

BRANCH*LINE

The Magazine for ACTRA Toronto



performers

WINTER

Volume 12 • Issue 1



Sean Cullen

on being Professionally Funny in Canada

Ham and Cheese—

Jason Jones and Mike Beaver make a movie

The Mysteries of TIP Revealed

Leah Pinsent on the Americanization of Canada

More on the Fight for Canadian Drama



DON'T MISS OUR FEBRUARY 27TH

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!



CONTENTS

The Jessica Holmes Show: (l to r) Kurt Smeaton, Jessica Holmes and Roman Danylo

Page 5 –

The Americanization of Canada

Leah Pinsent makes a plea for Canadian nationalism.

Page 6 –

It's Good To Be Funny in Canada

Seán Cullen on the taking off of Canadian performers in the great white north.

Page 10 –

Toronto Indie Productions

Ham & Cheese: Two guys make a movie; The Spirit of TIP; The Toronto International Film Festival—good for Canadian Film?

Page 14 –

Canadian Dramatic TV: Going, going...

Page 16 –

Selections from Charles Dalfen & Shirley Douglas' speeches

Page 17 –

Members' News

Page 19 –

Industry Standards in Casting

Page 20 –

Last Meeting:

Maury Chaykin, Aceing your Next Audition, Children in the Biz, Getting your contract right, Voice Overs.

Page 22 –

Next Meeting

Our next February 27th Members Conference

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If you're an ACTRA member or apprentice and want to write an article, contribute original cartoons, artwork or photos – we'd love to hear from you! Send us an email.

THE NEXT COPY DEADLINE IS

May 2, 2003

The magazine invites members to submit notices of births, marriages, obituaries, and letters to the editor. Article submissions MUST be sent via e-mail (editor@actratontoronto.com) or on disk with accompanying hard copy.



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**COVER PHOTOGRAPHY**

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Seán Cullen of *The Seán Cullen Show*

**President's Message**

*"It's not a job, it's a way of life...
it goes on and on, and your need to do it
goes on and on."*

-Gordon Pinsent, June 2002

Performers on screen, stage and television in Canada are as diverse as the cultures that compose our country. For decades, Gordon Pinsent has portrayed the quintessential English Canadian male, as both hero and anti-hero. In a truly notable range of roles, from a remarkable Cyrano de Bergerac on stage, and title roles in *The Forest Rangers* and *Quentin Durgens, MP*, through Benton Fraser's Mountie-Father in *Due South*, to the Newfoundlander Billy Pretty in the film *The Shipping News* and the running character, Hap Shaughnessey on the *Red Green Show*. Gordon has defined a way of life as an actor.

It is more remarkable that Gordon Pinsent successfully balances acting and writing. His novels "The Rowdyman" and "John and the Missus" were adapted for film and stage. His memoirs "By the Way", were published in 1994.

He is a holder of the Earle Grey Award, the John Drainie Award for contribution to the industry, two ACTRA Awards for his television work and three Genie Awards for performance in Canadian film. He was elevated from his appointment in 1979 as an Officer of the Order of Canada to a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1999.

During his distinguished career, Gordon has clearly been a unique force in the shaping of English Canadian culture. He is still hard at it, and his commitment to his art and his country remains an inspiration to us all.

This year ACTRA is recognizing our 60th anniversary. Founded in Toronto by a group of self-described "radio artists", we have come a long way. Actors like Gordon and those that led the path before him, created the heritage that we now build upon. So when it was suggested that we mark the 60th with events at every Branch, it seemed like a good idea to re-instate the ACTRA Awards at our February Toronto Members Conference. Throughout the year, other branches will also be bestowing awards to their members.

Your Council of Toronto Performers has also decided to inaugurate a special award to celebrate the anniversary. It will be our honour to bestow the ACTRA Toronto Award of Excellence on this extraordinary actor.

Please join us February 27 (details on page 22) to celebrate one of our greats, our "Everyman", Gordon Pinsent.

Richard Hardacre, President

WINTER 2003

3



Letters to the Editor



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@actratontoronto.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.

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FRUSTRATED WITH "THE TALKERS"

First of all, kudos' to ACTRA for a fine day at the ACTRA General Meeting. It was well thought out and well-organized; time well spent. However, as an ACTRA member I have to bitch about something.

In the session with Maury Chaykin when his answer was he "had no answer for that" the questioner offered up several possible answers of her own to the question on his behalf. I have to ask - is that really necessary? If you already have your own answers, then why ask the question? In the Achieving Diversity in Casting workshop, Phil Atkin (the moderator) did his best through gentle good humor and dry wit to keep the workshop on track, but some people just wouldn't be stopped. One woman in particular insisted on relating her anecdotes and rambling on about her issues.

I must add that I later overheard this same woman relating how she had to take charge of the moment to make herself heard and how she doesn't come to these things to listen to others but rather to interject her two cents. May I say to this woman; I don't come to these things to listen to you prattle on and vent your personal grievances.

If you have an uncontrollable urge to make yourself heard perhaps this is the forum for your personal agenda - letters to the editor! Those who agree with you can read your words and revel in your bounty. The rest of us can ignore you and get on with our lives which is a lot harder to do when you hijack a workshop and get into a tiff with the moderator!

There now, I've vented and I feel better.

Leo Petrus



*Ask the
Dentist* Practical Dental Information From Dr. Paul Scłodnick, DDS.

Q. I'm reluctant to smile with my mouth open because my teeth are crooked. But, as an actor, braces are out of the question. What can I do?

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Dr. Paul Scłodnick 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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The Americanization of Canada

By Leah Pinsent

When I was a kid, I saw an anti-free trade T-shirt of an eagle sodomizing a beaver. Even though I was ignorant of the ways of the nasty I knew what it meant. As a country we were screwed and the one doing it to us lived right next door.

As we worry about our imperialistic neighbors to the south invading other countries, we should also worry about their slow but steady invasion of us. This is about McD's, KFC, Starbucks, AMC, Tower Records, Esso, The Gap, Wal-Mart, and others. Eatons being bought out by Sears and the possibility of AT&T Broadband taking over our cable channels. This is about the slow Americanization of our own country.

