

ACTRA
TORONTO

ACTRA TURNS 70!

THE MAGAZINE FROM ACTRA TORONTO

VOLUME 22 • ISSUE 2 • FALL 2013



7 Ages of Acting

PLUS:

**A Decade of the ACTRA Advantage
& Out, Loud and Proud: Queer in the Biz**

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7 Ages of Acting

This year marks the 70th anniversary of ACTRA. Our cover photo pays tribute to some of the founding CBC Radio artists from Toronto who came together in the early 1940s to form RATS (Radio Artists of Toronto Society) – including **Jane Mallett, Lorne Greene, and Tommy and Jean Tweed**. In 1943, other groups of organized radio artists from Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver joined with RATS to become ACRA, The Association of Canadian Radio Artists. The first collective agreement was only one page long.

In one season (1947-1948), there were 320 English drama programs on CBC Radio.
(Source: Canadian Encyclopedia)

For a more detailed history of ACTRA go online to look through InterACTRA's 60th anniversary magazine. (<http://www.actra.ca/main/wp-content/uploads/InterACTRA-2004-60thAnniversary.pdf>)





Photo: Tim Leyes
Wardrobe: Janet Ellis. Hair and Make-up: Caroline Laxton and Sheila Victor. Thanks to CBC.



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Performers

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Cover Photo: Tim Leyes
(www.timleyesactors.com)



David Sparrow
ACTRA Toronto President

President's Message

“I AM PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF ACTRA.”

“My union is a Champion of Fairness.”

In an industry where being tall or short or funny or ethnic can win or lose you the job, ACTRA Toronto gives us all a level playing field on which to build our careers. We are an unusual collective - a union of self-employed creative artists who compete with one another for work. By joining together to negotiate minimum rates, working conditions and health & safety standards, we allow ourselves to focus on the really important, individual work of developing and promoting the skills that get us hired.

We are now practicing union democracy as we hold elections for the 24 seats on ACTRA Toronto Council. Are you interested in representing your fellow members on the important issues we face as performers? Visit the ACTRA Toronto website for details on how to get started. And I hope you took the opportunity to vote in our first online referendum. Your council tidied up the bylaw language and modernized some clauses to better reflect the work we do as a union. Your voice was only a mouse click away.

“My union is a Champion of Work Opportunities.”

Unlike many unions, we don't have one work place or a hiring hall. Does that mean we are dependent only on our agents, our professional reputation and the vagaries of the Canadian dollar to secure our next audition? No! Every day our union works to help create a flourishing production environment that attracts business to Ontario and producers to ACTRA Toronto. And we're doing pretty well. In 2012, Ontario saw \$1.27 billion dollars worth of production, employing close to 30,000 workers. Nearly nine-hundred million of this was domestic - Canadians telling great stories. We achieved this by working closely with our industry partners through organizations like FilmOntario, where we stand together with producers and other media unions and suppliers to lobby governments with one voice for “More Canada on TV” and sustainable tax strategies. In fact, we meet regularly with all of the political parties to remind them of the importance of the Film & TV sector to the Ontario economy and how much continued investment in this sector means to its growth and stability.

But our work together doesn't stop there. Our stewards meet with every producer to cheerfully point out the depth, breadth and diversity of our talented members and to insist on more roles for ACTRA members. They explain the agreement to them and direct production to our member databases, including Casting Diversity and Casting Stunts. And our IT department has been hard at work creating digital, self-filling forms that make it easier for producers to calculate and submit payments owing to ACTRA Toronto performers. They've even made our agreements available to anyone anywhere online and on any device. Better working relationships through better technology and less paperwork will mean more work opportunities.

“My union is a Champion of Professional Development and Emerging Creators.”

I encourage everyone to attend one of our excellent professional development conferences. (We've had 30.) They're FREE for members and they give you the opportunity to network with other dedicated performers and to attend workshops with the stars, producers, directors, casting professionals and agents who can answer your questions and provide you with new tools for success.

The Toronto Indie Production Guideline is now in its tenth year. Hundreds of new and emerging filmmakers have created exciting low-budget projects using ACTRA members. The result? Thousands of festival screenings, dozens of awards and even a couple of successful TV series.

And the times, they are a changin'. That's why we're in talks with member creators and emerging producers about low-budget web-series to attract these exciting projects to engage more ACTRA members. ACTRA Toronto meets every day with producers to help them see that, if they think they can't afford to go ACTRA, they can't afford not to. We work with them to help them access professional performers for professional results.

Online Voting... It Works!

"My union is a Champion of Artists."

Part of our lobby efforts on Parliament Hill and at the Ontario Legislature is continued work on our "Status of the Artist" and "Respect the Artist" campaigns. ACTRA has positioned itself as the voice for the arts and artists in Canada. Our work to protect all child performers working in Ontario, regardless of the medium or their union status, is gaining traction. Presentations on income averaging, changes to Employment Insurance and legislative bills insisting that a negotiated collective agreement is a contract in the entertainment industry just like any other workplace, have been well received. Changes like these take time, but they will ensure that, as our industry continues to thrive, future generations of ACTRA members will be able to make a living under even better conditions than we have experienced.

"My union is a Champion of Each of Us."

I began by pointing out the arbitrary nature of success in the business we have chosen. There are no promises. There is, however, the advantage of being an ACTRA member - the ACTRA Advantage. Without ACTRA we're playing the entertainment lottery and relying on our personal level of celebrity to negotiate a daily fee (likely sans residuals). With our union, in addition to minimum rates, Use Fees, grievance procedures, late payments, call-back cheques... I could go on... we have a collective advocate, publicist, lobbyist and the strength of our 13,000 voices. We helped to create an insurance company and a retirement fund in Actra Fraternal Benefit Society (AFBS). We helped establish a bank in the Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union (CASCUCU). We started a collection society, Performers Rights Society (PRS), which scours the globe for the royalties owed to members. We helped form the Actors Fund, giving us a hand-up in our most challenging times. And we have the support of each other, pledging to work only on union productions and for union wages. That's fairness.

It has taken 70 years of dedication, thoughtfulness, consultation and struggles to build the ACTRA Toronto we share in 2013. A champion of fairness, work opportunities, professional development, emerging creators, artists and each other. I'm proud of those who built our union and I'm glad that you and I are a part of it. ●

In solidarity,



David Sparrow
ACTRA Toronto President

P.S. See you at the Labour Day Parade in Toronto! As always, there'll be FREE swag and FREE admission to the CNE.



Thanks to all of you who voted in the online referendum for a modernization of ACTRA Toronto's By-Laws. Member participation in the online referendum represented an increase of 300% as compared to the previous By-Law Referendum which was voted on by members in attendance at the Annual General Meeting.

Online voting makes it easier for more members to participate in union elections, contract ratifications and other referenda. Using online tools, members who voted in the recent referendum were able to read and evaluate 27 pages of supporting documentation before voting. Precious dues revenue did not have to be spent on printing and postage to distribute that material, saving members' money and members' time.

For these reasons, ACTRA Toronto members can look forward to more online communications. Next step? **Our upcoming Council elections in the fall will also be conducted online.**

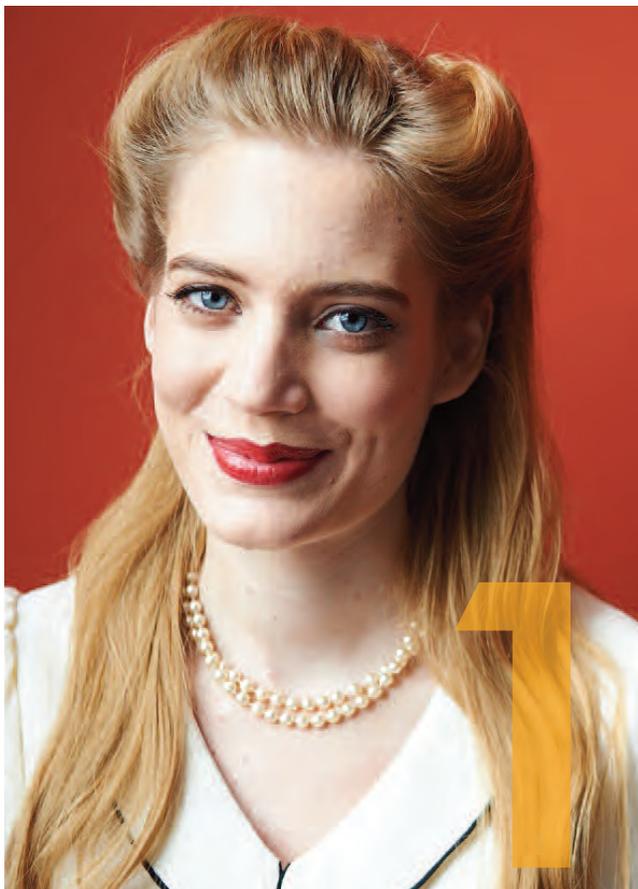
If you don't have an email address yet, now is a great time to set one up. Remember, you don't have to have a computer to create an email account. Publicly accessible computers are readily available in libraries and Internet cafés and many hand-held devices offer inexpensive and mobile access to the Internet and to email.

If you haven't been receiving your ACTRA email, perhaps we have an out-of-date email address for you. If so, please email membership@actratoronto.com to update your contact information. Or phone 416-928-2278. Thanks!

Seven Ages Of Acting

At *Performers*, we decided to mark ACTRA's 70th birthday by asking 7 different performers in 7 different decades of life, "What is it like being an actor and an ACTRA member in this decade of your life?"





In your 20s

I'm often still "the kid" on set and secretly love this. Occasionally, I let my youth give me permission to not have all the answers, to make mistakes. Sometimes I've played opposite performers who have been working for over 25 years and I've thought, "My God, just thinking about turning 25 seems far away!"

