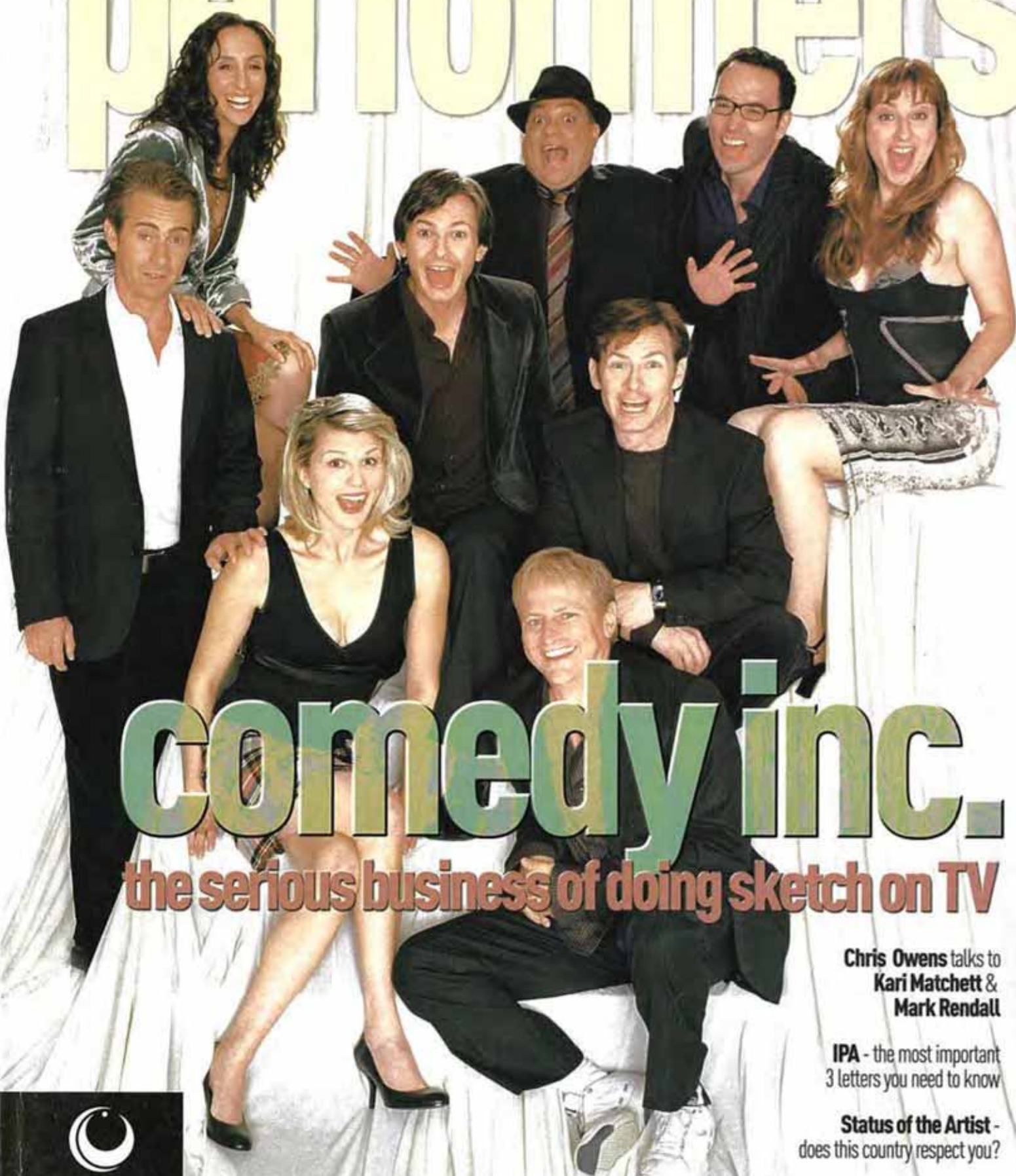


performers



comedy inc.

the serious business of doing sketch on TV

Chris Owens talks to
**Kari Matchett &
Mark Rendall**

IPA - the most important
3 letters you need to know

Status of the Artist -
does this country respect you?

AFBS & ACTRA - what's in a name?



ACTRA
TORONTO PERFORMERS

Your next Members' Conference - register now!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I have a good deal to tell you about. It's called ACTRA.

ACTRA is the name of a deal that Canadian actors have been making with each other for more than 60 years. We make a deal with each other to define terms and working conditions that guarantee minimum standards of dignity and compensation. We make a deal with each other not to accept engagements that do not meet these standards. We make a deal with each other and with our founding members when we agree that individual success founded on concessions that undermine our fellow performers is not worth it. We make a deal with each other that, whatever picture we happen to be working on at the moment, we will remember the Big Picture and do our part to build, nourish and protect the opportunity – for our fellow actors and all the actors that come after us – to dream with confidence, work with pride and retire with dignity. It's a good deal to think about, and well worth the work and planning that your council has put in to make it a good deal... better!

In July, ACTRA Toronto made a presentation to the Ontario government's Subcommittee on Status of the Artist – check www.actratoronto.com for the details of our presentation and read **Christie MacFayden's** excellent article on Status of the Artist in this issue. This legislation is important stuff. If the government gets it right, all artists in Ontario will have something real and lasting to celebrate. We hope to make some noise about this issue at Queen's Park this fall and we will be asking for your help to do so – keep yours ears on!

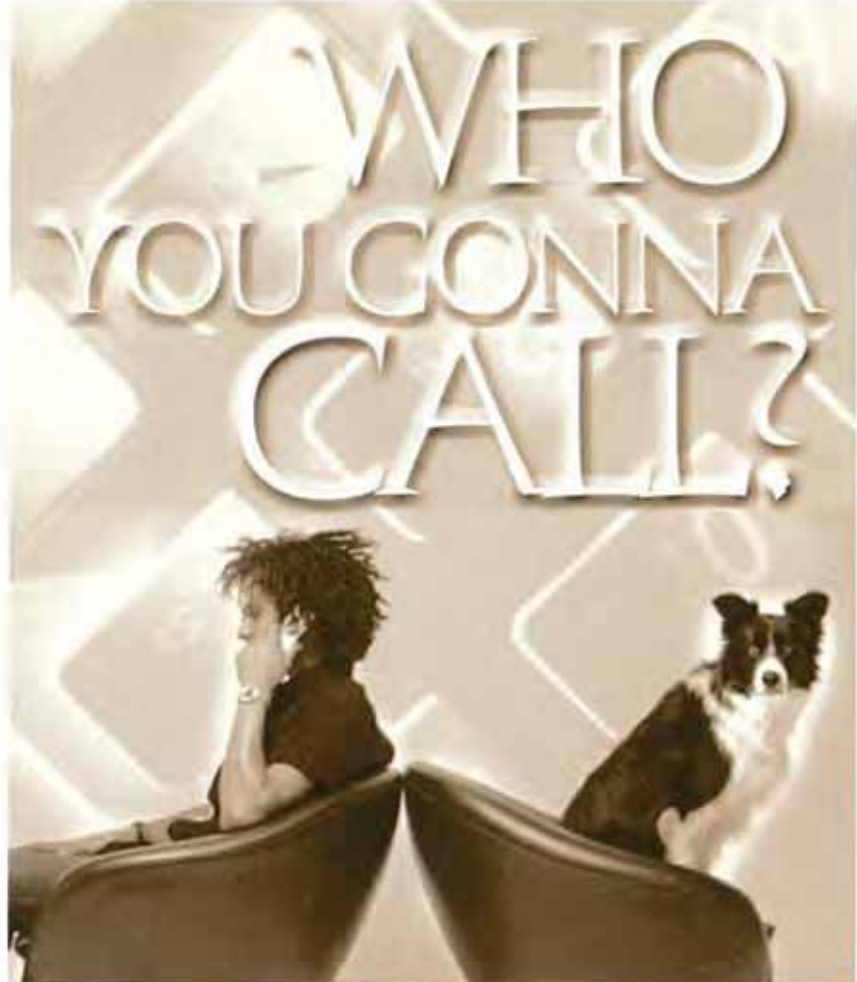
We make a deal with each other and with our founding members when we agree that individual success founded on concessions that undermine our fellow performers is not worth it.

Last November, our planned demonstration at the Canadian Association of Broadcasters convention had to be cancelled because of security arrangements for a U.S. presidential visit. We still managed to steal the headlines and get our point across by sending **Shirley Douglas, Gary Farmer, Peter Keleghan, Rick Mercer, Leah Pinsent, Fiona Reid, Sonja Smits** and **Julie Stewart** to crash the CAB convention and meet with Culture Minister **Liza Frulla**. As we go to press, plans are being drawn up to mount our most ambitious political lobby effort yet. By the time you read this, with council's approval, preparations should be in full swing for a fall trip to Ottawa. Join the effort to turn things around for our industry. Get on the bus, **HEAD FOR THE HILL** and help us get ACTRA's message out.

Collective bargaining starts next spring for the next **Independent Production Agreement (IPA)**. To identify our negotiating goals, we have been making efforts to get input from as many members as possible. If you are asked to join a focus group on IPA issues, please try to participate. If you have suggestions for the bargaining team, do not hesitate to email them to ipa@council.actratoronto.com

Ballots for the November ACTRA Toronto Council elections will be mailed out towards the end of October. Please read the candidates' election statements carefully and choose thoughtfully those you think best qualified to serve as our elected representatives. To be an effective ACTRA Toronto councillor takes patience, the ability to learn fast and think clearly as well as a deep commitment to work cooperatively for the welfare of the ACTRA Toronto membership. Vote wisely. A good deal depends on the choices you make.

Karl Pruner, President



**GOT A PROBLEM?
ACTRA TORONTO STAFF IS HERE FOR YOU.**

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Visit the ACTRA Toronto website at www.actratontoronto.com!

Who's doing what for you at ACTRA Toronto?

To find comprehensive reports on the goings-on of ACTRA Toronto's committees go to www.actratontoronto.com



performers

The magazine from ACTRA Toronto

Fall 2005 • Volume 14 Issue 3

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JOIN THE TEAM

If you're an ACTRA Toronto 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

December 15, 2005

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

We reserve the right to edit or omit any material for length, style, content or possible legal ramifications.