Are we noticing this happening? Do we care if it does? American business is not only infiltrating our corporate society, it is starting to affect our cultural identity.

As someone who makes her living in the entertainment industry, I've always been aware of the importance of keeping our Canadian culture alive. Unfortunately what I see is its decay. Don't get me wrong, our work is top notch, but it seems as a society we show very little interest.


The excuse used is that we don't think it's any good. Our own critics skewer our award shows before they're even aired and tell people not to waste their time. Most don't. Who wants to watch a

Gemini show if you've never seen the shows nominated in the first place?

The thing is, most of the time we do make great TV and film. In most cases better than a lot of the American crap out there. We are better now than ever. Other countries buy our product and give us awards at Cannes and other international film festivals.

If we don't look out for our own, we might disappear. In keeping Canadian culture alive, we unify our people; we tell our own stories; we treasure our history and we fortify our uniqueness.

Give Canadian product a chance, knowing you're investing in your Canadian future. Canadian culture is about us, not about them, and shouldn't we put back into our own economy and strengthen our own reserve, not somebody else's? If we all just gave "us" a chance, we might discover we aren't so bad after all.

If Canadians aren't careful, our own homegrown industries and culture will melt into the American pot, and our identity as Canadians will fade away. It's up to us to think for ourselves and root for our own team. Maybe we could start tuning into CBC, rent "Men with Brooms", browse at Book City while drinking our second cup from Second Cup. Shop at The Bay, not Sears; Canadian Tire, not Costco. Belt out "Oh Canada" loud and clear, even if we don't know the words. 

FEATURE

It's good to be
Funny in Canada

By **Seán Cullen**

It's great to be a Canadian Comedian. The wealth! The fame! The sheer professional satisfaction! It's unbelievable. But seriously, I've just finished shooting *The Seán Cullen Show* for the CBC and I wait anxiously for the reaction of the public to my efforts. Between delivering the show to the network and the actual airing of the show, there are a lot of angst-ridden weeks.

I'm one of the lucky ones who actually has a show to air. One can hardly walk down the street in Toronto, for example, without stepping on a comic or being mauled in an alley by a sketch troupe. Why are there so many comedians and why do they think being a comedian is a viable career? I asked Rick Mercer what made him choose a career in comedy.



THE SEÁN CULLEN SHOW
FRIDAYS AT 9PM ON CBC

“I think I’d discourage anyone from going into comedy as a career if they asked my opinion.” Mercer said when I contacted him at his palatial headquarters (I’m imagining this) in Halifax. “They would be destined to almost certain failure. I mean, would you encourage someone to be a bass player? It would be ridiculous to do that. The chances of success are almost non-existent so why would you encourage someone to do it? If they end up being a bass player then that’s well and good. I don’t want to sound negative but I think I’m just being practical.”

So why did Rick Mercer decide to go into comedy?

“Starting out, I was part of a comedy troupe in high school and when I told my parents I was going to make a career in comedy, they were fine with that. Basically the economic situation in Canada at that time was pretty dire and in Newfoundland it was even worse so it made as much sense to go into comedy as anything else. It didn’t make sense to become a schoolteacher for example because there was just no work in that field either.”

But surely now, after his success with *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and *Made in Canada*, he has carte blanche on Canadian television. Not so, apparently.

“You’re only as good as your last show. Certainly, I’m in a position where I have a little bit of power but you’re only as good as your last show. I think it’s good to be pragmatic. When I got the job doing 22, it was for six weeks and I thought that would be the end of it. I was lining up work. And then I ended up working for eight years and the others are in their tenth year.”

I decided to talk to another Canadian success story, Jessica Holmes, who stars in her own vehicle *The Holmes Show* – new on CTV this season.

“As a Canadian performer, I think I’m just happy to be busy. I believe it was Al Waxman who said, ‘Isn’t it funny how the more you work, the luckier you are.’ I really take that to heart. I try very hard to have five irons in the fire at any given time. You never know when something is going to take off so it’s best to keep a lot of projects going. Even though I have my show (*The Holmes Show*) on the air, I have lots of other projects going. I’m exploring my writing and working on a new one-woman show. It’s very satisfying though to turn on the television and see myself hugging the big CTV ball.”

There seems to be a pattern here. Canadian Comedians all profess to be lucky and grateful and in that respect, their experi-



L to R - Adam Sternbergh (Door to door canvasser), Jason Belleville (Critic) (glasses), Ted Ludzik (Sonny) (bald), Sean, Winston Spear (Winston, The Cellar Dweller (under Sean), Meher Steingberg (keyboards band) (cowboy hat), Ryan Belleville (Critic) (redish hair), GreatBob Scott (drummer band) (purple shirt), Ian Goodhue (bass band)(glasses), Jennifer Robertson (Betty) (blond), Theresa Pavlinek (Frau Foch) (black hair), Stephen Hart (Sasquatch) (hand only)

JESSICA HOLMES SHOW

The Holmes Show is a Carol-Burnett-style sketch comedy, which stars Gemini-nominated comedic actress Jessica Holmes along with Roman Danylo and Kurt Smeaton.





MADE IN CANADA
Fridays @ 8:30 p.m.
on CBC Television



THE RED GREEN SHOW

Steve Smith plays Red Green in this successful Canadian comedy series.

MADE IN CANADA

Starring Rick Mercer, who *Maclean's* magazine calls "the sharpest satirist on television," the series about the inner workings of a film and television production company has been hailed by critics as "viciously funny," "wonderfully wicked" and "the most savagely funny satire on the medium."

ence mirrors my own. Certainly, there are a lot of comedians out there and the one thing that all the successful ones have in common is this: they work very hard. From my own experience, I know that the real key to success in Canada is to have a lot of irons in the fire, to keep your head down and to keep working. The industry in Canada is like a pyramid and the apex of that pyramid is television. There are a very limited number of seats at the top of the pyramid so you'd better have your talent honed when your chance comes.

