

The magazine from ACTRA Toronto

Volume 17 • Issue 1 • Spring 2008

# performers

A photograph of actor Eric Peterson, an older man with glasses, smiling broadly. He is wearing a dark sweater and is seated in a wooden chair. He is holding a small, golden statuette of a female figure in his right hand. His left hand is resting on his chin. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## Eric Peterson

My life as a  
Canadian actor

Display until June 2008 \$4.60



### INSIDE:

**Don McKellar** talks about bringing *Blindness* to Toronto pg. 4

2008 ACTRA Awards in Toronto nominees pg. 12

The TIPping point: surviving low budget filmmaking pg. 16



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## Performers

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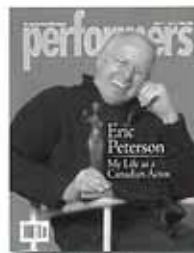
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### JOIN THE TEAM

If you're an ACTRA Toronto member or apprentice and want to write an article, contribute original artwork or photos, we'd love to hear from you. Send an email to [editor@actratontoronto.com](mailto:editor@actratontoronto.com).



### THE NEXT COPY DEADLINE IS April 22, 2008

The magazine invites members to submit notices of births, marriages, obituaries and letters to the editor. Article submissions must be sent via email ([editor@actratontoronto.com](mailto:editor@actratontoronto.com)). We reserve the right to edit or omit any material for length, style, content or possible legal ramifications.

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On the cover: Eric Peterson  
photographed by Jag Gundu.



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Eric Peterson  
photographed by Jag Gundu





# President's Message



## United we bargain. Divided we beg.

**Question.** What do: the Canada Pension Plan, overtime, holiday pay, student loans, universal health care, and legislation enshrining health and safety practices in the workplace all have in common with:

- our National Commercial Agreement,
- our Independent Production Agreement, and
- the ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society?

**Answer.** Two things.

First, we tend to take all of them for granted. Second, every single one of these gains was conceived of, fought for and won by people in unions. That's what unions do.

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada recently recognized collective bargaining as a fundamental right, guaranteed by the Charter of Rights. That recognition makes some cool things possible.

It makes it possible to take on multi-national corporations, in fully globalized industries, as ACTRA did in our strike and as the Writers' Guild of America is doing even as I write this.

It makes it possible for writers, and directors and performers to imagine a future in which we will continue to receive a share in the revenues generated by our work. Without unions and union activism, there is no such future.

It makes it possible for writers and directors and performers to imagine a future in which we can actually retire with dignity, because we have negotiated engager contributions to our retirement funds and our insurance plan.

It makes it possible for younger performers to dream of a career instead of a handful of dead-end jobs.

The Court's recognition of the right to union membership makes all these things possible because unions fight for all these things.

### And fight for them we shall.

We have a new Council at ACTRA Toronto and they are hard at work shaping the Operating Plan for 2008 and establishing priorities for the coming year. With a high Canadian dollar, a multitude of competing American film and television production tax incentives, and the battle over the Internet, the fate of the service production sector is in doubt. At home, ACTRA will have to fight hard for content and expenditure requirements in the coming broadcast

licence renewal hearings before the CRTC, at the same time as we carry on talks with the commercial engagers on the shape of the next National Commercial Agreement.

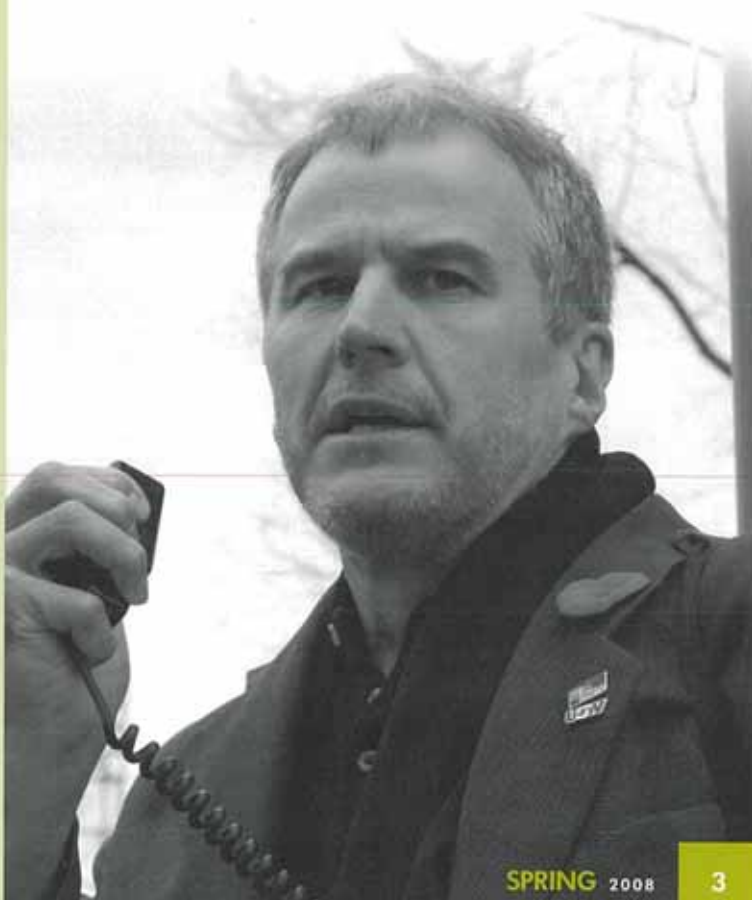
As I write this, the Ontario government has just announced an increase to our own provincial film and television production incentives – a real victory and the result of two years work by ACTRA Toronto and our coalition partners in FilmOntario – and there is evidence that the province is planning a further significant investment in our industry in the near future.

While that is great news, it must be pointed out that the regional tax incentive was also increased, meaning that the Ontario government is still paying people to shoot anywhere but in Toronto.

And so it goes. Clouds and silver linings. Variable weather with alternating periods of greed, integrity, duplicity, conniving, bickering, backbiting, lobbying, litigating, posturing, pleading and bargaining, bargaining, bargaining. Adrift on an ocean of contradictory voices and competing interests is our little boat, the good ship ACTRA Toronto. Bless her and all who sail on her.

**In solidarity,**

**President  
ACTRA Toronto Performers**



Karl Pruner addresses the crowd, at a recent ACTRA demonstration in Ottawa, demanding more Canadian-made programming.  
Photo: Chris Faulner

# Blindness

The world famous book comes to life on the streets of Toronto

by Chris Owens

A man sits behind the wheel of his car at a traffic light. He waits while a group of pedestrians pass in front of him. When the light changes to green the cars on either side of him drive through the intersection. His car does not move. There is the sound of impatient horns. Another driver approaches the car. The man inside is shouting something. When his door is opened the words he is shouting become clear. "I am blind."

This is the opening image of *Blindness* by the great Portuguese writer, **José Saramago**. It is the story of an epidemic wave of blindness that strikes an entire city and the societal breakdown that follows. I read the book several years ago and it was so powerful that many of the scenes have stayed with me.

When actor, writer and fellow Toronto member **Don McKellar** picked up *Blindness* he felt it would make a good movie after reading the first page. Even though he tends to read novels to escape from film, this one caught his attention right away. "By the end of the first chapter I was thinking even if this goes way off track I could still make a movie of this. When I finished the book I thought well, there are huge challenges here but I think that was part of the draw to me. I respond to that kind of thing."

The first challenge was to convince Nobel Prize winning author José Saramago to allow his novel to be made into a

film. He had been approached many times before and was not very receptive to the idea. "He said no but we (McKellar and producer Niv Fichman) were persistent. We sent over films that I'd written plus a few others to show him what we were interested in," McKellar explains. Eventually, Saramago's agent responded with an invitation.

Though he was doing a Nobel Prize tour, the author was willing to meet with them on one of two days at his home in the Canary Islands. "I was in Australia at the time and so I had to fly around to the other side of the world," says McKellar. "We met him in the Canary Islands and I think that was the first challenge we conquered. After that I think the main thing was that he just trusted us. I remember about half-way through he said 'If I go with this, one of the reasons will be because you're Canadian.'" Saramago had been angered by the approach of American studios that offered more and more money without any guarantees about who would direct, write or star in the film.

Saramago responded positively to the guarantee that McKellar and Fichman would keep artistic control of the project and not relinquish it in exchange for more money.

What was the Portuguese author like? "There was an article in the *New York Times Magazine* about a month ago about how stubborn and difficult he is, but that's not what we found. Saramago was sort of intimidating when we first met



*"If I go with this, one of the reasons will be because you're Canadian."* — Nobel Prize winning author José Saramago

Susan Coyne and Martha Burns share a moment together.

Photo: Kim Wozniak © Phantasm Media (Blindness) Inc.



Maury Chaykin, as the accountant, struggles to survive in *Blindness*.

Photo: Kim Wozniak © Phantasm Media (Blindness) Inc.





Don McKellar, in the role of the thief, feels his way along some unfamiliar surroundings. Photo: Ken Worrner © Rhombus Media (Blindness) Inc.

him but, I just felt it was his priorities. They're pretty clear," says McKellar.

The pair have met with the author a number of times since then and he has displayed a witty, sly sense of humor and given his blessing to the project. He insisted that he have nothing to do with writing the script and that the story take place, as it does in the book, in an unnamed, unrecognizable city. In order to keep the city non-specific the film had to be shot in an international location with a high multi-cultural content. The chosen cities were Toronto and San Paulo.

When the screenplay was finished the next task was to find the right director. McKellar had a very short list of dream directors for the project and at the top of the list was Portuguese filmmaker Fernando Meirelles (*The Constant Gardener*, *City of God*). Meirelles liked the script and had previously tried to acquire the rights to the book before McKellar. The eager Canadians had their director.

*Blindness* has remained a timely story. McKellar says, "When the book was published my interpretation, along with a lot of other people, was that it was a sort of summary of some of the worst events of the 20th century. It evoked diseases and AIDS and Nazism and other nightmares. After the Katrina disaster I had so many people call me and say, 'Oh my God it's actually happening, it's happening in that stadium.'"

