

ACTRA

magazine

WINTER 2012

Gearing up for Bargaining

Performers in the driver's seat



Inside your union magazine



Lobby Days 2011... ACTRA on the Hill

24

Treaty Co-Productions: A Q&A with Sarah Gadon

26

Low Budget? No Budget?

Three productions that put ACTRA's Indie Agreements to work.

16



Farewell: John Neville and Gordon Tootosis

34



ACTRA magazine

Winter 2012 • Vol. 19, Issue 1

ACTRA magazine is the official publication of ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists), a Canadian union of performers affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the International Federation of Actors (FIA). ACTRA magazine is free of charge to all ACTRA members.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:
Joanne Deer, Ferne Downey, Carol Taverner, Theresa Tova, Stephen Waddell, Jeremy Webb, Christine Wittes

CONTRIBUTORS:
Tina Alford, DJ Anderson, Mike Burns, Mark D. Claxton, Chris Cornish, Ferne Downey, Ted Dykstra, Chris Faulkner, Sarah Gadon, Cary Lawrence, Jessica Paes, Billy Parrott, Gary Saxe, Marit Stiles, Michelle Thrush, Theresa Tova, Stephen Waddell, Tony Walsh, Jeremy Webb, Christine Webber, Karen Woolridge, Carmelo Zucco.

LAYOUT & DESIGN:
Erick Querci • CreativeProcessDesign
creativeprocess@me.com

Printed in Canada by union labour at Thistle Printing.

All contents are copyright © 2012 ACTRA. All rights are reserved and contents, in whole or in part may not be reprinted without permission. The points of view expressed do not necessarily represent those of ACTRA.

Please return any undelivered mail to:
ACTRA, 300 - 625 Church Street,
Toronto, ON, M4Y 2G1
Phone:
1.800.387.3516 or 416.489.1311
Fax: 416.489.8076
Email: actramagazine@actra.ca
Web: www.actra.ca

Publications Mail Agreement #40069134 ISSN 705-9496



Cover photo of Jason Priestley
Courtesy of Entertainment One. Photo: Matt Barnes



Passion for Collective Bargaining

United we stand; divided we beg

The mainstream media is chock-full of stories about unions and collective bargaining these days. Remember the blast of cold wind that blew across Wisconsin last winter when Governor Scott Walker sought to strip collective bargaining rights from public sector unions. It was a story about politics plain and simple, not the story of a fiscal crisis. The story south of the border is far from over as citizen response swells to “recall” Governor Walker.

The engagement of the union movement and citizens who have rallied against these destructive, politically motivated, union-busting politicians warms the cockles of my heart. It seems to me that many people are not buying the message the right wing is pushing — mostly, because people know better. Many know and understand that unions paved the way for a better society and that unions are the best positioned organizations to challenge the right-wing agenda. It is not surprising that conservatives and the media conglomerates they control loathe the unions. They perceive unions as the biggest obstacle to their success.

I am very mindful of how aggressively politicians all over the world, including here at home, have been working in the court of public opinion to denigrate both unions and the power of collective bargaining.

In our world at ACTRA, the very heartbeat of our union is our ability to collectively bargain with our engagers and improve pay and working conditions for all members. We are inspired by our cultural pioneers who demanded more than a “dollar a holler” in the early days of CBC Radio. They banded together collectively when work opportunities for performers and writers had exploded in the 1940s but the paycheques didn’t follow suit. As reported in the 60th anniversary edition of *InterACTRA*, “Determined to make a living with their creative gifts, several Toronto-based artists decided there should be a more professional approach to this acting business and organized the first ‘union style’ collective in 1941, the Radio Artists of Toronto Society (RATS). Meetings were held in secret, and the group was happy to officially adopt the term ‘society’, knowing well the panic that would ensue if the word union made the rounds.”

In 2011, I couldn’t be more proud of our union’s consummately professional approach to collective bargaining. (And I think our founders would approve.) We have a highly experienced lead negotiator in our National Executive Director **Stephen Waddell**; we have a stellar national Research and Bargaining department and dedicated and smart staff all across the country, coast to coast. But most importantly, we have passionate, engaged, smart and soulful members willing to stand up and fight on behalf of our community. It was an honour to serve with our National Commercial Agreement (NCA) negotiating team members: **Heather Allin, Ruth Chiang, Jackson Davies, Ian Finlay, Billy Parrott, Alvin Sanders, David Sparrow, Maurice Dean Wint and Sheila Victor**. We’re looking forward to an increase in work opportunities under this contract and the minute it was ratified, we started work on the next round of negotiations. That’s the simple truth of it. At ACTRA, research and analysis never stops — we are mindful and prepared. And bold.

Next? We have geared up for collective bargaining on the Independent Production Agreement (IPA) and the British Columbia Master Production Agreement (BCMPA). Focus groups are hopping and national solidarity deepens. This photograph was taken in Ottawa at ACTRA’S Lobby Days’ reception and boasts leading actors from every part of the country from Vancouver to St. John’s, from Regina to Montreal, from Edmonton to Toronto. We are working very closely together because we all have our eye on the same prize — leveraging the power of a unified ACTRA membership to fight for the best possible pay and working conditions for all ACTRA members.



Ferne Downey
ACTRA National President

ACTRA’S MP reception on Parliament Hill Front row L to R: Heather Allin, Leah Pinsent, Fiona Reid, Grace Lynn Kung, Ferne Downey, Angela Asher, Cary Lawrence, Don Ast, Shannon Jardine, Alvin Sanders. Back row L to R: NDP MP and Heritage Critic Tyrone Benskin, Theresa Tova, Peter Keleghan, Barry Blake, Jackson Davies, Richard Hardacre, John Nelles, David Gale. Photo: Fred Chartrand



ACTRA INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE!

CALL ME FITZ

by Jeremy Webb

The successful twisted family dramedy, *Call Me Fitz*, about a morally bankrupt salesman, stars Canadian actor and ACTRA member **Jason Priestley**.

Set almost entirely in a used-car dealership, *Call Me Fitz* is a show about a handsome, substance-abusing scoundrel, Fitz, who torments his naive co-workers, sleeps with any woman who has a pulse and — thinks his life is perfect. Priestley's TV creation is forced to become business partners with his inner conscience, an offbeat do-gooder intent on healing Fitz's mangled psyche, one hilarious disaster at a time.

DIRECTV launched the Canadian half-hour comedy on its 101 Network in April 2011; the 13-episode series premiered on HBO Canada in fall 2010.

Fitz is a bleak, black and twisted Canadian production that is raising a middle finger at the establishment, but doing so with ACTRA talent, ACTRA contracts and now an ACTRA guy (ACTRA Maritimes National Councilor, **Jeremy Webb**) sniffing around.



Jason during the ACTRA interview. Photo: Jag Gundu

“They have some very ‘creative’ situations in their scripts that include strippers, men in diapers etc., so it can sometimes be challenging and amusing when it comes to contracting. We are delighted that they have had so much success with the show. Let’s hope they are here for a very, very long time.”

— Richard Hadley, ACTRA Maritimes Branch Representative

Jason Priestley and Jeremy Webb talk ACTRA, *Call Me Fitz* and life as a working actor. Photos: Jag Gundu



“ My ACTRA number is 1482; that’s how long I’ve been a member! I have been very thankful for everything that ACTRA has been able to afford me. ”

A MAN CALLED FITZ



SUPER: The ACTRA logo on black.
MUSIC: a rock beat kicks in, something Canadian and classic.

CUT TO:
INT. HOTEL BAR, TORONTO – MORNING

Webb stands in a swanky Toronto boutique hotel bar, looking out of place. He looks nervous. His palms are sweaty. He moves a tape recorder on a table half an inch to the left for the fiftieth time. A WAITER comes over and eyes Webb suspiciously.

WEBB
(gushing and sharing too much)
I'm here to interview Jason Priestley.

The waiter is not impressed.

At that exact moment our hero enters the bar. JASON PRIESTLEY is in his early forties and very good looking, with a few days beard on his face and a tailored two-piece grey suit, without a tie. He carries a Hollywood-issue cellphone and spots Webb straight away (aside from the bar staff, Webb's the only one there.)

WEBB
Hello! Mr. Priestly, I'm Jeremy Webb. Good to see you.

There's a handshake and the two men head to the table and sit. They are similar height, similar in age, yet one looks like Jason Priestley.

Webb plays it cool, denying to himself even the existence of a man-crush.

CU on Priestley: a slight eyebrow raise. He's seen this before.

The two men, Webb and Priestley sit opposite each other at a low table in the bar. They both have an iced tea, but Priestley also sips a coffee. Webb has just asked him a question.

"It (*Fitz*) came to me. I was directing a web-series in L.A. for Warner Bros. called *The Lake*. There were these two writers who had just been working with Sheri Elwood on a TV series. While editing the web series they kept talking to me about this Canadian writer and the pilot she had written for this series. About the fact that it was one of the funniest shows they'd ever read. And how she was trying to get this show to me, that it was the perfect show for me. And 'Oh My God, this thing is so great!' We were trapped in an editing room together for weeks and weeks. I kept hearing about the show. And as you know, you know, nine times out of 10, when somebody talks up a piece of material that much you are horribly disappointed." Webb nods as though he knows. He's lying; he doesn't know.

"I read this thing," says Priestley, "and it was one of the single-greatest pieces of material I had read in the last 20 years. It was absolutely perfect. It was so well-crafted and well thought out. The characters were all so fully developed and the world in which they inhabited was perfectly conceived. It was right. You know? I immediately emailed Sheri. And said 'I love this piece of material and Richard Fitzpatrick is such a beautifully flawed character.' What a beautiful opportunity to play a character like this."

"She said 'Great. Amaze has the show. We are setting it up at HBO Canada. E1 is another partner. I'd love for you to come in and meet with me about playing Fitzpatrick. Here are all the pages to prepare and come on in and read for me.' I said 'Fantastic'. I prepared. The scenes were big scenes. Me as a director, I understand the desire to have actors come in and read for things. So I got the role the old-fashioned way."

With that, Priestley produces a winning smile.

Back at the producer's office, Sheri Elwood, producer and show runner of *Call Me Fitz*, sits opposite Webb, behind her desk. They've been there for a few minutes. Webb leans in close and hits her with his question. "Jason Priestley heads your cast, how did you find him? Was he always 'Fitz'?"

"Jason was suggested by the casting agent and he auditioned like everyone else," says Elwood. "I didn't know if Jason could be funny; I didn't know him. I looked at the material that he had done. I had not seen him do any comedy. I had never watched *90210*. Jason rolled in after a night of partying, scruffy and in an old shirt. He just sat that there and I thought 'God, that guy's cocky: Perfect! Very funny and confident. I can't imagine anyone else playing the role. The character is based on my brother, who is a used-car salesman. It's based on my family, this show; unfortunately!"

We move forward now to the Gemini Awards gala evening in Toronto. We circle around a rowdy table of TV types as they celebrate multiple Gemini wins. Sheri Elwood is there, and she is surrounded by the actual hardware. The table of cast and producers are in high spirits. The awards show has just completed for 2011 and *Call Me Fitz* was nominated for 16 and won seven, including Best Supporting Actor, Best Actress, Best Guest Performance (female), Best Sound, writing, Direction and Editing.

Everyone is on their feet and celebrating. Jason Priestley runs across the stage from behind the scenery, after presenting the last awards of the night. He joins his posse and, without warning, Jeremy Webb is right there.

Webb manages to line up a candid photo of ACTRA National President **Ferne Downey** with Priestley, before everyone moves off into the night. "That's one for the ACTRA magazine," Webb mutters to ACTRA PR guru **Joanne Deer**, who stands off to one side.

"Did you hear our table screaming?! I was so shocked," says Elwood. "The first season on our show... we really were under the radar." She explains that shooting in rural Nova Scotia allows her a creative control and freedom she enjoys. "I can do it really fast and no one can stop me." She laughs again, "I told everyone do it like we'll never get to make TV again."

There's no doubt that ACTRA agreements facilitate the creation of *Call Me Fitz*, with such a Canadian ensemble cast.