Paying gigs are hard to come by and there are a lot of people out there vying for them. As a result, Canada is a great place

to learn your chops. That's why we export so much great talent to the United States. By the time a Canadian performer who has been clawing his or her way through life decides to take the plunge and go down to Los Angeles, they find that the general run of competition down there hasn't spent all their time brawling over a tiny crust of opportunity and the Canadian performer, honed, poised and baptized by fire has a huge advantage over those who have come to Hollywood because they have nice eyes or their parents think they are funny.

Staying in Canada, and succeeding, is a whole level of magnitude greater on the difficulty scale. But comedy has some special advantages over other fields of endeavour in the performing arts.

Rick Mercer says, "Comedy has a better chance of getting on the air in Canada because the networks are always looking for Canadian content and comedy can provide that easier than drama. Drama has to compete with excellent product from the United States. Television is expensive and comedy can be made a little more cheaply because production values for a drama have to be high in order to compete with American dramas of the same genre whereas comedy is a bit more flexible."

"The networks have suddenly realized that comedy is a marketable commodity" says




Holmes. "They are developing a lot of talent and I was lucky enough to be a part of the new wave."

*A new wave of Canadian comedy? Hooray!
I'm lucky enough to be part of it. The time just
seems to be right for myself and others like me.*

The CBC is looking to freshen their comedy lineup with a series of comedy pilot projects (*Rideau Hall, An American in Canada, The Seán Cullen Show*) to support their already successful long-running programs. The great thing about having a pilot in Canada is this: You are almost certain to get on the air. I want to dispel one ridiculous misconception that exists. People believe that American networks are better at making comedy and especially sitcoms. This isn't true. The Americans make a lot of terrible television. In fact, they fail about ninety per cent of the time. For every show like *Friends* or *ER* that is a mega-success, there are nine pilots shot that fail. The difference between Canadian networks and American networks is the American networks can afford to waste the millions and millions of dollars because the rewards of having one hit pays for the waste of all the misses.

In Canada, raising enough money to make a pilot for television is so heinously difficult that, once it gets made, that pilot is destined to get on the air. Canadian networks can't afford the waste of the American system. By that standard, Canada makes an amazing amount of very good television when compared to the United States because the process is so difficult; the lousiness tends to get rooted out before the shooting of a television pilot begins. I have six shows in the can and I know they will all make it to air because the waste would be horrific otherwise. I am also assured that the show will be given every chance to find its audience and not be yanked off the air after one episode. Oh Canada! Wonderful, wonderful Canada. Lucky, lucky you for being born and plying your trade here.

So there you have it. Being a comic means working hard, doing everything you can to learn and improve and making the utmost of your opportunities. I wouldn't have it any other way. It doesn't hurt when people watch your show, so tune in. My mandate in making the program was to bring brilliant performers to the attention of the viewing public. I'm proud to say that the cast we assembled are people I consider to be stars in the making. I've been lucky to get my own show after 15 years of trying. Maybe you'll be lucky, too. 

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Two Guys and a Script:

The making of HAM & CHEESE

By Brad Borbridge

How many times have you been sitting in a bar, turned to your buddy and said; “Ya know, we’ve got lots of ideas, and lots of talent. To hell with it, we should make our own movie... Ahh, it’s too expensive and we’ll never get the money. Can I have another beer please?” and thus the dream fades to fantasy.

Well, here are two guys that grabbed onto that dream and cinched it into a strangle hold - and *then* ordered another beer. Jason “Jay” Jones and Mike Beaver weren’t going to let a little thing like money deter them. They were going to make their movie and nothing was going to stop them. Granted, they may have been blessed with the bravery of ignorance, but off they charged. “We were bored and drunk in a bar and we said, lets just shoot this. Lets grab a DV camera and shoot a movie”, says Jason.

A few more beers were quaffed and in two weeks they had a comic script called *Ham and Cheese*. “At first we were just going to improv it,” says Jay, “But we write well together and half of it was autobiographical anyway so it all ended up being written.” Mike says, “Every scene has something comedic to offer.” They approached Mike’s high school friend, Warren P. Sonoda – already an accomplished music video director - to direct the film, and P. J. Wilson, a producer for CBC’s *Sketchcom* and *The Air Farce*, to produce. This gang of four neophyte feature filmmakers got together, worked some more on Mike and Jay’s script and got really excited.



INDIE FILM

They had the knowledge and talent to do it. Jay and Mike had just completed *The Bob Room*, a new comedy series for CTV, so they were confident that their script was good and their ideas funny. Warren was dying to direct real actors, (“In music videos there are six directions that you give; look up, look down, look left, look right, look happy, look sad and when you don’t have any coverage, cut to the drummer”), and J.P. was itching to expand his sphere of influence.

Then reality set in. This was going to cost money. Not a lot in the grand scheme of things, but more than the four of them had. It’s usually at this point that the noble aspirations of projects such as theirs fizzle and die a typically pathetic death. There was no way they could afford to work under ACTRA’s IPA agreement, CIPIP was out of reach and doing it non-union would mean a lot of headaches using untested actors – and they needed a lot of actors.

Still, they continued to work. Such notable Canadian stars as Dave Foley,

Scott Thompson and Polly Shannon agreed to be in the film. This made it easier for them when they hit the pavement to find some of those elusive “private investors”.

They managed to drum up \$80,000 dollars, a package truck, a digital camera and an editing suite. However, \$80,000 is nowhere near enough money to make a feature length film. More beers were ordered.


Then they discovered ACTRA Toronto’s TIP program. Mike tells me, “TIP really made this film possible. We couldn’t have done it without them.” Through TIP they were able to find actors willing to invest part of their salaries in the movie. “You can find any actor in the city to work for \$100 a day if they believe in the project,” says Jay, “We had over 50 principal performers – Our actors were our production values. You may not know all their names but they were terrific.”

Warren, the director, says, “The TIP package was enormously useful. It became the basis for all of our pre-

production; our scheduling, our boards, our breakdowns, our budget. Then we got to use actors from ACTRA, which was a bonus.”

Once everything had come together, they shot the film in three weeks. As I write this, Warren is in the editing room slogging away at digitizing, logging and syncing.