I play young women, but I also still play teens. Though I may be slightly more mature than some of the characters I play, I now feel I have the ways in to some of these characters that I didn't have when I was their age. How little I knew of love, loss or sex at 15 and yet young characters are often asked to navigate these territories. Having done some of this navigating in my own life now, my character work has become more truthful and complete. I might even say I'm better at playing some of these younger characters now. Perhaps I am still asked to do so because I haven't lost that little girl who walked into my agent's office for the first time with a page full of questions composed with help from the grown-ups in my show. And because I can still look like a kid, especially when I really smile.

ACTRA, my union, gave me a voice, held my hand the first time I spoke on Parliament Hill or chaired a meeting, clapped at the premiere of my first film as a filmmaker and made me feel as though, in this crazy profession we've chosen as our careers, I might have more control than I thought. Best part about being an actor my age: we still think we can change the world (or at least the industry) and we're now old enough to toast when we do.

• Clara Pasieka

Selected credits:

Pretty Thing; Bejide; Ben's at Home; Off2Kali; Murdoch Mysteries; My Babysitter's a Vampire; Being Erica; The Latest Buzz



In your 30s

Being a male actor in his 30s definitely has its advantages. All the "fun" guy characters I love – you know the jaded, witty, confident, and energetic ones, fit in that 30s sweet spot. Bring on the lawyers with shady pasts, the Dads with toddlers, the embittered journalists who still hold a torch for humanity!

As an actor in my 30s I have to balance experience and learning. I feel that I've come into my own, with more than a decade of adulthood to back me up. But this age-based confidence that helps me book roles or make compelling choices could easily turn into stubbornness, making me closed off to feedback or different approaches to acting. Staying flexible while still having faith in your ability is a skill all successful actors need, but in my 30s I've just started to realize the importance of this.

Working on ACTRA committees inspires me. Being with and learning from other motivated working actors has given me the tools to take the reins of my career through self-producing my web series **Off2Kali Comedy** and networking. More importantly though, those actors remind me that an acting career is not an intangible fantasy, but with a lot of perseverance and luck, can be a working reality.

• Richard Young

Selected credits:

Off2Kali; Degrassi; TNG; Saving Hope; King



In your 40s

I could hardly have imagined when I was in my 20s or 30s what it would be like to be an actress in my 40s. Life is busy. REALLY busy. Not the kind of busy I once knew, but one that is more rewarding. Where once I was juggling hair/nail/facial/personal trainer appointments, I now juggle field trips/packing lunches/teen angst and girl power.

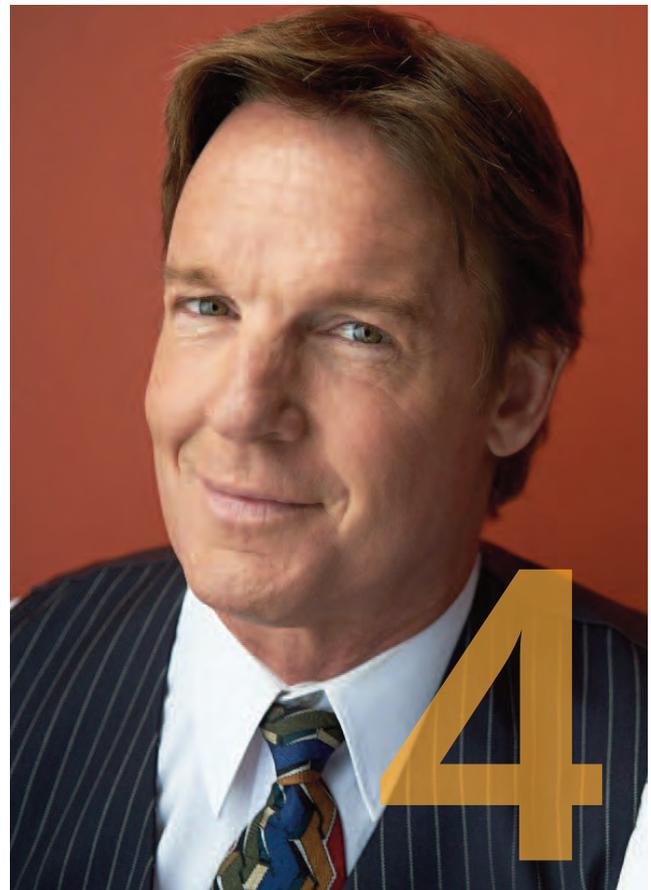
Acting no longer makes the same demands on my time as it once did. Perhaps there aren't as many work options, but I will be damned if I will let the business tell me when I am done.

These years have been the most creatively rewarding in my life. I have a fraction of the neuroses I had as a younger woman. This is the ONE most important outcome, the one that has led to receiving awards (ACTRA, CANADIAN COMEDY AWARD) for the risks I am now taking, stretching into areas that I had never dared go before.

One of my latest joys and passions, the opportunity to sit on ACTRA council, was almost accidental. I couldn't have imagined getting as involved as I have. The peace of mind that has come as a result of knowing that there is something/someone who is there to watch my back is infinite. I enjoy being with people who are impassioned and deeply committed to our union and the caring of our community.

• Maria del Mar

Selected credits: *Flashpoint; King; Lost Girl; A Touch of Grey; Murdoch Mysteries; Terminal City; 24; Monk; Blue Murder; RoboCop: Prime Directives; Mercy Point; The Practice; Frasier; TekWar; Street Legal; E.N.G.*



In your 50s

You know you're an actor in your 50s when you're no longer concerned with being #1 on a call sheet ...your concern is being *on* a call sheet.

I'm a family man. When I started in the business I quickly realized that my career trajectory was going to be a direct result of what I was willing to sacrifice. Some sacrifices I wasn't willing to make, i.e. four months on location to shoot a Hollywood feature versus home every day if I chose the TV series path. I was fortunate to have choices. I chose home. And I would make the same choice again. The years go by quickly and you can't get them back.

I am an artist. In all of its creative forms. That's what pays my bills. I am not in the business of famous. Fame costs you money. In Canada in particular, there is no leverage with fame.

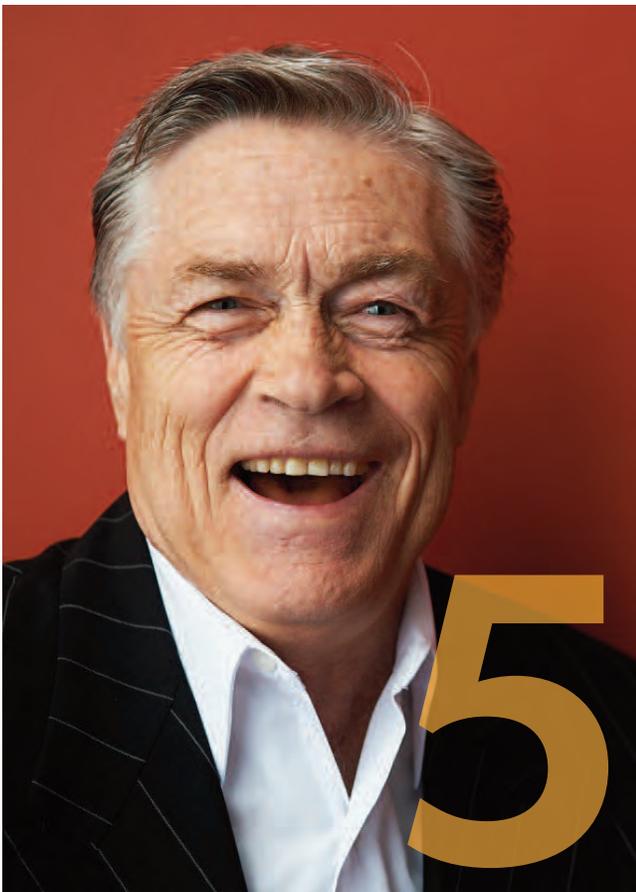
In the end, life is just stories. I've got dozens of them. In your 50s you're just beginning to realize that no one wants to hear them.

There is no tenure in our business. You're as good as your last job. I continue to approach my work the way I always have - being ready to work. To me, that is the hard part of the job - hardest when there seems to be no work in sight.

I must thank ACTRA for the fellowship and shared support. AFBS has provided group health benefits for our family for 25 years. That security is invaluable and unavailable for most self-employed business owners. Thank you all.

• Chris Potter

Selected credits: *Heartland; Good Witch; The Pacifier; Rocket's Red Glare; The Young and the Restless; Superstorm; Law & Order: SVU; Wild Card; Sex Traffic; Queer as Folk; Will & Grace; Silk Stalkings; Kung Fu: The Legend Continues; X-Men: The Series; Material World; Top Cops*



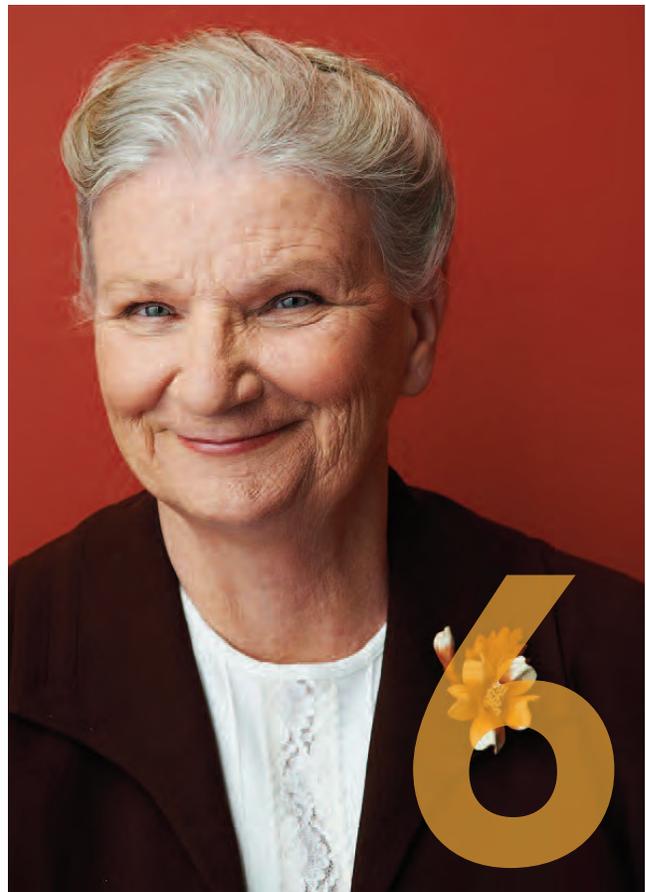
In your 60s

Acting into your 60s brings many rewards and some speed bumps. You don't get to kiss the leading lady anymore. You are now a full-fledged character actor and consequently the roles are more interesting. After 45 years in show biz, you've seen it all and then they surprise you - usually with something dumb. Although I still get many offers, albeit fewer than before, I am still asked to audition, something I have never minded. But auditions have actually gotten tougher, the memory not being what it was, and my reluctance to spend (read 'waste') a couple of hours in the car and waiting room. Once you get in the audition room, often the director is not there (my preference) even if they were once an actor (a surprise to me). The nice thing about the waiting room is the chance to catch up with old, and I do mean old, acting buddies. The downside is those same buddies have been around a long time as well, are up for the same role, and are not chopped liver.

