McCallum and Gordon Pinsent; Michelle Nolden. Bottom row: Sarah Polley and Jill Arthur; Paul Gross and winner Kristen Thomson.



Nominees: Thea Gill, Kari Matchett, Kristen Thomson (winner), Michelle Nolden and Wendy Crewson.



Charmion King, Gordon Pinsent and Michelle Nolden.



Awards chair Jackie Laidlaw with jury foreperson Ferne Downey.



The ACTRA Awards in Toronto

Congratulations to
Outstanding Performance – Female:
Winner
Kristen Thomson - *I Shout Love* (short film)

Nominees:
Wendy Crewson - *Perfect Pie* (feature film)
Thea Gill - *Queer As Folk* – (television series)
Michelle Nolden - *Men With Brooms* –
(feature film)
Kari Matchett - *Nero Wolfe* (television series)

Outstanding Performance - Male:
Winner
Shawn Doyle - *The Eleventh Hour*
(television series)

Nominees:
Maury Chaykin - *Nero Wolfe* (television series)
Matthew Ferguson - *I Shout Love* (short film)
Paul Gross - *Men With Brooms* – (feature film)
Rick Roberts - *An American in Canada* –
(television pilot)



Shawn Doyle

A Sympathetic and Powerful Actor

By Ferne Downey

Shawn Doyle won this year's ACTRA Toronto Award for Outstanding Performance - Male for his sustained, sympathetic performance in CTV's drama *The Eleventh Hour*. It's safe to say that he "fought his way to the top" – literally. His skill as a stage-fighter/choreographer is a vital part of the career path that led to his emergence as a bona fide Canadian star.

Fresh out of York University theatre school, he and two friends took their talent for stage fighting to the streets of Toronto, busking and brawling as the troop *Laugh In The Face Of Adversity*. That led to Shawn's employment as a fight choreographer for Equity Showcase Theatre and later, to a season's contract with Newfoundland's Stephenville Festival. Here, he launched his professional career, that by the end of his twenties, saw him established as a leading actor on the Toronto stage.

The scientific brawling also became his calling card in film when he co-starred and co-wrote the 1996 Genie Award winning short, *The Hangman's Bride*, with Allegra Fulton. The film's strong story and glorious stage fighting made casting directors take notice. Who was this soulful performer with all this physical confidence? More parts followed, including a starring role in the primetime drama series, *The City* - for which he received a Gemini nomination for Best Supporting Actor. Then he was put on retainer and kept on "stand by" for projects in development with CBS.

This led to Shawn getting his feet wet south of the border. The experience, sometimes thrilling, often demoralizing, finally got him an audition for director Gregory Hoblit (*Primal Fear*) who was about to shoot the thriller *Frequency*. Shawn had a strong instinctive response to the script, nailed his cold read and got the part of the serial killer stalked across time by Dennis Quaid. The critical success of the film led to a plethora of film, mini-series and television projects that showcased Shawn. His physical skills and ability to ground his characters with sensitivity, makes his work beautifully nuanced and always believable.

When asked what he saw in his future, Shawn commented, "Regrettably, south of the border is where my optimism lies." Born into a theatrical family in Labrador, he lives in Toronto with his wife and son, but when opportunity knocks, an actor has to follow its call. And Shawn Doyle is enjoying the reality of having many opportunities.



WINNER

KRISTEN THOMSON

By Chris Owens

In 1997, London-born Kristen Thomson won critical acclaim and her first Dora Award for her performance in George F. Walkers' *Problem Child*. She also made her first connection to another talented actor, Shawn Doyle. They played a husband and wife who fought to retrieve their baby from Children's Aid. Now, six years later, both are recipients of the 2003 ACTRA Award for Outstanding Performance: he, for his work on *The Eleventh Hour*, and she, for her wide-ranging portrayal of Tessa in the Genie Award-winning short *I Shout Love*, directed by Sarah Polley and co-starring, Matthew Ferguson.

"The wonderful thing about the process of making *I Shout Love* is that there was a process. Sarah wrote the script and she gave me a certain amount of access to what she was doing and allowed me some input...We rehearsed for three or four days on the set and got to know each other and trust one another."

Kristen began her professional career in a summer stock production of *Lend Me A Tenor*, shortly after graduating from The National Theatre School. "They thought I might want to negotiate but it never occurred to me that I would ask for more — just getting paid in the first place was such a big deal. An attitude," she laughs warmly, "that I've since abandoned."