Ham and Cheese is about two guys and all the bizarre situations that trying to be an actor can get you into. This will no doubt be very familiar to many of us. “You can relate to the guys no matter who you are,” says Jason, “But actors will love it ...non-working actors will laugh and then re-examine themselves.” Mike sums it up quite succinctly, “We do a good job of playing losers”

Congratulations to Jason and Mike (and, of course, everyone else that helped make it come about). These guys did what many of us talk about doing. With the help of TIP and about 50 generous actors, not to mention some courageous investors, these Canadians did it. I hope many more of us will follow their lead. 



Such notable Canadian stars as Dave Foley, Scott Thompson and Polly Shannon agreed to be in the film. This made it easier for them when they hit the pavement to find some of those elusive “private investors”.

INDIE FILM

THE SPIRIT OF TIP

by Elizabeth McCallum

THE CRYPT CLUB



NOT A FISH STORY



GENEROSITY CREATING OPPORTUNITY

Actors are a generous bunch and are always willing to do whatever it takes to practice their craft. ACTRA wanted to find a way to let us actors help out Canadian projects in a manner where we wouldn't have to sacrifice any of our hard won rights.

In July the TIP (Toronto Independent Production) Guideline was implemented to foster modest-budget Canadian film projects, and allow ACTRA members to access more challenging film roles. The TIP Project evolved in co-ordination with the CFTPA (Canadian Film and Television Producers Association), as a simplified and permanent replacement to its predecessor, CLIPP. TIP provides great incentive for low-budget film productions to access professional acting talent.

But what does it mean for actors? Perhaps most importantly, we are no longer just a cog in the machine – we actively participate in funding short and long format dramatic projects by investing 63% to 82% of our normal contracted fee. As well, we actively and indirectly invest in Canadian culture and the development of emerging Canadian film producers, directors and writers.

ACTRA members do not work for free, nor do we easily discount our salaries. Under this program we provide a tangible, economic investment, trading some of our minimum contracted performance fee for a back end, perpetuity residual of 3.6% of the Distributor's Gross Revenue (DGR). We invest in faith that the project will one day pay off, and the minute it starts to make money, so do we - for as long as it does! PRS (Performers Rights Society) is also involved from the very beginning to safeguard this.


It is important to note that if our members didn't provide this generous incentive for the production of TIP films, many projects would not be made. Or, if they were, they would be in an unprotected, non-union environment ripe for exploitation of the performers.

Since TIP was implemented, sixteen shorts and six features have been produced, resulting in 650 workdays for our members and providing approximately \$180,000 in performers' earnings. Current films include *The Crypt Club*, *Adam and Eve*, *Ham and Cheese*, *Dermott's Quest* and *Not a Fish Story*. Remember these titles - you're sure to hear a lot about them in the future.

In fact, when TIP celebrates its first anniversary in July we anticipate 35 to 50 shorts and 10 to 12 features will have been completed. Most of these are projects that probably would not have been produced without the TIP program.

We should be very proud of our contribution to genuine Canadian filmmaking. This program cannot be a front for cheap international productions (i.e. American) because TIP Guidelines require directors, producers, writers, crew and performers be Canadian residents, citizens or landed immigrants. The project must be cast entirely from the ACTRA membership, and must shoot in ACTRA Toronto's jurisdiction. These criteria are strictly managed by ACTRA staff through a rigorous guideline application process, and by the stewards.

TIP feature films must commit to having at least 2 theatrical screenings and short films must commit to at least one public or festival screening. This provides for exposure through publicity and public screenings and at festivals (where the film may get distribution). In fact, ACTRA Toronto is contemplating a TIP Film Festival in the coming year - so go tell Aunt Martha to get the fox stole out of storage, there could be a red carpet to be walked on!

Canadian filmmaking is very much alive and ACTRA members are now a major driving force behind the next generation of emerging Canadian film production talent. Because of TIP, many up and comers are now able to step up with a great idea and we'll help them get it made! 

The Toronto International Film Festival: *Good for Canadian Film?*

By Jackie Laidlaw


We all love to see and be seen at the film festival every year. And we know that it brings in millions of dollars to Toronto in hotel and restaurant revenue. But what does it do for our industry? Does the Canadian film industry really benefit from the thousands of producers, directors, distributors and actors that attend the 10 day film marathon?

This year in the festival, there were 42 Canadian features (of which 18 were world premieres) and 39 Canadian shorts that were chosen from 587 submissions. These numbers demonstrate that not only are we producing films in this country, we are producing quality films for international distribution.

Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* opened the Festival itself, *Bollywood/Hollywood* opened Perspectives Canada and was the

most popular, but others such as *Perfect Pie*, *Rub and Tug* (a former CLIPP project), *Gambling Gods and LSD* did very well for themselves.

This year the Canadian Retrospective showcased the works of Canadian Filmmaker Alan King. Along with King, today's top Canadian directors are not far from the consciousness of many festivals. The 10 *preludes* directed by top Canadian directors and produced last year to honour the festival's 25th anniversary, continue to be screened at festivals all over the world.

By all accounts, the Toronto International Film Festival not only shows the world the good city of Toronto, it also shows the world our good films. It showcases Canadian talent and puts our style of filmmaking front and centre. 



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ACTION

Canadian Dramatic TV, going, going...



WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Audition for many Canadian TV shows lately? Not much, eh? Know why? In 1999 the CRTC removed expenditure requirements for Canadian broadcasters, and re-defined "priority programming" by throwing drama together with cheaper fare, like magazine shows and documentaries (this includes "reality shows"). This "loosening" of the regulations was what the broadcasters lobbied for, and what they got.

They promised they were a "mature" industry and would fulfill their obligations to the Broadcasting Act as a public service "essential to the maintenance of and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty". Instead they dropped most of their expensive drama programming in short order - from 12 shows in 1999 to five in 2002.

Now they claim, in order to produce this non-profitable "product", they need more than the 1.4 billion dollars in tax benefits and credits they already get, even though these broadcasters reap huge profits and are protected economically by the regulated public airways.

