



ACTRA

branch news

NEWFOUNDLAND

2001 an extraordinary year

In Newfoundland, we're coming off an extraordinary year. Our members have worked on international productions such as **Random Passage**, **Rare Birds**, **The Red Door**, and **The Shipping News**. Local production has included **Messiah** from Montreal, **Bread-maker**, and **Ashore**.

CBC Television continues its dance around a couple of pilot shows that could signal a six- or 13-episode series to be produced in **St. John's**. Otherwise, things are pretty slow in our region.

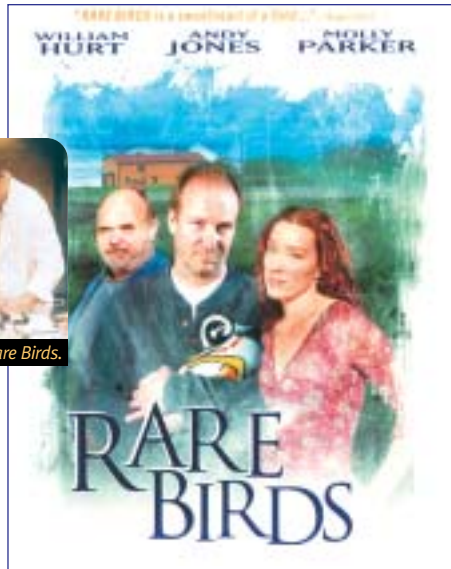
But while production has backed off, that doesn't mean that the industry has slowed down. With only a limited number of local producers, they're all busy in post-production and marketing, while development of new projects has just begun. This lull affords us the opportunity to work on industry-wide initiatives with the other members of the film community.

A new legal entity has been established for professional development – the **Film Professional Development Inc.** Funding has been secured from **HRDC**. A director and program officer have been hired and initial meetings with the stakeholders have begun. The professional development needs of performers are brought forward by **Ruth Lawrence**, a member of our Branch Council who is participating on the board.

With the **Safety Guidelines for Newfoundland and Labrador** completed, all producers producing in Newfoundland are required to operate under the guidelines.

Mack Furlong sits on the advisory board to the **Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation**, and **Glenn Downey** is our representative on the **Executive Board of the Association of Cultural Industries**.

We're very excited to report the completion of a proposal for Newfoundland's first **soundstage**. Applications for funding are underway. The facility will better serve our own community and should be a boon to our

Molly Parker and William Hurt in *Rare Birds*.

burgeoning commercial industry.

We continue to organize and unionize the workforce, and look forward to Eastern Region Organizer **Gary Saxe's** visit in the coming year.

MARITIMES

Move into the Reel World forum builds bridges

Despite the tremendous growth of the film industry in Nova Scotia, the **African Nova Scotian community** has remained, for the most part, on the outside looking in.

So in late 2001, a committee which included ACTRA Maritimes member **Tamara Patkau** and Branch Rep **Gary Vermeir** – along with representatives from the Atlantic **IATSE** and **DGC** locals, the **Moving Images Group**, the **Black Business Initiative** and other interested parties – began planning an event which would bring the African Nova Scotian community and the film community together. Our plan was to bring together reps from all aspects of the industry in an informal question and answer session for interested members of the black community.

ACTRA Members Glen Michael Bradley and Tara Baxter at the *Move into the Reel World* forum.

Branch Rep Gary Vermeir with keynote speaker and ACTRA member Anthony Sherwood

Entitled **Move into the Reel World**, the forum took place on January 23rd. The film unions, government film agencies, the **Atlantic Film Festival**, Moving Images Group, the **Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op**, the **Nova Scotia Community College**, **Filmworks Casting** and the **Nova Scotia Producers Association** all took part. The turnout from the public was great, the atmosphere was relaxed and we answered a lot of good questions and handed out a lot of information.

The star of the evening was ACTRA member and social activist **Anthony Sherwood**. A Halifax native, Anthony spoke of the history of the Canadian black community in film and television and of the first **black actors' association's** successes in forcing advertisers to better reflect Canada's ethnic diversity in commercials. He spoke of his audition for the role of Crown Attorney Dillon Beck on **Street Legal**. There had never been a black co-star on a Canadian series before, so he didn't hold out much hope. But he of course won the role and a Gemini nomination to boot.

Things have gotten better, he admitted, but there is still a long way to go. The industry is more inclusive, but still does not accurately reflect the richness of Canada's fabulously diverse society. He emphasized that it is the responsibility of those currently working in the industry to point the way for those coming after. Anthony's talk and his encouragement was an inspiration for everyone there.

