



ACTRA Montreal

Grapevine

Fall 2009

Fakers
The Usual Suspects
Barney's Version
Web of Lies
Edible
18 to Life
Daisy
Tangled
Beastly

Cartoon Gene
The Phantom
Funky Town
Territories
Lesson of Fear
Durham County
Blue Mountain State

The Kate Logan Affair

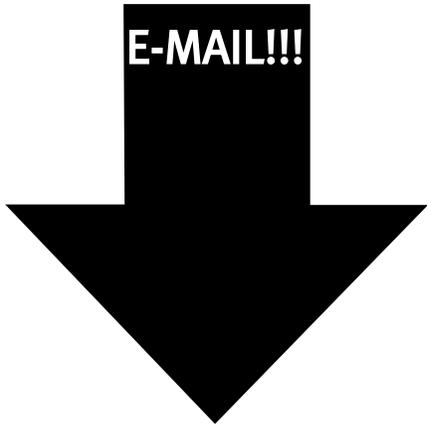
Cutting Edge: Fire on Ice

Assassin's Creed Lineage

Ring of Deceit

The Mountain

**MONTREAL
BACK IN BUSINESS**



E-MAIL!!!

Please Send Us Your E-mail Address

ACTRA occasionally sends out important e-mail announcements to Members.

Many of you have not updated your e-mail address with us and do not receive these announcements.

Please send us your current e-mail address. Just send an e-mail to montreal@actra.ca with "e-mail address" as the subject line.

Thank you.



E-MAIL!!!


ACTRA Montreal
Grapevine

fall 2009

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If you're an ACTRA member, apprentice member or ACTRA Extra and would like to contribute news, an article or photos to the Grapevine, we'd love to hear from you! Send us an email at gsaxe@actra.ca.

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The ACTRA Awards are Back





LOOKING FORWARD TO 2010

Dear Members,
If you look very closely at the front cover of this magazine, you'll be able to count twenty-three titles of significant productions filmed in Montreal this year. These include feature films, MOWs, television series and one HUGE web series. And not included on the list are many corporates, documentaries, video games, animation projects, low budget films and countless commercials.

This amount of production is an enormous improvement over the dreadful 2008. In our feature article **Montreal - Back in Business**, (pages 8 and 9), you can read all about what ACTRA Montreal did to help improve work opportunities for Members. You can also check out ten photos of Members at work on many different projects this year.

And next year is looking good as well. In addition to what we hope will be another steady stream of productions from **Muse**, **Incendo** and **Galafilm**, we already have confirmations on several big projects set to shoot in the first part of 2010 (appropriately pronounced "Twenty-Ten" as opposed to the ill-advised and wrong-sounding "Two Thousand and Ten").

After months and months of agonizing rumours and changes of decisions, **Dawn of War**, featuring **Henry Cavill** (*The Tudors*, *Stardust*) was finally

green-lit for Montreal. This major feature film will tell the epic tale of the battle between the Olympian Gods and the Titans.

Upside Down, starring **Kirsten Dunst** (*Spiderman*, *Marie Antoinette*) and **Jim Sturgess** (*Crossing Over*, *Fifty Dead Men Walking*) will film in Montreal over almost three months. This feature film is a love story set between two alternate universes.

Source Code, a science fiction story featuring **Jake Gyllenhaal** (do I really need to tell you he was in *Brokeback Mountain*) will also be filming in Montreal for a few months near the beginning of 2010.

Our very own **Jay Baruchel** (*Tropic Thunder*, *Knocked Up*, *Million Dollar Baby*) will be leading the cast in a film about his favourite neighbourhood in the world.

Notre Dame de Grace is set to shoot early in the new year.

Above, I mentioned a huge web series filmed last year. **Assassin's Creed Lineage** was Ubisoft's first significant foray into non-video game production. This exciting development will likely see Ubisoft hiring more and more ACTRA Members as they go into the feature film business. Go to Youtube to check out our Members at work on **Lineage**. (You can find it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcE8xjK6t4)

2010 will also see the return of the ACTRA Awards in Montreal. It's time for you to start nominating each other, so please fill in the nomination form on the inside back cover of the Grapevine and send it in. You will also be able to nominate Members through our web page - www.actramontreal.ca

There have been some recent changes on ACTRA Montreal's Branch Council with the departure of **Barbara Bacci**, **Johanna Nutter**, **Nicholas Wright** and **Noel Burton**. Also leaving Branch Council was long-time Councillor **David Schaap**, who recently became a father and moved to Toronto.