"ACTRA has been extremely considerate of our creative needs. It's especially tricky being here as the talent pool isn't huge. Once we've used someone in a guest spot it's tough to recycle." She chuckles again and admits "We like ACTRA but I'm not sure we've been that easy for them to deal with!"

Reports from the Maritimes have been nothing short of glowing. Elwood is thrilled with her Canadian cast. "We are allowed to have the occasional American guest star. **Joanna Cassidy** is American. I think we've got the strongest ensemble cast on television right now. We spent months casting. Our cast is rock solid. Everything we need is right here."

Jason Priestley is in full agreement about his co-stars and the actors the show has utilized. "Canadian actors are like actors everywhere: committed to their craft and they work hard at what they do," he explains. "No different to actors everywhere else. I'm a Canadian actor. I went to theatre school in Canada." Priestly pauses mid-thought for the photographer to capture the perfect candid shot.



Fitzpatrick family photo: Tracy Dawson (Meghan), Peter MacNeill (Ken), Joanna Cassidy (Elaine), Jason Priestley (Fitz).
Photo: Mike Tompkins.

CALL ME FITZ



Ernie Grunwald plays "Fitz's" conscience Larry.
Photo: Chris Resardon.

"The people that I associate with a lot of the time in L.A. are other Canadian actors, who like me, went to school in Canada. **Eric McCormack** and guys like that: Canadian actors."

The actor continues, "We all went to school here, started our careers and moved down there. We ended up leaving at a time when the industry up here was struggling and we had to go elsewhere and ply our trade."

Priestley knows, like all ACTRA members, that actors are a nomadic breed. "We have to be. We need to go where the work is. It's part of the career we have chosen."

"I left Canada in 1987; I left Vancouver," he recalls. "At that point it was simply a service industry town. There were three to four American television shows shooting there. Once you've done them, you look around and go, 'Well, I'm either going to move to Toronto or move to L.A.' Those were your options. L.A. was a lot closer than Toronto, so that's where I went."

Priestley has noticed the growth in member-generated projects, with ACTRA members getting into the producing, directing and writing roles. "*Hobo With A Shotgun* was a big turning point for that kind of thing," says Priestley. He adds, "*The Trailer Park Boys* have been very successful."

Priestley has directed an episode of the second season of Syfy's *Haven*, also shooting in the Maritimes and he also shot a four-episode story arc as a guest star. *Haven* is loosely based on Stephen King's short novel *The Colorado Kid*.

This past summer, Priestley reunited with former *Beverly Hills 90210* co-star **Luke Perry** to direct and star in the Hallmark Movie Channel Original *Goodnight for Justice*. The made-for-TV Western was penned by Perry and filmed in Vancouver.

Also behind the camera, Priestley has directed numerous episodes of ABC Family's hit series *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, based on the *Rolling Stone* article by Jesse Hyde, and is developing the feature film *Death of a Freerider*. The film is based on the tragic true story of Sam Brown, a young Canadian mountain biker who got caught up in the world of international drug smuggling.

"My ACTRA number is 1482; that's how long I've been a member!" says a smiling Priestley. "I was gone for a long time, not working up here. Starting in the late '90s I started coming back here a lot to work. The industry for me shifted back and then ACTRA started to play a much bigger role in my life again. I have been very thankful for everything that ACTRA has been able to afford me."

Priestley muses on what his union does for him on a daily basis. "Now that I am married and have children, I look at the AFBS and see the money I can put away into my retirement account, my RRSP and I'm very thankful for all of that!"

He continues, "As an actor/artist classically we aren't the most responsible with our money. It's always very cyclical. It's difficult to save. One minute you make a lot, the next minute you don't make any."



On the set of *Call Me Fitz*.
Photo by Jeremy Webb.

"To have our union take care of putting away that money is a huge benefit. You don't think about that when you're younger. You get into your middle age and you see the money that your union has put away for you without you even knowing it... you appreciate the union."

Back in New Minas, Nova Scotia, showrunner Sheri Elwood explains how she creates a show.

"As an artist I don't write with borders in mind," she says. "I'm a person of the world; I've lived in Canada, the U.S., in Europe. When I come up with a story I write to character. I don't write to regional tax incentives," she laughs again.

Elwood feels that she's seen shows attempting to fit their own square peg into a round hole, purely for financial reasons.

"There are shows that call for a very specific Canadian locale; you know, that backdrop. *North of 60*, *Heartland*, so quintessentially Canadian. But a show like this is sleazy dealership, 'Anywhersville!' It almost undermines the concept; it pokes away at the universality I think."

The producer/creator divides her time between here and L.A. but she's delighted to be in Canada. "It feels like home to me. I've known this crew for years, they all worked with me on my first film which was shot in Nova Scotia. So I have a real safety net and a real support system." That first feature was *Deeply*, starring Lynn Redgrave, Kirsten Dunst and **Brent Carver**.

"*Fitz* is my first big series that I'm doing on my own, that I'm responsible for, so having a lot of Nova Scotians watching my back is immeasurably good." She laughs once more.

A MAN CALLED FITZ

INT. HOTEL BAR, TORONTO – DAY

Flashback.

Webb has inched closer to Priestley, who is looking a little unnerved, but remains in good humour with the British interviewer.

WEBB

You've taken your career into your own hands now: directing and producing. So what's it like on a show like *Fitz*, where you have some control. How's that career development for you?

PRIESTLEY

It's something that I've been looking to. I'm not a guy who likes to micro-manage. Bill Fleming our production designer is an incredibly talented guy who creates things that are genius. I would never try and imprint my ideas on him. I want to incorporate his ideas into what I want to do. As a producer/director it's about empowering other people to be creative and maximize their creativity. That's what I've learned through my career. I've seen it the other way, where someone stifles everyone's creativity. Everything grinds to a halt. If you kill creativity you don't get anything out of anyone.

I like to see it thrive and grow in a production. We all want to create an unbelievable product. Let people bring you their A game.

Webb senses his time is coming to a close and on cue Priestley's phone rings. Webb glares at the device, sure that the phone is about to come between him and his new guy-pal.

WEBB

What's next for you, Jason?

PRIESTLEY

Twelve episodes of *Fitz*. January/February: I'm going to shoot a horror movie for Paramount in L.A. called *999*. March/April... there are some offers.

Webb nods knowingly. He wishes he had some offers for March/April. Or even next week.

WEBB

So, let me wrap here by saying congrats on all the Gemini nominations: best actor, best ensemble...

Priestley stands, putting away his cellphone and draining his coffee. Webb reluctantly stands as well. Can it really be over?

PRIESTLEY

I feel like the ensemble we have in the show is so strong... everyone is so capable. I can't believe I work with these supremely talented actors every day. They all come with so many ideas and so much 'stuff'... I get to go to work with. It's a wonderful gift.

WEBB

Do you get a sense of the show's longevity?

PRIESTLEY

It's season by season. I hope this show has longevity. I'd like to do it for a long time. It's one of those things where we are having so much fun. The show works on many levels. The show is a tragedy. The tragedy of this family falling apart and what caused this family to implode the way they did.

I've shot a few times in Nova Scotia myself: the crews out there are phenomenal. Talented filmmakers who are tireless, creative craftspeople. They love to make movies. They take pride in what they do. I love to go out there and shoot stuff.

Priestley holds out a hand. That's it; the interview is over. Webb grips the actor's hand and shakes it firmly. He doesn't let go straight away. It's awkward for a moment.

EXT. FRONT LOT OF FITZ CAR DEALERSHIP SET – DUSK

Webb emerges from the front of the building, reluctant to leave. He moves close to camera and he turns slowly taking in the whole scene. There are used cars and a giant piece of signage: Fitzpatrick's name is huge.

He walks off down the street, content that his time visiting with the *Call Me Fitz* folks has proven that ACTRA is a big part of a Canadian success story. •

CALL ME
FITZ



ACTRA National President Ferne Downey and Jason Priestley at the Gemini Awards.

Jeremy Webb is the Maritimes ACTRA National Councillor. He previously served as ACTRA Maritimes President for four terms. Jeremy runs his own company **Off The Leash Creative Ltd.**, producing theatre, film and most recently a CD of his one-man show *A Christmas Carol* with Symphony Nova Scotia. Jeremy's website: www.offtheleash.ca



Keeping our working kids happy and secure is a job equally shared by parents, ACTRA and producers. Being torn out of school or away from family and friends for long periods of time, while maintaining grades and making time for normal and healthy activities of childhood, can be an overwhelming experience. With extra care given to proper health, education, morals and safety of our working kids, it is paramount for us to work closely together to ensure a safe environment.

CAUTION

ANGER

DAWN

CAUTION



CAUTION



PROTECTING OUR WORKING KIDS

Why All The Rules?

By Theresa Tova

I can honestly tell you that the event of my kids entering this business made me into a children's advocate! As a career actor, I know very well that performers on ACTRA sets are treated with utmost respect and are supported so that they can do their best work. I had mistakenly thought that kids working in this wonderful business would be treated as well or better. When thrust into the role of STAGE MOM my eyes were opened to what stage parents who were new to this industry had to contend with. For the very first time in my professional career I encountered misrepresentations of the rules and working conditions that I had taken for granted as an adult. I saw paperwork filled out wrong so as to benefit the producers and bribes were even offered me so that I would agree to break rules that helped safeguard my children's welfare and safety. I decided to speak up for child performers, and with ACTRA's help I grieved every case and won!

AND THEN WE GOT TO WORK

I was asked to join the team that negotiated the landmark 1995 Independent Production Agreement (IPA). Often referred to as our 'watershed' agreement, in this particular round of bargaining we changed the Distributor's Gross Revenue (DGR) formula so that producers would no longer eat away at our income by paying use fees based on net. We also achieved huge improvements to the minor's section. We formalized rules and guidelines that provided young actors with a work environment that the best producers were already providing.

Some parents may not understand the importance of the rules or why they have been put in place. They may think that they have the right to decide what their kids can and can't do on a film set. With few exceptions, this is NOT TRUE. Child labour laws and safety standards vary provincially, but in essence Canadian children under the age of 14 are not allowed to work regular jobs. The provinces allow the film industry to engage children and toddlers, in truth, due to the strength of ACTRA agreements. Our agreements provide the appropriate strong language and detailed guidelines for children who work in the high-pressured 'time is money' world of show business.

What follows are a few excerpted rules that ACTRA has developed with the industry, in reaction to abuses children have endured.

A2708 Presence of Parent

(a) "A Parent of a Minor under 16 years of age must be at the studio or the location and accessible to the Minor at all times... and must accompany the Minor to and from the set or location, and shall have the right to accompany the Minor on hair, make-up, and wardrobe calls..."

- Before this rule was in place, a young **Sarah Polley** got lost in an airport when a production allowed her to travel alone to a European location. Her American co-star had chaperones while she was abandoned.
- Before this rule, a 10-year-old boy was kicked across a make-up trailer by an inebriated star who took exception to the young boy innocently telling his 'hero' that he was back late from lunch. The child was found cowering under a props table emotionally bruised and unable to work.
- Even with this rule in place, I've witnessed a mother sitting in a warm tent while her pre-teen son was shooting a scene high up in a tree house which production was about to set on fire. I reminded her that this rule means it is her job to be in sight or sound of her child at all times. There is no one better person who can tell production that your young child is scared, needs a break, is cold or hungry.

A2709 Dangerous Work

(a) "No Minor shall be required to work in a situation that places the Minor in clear and present danger to life or limb, or if the Minor or Parent believes the Minor is in such a situation..."

- Before this rule was in place, children could be included in stunt performances, the worst of which was in Hollywood when two young actors were killed in a famous scene where a helicopter flew too close and crashed.
- Before this rule was in place, I had a producer innocently ask me last minute if it was all right for my child to be pushed by another child, and then roll down a hill. Some might think that is fun for a seven-year-old, but I understood that it could be up to six hours of shooting the same action over and over again. Plus, there was a real possibility of injury without a stunt coordinator overseeing the ground cover and the choreography of the jostling and the fall.
- This rule means you have the right to speak up.
KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE!

A2703 Conditions of Engagement

(d) "In the case of work requiring superior physical skill, a description of the activity required will be provided in the Minor's contract... If not notified at the time of contracting, a Parent responsible for the Minor shall be notified at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of when the Minor will be asked to perform work requiring superior physical skill..."