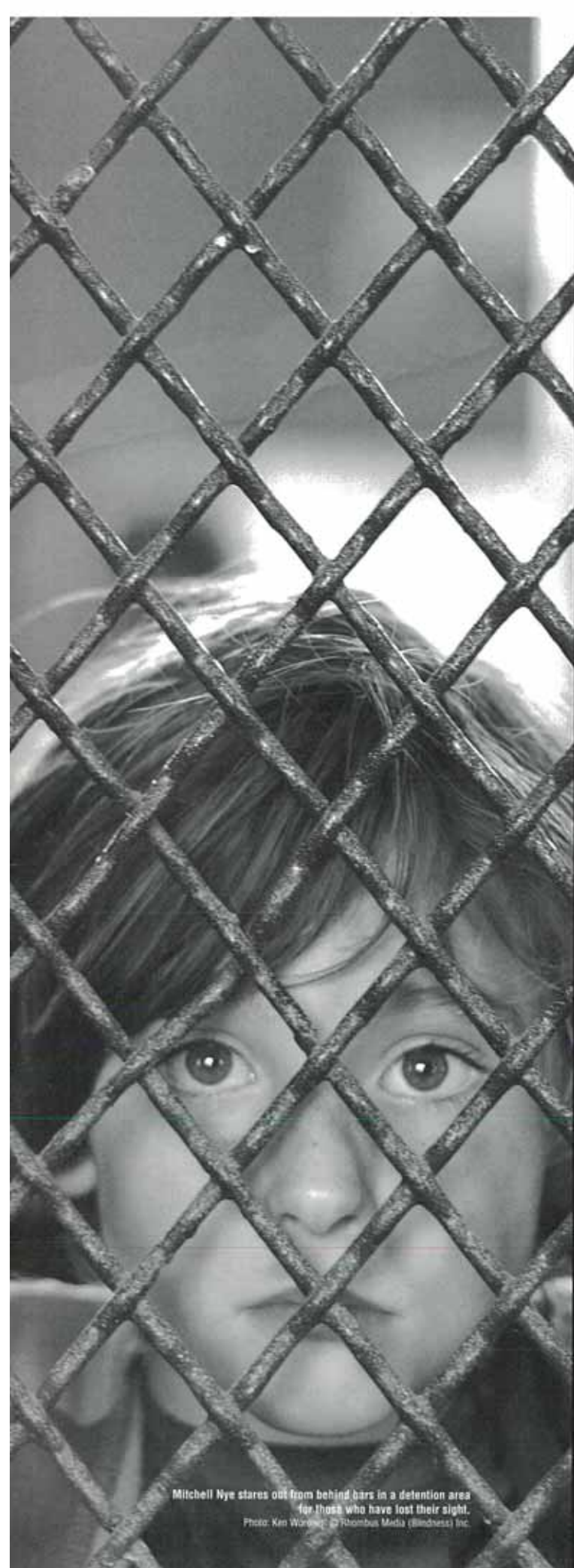
For the actors, the challenge was to learn how to appear suddenly blind. To make sure all the performers were on the same page, acting exercises and workshops were incorporated into rehearsal. The performers worked for several weeks through a multitude of difficult tasks. "I'd like to say," McKellar adds "that ACTRA was incredibly supportive of this, the extra workshops and in helping to explain to agents what was going on and that it was legitimate."

Much of the filming took place in blind camps, where the afflicted were segregated from those who had not yet lost their sight. The camps are filled with squalor and violence. McKellar thought that it was going to be a hellish shoot and was prepared to accept that, but the griping and complaining never materialized. Instead he found that the actors bonded together and used their humor and sense of camaraderie to get through.

McKellar loves the fact that it took Canadians to make *Blindness* into a film. "In many ways it's really an example of what Canada can do. Not just because of the talent here but it also shows the model of where Canada can fit and how it can be a positive thing in an international co-production. That Canadian-ness was a real asset for us."



**Chris Owens** is editor of *Performers* magazine. His recent credits include *The Incredible Hulk* and George Walker's *The Weight*. He plays hockey in Toronto.



Mitchell Nye stares out from behind bars in a detention area for those who have lost their sight.  
Photo: Ken Worden © Rhombus Media (Blindness) Inc.

## Playing in the mud

Chris Owens talks with Amanda Hiebert about her time on the set of *Blindness*.



**CO:** Did you have to act blind in the audition?

**AH:** Yes. I had to walk up to a table and pour myself a glass of water and drink it. I got to the table and I was really bad at being blind so I decided to forget pouring the water and drank out of the pitcher.

**CO:** I understand you did a lot of rehearsal workshops. What was that like?

**AH:** It was really, really frustrating and very difficult. We trained for about two weeks. The second week, they brought us in and before we even got to the ward we had to put blindfolds on. They led us to where our camp would be and then they led us back outside and told us to go find it again. I learned a lot about the sort of deconstruction that takes place because everyone wanted to be a leader, nobody was listening to each other. By the time we finally got there somebody had to go to the washroom and it took us another hour to find it. It was so exhausting having to use your other senses but also dealing with the rest of the people. It was funny because there were actors that I revere who were like, 'I quit, I quit the movie' (laughs). It was great but it was hard.

**CO:** A unique experience.

**AH:** Afterwards you kind of realized that you're part of something great. It was like in taking the blindfolds off that we had to learn how to see. It was good for us because we had to be so intimate and get to know each other before we actually went to camera. I remember coming home and saying to my partner, it's like you're getting paid to play in the mud and at the end of the day you can say, 'I'm sticky and I'm stinky but I just got paid to play in the mud.' How wonderful is that!

**CO:** What was the atmosphere like on set?

**AH:** Between the really awkward, really difficult scenes, Fernando (Meirelles), the director, had such a great sense of humor and almost a childishness about him, so eager and excited. Everyone kind of kept it light so that when we had to go through this stuff we could do it. The other thing which he really encouraged was camaraderie. He'd make the point that even when people are in their most desperate situations, they laugh to make it bearable.

**CO:** Did you feel well taken care of?

**AH:** Everything was triple checked and the movie was just such a sacred thing. I think everybody knew how special it was so they jumped in head first. There was really no resistance and there was a great deal of respect. Sometimes it was like having a bucket of keys and trying to find which one goes in the lock. We were given the freedom and the time and the patience to go for it. It was great to watch the international cast come in and work with the Canadians. They were blown away just by the way we handled ourselves. I was very moved by a lot of the Canadians' work.

# An interview with Eric Peterson

by Sonja Smits

Sonja Smits interviews her friend and *Street Legal* co-star **Eric Peterson**, ACTRA Toronto's 2008 Award of Excellence winner, about the realities of life as a Canadian actor.

**SS:** So are you feeling a little nervous being interviewed by your co-star who knows everything about the old days, Eric?

**EP:** I'm a little nervous about this award actually.

**SS:** The ACTRA Award of Excellence, that's pretty amazing.

**EP:** I'm terribly awed by it. I mean you know as well as I do that we're a rivalrous lot.

**SS:** Remember back a number of years ago I said, 'You've got to get more involved with the union?' You've always been a very socially conscious person – you've got a good brain, you're quite passionate about things, but you were still sort of reluctant for a little while it seems. What changes happened in you that prompted you to get a lot more involved?

**EP:** The strike last year. The union was lining up their strategy for this upcoming strike, which they were pretty sure was going to happen. They called me and asked if I'd be available to speak. ACTRA had never gone on strike before and I felt that, like me, the membership as a whole had had enough, especially of regularly being offered scale as if you'd just begun in the business. I know we don't have a star system, but there is experience, in many cases years of experience, that actors have but nobody was being paid for it.

**SS:** There are stars, but they are not riding in the limos.

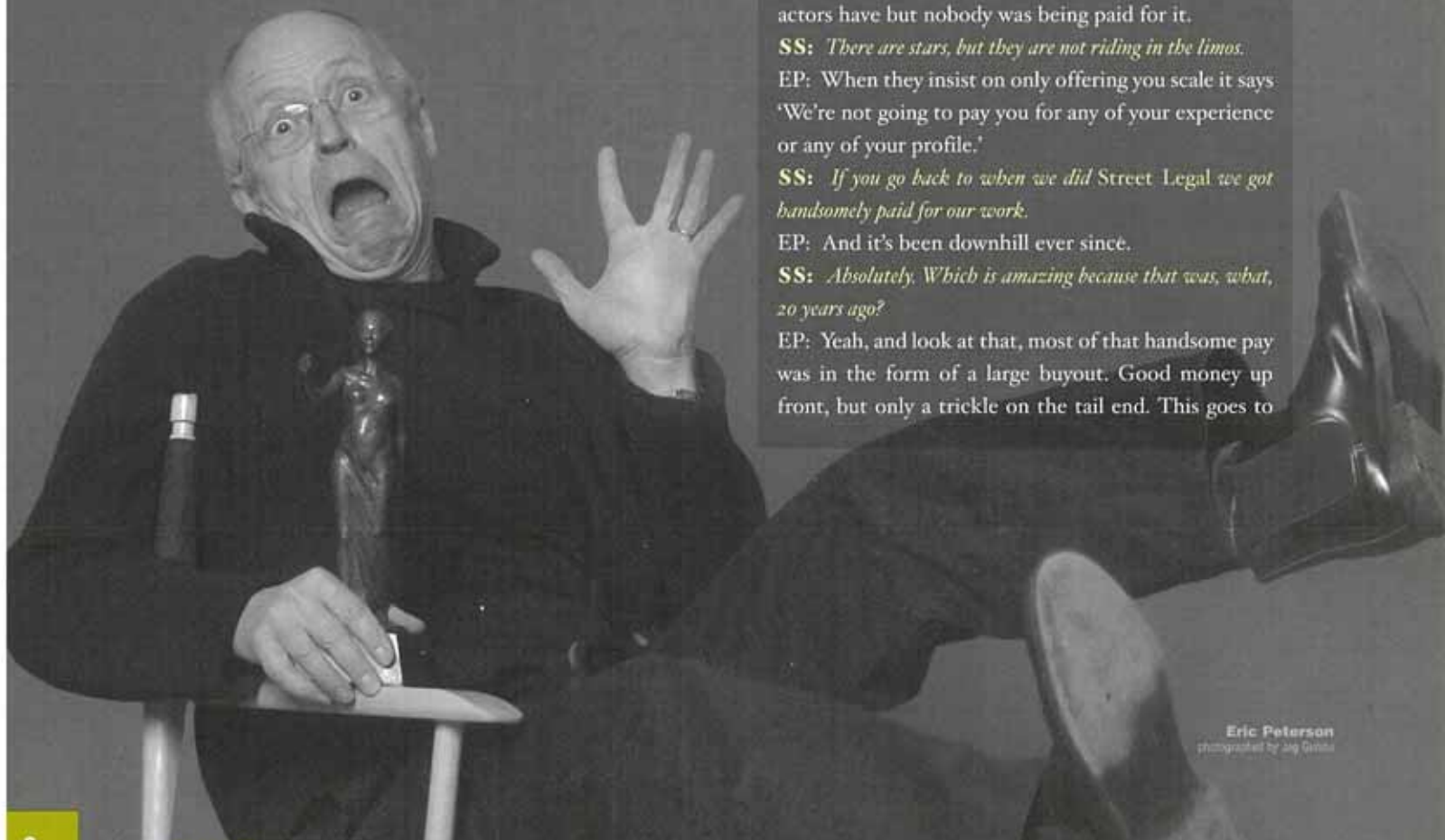
**EP:** When they insist on only offering you scale it says 'We're not going to pay you for any of your experience or any of your profile.'

**SS:** If you go back to when we did *Street Legal* we got handsomely paid for our work.

**EP:** And it's been downhill ever since.

**SS:** Absolutely. Which is amazing because that was, what, 20 years ago?

**EP:** Yeah, and look at that, most of that handsome pay was in the form of a large buyout. Good money up front, but only a trickle on the tail end. This goes to



Eric Peterson  
photographed by Jig Givins

the real issues of the strike, new media and residual payments. The producer's position is 'we need business flexibility here, so therefore we need all rights in perpetuity.' Residual payments are the only thing that allows you to have a career in this business.

**SS:** *Why do you say that?*

EP: If you're only getting paid for the day you work, how do you live between that day and the next day that you work? Not to mention that the actors make a unique investment of their talent and abilities, which are a definite factor in the value-added afterlife of the product, and deserve a return on any profits that the project generates.

**SS:** *We did Street Legal together, this hit TV show that a million people a week were watching. You did the show for eight seasons. Then you were a guest on Traders and you were saying, 'Here we are doing this and I'm back in line. Whatever I've done is not taken into account.' Do you still feel the same as when you made the guest spot on Traders, that your equity as a recognizable person was lost and were you just back in line?*

EP: Oh absolutely. A large part of the Canadian film and television industry is about servicing the needs of the American industry. In the negotiations with the producers there were times when Canadian producers were putting forward the notion that the indigenous industry was the one that wasn't of any importance. The real value was servicing the American industry and that was our star system.

**SS:** *When you first went to England, at the beginning of your career you didn't have a lot of luck there and did stage management work and stage carpentry. Why didn't you give up at that point? What made you think you could still be an actor?*

EP: Well, I still hadn't had a try at it.