Congratulations and good luck to David and his family. Also, a heartfelt thank you to Barbara, Johanna, Nicholas and Noel for their valuable contribution and commitment to their fellow ACTRA Montreal Members.

I sincerely wish you all a very safe and happy holiday season, with a new year overflowing in good health, work opportunities, and prosperity.

In solidarity,

Don Jordan,
President, ACTRA Montreal

CHERYL'S REMINDERS



KEEP YOU INFO CURRENT !!!

by Cheryl Alleyne, Membership Department

If your membership is suspended or cancelled, forgetting to change your address is never accepted as an excuse. It's totally (100% --- That's right!!!!) **your** responsibility as a Member to ensure we have the correct information for the following:

Mailing address, email & all contact telephone numbers
Agent information (if applicable)
Instructions as to where to send your mail and cheques

Keeping this information current helps make sure that you receive payments and your membership renewal invoice.

Also, as we like to stay current and up-to-date. Do not hesitate to share your news with us for the following:

Weddings & Births

Deaths

Milestones & Awards

All information must be received in writing. Two easy ways to update your information:

Use your username and password to access our ACTRA Membership System, located at www.actra.ca. If you do not have this information, do not hesitate to contact the membership department by phone (514-844-3318) or e-mail (montreal@actra.ca).

Send an e-mail to the Membership Department (montreal@actra.ca)

YOU CANNOT BE CAST APPROPRIATELY WITH OUT OF DATE HEADSHOTS!

We have received several complaints from Casting Directors about photos in our membership system that need to be updated.

So, take a look, have a laugh and update your profile on **Face to Face**. Forward your picture(s) **as soon as possible!!!** You are allowed a maximum of 10 photos. Ideal pixel size is 470 x 588. Photos can be sent by email to ftf@actra.ca

You will need a username and password to access your file. If you do not have this information, do not hesitate to contact the membership department at montreal@actra.ca, or call at 514-844-3318.

If you now look like this...



...your headshot shouldn't still look like this!

SHANNON'S ACTRA TIPS

by Shannon Joutel, ACTRA Montreal Steward

KNOW WHERE TO CALL IF YOU HAVE A MONEY PROBLEM

Insurance and Retirement money - ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society (AFBS): 1-800-387-8897

Royalties - Use Fee money for Film & TV - ACTRA Performers' Rights Society (PRS): 1-800-387-3516
for Commercial residuals - **ACTRA Montreal:** 514-844-3318

(Payment is only due a month after the first air date. Always have the date, time and channel that the commercial aired. Your payment comes to ACTRA first)

Dubbing, Commercial session and low budget production - ACTRA Montreal: 514-844-3318

These payments always comes to the ACTRA office first and then are sent to the address we have on file for you - regardless of what is written on your contract.

Film & TV Daily Fee payment is sent directly from the production office to the address on your contract. If it's late, please contact the production's accountant first. Then, if there's still a problem, contact the ACTRA Steward responsible at ACTRA Montreal: 514-844-3318.

When circumstances are at their worst and you need help, you can ask for financial assistance from the **Actor's Fund of Canada:** 1-877-399-8392



STUNTS, SQUIBS & UPGRADES

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.



by Michael Scherer

What is a Stunt Upgrade? It's when a non-stunt performer becomes involved in what can be considered a risk performance. Why am I talking about it? Because it is an often misused and misunderstood system.

Before I continue, I would like to say for the record that although I may sound like I'm generalizing, I do agree there are situations where the upgrade is warranted.

Secondly, down the road the producer may tell the Stunt Coordinator, a fellow ACTRA Member by the way, that the stunt budget will not be amended to cover the upgrade. In other words, a card carrying union Stunt Performer will not get a day now because that part of the budget went for an upgrade. Thirdly, the Stunt Coordinator him or herself gets it in the neck from several directions. This can include a reprimand, a flood of emails, and having to explain to ACTRA what happened. This can affect the persons reputation and future work.

That having been said, I have personally witnessed situations where Background Performers or Special Skill Extras (SSE) have conspired to put themselves in a situation that may qualify them for an upgrade. This may include techniques such as going to the ground, embellishing in a vehicle or getting close to something that may be considered dangerous, all done without being directed to do so. The plan then involves waiting a day or two and then filing for an upgrade with ACTRA.

I have even been in a situation where Background Performers who were passengers on a bus I was driving in a shot felt they should get upgrades because a stuntman was driving. Thing is, not every shot was an action shot. They were replaced with stunt people when the situation warranted it. But there was some serious planning going on and they even asked for my name and member number.