- Before this rule was in place, there was no line between dangerous work/stunts and superior physical skill. This rule recognizes that some children are trained equestrians or BMX dirt-bike champions. To those children, riding a course would not be as dangerous as it would be to an actor just pretending.
- My best example of this rule in action was when I was called to the set of *Splice*. The production understood the special needs and hired six-year-old Wushu cutie, **Abigail Chu** to play the young Dren sci-fi creature. After two hours of prosthetic make-up, the shot called for the young actress to struggle with her co-stars while being immersed in a tank of water. This young martial arts champion worked on the scene's choreography with her competition coach. I saw Abigail rehearse the moves for camera at 20%, 50% and then at full speed. Her control was astounding. At no time was she in any danger. When **Sarah Polley** and I first saw each other on set that day we both shared our concerns for Abigail's comfort and safety and also got to breathe a collective sigh of relief. Sarah shall forever remain a hero of mine for her help in improving the 1995 minor's section. Kudos also to the *Splice* team for asking Abigail to tell them when the water temperature was just right. It took a half hour to adjust to her liking, but that child was in control and never traumatized.



Abigail Chu



Abigail Chu and Sarah Polley in *Splice*. Abigail plays the young Dren sci-fi creature.

A2709 Dangerous Work

(b) Scenes Depicting Child Abuse, Disturbing Violence or Carnal Acts "...when a Minor is engaged to perform in a scene that depicts child abuse, disturbing violence, or carnal acts, the Producer shall consult with the Parent and, should the Parent agree, make available to the Minor and his or her Parent a psychologist or therapist properly accredited by the applicable provincial ministry to assist the Minor in preparing for and participating in any such depiction. A Minor shall not be present during such scenes unless it is essential for the Child to be on camera."

- Before this rule was in place, with cameras rolling, a four-year-old was tormented when a stranger she had not yet met, shoved a gun in her hand and forced her to 'kill' the woman playing her mother. This was so disturbing to the crew that one brave technician pulled the plug on the generator and called ACTRA. Before this rule was in place ACTRA stewards, parents and producers of films like *The Boys of St. Vincent* (with its infamous shower scene) struggled with how to protect child actors from being abused while exposing childhood abuse. It was agreed that the abusive adult would not be present and his/her part in the scene would be shot at another time. Productions are sometimes required to hire therapists to help the kids handle disturbing subject matter. Such preventative measures and precautions are now provided by ACTRA agreements to any child asked to portray sensitive subject matter.

- Even with this rule in place, ACTRA stewards in Montreal had a situation where the artistic vision of a production was clearly damaging. In one scene the producer wanted to have three 10-11-year-old children appear naked, gawking and teasing each other while playing doctor. In a second scene they wanted a young boy to touch the naked body of an adult woman. During pre-production our steward met with the producers to find out how they intended to proceed – to explain the creative ways that they were planning to film these scenes without actually involving naked children and/or sexualized contact. The production insisted that they would shoot the scenes as scripted and objected to our 'artistic interference.' We filed a grievance and then ended up in arbitration over the matter. We claimed that nudity in a sexualized context is not an acceptable working condition for children. Understandably, we won the arbitration, but on the day of shooting the producers tried to violate the decision again. ACTRA stewards were tipped off and stepped in to stop them from filming the scene.

- When my own 16-year-old daughter was cast in a movie with a bathtub scene, before accepting the job, we took meetings with her agent and the producers, to talk through exactly how they intended to shoot the scene. On the day of the shoot my job was to sit in the bathroom with my daughter watching hand positions and the placement of bubbles. I also kept my eye on the video feed to make sure that the camera angles lived up to our agreement.

A2705 Work Day and Rest Periods

(a) "Subject to A2705(c), the workday shall not exceed eight (8) consecutive hours per day, excluding meal periods but including tutoring time. (b) For Minors under 12 years of age, overtime is forbidden. (c) For Minors aged 12 to 15, a maximum of two (2) hours per day of overtime may be permitted, provided that in the event that a Minor is required to work a cumulative maximum of four (4) hours of overtime on three (3) consecutive days, the Minor shall not be required to work any overtime on the immediately following day..."

- Before the workday rules were in place, we had horrible cases of 12-16-hour days by unscrupulous producers. Even with this rule in place I have seen children being force-fed coffee by their own parents to keep them awake. We are all too aware of child actors with lost childhoods like Michael Jackson or others like 12-year-old Drew Barrymore who landed in detox.

Our agreements provide the appropriate strong language and detailed guidelines for children who work in the high pressured 'time is money' world of show business.



David Pearson, Bob Pearson, Theresa Tova and Tara Pearson.



Theresa's son David Pearson and Ryan Brown on the set of the *J.F.K.: Reckless Youth* miniseries.

Photo: Theresa Tova

A2710 Tutoring

(a) When a Producer engages a Minor as a Performer, the education of such Performer will not be jeopardized or hampered by such engagement. The Performer must be provided with tutoring appropriate to the Minor's educational requirements.

- Before this rule was in place, a child playing a young voyageur in the wilds of Manitoba rowing and portaging almost every day for months, failed his physical education class.
- Before this rule was in place, there was no communication between home schools and production. We saw young actors failing whole grades as they missed too much school for proper evaluation.
- Since this rule came into place, the home school sets out the curriculum requirements and on-set tutors can now focus in on the individual needs of the student. Child actors on ACTRA sets are excelling instead of failing.

A2716 Trust Account

After a Minor's total lifetime remuneration reaches \$5,000.00, twenty-five percent (25%) of the Minor's gross remuneration shall be deducted from the total payment due to the Minor by the Producer and remitted to the ACTRA PRS, which shall hold such monies in trust for the Minor.

- Before this rule was in place, too many children's earnings would disappear entirely. Well-meaning parents would call ACTRA to ask about paycheques owing to their seven-year-olds so that they could pay household bills, help fund family vacations or afford major purchases. These situations could tear families apart.
- Since this rule came into place, we hear wonderful stories of 18-year-olds receiving what can be incredible amounts of money just when they need it. These young actors can afford university, go traveling or purchase a home.

Yes, sometimes ACTRA has to step in and protect children from their own parents. I see parents who want stardom so much that they trust others to protect their kids or they lose sense of what is appropriate.

Dear Parents new to the business,

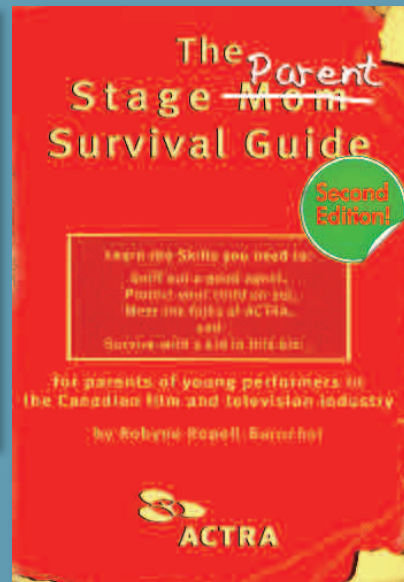
It may take some time to learn your rights and obligations as a parent of a child performer. Be rest assured that most of the rules are based on common sense. My first 'red flag warning' is when a producer comes up to you on set to ask if it's "Okay for little Suzy to do X, Y or Z." If it were okay they wouldn't ask for your permission.

I hope some of the examples here have made the minor's rules section clearer for you. If ever in doubt, call your agent, call ACTRA or just say NO.

This business can be both rewarding and difficult. Together with Canadian producers we have negotiated comprehensive minors sections for television, film and commercial work that should be every parent's bible. Our agreements ensure that talented young actors continue to excel at school and have time for the normal activities of childhood, while they build their careers. With parents understanding their role as advocate we set a high bar for health, education, morals, and safety for our young working actors.

Theresa Tova

Robyne Ropell-Baruchel and her son Jay Baruchel at the 2010 ACTRA Awards in Montreal, where Jay received the Award of Excellence.
Photo: Tom Disandolo



Back by popular demand!

The second edition of Robyne Ropell-Baruchel's *The Stage Mom Survival Guide* will be re-launched as *The Stage Parent Survival Guide*.

Download the new book at www.actra.ca and contact your local branch for a hardcopy.



Theresa Tova's career spans film, TV, the Broadway musical stage and jazz concerts around the world. She is ACTRA Toronto Vice President Internal, National Children's Advocate and Treasurer of ACTRA National.

Contact ACTRA...

ACTRA National

416.489.1311
1.800.387.3516
www.actra.ca

**ACTRA Performers'
Rights Society**

416.489.1311
1.800.387.3516
www.actra.ca/prs

UBCP/ACTRA

604.689.0727
www.ubcp.com

ACTRA Alberta

403.228.3123
1.866.913.3123
www.actraalberta.com

ACTRA Saskatchewan

306.757.0885
www.actrasask.com

ACTRA Manitoba

204.339.9750
www.actra.ca/winnipeg

ACTRA Toronto

416.928.2278
www.actratoronto.com

ACTRA Ottawa

613.565.2168
www.actraottawa.ca

ACTRA Montreal

514.844.3318
www.actramontreal.ca

ACTRA Maritimes

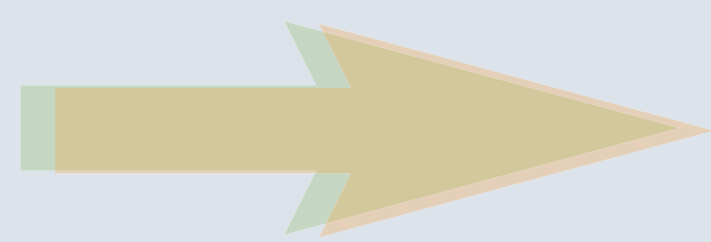
902.420.1404
www.actramaritimes.ca

**ACTRA Newfoundland/
Labrador**

709.722.0430
www.actranewfoundland.ca

“I work ACTRA
because I get a fair,
living wage.”

- Dalmar Abuzeid



Three
productions
that put
ACTRA's
Indie
Agreements
to work

Low Budget? No Budget?
There's always a way to work ACTRA



Collin MacKechnie and Spike who plays "Fang" in *Vampire Dog*.
Courtesy of Joker Films and Trilight Entertainment. Photo: Allan Fieldel.



Jim Bradford and Howard Rosenstein discuss life and death in *The Phoenix*.



Justin Rain and Ashley Callingbull in *Blackstone*.

Courtesy of Prairie Dog Film & Television.

Vampire Dog by Mark D. Claxton

When you're an actor in a mid-sized Canadian city, you must accustom yourself to watching the meaty roles in local productions, roles you are certain you could do, go to talent from Toronto or Vancouver. This is nothing to be bitter or resentful about. Those Toronto and Vancouver actors are paying their dues and need the work just as much as I do. Still, it can be frustrating to be denied even the chance to audition purely because of one's geography.



Mark D. Claxton

This past summer's filming of the family feature *Vampire Dog* was a rare treat for me and many of my colleagues in Regina. More than 90% of the cast, including several leads and principals, was comprised of local talent.

For me, the job meant an unprecedented six days on set: six days to better learn the rhythms and rituals of a film shoot, six days to play with a character, six days to show what I could do. As a principal actor, I was part of the creative team, able to contribute ideas, ask questions, try different things. After a steady diet of one-scene (or one-line) appearances as 'the veterinarian' or 'the man in the park', this was a heady feast and a real joy, not to mention a huge restorer of confidence. On set, first-day nerves were quickly calmed as my slightly rusted comedic instincts began to kick in and I felt free to play.

I'm well aware that economics were a primary factor in the largely local casting of this film: working with a \$2 million budget, the producers could not afford to fly in A-listers from across the country. Still, I'm grateful for ACTRA's Canadian Independent Production Incentive Program (CIPIP) that allows (with an all-Canadian Cast) a 25% discount on ACTRA rates, it provided them with one more reason to let me into the audition room. After all, being let into the room is all I can ask.