Encouraged by Urjo Kareda and Chris Abraham, Kristen set about creating a one-woman show *I, Claudia*. This led to her winning two Dora Awards in 2001: one for Outstanding New Play and one for Outstanding Performance. She has worked extensively in the theatre with appearances in: *Oleanna*, *Hysteria* (CanStage), *Skylight* (Citadel, NAC), *Great Expectations* (Grand), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Little Years* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *Dancing At Lughnasa* (MTC/NAC) and *Bald Soprano*, *The Lesson*, *School For Wives*, *Streetcar Named Desire* with the Soulepper Theatre Company. Other film credits include *Flower and Garnet* and the soon to released *Proteus*, directed by John Greyson.

In the future, Kristen would like to write a theatre piece for other characters, other performers. In the meantime, she is busy with Theatre Columbus creating a new show working with clown noses, a process she finds "incredibly difficult." When she needs a break from that, she'll take in Gregory Burkes' *Gagarin Way* at the World Stage Festival starring Hardee T. Lineham, Aidan Devine and... Shawn Doyle.

The best keep challenging themselves to get better.

WINNER

Gordon Pinsent

is well known to audiences across Canada and the U.S. for his award-winning work in theatre, film, television and radio, as an actor, playwright, author and director. Paul Gross presented the Award of Excellence to Gordon Pinsent at ACTRA Toronto's 60th Anniversary Awards Gala Party.

Gordon is a natural choice to inaugurate the Award of Excellence for ACTRA's Anniversary celebrating 60 years. He is inspiring in his dedication to the acting profession and continues to be a prolific actor and writer in demand.

His many credits include *The Forest Rangers*; *Quentin Durgens, MP*; *A Gift to Last* (which he also wrote); *Due South*; and *Power Play*. Gordon can be seen on the *Red Green Show* and recently played Billy Pretty in the critically acclaimed feature *The Shipping News* and Morley Callaghan in the CBC mini-series *Hemingway vs. Callaghan*.



Pinsent in *Quentin Durgens, MP*.



Gordon Pinsent as Morley Callaghan in *Hemingway vs. Callaghan*. Photo courtesy CBC.

A HOUSE FOR US ALL TO LIVE IN

Gordon Pinsent's Acceptance Speech

ACTRA Awards in Toronto • February 27, 2003

An award for Excellence. I guess the judges missed some of those really bad things I did. For example, they might not have caught Pinsent sings those Hollywood songs. When I sang and danced my way into your toilets or snored my way through *Who Has Seen My Wind*.

There was a little incident a few weeks ago in Nova Scotia when a woman said to me, a little old lady, she was sweet as anything, and she said "what was that thing you did?" and I said well, I don't know, and she said "name some," and I ran through a short list and I came to the more recent one, and she said, "No, no, it wasn't that one, no you were good in that; this one you were really bad in."

So, anyway, this is one I will never forget, truly, and I sincerely thank ACTRA for the honour.

When ACTRA's first award, Nellie, retired, I was asked if I could come up with a few words on her demise, and I will paraphrase the end of it here. I think I said Nellie, there was nothing that filled the hand and the light of the eye as did yourself when the light was right. You couldn't have been more real to us, or have had more spirit, more charm, more beauty, if you had walked and danced amongst us. You were on a pedestal for good reason, and be assured you did not get dusty on our mantles or tarnished in our hearts.



Pinsent with Jackie Burroughs in *John and the Missus*.

And, wherever you are, cover your amplexness in a big warm wrap because it's a bitch out there.

My memory of ACTRA's first award show was that it was a lovely affair with wall-to-wall friendship by peers that was the first half. The second half made *Gangs of New York* look like Adrienne Clarkson's Speech from the Throne. As the punch flowed in, the goodwill flowed out a little bit. That first show was not televised either, which was probably a good thing. Most of us had never seen an award — we weren't swimmers, we weren't of Olympic proportions. We were actors, and others.

But as I say, this was not your average night. Friends and peers and the like were getting their jollies while getting their Nellies. When it reached best Actress — they were known as actresses then — it was given to not only an ex-patriot, but one who was absent. This was a very important night for all of us, and you know it meant a great deal, I suppose, for everyone to have been there. No fault of hers, she just happened to have had to be elsewhere.

“Most of us had never seen an award – we weren’t swimmers, we weren’t of Olympic proportions. We were actors...”


This brought different reactions from a number of tables, but none so explosive or as well enunciated as from one of the more prominent tables made up of a selected few of our most celebrated and recognized actresses, where the aforementioned name of absentee Best Actress was received in a rather, shall I say, excitable way. The loudest recognizable vocal utterance being: “fuck”. It was odd it should have been that word because from all accounts, she, the recipient, had not done that to get the role, but there it was.