Being around this long has made me more appreciative of what ACTRA does for me. On set, I am made to feel comfortable, safe and protected all because of the good work by our bargaining teams. So I try to give back to ACTRA any way I can.

• Art Hindle

Selected credits: *An Insignificant Harvey; Moon Point; Monster Brawl; Paradise Falls; M.V.P.; Tom Stone; Sleeping Dogs Lie; North of 60; Beverly Hills, 90210; E.N.G.; Liar, Liar: Between Father and Daughter; L.A. Law; Murder She Wrote; J. Edgar Hoover; Berrengers; Porky's; Dallas; Invasion of the Body Snatchers; Face-Off*



In your 70s

I am 75-years-old, a member of ACTRA for 20 odd years. Work is more important to me than ever. Recently, writing is where I feel strongest. As an actor, I feel well-equipped for any part offered, and continue to audition. Of course I hope to get the work, but I also look forward to connecting with other actors of all ages, with a soft spot for old friends. I miss those who have left us. Though we are wanted for our advanced years and fragility as typical "old folks characters," these same restrictions are not always honoured by those running auditions. We nobly climb flights of ill-designed stairs, with or without our canes, to reach an audition. But should we have to? I recall performing for schoolchildren years back who would come up and touch us to see if we were real. We are. Aging encourages us to be aware of what is happening around us. If we seem cautious or slow-moving, or forget the odd word, it's not just because we are frail. We have invaluable experience to process, every step of the way, and are to be valued because of that.

I am grateful for the fine work ACTRA does in negotiating for us, and for its continuing encouragement to senior actors through Act Your Age workshops. Thanks to Actra Fraternal Benefit Society for its extraordinary thoughtfulness around our care. I am a proud early member of Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union. JOIN! Finally, I urge all actors to honour the work of our union and to publicly support the right of all workers to act collectively.

• Diane Gordon

Selected credits: *Mama; Happy Town; Flashpoint; Howie Do It; Pontypool; The Good Mother; Turning to Stone*



In your 80s

The great Bette Davis said it best: “Old age ain’t for sissies!” She was right. Being in your 80s is not so much about acting as it is about maintaining your instrument. When I was young, I was excited by the prospect of exploring the psychology of the characters I was playing and getting it right. As I got older, the first thing I would do was check the script. What and where? Was I up to my knees in freezing water? In a summer dress on Lake Ontario in November?

Now, it’s not, “I’d love to do it.” It’s, “Can I do it?” Can I get up at 4 a.m. to be on-location by 9 a.m.? Is it 40 below or 95 in the shade?

I know I can play a catatonic patient, or a poor old lady crumpled on the floor. But how many lines? Two or more, we might have a problem.

But I mustn’t complain. I’ve had a good run. Great therapy and very rewarding. I’ve been fortunate to have great agents, the most important relationship in one’s career.

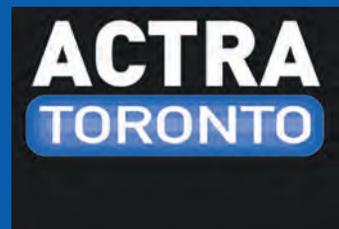
The most recent show I was lucky enough to get at the age of 85 was the final episodes of a children’s animated television show called *Max and Ruby*. I played Grandma Bunny.

My little grandson in New York was watching the show said, “That’s Nana!!” I was pleased to tell him that it was. ●

• Kay Hawtrey

Selected credits: *M.V.P.*; *Max and Ruby*; *Sue Thomas F.B. Eye*; *Perfect Pie*; *Kids in the Hall*; *Brain Candy*; *Police Academy*; *Mrs. Soffel*; *Traders*; *Avonlea*; *Videodrome*; *The Littlest Hobo*; *The Great Detective*

ACTRA’s 70th anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on the considerable progress we have made in the last seven decades of our ongoing mission to make things better for performers. Here, in the branch where the dream was born, it’s a good time to revel in the remarkable renaissance that has transformed ACTRA Toronto in the last decade or so.



A Decade of the ACTRA Advantage:

The Remarkable Renaissance of ACTRA Toronto

2001

At the beginning of the new millennium, the disastrous 1999 CRTC revision of its television policy was just starting to make itself felt.

ACTRA Toronto Council could not have known that the Ontario film and television industry was about to contract by 40 per cent over the next five to six years, nor that foreign service feature film work would virtually disappear from Toronto. Nor could they have anticipated the coming shake-up as the Internet and digital media revolutionized every aspect of our industry. What they did know was they wanted to do a better job of serving ACTRA members and in October 2001, they hired a new Executive Director, **Brian Topp**, to help them do it. That turned out to be a very good decision indeed.

UNITED VOICES

Almost immediately, ACTRA Toronto became a founding partner at FilmOntario, a non-partisan consortium of producers, unions, suppliers and financiers. The founders resolved to speak with a united voice to promote and lobby for Ontario's film and television industry. The collaborative work of FilmOntario eventually reversed the downturn by winning for Ontario a competitive and stable tax credit regime, an accomplishment which spurred record-breaking production activity in the latter part of the decade and corresponding increases in member income which continues to this day.



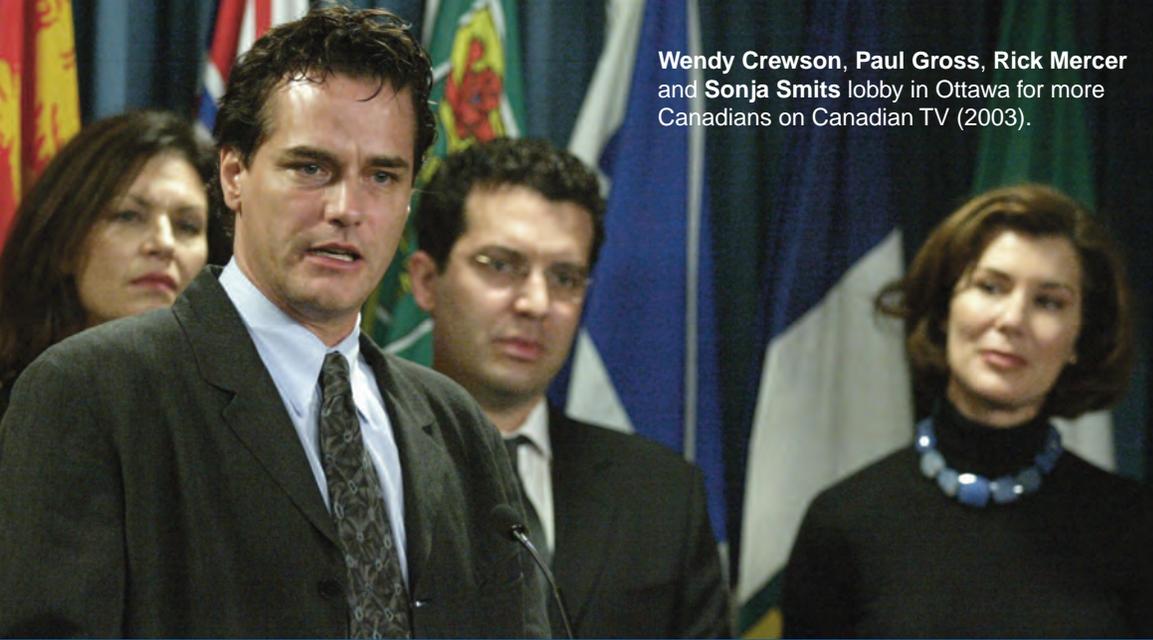
2002

CONNECT WITH MEMBERS

Recognizing that healthy union democracy requires engaged and informed members, our elected leadership decided to do something to get more ACTRA Toronto members to come to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Riffing on an idea borrowed from Brian Topp's earlier career experience in the credit union world, the ACTRA Toronto Members' Conference was born, pairing professional development workshops and career building opportunities with the union's Annual General Meeting. The twice yearly Annual Members' Conference builds the ACTRA community as it builds individual careers, introducing members to Casting Directors they might not know and offering free workshops in everything from accent refinement to weapons handling. In the process, members have become more knowledgeable about and engaged with the work their union does for them and the issues which continue to be of concern to us all.

Attendance at ACTRA Toronto's Annual General Meeting has leapt from 50 to 500. Photo: Jag Gundu





Wendy Crewson, Paul Gross, Rick Mercer and Sonja Smits lobby in Ottawa for more Canadians on Canadian TV (2003).



Each year the ACTRA Awards in Toronto attracts more press - in spite competition from The Oscars. Photo: Lisa Blanchette

Attendance at the AGM leapt from 50 to 500. Members discovered a reinvigorated union that had learned a few things about strategic planning, project management and reporting. An Operating Plan was presented that clearly laid out the union's objectives for the year ahead, followed by a progress report on those objectives. Suddenly the union was in motion - a place where people not only talked about problems, but found solutions. That story of initiative and accountability continues.