I know a lot of gifted actors in Saskatchewan who have the chops to delight directors and mesmerize moviegoers if given the opportunity. Thanks to Trilight Entertainment, Joker Films, and ACTRA, I'm more ready than ever for the next opportunity. •

The Phoenix by Carmelo Zucco

The Phoenix is a short film shot in the Ottawa area under ACTRA's Indie Production Agreement. It takes place in the not-so-distant future, where humans have the ability to extend their lives by transferring their souls into artificial bodies. Producer Carmelo Zucco notes that when he set out to create *The Phoenix*, his first order of business was to acquire professional ACTRA actors:

"I found nothing but open doors and welcome answers to my every query at ACTRA Ottawa. I would accept nothing but the best performances for my film, so I know where to go for that.

It's refreshing to work with actors who are dedicated to their craft and who are happy to help a budding artist such as myself, to see my dream come into realization. In the creation of a film there are always inevitable variables that keep a producer tossing and turning at night but the performances of **Alex Cardillo**, **Brie Barker**, **Jim Bradford** and **Howard Rosenstein** not only helped me get a good night's sleep during production, but they transcended my dreams into something greater than I could have hoped for. It was a pleasure to direct such a talented cast and I look toward a great future working side by side with ACTRA." •

ACTRA's Indie Production Agreement (AIP) facilitates low-budget Canadian productions. (At ACTRA Toronto it is called "TIP")
Learn more by visiting www.actra.ca

Blackstone by Tina Alford

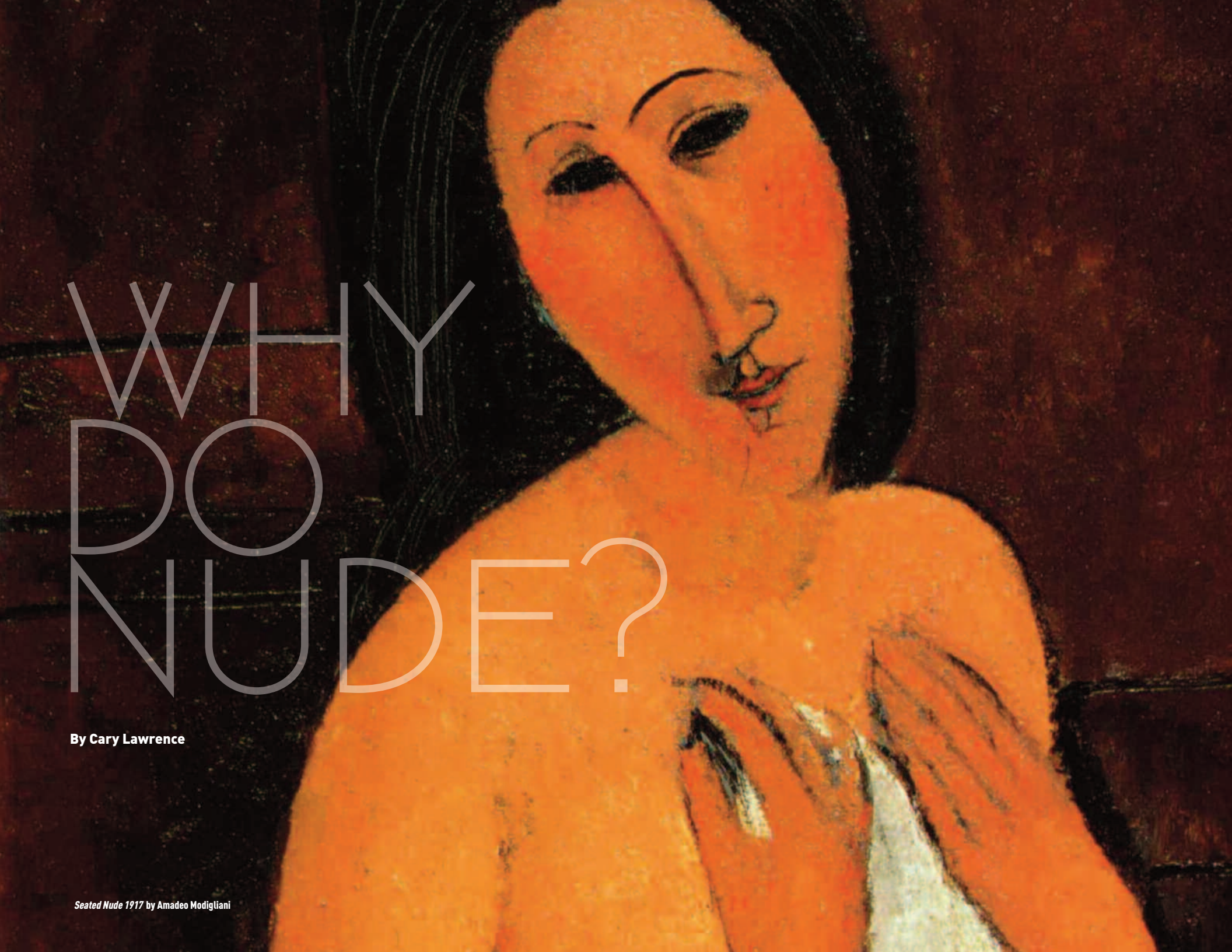
Alberta Branch Rep Tina Alford credits the CIPIP agreement with helping to ensure that small budget series "work ACTRA."

"Alberta's production industry may seem small, but we're rich with talent and gifted performers. Filmed on location in and around Edmonton, *Blackstone* is created, written, produced and stars Aboriginal Canadians. Using the Canadian Independent Production Incentive Program (CIPIP), we at ACTRA Alberta worked closely with the independent film and television production company Prairie Dog Television to make this show happen.

Airing on APTN, *Blackstone* weaves a dramatic tale of corrupt leadership and tumultuous relationships on a fictional First Nations reserve. The stellar cast includes **Carmen Moore**, **Eric Schweig**, **Michelle Thrush**, **Nathaniel Arcand**, **Roseanne Supernault**, **Steven Cree Molison**, **Andrea Menard**, **Ray G. Thunderchild**, **Justin Rain**, **Ashley Callingbull**, **Tommy J. Mueller** and **Lee Tomaschefski**. We'll miss legendary actor **Gordon Tootoosis** who was part of the original cast. New stars joining the cast include acclaimed First Nation's actors **Gary Farmer**, **Tantoo Cardinal** and **Georgina Lightning**.

Since the *Blackstone* pilot aired in 2010, the success of the show has been continuous. It has garnered five Rosie Awards, two Leo Awards and most recently two Gemini Awards including Michelle Thrush winning the Gemini for Best Actress in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role. Yes, we Albertans have a star system to be proud of." •

Mark D. Claxton is a Regina-based actor and writer, with TV credits including *InSecurity* and *Corner Gas*. He plays the ineptly villainous high-school principal Barry Hickman in the upcoming family feature *Vampire Dog*. Mark shares his experience on this indie production.

The background of the entire page is a reproduction of the painting 'Seated Nude' by Amadeo Modigliani. It depicts a nude woman with long, dark hair, rendered in the artist's characteristic style with elongated features and a warm, orange-toned palette. The woman is seated, and her body is the central focus of the artwork.

WHY DO NUDE?

By Cary Lawrence

What is it about the human body that makes us want to see it in the flesh, so to speak? Why does the entertainment industry believe that nudity will help sell movies? And why is it that it is most often the female body that is exploited? Not to be crass, but when was the last time you saw a man's family jewels front and centre, whereas the female mammary glands are regularly in the limelight? Ah yes, we have discussed these questions frequently, but there's no real answer. But to be certain, nudity is something that we in the acting business have to contend with. And I hate to say it, but statistics show young actors new to the industry are often targeted. This is not to say that seasoned members are not also asked to bare their bodies, but it is true that new members are very often forced or cajoled into something they haven't really thought through. And, this does not necessarily exclude men! So, here's the skinny on nudity: this is not just for the new members, but for all members. *A refresher course is always welcome, n'est-ce pas?*

First things first, know your rights! Read our collective agreements and see what your union has negotiated to protect you.

Here are some little tidbits on what Section A24 of the Independent Production Agreement (IPA) says about auditioning when there are nude scenes involved, and what your rights are on set if you get the part. If the part requires nudity, you must be told before you audition. At the first audition, you cannot be asked to disrobe, and you must be told if nudity will be required at a callback. If it is, the sole purpose of the second audition is to view your body – you can't be required to perform nude or semi-nude. For both auditions and filming, there's a closed set, and if the other performers agree, your personal representative can be on set during filming. An ACTRA steward has the right to be both at auditions and filming, and is there to help you protect your rights.

But wait! Take a step back and consider who you are and what you are willing to do. Some folks have no problem letting it all hang loose, and that is totally fine. But some people are definitely not okay with any form of nudity. Oftentimes, the role is fantastic save for that one love scene. Ask yourself, "Am I okay with being naked or partially naked in front of a camera and a bunch of strangers?" Consider how you will feel after the shoot. Don't take on the role because you think it will improve your future career options or gain you notoriety. It doesn't happen that way. Also, you have to consider how the scene will be filmed. Is the director someone who will work with you? And here's the thing, if you really like the role but are worried about that one little glitch called 'nude scene', then you can attach a rider to your contract that spells out exactly what you need to be comfortable performing this scene. Your agent will be instrumental in brokering this for you so make sure you two are on the right track. Whatever decision you make, make it with your agent and be prudent. Cover all angles and be specific with respect to your needs.

When I had my first nude scene, way back when, my agent and I were so specific, it drove the production people crazy! I was concerned about my reputation and didn't want casting agents and producers to think that I was willing to show my breasts at the drop of a hat. That is a concern in this industry. We are typecast, and we are remembered for what we do. So, in my rider, I wrote things like.

- 1) No full frontal nudity.
- 2) Partial dorsal nudity, including nape of neck to just above the buttocks.
- 3) Side nudity but in contact with the other actor.
- 4) A closed set.
- 5) A dresser to stand by with a robe at the end of each take.

I have to say that the scene shown in the final version was true to my rider. I cannot say however, that all my needs were met on the day of the shoot. There was a ton of folks in the room and the dresser was not allowed to cover me between takes as there was a concern about set dressing etc. This was a very long time ago and since then ACTRA has made some big changes. One of the most important things ACTRA has done is to make sure that stewards are there during these shoots. And, we have more stringent rules in our IPA.

Keep in mind that different projects generally have different risks. If you are auditioning for a movie that will be shown in prime time or that will be broadcast on one of the network channels, rest assured that the level of nudity will be minimal because network requirements are specific and strict. Where you will

need to be extra strong and firm in your convictions is when you're working in feature films. There, the word 'art' will get tossed around, and there, there is more possibility for things to get messy.

Lastly, please consider that there are some very dishonourable people out there. I mentioned at the beginning of this article that newer, younger members may be cajoled or forced into doing something they don't want to do. There are many stories out there about how this can cross the line and become harassment. In most cases, sexual harassment is related to the exercise of power. A director can make demands of you as a performer but those demands should never carry into the personal realm. So, know this. There are also anti-harassment provisions in our IPA. They include definitions of sexual harassment, and outline the processes to deal with any situation in which a performer feels harassed.

If you ever have difficulties or if you are cornered into changing all those decisions that you fought hard to get into writing, call the ACTRA office. Know in advance who the steward is on the film. Get to know him or her. If there is something that is not in the agreement that you feel should be there, tell the steward so that your concerns will be brought to the table during the next round of negotiations. You have a team of hard-working volunteer performers who sit at the negotiating table to be your voice.