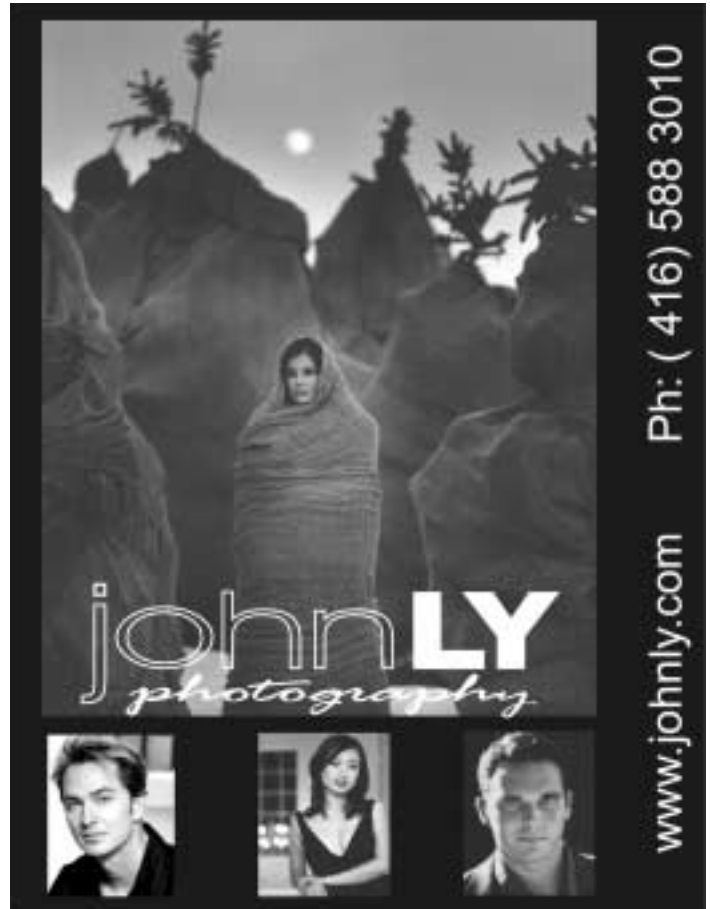
For those who saw the evening differently, or who might have been out of earshot, forgive me. And indeed, there were many fine and reputable moments to have been savoured from that first award show. (There was the unfortunate occurrence of the particular person who was taken down at the knees for trying to leave, but she got over that).

We have weathered some wonderful years with this union; with the incredible people that have made up the history that we know. Most of those years and those efforts have been well spent – all of them well meant. And what a highway of fantastic talented people have gone through; who have built from the sticks and stones of our own home-grown character a house for us all to live in, for all this time, the earlier drafts of what he have today.

I wish I could remember the names of all the people who have passed who were part of every one of our careers at the very beginning. But a great many of these people have not enjoyed the kind of attention that I’m getting tonight. They were in it for the love of work, of this union, and what it would mean to us, probably not realizing fully that their belief in their dream was adding credibility to our dream.

Again, this is great, although whoever gets this next, be advised of the peculiar rider that the union has placed on you. It’s the bit of signing over your organs to new members. That bit, that bit there. I have already said I’m not worth as much naked as I used to be, but my parts certainly do not come anywhere near what they might have looked like during my earlier 8 x 10 period. However, apparently the union can repo the lot and decide what they’re worth in Canadian.

But for the pleasure and privilege of being part of this work, this union and this night, thank you. 



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Own Your Actor/Agent Relationship

Moderator – Russell Ferrier

Panel – Barry Flatman, Alicia Jeffery, Michelle Nolden, Sandi Sloan

Michelle Nolden - Actor

The relationship with your agent needs to work when you're busy and when you're not. When you're not working, determine if you're the only one or if it's everybody. You need to communicate with your agent to find out what is going on, take the time to talk to him/her, get your photos/ resume in order, take classes, rework your demo, work on your craft. When you find yourself in a situation where you are the only one not working you need to talk to your agent, find out why you are not going out, is it your work, is it your look etc. You need to establish a good relationship with your agent — it is the actor's responsibility to accomplish this. If the relationship is not working after a good attempt on your part, you need to find a new agent.