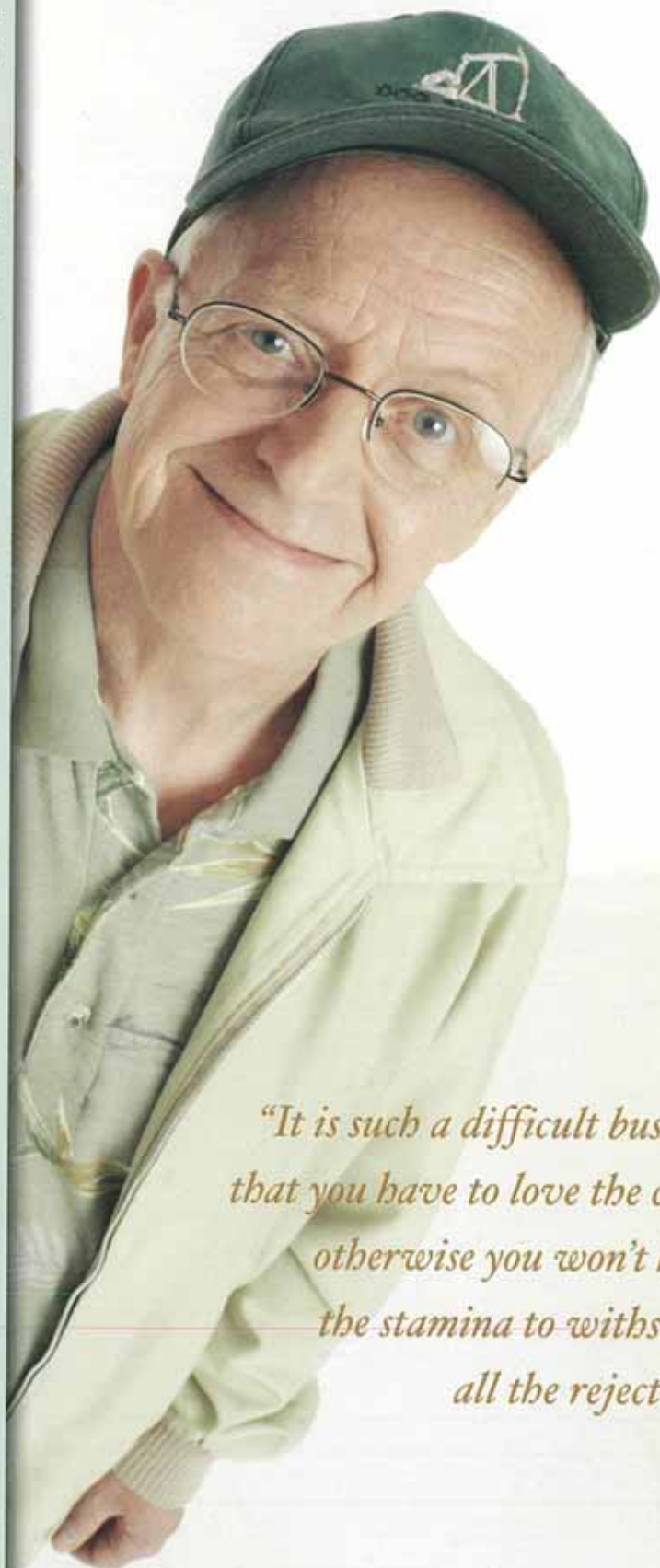
**SS:** *So you had enough faith in yourself then?*

EP: I was educating myself in the theatre. Early on in my career I saw myself as a stage actor. There was some television and film work then, but nothing like there is today. Later, with Theatre Passe Muraille, I discovered the thrill and connection of a more nationalistic theatre; our own stories told in our own ways. Canadian theatre; the cultural equation of Canadians talking to other Canadians about who we were as a people. It was characteristic of that time, not only in culture, but in the economy, in politics, in sports and in society.

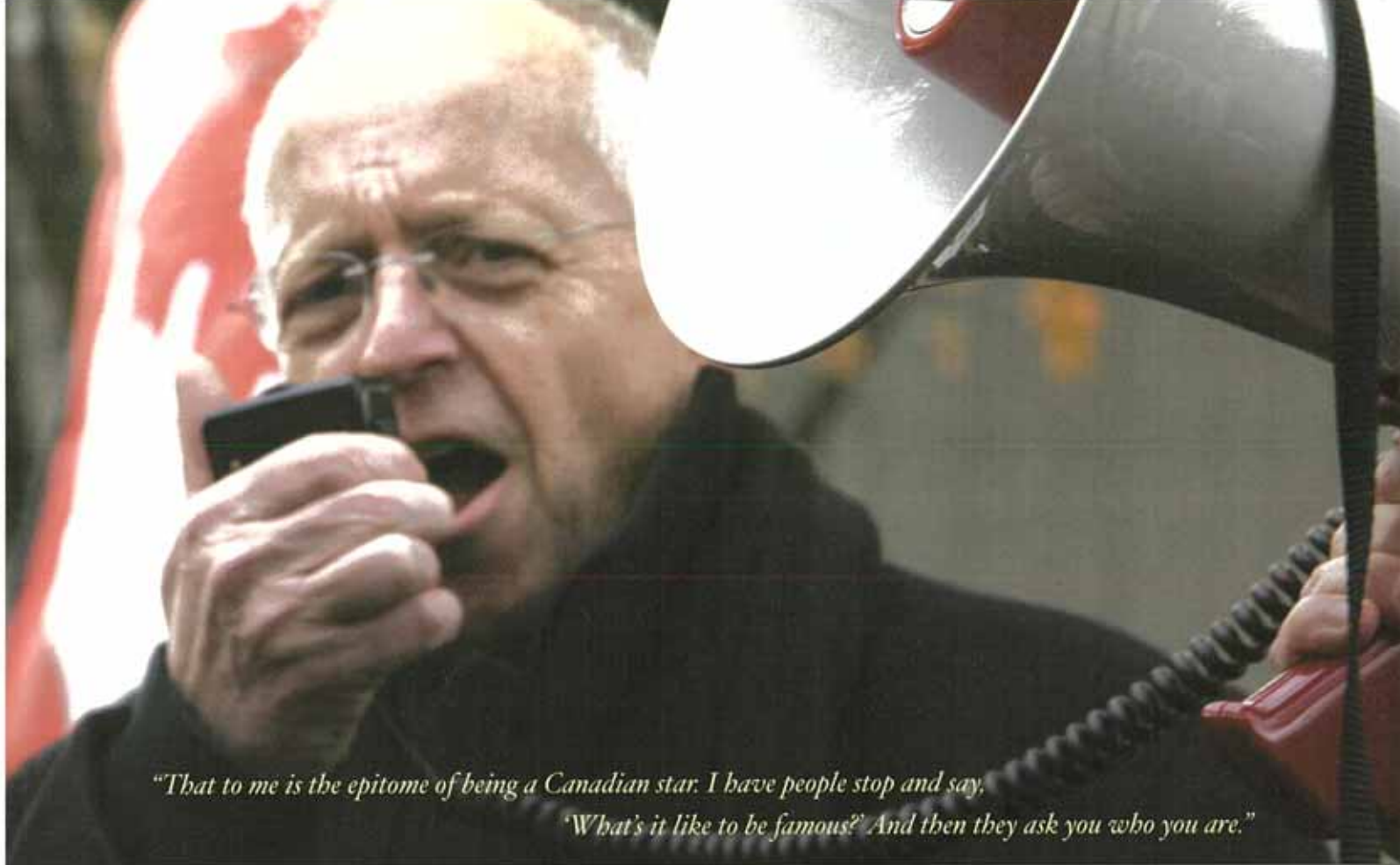
**SS:** *And a very optimistic outlook.*

EP: Yes, we thought we were building a Canadian film and television industry here. Today I find the opposite has come to pass. Any way one looks at it there is less Canadian dramatic production now than there was then, and ironically, more American work. The Canadian

Eric takes on the role of Oscar Leroy, Dog River's resident curmudgeon on *Corner Gas*.  
Photo courtesy The Comedy Network



*"It is such a difficult business that you have to love the craft, otherwise you won't have the stamina to withstand all the rejection."*



*"That to me is the epitome of being a Canadian star. I have people stop and say, 'What's it like to be famous?' And then they ask you who you are."*

Canadian programming in distress, Eric rallies the troops at ACTRA's recent CAB demonstration. Photo: Chris Faulkner.

audience is swamped by the American cultural product. I read somewhere that the Canadian viewer is the only audience, outside of the United States, that doesn't regard American programming as foreign. There is far less Canadian production now than there was back in the time of *Street Legal*. A situation I'm not happy with.

**SS:** *Don't you think what's happening currently in our industry is like a hijacking of the airwaves?*

EP: It is. You could argue under the *Broadcast Act*, as it stands, that it definitely is. I feel I've been so fortunate, I have been able to be in television shows that Canadians watched in numbers – big numbers – and for me that's all I want in life. I don't care if one American sees it. I just want Canadians to see it and go 'Wow, do I ever like that! What a great laugh!' But primarily, I care desperately that Canadians see our work. One of my darker thoughts, at three o'clock in the morning, is that we have an audience here that actually doesn't want to see Canadian work. Their preferred route for national expression within television and film is to see a Canadian go and make it in the American system and be a big star.

**SS:** *So your (daughter) Molly is at Concordia, studying theatre? How do you feel about your offspring going off to become an actor herself?*

EP: Her younger sister Katie wants to act too. It's a very hard way to make a living. But they know that. They've been living with a guy doing it.

**SS:** *But she's obviously seen the pleasure that you get out of it, otherwise she wouldn't be doing it.*

EP: They need to love to do it and if they love to do it, then that's all that matters. I can't make them love acting. And if they love to do it, I can't dissuade them from taking it up.

**SS:** *Nor would I.*

EP: My only argument is that it is such a difficult business that that you have to love the craft, otherwise you won't have the stamina to withstand all the rejection, all the ups and downs of it. You have to tell yourself, 'I need this like I need water.'

**SS:** *It's actually shocking that more and more little kids want to be actors. It's not a way to get rich.*

EP: No. If you'd only read *People* magazine or watched all these shows on television you'd go, 'Yeah, it looks easy.' But

# Eric Peterson

*selected credits*



**Above:**  
Eric as Old King Cole on *Sesame Park*.  
Photo courtesy Sesame Workshop and CBC Still Photo Collection



**At left:**  
Eric in his role as the iconic Canadian World War I flying ace, Billy Bishop.  
Photo courtesy CBC Still Photo Collection

nobody ever talks about the bone shattering fear of the next project or shooting under challenging conditions, nobody ever talks about the reality of the life they lead.