Canadian broadcasters can buy a 3 million dollar, all-American, pre-promoted, star-studded, first run show like *The West Wing* at a massive discount (\$150,000), sell advertising on it in a prime-time simulcast, take that money and reinvest. CTV made one billion dollars and Global made over \$800 million last year in ad revenue alone. The networks have never invested money in Canadian dramatic programs unless they were required to.

To those of you who complain that Canadian TV is boring, I ask you how good do you think the *Sopranos* would be if HBO invested the least possible amount of money, time and effort into script development, technical quality, creative talent and promotion? Add to that an erratic placement on the TV schedule and what do you think that show would look like now? That is if you could find it.

This is the approach of our broadcasters, and they have done this country a great disservice. How can you create excellence under those circumstances? The miracle is we have still managed to produce great stuff. The only reason we have any Canadian drama in the first place is because the broadcasters were required, through regulation, to spend money on it and put it in prime time.

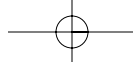
If Canadian broadcasters were not regulated they would not survive, period. In the States, broadcasters provide about 80% of the funding for production, here it is about 30%. For a Canadian one million dollar show they end up paying around \$225,000. Golly, that must really hurt.

By putting little money and effort into drama, Canadian broadcasters have created a self-fulfilling prophesy. They produce generic, substandard fare that cannot compete with American shows for audience and does not make a profit. Then they say there is no demand; that Canadians don't want to watch the shows and therefore, to supply something for which there is no demand does not make economic sense. "Is profit such a crime?" they ask. Yes, if it's made sideways off the public's back, it bloody well is.

Interestingly, as markets have globalized, people have become more local in their tastes. It's a fact that Canadians now want Canadian shows. Twenty years ago in Quebec most people were watching American TV. Now, 10 out of 10 of their most popular shows are made in Quebec - and they make a profit too. Similar trends can be seen in the UK, Australia, Italy, Germany and Spain.

An English-Canadian show doesn't even make our top 20. We don't see our political, judicial, health or any other systems, institutions and values represented on TV. We don't see our beautiful cities or the diversity of our population.

The only way that we can defend our country's cultural sovereignty is to fight for protection in the international, federal, provincial and municipal political realms. There is not a single



In the U.S. before they decide on picking up a show they see hundreds of scripts and pilots: The ratio of scripts read to those developed is 40 to 1 here the ratio is 2 to 1...

COLD SQUAD: one of the last remaining Canadian dramatic series.


TV is the single most important cultural force in the world today. Canadians spend more time watching TV than any other activity. Canadians overwhelmingly choose drama and comedy over other forms of TV viewing.

(see the CRTC's Broadcast Monitoring Report: www.crtc.gc.ca)

country in the world that can compete with the American Entertainment Machine. The survival of the Canadian television industry is inextricably linked to government support, as is our film industry. This is the reality for every country outside the U.S. of A.

We need to lobby the government, and get the public on board. There is a tremendous amount of attention being paid to this issue right now. Canadian content rules are being reviewed by almost every government cultural agency there is. We must take advantage of this moment to change the status quo. Be warned, the broadcasters are also lobbying hard and the regulators do not support changing the rules again so soon. They want to find other answers...

How long will it take to get Canadian TV drama back on its feet? While the industry and it's regulators figure out how to fix this mess it could be five years before things get going again – a lifetime for an actor. Time enough for the entire infrastructure of the industry to fall apart. American service production is down. What would happen if our American friends disappeared from the streets and the only thing left was Canada's dwindling TV industry? What would your dreams be made of then? We want to restore expenditure requirements and have indigent drama required as priority programming in prime time. We want the most popular dramatic TV shows in this country to be Canadian - written, produced, directed and acted by Canadians.

Write to your MP, talk to your friends and family. You can change this. 

ENTERTAINMENT LAW ISSUES

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Producing your own film or show? Selling your creation? Applying for funding/tax credits? Not definite on this "copyright" thing?

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ACTRA member and lawyer.

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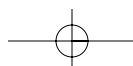
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For more information on the latest products and services of interest to the Film and Television Industry, contact Festus Addae at the above numbers.

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DIALOGUE

CRTC Chair Charles Dalfen

At the Nov. 6th Members Conference CRTC Chair Charles Dalfen wrapped the day with his speech on Canadian Drama. Recently appointed as Chair of the CRTC (which writes the rules for broadcasters), Mr. Dalfen has repeatedly committed himself to working to improve the current situation. Here are some highlights from his speech.

For a transcript of the complete speech go to www.actratoronto.com.

IS CANADIAN TV DRAMA POSSIBLE?



Is Canadian TV drama possible? Let me answer that with another question: Is Canada possible? Because if Canada is possible as an independent country, it seems to me that Canadian TV drama is not only possible, it's essential.

The Honourable Sheila Copps recently remarked: "A country that does not have access to its own stories is a country that has no soul."

Germany, France, and Australia – where American drama once dominated – now have high proportions of home-grown drama in their top ten shows.

Why is it so difficult to get our own stories on the air, and get them watched by large numbers of Canadians? Is it because we don't know how to do it? Certainly not.

The economics make it much more attractive for the broadcaster to present an American show rather than one of our own.

What point is there in supporting a distinctive Canadian broadcasting industry if it is not distinctively Canadian in its creative output?

We have seen Canadian TV drama flourish in French, and we will be consulting a Québec broadcaster to see how that success might suggest some ideas for English-language drama.

By the end of my term, I hope to see at least a few Canadian drama and comedy series up in the top 10. I believe that if we work together we can find the way to do it. And I feel confident that when I am watching those shows, I'll be seeing some of the faces that I'm looking at right now.

Actor/Activist Shirley Douglas

Shirley Douglas, one of our leading actors and activists, started the afternoon portion of the Members Conference with a rousing address on the roots and mission of our union, and on one of the burning issues facing our country – our health care system.

For a transcript of the complete speech go to www.actratoronto.com.

SHIRLEY DOUGLAS' MEMBER CONFERENCE SPEECH



I am a strong believer that you can't move ahead if you don't know where you've come from.