Performers magazine is published three times a year by ACTRA Toronto Performers. The views expressed in articles and submitted articles are not necessarily the views of ACTRA Toronto Performers, its Council or its Committee.

www.actratocouncil.com



CTV's sketch comedy series Comedy Inc.

Clockwise from left: Winston Spear, Jen Goodfellow, Roman Danylo, Gavin Stephens, Albert Howell, Aurora Browne, Terry McGurkin, Ian Sirota and Jean Robertson



THE ACTRA AWARDS TORONTO



FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 24

2006



THE CARLU

SUBMISSIONS OPEN

ACTRA TORONTO MEMBERS: send in your submissions for the ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2006. Two ACTRA Toronto members will receive Outstanding Performance ACTRA Awards (one male; one female), to be held at The Carlu, February 24, 2006. Submit any lead or supporting performances by ACTRA Toronto members in productions with their first broadcast or air date being between December 1, 2004 and November 30, 2005.

Make your submissions online at www.actratocouncil.com

Submissions close November 30, 2005.

ACTRA Awards Toronto 2006: Rules and Regulations

- submissions to the Nominating Jury accepted from any ACTRA Toronto member (Full member, Apprentice member, ACTRA Extra)
- lead or supporting performances only
- performances can be in any genre (excluding radio or voice performance)
- film or television production can be indigenous or international
- submission must be a performance by an ACTRA Toronto member in good standing, residing primarily in ACTRA Toronto's jurisdiction
- performance must be from an ACTRA-signatory production
- production must have been exhibited or broadcast between Dec. 1, 2004 and Nov. 30, 2005
- Make as many submissions as you like - but only one per performance.

For complete rules and regulations go to www.actratocouncil.com

In Memoriam

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

Tony Van Bridge
 Vernon Raymond Agopsowicz
 Arnie Achtman
 Dolores Agnes Ettienne
 Derek Curwen



Whenever I think of **Paul Bettis** I hear the silvery ring of a teacher's desk bell, a tool the elegant and erudite director made an integral part of his definitive stylistic form, *The Rule Play*. The form, like the gentleman himself was a rare blend of intellectual rigor and experimentation, often used to explore the genesis of ideas and the nature of eroticism. Paul's Theatre Second Floor was a focal point in the birth of Canadian theatre during the 70's and reputedly the site of some of the best parties the city has ever seen. His later work continued to offer a truly individualistic approach to the medium. He had a great knowledge of the theatre and his appreciation of other's work was always trenchant, insightful and unfailingly kind.

Like many theatre artists, Paul struggled to find funding. He supported his true love by acting on television and wrote deeply insightful script analyses for television and film projects. He sometimes expressed self-deprecating doubt about the value of what he had accomplished, but the communal outpouring of love and support during his final illness is a testament to the inspiration he brought to so many of our lives. Paul passed away on August 4, peacefully and at home after a brave battle with cancer. **Paul Ledoux**

Welcome New Members



Joseph Adam
 Lauren Ash
 Mary Ashton
 Christine Azouli
 Nicole Babl
 Michael Balazo
 Samantha Baldwin
 Kaelyn Bamshrough
 Terry Barna
 Sandra Battaglini
 Ryan James Beattie
 Lisa Berry
 Ian Blackwood
 Noelle Boggio
 Bill Bough
 Julie Bear
 Randy Brooks
 Aaron Brown
 Rhodlyne Dugry
 Craig Burnatowski
 Ashley Burton
 Randi-Lee Butcher
 Brian Byrne
 Alexandra Cannito
 Lex Casar
 Frank Castle

Archie Castro
 Annabelle Cho
 Rebecca Chu
 Lloyd Cuke
 Andrew Conzio-Picard
 Patrick Cook
 Cookie
 Alex Courey
 Harry Crane
 Amber V Call
 Amy Cunningham
 Melissa Cvetkovic
 Therese Dawn
 Devin Delehme
 Denise Desrochers
 Missy Dingman
 Kordis Doski
 Mel Downey
 David James Elliott
 Joshua Erasme
 Helen Farmer
 Kris Ferguson
 Chanté Fisher
 Courtney Fitzpatrick
 Christina Florencio
 Derek Flute

Sarah Foud
 Shigra Francis-Nelson
 Taysa Fuller
 Brendan Gall
 Ric Garcia
 Christopher Gaudet
 Amber Godfrey
 Jonathan Goldapple
 Oscar A Gonzalez
 Balford Gordon
 Scott Gorman
 Kesha Graham
 Tini Grates
 Jessica Greenberg
 Harry Grimsco
 Christian Hagen
 Matthew Hawkins
 David Hicks
 Bryan Ho
 Nadia Howe
 Dana Howe
 Muriel John
 Demetrius Johnson
 Theresa Joy
 Natasha K
 Genevieve Kang

Kasia
 Keen
 Jennine Kerr
 Peter John Kerr
 Zachary Kra
 Robert Laughlin
 Oresda Leonard
 Jacqueline Leung
 Cassidy Lewis
 Tommy Linzas
 Canny Lo
 Jennifer Lo
 Kristopher Lombardo
 Lucky
 Austin Macdonald
 Tim Machin
 Andrew Mahon
 Anita Majumdar
 Melissa Mancini
 Jajube Mandela
 Karly Marek
 Willie Matthew
 Kyle McDonald
 Patricia McPherson
 David Steven Mickle
 Robert Mignott

Miss Gardiner
 Renee Montpelier
 Chris Morgan
 Gordon Muir
 Roddy Muir
 Andrew Muir
 Evelynking Namatayi
 Amanda Nanfo
 Rebecca Nicholson
 Jacob Howard Nolin
 Mehdi Nur
 Juliette Nurse
 Tinity Oelkers
 Faustina Owusu-Ansah
 Daniel Park
 Peter Paok
 Renee Percy
 G.Wallace Pedgrew
 Chris Ploszczansky
 Miroslaw Polatynski
 Ari Posner
 Mark Pincer
 Adrian Prossowski
 Joel Rechi
 Kathryn Romanow
 Christine Rossi

Michael Sowers
 Tamiie Shah
 Cameron Sheppard
 Rav Shih
 Shipley
 Christina Sculi
 Becky Siddall
 Ailan Simpson
 Timoko Sui
 Alison Smiley
 Dylan Scott Smith
 Max Smith
 Zie Souward
 Lauren Spring
 Campbell Stahlbaum
 Scott Sykes
 Nikolai Tichuchenko
 Adnan Virk
 Mariaka Weathered
 Jeffrey Brendan Woodin
 Mark Whelan
 Brandon Wong
 Janet Yao

Performing Arts Lodge Annual Christmas Bazaar

Crest Theatre Green Room, 100 The Esplanade, Toronto
 Saturday, November 19, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 Sunday, November 20, 10 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Featuring unique gifts, unusual items, collectibles & delectables for the festive season

For more details, call 416-363-0049.

ACTRA and the USW – A great team

They joined with ACTRA to demonstrate against non-union production; pressured a hotel to stop advertising room packages with *Blue Man* tickets; are working with ACTRA Toronto's organizing staff to ensure foreign service production is done union and are jointly planning the largest lobby of parliamentarians Canada has ever seen. Our strategic alliance with the United Steelworkers (USW) is already a success and the momentum hasn't let up.

The USW is the largest private-sector union in North America and they are on the leading edge of the union movement. They're building strength by making alliances with other unions all over the world and in April, our alliance was formed. In Canada they're renowned for their political action and their ability to get results from government. The Steelworkers lobbied to get the Westray Bill passed in Parliament. This bill, the first of its kind, holds corporations, their directors and executives accountable for criminally negligent acts in the workplace. The USW is currently lobbying to put working people at the head of the line, before banks and shareholders, for their wages and pensions when companies, including producers, go bankrupt.

ACTRA is counting on the support of the USW in our lobby for Status of the Artist legislation in Ontario. We will also be campaigning together to support Canadian broadcasting by making the CRTC more accountable. The USW, through SCAN (Steel Communication and Action Network) has the ability to deliver messages and organize support rapidly from its almost 280,000 members across Canada. With our new alliance, ACTRA is counting on using these types of resources to help get our messages out to the public and government.

Later this year ACTRA and the USW will be embarking on the largest lobby of Parliament Hill that Canada has seen. We will be working together over a number of days to meet with as many MPs as possible, to influence the legislative agenda and the development of party platforms for the next election.

This is an alliance of two sophisticated and progressive unions who have realized that strength counts but strategy is just as important. Together ACTRA and the USW truly make a great team.

CBC lock-out



ACTRA Toronto President Karl Pruner shows his support for the Canadian Media Guild workers locked out by CBC management.

Below:
CMG members Jian Ghomeshi, Matt Galloway and Karl Pruner on the picket line.



FYI — MEMBERS' NEWS

We Need You To Make a Movie! Less Cut, More Action



ACTRA Toronto's Co-op Challenge Deadline:
December 15, 2005

Less Cut, More Action is a challenge to the ACTRA Toronto membership to create a short film (90 seconds or less) that spreads our message about the need for Canadian drama, Canadian stars, and a clearly stated Canadian Cultural Policy that contains a commitment to developing and protecting a healthy Canadian film and television industry.

ACTRA members are experts in telling stories on camera. Let's use that expertise to create short, witty and arresting messages that tell the politicians and the CRTC how we feel and get the public on side. The challenge is to tell our story in such an entertaining way that people will want to pass the message on.

Get political, get creative, and put your wits to work! Submit your co-op film to the **Less Cut, More Action** challenge by December 15, 2005.

Winners will be selected by a jury of industry professionals, compiled on a DVD and sent to politicians, broadcasters, the CRTC, and screened at our winter conference and on our website.

For information on how to submit, example short films, Co-op Agreement guidelines and more, go to http://www.actratontoronto.com/home/Co-opChallenge_05.htm

LESS CUT, MORE ACTION



Access 2 Entertainment™ Cards Now Available To Persons with Disabilities



The Access 2 Entertainment card provides persons with a disability to receive either free admission or a significant discount for their support person at member movie theatres across Canada. This program was developed by an advisory group of nine national disability organizations, in conjunction with Famous Players and Cineplex Galaxy. Persons with a disability who require a support person when attending a movie theatre are eligible for the card. Allow four to six weeks for processing of your application and delivery of your Access 2 Entertainment card. Thanks to **Leesa Levinson**, ACTRA member, who was part of the ACCESS advisory group and who helped make this possible.