Here's the problem. Although a person may succeed at this they don't realize the ripple effects. First and foremost it's dangerous. You may not know the action or FX involved and might actually be injured or cause someone else to be injured. I have personally witnessed extras trying to get close enough to an explosion to get an upgrade. Risky stuff that. An extra decides to fall in a crowd scene and winds up taking down a dozen others or throws off the timing in a car sequence.



Mike Scherer, performing a cable drop on the set of *The Second Arrival* (1998) with Marc Desourdy, Jean Frenette and André Laperrière.

Unless you have been given specific direction to perform something risky, then don't do it. Also, if you are asked to do something you are not comfortable with, you need to speak up. If you are willing to do something more and you feel it's risky in nature, you need to establish that beforehand. Some roles are very action oriented and a little rough and tumble work may be considered a prerequisite for the job. Get it sorted beforehand.

As a side note, a squib is a pyrotechnic device and is a stunt upgrade. There are however some non pyro systems that would not qualify. The flip side is that there are times where we need to bump someone on the spot because of a change in the action or at the director's request. They can be unavoidable and are legitimate situations for which the upgrade was designed. Just think of the repercussions before you take advantage of a self generated upgrade opportunity.



Stephane Lefebvre, practicing, then flipping a car on the set of *Veritas: The Quest* (2003).

STORIES FROM THE



by Andee Shuster

In the middle of the night my father packed his gym bag and prepared to leave. He carefully shook me awake and whispered that we would need to go soon. Together, we rummaged around in the dark, still half asleep, grabbing for books, snacks, playing cards, Archie Double Digests, and a Sony walkman accompanied by a pile of cassettes. These were tools that we would need for our adventure. It was a rainy day in 1985 and we were off to meet the bus at Berri Station. I was eight years old and it was my first job on the set of *Barnum*, starring Burt Lancaster.

Back then, I didn't have a clue that Burt Lancaster was a celebrity. Back then, you were an "extra", not a background performer. Back then, I didn't know what a union was. All I knew was that Dad and I were going to be paid to be in a movie--and that was cool.

Once on set, we plunked our stuff down on a long cafeteria table and got dressed in the period costumes that we'd been fitted for. I got a tattered lilac coloured dress with lots of layers and ruffles and a bonnet that covered my short bob. I loved the dress, but hated the bonnet. I saw other girls in crisp white and blue dresses with satin trim and bouncy blond ringlets. I stared at them with envy. Dad explained that we were portraying the audience members who sat in the poor section at Barnum's circus and there are other actors who are from the rich section. Then and there I quickly concluded that long-haired girls get "better" roles and I silently vowed never to cut my hair short again.

It was a long day of waiting and clapping at jugglers and more waiting and laughing at clowns and more waiting and sandwiches for lunch and still more waiting. I read some of my Archie comics, but I was getting weary and impatient. At the

end of the day we signed our vouchers and got back on the bus. It must have been close to midnight. With the gentle rumble of the bus and the cool window against my forehead, I started to drift off. At the depot, Dad carried me off the bus and tucked me into the car. "So, how'd you like working on a movie?" Dad asked with a smile. With sleepy eyes and a deep I yawn I muttered, "I'm not doing this again unless I'm the star..."



8-year-old Andee Shuster, on the set of *Barnum* (1985)

The summer of 2009 I did some background work on "Blue Mountain State" playing a banquet guest, dolled up in my own colourful frilly dress and cascading chocolate brown curls. At 2:00 am I signed my ACTRA voucher and waited for my husband to pick me up. On my mother's insistence, I called my folks to let them know I was finished filming and on my way home. My mom was somewhat cross that the shoot went so late and that I'd be tired at my office job in the morning. My dad asked warmly, "So, did you have fun?" I grinned and responded

with a chuckle "I'm not doing this again unless I'm the star...G'night, Dad."

Luckily, over the past twenty five years since Andee worked on the set of *Barnum*, ACTRA has won better working conditions for children, including strict limits on overtime.

Hopefully, Members also get a better lunch.

Has anything strange, funny or embarrassing ever happened to you at an audition, on set or in studio? Do you want to share the experience with your fellow ACTRA Members?