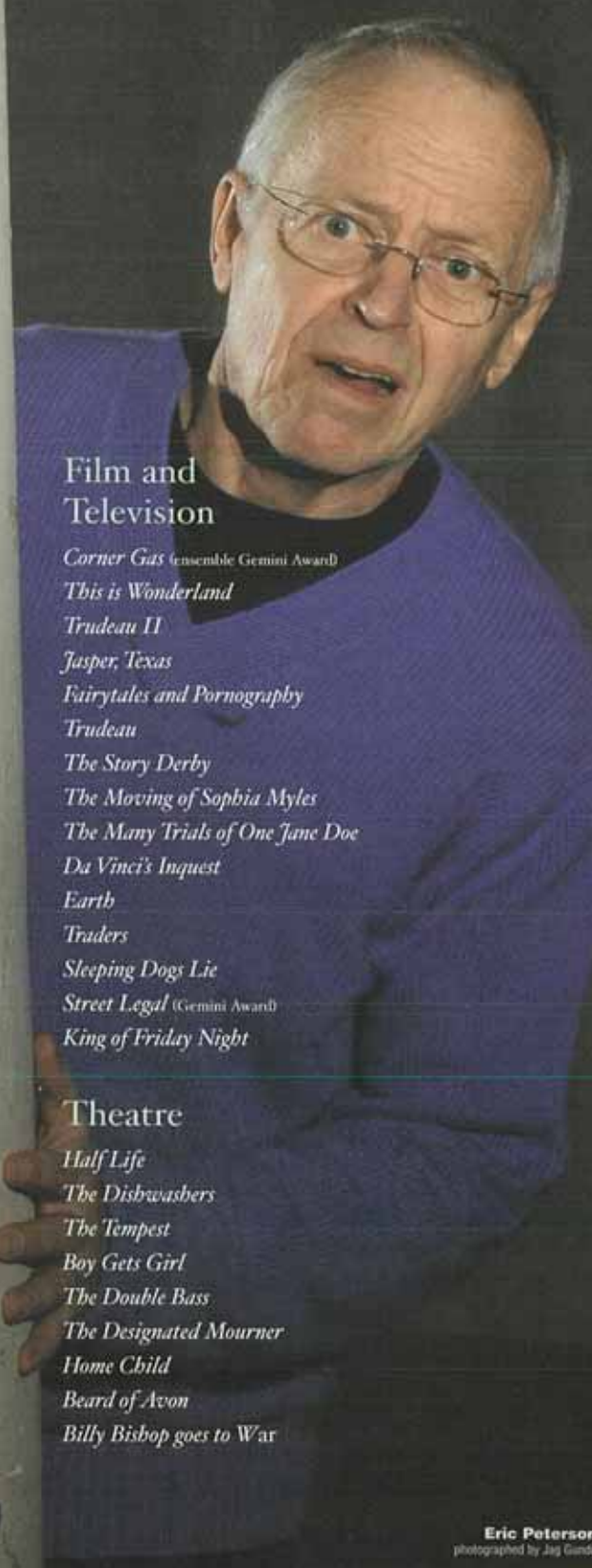
**SS:** *With your two girls, you still managed to pay the bills.*

**EP:** It was touch and go at times. But what the hell, at my age I can't do anything else and it's great fun. I was at a hockey game the other night and the lady sitting next to me said, 'Hey, you're that famous guy on TV, aren't you?' Then she paused and asked, 'What's your name?' And that to me is the epitome of being a Canadian star. I have people stop and say, 'What's it like to be famous?' And then they ask you who you are.

**SS:** *I think that's a perfect ending Eric.*



**Sonja Smits** is the star of several Canadian television series, including *Street Legal*, *Traders* and *The Eleventh Hour*, and in 2004 was the first woman to receive the ACTRA Toronto Award of Excellence. Sonja is a founding member of the ACTRA Women's Caucus and currently serves on the Ambassadors Council of The Redwood, a shelter for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Sonja lives in Toronto with her husband and two children.



## Film and Television

- Corner Gas* (ensemble Gemini Award)
- This is Wonderland*
- Trudeau II*
- Jasper, Texas*
- Fairytales and Pornography*
- Trudeau*
- The Story Derby*
- The Moving of Sophia Myles*
- The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*
- Da Vinci's Inquest*
- Earth*
- Traders*
- Sleeping Dogs Lie*
- Street Legal* (Gemini Award)
- King of Friday Night*

## Theatre

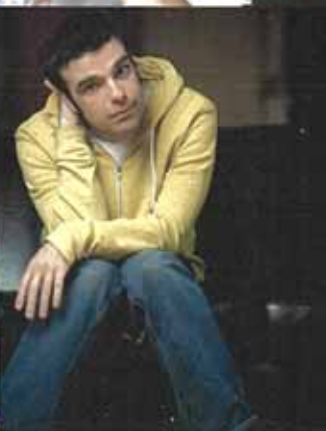
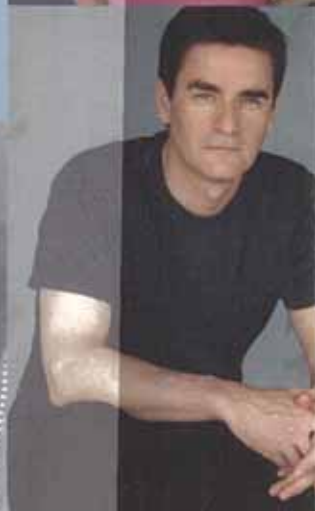
- Half Life*
- The Dishwashers*
- The Tempest*
- Boy Gets Girl*
- The Double Bass*
- The Designated Mourner*
- Home Child*
- Beard of Avon*
- Billy Bishop goes to War*

Eric Peterson  
photographed by Jag Gundo

# The ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2008 Nominees

A chance for performers to celebrate their own

On Friday, February 29th the 2008 ACTRA Awards in Toronto will be held at the elegant Carlu theatre in the heart of the city. Colin Mochrie will host this prestigious event, designed to celebrate the artistic achievements of our local ACTRA community. On the night, three juried ACTRA Awards will be presented in the categories of Outstanding Voice Performance, Outstanding Female Performance and Outstanding Male Performance. The performers listed in the following pages are the praiseworthy nominees for each category.



## The ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2008 Nominees

### ACTRA Award for Outstanding Performance – Voice

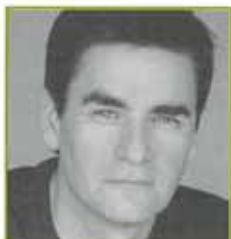


#### Stacey DePass Ruby Gloom

Stacey has had the immense pleasure and privilege of being able to do what she loves to do on a regular basis. In addition to having voiced hundreds of television and radio commercials, her greatest thrills come from creating characters in the cartoon world where she can really play.

Currently she lends her voice to recurring roles on *6Teen*, *Ruby Gloom*, *Captain Flamingo*, *Gerald McBoing Boing*, *My Friend Rabbit*, *Spider Riders* and *Harry and his Bucketful of Dinosaurs*. She replaced Alicia Silverstone in the title role of *Braceface* and has enjoyed a myriad of roles on MTV's *Undergrads*, CBC's *What It's Like Being Alone*, *Odd Job Jack*, *Powerstone*, *Atomic Betty* and *Rescue Heroes*.

After having been the voice of the Life Network for over five years, she is now the voice of Disney Playhouse Canada. Stacey is excited for all the new opportunities and challenges to come. Stacey lives in Toronto with her talented actor and writer husband, **Jeremy Harris**.



#### Peter Keleghan Ruby Gloom

Born and raised in Montreal, Peter studied acting at John Abbott College and Concordia University. He then concentrated on classical theatre with a diploma from The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in England and a degree from York University in Toronto.

Peter is a twelve time Gemini Award nominee and a four-time winner in the category of Best Performance in a Comedy Program or Series for his roles as the self absorbed Jim Walcott in *The Newsroom* and as the vain and vociferous Alan Roy in *Made In Canada*. A busy voice over artist, Peter can be heard on dozens of radio commercials and in animation series nationwide.

In March 2007, he shot a pilot for NBC called *Business Class*, his fourth U.S. pilot not to be picked up, a message he is sure means: stay in Canada.

Peter has been a licensed private pilot since 1976 and currently resides in Toronto with his partner **Leah Pinsent**.



#### Julie Lemieux Magi-Nation

Julie Lemieux's voice work career began in 1992 with the part of Rupert Bear in the animated series *Rupert*. An ACTRA member for 20 years, Julie's work includes a wide range of commercials, documentaries and more than 75 animated projects.

Julie holds a BFA in Theatre Performance from Concordia University and an MFA in Theatre Performance from York University.

"With such an incredible wealth of talent in Toronto, I am humbled and honoured to be nominated for this award," says Julie.

Some of Julie's recent credits include *Buystown Mysteries*, *Clang Invasion*, *Spliced*, *Magi-Nation*, *The Wubblers*, *World of Quest* and *Bakugan Brawlers*.

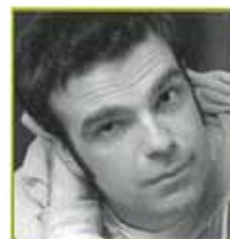


#### Adrian Truss Ruby Gloom

Adrian Truss's eclectic career has included live performances with Second City and episodes of *SCTV*. He helped form the infamous improv troupe Illustrated Men which toured North America and staged a highly successful production of *Waiting for Godot* at CanStage. Trained at Ryerson Theatre School, Adrian has written and directed several stage plays including *Dragonhead*, *Retribution* and *Tale of the Scorpion*.

On being nominated for an ACTRA Award Adrian said, "Having been instrumental in getting this particular award off the ground, I feel a little sheepish receiving a second nomination. However, you can easily get rid of me by simply giving me the award. Then I can move on to creating an award for red-haired actors over 50."

In voice, Adrian has performed original roles in many popular animated series including *Bob and Margaret*, *Mischief City* and the Emmy® Award-winning *Rolie Polie Olie*.



#### Matt Watts Canadia 2056

Matt began working in the industry at 17 as a writer and a stand-up comedian. He is best known for his work playing 'Matt' on two seasons of *The Newsroom* on the CBC. His other credits include *Twitb City*, *Slings & Arrows* and *Childstar*. Matt is also credited as being one of the original writers for the award winning musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

Regarding his nomination Matt says, "It's an honour and a thrill to be nominated. I promise I'll pay my dues on time this year, at least, I promise to try."

Matt has been working in radio drama for the past four years, creating the series: *Steve*, *The First*, *Steve*, *The Second* and *Canadia 2056*. Currently, he's developing a screenplay with Foundry Films.

# Nominees

## The ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2008 Nominees

### ACTRA Award for Outstanding Performance – Female



#### Kristin Booth Young People Fucking

Kristin Booth is a versatile performer experienced in film, television and theatre. She won her first Gemini Award in 2005, for her guest performance in an episode of *ReGenesis* entitled 'Spare Parts.'

On stage, Kristin joined the prestigious Soulpepper Theatre Company in 2001, garnering rave reviews for her portrayal of Olivia in *Twelfth Night*. She was welcomed back to the company in 2005 to play the title role in Molnar's *Olympia*.

Kristin is currently starring in the new CBC series, *MVP* and can also be seen in TNT's six part mini-series, *The Company*, opposite Chris O'Donnell and Alessandro Nivola.

Two of Kristin's most recent works, *Young People Fucking* and *This Beautiful City*, were official selections of the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival.



#### Caroline Cave This Beautiful City

Caroline Cave was born and raised in Vancouver. She is an honours graduate of the Conservatory Acting Programme at the University of Alberta and at the Royal National Theatre studio in London, England.

Caroline worked in theatres all over Western Canada before joining the acting company at the Shaw Festival in 2001. She has lived in Toronto since, and has balanced her theatre career with some equally acclaimed work in the film industry.

Caroline's work in *The Syringe Tree* garnered her the 2006 Jessie Award and 2005 Dora Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female in the Lead Role.

Some of her recent credits include, *The I. Word*, *Stargate: Atlantis*, *Six Figures* and *ReGenesis*.



#### Allegra Fulton Loonie

Allegra Fulton is one of Canada's most celebrated actors. Born to two writers her childhood years were shared between her birthplace Toronto, Canada, Barcelona, Spain, and Sydney, Australia. She has been working professionally since the age of 11 and her career has included work in Europe, the U.S. and Canada garnering numerous awards and extensive critical praise.

Equally at home in new plays or classical theatre, she was recently seen at the Stratford Festival of Canada playing Penelope in *The Odyssey* and Adriana in the festival's 200th Shakespearean production, *The Comedy of Errors*. In 2007 the National Arts Centre of Canada remounted her Dora Award winning performance of her acclaimed one woman show *Frida K.* which earned her a Capitol Critics Circle Award for Best Actor and in Edmonton a Sterling Award nomination for best production.