Go to www.access2.ca for further details and to download your application.

FYI — MEMBERS' NEWS



ABILITIES FESTIVAL

October
27 to 30

A Celebration
of Disability
Arts and
Culture

This artistic and cultural Toronto event showcases excellence and the talent, vision and passion of artists with disabilities.

For details go to www.abilitiesfestival.org

Paul Gross gets top honours at European gala

Kudos to **Paul Gross** who captured the best actor award at the Monte Carlo Television Festival for the CBC political thriller *H3O*. **Anamaria Marinca** won best actress honours for her role as an Eastern European woman sold to sex-slavery in the international CBC co-production mini-series *Sex Traffic*. Both films had also been nominated in the best miniseries category.

MAINSTREAM NOW!

Monday, June 20th saw the press launch of ACTRA Toronto's *Mainstream Now!* catalogue of diverse performers and performers with disabilities. It was my pleasure to host a star lineup of speakers that included **Jennifer Podemski**, **Siu Ta**, **Tonya Lee Williams** and **Richard Chevolleau**. ACTRA Toronto President, **Karl Pruner**, and *Into the Mainstream* founder, **Sandi Ross** who also spoke at the event. It was attended by over 100 industry guests including casting directors, producers, funders, and actors. The industry welcomed back the book as a casting tool; many wondering why it had disappeared in the first place.

The original book, *Into the Mainstream*, was created in 1990 as a means of showcasing the wide variety of talent that we have in Canada. In the nine years since the final printing of *Into the Mainstream*, the film & television industry has come far in accurately representing the society we live in. Yet there is still a long way to go. Thus, ACTRA Toronto's Diversity Committee decided it was time to bring back this book, revamped and reborn as *Mainstream Now!*

The success of the press launch continues to this day. Articles were written in *Playback* and *The Toronto Star* among others, with camera crews from CTV, CityTV and OMNI. Over 180 books have already been sent out to casting directors and producers in Toronto and LA, with more being requested every week.

It was the culmination of over two years of thought and work on this project and proved to be a resounding success.

Priya Rao Chair, Diversity Committee

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Sandi Ross and Tonya Lee Williams at the Mainstream Now! launch party.



Leesa Levinson promotes Mainstream Now! on CBC's Moving On with host Joanne Smith.

Prominent Canadians inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame

This year's inductees included Paul Anka, Rex Harrington, Alanis Morissette, Kiefer Sutherland, and screen legend Fay Wray.

Sutherland, who joins his actor mother Shirley Douglas and actor father Donald Sutherland on the Walk, said "Today is an incredibly humbling experience, there is such a national feeling, in a sense, about this award and so yes [my grandfather Tommy Douglas] is very much on my mind right now."



Some of the inductees of this year's Canadian Walk of Fame: Paul Anka, Rex Harrington, Fay Wray and Kiefer Sutherland.

Labour Day Parade a HUGE success!

More than 100 ACTRA Toronto members, including jugglers and stilt walkers, joined the thousands of people in Toronto's annual Labour Day parade up Queen Street West through the Dufferin Gates and into the CNE.

Bravo to our volunteers and participants for making this day a big success. See you next year!





Status of the Artist in Ontario

by Christie MacFadyen

When people conjure up an image of the struggling starving artist I imagine they picture Gene Kelly in *An American in Paris* singing and dancing in his striped shirt and getting his dinner paid for by the beautiful heiress. What a charmer!

I'm quite sure they don't picture a sweet old woman alone and sick in a little apartment with nothing and no one. An old woman who, in her heyday, was not only a success but perhaps achieved greatness in her artistic life; gave joy to thousands of people and who now finds herself forgotten and impoverished. Perhaps she is visited occasionally by an admirer who is shocked to find her in such a state.

PLANNING ON BEING
RICH

AND FAMOUS?

...THEN DON'T READ THIS.

This is why my mother didn't want me to be an actor!

Gene Kelly died a very rich man because he was a Hollywood movie star. In Canada, our "stars" in all artistic disciplines don't dream much of riches. Though some may achieve a modest level of financial comfort, many struggle in virtual poverty their whole lives. And a few, more than you think, end up like the sweet old lady in paragraph one.

How did she get there? Maybe she was an opera singer or a ballerina, or a painter or a writer or a musician, or maybe she starred in a popular TV series. Whatever her artistic achievements may have been, chances are her average income was no higher than an inventory clerk.

Chances are that she has no real pension plan or, if she was an ACTRA member, she may have cashed in her RRSP's long ago. Chances are her income was supplemented by other part time jobs like waitressing, or working in a bookstore. Thus her Canada Pension payments are miniscule because her overall income was so small.

And when the big prize came after years of hard work and she finally achieved a successful novel or show and earned that fabulous middle class payday - the government then taxed her as though she earned that amount every year and much of it was ripped away.

As she aged, her working opportunities diminished. (depressed yet?) She probably has some persistent painful medical problem courtesy of the grueling physical circumstances of her work (during which she was not protected under standard labour law) that requires special therapy she can't afford.

What she also has is a trunk full of awards and accolades and reviews and mementos of glorious moments that can't be exchanged for bupkis. And, well I wouldn't be at all surprised if she even has an



Order of Canada award on, say, her bathroom wall - just to tickle her funny bone when she's in the mood. Hey, it's better than a kick in the head.

And so we find our sweet old lady in a rather bad state; a place no one wants to be at any age; a place where most artists live their entire lives.

The unavoidable fact is that in Canada, even our greatest artists live a very precari-

The unavoidable fact is that in Canada, even our greatest artists live a very precarious existence. They deserve better, much better.

ous existence. They deserve better, much better. They deserve, at the very least, to share equally in the social programs that are the right of all Canadians: social security, employment insurance, education and training, and basic protection in the work place. But they don't even bloody well get that. This is why your ACTRA Toronto council is fighting for Status of the Artist legislation in Ontario.

In 1982 Paul Sirin, ACTRA's then National Secretary and a man of great wisdom, co-chaired the international advisory committee that led to UNESCO's proclamation on

the Status of the Artist. Its core principle states:

"In the Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist, the General Conference of UNESCO recognizes the importance of the role played by the artist in society... The arts in their fullest and broadest definition are, and should be, an integral part of life and it is necessary and appropriate for governments to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of artistic expression, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent."

It was the recommendation of this U.N. committee that all nations should undertake to give artists the recognition they deserve for their contribution to society, and to help support their unorthodox way of making a living.

continues on page 30.

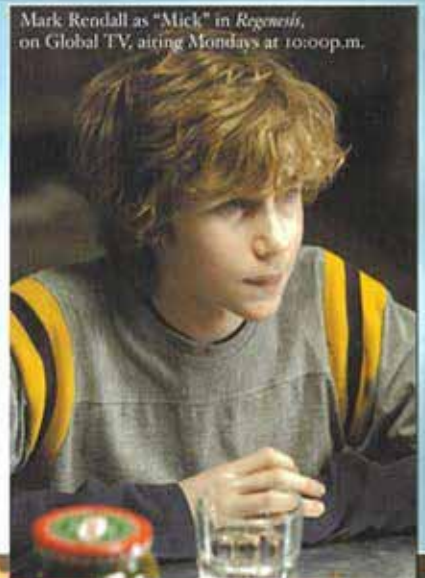
in conversation with...

Kari Matchett
& Mark Rendall

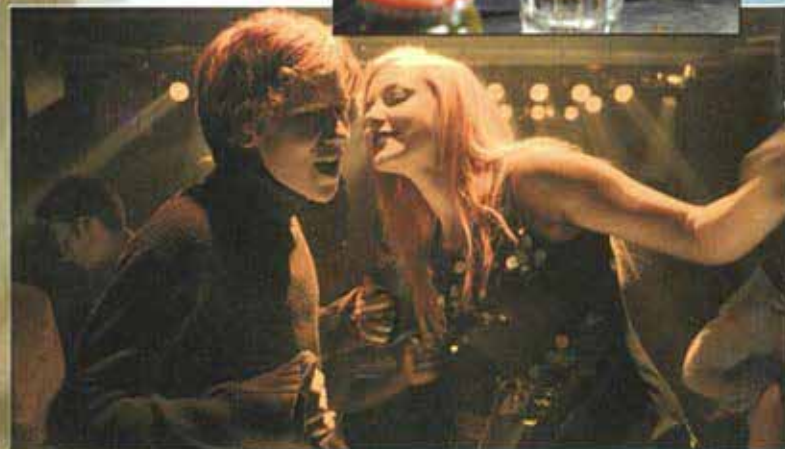
by Chris Owens



Kari Matchett in ABC's new TV series *Lucifer*.



Mark Rendall as "Mick" in *Regeneration*, on Global TV, airing Mondays at 10:00p.m.



Mark Rendall as "Taylor Brandon Burns" and Kristen Adams as "Natalie" in the feature *Childstar*.

CO: What started you on this career path?

MR: About six years ago, I told my parents I wanted to try acting because it was fun. There were open-call auditions for *Oliver* at the Prince of Wales and my dad asked if I'd like to try out just to see what it's like. So I did. I'd taken choir in school, so I was able to sing. I became the understudy of Oliver and a few other parts in the play. Then, I got an agent and started from there.

KM: When I was 12 years old, I was totally obsessed by the writer S. E. Hinton - *The Outsiders*, *Tex*, those sort of pre-teen adolescent killers - I read *The Outsiders* about 10 times. One day, I picked up a *Teen Beat* magazine and it said that they were making a movie of it. When I read *The Outsiders*, I would be overcome with emotion - just overcome with all the stuff I was feeling for 'Pony Boy' and what all the characters were going through. And then, when I read that they were making a movie about it, it was like something in my brain switched. I wasn't really conscious of what that was. It was just clear that I needed to do all that I was feeling. I saw some kind of place where I could put that energy, those emotions. But I lived in Lethbridge, Alberta at the time and I don't come from a family of actors or anything like that, so I guessed the next thing to do was to sign up for drama in junior high and then sign up for drama in high school, and then go to drama camps and then I wove my way to the National Theatre School and then to living in Toronto.