In short: Be wise. Be aware. Know who you are and what you are willing to do! Know your rights. Read your IPA. Have a good relationship with your agent. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to say no. Stop the shoot if you are not comfortable. And for heaven's sake, if you have a problem, call ACTRA! Your ACTRA office number should be on speed dial. Remember: we have your back! •



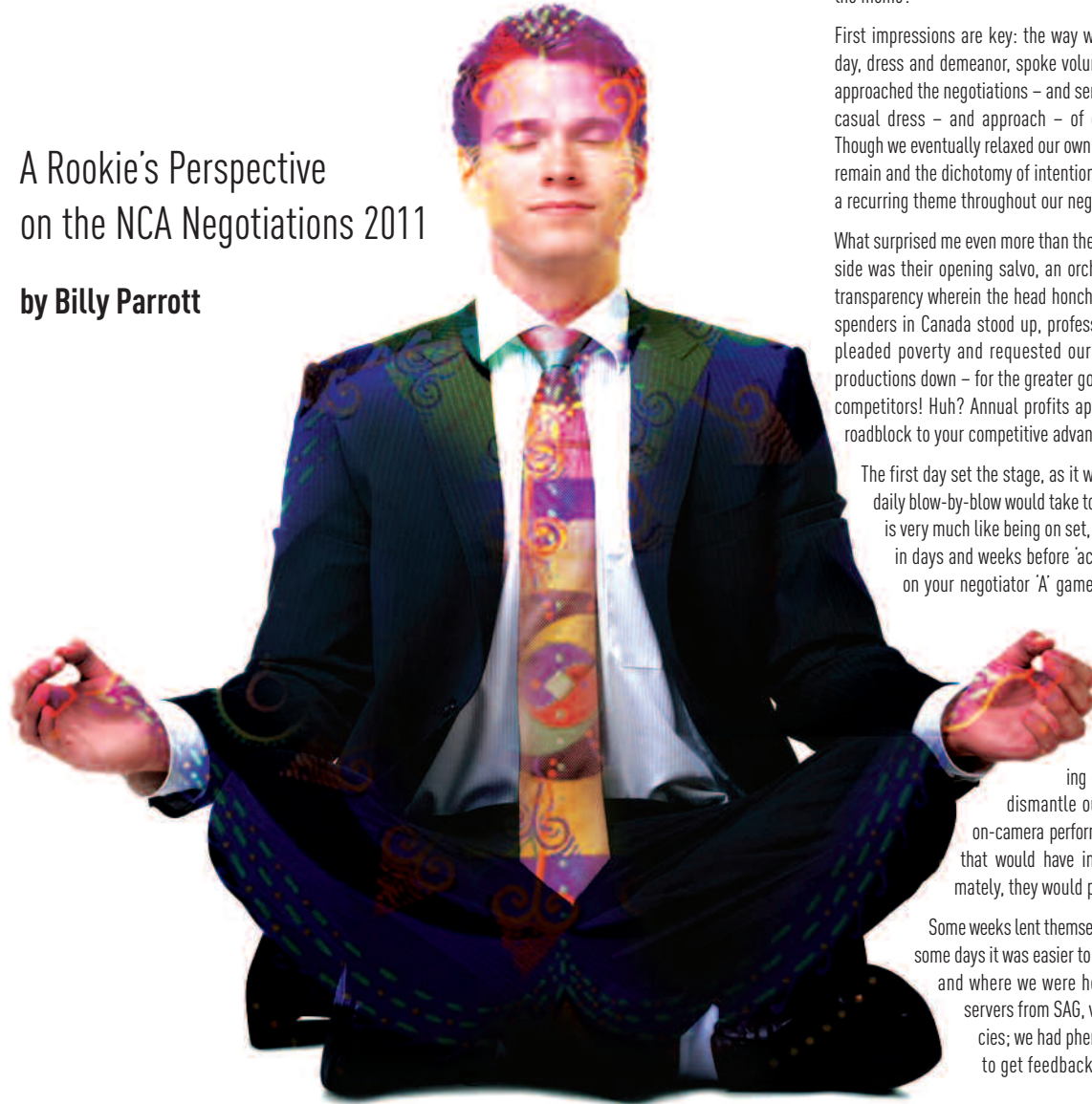
Cary Lawrence is a Montreal-based actor working on both sides of the linguistic line. She is Treasurer of ACTRA Montreal and National and Executive Councillor for ACTRA National. She lives with her husband, writer **Thomas LaPierre**, and her two lovely girls. Cary no longer takes her clothes off in front of the camera.

○ Check out *The Nudity in Film Survival Guide* at actra.ca. It was produced by ACTRA Montreal as a candid, straightforward dialogue between ACTRA and its members. It offers some solid, common-sense advice on how to handle those awkward, stressful situations that sometimes happen when filming in the buff.

Calm, Cool and Collective

A Rookie's Perspective on the NCA Negotiations 2011

by Billy Parrott



Our entire team was dressed for action. We were focused and ready for a deal. Maybe the other side didn't get the memo?

Walking into the boardroom at ACTRA HQ for the first day of the National Commercial Agreement (NCA) negotiations, I didn't know what to expect. Not because I wasn't prepped in advance, but because, like a kid on the first day of school, I was waiting for something dramatic to happen. I even wore a tie. Our entire team was dressed for action. We were focused and ready for a deal. Maybe the other side didn't get the memo?

First impressions are key: the way we presented ourselves that first day, dress and demeanor, spoke volumes as to how professionally we approached the negotiations – and served as a counterpoint to the very casual dress – and approach – of our agency negotiating partner. Though we eventually relaxed our own wardrobe, the initial effect would remain and the dichotomy of intention between our two sides would be a recurring theme throughout our negotiations.

What surprised me even more than the lack of formal attire on the other side was their opening salvo, an orchestrated spectacle of corporate transparency wherein the head honchos of a trifecta of the biggest ad spenders in Canada stood up, professed undying love for performers, pleaded poverty and requested our help to keep the cost of their productions down – for the greater good of Canada against evil foreign competitors! Huh? Annual profits approaching billions and we're the roadblock to your competitive advantage?

The first day set the stage, as it were, for the months to come. The daily blow-by-blow would take too long; suffice to say the process is very much like being on set, but the waiting time is measured in days and weeks before 'action' is called and you must turn on your negotiator 'A' game. In a nutshell, we wanted basic improvements in areas of dignity and respect, health and safety, working conditions and compensation – the ad agencies were looking to appease their clients by attacking our jurisdiction and attempting to dismantle our rights to receive payment for on-camera performances under a host of scenarios that would have included most commercials. Ultimately, they would prefer we work for free. Seriously.

Some weeks lent themselves to more progress than others; some days it was easier to feel optimistic about the process and where we were headed. Periodically, we had observers from SAG, voice and on-camera talent agencies; we had phenomenal support and it was great to get feedback from them. Ultimately, a nego-

tiation takes two willing parties, and there were agendas on the other side that had to play themselves out while we remained patient and resolute. Over time, we could see the outline of a deal appear as we worked diligently through issues and eventually, the other side saw it too and we reached an agreement. *Finally.*

Random thoughts:

One thing is clear about this shifting media landscape; the ad agencies are being squeezed, their profit margins are shrinking, and they fear losing their jobs. They want to cut costs – by stripping more dollars from our pockets – yet continue to hire American directors at \$20,000 per day. False economy? Perhaps a reset in the director's day rate is in order? Consider hiring local director talent hungry for opportunity? There is a way for all of us to prosper, but we must respect each other and rethink old paradigms.

We certainly made huge strides on dignity and respect issues that were obvious to us and should have been no-brainer 'gives' from the other side; unfortunately, we had to fight for a great majority of them. We are winning this battle.

I learned a lot, made some friends, and contributed time to a cause bigger than myself (which always feels good). I now realize how critical it is to keep the big picture in mind – we are the custodians of future performers' livelihood – and the decisions made in one collective bargaining agreement affect the framework of future negotiated agreements, be they IPA or NCA.

In the end, I'm left with a deep appreciation for all the incredible work that ACTRA does behind the scenes on our behalf every day to make the quest for a living in this industry achievable and as stress-free as possible.

I found sitting on the committee immensely rewarding. We presented an informed, articulate, united front and I was proud to call myself an ACTRA member. Would I do it again? Absolutely. **Would I wear a tie again on opening day? You bet'cha.**



Actor and writer **Billy Parrott** has appeared in over 50 film and TV roles including *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* and *Degrassi Junior High*. He has been featured in dozens of TV commercials and has voiced a number of radio spots. Billy has written short and feature films, as well as many random scenes and one-liners on napkins around the globe.

National Commercial Agreement Negotiations

A CAREFUL BALANCING ACT

by Stephen Waddell

After months of tough bargaining with the Canadian ad industry, ACTRA now has a freshly ratified National Commercial Agreement that sets new industry standards for the production of commercials in Canada.

Over the decades, ACTRA has negotiated collective agreements in both good times and bad. Due to the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis, the Canadian advertising industry is slowly but surely rebuilding and gaining strength. But with mounting fears of another global recession, ACTRA's bargaining team faced a very anxious group of ad execs, producers and advertisers at the table. With the assistance of a government mediator, both sides eventually found agreement on changes to the NCA that are significant wins for performers, while recognizing the very real challenges faced by the industry.

A general increase of 7.5% — a 2.5% increase per year over three years — is a strong showing for any union and in keeping with increases being achieved elsewhere. We also received an additional 1.5% bump in residual fees, additional increases in rates for cable, specialty and other media use, plus improved session and use rates for commercials made for new media.

All in all, these gains will mean about a 10% overall increase in performer compensation.

And there were other wins that won't be felt directly in performers' pocketbooks, but will improve the manner in which performers are treated while working in commercials. In the pre-negotiation process of consultation with performers about

proposed changes to the NCA, we heard again and again about the lack of dignity and respect for performers on set and in auditions. It was clearly a time for change. In the result, we reached clearer and stronger terms on issues of dignity and respect, reinforcing the need for producers to ensure basic needs are met, including clean drinking water, a place to sit and fair auditions.

In exchange, the industry was given a little more flexibility to feature CEOs and employees of the advertiser as well as winners in lottery commercials. We built fences around these provisions to ensure they won't eat away at ACTRA work opportunities.

And while we were keen to bring the new media rates up to the same level as conventional broadcast commercials, the industry wanted to reduce those rates even further. Given the reality that online video advertising remains a tiny slice of overall advertising in Canada (just 1.1% of what is spent on conventional television advertising), we agreed to extend the new media pilot project for 20 months — until June 30, 2013 — in order to encourage the production of more ACTRA-covered new media commercials. In return, the advertisers and agencies agreed to a 10% increase in new media rates. And, with a view to eliminating the reduced new media rates by mid-2013, we also established some measuring sticks that will help all parties monitor the growth and maturity of online video advertising.

Bargaining is a balancing act. Too much, too far, too soon can cause our work opportunities to slow.

On the other hand, performers cannot be left behind while the potential exists for strong growth in new media production. The agreement we reached works for performers and the industry and opens doors to allow work opportunities to grow over the next three years. •

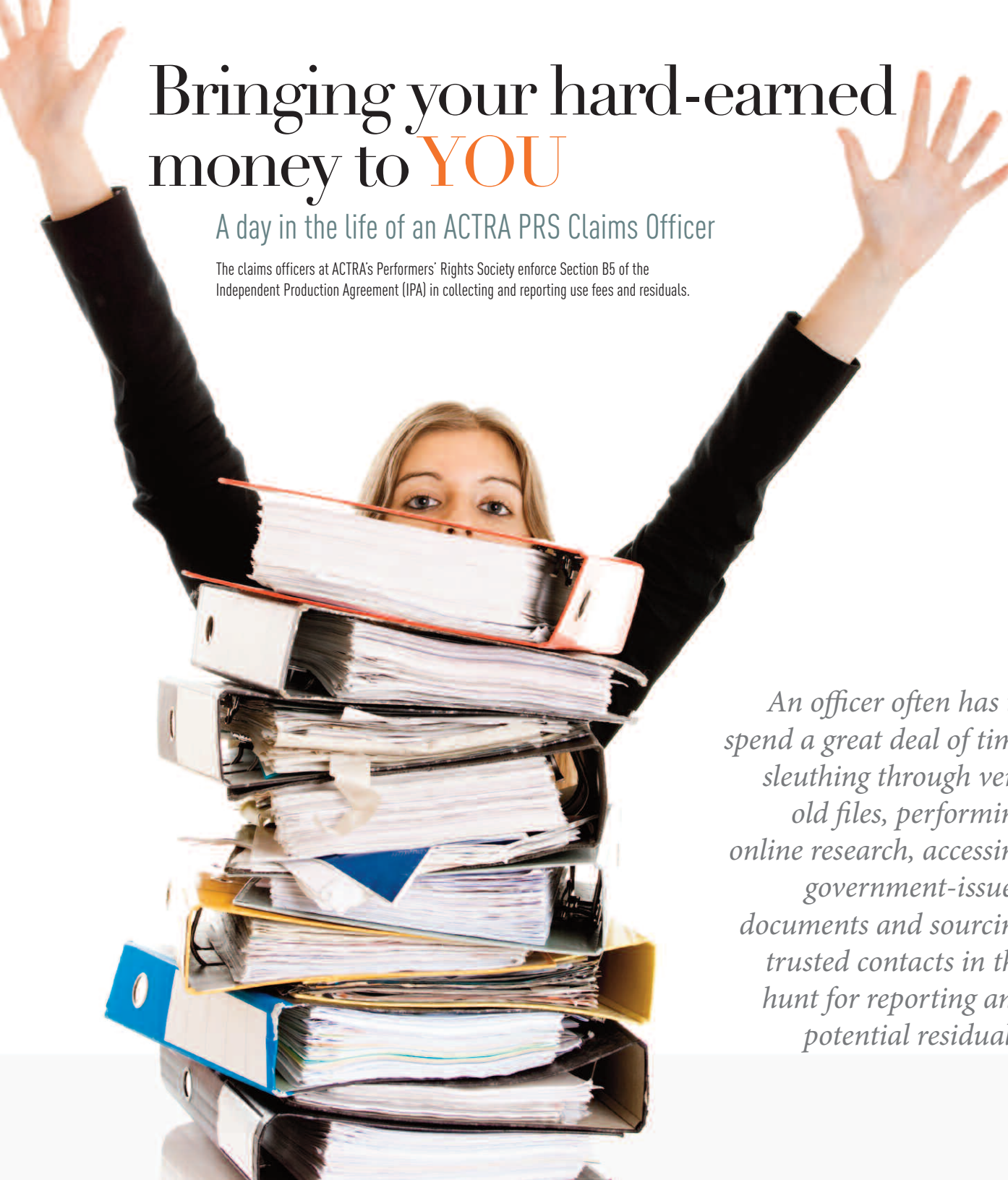
Stephen Waddell is ACTRA's Chief Negotiator and National Executive Director of ACTRA.