It's when you move collectively that you have the power to make change.

We never can forget what Nemo said; "When they came for the Jews I didn't protest because I wasn't a Jew. When they arrested the communists I didn't protest because I wasn't a communist. When they arrested the trade unionists, I didn't protest because I wasn't a trade unionist, and when they came for me, there was no one left to protest."

Privatization has been tried in every country in the world and failed. The best it can do is add 30% to the bill because health companies must make a minimum of 30% when they come in.

You'll always hear complaints about the labour movement. "They always want something for nothing, those people." Isn't it odd, I don't know when I've heard working people, including ourselves, asking for something for nothing. I can look at Exxon -- I can look at all kinds of places where people have wanted something for nothing.

Working artists have the most enormous power. We have the power to change people's minds. We have the power to bring a message to a country.

MEMBERS' NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS



Deaf Canadians Hail Launch of CBC's Full Captioned Schedule

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation proved it is possible to provide closed captioning for 100 percent of the TV broadcast day. CBC's *Newsworld* will be captioning all material they broadcast, including news updates, station promos, live interviews, sports, and emergency reports. The Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) and Deaf individuals have been fighting for more captioning for a quarter of a century.

KUDOS

ATP Diversity Advocate

Leesa Levinson and George Lucus at the Media Access Awards in L.A. This annual event honours media and entertainment productions, and individuals who promote employment and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities in the industry.



Do we have your e-mail address?

ACTRA Toronto Performers is trying to improve its communication with members and save a few trees in the process. If you haven't been receiving occasional e-mails from ACTRA Toronto Performers, e-mail us at info@actratoronto.com with your e-mail address, name and membership number.

Once we have your address, we promise to:

- Respect your privacy and not give it to anyone else.
- Respect your intelligence and not deluge you with uninteresting mail.

We promise to only send you information about the entertainment industry and interesting ACTRA stuff.

Please, help us reach you faster and more effectively.

Great Canadian actor Gordon Pinsent to receive ATP's Award of Excellence

Gordan Pinsent will be honoured with ACTRA Toronto's Award of Excellence at our 60th anniversary celebration on Feb. 27th (see pag 22 for details). Two awards will be also be given for Outstanding Acting Performance — Female, and Outstanding Acting Performance — Male.



LATE BREAKING NEWS!!!!

President Richard Hardacre re-elected

At its January 14th meeting, the governing council of ACTRA Toronto Performers re-elected Richard Hardacre as your President.

For further details visit www.actratoronto.com

MEMBERS' NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS



We share our sadness at the passing of the following ACTRA Toronto members:

- Linda Racine • Anthony Parr • Tibor Skorik • Vivian Reis • Peter Purvis • Julia Haughton •
- David Bruce Rankin • Jay MacDonald • Patricia Scott • William Stepchuck •
- Stuart Kenny • Tom Fulton

The ATP membership wishes Gary Goddard a fond farewell

After a brief illness, Gary Goddard died surrounded by flowers and friends on December 1. The founder of Gary Goddard and Associates in 1980, Gary represented many of Canada's most prestigious actors and made a significant contribution to the performing arts community in Canada. Gary served as a board member of The Actors' Fund of Canada from 1980 to the present, and served as its president from 1999 through 2001.

27 ACTRA members are Gemini Winners

The 17th Annual Gemini Awards marked a celebrated day for all ACTRA members.

Congratulations to our 27 winners -- and to our more than 100 members who were nominated.

Dramatic Series, *Cold Squad V, Ambleton*

Julia Chantrey
Best Performance by an Actress in a Guest Role
Dramatic Series, *Blue Murder, Family Man*

Colm Feore
Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series, *Trudeau, Part 1*

Wayne Grigsby
Best Writing in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series, *Trudeau, Part 1*

Peter Keleghan
Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Everyone's a Critic*

Dan Lett
Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Everyone's a Critic*

Bette MacDonald
Best Individual Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Halifax Comedy Fest Gala: Cycle VI Episode 1*

Ron MacLean
Best Sports Broadcaster, *2002 Winter Olympic Games*

Kevin May
Best Childrens' or Youth Fiction Program or Series, *The Famous Jett Jackson*

Rick Mercer
Best Writing in a Comedy or Variety Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Damacles-Time Traveler*

Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Everyone's a Critic*

Leah Pinsent
Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Everyone's a Critic*

James Rankin
Best Performance in a Pre-School Program or Series, *Scoop and Doozie 3, Boo Who?*

Donnelly Rhodes
Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role, *Da Vinci's Inquest, Ugly Quick*

Tom Scholte
Best Performance by an Actor in a Guest Role
Dramatic Series, *Da Vinci's Inquest, Oppenheimer Park*

Dixie Seattle
Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Supporting Role in a Dramatic Series, *Paradise Falls, Pete and Jessica*

Julie Stewart
Best Performance by an Actress in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role, *Cold Squad V, Ambleton*

Jackie Torrens
Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series, *Made In Canada, Everyone's a Critic*

ACTRA MEMBERS WINNING SPECIAL GEMINI AWARDS

Codco – The Earle Grey Award (Andy Jones, Cathy Jones, Greg Malone, Mary Walsh and the late Tommy Sexton)
Patrick Watson – Margaret Collier Award
Wendy Crewson – Humanitarian Award
Gordon Michael Woolvett – Gemini's Hottest Star

The Gemini Awards celebrate excellence in Canadian English-language television, by the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. For a full list of ACTRA member nominees - go to www.actra.ca.

NOTE



ACTRA Toronto is compiling a catalogue of differently-abled and visible minority performers to promote work opportunities. This tool will be available to casting directors looking for a particular ethnicity or type of performer. We encourage you to submit your photo and resume to the attention of ACTRA Toronto's Diversity Advocates for inclusion in this catalogue. Should you have any questions please contact: Leesa Levinson ext. 6619 or Priya Rao ext. 6618.

Welcome

We welcome Austin Chatz, former Vice President of Internal Affairs, as our new Vice President of Finance. The governing council of ACTRA Toronto Performers elected Elizabeth McCallum as its new Vice President of Internal Affairs.