CO: Did you like the movie?

KM: I went four times.

MR: That's an awesome story, very powerful, I mean, I kind of got into it by chance, not that I didn't want to do it, but it seems like you became really passionate about it.

KM: I think I had to feel that passionate about it, otherwise I wouldn't have got here because I lived in such a world apart from the world I'm in now.

CO: What about training?

MR: I think I've sort of learned as I've gone along, you know, working with different people.

KM: I went to the National Theatre School and before that I went to Red Deer College for two years, right out of high school. All I did was act for two years. I played Juliet, I did summer stock; so I got this huge practical influx as well as theoretical. If I had been living in a place like Toronto, maybe it wouldn't have been necessary for me to do that. I don't believe anyone needs to go to theatre school to learn to be an actor. I think you learn to be an actor because you follow your instincts about what you need to do in order to act.

CO: You both have experience in theatre, film, TV, and voice-over; do have a preference?

MR: I've only actually done one play and it was the first thing I did: *Oliver*. I just remember how fun it was doing it. It was one of the best times I've ever had in my acting life. It's like a community; you work with these people and they become your family. It's different from film or television. You can still feel togetherness but, it's different. They all have their pros and cons. They're different but they're all a part of acting.

KM: I've done television predominantly, so that's the world I know. I started in theatre. That's my basis. So, that's a place I always feel like I'm going to go home to. I have huge fantasies about all kinds of roles, you know, in the



Born in Spalding, Saskatchewan Kari Matchett moved to Montreal in her late teens to study at the National Theatre School. In 2001 she

landed a guest appearance on the series *Blue Murder* for which she won a Gemini Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Guest Role and was subsequently invited to join the show as one of the four leads. Kari has been nominated for Gemini Awards for her work on the tv series *Power Play* and *A Colder Kind of Death*. Kari's long list of credits includes the Canadian box-office smash *Men with Brooms*, *The Webster Report* (a 2004 pilot opposite Stanley Tucci), the tv movie *Say When* (with Joe Montegna), the tv miniseries *Five Days to Midnight* (with Timothy Hutton), a supporting role in the Jennifer Lopez feature *Angel Eyes*, and the acclaimed A&E series *Nero Wolfe* (with Timothy Hutton and Maury Chaykin). Currently Kari plays Dr. Mariel Underlay on ABC's *Invasion*.



At the age of 10, Mark Rendall won the role of "Spider" in the musical *Oliver*, at Toronto's Princess of Wales Theatre. He received a 2002 Gemini Nomination for the Hallmark

tv movie series *Tales From the Neverending Story*, a 2003 Young Artists Award nomination for the feature *Touching Wild Horses* (opposite Jane Seymour), and a nomination for a 2004 ACTRA Toronto Award for Outstanding Male Performance in *The Interrogation of Michael Crowe*. Mark's many credits include Disney's *The Scream Team* (with Eric Idle), Don McKellar's feature *Childstar* (with McKellar, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Eric Stoltz), the tv series *Regenesis* currently airing on Global TV, CTV's *Spirit Bear: The Simon Jackson Story* (with Graham Greene), and the NBC mini-series *Revelations*. Mark's voice is also well-known in numerous animated tv series including PBS' award-winning *Arthur*.

West End in London (laughs) I really do. I feel very strongly about wanting to do that in my life. But right now, it feels like television and film is where the energy is for me and not only that, where my passion is. I love being on set. I just love it. I'm crazy about what I do. I can't get enough of it. I love it and I love the community that's on a set just as much as I love the community in the theatre. I think your family and community is wherever you make it. It's the energy you put into it more than anything. I just feel I've had tons and tons of great experiences on film and television sets.

CO: When you're on set, do you like to be alone, do you like to mix with everyone, and do you have anything you might bring along for downtime?

KM: I actually have a hot-pink rolling suitcase that I bring everywhere on set because I cannot stand being unoccupied. In it I've got a scarf that I'm knitting, a game, magazines, plays I'm reading... I've got a whole life in there that I just cart around with me. As much as I love hanging out with everyone on set, I need my downtime. I always eat lunch by myself. It's such an intense output of energy. It's especially when I'm on set all day in every scene that I need those times of solitude and alone time. So essentially, that's where I get my energy and reframe my mind around what I'm doing.

MR: I juggle. I play guitar. I think it depends on the type of role or the scene you're doing. I do like hanging out with the crew and the rest of the cast if I can. But, if it's a particularly emotional or difficult scene... there are times I'd definitely keep to myself. It depends on what I'm doing.

KM: I've noticed the same thing: if I'm doing a comedy I'm in a much more social space.

CO: Let's talk about auditioning; some of your thoughts, feelings, how you prepare?

MR: Over the years, as much as I've gotten somewhat used to them, I still get just as nervous at each audition. I've had a few times at this audition place near a bakery where I've thrown up before my audition because I felt so nauseous and felt so nervous.

KM: Actually, thrown up?

MR: Actually thrown up. In the planter outside. (laughter)

That only happened twice so, you know, it's not like a compulsive thing.

CO: It was years ago.

MR: Uh, yes...right. Years ago. (laughter)

KM: I'm amazed at how nervous I still get. I've certainly gotten really good at pretending I'm not nervous. That's one of the actor's greatest skills is knowing how not to look nervous. It's a huge part of being a good auditioner; to look as cool as a cucumber even though you might be boiling up inside (laughter). I'm a wreck if I get something the day before or the day of. I decided to do pilot season this year in LA for the first time. It was really intense. I got a script or two everyday, the night before, and I had to go to a variety of places; I would have my maps, I would have just read the scripts, just memorized maybe twenty pages of sides, and I was going from one end to another of this world that I was just learn-



Kari Matchett in *Plague City: SARS in Toronto*

ing. It was a harrowing experience. Just trying to keep it together in order to do your best in those ten minutes in each room is really hard.

CO: Besides the nerve-racking process of auditioning, how do you deal with nerves when you're on set?

KM: For me it's all about being prepared. If I can, I memorize the entire script before I start shooting it. I'm all for being absolutely prepared; knowing what you're doing, where you've come from, knowing all your lines inside and out, why you're saying this. All of that and going in and tossing it away and then being in the moment and creating what comes out of that moment.

MR: Generally, I learn the lines the night before and once I get into a role, it takes on its own momentum. It's not such a challenge to learn the lines, so I'm able to concentrate on just the emotion and the character. Sometimes I go to bed and I kind of rehearse in my sleep.

KM: I sleep with scripts under my pillow sometimes.

MR: You mean, like a good luck thing?

KM: I look at it like an osmosis thing. I don't know if it works but I do it sometimes (laughter)

CO: The Kari Matchett Secret - we've found it now.

continues on page 30.

Mark Rendall and Noam Jenkins in *Childish*



YOU YOUR UNION

IPA: three initials you should know all about

By Karl Pruner, President ACTRA Toronto

The Independent Production Agreement is ACTRA's central collective agreement and our current contract expires in 2006. This means that we'll be back at the bargaining table in February next year. That's why there was a workshop on the IPA at the June Members' Conference, why you may have been asked to participate in an IPA focus group in September and why I'm asking you to lend a hand over the next few months and help us come up with a very short list of negotiating goals. Here's how the process works.

We will be negotiating with the Canadian Film and Television Producers Association (CFTPA). ACTRA has a reputation for "toughness" at the bargaining table and the CFTPA will likely try to establish an "industry pattern" by negotiating west of the Rockies and then moving east to bargain with all of the other film and television

unions before they finally take us on. Considerable pressure will be applied to get us to accept concessions, especially if the other unions do so. The strength of our answering case will depend on the energy and intelligence we commit to preparation. That is why we are planning a major effort.

By the time you read this, ACTRA Toronto will already have begun conducting focus groups with members and consultations with staff and elected representatives here in Toronto. ACTRA National's Research and Collective Bargaining Department will use the information gathered here and in other branches to produce a report for consideration by the IPA Bargaining Committee, whose recommendations will frame the final round of consultations that determine our demands at the table in February. Until then, let me strongly encourage you to:

Send Suggestions to the IPA Bargaining Committee at ipa@actratoronto.com

- Show up at the members' meeting at the October 22nd ACTRA Toronto Members' Conference
- Read and respond to information bulletins and requests for input at the ACTRA Toronto website at www.actratoronto.com and also at the ACTRA National website at www.actra.ca
- Participate in IPA related focus groups if you are asked
- Attend IPA-related "Town Hall" meetings when they are called
- Join the IPA Bargaining Committee if you are offered an invitation to do so

The Independent Production Agreement is at the heart of what ACTRA does.

It's what ACTRA is for. With your help we can make this good deal, a good deal better.



The IPA (Independent Producer Agreement) is the contract we have with the producers of film and television that set our minimum rates and how we're treated. Along with the CBC Agreement and the Commercial Agreement, it is the single most important reason why we all come together and form ACTRA.

INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION AGREEMENT

ACTRA Toronto Council Elections in progress - **VOTE!**

If you are a full member of ACTRA Toronto, you can vote in the council election. Ballots are mailed to all full members at the end of October, to be returned by November 25, 2005.

All of your councillors are professional performers who volunteer their time to represent your best interests. Your Toronto Council is governed by 24 full members elected every two years. Twelve of these Toronto councillors also serve on ACTRA's National Council.

Candidate bios will be posted on www.actratoronto.com.

ACTRA TORONTO'S MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 22 | 05

9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Morning Workshops (pick one) 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon

WORKSHOPS

Learn from others in a large-class lecture format. These workshops are with a number of panelists who will discuss the topic at hand.

MASTER CLASS SESSION FORMAT

MASTER CLASSES give selected ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS the chance to work with an industry professional. AUDITORS can watch from the audience. A selected number of participants, as per the class' specs, will be chosen from applications submitted.

Participants apply at www.actratronto.com with your photo and résumé and any other requirements for that particular MASTER CLASS.

We encourage performers with disabilities to apply.

* Master Class participants must apply by October 13, 2005!