2003

ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT

ACTRA Toronto's public profile mushroomed in 2003 when Brian Topp, then president **Richard Hardacre**, and Council, in consultation with some of ACTRA's leading activists like **Shirley Douglas**, had a moment of insight. Performers are good speakers and the kind of personalities that cameras flock to; why not ask their help to lobby government on cultural policy? **Paul Gross, Sonja Smits, RH Thomson, Rick Mercer, Wendy Crewson** and many other leading performers traveled to Parliament Hill to make some noise about the CRTC Broadcaster policy and its failure to put Canadian shows on Canadian TV. Not surprisingly, our performers spoke eloquently and passionately and the cameras loved them. ACTRA has never looked back. This was the genesis of ACTRA's now robust public profile. ACTRA National and ACTRA Toronto continue to draw upon the willingness of well-known Canadian performers to meet one-on-one with politicians of all stripes, employing their skills of persuasion to convince them to support cultural industries and the artists who work in them in Canada, Ontario and Toronto.

CONNECTING WITH THE AUDIENCE - CELEBRATING PERFORMERS AND THEIR WORK

The idea that traditionally meagre marketing budgets (and perhaps a failure of imagination) have stifled the natural development of a star system in Canada has been around for a long time. Council decided to firmly seize the spotlight and shine it on our performers by reinventing the Awards at ACTRA Toronto to celebrate the outstanding artistry of our membership. Many years earlier, ACTRA Toronto had handed out Nellies but those Awards were discontinued in 1985. The awards were reborn in 2003 as the ACTRA Awards in Toronto. The hot ticket event sells out fast - a professional yet good time affair. The Awards are ACTRA Toronto's way of focusing media attention on Canada's otherwise poorly promoted leading lights and of honouring with the Award of Excellence its high-profile members who lend their time and celebrity for the benefit of all performers. Each year the event attracts more press - in spite of competition from The Oscars.

2004

DREAM NEW DREAMS

In 2004, **Peter Keleghan** mused out loud about why ACTRA members didn't have a credit union as SAG members did in the U.S. Once again, Brian Topp's understanding of the credit union world and Council's steady determination to provide expanded services for performers led to the launch of the Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union (CASCUCU). CASCUCU is now a full service financial institution with \$25 million dollars in assets and has been providing banking, loan and investment services since 2008 to the sorts of freelance arts workers normally shown the door by the banks.



The historic 2007 strike where ACTRA won a signal victory on the issue of new media.
(Photo: Peter Baker)

2007

DEFENDING OUR TURF IN THE NEW DIGITAL FRONTIER

A key milestone was ACTRA's historic strike of 2007, during Past President **Karl Pruner's** tenure. ACTRA Toronto's membership and leadership played a determining role in the negotiations which won ACTRA members the best new media terms for performers anywhere on the planet. A strategic alliance with the United Steelworkers, minted in 2005, provided a bulwark of reassurance at the time, as tens of thousands of retired Steelworkers volunteered to walk the picket lines for us if necessary.

2008

BUILDING AND MARKETING A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

During this period, ACTRA Toronto had a hand in the expansion of Toronto's studio space through its sponsorship of ROI's Labour-Sponsored fund's investment in Pinewood Toronto. Other studio spaces followed. Toronto is widely considered one of the best places in the world to shoot and has in recent years become an increasingly important production centre for U.S. television series. The excellence, professionalism and friendliness of our talent and crews are internationally recognized. Closer to our hearts, our domestic industry can no longer be described in childhood terms – it is a fully mature industry and now supplies more than half of our work.

2009

MARKETING A DIVERSE TORONTO

Past President, **Heather Allin's** focus upon inclusion for women and diversity added to the smart branding of Toronto as a super-diverse shooting location - one of the only global locations where a broad diversity of talent speaks English. On the gender balance file, long-serving female councillors now comprise half of the Executive of ACTRA Toronto's Council, and the Toronto ACTRA Women's Committee is actively contributing to the growing industry conversation around increasing working opportunities for women working in recorded media.

PROTECTING THE BOTTOM LINE

Through all these adventures, ACTRA Toronto's fiscal management was shepherded through good times and bad with safe, conservative restraint. Its strike fund experienced enviable growth, providing assurance that we can back up our words with action if necessary. Detailed financial statements are always publicly available on our website.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Every challenge we've faced and every strategy we've adopted as a union has been about one thing and one thing only: making things better for performers. Knowing more about your concerns and priorities helps to focus our efforts on the things that matter most to you, not just in times of bargaining. At all times, you are just an email away from us. **Email us any time at info@actratoronto.com.**

STAFF CHANGES

Brian Topp, the longest serving Executive Director of ACTRA Toronto, having occupied the post for over a decade, recently announced his transition to a Senior Advisory role and is taking on new challenges outside of ACTRA.



Sue Milling

Topp was pivotal in the accomplishments of the last decade and in the work of most importance to the pocketbooks of members: bargaining. Topp led ACTRA Toronto in the 2001, 2003, 2007, 2009 and 2012 Independent Production Agreement negotiations, and the 2002, 2005 and 2010 National Commercial Agreement negotiations, including the 2007 strike for new media.

But the time for change and renewal was inevitable and it arrived at the beginning of this year with the announcement of Mr. Topp's transition. After careful consideration, the elected Executive sought the appointment of its first choice, **Sue Milling**, recently Director of Independent and Broadcast Production, and council approved the recommendation.

Sue Milling has been a long-time union activist, working with the United Steelworkers (USW) and volunteering with New Democratic Party of Canada. She has known and worked with Mr. Topp on various projects over nine years. In three years, as Director of the Independent and Broadcast department (on loan from the USW), Sue crested a steep learning curve, catching on to the unique working conditions of our industry in record time. She absorbed the soft and hard skills of the biz, negotiating with producers on specific projects, traveling to L.A. to promote Ontario's diverse talent base to bigwig studio execs, and playing a key role in the bargaining of the Independent Production Agreement this past fall. With seemingly boundless energy, she also found time to support and encourage work of the diversity committee, the stunt committee, the youth committee, and to increase outreach to child performers and their parents.

Her appointment left an opening in the Director's office of the Independent and Broadcast Department, which **Mimi Wolch** was sourced to fill. Ms. Wolch began her long career in film and television as a script supervisor. Moving into senior labour roles, she served with two other audiovisual unions: I.A.T.S.E. and the Director's Guild of Canada, Ontario. She was an early member of the FilmOntario board (where Topp first made a mental note of her broad grasp of the industry and negotiating skills). She currently sits on the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board. ●

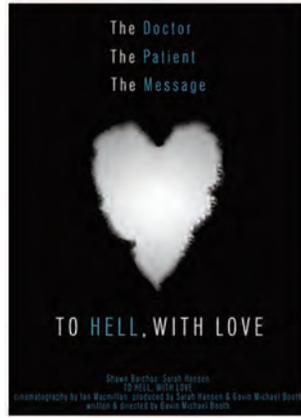
YEAA Short Films sell out at ReelWorld!

By Clara Pasieka

At the Q & A following the YEAA shorts screening, **Bobby Del Rio**, ReelWorld's Canadian Films Programmer and ACTRA Toronto member, said, "And they said Canadians didn't watch Canadian film." Del Rio was referring to the immense popularity of the YEAA Shorts program at ReelWorld, helmed this year by YEAA member, **Sam Coyle**. In fact, the YEAA Shorts premiere, held on April 14th, the closing day of the festival, sold out before the festival even opened; it was the only program to be awarded a second screening which also sold out. Following the Q & A, as we made our way towards the waiting cameras, a woman I didn't know caught me by the arm and said, "You might not realize it, but you guys were the superstars of the festival." And with that she handed me her card, told me to email her and left me to ponder the weight of her words.

If we were superstars, (which would be far too un-Canadian of me to suggest), it is because we stand on the shoulders of many incredible artists in this union, who said yes to our ideas and many requests throughout, who advised us, coached us on how to do a solid press interview, helped us with a press release, and spread the news of our fundraiser and our premiere as if it was their own. We gratefully share our success with them. If we were superstars, it was because we held each other's hands during the process of making these films, it's because we were generous with each other, it's because we dared each other to go do interviews, it's because we asked artists we respected to join our creative teams, it's because we were not ashamed to ask and to not know.





If we were superstars, it was because, prior to the premiere, we engaged in an extensive traditional and (the sort of thing we do well) a social media campaign, with impressive results, including interviews on CBCradio and Rogers TV, among others.

If we were superstars, our success was built upon the success of our YEAA predecessors in the 2012 ReelWorld YEAA shorts program, *The Untitled Toronto Project*. Three of those six shorts, directed, produced by and starring YEAA members, found further life. **Matt Austin's** *The Tape* was accepted into Cannes and TIFF, **Andy McQueen** and **Evert Houston's** *Churano* was licensed by the CBC, and **Supinder Wraich's** *Chinesey* was screened at the Reel Asian Film Festival.

The success of this year's nine multicultural films also proves what ACTRA Toronto's Diversity committee and others have been articulating for some time: that Canadians want to see themselves reflected on-screen in diverse characters whose stories are complex. Every day, Canadians tell each other stories that spring from our unique, diverse histories. And grappling with these stories is as much a part of our Canadian identity as the telling. It's about time we started seeing all those stories on screen.

When I began writing this article, I had difficulty conveying how intensely proud I am to be a member of this union and of YEAA. Making my film and then promoting all the films with my fellow YEAA artists was a transformative experience. The experience made us feel as though we have control over our careers in ways many of us never thought we could. While some of the success we felt may be related to the publicity and attention we received - for lack of a better word, the taste of "fame" - more important is the power we felt creating and playing diverse Generation Y characters and telling our own stories, that, to use our vernacular, "didn't suck"

As YEAA filmmakers begin to ponder ReelWorld 2014, we are grateful for the courage, capacity and support from ACTRA and ReelWorld, to tell our stories. Because at the end of the day, that's all we really want, isn't it? ●

- **Clara Pasieka** is a Co-Chair of YEAA and recently guested on an episode of *Murdoch Mysteries*. A sometime alternate on council, Clara was recently overheard summing up all of ACTRA's work in one memorable phrase: "Just pay the f!@\$%^&* actors!"