To submit your experience, just send it by e-mail to gsaxe@actra.ca

Photos courtesy of Andee Shuster



ACTRA STORMS PARLIAMENT

by Carol Taverner, Public Relations Officer - ACTRA National

On Monday, November 16, 2009, Members of ACTRA Montreal joined with Members from Ottawa, Toronto and some of Canada's top TV stars to march en masse to Parliament Hill. Our demand: "More Canada on Canadian TV".

As the CRTC launches hearings on the future of TV broadcasting, performers across the country are calling on the regulator to put Canadian programming first by ending the free-ride for big cable and private broadcasters.

"Today is about reminding Ottawa and the CRTC that big cable and broadcasters don't own the airwaves, we do. It's about taking back our TV and making sure there is space on

our airwaves for Canadian stories," said Nicholas Campbell. "We've been waiting 10 years to get the rules fixed. If the CRTC gets it wrong again our airwaves will continue to be dominated by U.S. programming, our industry will be crushed and we will lose yet another generation of actors and writers to L.A.," said Mark McKinney. "We need to seize this moment of opportunity so our talent will stay to serve and create shows for a Canadian TV industry that is poised to explode in ambition, reach and profitability."



ACTRA Montreal Members, preparing to march on Parliament

Stars at the Ottawa rally included: Dalmar Abuzeid (Degrassi), Charlotte Arnold (Degrassi) Nicholas Campbell (Da Vinci's Inquest/ZOS), Jackson Davies (Beachcombers), James McGowan (The Border) Mark McKinney (Kids in the Hall/Slings & Arrows), Carlo Rota (Little Mosque/24), Zaib Shaikh (Little Mosque/Metropia), R.H. Thomson (October 1970) and Tonya Lee Williams (The Border/The Young and the Restless). Award-winning recording artist Gordie Sampson also made a special musical appearance.

Canadian English-language drama has been a rarity in prime time since 1999 when the CRTC relaxed Canadian content rules. Since then, private broadcasters have been saturating Canada's prime time schedules with U.S. shows. Last year they spent \$740 million on U.S. and foreign programming and just \$54 million on Canadian English-language drama.

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1

▶▶ "The CRTC must take the public's interest to heart and stop giving both private broadcasters and big cable the wide breadth they have enjoyed for so long. We're the ones that end up paying for this with higher cable bills and less Canadian programming on our airwaves," said Tonya Lee Williams. "The fact is both sides need to be doing more."

ACTRA is asking the CRTC to direct conventional TV broadcasters to invest at least 6% of their gross revenues in Canadian drama and air a minimum of two hours a week of original scripted Canadian drama and comedy in prime time.



2

"How do we know what it is to be Canadian if we can't see and share our experiences, our own lives, our communities, our heroes and our history on TV, the most popular and pervasive cultural medium in history? If Canadian broadcasters don't give us space to tell our stories, no one else will," said Ferne Downey, ACTRA National President.

ACTRA also held a press conference at the CRTC hearings in Gatineau, launched a lobbying campaign on Parliament Hill and organized local activities in Halifax, Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg.



3



6



4



5



1. Morty Bercovitch and Kevin Ward; 2. Ken Fernandez, National President Ferne Downey and Peter Hurley; 3. Gino Arcaro and Alison Louder; 4. Jane Gilchrist and Kelly Ricard; 5. A.J. Henderson and Kevin Ward; 6. National President Ferne Downey addressing the crowd.

MONTREAL BACK IN BUSINESS



1. Patrick Huard in *Funkytown*; 2. Laurence Leboeuf and Michelle Forbes in *Durham County*; 3. Andrew Walker in *Web of Lies*; 4. Conrad Pla and Jake McLeod in *Hidden Crimes*; 5. Ryan Carnes, Sandrine Holt and Jean Marchand in *The Phantom*

Photo 1 courtesy of **Caramel Films**.

Photos 2 & 5 courtesy of **Muse Productions**.

Photos 3 & 4 courtesy of **Incendo Productions**.

We needed to answer a few important questions: How can ACTRA help create a stable environment that allows Montreal performers to make a decent living in this industry? How can we do this for local film and television production?

We began to answer these question by going back and taking a look at those years when local production was firing on all cylinders. What was it about those years that made them so good? So, just for fun, we went back to 1998 and 1999. Forty-two major Canadian film and television projects were shot here in 1998. Thirty-four in 1999. To put that in perspective, 2008's number was thirteen.

As you might imagine from the title, "Going, Going, Gone", the news was not good.

We discovered two things when we went back to those golden years. First, we discovered that there were three major local producers whose production volume was big enough to ensure the community's survival. In 1998, **Allegro**, **Telescene** and **Cinar** accounted for twenty-one of the forty-two Canadian projects shot in Montreal. In 1999, those three companies accounted for eleven of the thirty-four projects.