A Greatful Thanks to Jefferson

ATP Council wishes Jefferson Mappin a fond farewell, after more than five years of dedicated and committed service to members. On behalf of both National and Toronto Councils we wish you success in all your future endeavours Jefferson!

Establishing Your Bona Fides Industry Standards In Casting

YOUR RIGHTS

The casting process is critical to the life of an actor.

In your own interests and as an ACTRA member, you have an obligation to behave with consummate professionalism in the casting process. That means being prepared, on time, and ready with an up-to-date photo and resume.

ACTRA believes that producers also have some obligations in the casting process. In recent years ACTRA Toronto members have raised a number of concerns about the way the casting process is conducted in Toronto. These concerns were raised by ACTRA's bargaining committee during the last round of bargaining, leading to a commitment by producers in our collective agreement.

Here's what they promised:

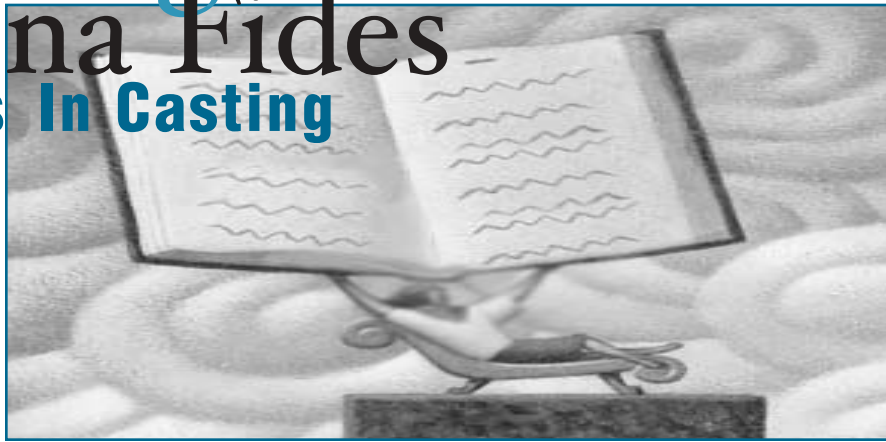
"Producers commit themselves to real and bona fide casting sessions for ACTRA members in a professional audition environment consistent with good industry standards."

That's not much. But it's a start. So what does that mean to you?

ACTRA Toronto held an informal discussion with many of Toronto's casting directors some months ago to discuss what "industry standards" might mean as a practical matter.

Here's what ACTRA Toronto thinks it means.

"Real and bona fide casting sessions for ACTRA members..." means that you have the right to take part in casting sessions that are really about casting the production. It's not about meeting minimum compliance requirements under the IPA, in order to enable the producer to demand work permits for foreign performers who may have already been cast for the show. "Bogus auditions" have no place on a production attached to ACTRA's collective agreement.



Preferably, that means that a producer or director is present at the audition. If not, then professional-quality taping is done, and those tapes are reviewed by real decision-makers in a real casting process.

"...in a professional audition environment..." means that the physical space you are asked to audition in should be appropriate for a professional casting session, and conducive to you doing your best work.

In our view that should mean a space that is appropriately sound-proofed, so that you aren't distracted and so that other actors can't hear your audition. That means appropriate lighting. That means proper heating.

We also suggested that casting directors work hard to ensure audition spaces in Toronto are centrally located, near public transport.

"... consistent with good industry standards" means that casting is conducted in a manner that a reasonable person would view as common practice in any well-run, professional audition in Toronto.

That means:


- Getting notice – and sides – in sufficient time to be able to prepare for the audition. In the IPA, producers commit to make reasonable efforts to provide sides and/or scripts available to performers 24 hours prior to an audition.
- Having a competent reader involved to facilitate the audition. Casting directors have different work styles. Many engage professional actors to serve as readers. Others are more comfortable reading themselves. The result should work –

and not be an obstacle to doing your best work.

If you believe that you were asked to participate in a bogus audition, or in a casting process that was not in a professional audition environment, or one that was conducted in a manner that is not consistent with good industry standards, you have a potential recourse under the collective agreement.

If you'd prefer to remain anonymous: You can. Send ACTRA Toronto a report, but with a request that your name not be used and that no grievance process be undertaken. We'll discuss the problem in a friendly and businesslike fashion with the production, and work with them to avoid the issue in future casting sessions. Most issues can be resolved amicably, with a bit of discussion.

If you're willing to go public with your name: You can file a formal grievance. Here's how to do it. **Write a clear, to-the-point letter describing the issue, and mail, fax or email it to ACTRA Toronto. We'll look into the issue, discuss it with the production, and if appropriate pursue the matter through the grievance/ arbitration process.**

Other issues face members in the casting process. These include diversity in casting; the problem of Toronto as a "scale town"; the professional consequences of refusing roles; claims that some casting directors "play favourites"; acceptable methods for actors to pitch themselves to casting directors and to production; and incidents involving personal harassment in and around the auditioning process. We'll discuss these issues – and what were trying to do to improve them – in the Spring issue of this magazine. 

LAST MEETING

ACTRA Toronto Performers hosted the third in this year's series of Members Conferences on Nov. 6 at Hart House Theatre. During the morning portion of the conference 8 concurrent industry presentations were presented. Here are some excerpts:

The Master Series – Live Action

Maury Chaykin

- With me it's using myself and my feelings rather than creating a very elaborate world for the character. Generally I'm totally intuitive, I don't have any rules that I go by according to a method or whatever.
- When the dialogue is good, it hurts to change it. When the dialogue is bad it really hurts not to.
- Most scripts are not that great so you really have to bring something of yourself into it to make it alive.
- If you need the money you have to do it but the only way to make progress in a negotiation is to say no – that's the only thing they understand.
- I memorize lines in character.
- I was actually watching my own performance while I was doing it – and not being encumbered by that but ultimately controlling it.

That's the ultimate for me.

Getting Your Contract Right *Martyn Kryz, Lawyer*

As soon as the contract says net, the producer or whoever can cook the books. The gross is what they sell the movie or whatever for – it's the important number.