Bringing your hard-earned money to **YOU**

A day in the life of an ACTRA PRS Claims Officer

The claims officers at ACTRA's Performers' Rights Society enforce Section B5 of the Independent Production Agreement (IPA) in collecting and reporting use fees and residuals.



An officer often has to spend a great deal of time sleuthing through very old files, performing online research, accessing government-issued documents and sourcing trusted contacts in the hunt for reporting and potential residuals.

THE INVESTIGATION:

The claims officers work on over 7,000 titles making sure that claims are launched and nothing falls through the cracks. With various productions' rights expiring or becoming due for reporting every day, the team keeps a keen eye on our members' work as well as the connected producers and distributors. This means investigating rights holders ranging from the largest multi-national studios down to first-time independent producers and member-initiated projects.

To streamline and maximize the claims team's investigative powers, a new software program was designed, developed and launched in 2011. The Claims Project Research (CPR) program documents thousands of productions and can alert claims officers when titles are due for investigation. An officer can now access all of a production's pertinent information with a single click of a button, maximizing their productivity better than ever.

THE IDENTIFICATION:

One of the biggest challenges for a claims officer is locating the current rights holder for a production and most importantly, finding where a claims request can be directed. An Officer often has to spend a great deal of time sleuthing through very old files, performing online research, accessing government issued documents and sourcing trusted contacts in the hunt for reporting and potential residuals. Any tool available is put to use to initiate a claim on behalf of our performers. A claim may be completed in weeks, months and in some cases over years.

THE COLLECTION:

When cases arise where reporting and/or use fees are not forthcoming, claims officers will take the issue as far as possible including reminding a rights holder that they could lose their status as a 'producer in good standing.' If this isn't enough to persuade them, the case is elevated to PRS senior management and in some cases – legal action. While legal action is a worst-case scenario, it is an example of ACTRA Performers' Rights Society's fortitude in protecting its members and enforcing the IPA.

At the end of the day, claims officers do everything in their power to complete a claims request. Once money comes into ACTRA PRS, the team processes it, updates our CPR system and gets the money out the door and where it rightfully belongs — into the performers' hands. All in a day's work at the ACTRA Performers' Rights Society. •

Helping Put Money Where Your Mouth Is

ACTRA'S AUDIO CODE AHEAD OF THE CURVE

As our digital entertainment industry keeps changing, expanding and evolving, we've designed the new Audio Code to fit right in while keeping up with Canada's developing technologies.

Our Audio Code covers a wide range of voice work for audio products including audiobooks, podcasts, automated phone prompts, robocalls, museum audio guides, transit messages and more. **If there's no visual component and it's not being done under one of our broadcast agreements, it's Audio Code work.**

As our digital entertainment industry keeps changing, expanding and evolving, we've designed the new code to fit right in while keeping up with Canada's developing technologies.

The new Audio Code is a great organizing tool designed to increase work opportunities. It allows us to reach out to audio producers and let them know how easy it is to hire a professional. With this new code we'll be knocking on doors and making sure that ACTRA members are getting in the door. To work in this growing market we need to be on the look-out, to talk to our friends and to keep our eyes peeled for new opportunities to WORK ACTRA under the new code.

AFTRA members in the U.S. are experiencing enormous success with their new Audiobook Agreements. In identifying the expanding audiobook market as a top organizing priority, their pro-active work with emerging audiobook producers has paid off with top U.S. publishers now telling their producers that they want AFTRA contracts. It is also successful when, like in the music industry, audio productions move away from the big publishers to private studio work. In these cases the power shifts to the performer to negotiate and organize.

ACTRA's Audio Code is also designed to embrace new and emerging forms of productions of all sizes. Like our AFTRA sisters and brothers, we insist that all audio producers sign on to the code.

The success and fair compensation of ACTRA members relies on our collective ability to organize member-to-member and job-by-job. The code is our promulgated agreement and we establish the minimum terms and conditions of engagement. Our new Audio Code is designed for this, as it is written in straightforward language.

This year we ratified our new Audio Code, and we thank our working committee for identifying key trends and sharing their industry insight. The use structures now allow producers to pay for blocks of time where the rates, terms and conditions for particular types of audio production are clearly defined. The new code is a shorter document written in plain language. It is easier to find and understand the rates, terms and conditions for particular types of audio production. Together, ACTRA members are poised to flourish in the digital audio world. •

LOBBY DAYS 2011 ...

ACTRA on the Hill meeting MPs and Prime Minister Harper



November was a busy lobbying month for Canadian performers, starting with a two-day Ottawa blitz. Our lobbying team included ACTRA members from coast-to-coast and effectively delivered the message to MPs and Senators that Canadian content needs to be a central part of our digital economic strategy.

ACTRA returned to the Hill two weeks later for a private meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The message was simple: we need continued, stable government support — we want to create jobs, generate investment and sell our Canadian stories to the world.

Canadian Content in a Digital World: Our Stories on Every Screen

Canadian content is not only critical to our national identity, but it is playing an increasingly important role in our nation's financial well-being. Our cultural industries contribute more than \$85 billion — or 7.4 % to our GDP — and more than 1.1 million jobs to our economy. **Film and television production alone created 117,000 jobs in 2010, and \$1.7 billion in exports.** If we're going to stay competitive and create jobs we need to make sure the tools are in place to seize every opportunity and ensure we can see our Canadian stories on every screen — big, small and mobile.

Critical planks in a sustainable digital economic plan include: strategic government investment and incentives for private investment in content creation. We also need to nourish and support artists and creators with fair copyright laws and taxation that allows us to average our fluctuating incomes.

Bottom line? Culture is a serious business, and it's time to take content — and the artists who create it — seriously.



From L. to R.: Jackson Davies and NDP MP Jasbir Sandhu; Theresa Tova, Conservative MP Gary Schellenberger and Shannon Jardine; Cary Lawrence, Peter Keleghan and NDP MP Andrew Cash; Fiona Reid, Conservative MP Terence Young and Richard Hardacre; Alvin Sanders, NDP MP Rathika Sitsabaesan and Don Ast; Grace Lynn Kung and Liberal MP Scott Simms.

3rd photo from left by Joanne Deer. All other photos by Fred Chartrand.





**Treaty co-productions:
What every ACTRA member
needs to know about working
outside Canada**
with Sarah Gadon

Sarah Gadon has worked with legendary filmmakers such as Jim Sheridan on *Dream House*, Mary Harron on *The Moth Diaries* and David Cronenberg on both *A Dangerous Method* and *Cosmopolis*. Sarah was recently named one of Canada's "10 to Watch" at Playback's 2011 Hall of Fame awards. Sarah often works outside of Canada, and has questions for ACTRA about union coverage while working off-shore.

More and more, Canadian performers are working outside Canada in treaty co-productions. In a nutshell, what exactly is a treaty co-production?

A treaty co-production is a film or television production that has been created by pooling technical, creative and financial resources between a Canadian producer and a foreign counterpart. These projects are produced under the terms of an official Co-production Treaty between Canada and the collaborating countries. Notwithstanding that these productions are often shot entirely outside of Canada, they do fully qualify as Canadian content. Canada has been involved in creating co-productions for nearly 50 years and has helped co-produce over 800 films and television productions.

What happens when an ACTRA member leaves Canada to work on one of these treaty co-pros?

ACTRA asserts that our jurisdiction is not limited to Canada, but applies to the engagement of Canadian performers by Canadian producers anywhere. We look out for the well-being of our members all across the world, regardless of where a production is physically being shot. We assert ACTRA's jurisdiction on performers who are ACTRA members working outside of Canada. The remainder of the cast (who are not ACTRA members) are covered by their local union. And, in the case of countries where there are no unions, we try to encourage the producers to use the terms and conditions of the IPA for the entire cast.

What about countries that have no performers' union, or no effective collective agreements, like Romania?

If a member is required to work in a country where there is no local performers' union, or no effective collective agreements, then the member's work would have to be done under the terms and conditions of the ACTRA IPA. Make sure that the production and your engagement is either covered by the local performers' union or ACTRA before you leave Canada.

How does ACTRA steward offshore co-productions?

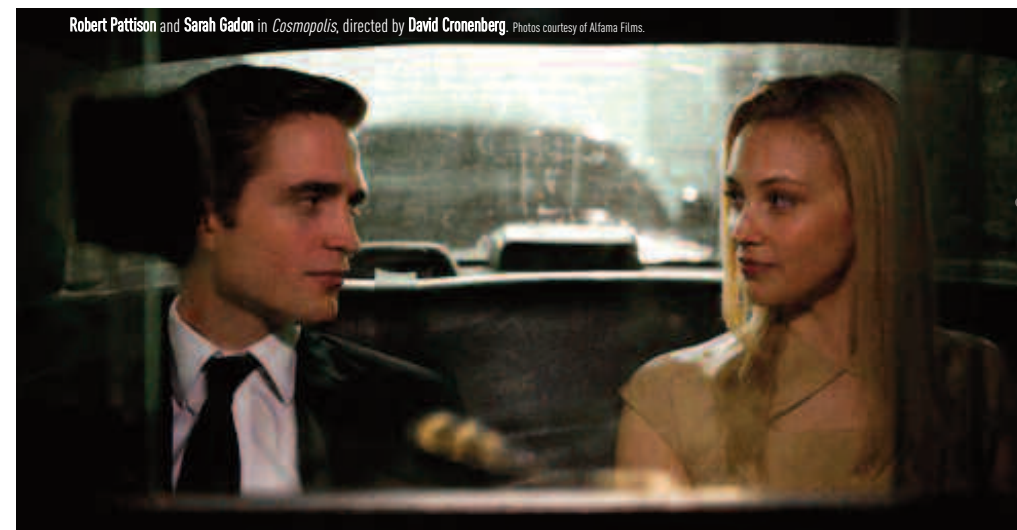
Stewarding a set in a foreign country is the responsibility of the local performers' union. However ACTRA continues to be an important part of the equation. During the pre-production phase ACTRA stewards meet with the production to get a sense of what is going to be required from the member during the shoot. They will confirm the member's shooting schedule, when they're expected to travel to and from the shooting location, their working conditions and any other potential areas of concern. During production, ACTRA maintains close contact with the performers' agents. They will report any issues immediately. If performers do not have agents we encourage them to email (especially when they are working in different time zones) any concerns.