The films:

A Man is a Man is a Man, created by Brian Mifsud, directed by Alfredo Salvatore Arcilesi

Audition Day, created by Richard Young, directed by Spencer Indenouye

Bejide, created by Clara Pasieka, directed by Joel Keller

Getaway Car, created by Kristina Esposito, directed by Ryan Fisher

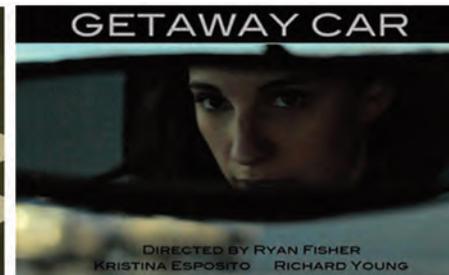
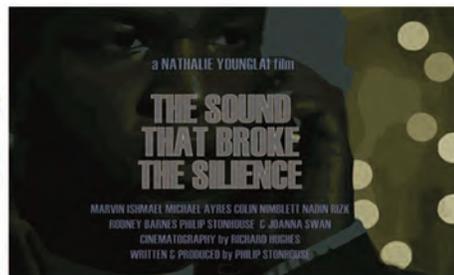
New Domain, created by Ryan Kotack, directed by Andre Rehal

The Change, created by Sam Coyle

The Haircut, created by Imogen Grace, directed by Carrie Adelstein

The Sound that Broke the Silence, created by Philip Stonhouse, directed by Nathalie Youlai

To Hell with Love, created by Sarah Booth, directed by Gavin Michael Booth



Out, Lo



oud and Proud

Queer in the Biz

by Joanne Vannicola

Since Ellen's trailblazing episode when she announced she was gay, there have been more shows with LGBTQ roles: *Queer As Folk*, *Bomb Girls*, *The L Word*, *Being Erica*, *Modern Family*, and *The New Normal*, to name a few.

However it wasn't until the mid-90s that television started to put a face to queer characters (often played by straight actors,) and since then it has only really scratched the surface.

As an actor who is out, I have managed to work and maintain a career. I've won an Emmy and been nominated for Genie, Gemini, and ACTRA awards, but the truth is: I don't easily pass as heterosexual. That doesn't upset me. What does concern me is the lack of storytelling from an LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Queer) perspective and the lack of roles for gender non-conforming talent. The question remains: how can we encourage a paradigm shift in our industry, where diverse and multidimensional storytelling becomes the norm and people of all genders, sexualities, races and abilities are equitably represented in the stories that are told?

I've always spoken out and up about the lack of diverse choices for women and LGBTQ people in our industry. I worked against stereotypes of gender, clothing, hair, and the notion that I should render my LGBTQ identity invisible. Many of us do this work on our own with common goals and experiences, including actor and award-winning author of *Fall On Your Knees*, **Ann-Marie MacDonald**. "I remember auditioning for the part of a lesbian for a CBC show in the eighties," Macdonald shared. "I had heard about the part and had to fight for an audition,

even though I had done lots of work already. The producer and casting people thought that it would be unwise to cast "a real one" in the role. I barged into the audition...they were quite frank about my being "wrong" for it because I was "too right" for it. A straight friend of mine got the part. Over the years I played quite a few "girl-next-door" types," Macdonald continued, "often for CBC, gradually evolving into more grown-up roles such as serious crown attorney types. 'Crypto-lesbians' I called them and 'Execu-dykes,' the types of roles that seemed to require a lesbian undertone, but were never declared as such. And all this when I had been out for years! Apart from *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* and *Better Than Chocolate*, if I wanted to play an actual dyke I had to write the stuff myself, which I did for theatre."

A similar story emerged from other women I spoke to: "I got labelled as difficult," says **Trey Anthony**, actor and writer of *Da Kink in My Hair*. "I don't want to play roles that debase me. I call them the 'where is my chicken?' roles. I want stories that speak to me as a queer woman, a black woman." I asked if Anthony thought things had changed. She told of a casting director asking for her 'ABC,' her 'Angry Black Chick.' "No, I don't really think there has been a lot of change, but as someone who identifies as queer, I can pass (as straight). We need powerful writers, especially coming from the black community and for any of us who do have power, we must give back."

Sexism and racism add layers to the already complicated reality of being an LGBTQ actor, particularly if you do not try to pass as heterosexual. **Adamo Ruggiero's** experience was unique: growing up as a gay character on TV in *Degrassi: TNG* while staying in the closet at home. "It wasn't until half-way through the show that I came out," explained the award-winning host of *The Next Star*. "I got used to having three lives. I had a straight life, a gay life on TV and pretended to be a straight guy playing a gay character. It was exhausting. I wanted to come out, to speak



OUT, LOUD AND PROUD

to my generation and take responsibility but there were so many regular things as a 17-year-old that had to be kept in because I had this public persona and had to think about people watching me. I hope to play gay characters at 37 but I don't want to play the 'flamboyant and faaaaabulous gay.' I

want to play real people, real characters and I'm not the hair-dresser type so why would I be brought in for it? Just because I'm gay? I'm an actor and I want to play all kinds of roles."

Actor, writer and ACTRA Toronto V.P. **David Gale** (*Loving Spoonfuls*) observed: "In the music industry and reality TV world the public doesn't have to buy a star's sexuality being something that it's not. But with actors there always needs to be a willing suspension of disbelief. Our society is still uptight around sexuality and so it's easier for the public to believe an actor playing a rapist or a murderer than it is to accept a gay actor playing straight. Isn't that twisted? But I see that changing with the current generation. They grew up with positive gay characters like those on *Will and Grace*. Growing up in the 60s & 70s there were no, out, non-stereotype gay role models."

Actor/writer **Diane Flacks** (*Kids in the Hall*): "When I think of the industry and who it aims to please, it has a life of its own, a fantasy-driven industry of gorgeous people... so we have to take the risk, get things out there, however we can, create our own work." Flacks' perspective resonates. If we are ever going to have accurate LGBTQ representation on our screens, we must break down the stereotype of white, straight and perfect-looking. Otherwise it tells gay actors: 'If you want to be in the industry you must look straight.'

"I look gay, it's who I am." **Billy Merasty**, First Nations actor (*Elijah*) shared his distinct perspective: "I've had casting people tell me I look too gay and some have said I'm not gay enough, but it's a part of my life and I don't want to edit it. I live it. I breathe it, but the business is stereotypical and we are always underestimated by the way we look. And you would think that, with new Native programming and TV shows, I would be working more. I'm not." I asked if he thought it was because he is gay. "Yes," he answered, "but... I was lucky. I was raised Cree and it has enhanced my life and just because I live in a racist and homophobic world doesn't mean that being Cree or gay isn't potent. It's magical."

Change comes slowly but everyone I spoke to agreed there is an overwhelming imperative that LGBTQ characters not only be identified as gay but portrayed as having full lives - sometimes in loving relationships but always with storylines that pertain to more than just their sexuality.

Bomb Girls is a great example of a series with diverse characters, in primetime, on a major network. The show, set during WWII, depicts strong and dignified female characters including a lesbian character named Betty - played by **Ali Liebert**. **Michael MacLennan**, *Bomb Girls*' co-creator and writer explains: "Anyone who claims to care (about LGBTQ issues) should include queer content. I think we have found a good balance with *Bomb Girls*. Betty's character isn't just about being gay, but about her friendships and work and so many other things that make her life full and it's what our audience responds to." Writer **Aaron Martin** of *Degrassi* and *Being Erica* agrees. "I've made a point of putting gays and lesbians in all shows I've written or created. I feel like it's everyone's duty - gay or straight - to reflect reality in the shows they put on the air."

Some LGBTQ people and supporters need to be out, loud and proud and rocket ideas forward, work feverishly for LGBTQ rights and stories. Others need to take time and space and do things slowly, gradually. We are all different. Many actors are still afraid to come out, afraid they won't be able to earn a living, or do what they love. I don't know many out lesbian actors in Toronto. It's actually a lonely thought, to be part of such a small pool of women in our industry, but nevertheless, we are an important part of its fabric, living our lives.

I am grateful for who I've become and proud to walk into any room without feeling the need to hide. Now I audition and play female characters where I am not asked to 'pass' and my sexual identity isn't a barrier but may even enhance the character and open minds. I've been in the business since I was eight-years-old and I'm still here. I prefer to be part of a Canadian culture and history that provides courage, strength and gives hope to the next generation by being out, by being an activist and by working hard to make our industry and the world a better place. No matter how slowly things change, soon there will be a shift in the way stories get told, with equitable representation of LGBTQ people, but we must keep vigilant to make that a reality. To quote K.D. Lang, "Let your freak flags fly." ●



Joanne Vannicola is an actor, writer, coach and activist. She is known for her roles in *Being Erica*, *Love and Human Remains*, *Stardom*, *Maggie's Secret*, and numerous animated series. She is currently working on a rewrite of her first novel in the Diaspora Dialogues Program and hoping to write her second book on the lives of LGBTQ talent - there are so many stories to tell.

She can be reached at: joannevannicola@gmail.com or [@joannevannicola](https://twitter.com/joannevannicola)

GUIDESTONES

by Chris Owens



On a hilltop in Elbert County, Georgia stands a monument made of granite slabs over 19 feet tall known as the Georgia Guidestones. Inscribed with a set of 10 guidelines or principles in eight different languages, the Guidestones are meant to serve as a template for how to live now and, presumably, in the post-apocalyptic era.