Some of Allegra's recent credits include *Choke*, *Show Me*, *Puppets Who Kill*, and *My Uncle Navy* and *Other Inherited Disasters*.



#### Mayko Nguyen ReGenesis

Born in Halifax and raised in Vancouver, Mayko Nguyen attended the University of British Columbia where she studied theatre briefly before moving to Toronto in 2002. Since then Mayko has worked primarily in film and television. She has been a series regular on *ReGenesis* since it began filming in 2003 and currently she's back in the Showcase comedy *Rent-a-Goalie*. Both shows earned her a Gemini Award nomination in 2007 in the category of Best Supporting Actress for *ReGenesis* and Best Ensemble Cast in *Rent-a-Goalie*.

Some of Mayko's other film credits include *Tilt*, *Why I Wore Lipstick to my Mastectomy*, *Princess* and *Relative Chaos*. Mayko's performance interests include physical theatre, and she recently had the opportunity to study clown with John Turner of *Mump and Snoot*. Mayko is extremely honoured to be nominated for a 2008 ACTRA Award.



#### Kate Trotter The Jane Show

Kate was born in Toronto, but grew up on Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto. She earned her B.A. in film and psychology from Brock University in St. Cathrines, Ontario. Kate dabbled in theatre arts during her university years and went on to study at the prestigious National Theatre School.

Kate got an early start on television when she played the role of R.H. Thomson's 15-year-old girlfriend in Ralph Thomas' TV movie *Tyler*. Now she has over 50 screen credits to her name, including her Gemini Award winning performance on *Blue Murder*.

Kate says "I'm thrilled and honoured to have received this nomination and I'm constantly reminded just how privileged I am to be a Canadian actress."

Kate played the only slightly deranged, and certainly intense, Stella for two wonderful seasons of *The Jane Show* for Global TV. She has recently completed two pilots, *The Dark Room* and *The City Next Door*. Currently she can be seen in a recurring role in HBO's popular series *Till Me You Love Me*.

# Nominees

# Nominees



## David Fox Across the River to Motor City

In the early 70's David was a part of the vital Toronto collective theatre movement at Theatre Passe Muraille. Now, in his 36th year as a professional actor David has been nominated nine times for stage roles across the country and has won a Sterling Award for Paul Quarrington's *The Invention of Poetry*, a Merrit Award for Michael Cook's *Jacob's Wake* and a Dora for Michael Healey's *Dratzer Boy*.

On his nomination David says, "I initially turned down the audition for *Across the River to Motor City* because I wanted to devote time to my kitchen renovations. It was a tough choice because the concept and the writing were so fine. Thankfully another opportunity presented itself."

Some of David's recent work includes *Due South*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *This is Wonderland* and *Puppets Who Kill*.

David will soon appear in *H2o: Trojan Horse* and recently shot the pilot *The Ron James Show*.



## Jack Knight Loonie

Jack Knight joined the ranks of ACTRA at the age of nine and was immediately hooked after he landed a recurring role in the Showtime series *Street Time*. Mentored by the show's stars, Rob Morrow, **Michelle Nolden** and **Christopher Bolton**, Jack developed skills and insight that would garner him a lead in the film, *Some Things That Stay* playing son to **Alberta Watson** and brother to **Katie Boland** and real life sister **Tatum Knight**. Jack has appeared in numerous TV shows, including *Queer as Folk*, with his younger brother **Matthew Knight**, and more recently in the A&E drama *Touch the Top of the World* with Kate Greenhouse and Bruce Campbell. In this true story Jack faced the challenging task of portraying a young blind teen, Erik Weinhenmayer, who went on to become the first blind climber to summit Everest.

Jack shares the spotlight at home with two actor siblings and aspires to build a lifelong career in this business.



## Joe Pingue The Answer Key

Born and raised in Niagara Falls, Joe Pingue began acting in theater as a teen. He went on to graduate from the York University theatre program.

Joe's list of film credits include *Citizen Duane*, *The Boondock Saints*, *The Highwayman*, and the short film *Leo* for which he earned nominations from both the 2006 ACTRA Awards in Toronto and the Canadian Comedy Awards. On television Joe is currently part of the Gemini nominated cast of *Rent-a-Goalie* and can be seen playing the down and out comedian Del Sherman in the series *Across The River To Motor City*. In 2004 Joe took on the role of Momo in the CBC mini-series *Il Duce Canadese*.

Recently Joe completed filming an adaptation of the novel *Blindness* with Rhombus Media and began his work on the Universal Pictures sci-fi tale *The Repossession Mambo*.

This winter Joe will direct his second short film, *Chili & Cheese*, which he co-wrote with **Sean Moore** and is being produced by Kerry Young.



## Aaron Poole This Beautiful City

As graduate of George Brown Theatre School Aaron Poole quickly discovered what the Canadian film scene was like. His first break was in an episode of the *X-Files* which guest starred Giovanni Ribisi and Jack Black. He played the role of 'Bystander'. Still, Aaron chose to keep at it, balancing his theatrical training with being a young dad to a new daughter and delving deeper into the indie film scene.

Residing in Toronto's Kensington Market, he's the proverbial man-about-town. No doubt this had a part in his interest in *This Beautiful City*, a cultural clash of the hip elite and the down-and-out in Toronto's Queen West fringe. Premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival, Aaron not only nailed his cracked-out character, Johnny, to rave reviews but also stepped up as a producer on the project.

All in all everything is coming together, always a daily struggle for truth, always a new can of tuna (sometimes bought on credit). He still gets bad scripts to trudge through, but these days there are more and more excellent ones to disappear into.



## Michael Riley St. Urbain's Horseman

Upon graduating from the prestigious National Theatre School of Canada in 1984, Michael Riley worked constantly at most of the major theatres in Toronto. Within six years, he was nominated for a Dora Award for Best Actor four times.

Michael is a five time Gemini award winner. His first win came in 1996 for his work on the TV movie *The Helsinki Roccamatios*. Later Michael won consecutive Gemini awards for his role as Brett Parker in 1999 and 2000 in the series *Power Play*, as well as winning a Gemini in 2003 for his work on *The Interrogation of Michael Crowe*. Finally in 2005 Michael won his most recent Gemini for the role of Eliot Sacks, a lawyer, in *This is Wonderland*.

When asked about his ACTRA Award nomination Michael said, "The real honour in being nominated is knowing that your peers respected your performance enough to submit you in the first place."

Michael resides in Brooklin, Ontario with his daughter Dylan.

# The TIPping Point

How low budget filmmaking  
can put you in the  
director's chair

by David Sparrow

Tired of waiting for the phone to ring? Looking to be in charge of your own destiny? Does the title of Producer grab you? Then you've reached The TIPping Point.

The Toronto Indie Production (TIP) guidelines were established by ACTRA Toronto, in association with the Canadian Film and Television Production Association (CFTPA), in 2002 to invest in and further develop an independent film industry in the Greater Toronto Region. To date almost 300 films have been produced under TIP, including 56 features. These are films that, except for the generous support of ACTRA Toronto's membership, would likely not have had the financing necessary to be produced.

ACTRA member/producers **Steve Adams** and **Alison Reid** are just finishing post-production work on their TIP feature, *Making Babies*. It's a comedy about the first two women in the world to give birth to babies with two biological mothers and no father. It grew out of another TIP project, a short called *Succubus*. "We applied to shoot under TIP because we wanted professional actors but had a limited budget," says Adams "and we were really impressed with the calibre of actor that came out to audition. We ended up with an excellent cast."



The investment actors make in a TIP production takes place in the form of a rate reduction. IPA rates are reduced by as much as 85%, allowing qualifying filmmakers to cast professional union actors. To compensate for this front-end rate reduction the cast shares in 3.6% of Distributors Gross Revenue (DGR) beginning on the anniversary of the film's premiere.

In November of 2005 ACTRA member **Yuval Daniel** and I embarked on the production of our first feature, *teddy bear*, a psychological drama in which everyman Ben Corisky searches for answers in the mind of a monster, himself. We welcomed the structure TIP provided us during the pre-production phase. "Preparing for our first meeting made us really consider our script, shooting schedule, minor issues and budget," says Daniel. "He had concerns about the number of pages we expected to shoot on one particular day, so we revisited our schedule and added a day."

**Tasso Lakas** is ACTRA Toronto's TIP Coordinator. He is the gatekeeper who ensures that projects qualifying to be produced under TIP merit member investment. His counsel springs from a sound knowledge of film and an unmatched resume. Throughout his career Tasso has been a Senior Development Officer at Telefilm Canada, a literary agent, an ACTRA Steward and was in charge of comedy talent development for the CBC in the late 1970s. He was also an ACTRA member from 1979 to 1990. As TIP Coordinator Tasso goes over each application in detail ensuring that proposed budgets, filming strategies, locations and postproduction requirements meet the demands of the script and of the IPA. He often sends would-be producers back to the drawing board to address issues that might stand between them and a completed production.

Member and producer **Brigitte Kingsley** and her director, **Andrew Cymek**, finished their first feature, *Dark Rising*, last summer. The film follows Landy Cannon as his dream of reconciliation with his ex-fiancée turns into a blood soaked nightmare when he is forced to take up a new career as a demon-hunting action hero. TIP allowed Kingsley "to learn through our first feature while enjoying all the benefits of an ACTRA production."

There are a lot of rules and guidelines to observe when you decide to produce under TIP. This is because, beyond member investment, TIP is designed to be a training ground for emerging creators. The people behind TIP projects are often first time producers, writers and directors. They may employ first time production managers, assistant directors and director's of photography. ACTRA wants these future industry professionals to learn step-by-step how to produce under the Independent Production Agreement (IPA). This is why Tasso goes to such lengths to see that everything is in order before he signs off on a project.

The process ensures that TIP productions are actually completed and that they receive some form of public display, broadcast or distribution. Since the budgets are low and the productions truly independent, a copy of the completed production, and the opportunity to have it seen by people in the larger film industry, may be the only return on investment an actor receives. ACTRA reserves the right to audit TIP productions to confirm that they have been produced within the guidelines. Punishment for breaking the rules, say shooting past the maximum 12 hour day, means production pays the full IPA rate plus overtime to every cast member shooting that day. It can get expensive. "Luckily," says Tasso, "we haven't had to discipline many productions."

Matt Baram and R.D. Reid in the TIP film *Making Babies*. Photo: Allen Yee



Brigitte Kingsley threatens Julia Schneider with a knife in *Dark Rising*, a feature-length TIP production. Photo: Rafael Ludwig





*“TIP was essential to our getting to where we’re at now. It allowed us to see our idea more fully realized and to get the story told.”*

“Have you ever heard of E & O, CAVCO, Heritage Declarations or 10 out of 10? Do you know how to finalize a budget, apply for GST rebates, qualify for tax credits, seek out distributors or apply to festivals? Me neither.”

That’s why each TIP producer must find a mentor, an experienced producer to help them through the business end of making their film. Kingsley was fortunate to have Mihkel Harilaid of *Black Walk* as her mentor and Executive Producer on *Dark Rising*. This is Mihkel’s third time as Executive Producer on a TIP film. His other TIP films are *Ham & Cheese*, starring **Mike Beaver** and **Jason Jones**, and *Phil the Alien*, written, directed by and starring **Rob Stefaniuk**. Kingsley says, “Mihkel took me under his wing and led me through the paperwork details and the day-to-day financials, making sure everything was ready for distribution and delivery. I found the mentoring invaluable.”