1 WORKSHOP Sounds Canadian

Tired of having to sound American? Canadian's have their own authentic and diverse voices! Come sharpen your regional dialects as you rediscover the sounds of Canada from coast to coast to coast. What does a professor from Newfoundland sound like or an oil worker from Alberta or a school teacher from the Ottawa Valley? Join **David Ferry** and **David Smukler** on this journey toward mastering our Canadian voices and be ready when Canadian Film and TV comes knocking...eh? Hosted by **Frank McNulty**.



2 WORKSHOP Creating Background Atmosphere

Whether you are just discovering extra work, or you are a seasoned background performer, learn how to contribute further to the film process and potentially increase your opportunities for repeat bookings. Directors including **Stacey Stewart Curtis**, 1st & 3rd ADs **David Manion** and **Neil Winemaker** as well as BG performer **Denise Neuhaus** talk about their daily experience creating that important scene atmosphere. Moderated by **Austin Schatz**.



3 MASTER CLASS Spotlighting Hit Series *This is Wonderland* with DOP Gerald Packer

Director of Photography **Gerald Packer** is back by popular demand, this time using *This is Wonderland* as a model. From his cinematographer perspective on acting he will review the "hows and whys" from actual *Wonderland* scenes, explain what impresses him and how the pros thrive in their scenes, illustrate what it takes to nail the first take, and choreograph and shoot prepared *Wonderland* scenes.

LIMIT of 4 PARTICIPANTS. Audience limit: 80. See MASTER CLASS details on this page for how to be chosen as a participant. You will be required to come with your sides prepared and ready to shoot as if you'd been cast.

FACE TO FACE ONLINE

A Face to Face workstation will be set up throughout the day for demos and assistance. Bring your photos and résumé for addition to your Face to Face portfolio. Forgot your password? Don't have one? Staff will be available to help you out.



12 noon to 1:00 p.m. LUNCH Lunch Courtesy of ACTRA Toronto Performers

1:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Plenary

Town Hall Meeting on Your Next Contract

- * IPA presentation & discussion
- * Executive Report from Your Council
- * And more...



Afternoon Workshops (pick one) 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

8 WORKSHOP CAREER TOOLS - Auditions 101



Features, MOWs, TV, commercials... are they all the same? How about auditioning for... Day Player, Principal, Series Regular roles? Join fellow actors **Marium Carvell**, **Neil**

Crone, **Kirsten Bishopric** and **David Sparrow** as they draw from their experiences (both victories and stumbles) to explain how the process differs from part to part. Learn what to expect, how to prepare, what to vary and why, and how to give yourself a fighting chance. Moderated by **David Gale**.

9 WORKSHOP Nailing the Part

Join casting directors **John Buchan** and **Diane Kerbel**, actors **Ron Lea**, **Sherry Miller** and **Kate Trotter**, for an in-depth discussion on the casting process as it relates to film and television. Hear the tips on how to show up best prepared. Moderated by **David Macniven**.



10 WORKSHOP Your Episodic TV Gig

Be ready to hit the floor running on a TV series set. **Jayne Eastwood**, **Peter Outerbridge**, **Michael Riley**, **Julie Stewart**, **Kristopher Turner** and **Alberta Watson** discuss the demands that are faced by TV series regulars and recurring and guest actors. Moderated by **Walter Alza**.



HOW TO REGISTER

* the fastest way to register is online:

www.actratronto.com

* by fax (416) 928-0699

* or drop off your workshop choices to ACTRA Toronto, 625 Church St., 2nd floor

PLEASE REGISTER BY OCTOBER 18, 2005!

* Master Class deadline October 13, 2005

All workshops and master classes are subject to change. Check for conference updates at www.actratronto.com. Conference free to ACTRA Toronto members who register.

Free to ACTRA Toronto members who register.

Registration and Breakfast 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at Victoria College, U of T (building foyer behind Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W.)

Your chance to share and build on the experiences of fellow professional actors

4 WORKSHOP Casting from the Producer's POV

Join producers **Don Carmody**, **Jennifer Jonas**, **Peter Lauterman**, **Bernie Zuckerman**, and CTV's **Tecca Crosby** for a behind-the-scenes discussion on the casting decision-making process from the producer's point-of-view. Moderated by **Jennifer Podemski**.



5 MASTER CLASS Acting & Auditioning with Janet-Laine Green

Janet-Laine shares her seasoned approach to acting and auditioning. She will share her understanding of what directors want to see in the audition process. Janet-Laine will lead a discussion and a Q & A on how to maximize your chances of winning your roles.

LIMIT of 4 PARTICIPANTS. Audience limit: 80. See **MASTER CLASS** details on this page for how to be chosen as a participant. You will be required to come with your sides prepared and ready to shoot as if you'd been cast.

KIDS IN THE BIZ: If you're an ACTRA member between 8 and 17 years old, this workshop series is for you! Each section features one workshop for kids only, and one for parents only. ACTRA members aged 8-17 yrs. are encouraged to register.

KIDS IN THE BIZ: If you're a parent of an ACTRA member between 8 and 17 years old, this workshop series is for you! Each section features one workshop for kids only, and one for parents only. Register using your child's membership number.

6 JUST FOR KIDS Being a Child Actor

Kristopher Turner (*Instant Star*) and ACTRA Toronto's Youth Committee talk with child performers on the trials and tribulations of the acting world.



7 JUST FOR PARENTS Managing Your Child's Career

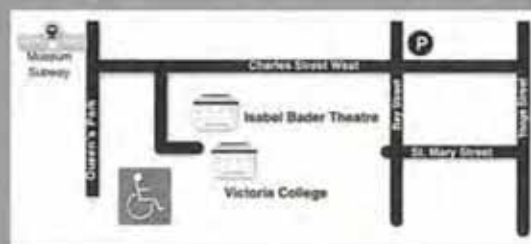
Parents are encouraged to come out to discuss their important role as a parent of a child actor, both on and off a production set. Parents **Jennifer Ansell**, **Anna Donato**, **David Huband**, **Leanne Lochner**, **Henry Rendall**, **Janet Tonello** and agent **Shari Quallenberg** will share their experiences, outline their responsibilities and give you tips on how to best navigate the entertainment business together with your child performer. Moderated by **Eric Murphy**.

Plenary Prizes!

Win a **FREE HEADSHOT SESSION**
with **Monica McKenna** www.mckennaphoto.com

Lunch for two at the **Peartree Restaurant!**
Gift certificate from **Focaccia Restaurant!**

to qualify for the draws you must attend the
afternoon plenary session



Getting there

Victoria College, U of T
Building behind Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W.

11 CO-OP FILM SCREENING Going Co-op!

Come see some great Co-op films and meet the actors who wrote, directed, produced and starred in them. Learn how to make your own Co-op production! Hosted by **Anne Marie Scheffler** - Chair of ACTRA Toronto's Co-op Committee.

* Enter the **Co-op Challenge - LESS CUT, MORE ACTION** ACTRA Toronto's membership challenge to make a Co-op short with a political message. It's a chance to let Ottawa know what you really think.



12 MASTER CLASS with Director John Greyson

Director **John Greyson** will give individual direction to participants in a scene and comment on how to build a professional working relationship with a director on set. Moderated by **Priya Rao**.

LIMIT of 4 PARTICIPANTS. Audience limit: 80. See **MASTER CLASS** details on this page for how to be chosen as a participant. You will be required to come with your sides prepared and ready to shoot as if you'd been cast.



13 JUST FOR KIDS MASTER CLASS Working with Casting Directors

Casting director **Millie Tom** (*Dragma*) and acting coach **Nial Lancaster** speak to youth actors on the basics of the film and television audition process. They will also lead a hands-on workshop on how to best prepare and present yourself at your audition.

Participation will be limited and taken on a first come first served basis.



14 JUST FOR PARENTS What Every Parent Needs To Know

ACTRA Toronto Performers is pleased to offer a two hour course for parents of apprentice and full members. The course will cover the business aspects of being a child actor, audition protocols, an overview of ACTRA's collective agreements and how ACTRA works for you.

*Please register for this parents only workshop using your child's membership number.



Well-produced Canadian drama – shows by and about Canadians – whether they live in a trailer park in Dartmouth, work in a courthouse in downtown Toronto, or a general store in Dog River, Saskatchewan will, given half a chance, find an audience.

I believe when it comes to Canada's cultural industries, and especially film and television, government participation is absolutely critical. It's the difference between being Canadian and simply *not* being American.

For well over 75 years, ever since the CBC was founded in 1929, Canada's governments have been intervening to support and strengthen Canadian culture because we're a very small population in a very large space. So creating the myths that shape and distinguish us from the world's other tribes, communicating the stories that define our identity, isn't an easy task.

Countries such as Spain, Sweden and Australia have a similar population and a flourishing culture, especially in film and television. What's the difference? In three words: proximity to America. Our neighbour to the south has 10 times the number of people we do, and has an incredibly strong culture that is also highly aggressive.

Northrop Frye expressed it best for me: "Identity is local and regional – rooted in the imagination and in works of culture." After all, culture today is what sets one nation apart from another and gives people their unique identity.

Far from being a producer of 'soft' ephemeral jobs, the film and television industries in particular create the very jobs, the 'above-the-neck' jobs, that will secure Canada's economic prosperity in the years to come.

I believe our finest drama will originate from our diverse cultures. One need not look further than the success of *Atanarjuat: The East Runner* and the films of Clement Virgo and Deepa Mehta, just to name a few. And it's not about political correctness. It's about creative smarts and good business.

The Times points out that 600 American colleges and universities now offer programs in film studies. Is it because everyone wants to be a director? Probably! But it's also about power. And I quote: "People endowed with social power and prestige are able to use film and media images to reinforce and assert their power. We need to look to film to grant power to those who are marginalized."

Forty years ago, Ottawa decided to create the predecessor to Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

It had an initial budget of \$10 million a year to fund Canadian films and Canadian talent. Today, in part because of Telefilm's consistent and rising level of support, that industry is worth over \$3 billion to our national economy and plays a significant role in virtually every provincial economy.

Government support – Telefilm support – has made it possible for literally thousands of Canadian writers, directors, producers, actors and technicians to build their careers here at home, to work in their own part of Canada and their mother tongue.