Alicia Jeffery - Agent

It's better to have a good relationship with your agent than the "best" agent. You and your agent each represent each other. It is your agent's responsibility to know your special abilities. Your agent misrepresents you if they are putting you up for the wrong roles. It is very important that you behave in a professional manner; being late, unprepared, hung over, tired, etc. can be detrimental to the reputation of both you and your agent. When you get a job it is still a mutual relationship – if you cause any type of disruption to production, the agent is called right away and her/his reputation is now on the line. Respect your agent's advice, it is based on experience and knowledge. The agent needs to respect the actor's lifestyle; such as whether you have kids, your political beliefs etc. and they should be able to work around these. Your agent needs to be honest and direct with you and they need to have a good reputation with producers and casting directors. If your agent is rude and belligerent with producers then inevitably they will act that way towards you. Your agent should be in their office everyday, or at least reachable. If you're unsatisfied with your agent don't diss them to everyone, this reflects poorly on you and it may burn bridges.

Sandi Sloan - Agent

You must be able to communicate, you need to discuss your long and short term goals. Actors need to communicate their availability and whereabouts to the agent so they can work for you more effectively. The actor/agent relationship takes time and effort to build trust. The agent must be available to their client and an actor must understand an agent's schedule and time constraints. If you are looking for representation use your instincts, probably the person you feel most comfortable with will be the best agent for you.

Barry Flatman - Actor

Trust your own instincts. Your allies are; yourself, your agent, fellow actors, ACTRA and casting directors. You need to let others know what you are capable of. You should have the same ethics. Talk regularly almost everyday — this keeps you informed of what is going on — it keeps you in touch with your business. Don't wait for your agent to call you, you need to know what is going on and take responsibility for your job. You can't blame your agent alone when things go wrong. Have a business meeting at least once a year – talk about your changes i.e. your look, age, any changes in the industry. Everyone in your business relationship needs to be well informed.

Own Your Actor/Agent Relationship

panel included: Sandi Sloan & Barry Flatman,



Own Your Actor/Agent Relationship

panel included: (l.to r.) Michelle Nolden, Alicia Jeffery, Russell Ferrier



Auditions panel: Lynda Mason Green, Peter MacNeill,

John Buchan, Damon D'Oliveira & Michael Oscars.



AUDITIONS: WHAT GETS YOU IN THE DOOR

Moderator: Lynda Mason Green (Actor/Writer/Director of Website CanadianActor Online)

Panelists - Peter MacNeill (Actor), John Buchan (Casting Agent), Michael Oscars (Agent), Damon D'Oliveira (Producer/Director/Actor/Writer)

- Preparation, training, confidence, having an agent.
- Remember, they WANT you to be “the one”.
- On a call-back, there’s usually an opportunity to read the entire script. Ask.
- The actor must focus JUST on the text. Block out the rest of the room. You may not get the role you’re up for, but you may get the next one. FOCUS. FOCUS. FOCUS!
- You can send in a clip to casting directors: a three minute demo tape, geared for film and try to get feed-back on it. VHS format is still preferable. If you are in something — tell them.
- Good picture and resumes.
- Demo reels are important for the more experienced actors.
- Get pictures that most look like you. Don’t look for the flattering one, but rather the one that looks like you when you walk into the room.
- Spell out what your training has covered, where and with whom. That is important for the beginning actor.
- You can add in workshops if you are inexperienced, theatre school productions, etc.
- With film, the more you reveal who you are, is the most interesting — bring in what and who you are and cut the artifice! Film and TV is different from theatre. Who

you are is what you’re being cast for.

- Dress the way you feel comfortable, but read the breakdown and come in dressed appropriately, but NOT in costume.
- Don’t put commercials on a resume.
- LEARN THAT THE BUSINESS ISN’T FAIR. Accept it.
- Perseverance is important — keep training, to show you are working on your craft.
- Be prepared for anything in an audition. Be flexible.
- Actors appreciate it when directors work with them. It’s not a criticism.
- Most directors are terrified and don’t have the “language” to talk to actors. Don’t be afraid to ask for direction in an audition, or to make a (brief) suggestion.
- ONE page resume only. Demo tapes should be no more than three minutes (and under is better). Talk to other actors — see their tape, find out who did it for them.



Co-Ops

Moderator - Elizabeth McCallum

Panelists - Priya Rao, Gordon Currie, Barbara Larose

Q – What is a realistic timeline for Co-ops? What is the first thing to do? What are some common mistakes?

A – The first thing is to decide on your group, get together and decide on your roles in the production. Tell ACTRA before you fill out paperwork, tell them when you are shooting and you plan for the project. Once it is organized go back and do the project. Some common mistakes are usually forgetting about the incidentals like food, wardrobe etc. The timeline depends on the size of the project and what you have in place – do you have a lot of different locations, how much equipment do you need to get.