The immediate upside for actors in TIP productions is that the cast is 100% ACTRA. Lead and large principal roles are often offered to members who have been overlooked for such roles in the conventional marketplace. Some member writer/producers have even taken the opportunity to create their own dream role from the ground up or to explore a character for which others might have considered them an unusual choice.

And TIP opportunities have led to industry recognition.

*The Truth About Head*, a short starring **Bruce Hunter**, won three awards at Cannes and five other international awards. *Leo*, another short subject production, garnered a 2005 ACTRA Toronto Award of Excellence nomination in the category of Best Male

Megan Fahlenbock and Angela Vint star in *Making Babies* as the first women in the world to give birth to children with two biological mothers.

Photo: Allen Yin



Brigitte Kingsley in *Dark Rising*. The actress did more than just perform in the film, she was also a producer. Photo: Rafael Lubzig

Performance for **Joe Pingue**. 2005's *Choke* was nominated for the Best Live Action Short Genie Award. Every year since its inception at least six TIP films have premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Feature films and dramatic shorts are eligible for TIP. Pilots are not. However, a few short subjects have gone on to be series, the most notable examples was developed from *Kink in My Hair*, a one hour comedic drama produced by Damion Nurse and ACTRA member **Tonya Lee Williams**. It was based on the hit play of the same name and has now morphed into the new hit series *'da Kink in My Hair* airing on Global. Nurse says that, "TIP was essential to our getting to where we're at now. It allowed us to see our idea more fully realized and to get the story told. ACTRA and Vision TV were strong supporters of diversity when they facilitated the one hour." ACTRA members **trey anthony** and **Ngozi Paul**, who created and starred in the TIP version of *Kink in my Hair*, now star in the series and are also the show's Executive Producers.

Since completing *teddy bear*, Daniel and I have submitted our film to more than 25 festivals. We're also seeking Canadian and international distribution, applying to the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO), applying for Errors and Omissions Insurance (E&O), submitting our GST information and considering marketing strategies, but

mostly we're keeping our fingers crossed. We learned a lot producing our first feature under the watchful eyes of TIP and our ACTRA Steward. And we're putting what we learned to good use on our next feature, a story about... well that'll have to wait until next time.

With 300 films in five years, over 2000 festival screenings, more than 100 awards and counting, ACTRA Toronto's TIP program is doing its part to build the Canadian independent film industry. So, if you have a script, you can find the TIP guidelines and the IPA on line at [www.actratontoronto.com](http://www.actratontoronto.com). Then, once your financing is in place and your other ducks are in a row, make an appointment with Tasso and you'll be on your way to the sometimes thankless job of being a producer.

**There's nothing like it.**



Luke Murdoch and David Sparrow share a moment together in *teddy bear*. Photo: Sabine Giese



**David Sparrow** sits on ACTRA Toronto Council. He co-wrote, co-produced and starred in *teddy bear*, a TIP feature due to be released later this year.

## Breakfast with an angel



David Gale and Linda Kash at the Fall Member Conference  
Photo: Jag Gundu

I can't think of a better way to start the day than with the delicious taste of Philadelphia cream cheese. Okay, there are a few better ways. The best however is having breakfast with the Canadian cream cheese angel herself, **Linda Kash**. Kicking off the fall member conference our very own angel descended to the stage and I had the heavenly pleasure of interviewing my friend of 25 years.

Getting cream cheese out of the way - she's been the Philly spokesperson for fourteen years with no end in sight - we got Linda's story. The daughter of opera star **Maureen Forrester** and virtuoso violinist the late **Eugene Kash**, the business is in Linda's genes. With four talented siblings, two of whom are also ACTRA members, her home was abuzz with performance. As a teen Linda tried

singing opera and playing the violin but had a different calling, comedy. After a stint with Second City she leapt to television on *The Comedy Mill* and for the next two decades Linda became a fixture on TV and film.

The hour flew by on gossamer wings as Linda shared wondrous stories of working with everyone from **Steve Smith** and Christopher Guest to **Mike Myers** and Robin Williams. The record crowd was blessed with Linda's insightful perspectives on acting, comedy, producing, writing, teaching, working in the U.S., being a working mom and getting to a certain age in the biz. This is one cherub who came across as a savvy businesswoman who makes the most of her considerable talents while keeping a realistic view of her casting possibilities.

Bottom line: Linda's acted in scores of films, been a regular on countless TV series both here and the U.S. and won a Gemini for *At the Hotel*.

But when I describe her to Canadians they are always most impressed that I know the cream cheese angel. Thank heavens for Linda Kash!

• **David Gale**

## Learning to listen

As I walked into the classroom a nervous boy approached me, note pad in hand.

"Miss, is this Improv for Young Actors?" he asked. "Yes it is," I told him.

"Will I have to take notes?" Most of the class perked up at this question. "No, not if you don't want to," I said.

"Will there be any homework?" Now he had the attention of all 32 students.

"No, there will be absolutely no homework!" I announced. The room cheered. "Let's get this party started," I said.

"What is improv?" I asked. "Making it up on the spot." "Not having to learn lines." "Saying what you want."

Great! Not one person said being funny. I liked this group. After a simple warm up, I asked for two volunteers. The entire group stormed to the front.

When you teach a group of people who all want to come out and play, they have already demonstrated the most amazing quality, they're fearless. All I had to do was cultivate this madness, and if you could see my garden you'd know that's exactly what I love to do.

By the end of the two hour session, the participants recapped what they'd learned; focus, say yes, eye contact and let someone else have a chance.

I asked them to be aware, as they are out there living their lives, of when they're actively listening. This is the most important skill an improviser can have. You can't practice this enough.

"Sounds a lot like homework," the boy said, no longer nervous at all. My work here was done.

• **Katherine Ashby**



Katherine Ashby leads her Improv for Young Actors session. Photo: Arkan Zaitarov

## Keynote speech: A credit union for us all

**Steve Mumford**, CEO of the Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union, was the keynote speaker at ACTRA Toronto's fall member conference.

Steve addressed the audience, bringing them up-to-date on the status of the credit union's application, outlining the benefits the fledgling institution will provide to Toronto's entertainment industry and offering a little history about the origin of credit unions in Canada.

Credit unions are created with the guiding principles of open membership, democratic member control, autonomy and independence, member participation, cooperation, education and community concern.

The credit union initiative was born out of the frustration members felt when dealing with traditional financial bodies that didn't look upon them as a demographic worth investing in. All too often, when banks realize they are dealing with a performing artist, the conversation is effectively finished. By creating a credit union for entertainment professionals, the statement that you are a performer will mark the beginning of the conversation, not the end.

Many of the services offered by traditional banking institutions were first pioneered in the hallways of credit unions including debit cards, open mortgages, Internet banking and registered education savings plans, with the intention of making financial services more convenient and flexible for members.

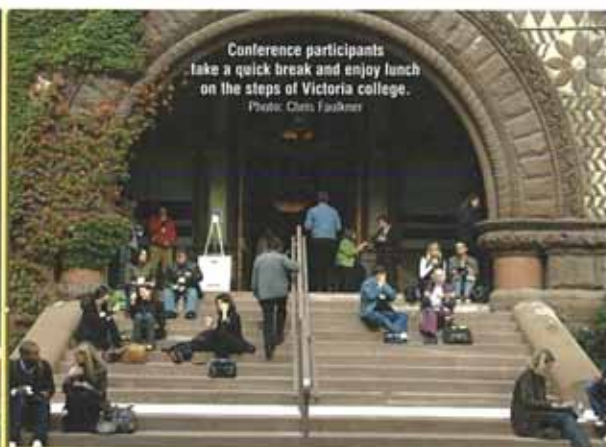
Membership in the Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union will be open to ACTRA members, their families and other professionals working in the Ontario film and television industry.

During the question-and-answer session Steve went into greater detail about how members have a chance to get in on the ground floor of the credit union by purchasing investment shares. These shares, which are RRSP eligible, will earn interest up to 1.25% above the average five year GIC rate and help provide sufficient capital for the credit union's first few years of operation.

In Steve's own words, "Everyone deserves an opportunity to achieve financial well-being, working together, cooperatively, works for the good of all and giving back to our community is a key rationale for profitable operations."



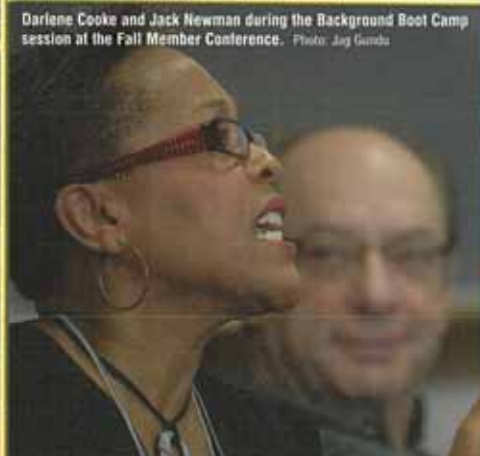
An ACTRA Toronto member gets a lesson on sword handling at the weapons technique class. Photo: Chris Faulkner



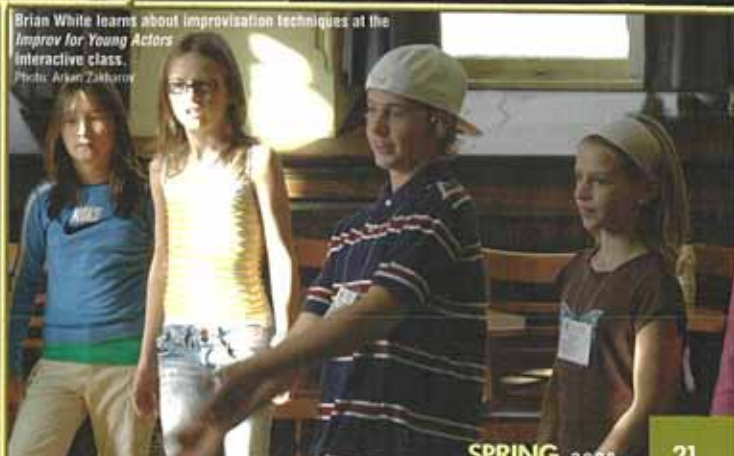
Conference participants take a quick break and enjoy lunch on the steps of Victoria college. Photo: Chris Faulkner



Steve Mumford, Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union's new CEO, delivers the keynote speech at the plenary session. Photo: Arkan Zakharov



Darlane Cooke and Jack Newman during the Background Boot Camp session at the Fall Member Conference. Photo: Jay Gardo



Brian White learns about improvisation techniques at the Improv for Young Actors interactive class. Photo: Arkan Zakharov

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Congratulations from



# Political Action

## Navigating the political currents in the year ahead

by Norm MacAskill



ACTRA Toronto is active politically on three fronts – municipally, provincially and federally and our work over the coming year will need to take into account each level of government.

At the municipal level, our main concern is that Toronto secure the world class studio facilities to solidify our status as Canada's primary production centre. We need to make sure Filmport and the plans for Pinewood Studios in the west end are a top priority for the City of Toronto.

Provincially, the Liberal government has been handed another four year mandate. ACTRA, along with industry partners, including FilmOntario, have been lobbying for increased tax credits for our industry. In December we saw the results of those efforts when the government announced increases in the domestic tax credit, from 30% to 35%, and the foreign service tax credit, increased to 25% from 18%.

In response to ACTRA Toronto's criticism of the Status of Ontario's Artists Act, the former Minister of Culture insisted the Act was a foundation to be built upon. ACTRA Toronto is meeting with the new Minister, Aileen Carroll, a newly elected MPP from Barrie with extensive experience as an MP at the federal level, to find a way to make these statements more than just convenient election promises.