Sandy (**Supinder Wraich**) and Trevor (**Dan Fox**) explore various locales in the web series, *Guidestones*.
(All photos courtesy of Jay Ferguson)

GUIDESTONES

Exactly who created this monument is a mystery. All we know is that someone using the pseudonym R. C. Christian hired the Elberton Granite Finishing Company to build the structure in June 1979. This story so intrigued producer/director/writer **Jay Ferguson** that he used it as a launching point for his award-winning interactive web series, *Guidestones*.

The first season of *Guidestones* consists of 50 cliffhanger episodes each three or four minutes in length. The series follows two Ryerson journalism students, Sandy (**Supinder Wraich**) and Trevor (**Dan Fox**), as they investigate an unsolved murder that leads them to the mysterious monument rooted in the Georgia countryside. It was shot on location in Canada, the U.S., and India on a budget of \$300,000 and also stars veteran Canadian actors **Rosemary Dunsmore**, **David Fox** and **Hrant Alianak**, as well as **Amber Goldfarb** and **Christina Jol**.

Guidestones is transmedia storytelling. It is a single interactive story experienced across multiple platforms and formats using digital technology. There are clues hidden in each episode that can help the viewer solve the mystery. These clues may be, for example, a website address. By clicking on the address you can gather more information and try to get ahead of the protagonists. If you go to guidestones.org, you can sign up for the entire series and episodes will be sent to you in real time via email or Facebook. You can also download the series on iTunes.

While the show's creator thought he had enough material for a feature-length project that "should've taken two or three months to post," it actually took Ferguson a solid year because of its complex three-dimensional nature. In addition to shooting the main story, he also had to build all those webpages where viewers could search for clues. "We would shoot it, cut it, build the additional elements while we were cutting, then shoot those elements and cut them back into the story," he says. "It was almost impossible to lock an episode, there were so many things going on."

When he was casting *Guidestones*, Ferguson wasn't sure if he could afford professional actors so he put a call out to friends to see what kind of non-union talent was available. "I had about 15 names and Supinder was like the second one who came in and she gave this incredible audition and I thought, 'Man, if they're all like this, it's going to be easy!'" It turns out there'd been a misunderstanding and Supinder is a union member. According to Ferguson, "I knew at that moment there was no way I was going to be able to go back and so it was like, alright, we're an ACTRA show now." Supinder also recommended Dan Fox. "I'm really glad that happened not only because they're amazing to work with but because it opened the door to all these other talented people. On a tight budget shooting guerrilla-style, I needed actors who could come in, nail it and walk away. I needed total pros. I feel very, very lucky to have this cast."

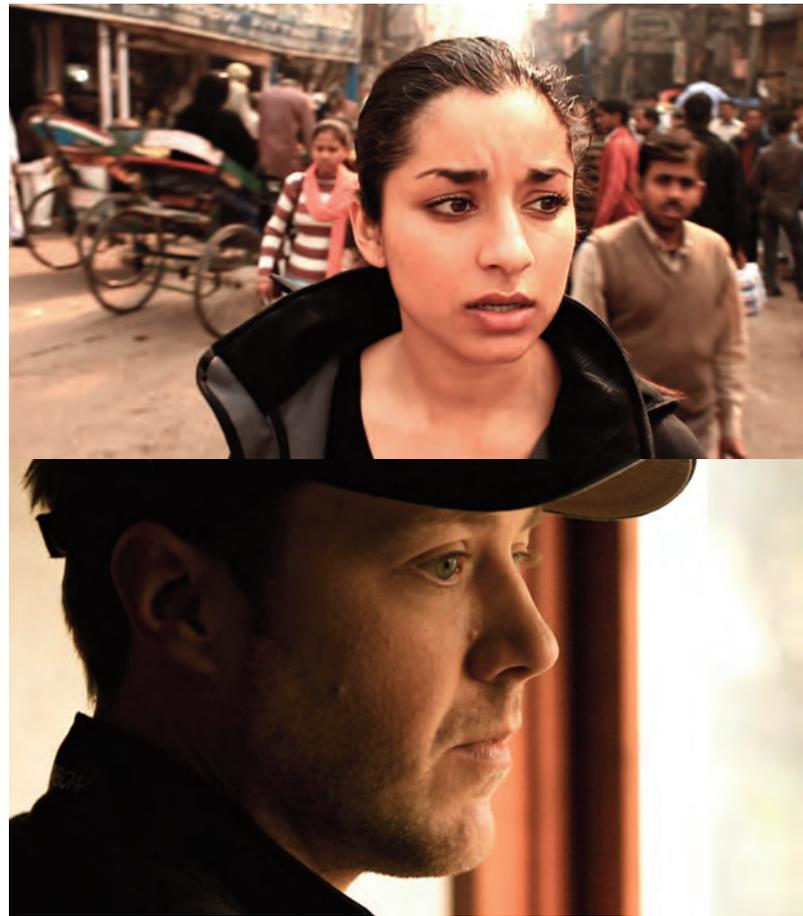
Guidestones recently won an International Emmy and a Canadian Screen Award for Digital Programming. High praise, indeed. Has this made the road any smoother for Ferguson as

he prepares to tackle Season 2? "Producing anything is hard," he says. "It's also extremely gratifying. And I find it isn't getting easier in the online space. We've certainly done fairly well in terms of accolades and feedback, it's been a very positive experience on that front, but we still don't have people banging down our door to get involved. We still have to go out there and slog it out."

On the other hand, Ferguson sees some positive developments that bode well for the future. "Canada is a world leader. In all my travels, everywhere I go, there are tons of Canadians out there doing interesting things in this field and it really makes me excited because it's places like the Independent Production Fund and the Ontario Media Development Corporation who are helping finance this stuff. It's not a lot of money but it's money that allows people with passion to really dig in and try to be innovative and I think that will serve our industry extremely well moving forward."

Of course, there are no blueprints for trailblazers, they must learn through trial and error. As Ferguson says to author **J. C. Hutchins**, in one of his many production video diaries, "Everyday we're making something up that's new. There are no systems set in place in transmedia."

Sometimes you have no choice but to carve out your own *Guidestones*. ●



TALKING TO:

SUPINDER WRAICH:

Chris Owens: *Does shooting an interactive web series differ from shooting a regular television show?*

Supinder Wraich: I've just been cast in my first role as a recurring character on 'regular' TV- in BBC's *Copper* and one of the challenges of that show is I receive the scripts week to week and have little insight into what will be happening with my character. Shooting *Guidestones* was the exact opposite, I had the entire script beforehand and it was more like shooting a feature-length film.

CO: *What do you feel you need to perform at your best?*

SW: Every role is different but I always like to throw something into the preparation of a character that makes it fun for me. For Sandy, I moved into a hostel for a month while we shot, became a vegetarian, spoke with an accent as often as I could, and tried my best during our shoot in Toronto to see the city through the eyes of an exchange student. To perform my best I feel I need to know the character I'm playing inside and out. Keeping it fun and interesting makes it all feel less like work and more like what I've always wanted to do my whole life.

DAN FOX:

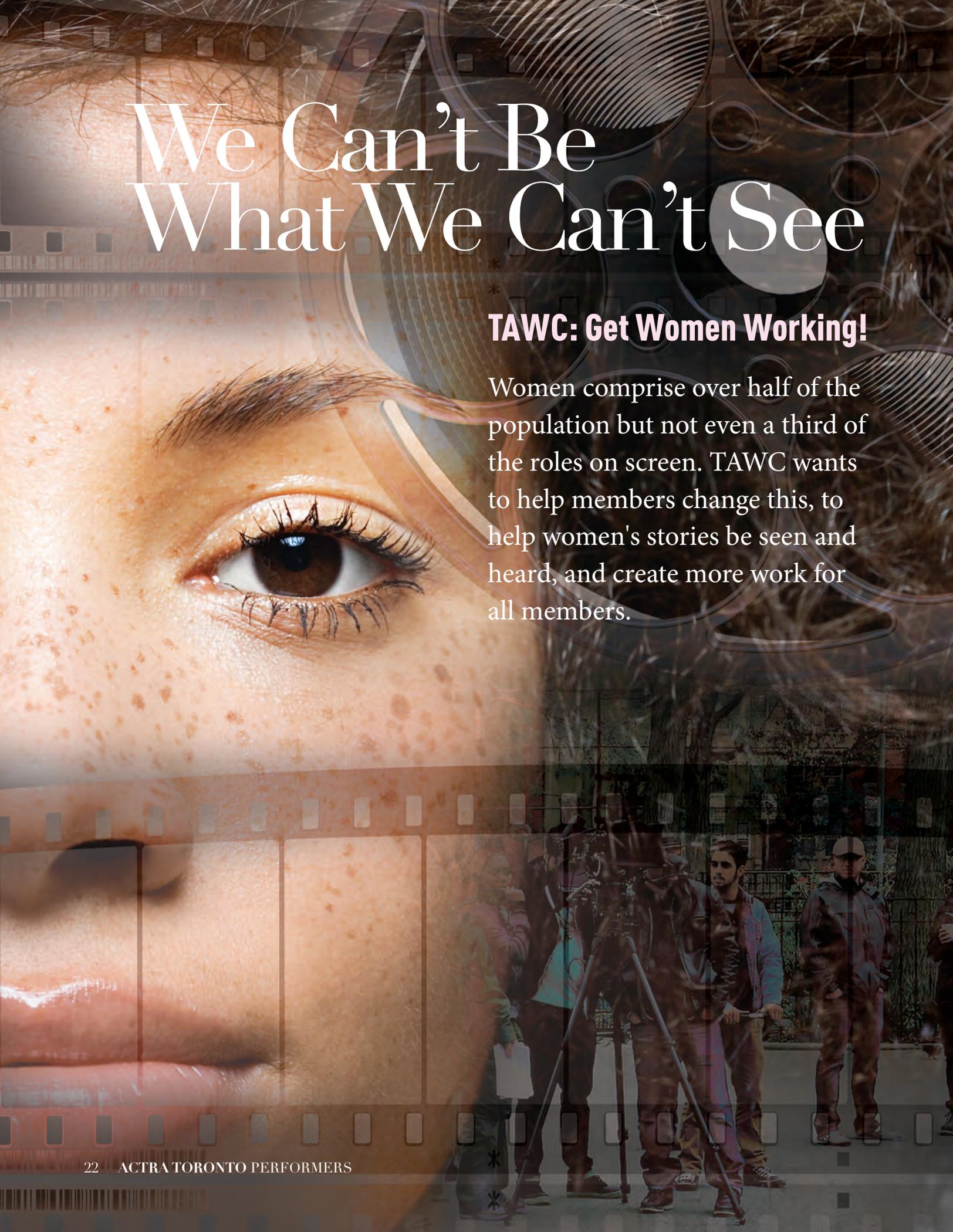
Between filming Seasons One and Two of *Guidestones*, Dan Fox is exploring Peru:

Chris Owens: *Whereabouts are you?*

Dan Fox: I just finished a month in the Amazonian jungle on a work exchange program in a Shamanic healing centre down here. I've been working with a few plant medicines. Then I'm headed to Cuzco to visit some of the ruins there as well as Macchu Pichu. This trip has been overwhelmingly life changing so far and it's only half done!