When working on an offshore co-production who should I go to if there is a problem on-set?

Contact the local performers' union immediately. They are the organization best placed to deal with any issues surrounding an ACTRA member's immediate working conditions. Next, call the ACTRA steward responsible for overseeing the production. You should always loop ACTRA in to any on-set developments that make you feel uncomfortable. After all, we can't help you resolve a problem if we don't know about it.

If an on-set accident happens will I be able to access my union health benefits?

Yes. In the case of an accident on a co-production, members can access their Actra Fraternal benefits package, and/or AFBS Accident on Set benefits if the Canadian producer has purchased the coverage. You should also be aware that traveling to and from an offshore location that the production company must purchase additional travel insurance to ensure that you are properly covered at all times. •



Robert Pattinson and Sarah Gadon in *Cosmopolis*, directed by David Cronenberg. Photos courtesy of Alfama Films.



APPLAUSE

Eugene Levy appointed to the Order of Canada

Known to audiences around the world, Eugene Levy has starred in more than 40 films and the groundbreaking sketch-comedy TV series SCTV. He received ACTRA's 2010 Award of Excellence in L.A. in recognition of his career achievements and contributions to fellow performers and the Canadian industry. The Order of Canada is one of the country's highest honours.

Eugene Levy



Canada's Walk of Fame

The class of 2011 inductees includes ACTRA members Burton Cummings, Sandra Oh, Russell Peters and Ryan Reynolds. Canada's Walk of Fame honours the exceptional achievements of Canadians.

Russell Peters



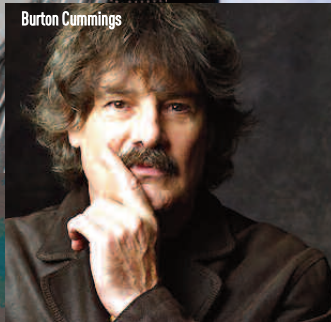
Playback's Canadian Film and Television Hall of Fame

2011 inductees to Playback's Hall of Fame include Tantoo Cardinal, Jian Ghomeshi, Allan Hawco, George Stroumboulopoulos and a special tribute to the late Roger Abbott. Art Hindle presented the "10 to Watch", including ACTRA members Jason Belleville, Ryan Belleville and Sarah Gadon. ACTRA is a founding sponsor of this event.

Tantoo Cardinal Photo Jag Gundu.



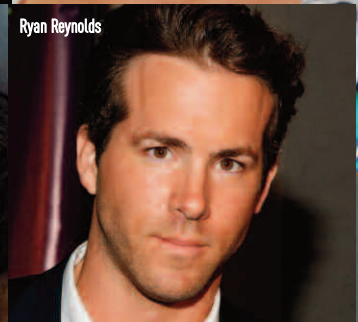
Burton Cummings



Sandra Oh



Ryan Reynolds



The 2011 ACTRA Awards in Montreal

This year's ACTRA Montreal Awards gala was hosted by **Holly Gauthier-Frankel** and Montreal President **Don Jordan**, featuring music by **Chris Barillaro**.

ACTRA Award for Outstanding Voice Performance
Tony Robinow — *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

ACTRA Award for Outstanding Female Performance
Emily Van Camp — *Ben Hur*

ACTRA Award for Outstanding Male Performance
Joe Cobden — *Peepers*

Best ACTRA Short, Audience Choice
Ellen David — *What a Doll!*

Best ACTRA Short, Jury Selection —
Lydia Zadel — *Toast*

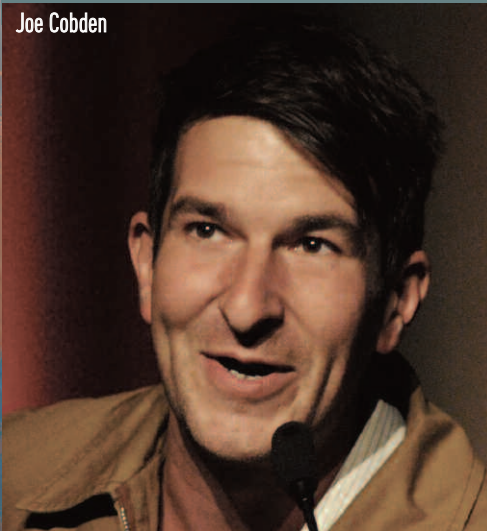
Walter Massey presented **Dick Irvin** the 2011 Award of Excellence. Dick has enjoyed a 50-year career in sports broadcasting that has earned him a place in the Hockey Hall of Fame, Canadian Broadcaster's Hall of Fame and CBC Sports Hall of Fame. For five decades Dick Irvin has been an iconic broadcaster, welcomed into the homes of Canadians across the country on television and radio.



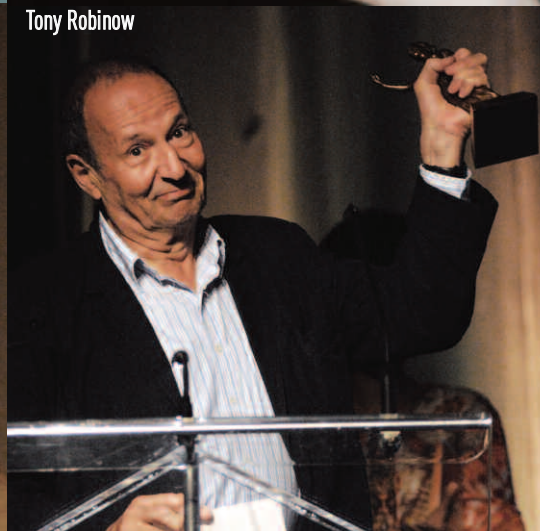
Dick Irvin



Ellen David



Joe Cobden



Tony Robinow



Shaun Johnston

SHAUN JOHNSTON honoured by Alberta production community

Shaun Johnston was named recipient of the 2011 David Billington Award for his invaluable contribution to Alberta's production community.

"Shaun has been an ACTRA member for more than 20 years. He is generous with his time in the community, from fundraising for the Actors' Fund of Canada, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary, to being a supportive ACTRA Alberta union member. We join in the chorus of applause for Shaun," said ACTRA Alberta President **Duval Lang**.

Born and raised in Ponoka, Alberta, Shaun Johnston has lived in Edmonton since he graduated from the University of Alberta. He received a Gemini Nomination for his portrayal as Jack in the first season of *Heartland*. From the lead role in *Jake and the Kid* to family head Jack Bartlett in *Heartland*, Shaun has proven to be a compelling and passionate performer.

Carol Whiteman receives Crystal Award

A two-time Governor General's Award-nominee and an industry award-winner for promoting women's equality in Canada, ACTRA member **Carol Whiteman** is the 2011 recipient of the Women in Film & Television (WIFT-T) Mentorship Award.

Carol is President & CEO of the Creative Women Workshops Association and Producer of The Women in the Director's Chair Workshop. She has helped advance the careers of hundreds of women screen directors, actors and technicians across Canada and internationally.

Samantha Bee received WIFT-T's 2011 Crystal Award for International Achievement.

Carol Whiteman



Peter Keleghan



Callum Keith Rennie



Tracy Dawson



Congratulations to all Gemini Award Winners & Nominees!

The 26th annual Gemini Awards celebrates the best in Canadian English-language television and digital media.

The 2011 performance award winners include:
Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Comedic Role

Peter Keleghan — *18 to Life*

Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role

Callum Keith Rennie — *Shattered*

Best Performance by an Actress in a Continuing Leading Comedic Role

Tracy Dawson — *Call Me Fitz*

Best Performance by an Actress in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role

Michelle Thrush — *Blackstone*

Russell Peters hosted the star-studded broadcast night at CBC in Toronto. For the full list of the 2011 winners go to The Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television's website: www.GeminiAwards.ca

All Gemini photos: George Pimentel Photography. Courtesy of ACCT.

Michelle Thrush



The Canadian Comedy Awards

This year the funny event was held in Toronto, including five days of comedy performances, workshops and seminars by some of Canada's top comedic performers and comedy industry professionals.

TV comedy series *Less Than Kind* was a double-winner, earning kudos for its direction by **James Dunnison** and for **Brooke Palsson** who won Best Female TV Performance. Best Male Television Performance went to **Jason Priestley** for *Call Me Fitz*.

The Montreal-set comedy *Good Neighbours* picked up Best Male Film Performance by **Jay Baruchel** and Best Film Writing by **Jacob Tierney**. Best Female Film Performance went to **María del Mar** for *A Touch of Grey*.

The Dave Broadfoot Award honour was presented to **Jayne Eastwood** and **Samantha Bee** was named the Canadian Comedy Person of the Year.

For the complete winners list go to:
www.canadiancomedy.ca

Jayne Eastwood Photo: www.mckennaphoto.com



Brooke Palsson



María del Mar for *A Touch of Grey*.



Samantha Bee

APPLAUSE

ACTRA Manitoba Honours Members

Manitoba celebrated members at a reception in June where past councillor **Lionel Moore** received the Victor Cowie Lifetime Achievement Award. Well-known broadcaster, **Lee Major** paid tribute: "Lionel is an inspiration to us all. In front of the camera and microphone, as well as behind the scenes, Lionel guided and represented ACTRA Manitoba for our health, pension and wage agreements."

Members' Choice Awards: Outstanding Performance, Male - **Stephen McIntyre** and Outstanding Performance, Female - **Sarah Constible**.



ACTRA Manitoba President **Talia Pura** (right) and **Sarah Constible**. Photo: Claude Dorge

ACTRA Alberta Honours Members Colin MacLean and Senator Tommy Banks

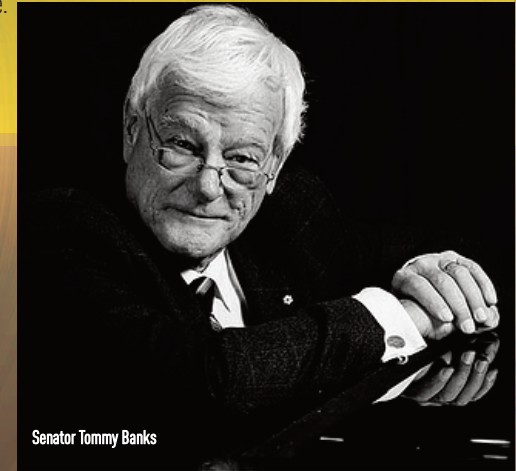
Performers **Colin MacLean** and Senator **Tommy Banks** were honoured with ACTRA's Lifetime Membership Awards at a special June gala at Edmonton's Ramada Convention Centre.

Colin Maclean is one of Alberta's best-known TV and radio personalities. For more than 35 years he has worked on CBC radio and television series and specials including *Stomping Tom's Canada*, *Reach for the Top* and *Colin's Hollywood*. Colin has penned several musicals and has performed with the National Arts Centre Orchestra.

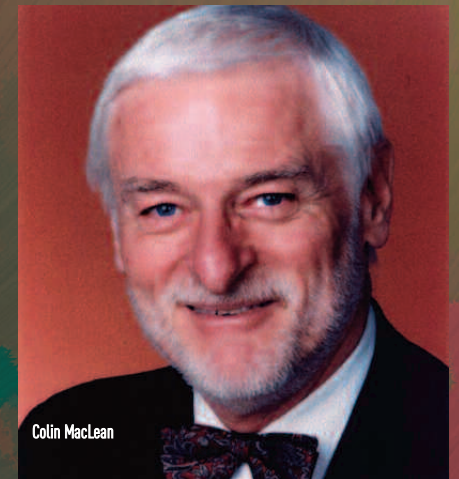
The Honourable Tommy Banks was appointed to the Senate in 2000 after a 50-year career as an internationally acclaimed musician and TV personality. In 1960 he presented *The Solo Piano of Tommy Banks* on CKUA before launching *The Tommy Banks Show* from 1968 until 1983 on CBC. Senator Banks served as chair of the Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts from 1978-86, chaired the music program at Grant MacEwan College from 1983-87. From 1989-95 he was a member of the Canada Council, and its policy adviser from 1996-98. Senator Banks has been honoured with SOCAN's 2010 Special Achievement Award, the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of Excellence.



Stephen McIntyre



Senator Tommy Banks



Colin MacLean



PUT A SAFETY NET UNDER YOUR ACT.