On the federal scene, ACTRA Toronto works closely with ACTRA National to ensure our issues are noticed by the public and politicians alike. On November 5 of last year, ACTRA Toronto took three bus loads of members to Ottawa, demonstrating outside the convention of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters in order to promote our message; Canadian broadcasters have a responsibility to show Canadian stories! **Julie Stewart**, whose popular series *Cold Squad* was cancelled and replaced by a copycat American show, **Robb Wells** of the *Trailer Park Boys* and

**Eric Peterson**, this year's winner of ACTRA Toronto's Award of Excellence, all made speeches that rallied the hundreds in attendance.

This demonstration was just one volley in a campaign leading up to the day the broadcasters apply to have their licenses renewed by the CRTC. We will insist that the CRTC stop playing loose with the rules and demand more Canadian content in return for the use of public airwaves. We will continue to work toward changes to the CRTC's disastrous 1999 television policy, which has brought us crippling reductions in the amount of Canadian drama we see on Canadian television screens.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. But we won't be doing this alone. ACTRA has been building working coalitions to help accomplish our goals. Our Strategic Alliance partners, the United Steelworkers, are there when we call. Alongside other industry unions and guilds, as well as producers and agents, we work with FilmOntario promoting many of our provincial initiatives.

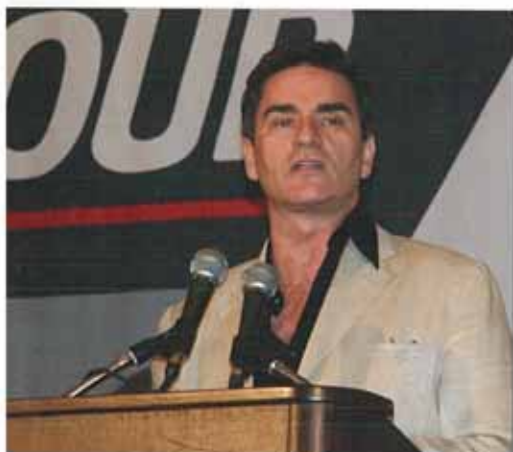
And finally, we can't do it without the support of all our ACTRA members. Our demonstration in Ottawa was an important day – a day of brother/sisterhood and solidarity – a day of standing up to be counted and making our voices heard. That's what you can give back to your union, to your fellow performers and to Canada.

**Norm MacAskill** is an Organizer with ACTRA Toronto. He can be reached at [nmacaskill@actratontoronto.com](mailto:nmacaskill@actratontoronto.com)

Taborah Johnson, Julie Stewart and Robb Wells, at the recent CAB demonstration, insisting Canada's broadcasters take on their responsibility of showing more Canadian stories. Photo: Chris Faulkner



Above, left: Toronto member Ted Atherton shows the flag, helping to remind CAB delegates that the issue of maintaining Canadian cultural sovereignty isn't going away. Photo: Chris Faulkner



Peter Keleghan addresses the delegates at the OFL convention in Toronto.  
Photo: Chris Faulkner

## ACTRA Toronto takes a stand at OFL convention

ACTRA Toronto member **Peter Keleghan** introduced the co-op film *Hinterland What's What* with a speech at the recent Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) convention in Toronto. The film was a collaboration between Peter and Toronto members **Gordon Pinsent** and **Leo Petrus**. Peter's speech focused on the urgent need to develop domestic film and television production within Canada. The video, which spoofs the classic *Hinterland Who's Who* nature segments, uses a tongue-in-cheek approach to illustrate the way Canadian culture is threatened by American media conglomerates. When the screening was finished ACTRA Toronto President **Karl Pruner** introduced a motion from the floor asking the convention to issue a statement in support of the striking Writers Guild of America. After a standing ovation from the gathered delegates the motion was unanimously endorsed. The *Hinterland What's What* video can be viewed at: [www.youtube.com/user/ACTRAToronto](http://www.youtube.com/user/ACTRAToronto).



ACTRA Toronto members joined the WGC as part of an International Day of Support for striking writers.  
Photo: Chris Faulkner

## WGC demonstrates in solidarity with American scribes

On November 28 the Writers Guild of Canada demonstrated outside the Sony Centre as part of an International Day of Support for the striking Writers Guild of America. Supporters from other unions, including ACTRA Toronto and the Canadian Media Guild, picketed outside the Centre for several hours cheering and chanting slogans. At the time of the demonstration the WGA had been on strike for over four weeks, unable to come to an agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) on a number of subjects, including payment for work distributed digitally and other new media issues. Many of the reasons that led to the WGA strike were also important issues in ACTRA's decision to go on strike last winter.



The ACTRA Toronto Diversity Committee meets with members of the local Asian film community.  
Photo: Joanna Bennett

## Community initiatives:

### 11th Annual Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival

The ACTRA Toronto Diversity Committee is in the process of reaching out to the various local film communities. During the 11th Annual Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival members of the Diversity Committee participated in a roundtable discussion with the Asian film community, including filmmakers, actors, producers and representatives of the press, in the hopes of engaging in a dialogue that would enlighten and inform both parties. During the discussion a number of filmmakers expressed how grateful they were to be working with professional actors from ACTRA Toronto and how their productions had benefited from accessing the TIP program. The Diversity Committee explained that while there are many non-union productions, our approach to the industry was not about focusing on a single production but delivering on an overall approach that enshrined the protection of all our performers. As a stepping stone to greater things the meeting was a productive first step and will be followed by information sessions on ACTRA Toronto programs for both our members and those of various Diversity communities.

## National Commercial Agreement negotiations update

The National Commercial Agreement is a significant source of income for our members, and most of the work under this agreement is shot here in Toronto. ACTRA's negotiating team was approached by the other party's negotiating team early last spring. We agreed to a 3% increase to our minimum fees, an additional 1% increase to Insurance and Retirement and to roll over the contract for one additional year. We also agreed to look at alternative ways to traditional bargaining when negotiating a new agreement. Both teams have now been trained in Interest Based Bargaining. This process, we hope, will derive better solutions to improve our agreement in concert with all parties concerned. In this expanding world of digital broadcasting and new media and a changing advertising environment the key issues we face are use fees, the scope of the agreement, its competitiveness, and improvements to working conditions. The goal of the current round of negotiations is to create a healthier environment and a robust commercial production industry. Negotiations began in January and we hope to have a new agreement in place by June 2008.

• Heather Allin

Please go to

[www.actratoronto.com/home/pirate\\_toronto.html](http://www.actratoronto.com/home/pirate_toronto.html)

and read the letter from Pirate, a local engager, reaffirming their commitment to using professional talent and standing by the ideals of the National Commercial Agreement.

## ACTRA Toronto credit union is ready and waiting

The Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union is ready to proceed with the next stage of its development. Currently, the credit union's application is on file with provincial regulators and we are awaiting their pending decision. In the meantime the credit union's business plan, regarding our investment share offering, is being reviewed by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO). We have developed a detailed marketing plan to promote the sale of 2.5 million dollars in investment shares to raise the credit union's initial capital. These shares, which will be RRSP eligible, can earn interest up to 1.25% above the average five year GIC rate and will help provide sufficient funds for the credit union's first few years of operation. We are continuing to work closely with FSCO to win the approvals we need to begin selling shares as soon as possible. For more information about other important developments in the Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union please visit our website at [www.creativeartscu.com](http://www.creativeartscu.com).



Credit union CEO, Steve Mumford. Photo: Arkan Zakharov

## ACTRA Toronto member wins director's chair at WIDC 2008

ACTRA Toronto member, **Karen Hines** has earned a WIDC 2008 director's chair through a national jury selection process. The *Women In Director's Chair* workshop is led this year by Emmy® Award winning director **Donna Deitch** (*Desert Hearts*, *NYPD Blue*, *Bones*). The WIDC program takes eight mid-career women directors through an intensive script-to-screen development process where the focus is on developing the skills and talents of these women storytellers along with new original fiction stories for screen. The first phase of the program, the Story Incubation Module (SIM) was completed in December and in January Karen returned for the Production phase of the program where she had the opportunity to work with ACTRA members from across the country, as well as IATSE and DGC crew, at the world renowned Banff Centre in Alberta. For more information about the program contact WIDC Producer, **Carol Whiteman** at: [carol@creativewomenworkshops.com](mailto:carol@creativewomenworkshops.com) or toll free 1-877-913-0747.



Karen Hines

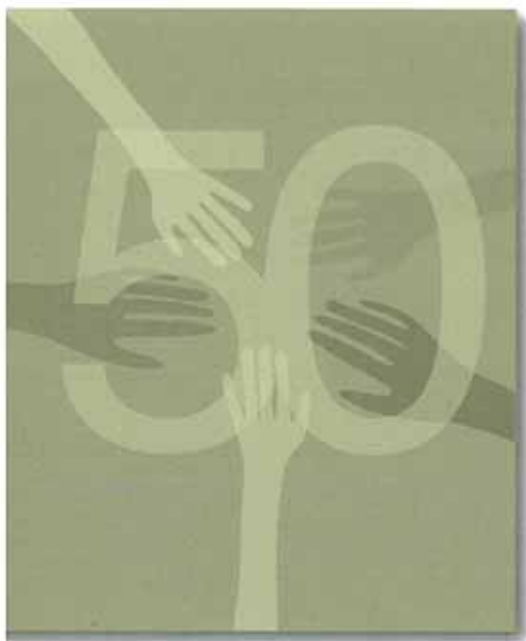


Webster Catherwood on *The Limelighters*, a documentary series about senior artists. Photo courtesy of Global Television

## The Limelighters

It's fun to give credit where credit is due, so bravo to Global Television for supporting and airing **David Hansen's** four-part documentary series *The Limelighters*. The show which celebrates the lives of senior Canadian artists living at the Performing Arts Lodge (PAL) in Toronto, aired Thursday nights throughout January. It was wonderful to see the passion with which these Canadian treasures shared their experiences of yesterday and it was thrilling to see that some are still performing today. Says Hansen, "It's almost like performers and artists in general have a fountain of youth in the basement . . . the 95-year-olds are completely lucid and they're all living like they're 40." Let's hope for more of this kind of 'star system' programming from Canadian broadcasters in the future.

• **David Sparrow**



## The Actors' Fund of Canada: 50 years of support

The Actors' Fund of Canada celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2008, aiming to be more respected, connected and supported than ever before with a year-long awareness and fundraising campaign. The Fund provides short-term emergency financial aid to entertainment industry professionals working in theatre, film and TV, music and dance. Actors' Fund Executive Director **David Hope** says that ACTRA Toronto members will see and hear a lot more about the Fund during 2008 and urges performers to put the Actors' Fund first on their list when making charitable donations. Hope adds, "Our message to ACTRA Toronto members is: support the charity that supports you – make the Actors' Fund your charity of choice." Performers, creators, technical staff and other production members can apply for help from the Actors' Fund, which delivers over \$400,000 in rent payments, grocery money, utility payments and other basic living expenses to clients annually and has provided over \$3 million in emergency financial aid in the last 10 years. For more information on the Fund's 50th anniversary, or to make a donation, call (416) 975-0304 or visit [www.actorsfund.ca](http://www.actorsfund.ca).