Building on the momentum of this event, we are happy to report that our Branch is establishing its own **Diversity Committee**. Stay tuned! *(continued on page 10)*

MONTREAL

Record attendance at Montreal AGM

Montreal held its AGM in November, with a record turnout of some 350 members. Any divisiveness over the **Daredevil** debacle seemed to have evaporated. Members were clearly happy with the new IPA. Kudos to the negotiating team, and thanks to **Stephen Waddell** for walking our membership through the highlights of the agreement at our AGM. Members were wowed by the live online demonstration of www.actra.ca and **Face to Face Online**, and the party that followed went on into the wee hours.

In keeping with the emphasis on improved communication, the branch has created our own website and upscaled our newsletter.

Our office is expanding to accommodate organizer **Gary Saxe**, computer wizard **Randy Duniz**, and to generally allow our staff to function more efficiently. We now have room for a proper studio facility for taping voice and on-camera auditions for members. As well, the **Professional Development Committee** will have expanded space for workshops. Meanwhile, the staff is tweaking the Montreal version of the **Apprentice Training Program**.

The only less-than-happy news is that Montreal Branch did run a deficit last year. We will be gingerly dipping into our surplus for now, attempting to strike that balance between maintaining the services our members expect, and saving for a rainy day.

Production for this year is picking up, with about a dozen projects in the pipe. While we are happy for the work, the conspicuous lack of indigenous production is of great concern. Montreal Branch wonders what actions ACTRA might take to help the Canadian industry.

OTTAWA

Like most branches, 2001 was a slower year for Ottawa ACTRA members. The downturn in the economy, the threat of a SAG strike, and the events of September 11th all combined to create a difficult climate for low-budget producers in our small jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, the news wasn't all bad. The series, **The Endless Grind**, which airs on the **Comedy Network**, was shot in Ottawa over the summer and a number of local actors found work in the series along with

quite a few of our colleagues from Toronto. A mix of local and Toronto performers also found work in the low-budget film **Posers** by **Katie Tallo**, which stars Ottawa resident **Adam Beach**. Animation remains a strong industry in town with two continuing series **Hoze Hounds** and **Kevin Spencer** keeping Ottawa performers working. We're continuing to encourage the development of local filmmakers and actors who are making local products through the use of our **Local Development Agreement**.

Our training subcommittee has been researching and arranging developmental programs for our members. We've hosted some very successful workshops this year and continue to offer weekly **Apprentice Member workshops** to help develop our newer members. We hope to receive 'Train the Trainer' courses in the near future and introduce the Apprentice Training Program as soon as possible.

The jurisdiction remains strong. There are a few producers who do not use ACTRA talent, but these are getting fewer and farther between. Our Branch Rep. **Nanci Morrison** continues to work with producers to ensure that they pay promptly.

TORONTO

Casting task force prompts dialogue

ACTRA Toronto Performers had a busy fall and winter.

A **Task Force** opened a dialogue with casting directors toward an understanding of what 'good industry standards' mean in the practice of auditions and casting. We met with key film and TV casting directors around Toronto in a good first dialogue.

We are re-developing the **co-op production guidelines**, and revising a low-budget successor to the experimental CLIPP. We are also participating in discussions with the other unions and stakeholders around the city's plan for a \$150-million world-class film production facility.

From perhaps the most diverse city in the western hemisphere, we launched a **diversity casting campaign** that received wide media coverage including **Citytv**, CTV's **Canada AM**, and **The Toronto Sun**. Our 'Cast Reality' posters were sent to all ACTRA branches, and the artwork is available to share.

On Feb. 15th we initiated our **Members' Conference** entitled, 'Making Connections – With Your Art and Your Industry.' This year ATP evolved our AGM into a full day



One of the postcards from ACTRA Toronto Performers' diversity campaign

of professional panels, an Executive Council plenary session, and an evening celebration with more than 500 members. The strength and unity of the membership was evident with the massive turnout.

We hosted industry panels with guests including members **Alberta Watson**, **Chris Owens**, **Don McKellar**, **James Allodi** and **Michael Healey**, in discussion with prominent producers, directors, and casting directors.

A rousing address was given by ATP President **Richard Hardacre**, who then introduced **John Connolly**, National President of AFTRA, one of the American Performers' unions. Connolly's inspiring keynote speech brought a standing ovation for his views on unity and the harmful 'runaway production' rhetoric. ACTRA National President **Thor Bishopric** also gave a tremendous solidarity speech.

Toronto thanks the Montreal Council and members for the temporary 'loan' of **Raymond Guardia** as interim Director. We welcome our new Executive Director, **Brian Topp**, who with his new team is off to an excellent start.