Second, we discovered that the tax credit regime in Quebec was the best in the country, permitting these three major companies to produce at a high level and encouraging all sorts of smaller players to get into the production game.

By 2005, everything had changed. The big three had disappeared. **Allegro's** owner cashed in by selling his company, **Telescene** started believing its own press releases and **Cinar**, well, we all know what happened to **Cinar** and the damage that their cheating ways caused our community. Plus, while the effective tax credit rose slightly in Quebec, our friends in BC and Ontario not only caught up, they left us in their dust. Frankly, local production has been struggling ever since.

So once we discovered the key ingredients to creating a stable environment that allows Montreal performers to make a decent living in this industry, **ACTRA Montreal** got to work on recreating the magic of those heady years of a decade ago. To be clear, we can't create strong, vibrant production companies that produce multiple projects, year in, year out. That is not a union's role. Rather, it requires good capitalists who are committed to Montreal, who don't get carried away with their own sense of self-importance, and who play by the rules. The very things the big three from the turn-of-the-century could not do.

Fortunately, three new companies have emerged from the rubble and are prime candidates to do just that: **Incendo**, **Galafilm** and **Muse**.

Still missing was a tax credit regime that would permit these three to produce - right here in Montreal - at a high level year after year, and encourage smaller players to get their projects off the ground. That's where **ACTRA** decided to play a role.

We knew that in order to change the provincial tax credit regime, we would need hard, statistical evidence - and not just anecdotal stories - in order to convince



Some years are good and some years are bad.

Overall, 2009 was a good year.

After the disastrous 2008, we needed to figure out what ACTRA can do to foster a good year and ward off a bad one.

the-bureaucrats and politicians that it would be a good thing to do this. We started discussing this problem with our colleagues at the Quebec wing of the **Directors' Guild of Canada**, who definitely shared our concerns. Together, the two unions hired a researcher, **Kirwan Cox**. The result was a report; **"Going, Going, Gone: The Decline of English-language Production in Quebec - 1996-7 to 2006-7"**.

As you might imagine from the title, **"Going, Going, Gone"**, the news was not good. English language domestic production dropped by 10% across Canada. While this was bad enough, the regional disparities were striking. Ontario saw a modest growth of 6%. BC saw a major decline of 22%. *And for us in Quebec, well, we hit an iceberg, with a drop of 40%*. In 1999, there was \$306 million of English-language domestic production in Quebec. In 2006, it was \$184 million. That's a drop of \$122 million. The situation was even worse when we looked at fiction - drama and comedy - production, which plummeted by 46%; the worst kind of production to lose for the simple fact that these are the productions that really hire a lot of performers.

Clearly, this was a significant downturn. Our report identified the main culprit - uncompetitive tax credits. Over the period of the report, tax credits for producers in Quebec went from being the most generous in Canada to being one of the least generous. **ACTRA Montreal** and the **DGC** in Quebec then put together a coalition that included **Muse, Incendo, Galafilm, Sphere Media, Cineflix** and **Reel One**. The coalition also included the producers' associations, the **CTPA** and **APFTQ**, as well as **Michel Trudel**, representing the studios and equipment providers.

In short, this coalition brought together all of the significant players in the English film and television industry in Quebec. As a united team, we lobbied the Quebec Ministries of Culture and Finance, as well as Premier Charost. On January 14, 2009, the Quebec Government announced the changes. It was everything we asked for, exceeding our expectations.

Although it's early, the initial signs are encouraging. Mentioned above, the total number of Canadian productions shot in Montreal last year was a lowly thirteen. This year, with the new tax credits in place, we've hit twenty.

Although it's early, the initial signs are encouraging.

Twelve of the twenty come to us courtesy of our big three producers - Incendo, Galafilm and Muse - while the other eight come from a variety of other sources. And that is precisely the kind of balance between the big three and the others that we saw a decade ago.