Q - What is the application process and obstacles?

A – All members of the co-op have to be full ACTRA members. Two out of the three, producer, director, and writer have to be full members. You have to meet with ACTRA to discuss the project and provide the script, shooting

schedule and cast list. You cannot audition. The actors need to be in place already. Extras can be costly and difficult to find. All members of the co-op have to sign a partnership agreement, so all become partners.

Q- What kind of project is ok?

A – It is hard to do a feature, it is better just to do some scenes from a feature, which would be good for a demo. Demos and shorts are the best suited projects for this program.

Q - Do IPA rates apply?

A – No, there is no money involved. It is a partnership and you pay each other when the project makes money. Yet, all IPA conditions apply i.e. meal breaks, minors etc.

Q – Do you get an ACTRA credit for working on co-ops?

A – No, not at present — they may be changing this.



CO-OPs panel: Barbara LaRose, Gordon Currie, Priya Rao & Elizabeth McCallum.

Q – What about other actors involved?

A – As they are not part of the partnership they get paid up front at IPA rates.

Q - Once completed, are distribution decisions shared by the whole group?

A – Yes it has to be a group agreeable decision. That is why it is very important to form a partnership that is of like minds.

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Disciplinary ACTION

1

Sharon Danley Dispute Resolved

Ms. Danley is no longer an ACTRA member, having chosen not to challenge the charges rendered against her under ACTRA's by-laws. In addition, Ms. Danley has retracted the unwarranted allegations that she has made about members of ACTRA Toronto's management and has privately apologized for any distress or embarrassment she has caused.

2

ACTRA Works

Too many times young people, desperately hoping for their "big break", are too highly influenced and exploited by people that have little or no interest in the direction of their careers. This past spring I was involved in such a situation, where my high hopes and dreams got the better of my judgment.

I got a part in the movie I auditioned for, and signed a contract — at no time ever questioning whether this was a union production or not — fully believing and trusting that my agent would not jeopardize my membership with the union. Being new to the world of feature productions I had no idea what my contract was supposed to look like and so I signed on for a non-union project which, as most of you know, is a huge no-no when part of the union.

During a union shoot I now know that there are stewards responsible for any questions or problems anyone might have, and that they are there in order to protect the rights of all union members no matter what the situation.

I have realized just how important it is, especially for those of us who are just starting out, to have representation (both by an agent and by the union) that care about us, who care about upholding the standards of our industry. Show-business can be a cutthroat profession, one where money talks and where values are compromised every day for the sake of a dollar. ACTRA works hard to make sure our experiences are more enjoyable and to ensure that we are treated in a respectful and professional manner.

But the onus of responsibility cannot simply be laid on them or, for that matter, our agents. Each one of us holds the responsibility in our own hands to ensure that we are aware of what we are getting involved in, and to ensure that we do not compromise the work of our peers by letting down the union's standards.

Gillian Leigh



Ask the
Dentist

Practical Dental Information
From Dr. Paul Scodnick, DDS.

Q. It looks like my teeth are getting shorter as I grow older. Is this really happening, or am I imagining things?

A. Actually, tooth enamel does wear down as we age. Natural wear and tear and tooth grinding are two primary reasons why teeth look shorter with age. A smile can also sag if missing teeth are not replaced as soon as possible. Over time, we also lose elasticity in our lips and gravity pulls the lips down. By using a combination of porcelain crowns, implants and bridges your dentist can help you ward off the signs of aging caused by these factors. Sometimes a customized appliance is used at night for those who grind their teeth during sleep. As a general rule, investing in your smile can take many years off your appearance.

Dr. Paul Scodnick has been practicing dentistry in Maple for over 20 years, and has a particular interest in cosmetic dentistry. His state of the art practice is at Keele and Major Mackenzie.



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NEXT MEETING

ACTRA TORONTO'S **SUMMER** CONFERENCE THURSDAY, JUNE 26TH, 2003 NEW LOCATION!

60 Years Strong
10:00am – 5:15 p.m.

MORNING WORKSHOPS

9:00 a.m. Registration & Breakfast

– Victoria College, building
foyer located South of Isabel Bader Theatre
(91 Charles St. W.)

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. workshops,
please choose one:

1. MASTER SERIES WITH WENDY CREWSON

Veteran actor Wendy Crewson discusses
the art and craft of her performances
with Ralph Benmergui.