MANITOBA

2002 already a busy year in Manitoba

Manitoba, for the first time in recent memory, has experienced production in almost every month of the year 2001. The number of productions was unprecedented. Many members worked on more than one production throughout the year.

Canadian indigenous production was more than half of total production in terms of work days, but there was strong foreign production as well. Both the number of our **Full Members** and **Apprentice Members** are



Alice Poyser, William Carl Backman and Ida Reichardt Backman at ACTRA Manitoba's Open House in December.

growing faster than ever before. And we are expecting a financial surplus for 2001. 2001 has indeed been a good year for ACTRA Manitoba.

2002 is starting off even better. Three productions started in February and a fourth is getting ready. And there are more in the wings.

Last July we moved into a new office in Winnipeg's **Exchange district** – right in the middle of the film and arts community. We are establishing a studio within our office for acting workshops. Our council and membership are very excited with these improvements.

We held an **Open House** in our new office in December. All members and many film industry workers were invited. We had a good turnout and a very enjoyable time was had by all. In a little ceremony we recognized Alice Poyser for her past twenty-five years of service to ACTRA Manitoba and presented her with a gift – a very charming memory box.

Life is good in Manitoba and if the weather would improve it would be downright excellent.

SASKATCHEWAN

Status of the Artist legislation in the works



Chris Scott, President, ACTRA Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan is proving once again that it's the centre of the universe as the provincial government is set to introduce **Status of the Artist** legislation this spring. We'll be only the second province (after Quebec) to have such a law. The feds brought their law down in the early 1990s. This is extremely important for artists of all ilk as it will provide for collective bargaining rights for freelance artists and commits our government to honouring existing scale agreements.

The **NDP government** will bring in enabling legislation in March and form a high-powered committee of culture sector types that will be charged with putting meat on the bones of the law over the next couple of years. Our branch is expected to participate in a big way as ACTRA not only has a lot to gain it has a lot to offer other artist organizations.

Renovations of our new **ACTRA Saskatchewan Audition and Resource Centres** are complete. We've had several bookings from members and expect all Regina auditions will be held in the new spiffy space.

Construction of the \$12 million, 82,000-square-foot **soundstage** is due to be completed this spring. It's expected to change everyone's life here. Now we're worried about a shortage of crew and a number of them will need to be enticed home after they left last year for greener pastures.

Branch President **Chris Scott** has agreed to sit on the **Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board**, representing ACTRA and all cultural industries. This prestigious appointment by the Sask Fed of Labour will help raise ACTRA's profile in both the cultural sector and labour movement.

We're also working with the other prairie branches and ACTRA's National office to formalize regional administration out of the Calgary office, to free up our one-person staff from the over-burdening clerical duties.

EDMONTON



Colin MacLean, ACTRA Edmonton's National Councillor

ACTRA Edmonton is pleased to announce **Colin MacLean** has been acclaimed as our National Councillor. Colin is a veteran CBC broadcaster and writer and one of the founding members of the Edmonton Branch. His extensive knowledge of the entertainment industry, and his history with ACTRA will be a great benefit.

We're not as busy as we would like – but we are steady. Productions include documentaries (Great North/Alliance Atlantis) and other local independents; **Mentors** (the series); and the occasional feature film, MOW, commercial, and CBC Radio pickup. We are pleased that **The War Bride**, an official co-treaty production shot in Edmonton and England during 2000,

was nominated for 7 Genies including Best Motion Picture.

100 Days in the Jungle, a recent MOW that was filmed in Costa Rica for 3 weeks, had been variously affected by the September 11th attack, hurricane Michelle, a monsoon and a minor earthquake. The branch anticipates sending some recommendations to ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society on behalf of members working out of the country. We salute the indomitable Canadian cast and crew of *100 Days* and we are confident that they will ultimately be very proud of this undertaking.

The branch continues to focus on the pursuit of work opportunities and training initiatives for ACTRA members.

Our website was transferred to www.actraedmonton.com in December, and is already attracting enthusiastic enquiries. With the assistance of the Calgary regional office, we have managed to turn around some non-union activity.

In December, we held our first-ever combined **Equity-ACTRA** holiday celebration at the Varscona Theatre. It was a successful event which brought together the entire Edmonton acting community in celebration. It is the beginning of a new tradition in Edmonton.

In closing, we wish to thank the Western Regional Office for maintaining the Edmonton Branch during our Branch Rep.'s absence last summer: John Rooney, Dan Goy, Donna Burwood, and Jennifer Blaney. Kudos from all of us at the Edmonton Branch to the National staff for their continued hard work and recent achievements.