Canadians continue to spend an average of 24 hours a week with the flickering blue screen. It makes sense then, that another of the keys to building the new economic

Selections from
the keynote address at the
June Members' Conference
delivered by

Wayne Clarkson,

Executive Director,
Telefilm Canada
Toronto, June 28,
2005



landscape is strengthening Canadian television, especially English Canadian drama.

These days, it seems the more "Canadian" some programs are, the more they resonate with viewers. On CBC, the two-part epic series *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion* drew two million viewers a night. *Corner Gas*, the comedy series on CTV, drew close to two million viewers each week. And *Degrassi: The Next Generation* regularly attracted more than 600,000 Canadian viewers each week.

Well-produced Canadian drama – shows by and about Canadians – whether they live in a trailer park in Dartmouth, work in a courthouse in downtown Toronto, or a general store in Dog River, Saskatchewan, will, given half a chance, find an audience. Not only in Canada, but beyond our borders as well.

What is clear after forty years of federal government support for Canada's film and television industries is that we are reaching a tipping point. All of those sustained investments have created a multi-billion dollar industry where none existed before.

But in a business that's been described as the ultimate collaborative act, we're going to need continued effort for that tipping point we've reached to *really* tip.

Let's make Canadian cinema and television our highest priority.

Thank you.

Career Tools: **Acting For Sale**

promoting yourself

Learn to think of yourself as a very good product that people will be interested to know about. Think of it as separate from "The modest, humble person your mama raised you to be". It helps take the edge off potential rejection too.

Smile. Be aware of your posture. You and your self confidence are your best ad. Attitude. Attitude. Attitude.

Always think in terms of being a self-starter. Pursue opportunities on your own (with your agent's knowledge). Take classes. Create your own work. Get yourself out there!! Don't wait for the phone to ring or your agent to do it for you. Try volunteering!

Keep your agent informed about any performance you may have coming up and make sure s/he knows about your extra skills, fencing, horseback riding, SCUBA, Karate... whatever.

Prepare your tools and keep them current: headshots, resume, business cards, info material, actor postcards. (Actor postcards have your picture and agent's contact info and a blank space to include a note and addressee.)

Learn when and how to use them appropriately.

Be persistent, stay polite and positive, ask for what you want. At worst, they can only say 'no' but they might say 'yes' if you at least ask. If they do say 'no' ask if there is a better time later and for advice, alternate leads etc.

Be prepared for an opportunity to introduce yourself, your work, or your project. Meet people, make friends, be where there are others doing what you want to do. Learn about what they want and/or need and think about how you can make the situation a win-win for both of you.

**Keep at it,
be persistent and tenacious.**



Learn to think of yourself as a very good product.

Career Tools
Moderator Lynn Mason Green



Writing and Acting in Diverse Voices

By Jean Yoon

As a performer, I regularly audition for and land roles for characters who are not specifically written Asian. They are “everyday Canadians or Americans” as it were; middle-class professionals whose native tongue is clearly English. For me, this means corners, witnesses, clerks and so on. Characters who advance the plot but have no life beyond the job they do. Characters who can be cast “of color”, adding a more diverse and updated look without changing the story or hero’s journey. This decision is usually made by the casting director and/or the director. It’s a valuable and important step towards diversity on the screen.

This step towards diversity in casting, however, must work in conjunction with the development of writers of color, and projects in which the stories of people of color are featured; where our lives and our private hopes and aspirations figure into the story itself. **Jill Golick** spoke of how, in the development of *Metrophia*, she discovered that it was more effective to find the actors first then tailor the stories to their talents and personalities. This is an important step and it was very exciting to learn of *Metrophia*’s willingness to take this measure to ensuring diversity in their project.

Fundamentally, however, the problem of limited opportunities for actors of diverse backgrounds lay in the ineffectiveness of broadcasters and producers to listen to, develop and support projects by diverse writers; particularly in the television industry.

The industry has come a long way since I first started out as an actor, but there’s still a long, long way to go...



Director David Wellington – notes from his master class

1. **Know your lines down cold.** (This allows you room to play around on the day.)
2. **Any script can be instructive.** (Especially bad copy because you have to be inventive in order to be compelling.)
3. **Don't fall into obvious traps that lead to mediocrity.** (Just because a writer envisioned a scene a certain way doesn't mean it's the best way to play it.)
4. **Don't be afraid to talk to the director if you have a problem.** (At the same time be respectful of their time.)
5. **Don't be afraid to take risks.**



Walter Alza (Career Tools panelist) and *Metropolis* writer Jill Golick (Diverse Voices panelist).



Matthew Morris and Mark Leroy.

An amazing time was had by all!



Youth Forum panelists David Reale and Genelle Williams.



Jeff Seymour hosted *Taking Control of Your Career* and led the afternoon acting master class.

See you at the next conference!

LAST CONFERENCE BARBECUE

ACTRA 2005 SUMMER CONFERENCE



Andria Apulmaro with her new ACTRA Toronto T-shirt.

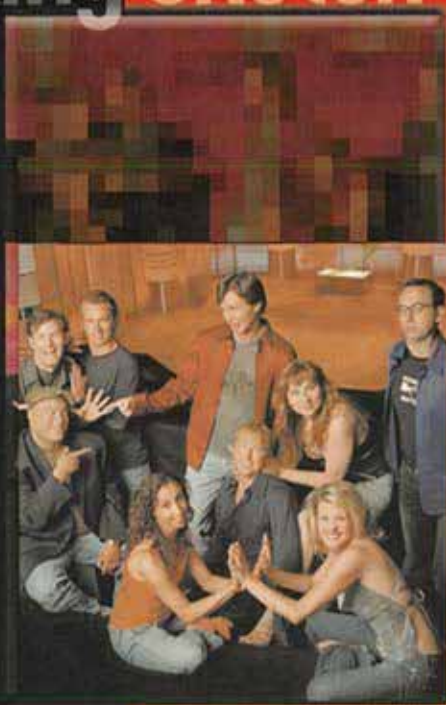
make 'em



Laugh.

By Andrew Moodie

taking sketch comedy seriously at COMEDY INC.



Clockwise from back row centre: Roman Danyle, Aurora Browne, Albert Howell, Jenk Robertson, Ian Sirala, Jen Goodhue, Gavin Stephens, Terry McGarrin and Winston Spear.

I am not going to go on about how Canadians are so funny. Seriously, I'm not. You know the whole "Gee, why are Canadians so funny?" shtick that comes up every now and then in the media? I'm sick of it. Comedy is hard, hard work. It's incredibly technical and the rules are always shifting. And there is no feeling more caustic as that sinking miasma of pain when the audience DOESN'T LAUGH. The horror, oh god the horror. Being funny can really take a chunk out of your soul. So if you see a Canadian being funny, it's because there's a heck of a lot of hard freaking work going on to make them funny.

Or at least that's what I like to believe.





Demos with the Devil featuring (l-r) Terry McGurkin and Ramgo Danylo.



Bad English featuring (l-r) Whiston Spear, Roman Danylo, Aurora Browne and Terry McGurkin.

Is comedy hard work or is there something in the water in this country that just makes us oh so funny?



COMEDY INC.



Celebrity Roast featuring Aurora Browne (as Cheri)



Crazy Kirk featuring Roman Danylo (as Captain Kirk)

To test my hypothesis, let's get the opinions of a few who have some direct experience with the subject at hand; the cast of *Comedy Inc.*, CTV's off-beat sketch comedy show. It has just won the prestigious Gold Medal award at the New York Festival in January, and has also been picked up for broadcast in the States by Spike TV. The show features performers **Terry McGurrin, Winston Spear, Roman Danylo, Aurora Browne, Albert Howell, Gavin Stephens, Jen Goodhue, Ian Sirota** and **Jenn Robertson**. I called up Roman, Terry and Jenn and put this question to them: Is comedy hard work or is there something in the water in this country that just makes us oh so funny?

Jenn was born into a comic dynasty. Well, okay, maybe a comic legacy. Well, okay, her father is Bob Robertson from CBC's *Double Exposure*. She has the blonde Teutonic good looks of that girl in high school. You know, the one who was smart and funny.

She grew up in a house where in the morning, at the breakfast table, her mother told her to be quiet because Daddy is upstairs on the phone playing Queen Elizabeth for the show. So I have to ask if having comedy in her family helped her out in any way. "People think that because you grow up in a comedy house everything is funny all the time. This, of course, isn't true." Her mother is a child psychologist and a Montessori teacher who often proclaims that she is the most serious woman in the world. And even though Jenn lives with the *Ramoli Brothers* (another sketch comedy troupe), and her step-mother is Linda Cullen (also of *Double Exposure*), she assures me that her home life isn't a constant yukfest. Nor does it mean that she was forced into the fam-

ily business. After all, her brother works in construction. "Although construction workers do tell the dirtiest jokes," she says.

Terry McGurrin tells me that his start in comedy happened on the road to a cushy advertising job, "I thought I was going to get into advertising and sell products the world doesn't need." Sure he did the *Canadian Improv Games* as a high school student at Hillcrest in Ottawa. Sure he was the class clown who was asked to stand in the hall on many occasions. But he says he never really intended on becoming a comedic performer. "When I came to Toronto, I studied advertising for two years. I had a 4.0 average. I would have been damn good at corrupting the world."

When not in class, he spent his free time working in a comedy troupe and making money going around and performing at different colleges. At the end of his second year of school, he realized he could either go into advertising and become a copywriter or work in comedy and make... um... more money.

Roman Danylo is the head writer and major domo for *Comedy Inc.* The show began when producer **Sandra Faire** offered him the chance to head up a sketch comedy show while he was down in LA for pilot season. Sandra explains, "I first met Roman Danylo approximately five years ago when he starred in his own *Comedy Now* special for us. I knew then that if I ever did a sketch series, he would be perfect. So he was the starting point for *Comedy Inc.* Our criteria in casting was obviously a) funny, b) chemistry, c) the ability to work within an ensemble and last but not least d) as much as I wanted comedic and acting skills, cast members had to be writers - as in writer/performers."