2. CANADA'S STAR SYSTEM

An insider's look at how the film and
television publicity machine really
works.

Featuring: George Bloomfield,
John Doyle (Globe & Mail),
Beth Sulman (publicist), Etan Vlessing
(Hollywood Reporter),
Ralph Zimmerman &
moderator Phil Akin.

3. U.S. ACCENTS: WE'ya WOIKIN HE-AH

Renowned speech coach Roland
Parliament will provide a workshop on
U.S. accents.

4. ABOUT KIDZ IN THE BIZ

Roundtable discussion for parents of
child performers with ACTRA Toronto
Children's Advocate Theresa Tova,
Susan Forrest, Mark Rendall,
& Mary Swinton.

5. BACKGROUND PERFORMERS WORKSHOP

A roundtable discussion on back-
ground issues, featuring ACTRA
staff & officers.

AFTERNOON LUNCH

12:15 p.m. Lunch at Burwash

Dining Hall – across from Victoria College
(Courtesy of ACTRA Toronto)

1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Plenary Meeting

- **Keynote address**
by **KEN FINKLEMAN**
- **Executive Report**
with **Q&A**

3:45 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. workshops, please choose one:

1. MASTER SERIES: WITH GARY FARMER

Gary Farmer discusses the art and craft
of his performances with Valarie
Buhagiar.

2. SURVIVING A TELEVISION SERIES

The thrills and chills of being a series
regular.

Featuring Luba Goy (*Air Force*), Chris Owens
(*X-Files*), Alberta Watson (*Nikita*), Maurice
Dean Wint (*Blue Murder*) & moderated by
Maria Ricossa.

3. AUDITIONS: Your 3 minutes to make or break it

You're in the room, now get the part.
Featuring Kari Matchett, Ron White,
Clare Walker & moderated by
Jennifer Wigmore.

4. WINNING STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN IN THE BIZ

Leading women actors discuss how to
build lasting careers.

Featuring Janet Bailey, Allegra Fulton,
Fiona Reid, Kate Trotter, & moderated
by Camilla Scott.

This ACTRA Toronto
conference is your chance
to share and build upon
the experiences of fellow
professional actors.

**Please register before
Monday June 23, 2003**

Please provide us with
your name, membership
and telephone numbers,
e-mail address, and the
names of the workshops
that you would like to
attend – through our web-
site, by fax: 416-928-0699,
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**For faster registration,
register online:
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**(To qualify to attend,
please have your dues
up-to-date and bring your
member card)**



Wendy Crewson



Gary Farmer



wheelchair accessible

SUMMER 2003

27

The Casting process

The Five Toughest Issues

In our last issue, following up on work conducted over the past year by ACTRA Toronto's casting task force, we addressed some of the more straight-forward issues in the casting process. ACTRA takes the view that you have the right to professional, well-run auditions, in conditions that meet industry standards. If that doesn't happen, and you or your agent can't get the issue resolved, call your ACTRA steward.

In this article, we tackle some of the tougher issues actors raise about the casting process in Toronto: personal harassment; Toronto as a "scale town"; the consequences of refusing a role or a rate; "playing favourites"; and the problem of "bogus auditions".

5

Personal harassment

Of all of the issues discussed in this article, this one creates the least controversy between casting directors and ACTRA. There is no place for threats, intimidation, brow-beating, or other inappropriate behaviour by any party in the casting process. If a casting director engages in any of this, you should report it to ACTRA immediately. We'll insist the Canadian Casting Society investigate and enforce its code of conduct. If they don't, ACTRA will grieve the production. You should also know that if actors themselves engage in any kind of harassment of others in the casting process, they run the risk of disciplinary action under ACTRA's bylaws.

Toronto as a scale town

Many members in Toronto complain about the tendency over the past five years or so for casting directors to bargain hard to engage members – even prominent and veteran members – at scale. The root of the issue, casting directors argue, is pretty straight-forward – actors in Toronto are working for scale because they are willing to work at scale. With 13,000 ACTRA members in the Greater Toronto Area, competition for parts is fierce, and casting directors claim they don't have any difficulty finding willing actors at almost any pay rate. ACTRA has long argued that casting directors should not be in charge of negotiating pay rates for actors. Winning this change might address a potential conflict of interest on the part of casting directors, but won't reduce competition for parts. Legally speaking, ACTRA can't complain as long as you are being paid scale – at least.

Here are five things we can do together to begin to address this issue.

First, we can continue our fight through ACTRA to improve scale rates for all members.