CO: *In Season One, you shot 50 episodes. How do you prepare for a run like that?*

DF: Season One of *Guidestones* was pretty daunting. We shot everything out of sequence and I had a trunk-full of clothes for my wardrobe that I had to keep track of. The shoot was very 'run-and-gun,' (as Jay likes to say), it was very fast-paced which was great because it lent to the frantic tone of the show. The amazing thing for me (and Supinder as well) was the fact that we were able to travel to so many exotic locations to shoot *Guidestones* and do what we love to do. I did my best in preparing what I could every day, but when 'Action!' was called I had to be ready to let it all go and be fully present with whatever unexpected things came up so that no shot would be wasted and they'd have tons to work with in the editing suite.



We Can't Be What We Can't See

TAWC: Get Women Working!

Women comprise over half of the population but not even a third of the roles on screen. TAWC wants to help members change this, to help women's stories be seen and heard, and create more work for all members.

In the two years after the sad passing of Co-Chair **Cayle Chernin**, the Toronto ACTRA Women's Committee (TAWC) has had a renaissance.

It was February of last year, when I was invited on to the committee as Co-Chair, and along with Co-Chair **Tabby Johnson**, we set TAWC on a new path, dubbed **Get Women Working**. The goal: to reinvigorate the presence of the female voice, and galvanize ACTRA members to make it happen.

Our first step has been to let people know why this initiative, and even TAWC itself, is essential. The statistics and media advocacy we were seeing (*Miss Representation* and The Bechdel Test*) fuelled our goals to get organized, get our message out there and make concrete plans to practice what we preach. The initial organizing team (myself, **Tabby Johnson**, **Heather Allin**, **Wendy Crewson** and ACTRA staff member **Judy Barefoot**) have developed two project initiatives: the Let's Make Movies call-to-arms video, advertising our currently running Toolkit Sessions free to all members in good standing, and the Toolkit sessions themselves.

One of the best things about both of these projects has been the fantastic industry professionals we have been able to enlist. Instrumental in guiding the video's message was writer and musician **Jane Ford**. She assigned homework to the team: to gather statistics that resonated personally with us, and to write an impromptu from-the-heart speech. With this source material Jane crafted a brilliant script. When it came time to find a director a lot of amazing names came up, but when we saw **Hill Kourkoutis'** work there was no question that we wanted her. Her style, honed shooting rock videos, was exactly what we were seeking for this project: edgy, irreverent and exciting. We shot the video with a skeleton crew, in the Gordon Pinsent Studio at ACTRA Toronto, in an amazingly short period of time. But what a time it was! Being on set with all of those fantastic women at once was a blast, and the energy of artistic camaraderie was electric.

Once that was done we began to flesh out our ideas for the TAWC Toolkit sessions. We wanted to give female members the tools to make their own work. Keen to get more top-notch pros from the industry on board, I looked at the work of Raindance Toronto, the local chapter of a worldwide not-for-profit filmmaking initiative. I approached **Tiska Wiedermann** and **Jaimy Warner** at Raindance Toronto and asked if they might be interested in helping spearhead a series of sessions to help TAWC members learn to write, produce and direct their own films, and they said yes! Apprentice member, **Courtney Lyons**, has also been integral to TAWC's current initiatives. She and I brainstormed about the new TAWC website and she then created it.

On Saturday, April 6th, TAWC, in association with Raindance Toronto, hosted Build Your Script, the first session in the year-long series of the TAWC Toolkit initiative. Panellists **Karen McLellan** and **Daniela Saioni** inspired and engaged the participants with writing exercises and tips. Films created will be adjudicated by Female Eye Film Festival and the winner is guaranteed a spot in the festival. The films must meet three

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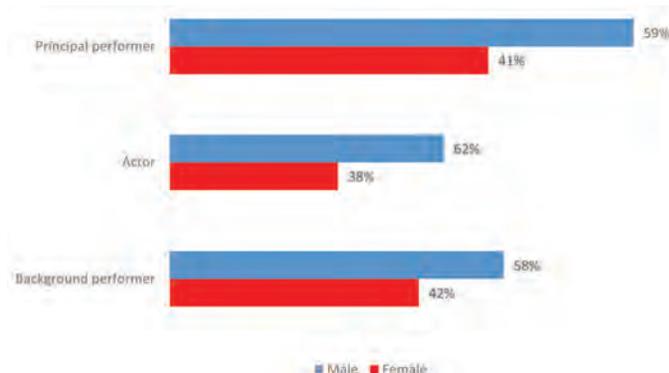
eligibility criteria: 1) a 60% female cast 2) the top two on the call sheet must be women and 3) the film must speak to our chosen theme: TABOOS. The first session was inspiring and motivating and we can't wait for the next!

Women comprise over half of the population but not even a third of the roles on screen. TAWC wants to help members change this, to help women's stories be seen and heard, and create more work for all members. Because we can't be what we can't see. And the world is only half as good without us. Let's make movies! ●

• **Nicole St. Martin**, TAWC Co-Chair

Read **CUES – A report from Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen on gender (in)equality in the Canadian independent screen-based production industry:**
<http://www.actra.ca/actra/focus/>

Percentage of working ACTRA members by performance category, by gender, 2010-2012



*The Bechdel Test is used to identify gender bias in films. Its origin is Alison Bechdel's comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*. To pass the test, a film must have at least two women characters who talk to each other about something besides a man. To view a database of thousands of films analyzed according to Bechdel Test go to bechdeltest.com.



Ask Tabby and Tova

Q: Where do I start?

Tova: The first thing I tell parents new to the business is this, “What you don’t know about this industry is A LOT!!!”

Tabby: Resources are actually very easy to find, both on the ACTRA Toronto website (www.actratontoronto.com) and at the ACTRA National site (www.actra.ca).

Tova: Start by downloading the Stage Parent Survival Guide. It’s a free PDF and should be on-set reading for the first few years at least. Here’s the link:

<http://www.actra.ca/actra/StageParentGuide/>

Tabby: It’s a funny, informative, personal guide to shepherding yourself and your child through this business, written by a parent who admits she made a few mistakes, but who must have done something right because her son, **Jay Baruchel**, is now one of Canada’s hottest young stars.

The Baruchels launch the updated Stage Parent Survival Guide



Q: My son worked a lot as a child. Now that he’s in his early teens, auditions seem fewer and he is no longer being booked. Did we do something wrong?

Tova: It’s an old Hollywood story: Some child actors disappear from age 12 to 20. Many factors can lead to this. Boys can sprout up. Suddenly they’re too tall to play 10 and too young play 17. Girls can go through awkward phases as well. These young performers aren’t doing anything wrong; this is just a tough business that finds it hard to break with the stereotype of what’s hot and cool.

Tabby: And consider this; sometimes a child’s interest in or enthusiasm for the business changes. They miss being a kid and they stop “showing up” in the audition room. Have a candid, supportive chat with your child. Maybe they need a break, or maybe they’d like to pursue some other creative or athletic outlet.

Tova: Either way, check in with your child. Let them know you’re proud of them and that the judgment of this sometimes harsh business is not how they should measure their success at a young age.

Q: My daughter is mixed race. She is beautiful. Why are so few young black girls getting work and what can I do to increase her odds?

Tabby: As a mixed race actor myself, I know that racism in the business is real. ACTRA Toronto is very busy bringing this issue into the light. Time and time again we point out that what we see on our screens does not look like the population we see on the subway. The business case for more diversity on our screens is irrefutable. Nonetheless we’re still fighting this battle. Diversity is a cornerstone to our development as a union.

Diversity is our strength. Toronto has one of the most diverse talent pools on the globe, but as a society, we still have a hierarchy that has yet to fully recognise diversity as a viable business strength. At ACTRA we actively reach out to diverse filmmakers, encouraging storytelling that reflects the full richness of our lives, but the business has a way to go yet. Is your child registered on ACTRA Toronto's online diverse talent database? www.castingdiversity.ca That could help.

What can you post on CastingDiversity.ca?

YOUR NAME your top 3 credits **sample profile:**

PRODUCTION	COMPANY	ROLE	YEAR
Timeless Drama	CBC	Lead	2011
A Canadian Story	Showcase	Lead	2009
Live and Funny	The Second City	Company Member	2008

ETHNICITY: Korean, Jamaican, French, Korean
LANGUAGES: ?
DISABILITY: ?
SPECIAL SKILLS: Juggling, Singing, Salsa Dancing

ACTRA TORONTO

RENT should only be a musical.

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Q: What are the rules about how I can spend the money my child earns?



Tabby: Boy are we glad you asked that!

Tova: As a parent or guardian who receives money or property on behalf of a minor in Ontario, you have specific obligations under the law. It's up to you to know and understand those obligations and to act in accordance with the law in your province.