The very funny *Comedy Inc.* cast

Clockwise from back row centre: Roman Danylo, Aurora Browne, Albert Howell, Jenn Robertson, Ian Sirota, Jen Goodhue, Gavin Stephens, Terry McGurrin and Winston Spear.

How did Roman react? "Hmmm, I get to leave L.A., do sketch comedy, and hang with people I like. Okay, I'm in. I wish all gigs came that easy!" Dude, I couldn't agree more.

Was Roman new to the whole hosting sketch comedy thang? Funny you should ask. As a student he ran a sketch review show every Tuesday at his school's theatre. "We would pack them in. About 400 people every week, and at the time Peter Oldring (another Canadian actor) and I were doing these re-occurring characters called *Studs are us!* and people went crazy for it. Maybe it was just a smattering of applause, but in my head I heard an ovation. It was probably the closest thing to glory I've ever felt." I talk a bit about the struggle to create something funny. Talk to me about the blood, sweat and tears my man! "Well, I've always said that I got into it because it's way easier than math. And I don't care what anyone says, I think drama is much harder. Comedy is essentially about having fun. If you can maintain that, you'll probably be okay." That's soooo not what I wanted to hear.

Jenn first became involved with *Comedy Inc.* when she auditioned for the show. She didn't get a spot in the cast but she did land a position writing for them. She even got a shot at doing a couple of lines in one of her scenes. "My mom always used to say if the acting thing doesn't work out I could be a hostess. And the first skit I'm in, I'm playing a hostess."

I start to wonder what it's like having a self-declared most serious woman in the world/child psychologist as a mother. I mean, if it were me, I'd be doing anything to get that milk sputtering out her nose with a well placed punch line. "My mom is German and she's the kind of person who would watch my dad do something funny and then she'd ask 'Why was that funny?' Only once she'd figured it out, then she'd laugh."

Terry lucked into a spot on the show. By 1996-97 he was working full time in stand up, and it was when one of the producers of *Comedy Inc.* saw him at a club that his life took this fortuitous and yet unusual turn. The producers had originally showed up to see another comic (oh wouldn't that just suck to be the other comic). They saw Terry and they offered him a writer's position. Terry told them that he also wanted to be a performer in the show. The producer at the time, **Milan Curry-Sharples**, told him that the show was cast and that he didn't have a hope in hell. Terry took that to mean "Just send us a demo tape and you're in." Terry sent them a demo tape, and he was in. (Note to self: being gutsy sometimes pays off.)

I asked him about his process. I wanted to hear how he struggles, how he sacrifices, how he bleeds for each precious witticism. "I don't really have any special method. I'll just get an idea. If it's funny I write it down, if it's not, I don't." Again, not quite the answer I wanted Terry. Thanks though.

Okay, how about this: Maybe it's all about the coming together; the clash of ideas that each comic brings; the struggle of titanic egos to create a cohesive comic vision. This is where the real struggle is. Right? I ask



The *Comedy Inc.* ensemble take a

Jenn to give me the dirt. "Season one we learned so much. It was all about 'just be funny!' In season two we started to focus more on the technical side and trying to figure out what the blow line is."

I stop her and ask if she could explain the term blow line. "A blow line is the line at the end of the skit that is the kicker, it sums everything up. It gets the big laugh." Right - the money shot. I get it.

"Now that we're in season three, it's less about making sure I get my skit in so that I can act, and more about: Here's the skit, and whoever is right for it should be in it. Now we know who we are, let's explore."

According to Terry, with other cast members adding in their two cents and making suggestions, this process can become a bit of a free-for-all. When you walk away from the table, you're idea might be taken in a direction that you would never have imagined. Roman explains that this has some major bene-

Ackward Moments featuring (l-r) Ian Sloota, Nikki Payne and Albert Howell.



As you watch the show, you



moment to relax and be...well... funny.

fits but also some down sides. "The toughest part about our process is letting ideas that you think are good, go. If the majority of people think it's not good, you have to let you're baby die."

Terry recalls a time when he was partnered with Gavin Stephens to come up with something for the show. "I remember I had this idea for a skit called *Planet of the Crepes*; about this restaurant where all the waiters are bitter unemployed actors in ape costumes. I went over to Gavin's place with the idea and he loved it, but he was like, 'What if the waiters really were apes?' I hadn't thought of that. So when we did the skit, the waiters were real apes and we destroyed the restaurant. It was totally different from the way I had originally conceived. Also, because of the way we shoot, we didn't get to destroy the set as much as we'd have liked."

Watch the show. Really. These men and women are... well, they're bizarre. Funny,

and bizarre: Aurora Browne as a female, middle eastern, Al Jazeera version of David Letterman; Albert Howell as a classical music radio host getting riddled with bullets; Winston Spears doing the detergent dance guy (the most absurd thing I've ever seen in my entire life); Roman nailing an impersonation of Tom Cruise who shows up at a fancy restaurant with his imaginary invisible girlfriend; and Terry as the head waiter who placates him. (It's funny cause it's true). Or Jen Goodhue as an Iraqi prisoner of war who returns from his daily torture to discover his cell has been remodeled and he's on *While you were out being interrogated!* And one of my personal faves, Jenn Robertson and Gavin Stephens as a Christian improv team in a seedy New York bar. When they ask the audience for a prop and a giant penis is thrown on stage I had that "milk goes out your nose" moment.

As you watch the show, you realize this cast is really strong.

You know how on *Saturday Night Live* they always seem to have a weak link? Where you think: Who the hell thought (insert any one of a number of names here) is funny?" You don't get any of that with this cast. Heck, Albert Howell hosted his own comedy show, *Improv Heaven and Hell*. A show that grew out of a skit he developed called *The Devil's Advocates* - an absolutely inspired comic creation.

Hey, wait a second, it just struck me, maybe Canadians get more experience at creating comedy. Sure it's hard work, but with lots of experience comes lots of craft - meaning you don't have to work so hard at it.

I asked Sandra about their schedule, "We start our pre-production process in February. In March, we meet with the cast, pitch ideas, talk about what we liked and didn't like about the previous season. From there it's full out pitching, writing, re-writing, and table reads until rehearsals in June, though some iffy or difficult sketches are work-shopped beforehand. We go to rehearsals knowing there are still some 20

or 30 sketches to be cut. We also tape approximately 20 or so more sketches than we will use, because inevitably some will not work. In July, we tape 13 *Comedy Inc.* episodes, approximately 120-130 sketches in 10 days."

Woah woah woah. Hold the phone. 120 sketches in 10 days? How do you do that?

"We rehearse from 11:00am to 6:00pm, and tape from 7:00pm to 11:00pm. Pick-ups are taped from 11:00pm to midnight, if necessary. On every level it's a brutal schedule. In the U.S., the entire process would be split into two or three blocks, with at least six weeks between each one. But this is Canada, the land of small budgets, so we work with what we have."

Okay, now I get it. They're lying! They're working their asses off and are too Canadian to admit it!

Jenn assures me that the schedule is manageable and apparently they have the best warm up act in the known universe to help out. **James Cunningham** is a bundle of energy who holds dance contests, giving away cereal to the winner. Yes, he literally opens up a box of cereal and chucks it at the audience and the audience begs for more.

Undermuse
teasing (l-r) Albert Howell, Roman Danyle and Ian Sirota.



realize this cast is really strong.



Isa Salsa featuring (l-r) Winston Spear, Aurora Brown, Jenn Robertson and Jen Goodhue.

I ask her about the difference between the reactions of the television audience and the studio audience. "The studio audience can handle more broad comedy, but you have to keep in mind that the camera picks up so much." Something we are all familiar with. "But really everything just boils down to whether something is funny or not. And isn't that the beauty of art?" she asks.

Terry explains the weirdness of doing sketch comedy with a studio audience by relating the story of the *Johnnie Abortion and Katie Coathanger* skit. (Yes, you heard me. Johnnie Abortion and Katie Coathanger.) "It's this skit about these two puppets of aborted fetuses" he says to me without batting an eyelash. "The first time we do the skit there wasn't much of a reaction. But because it's studio television, and we had to do take after take, the audience were more clued into what was going to happen next and the initial shock gave way and they laughed."

People are laughing at *Comedy Inc.* Big time. So much so that an American broadcaster has picked up the show. Yes you heard me, **Spike TV** is buying a Canadian show. I ask Sandra how she feels about that.

"Great. Especially since Spike TV loves and celebrates our Canadian-ness. In fact, they market *Comedy Inc.* as the third wave of Canadian comedy after *Second City* and *Kids In the Hall*. In the greater scheme of things, it's a vote of confidence for all Canadian comedy productions."

I ask Terry if he's thinking about what this could mean for his career and if he'd go south. He explains that he has no plans to leave Canada at the moment but, "If someone offered me a part, I'd take it. I'd go down with all my film and television ideas - Lord knows I have a lot of film and TV ideas - but only if someone made an offer. And [the show getting picked up] doesn't hurt if I decide to go down to the US. It's a feather in your cap. And it's nice to see an American broadcaster buying a Canadian show for a change."

Jenn is also somewhat philosophical about using this opportunity. "You want to go to the US because there's so much to choose from down there." And Canadians kick ass, right? "Yes, and Canadians kick ass down there and do very well."

And what does Roman think? "Winning the award and getting picked up was great. I'm

a pessimist so I keep bracing myself for bad reactions, but we seem to keep getting good reviews. And a U.S. sale? That's fantastic. I'm the kinda guy who is amazed that at the end of the day I'm not fired. So to win an award just makes me giddy, for about an hour, and then I go back to thinking I'm gonna get fired." Ah, and there's that Canadian humility.

I ask Jenn about *Comedy Inc.*'s trajectory. Now that they've got a bigger audience, is there a strategy? She says simply, "Cross your fingers, and tell funny jokes." I laugh and say, I think that's the blow line. She says, "Yeah. I think it is."



Comedy Inc. can be seen on CTV and The Comedy Network - check your local listings.



AFBS and ACTRA: What's In a Name?

By Karl Pruner, President ACTRA Toronto

The ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society (AFBS) is the insurance and retirement plans' supplier for ACTRA. AFBS was separately incorporated in 1975 to supply insurance and retirement benefits to ACTRA members. Those benefits are paid by contributions made by engagers, and deductions from the earnings of ACTRA members and non-members which monies are required to be made according to the collective agreements negotiated by ACTRA.