Second, we can continue our efforts to limit foreign work permits, thus creating more better-paid roles in service productions for Canadians.

Third, we can continue our work to defend and build Canadian television and film production – creating more better-paid, leading roles for Canadians in Canadian shows for Canadian audiences.

Fourth, we can continue our work of building common approaches with agents through our dialogue with their association (TAMAC). The more aggressive all agents are about securing above-scale rates where appropriate, the more likely they are to be won.

And fifth – and perhaps most important, we can help create better conditions for bargaining above scale, by fighting retaliation. That's discussed below.

There is a final thing each actor must do on their own. You need to make a decision, in careful consultation with your agent, about whether you are willing to refuse parts if they aren't at the above-scale rate you have earned.

Refusing a role or an offer

Many actors believe that there can be long-term career consequences to refusing a role or a low offered rate. Some casting directors, members believe, might retaliate by not calling you in for future roles – in effect, "blacklisting" you. ACTRA has been working over the past three collective agreements to make this a dangerous thing for casting directors to do. The current IPA requires casting directors to sign a set of legal commitments, set out in appendix 13 of our contract. These terms commit them to cast and negotiate strictly for that production – and to commit not to bring any casting or contract issue into any future casting process. That's what

we want. But enforcement is tricky because of some legal ambiguities around the appendix, when it is signed, and when it is enforceable.

In the current round of bargaining, ACTRA is seeking to have that “no retaliation” clause put into the main body of the agreement. We’re also discussing the creation of a joint industry standards committee with producers, casting directors, and agents. If we succeed, we’ll have taken two useful steps forward. We’ll have a “low profile” avenue to pursue issues. The industry standards committee will give us a place to pursue issues quietly and without forcing an actor to risk attaching their name to a complaint. Most issues can probably be addressed this way. And we’ll have a better “high profile” avenue to fight out issues. Having the no-retaliation clause in the body of the agreement makes it more likely we can make litigation stick, in a case egregious enough to warrant pursuing it formally. That means that if your career is seriously harmed by a casting director who is retaliating against you for turning down a role or a low-ball contract offer, you would have a better opportunity to seek redress (and, potentially, damages) through the grievance/arbitration process. Litigation is expensive and can backfire – but it is an important potential sanction that we are working to strengthen.

“Playing favourites”

Many actors complain that some casting calls in Toronto are “closed” – restricted to a relatively small number of favourites that a casting director returns to regularly. Casting directors hotly deny this, arguing that producers and directors get impatient very quickly when they see the same candidates for roles in succeeding productions. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle: some casting directors acknowledge they will draw on a small list of performers they know well, when budget or time pressures impose a quick casting process. They’ll cast a wider net when time and budget permit it.

Our goal here is to create opportunities for as many members as possible to be seen by casting directors and have a fair chance to earn roles.

Two first steps:

First, ACTRA Toronto has been and will continue to invite prominent Toronto casting directors in as speakers at professional workshops at our members’ meetings. It breaks the ice, gives them a chance to see a lot of actors at once, and allows members to hear them explain how they do their business, to everyone’s benefit.


Second, we’ve been piloting the concept of an “actors’ showcase”, which would give casting directors a formal opportunity to see ACTRA members they might otherwise not. We gave this idea a try with background casting directors and performers over the past four months. We are now working with TAMAC and casting directors to create a regular actors’ showcase for principal performers. We’ll be publishing details of this project later in the year.

“Bogus auditions”

Finally, there is the problem of bogus auditions – of pro forma auditions of Canadians for roles that the production has already decided will be filled by foreign performers.

In the past year-and-a-half ACTRA Toronto has made a point of aggressively confronting productions that engage in this practice – in one case we extracted a \$50,000 fine after a series of egregious violations. In place of this kind of conflict, we’ve been seeking to reduce bogus auditions at their root by working to engage service producers in early discussions about casting – encouraging them to tell the truth about their intentions and to discuss them with us.

With the example of what happens when we don’t work together in view, directors and production managers are increasingly working closely with us to honestly look for Canadians – with excellent results. In return, we’ve tried to be smart about granting work permits to foreign performers who are obviously required to finance a production.

“Bogus auditions” is an area that requires constant vigilance and on-going enforcement. ACTRA can only do as good a job as our information permits. It’s therefore important that members report to their stewards when they believe they have been called in for a bogus audition. 

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ACTRA Storms Ottawa

On May 13 ACTRA members took Ottawa by storm. Paul Gross, along with a team of some of Canada's best-known performers called on the federal government and the CRTC to take action to save Canadian dramatic programming.