Introducing the AFBS Arts & Entertainment Plan™

New benefits package for Apprentice Members or ACTRA Additional Background Performers



THE

Check it out at

www.artsandentertainmentplan.com

Email: admin@artsandentertainmentplan.com

Call 1.800.387.8897

 **ARTS &**
ENTERTAINMENT PLAN



IPA Consultations: Have your say!

In the next few months ACTRA will be heading into bargaining for our new Independent Production Agreement (IPA) and we need to hear from YOU.

email us at ipa@actra.ca and let us know:
How is it working for you?
What do you want to see in the next agreement?
What improvements can we make?

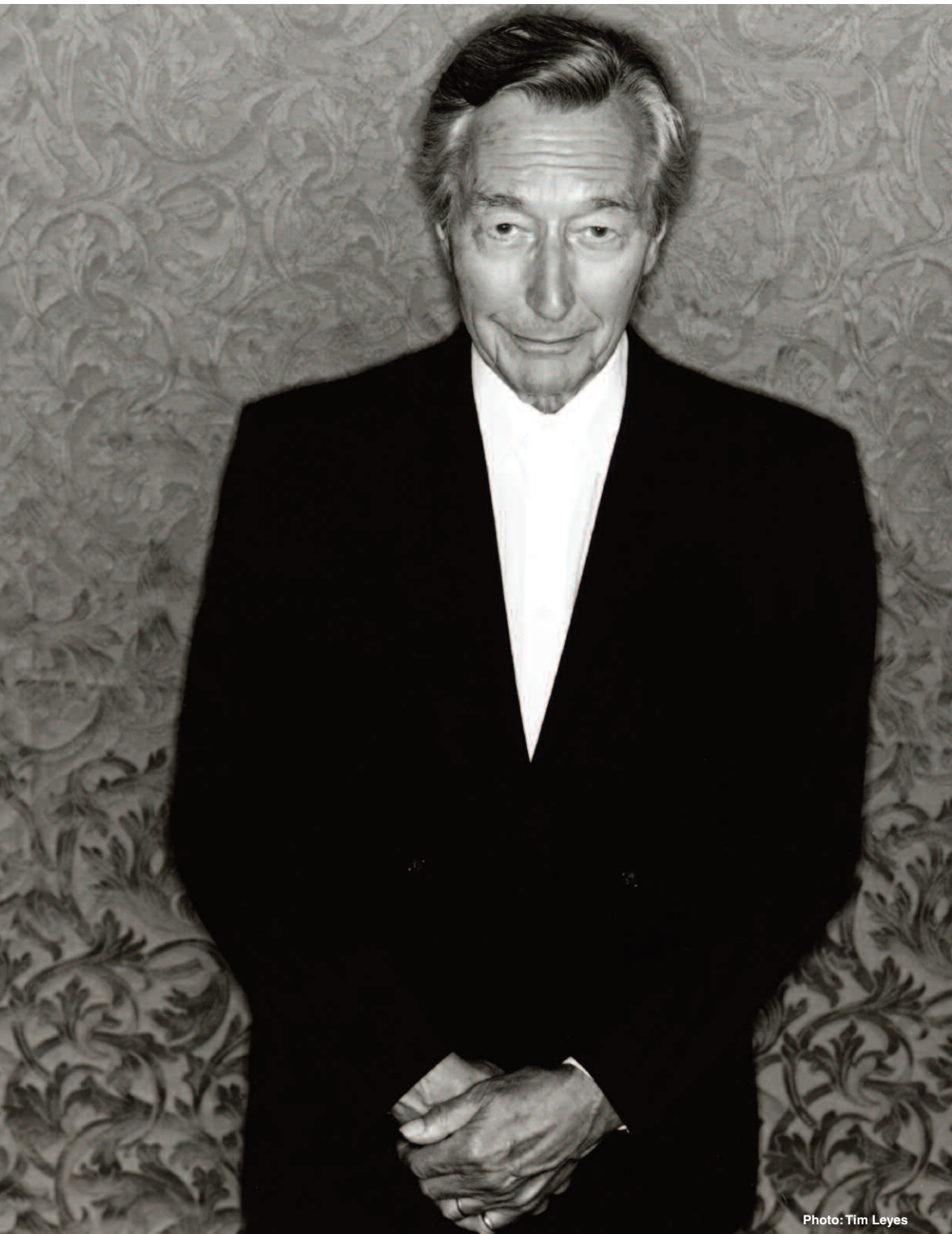


Photo: Tim Leyes

Farewell John Neville

I would have to say that of all the expat Brits I have ever had the pleasure of knowing/working with, **John Neville**, despite his wonderful accent and effortless flirtatious elan, was to me a Canadian to the core. He loved this country, and loved our acting community so very fiercely.

His myriad accomplishments have been trumpeted everywhere since his passing, of course. A bona fide Star in England, (*Alfie* and *Richard the Second* perhaps standing out for some) a contemporary, friend and colleague of the greatest Brit actors of the last century, (just name one, he/she knew John well) he came across the ocean to us and led three of our great theatres into new realms of glory: The Citadel, The Neptune, and Stratford. Major accomplishments, not matched by anyone I can think of.

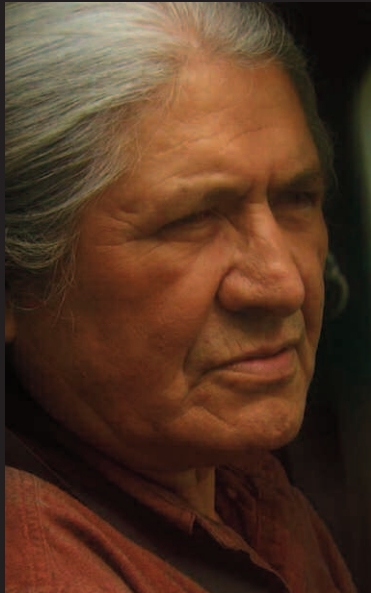
But what was he proudest of? Us. When I was in his Stratford Young Company in 1985 I remember John and I watching **Brent Carver** sing at a cabaret. "He's OURS, he belongs to US," he crowed, quite emotionally. And when I directed him a few years ago in what was to be his last stage appearance, even on the cusp of his illness, the thing he was most proud of: his Order Of Canada. And of course his Caroline of 65 years.

Sorry, England. They belong to US now. Sail on, my friend. Heaven needs you.

• **Ted Dykstra**

Farewell

Gordon Tootoosis



Gordon Tootoosis was more like a father to me, than a fellow actor. I first met him back in 1986 when I was still a school girl with the faint hope of someday becoming an actor. I remember the exact day I met him, as when Gordon walked in a room you knew he was there. He was a humble man with a huge presence and a smile that melted hearts.

Gordon and I worked together on many projects and I got to witness how people gravitated toward him. Small crowds would eagerly listen to his many funny stories about working on sets with various stars. He had this very special way of always laughing at himself. He was proud of his family and would also share stories about his grandchildren.

Early on in my career there were not many Aboriginal people in the industry, and I saw this as an obstacle. Gordon shared the journey of his acting career and filled my head with dreams, hope and encouragement. I can remember him saying, "You need to always go forward my girl, this thing called creativity is a gift from the creator and if you deny it you are disrespecting what has been given to you. We need to tell our stories." Gordon took me under his wing and his presence has always been a part of who I am as an actor.

Gordon passed away suddenly and it was a devastating and shocking loss to the Aboriginal film and television community, and to the world. We were two weeks away from starting our second season of *Blackstone*, and Gordon was a foundation for the cast and crew on that show. That first day on set was so difficult. Deep inside I knew that he was still with us and I could hear his words loud and clear, "Go forward my girl, creativity is a gift from our Creator. Now is the time to tell our own stories."

I will forever miss Gordon and I thank him for the gifts that he gave us.

• *Michelle Thrush*

SIDE NOTE:

In 2003 ACTRA Saskatchewan presented Gordon Tootoosis with the ACTRA Award of Excellence at the Yorkton Film Festival.

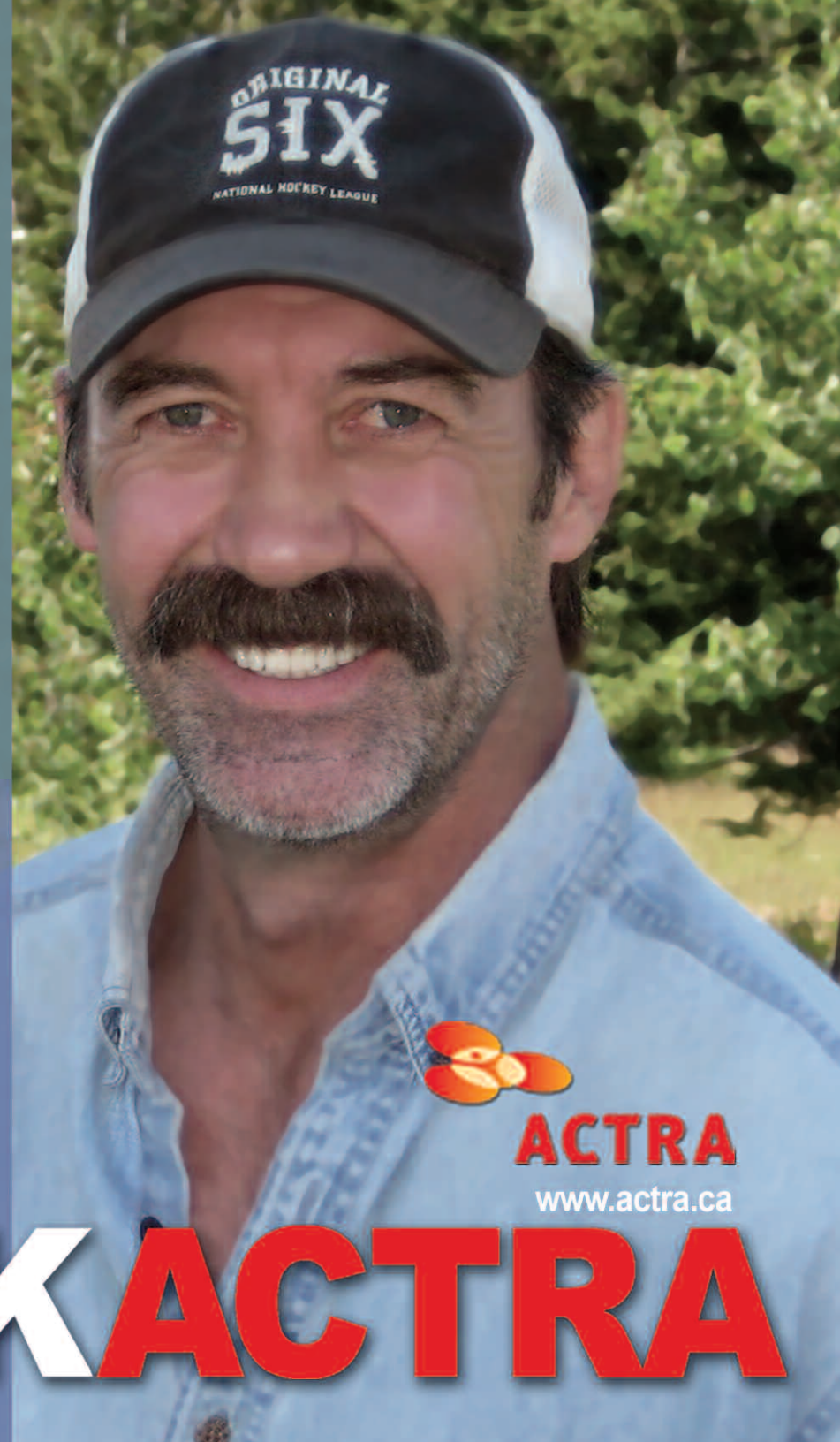


Gordon Tootoosis in the film *Legends of the Fall*
Photo courtesy of TriStar Pictures.

“I work ACTRA
because it not only
protects me...
it protects Canadian
culture.”

— Shaun Johnston

- *Heartland* star honoured by
the Alberta production community
with the 2011 David Billington Award



ACTRA

www.actra.ca



I WORK ACTRA