## Meet ACTRA Toronto's new Councillors

The voting is over, the ballots counted and the results are in. The fall election has brought some new faces into the folds of the ACTRA Toronto Council. The 24 councillors serve as the elected representatives of our 11,000 members for a two-year term. The outgoing council passed the baton to their incoming brethren at a recent meeting. The two groups of councillors discussed industry issues and examined a number of important priorities they felt that council should devote their time to over their coming term in office. With an ambitious and challenging agenda ahead of them we're fortunate that all our councillors are armed with the energy and determination necessary to get the job done. Your 2008-2009 ACTRA Toronto councillors are **Heather Allin, Joanna Bennett, Wendy Crewson, Ferne Downey, Dom Fiore, David Gale, Lyn Mason Green, Richard Hardacre, Art Hindle, Karen Ivany, Taborah Johnson, Don Lamoreux, Jani Lauzon, Steve Lucescu, Lynn MacKenzie, David Macniven, John Nelles, Jack Newman, Karl Pruner, Wayne Robson, Austin Schatz, Stephen Graham Simpson, David Sparrow** and **Theresa Tova**. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all candidates for putting their names up for consideration.



Your 2008 – 2009 ACTRA Toronto Council at their first official meeting. Photo: Chris Faulkner

## Toronto Green Screen Initiative

There is a new alliance of film industry guilds, unions, service providers and producers coming together to kick start a plan to green Toronto's Film & TV industry. ACTRA Toronto is one of the Founding Members. Six months of work has resulted in a successful coalition with a detailed plan, which has secured the financial backing of \$400,000 over two years from the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC). The organization will create and develop a system of policies and procedures to assist the greening of productions shooting here. The Green Screen Initiative includes generating a detailed book of best practice uses; specifically targeted educational workshops, and a certification program which is the first in Canada. Greening Toronto's industry will show ACTRA Toronto as a leader in environmental innovation. The city will become even more competitive amongst the world's film stages.

• Heather Allin

## Tax credit increase to boost local production

Members of the Ontario film and television industry received some good news in December as the provincial government made significant increases to its domestic and foreign service tax credits. The basic domestic tax credit will rise to 35% from a rate of 30% while the foreign service tax credit is set to increase to 25%, up from the previous 18%. This welcome news will create more jobs in an industry already struggling under the weight of a runaway Canadian dollar and will reinvigorate the local production scene. Local filmmakers will greatly benefit from this change, hopefully encouraging homegrown production showcasing Canadian stories and starring Canadian performers. The increase to the Ontario film and television tax credit also allows Toronto to be even more competitive in comparison to the incentives offered by other jurisdictions, and in combination with other local initiatives, it will place the city in a position to attract more global export work.

## More Canada on TV!

ACTRA members from across Ontario and Quebec descended on Ottawa November 5 to tell the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) they needed to develop and broadcast more Canadian-made television. Chanting "More Canada on TV" demonstrators marched in front of the convention's headquarters at the Westin hotel handing out leaflets to passing pedestrians and motorists. Later in the afternoon a crowd gathered to hear fiery speeches from **Robb Wells**, **Julie Stewart**, **Eric Peterson**, ACTRA National President **Richard Hardacre** and ACTRA Toronto President **Karl Pruner** as they lit into Canada's broadcasters for their failure to protect Canadian culture by airing Canadian stories. The demonstration also attracted support from political circles and was attended by **Paul Dewar**, NDP MP for Ottawa Centre, and **Thomas Mulcair**, the newly elected NDP MP for Outremont. Members of ACTRA's strategic alliance partner, the United Steelworkers, also attended the event led by their National Director **Ken Neumann**.

For more details about our CAB demonstration please visit:

[www.actratontoronto.com/home/cad\\_07.html](http://www.actratontoronto.com/home/cad_07.html).



ACTRA Toronto member Wilbert Headley prepares to demonstrate about the need for more Canadian programming on our airwaves. Photo: Chris Faulkner

# ACTRA Toronto Council

# Who's Who

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Visit the ACTRA Toronto website at [www.actratoronto.com](http://www.actratoronto.com)!

# ACTRA Toronto Staff is here for YOU.

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**Richard Todd** (Steward, IPA, Audio Code, Global, TVO, Industrial,  
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**Dan Mackenzie** (Manager)

## In Memoriam

*We share our sadness at the passing of our beloved colleagues*

- Eleanor Beecroft
- Frank Blanche
- Leo Leyden
- Colin Miller

### Keith Knight 1956-2007

I met Keith Knight in 1978 when we worked together on a low budget movie called *Summer Camp*, which eventually became *Meatballs* and set box office records for a Canadian film. Keith went on to appear in many more movies, as well as countless commercials and TV shows, but it was his dedication to the theatre and to his craft that completely infused his spirit, as those who worked with him at the Shaw Festival, or any of the smaller theatres at which he appeared, will attest.

Keith had a remarkable range of skills, sleight of hand, bang-on impressions, long tracts of poetry, movie dialogue and Shakespeare that he could recite from his virtually photographic memory. For a big fellow he had a surprising physical grace.

Keith's death last August after a brief but fierce battle with cancer was a stunning and cruel shock to the community and to his beloved wife Jennifer. Those of us who managed to spend some time with him in those last weeks were touched by the graciousness and good humour that never left him. He is sorely missed.

• Jack Blum



## Announcements

**Better late than never!**

ACTRA Toronto member  
**Suzanne Hatim** and her  
daughter Adina, born  
February 10, 2007

## Welcome new members!

Makara Adkins  
Armanda Amare  
Brian Bailey  
Michael Barry  
Debora Bastos  
Andrew Bathory  
Anna Bersam  
Ashley Botting  
Sian Brunton  
Greg Calderone  
Alex J Campbell  
Sandy Champion  
Charlotte Chen  
Andrea Ciacci  
Jennifer Coburn  
Kristen Convers  
Blaeds Court-Suzuki  
Erica Cox  
David Crosbie  
Chloe Cubric  
Peter Cunningham  
Tina D'Angelo  
Sunnie D'Souza  
Shri Devi  
Julian Dezotti  
Marvin Dalgay  
Joanna Douglas  
Isiah Douglas  
Josie Dye  
Connor Edwards  
Kelly-Ann Evans  
Patrick Ezerzer  
Ashley Fenster  
Nathan Fielder  
Samarah Forwell  
Rachelle Ganesh  
Johnny O'Gruipe  
Kat Germain  
Chris Gibbs  
Jason Gosbee  
Jonathan Gould  
Ben Graham  
Hayley Gratto  
Jeff Hammond  
Suzanne Elen Hatim  
Mark Henderson  
Shawn Henry  
Joshua Hewitt  
Michael Park Ingram  
Cecilia Jaladian  
Dalydd James  
Jason Ja  
Stephanie Jung

Helen Juvonen  
Julia Kelly  
Hayden Kelley  
Colette Kendall  
Stephen Kishewitsch  
Liam Kishinevsky  
Sophia Kolinas  
Stephanie Lalor  
Kyla Langstaff  
Taylor Lau  
Tony Lepage  
Isabella Lobo  
Zak Longo  
Jennifer Ma Lee  
Shane Mac Kinnon  
Michael Madorsis  
Rachel Marcus  
Oliver Masuda  
Lindi Masunda  
Rob Mckee  
Ryan McLaren  
Rashmi Mistry  
Nathan Mitchell  
Ginette Mohr  
Tina Moreau  
Michael Morgan  
Cathy Murphy  
Lyle O'Donohoe  
Karan Oberoi  
Samuel On  
Greta Papageorgiou  
Tyler Pearce  
Ethan Polgar  
Joanna Louise Polley  
Helen Prandekas  
Jason Priestley  
Ashleigh Rains  
Jake Roseman  
Mike Rowland  
Karen Faye Simpson  
Testa Smith  
Michael Charles Smith  
Michelle Soicher  
Giovanni Spina  
Valerie Stanois  
Rossif Sutherland  
Julie Sype  
Gregory Vitale  
Sara Waisglass  
June Walters  
Christie Watson  
Bailey Wolts  
Marcus Yau

## Stewards at work

● A performer contacted the office to inquire about a potential upgrade for work done on a foreign produced commercial. The advertiser had switched agencies and moved their business to a non-signatory engager. After numerous attempts to obtain a copy of the spot an ACTRA steward discovered the commercial online and pursued an upgrade from Background to SOC. The Steward was able to collect over \$2,600.00 on behalf of the performer.



The Joan Fairfax Show, broadcast date October 25, 1959  
Dancers (not in order): Norman Maen, Bill Bryan, Lloyd Malefont, Maureen Hill, Pauline Ross, Marilyn Rollo  
Photo courtesy CBC Still Photo Collection and Roy Martin

● This past spring an ACTRA Steward was on location at a commercial shoot which involved a large group of babies. Their holding area was in the finished basement of a house. The space was cluttered, had inadequate change facilities and mothers, with children in their arms, were expected to navigate a set of basement stairs that lacked a safety handrail.

The visiting steward stopped the shoot, had production clear out the basement of any non-baby related objects, set up change tables, additional playpens, a microwave for bottle warming and insisted a stair railing be installed as a safety precaution.

Online  
with ACTRA  
Toronto



Make sure to check ACTRA Toronto's homepage in the coming weeks as we unveil our new website design. The website will feature a fresh, clean look with an improved and updated interface that allows users to navigate smoothly around the website. Other new features include a site map, for quick access to ACTRA Toronto's most popular pages, expanded picture and video galleries and a page devoted to our most frequently asked questions. So keep looking in on [www.actratontoronto.com](http://www.actratontoronto.com) and take advantage of all the information and site features available to you.

ACTRA Toronto is also expanding our online presence into some of the Internet's biggest social networking sites, including YouTube, Facebook and Myspace.

Our YouTube website at [www.youtube.com/user/ACTRAToronto](http://www.youtube.com/user/ACTRAToronto) contains Co-op films made by your fellow members as well as video footage of some of our political action initiatives at work. Don't forget to look for us on Facebook and Myspace, under the username ACTRA Toronto, add us to your buddy list and discover what your friends and colleagues in the industry are up to.

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NEW RELEASE

# The Credit Union

An ACTRA Toronto Production

*"A Blockbuster!"*

*"Years in the making..."*

*"Financial benefits  
for the whole family..."*

*"You cannot afford to miss  
this premiere!"*

ACTRA Toronto's Entertainment Credit Union is now

## Creative Arts Savings & Credit Union

**COMING SOON**

SNEAK PREVIEW:

CHECK OUT [WWW.CREATIVEARTSCU.COM](http://WWW.CREATIVEARTSCU.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
AND LEARN HOW YOU CAN BECOME A FOUNDING MEMBER!

~ DIRECTED BY THE CREDIT UNION WORKING GROUP ~

HEATHER ALLIN ~ BRAD BORBRIDGE ~ LYN MASON GREEN ~ PETER KELEGHAN ~ DAVID MACNIVEN  
JOHN NELLES ~ KARL PRUNER ~ PRIYA RAD ~ KAREN RITSON ~ WAYNE ROBSON ~ AUSTIN SCHATZ ~ ANNE MARIE SCHEFFLER  
STEPHEN GRAHAM SIMPSON ~ JOHN STERLING ~ BRIAN TOPP ~ THERESA TOVA



ACTRA  
AWARDS  
TORONTO  
2008

It's all  
about  
YOU.



# The ACTRA Awards in Toronto 2008

Friday, February 29, 7:30 p.m.

The Carlu • 444 Yonge Street • 7th floor

- Hors d'oeuvres and cocktail reception 7:30 p.m.
- Awards Ceremony 9:30 p.m.
- Dancing until 1:00 a.m.

*The ACTRA Awards in Toronto honour outstanding performances by your fellow artists. Warm up on a cold February night by taking in Toronto's stars.*

*Come join friends and colleagues at this glamorous event, where we celebrate each and every one of **YOU!***

Award winning star of stage and screen and Canadian cultural activist **Eric Peterson** will be honoured with ACTRA Toronto's Award of Excellence.

Attendance is free to ACTRA members but you must RSVP by Feb 26th.  
[www.actratoronto.com](http://www.actratoronto.com)



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