Montreal Councillor Tyrone Benskin and Toronto Councillor and Vice-President of External Affairs Christie MacFadyen in the halls of the House of Commons.

Our star-studded cast included Paul Gross, Nicholas Campbell, Peter Keleghan, Gordon Pinsent, Leah Pinsent, Julie Stewart, R.H. Thomson, Fiona Reid, ACTRA National President Thor Bishopric, Toronto President Richard Hardacre, Toronto and National Councillor Christie MacFadyen and Montreal Councillor Tyrone Benskin.

Starting with a press conference on Parliament Hill in the morning, ACTRA members had a busy schedule of meetings with MPs from all parties, cabinet ministers and party leaders during the day, attended Question Period in the House of Commons and numerous media interviews.

"Television drama is the most powerful cultural medium in contemporary society. To maintain our identity as a nation it's essential that a range of Canadian stories be on our TVs," said Due South star Paul Gross. "Instead, Canadians are being fed an overwhelming diet of U.S. drama programming."

"This is both an economic and cultural issue. If we don't produce Canadian programming then we will have nothing to fall back on if U.S. service production dries up. Canada is losing both its economic and cultural independence to the U.S.," stated Nicholas Campbell, star of *Da Vinci's Inquest*.

Not one, but four questions on our issue were directed at Heritage Minister Sheila Copps during Question Period, a significant achievement. After Question Period's conclusion, as our performers were exiting the visitors' galleries, the MPs began applauding and gave a standing ovation. Very few lobby delegations get standing ovations from the entire House of Commons – and ours did, a tribute to the performers leading this effort.

The ACTRA delegation met with Liberal leadership frontrunner Paul Martin, Heritage Minister Sheila Copps, Finance Minister John Manley, PC Leader Joe Clark, Leader of the Bloc Québécois Gilles Duceppe, NDP Leader Jack Layton and Heritage Critic Wendy Lill, Liberals Liza Frulla, Alex Shepherd and Clifford Lincoln and Jim Abbott of the Canadian Alliance.

While on the hill, we ran into ACTRA member and Member of Parliament Julian Reed, who was thrilled we were raising the volume on this important issue.

The lobby, a joint effort by ACTRA National and ACTRA Toronto Performers, was a big step toward getting political movement on our issues of fixing the CRTC and restoring the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) and keeping the drama crisis on the national agenda.



COME ONE, COME ALL

Monday, September 1st Join Your Fellow ACTRA Performers for

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Peter Keleghan doing an interview at CBC Newsworld.



Gordon Pinsent and Paul Gross meeting with Liberal leadership frontrunner Paul Martin.



R. H. Thomson and Tyrone Benskin at dinner the night before ACTRA's hugely successful lobby day on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.



"It's breaking my heart to see what's happening to the Canadian industry." - Fiona Reid.

Fiona Reid, Nicholas Campbell, Leah Pinsent, The Hon. John Manley, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and ACTRA's National President Thor Bishopric.



Julie Stewart stressed, **"Broadcaster should commit to stable time-slots for building loyal audiences for Canadian dramas."**

Julie Stewart, Paul Gross, The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, Gordon Pinsent, and ACTRA Toronto President Richard Hardacre.



THE ANNUAL TORONTO LABOUR DAY PARADE



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TORONTO PERFORMERS

60 Years Strong

AGTRA TORONTO'S SUMMER CONFERENCE

THURSDAY JUNE 26TH 2003

10:00am - 5:15 p.m.

See page 27 for details.

Victoria College building foyer located South of Isabel Bader Theatre (91 Charles St. W.)

FIVE MORNING WORKSHOPS:

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

1. MASTER SERIES WITH WENDY CREWSON
2. CANADA'S STAR SYSTEM: an insider's look at the publicity machine
3. U.S. ACCENTS: we'ya woikin he-ah
4. ABOUT KIDZ IN THE BIZ: roundtable for parents of child performers
5. BACKGROUND PERFORMERS WORKSHOP: discussion on BG issues

AFTERNOON REPORT/WORKSHOPS

PLAN AND BUDGET REPORT

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY: Ken Finkleman

MORE WORKSHOPS:

3:45 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

1. MASTER SERIES WITH GARY FARMER
2. SURVIVING A TELEVISION SERIES: the thrills & chills
3. AUDITIONS: Your 3 minutes to make or break it
4. WINNING STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN IN THE BIZ

More information, a map, and to REGISTER ONLINE: www.actratoronto.com

Please remember to RSVP!

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