It is very important to make sure that what they say is what they mean. For commercial contracts you should make very sure that everything your agent has told you is actually on it before you sign it.

You should always be the good guy so the director and producer love you. You should never be exposed as the person that is adamantly against what is written.

You need a contract for the same reason you need a union, because if you don't, you are open to being ripped off.

Children in Business

Sarah Polley

To me, the really important thing, weather or not your kid instigated getting into the business, is that they are constantly asked from week to week if it's still what they want to do.

If the production runs into problems than it's because they didn't plan it right. The rules are there for a reason and they are totally do-able. And parents should be militant about enforcing them.

Michael Longstaff

Provide information about what's going on, You need to know who to listen to and who NOT to listen to.

Help them to imagine what's going on.



Panelists from "Children In The Business"
Theresa Tova, Sarah Polley, Michael Longstaff & Fraser McGregor.

Voice Workshop

• *Harvey Atkin*

You must have a base from which to work from, your signature voice, the voice that you can drop back too at any time. It's very important to have consistency.

My demo tape is 54 seconds long, that's it. After 54 seconds they don't want to listen to you.

• *Julie Lemieux*

If it's one of your first auditions, take a risk and take a big risk. It may not be right but you'll get called in again.

If it hurts don't do it. Not only are you potentially damaging yourself your committing to something that has a small range because you can't go anywhere. Place your voice where it's comfortable.

Your friends might think you're nuts but animate everything. Your dog, the Tea cup; make it talk. The more you do that the more you get into that world. It's 9/10ths imagination.

Aceing Your Audition

Janet Laine Green —

- They want someone who has made clear choices.
- A lot of decisions I make in my bedroom don't manifest themselves in the room.
- The best advice I was given by a casting director was "we're on your side".
- You can control when your audition starts and don't start until you're ready
- It's better to stop and start again if you know you're botching it rather than charge through.

Shawn Lawrence —

- Learn the lines, it's your job.
- I try to think what everyone else is going to do and I don't do that.
- Choices should not be too big or showy so that they overpower your work.
- If you have an audition and your agent has submitted you for it and the casting director has brought you in – you're right for the part.

Diane Kerbel —

- When I see people come in waitress and nurses uniforms it kind of feels like background acting.
- I am not fond of props.
- You do not need to mime. And no guns, plastic or otherwise, period.
- I don't care if you have the sides 100% memorized. As long as your head isn't buried and your making choices and your connecting with the reader, I don't care if you have to read your lines.
- Ignore punctuation, underlines, all capitals and stage directions but don't re-write it.

NEXT MEETING

Really Big

ACTRA TORONTO'S WINTER CONFERENCE

ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH, 2003

60 Years Strong: workshops, AGM, and the return of the ACTRA Awards in Toronto

9:00am – 5:00 pm

HART HOUSE THEATRE, 7 Hart House Circle, University of Toronto

8:15AM REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST

Hart House, 7 Hart House Circle, U of T

9:00am workshops,

please choose one:

1.

**OWN YOUR ACTOR/
AGENT RELATIONSHIP**

Find out what you should expect of your agent & what your agent expects of you – how to create a relationship that will grow your career.

Featuring Russell Ferrier, Barry Flatman, Alicia Jeffrey, Michelle Nolden & Sandi Sloan.

2.

MASTER SERIES:

Surprise guests – go to www.actratoronto.com or call the hotline 416-642-6755 for details.

3.

**AUDITIONS:
What Gets You In The Door**

What gets you in the door – and then gets you the part.

Featuring John Buchan, Damon D'Oliveira, Lynda Mason Green, Peter MacNeill & Michael Oscars.

10:45am workshops,

please choose one:

1.

**STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN
IN THE BIZ:**

From 40 to 60 in under 1.5 hrs.

Leading women actors discuss how to build lasting careers.

Featuring Jayne Eastwood, Linda Kash, Maria Ricossa & Mag Ruffman.

2.

**CANADIAN DRAMATIC
PROGRAMMING:**

Getting It On The Air

Filmmakers discuss their broadcasting hurdles and achievements.

Featuring Semi Chellas, Peter Meyboom & Frank Siracusa.

3.

**CO-OP'S: I've Got A Barn,
Let's Put On A Show**

Hear how fellow actors are using the Co-Op agreement to star in their own low-budget films.

Featuring Gordon Currie, Barbara LaRose, Elizabeth McCallum & Priya Rao.

12:15 pm afternoon lunch

Lunch at the Great Hall
(Courtesy of ACTRA Toronto)

1:30 pm

- Executive Plan
- Budget Report
- Q & A

3:30 pm workshops,

please choose one:

1.

FALLING INTO STUNTS

A dialogue on the stunt profession with some of ATP's top stunt performers.

Featuring Shelley Cook, Steve Lucescu & Ted Hanlan.

2.

**MASTER SERIES:
WITH GORDON PINSENT**

Gordon Pinsent, this year's ATP Award of Excellence Honoree, discusses the art and craft of his performances with Brian Linchan.

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LIMITED!**

Register before
Feb 24th, 2003

Please provide us with your name, member & phone numbers, and e-mail address, and the morning and afternoon events you would like to attend – through our website, by fax (416-928-0699), by e-mail or drop it off at the ATP office at 625 Church St.

For faster registration, register online:
www.actratoronto.com

(To qualify to attend, please have your dues up-to-date and bring your member card)

ACTRA TORONTO PERFORMERS

22



ACTRA 60th Anniversary Awards Gala

8:00 pm – 1:00 am

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM
The Currelly Gallery
100 Queen's Park (on Avenue Rd. at Bloor)

- Hors D'Oeuvres Reception •
- Awards Presentation •

*Really Big
Dance & Party
at the ROM*

ACTRA Toronto Members
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FREE Admittance

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WINTER CONFERENCE**

CELEBRATING OUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH, 2003



**workshops, members conference, and a party to
celebrate the return of the ACTRA Awards in Toronto**

DON'T MISS IT!

Check page 22 for more on this event.

More information, a map, and to REGISTER ONLINE: www.actratoronto.com Please remember to RSVP!



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