The current Board of Governors of the AFBS has recently proposed a "re-branding initiative," including a name change, partly because of a belief that this might allow them to attract and develop a wider "book" of business, i.e. clients outside of ACTRA and the WGC (the founding guilds of AFBS). Your National Council is convinced that such a move is neither desirable nor necessary and has officially expressed this view at the AFBS Annual General Meeting on May 30, 2005. When you consider that we represent more than ninety percent of the AFBS client base, it is difficult to see how "re-branding" or changing the name of AFBS would have any significant effect on the fundamental value that AFBS offers to prospective clients. It is more than a little disturbing to discover that identification with ACTRA has come to be regarded by the AFBS Board of Governors as a liability.

We believe that the provision of insurance and retirement benefits is a core value of union membership, that AFBS was created to provide these services to us, the members of ACTRA, and that AFBS must be able to satisfy us that its plans and policies represent the best value proposition in the market. ACTRA is neither a fund management company nor an insurance company and, in seeking to provide insurance and retirement benefits, has chosen to contract these services out to AFBS. This fulfills one of ACTRA's key obligations to the membership – to provide us with the best possible insurance and retirement benefits available. AFBS was created precisely to provide those services. ACTRA continues to be actively involved in AFBS affairs precisely because that is what ACTRA is supposed to do – represent its members.

ACTRA is not separate from its membership. It is, in fact, governed directly and democratically by the members. It is not surprising then, that ACTRA members frequently bring their concerns about AFBS matters to ACTRA rather than to AFBS (where, incidentally, ACTRA members make up less than half of the Board.) If AFBS has decided to "outgrow" us and become a stand-alone all-purpose insurer with a diversified client base, then it will have to line up with all the other insurance companies and fund managers and demonstrate to us that it offers ACTRA members the best plans and policies on the market. In other words, an inde-

pendent AFBS ought to be subject to market discipline with the attendant periodic review and transparent tender process.

It is more than a little disturbing to discover that identification with ACTRA has come to be regarded by the AFBS Board of Governors as a liability.

An alternative to such a brave new world involves a meaningful dialogue based on a clear understanding of our relationship. The opportunity for just this kind of discussion exists in the current service contract negotiations being undertaken by ACTRA and AFBS. People and organizations and bureaucracies being what they are, it would be very surprising if these negotiations did not involve some stepping on toes and howls of protest. But, if we all keep our heads and keep coming back to first principles, it will all be worth it. At the end of the day, ACTRA members will get the best insurance and retirement plan possible because we want it and we deserve it. AFBS will realize that when AFBS members, who are also ACTRA members, organize to express themselves they become...ACTRA... and it's okay to listen to what we have to say. **What a surprise.**

AFBS and ACTRA

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RICH AND FAMOUS?

Status of the Artist continued from page 11

These are ACTRA's main recommendations:

- 1) Recognition of the importance of art and artists to communities and to society.
- 2) Recognition of the necessity to provide meaningful social and economic support to individual artists.
- 3) Legally enforceable regulations protecting child performers regarding safety, education, overtime, rest, nutrition, and protection of earnings.
- 4) Tax averaging for artists: We need tax adjustments for copyright and residual income so that one-time creative earnings aren't taxed as if they were annual income.
- 5) Recognition of the contribution of older artists to the cultural life of our province and measures to protect their income and housing.
- 6) Workforce training resources for artists in career transition.
- 7) Access to minimum labour standards for all artists and performers beginning with access to overtime pay for all performers, including background performers.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF STATUS OF THE ARTIST IN CANADA

FEDERAL ACTION:

1982 - Applebaum-Hébert Report on Federal Cultural Policy Review, following extensive hearings and consultations, concluded that in 30 years, despite their overwhelming contribution to Canadian life, artists' living conditions remain virtually unchanged: "the income of many, if not most, of these artists classifies them as highly-specialized, working poor."

1990 - Bill C-7, Status of the Artist Act, was first introduced and in 1992 passed by the federal parliament. The Act covers the formation of an Advisory Council and collective bargaining within federal jurisdiction.

1992 - Ontario's NDP government does a study on SOA, but does not enact anything. *ACTRA Toronto participated in this process.*

1995 - CAPPRT (Canadian Artists and Producers Professional Relations Tribunal) was established to administer professional relations provisions of the Act. CAPPRT has dealt with numerous certifications and collective bargaining issues since then.

Note: federal taxes, pensions and E.I. are in the federal jurisdiction and cannot be directly addressed by this provincial legislation. However, these recommendations are precedent setting and a first step towards creating change in the federal jurisdiction in the future.

The Status of the Artists Subcommittee has promised to issue a report by year's end. Until they do, ACTRA Toronto will strive to make sure that this report reflects our recommendations. Please help us. Write to your MPP and to the Ontario Ministry of Culture. Go to ACTRA Toronto's website and learn more about this important legislation. **Help that sweet old woman, her fellow artists, and yourself.**

PROVINCIAL ACTION:

1987 - Quebec becomes the first province to develop status legislation. In response to considerable pressure from the artistic community, the Quebec government enacted **Bill 90** dealing with collective bargaining for performing artists, and **Bill 78 (1988)** covering visual and literary artists. In 2004, the Quebec government is expected to amend the Quebec Acts.

2002 - Saskatchewan introduces **Bill 73 - Status of the Artist Act** described as "enabling legislation". It established an advisory committee to consider further status measures. They are not there yet, but they are on the road.

2004 - Ontario - The Minister's Advisory Council for Arts and Culture establishes a **Status of the Artist Sub-Committee** to study the issue. The sub-committee is responsible for seeking stakeholders' views on potential proposals to address the Status of the Artist in Ontario, and for developing a **Report on the Status of the Artist in Ontario in the 21st Century** for the Minister of Culture. The SOA Subcommittee website is: www.maccac.on.ca

The average yearly earnings of artists in Ontario is \$26,800.

This puts us in the lowest third of all occupational groups. Other occupations with similar earnings include purchasing and inventory clerks, typesetters, accounting clerks and restaurant and food managers.

The average yearly "salary" for actors is \$15,005.

That's 46% less than the average working Canadian. \$18,000 is the cut-off point for defining a low income urban Ontarian.

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

continued from page 13



CO: What feeds your work?

MR: What always inspires me and makes me realize why I love acting is seeing other films, and seeing a performance that's so well done; it makes me want to do something that moves me in that way or will move somebody else in that way.

KM: I write a lot and I play the guitar, I write songs. It clears the cobwebs of my mind. It's something I'll do before going to set to sort of align myself. I do yoga. I run.

CO: How do you feel about the Canadian scene? Do you feel the need to spread your wings south of the border?

MR: I wouldn't judge a script by whether it's done in the U.S. or Canada. If it's a good script and it's got a good part and it's possible for me to do it, I would want to do it.

CO: Kari, you're down in LA right now...

KM: I'm working on a series [*Invasion*] and it just astounds me how exponentially huge the industry is here. It's everywhere. In Toronto, when someone asks you what you do and you say 'I'm an actor', they say 'oh, really...how interesting.' In LA, they kind of roll their eyes, 'oh, yeah...'

CO: Kari, there's a sign in Spalding, Saskatchewan that says, "Welcome to the birth place of Kari Matchett". How do you feel about that?

KM: That is like a childhood dream come true. I mean, who gets that? Astronauts? I am so wildly humbled by the fact that they did that. At the unveiling I kept thinking, "how did I get to be so lucky?" It felt like I was stepping into space. I love it and I can't believe that they wanted to do it.

CO: Mark, who are Zoey, Laila and Trixie?

MR: I have sugar-gliders: Flying squirrels from Australia. They're really fun, they're my good friends, my support system.

KM: I love flying squirrels.

MR: You do? I should introduce you to them sometime, they're really great.

CAN'T GET ENOUGH PERFORMERS?

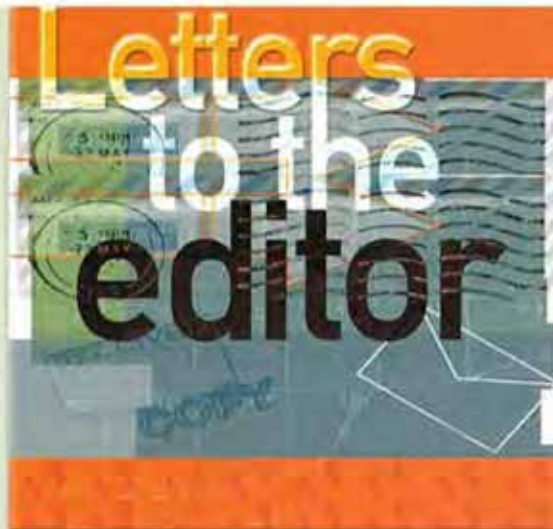


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Dear Editor: USW Alliance

Our President's June Conference report was upbeat and fact-filled. I admire Council's enthusiasm, but I find their rosy characterization of the ACTRA-Steel Alliance concerning. In my view, this hasty, formal ACTRA/USW agreement was ill-advised.

Some disclaimers: I have much respect for United Steel Workers (USW) and its members, many who've served ACTRA well for years, and I have long advocated alliances with like-minded organizations. My criticism is not so much a concern for the present, but for our blatant unconcern for the past.

In 1993, I initiated an informal, highly successful alliance with Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). Among other benefits, it proved critical in stopping a Teamsters' move on Toronto's jurisdiction. Without CAW's intervention, Teamsters, having captured UBCP, might have continued increasing their grip on Canada's national film industry.

How odd, then, to learn that a similar 'perceived' jurisdictional threat should result in allying with a different, untried, foreign-based entity (USW), rather than one already extant, proven successful and Canadian! Additionally, consider that CAW immediately, unequivocally stood by us. When then requested, USW did not!

Rectifiable? Yes. Council should move immediately to reactivate that historical relationship with our trusted friends, the CAW. "...those who cannot remember their past..."

Dan MacDonald, former ACTRA Toronto President

**editor's note:
for more on the ACTRA/USW Alliance go to page 7.*



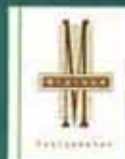
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