Tabby: Children have property rights in Ontario. And they also have a law office in the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario to protect them. It's called the Office of the Children's Lawyer.

We're not lawyers but here's a link to the Guardian of Property of Minor Children Brochure.

<http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/ocl/proguard.asp>

Read it and start educating yourself about what Ontario law has to say about who can receive property on behalf of a child and some responsibilities that go along with doing so.

Tova: More on-set reading for you. ●

If you have questions for Tabby and Tova email tjohnson@actratortoronto.com

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A Standing O for the winners!



In case you missed all the hoopla over the 2013 ACTRA Awards in Toronto, here are the winners: **Shannon Kook-Chun** took home the award for Outstanding Performance – Voice for an animated short called *Requiem for Romance*. **Shawn Doyle** won Outstanding Performance – Male for an independent film called *The Disappeared*, shot out of the Maritimes Branch. **Tatiana Maslany** won Outstanding Performance – Female for another indie film, *Picture Day*. A non-stop work schedule left Maslany unable to attend the Awards but her statuette was picked up by the Writer-Director-Producer of the film, **Kate Melville**. The venerable **Shirley Douglas** was presented with the Award of Excellence by her good friend and last year's winner, **Rick Mercer**. Douglas was accompanied to the shindig by her twins, **Kiefer** and **Rachel Sutherland**. The show was written and hosted by comic **Elvira Kurt** and live music was supplied by multiple Maple Blues nominee, **Shakura S'Aida**.

At the Plenary, held on Thursday, February 21, 2013, as part of the February Members Conference, the Stunt Committee lauded three of its own: **Matt Birman**, **Branko Racki**, and **Alison Reid**.

Shirley Douglas
ACTRA Toronto's 2013 Award of Excellence

ACTRA TORONTO

Tatiana Maslany
Outstanding Performance Female

CONGRATULATES THE RECIPIENTS OF THE 2013 ACTRA AWARDS IN TORONTO

Shawn Doyle
Outstanding Performance Male

Shannon Kook-Chun
Outstanding Performance Voice

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Actra Financial Benefit Society

ACTRA **BellMedia**

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THE 11th ANNUAL ACTRA AWARDS IN TORONTO

A big warm thank-you to our wonderful sponsors, the folks who made the Awards possible this year:

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2013 Stunt Awards for Outstanding Contribution to the Stunt Community



Matt Birman

Branko Racki

Alison Reid





What Does My Union Do for Me?

Negotiate Base Rates – Most performers find it difficult to negotiate above minimum fees. Their agents make the same complaint. When you are working on an ACTRA set, the minimum fee is all too frequently what you are paid. Who negotiates that for you? Your union. Bargaining the various agreements that ACTRA performers work under: the Independent Production Agreement, the National Commercial Agreement, the National Film Board agreement etc. are how the minimum fees are set.

Christopher Plummer cuts the ribbon at the opening of PAL Place Stratford. Photo credit: Marcelle Foucher



PAL Place Stratford, now ready for occupancy

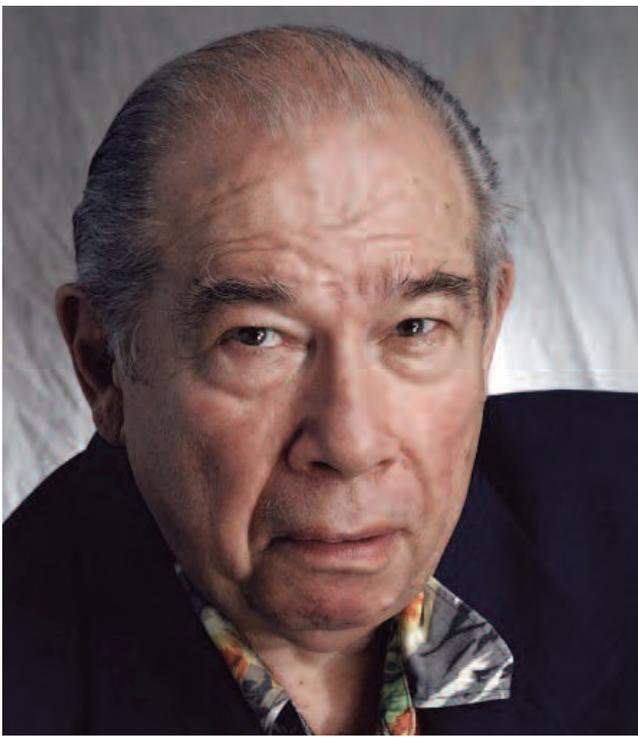
The Performing Arts Lodge in Stratford, Ontario is now accepting applications for tenancy. If you are a member of the performing arts community aged 55 or over and on a limited income, and interested in living in Stratford, you may qualify as a tenant. For more details call 519-275-3706.

The building at 101 Brunswick Street in Stratford provides affordable housing to those who are, or were, associated with Canada's professional and performing arts communities. PAL's goal is to assist senior members of our community in living independently and securely.

LIVES LIVED

We honour those that have passed
much too soon.

Helen Beavis
Jessica Booker
Ron Braden
John Brennan
Victoria Buck
Leo Burns
Gordon Clarkes
Bill Coules
Robert Cowan
Johnny Esaw
Max Ferguson
Stella Gaye
Jacques Giroux
Pauline Hebb
Ray Ireland
Dorothy Jones
Les Morrow
Tony Page
Richard Paiement
Bill Pepperall
Frank W. Taylor
Jonathan Winters



A Friend Remembered:



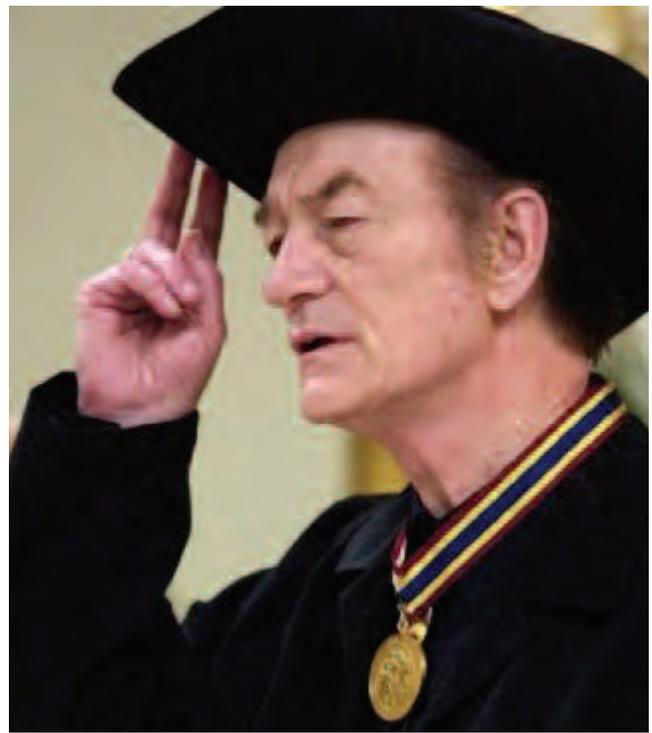
Len Doncheff was born in June 1932 and grew up in the Cabbagetown area in Toronto. I met my cantankerous, argumentative, opinionated, humorous friend, Lenin, in 1971. I first saw him perform in 1967 as Pandro the Clown in *Hey Rube* at Toronto Workshop Productions. We met a couple of years later helping each other move into new apartments. He loved to laugh, sing or improv at the drop of a hat. His improv skill was notorious at TWP. He was a unique and talented actor and I was fortunate to work with Len for a number of years there. He was a wonderfully creative actor who had the uncanny ability to paint a complete character from a blank canvas, a skill which is hard to come by. His incredibly funny Reverend Katz in *The Good Soldier Svejk* is something I still reminisce about to this day.

We spent many winter evenings in the ice rinks around Toronto watching local teams play hockey. In the summers we saw the Jays Wednesday matinees and the Leafs in Christie Pits. I was born a Montreal Canadiens fan and he a die-hard Leafs fan and so we forged a long lasting Canadian friendship. He loved all kinds of sports but even more, Len loved being an actor. He spent a number of years on ACTRA Council fighting for actors and helping to protect actors' rights.

But perhaps the deepest commitment and love he felt was for his family. His daughter Gina and son Michael meant the world to him. And when his grandson, Adam, was born he was elated. I recall him proudly showing us pictures, non-stop, of Adam growing up over the years.

I will remember him for his kindness and lust for life. Len, you will be missed.

- Allan Royal



Stompin' Tom Connors



In one poll, 97% of Canadians knew who Stompin' Tom was while only 60% knew who the Prime Minister was. Stompin' Tom's promoter, **Brian Edwards**, says Tom would get hundreds of letters from schoolteachers, grateful for his songs which they used to teach their students about Canada.

Edwards says Tom was exactly as he seemed. If there were T-shirts to be handed out on one of his tours, and Tom had any doubt that the merchandise wasn't manufactured in Canada, he'd send them back.

Stompin' Tom also sent back his 6 Juno awards in protest over the Junos being awarded to ex-patriots. In his letter of complaint he wrote: "I feel that the Junos should be for people who are living in Canada, whose main base of business operations is in Canada, who are working toward the recognition of Canadian talent in this country and who are trying to further the export of such talent from this country to the world with a view to proudly showing off what this country can contribute to the world market."

He was awarded three honorary doctorates, the Order of Canada, the Governor General's Performing Arts Award as well as the Queen's Gold and Diamond Jubilee Medals. He wrote over 300 songs, recorded 61 records and wrote two autobiographies. He has 11 albums worth of unreleased material.

An excerpt from Stompin' Tom's final letter to his fans reads: "It was a long hard bumpy road, but this great country kept me inspired with its beauty, character, and spirit, driving me to keep marching on and devoted to sing about its people and places that make Canada the greatest country in the world."

Upon his death, Tom asked that donations be made to food banks and homeless shelters.

Stompin' Tom Connors was an ACTRA member for 40 years.



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