CALGARY

We need a National presence in every region

It was a so-so year for Calgary, certainly not one of the blockbusters (no advertising intended). We had five feature films, of which three were deferrals, and two unit shoots for feature films. Five MOWs, two TV series, one mini series, one co-treaty and some odds and ends.

Preliminary figures for Canadian talent show: background days at approximately 3,500 of which more than 2,000 were non-members. Working days were approximately 2,000, of which 850 were for members in other branches and approximately 300 for (continued on page 14)



Women in the Director's Chair Workshop a unique experience

The **Women in the Director's Chair Workshop** is a specially designed intensive program for mid-career Canadian women directors. From prep through production and post – all of the components of a professional dramatic media production are explored, complete with professional actors (ACTRA) and crews (DGC, IATSE).

The WIDC Workshop alumnae have gone on to complete new original projects, collaborate on fellow graduates' projects and many are hired to direct series television. Graduates credit the increased skills, greater confidence and action plan developed at the workshop as a major force behind subsequent success.

Among graduates' successes, **Veronica Tennant** received a star on Toronto's Walk of Fame, **Gerry Rogers'** autobiographical *My Left Breast* garnered accolades across Canada and around the world, while **Katie Tallo** went to camera on a full-length dramatic feature film.

ACTRA member **Carol Whiteman** is co-founder and producer of the annual WIDC workshop.

ACTRA member authors **Kerry Segal** and **Shaker Paleja** and photographer **Gail Maurice** participated in the 2002 acting ensemble.

Application deadlines for the WIDC 2003 Workshop are:

Directors:	September 30, 2002
Actors:	October 31, 2002
Crew:	November 30, 2002

Watch the website for more information:
www.womeninthedirectorschair.com.

Note to 2002 applicants: demo tapes have been returned to your local ACTRA branch office for pickup.



ACTRA is a proud sponsor
of the Women in the
Director's Chair Workshop.



Since 1958, the **Actors' Fund of Canada** has helped thousands of performers and other entertainment industry professionals in financial crisis to get back on their feet after a major setback. When artists in need have nowhere else to turn, the Fund can intervene at a critical moment with a rent cheque, grocery money, a subsidy for prescription drugs or other assistance.

If you are ill, injured, or have suffered a financial catastrophe that puts your health, shelter or ability to work in jeopardy, contact the Fund for quick and confidential help.

The Actors' Fund of Canada is a registered charity sustained by members of the entertainment industry professions. For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, contact the Fund at:

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CALGARY

(continued from page 11)

non-members. Calgary members cast were nearly 200. The interesting figure is the 'other branches' figure, which supports the argument for a national presence in every production region.

Our members need and expect the local office of the area where they are working to be supportive and provide service. The local branch can only do that if we continue to maintain a National Agreement, fair to all our members.

On to other matters. Calgary has a new council which is getting its feet wet, coming to terms with itself and trying to be a cohesive group working for the membership who elected them. A new **workshop committee** is committed to providing dynamic courses and enhancing the educational opportunities for the membership.

Calgary was pleased to hear that the City of Toronto is building a new soundstage and hopes that the work for members will expand exponentially.

Carpe diem.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Waiting for 'business as usual'

2002 is a year of uncertainty and guarded optimism as we wait to see if and when the 'business as usual' flag will be hoisted by the entertainment industry.

Our long-awaited **financial statements** were completed in November and forwarded in a holiday bouquet to the national office. We are delighted and relieved that this onerous and time-consuming task has been completed and we thank you for your patience as we wrestled the financial demon to the mat.

In perhaps the most hotly contested elections in UBCP's eleven-year history, 27 candidates ran for 10 positions on the UBCP Executive Board. Elected on December 3, 2001 for a two-year term were:

Mark Holden, John Juliani, Stephen E. Miller, Peter Partridge, Elfie Pavlakovic, Kate Robbins, Alvin Sanders, Howard Storey, Gerry Vivash and Byard Wood.

In early September, it came to our attention that **CCRA** (formerly Revenue Canada) was auditing the tax returns of an inordinate number of our members. We pro-actively requested a meeting with the CCRA reps in an attempt to understand why we've become the object of their attention. After six meetings we managed to get CCRA to agree to put the audits for several UBCP members on hold pending the results of our meetings. We hope to send members a CCRA-UBCP statement about new guidelines for allowable expenses for performers.

UBCP has negotiated a one-year continuance of its collective agreement through March 31st, 2003. This arrangement seemed to be the obvious and most prudent choice to make. We have also met with the **AMPTP** and **CFTPA** in a 'consultation committee' mechanism provided for in the BCMPPA to discuss issues of mutual concern. We hope this process will facilitate bargaining when we sit down formally to renegotiate the BCMPPA.