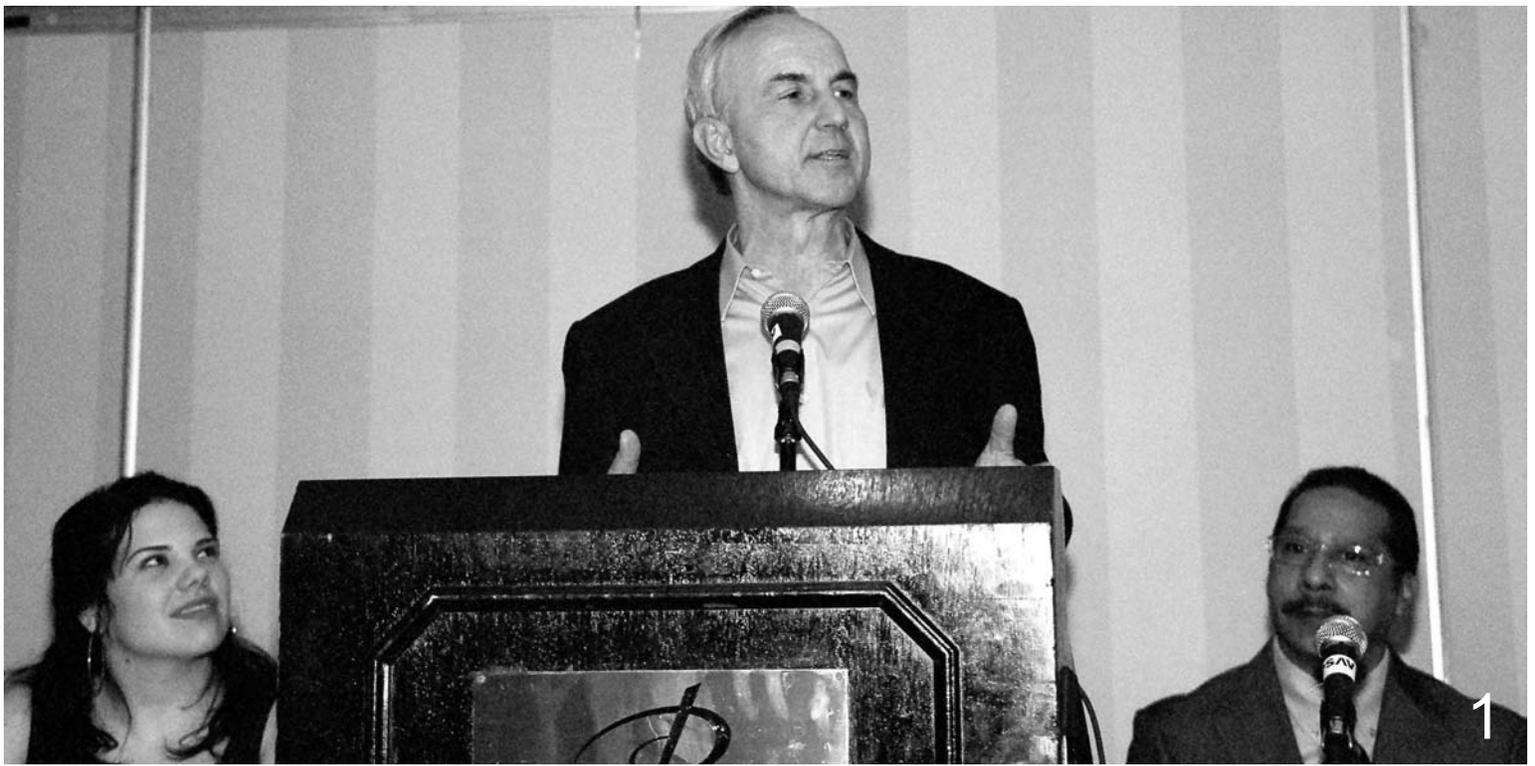
Surrounding this article are production stills from just a few of those projects.

So, the ingredients for a sustainable comeback are in place: And if this trend holds, it will be a testament to our actions, working with local producers to create a win-win scenario. By putting Montreal first, we are hopeful Montreal actors will reap the benefits.



6. Louis Oliva, John Dunhill, Rhea Perlman, Marianne Farley and Tyrone Benskin in *Christmas Choir*; 7. Disco scene from *Funkytown*; 8. Joel S. Keller, Claudia Ferri, Frank Schorpion, Hugh Dillon and Patrick Labbé in *Durham County*; 9. Tiio Horn in *Web of Lies*; 10. Mira Sorvino and Anthony Lemke in *The Last Templar*.

Photos 6, 8 & 10 courtesy of **Muse Productions**. Photo 7 courtesy of **Caramel Films**. Photo 9 courtesy of **Incendo Productions**.



The 2009 ACTRA MONTREAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We come home when we lose our way. We come home to recharge our batteries. We come home when we need time to figure out what's really important in our lives. And often, we realize that what really matters to us is what we've had all along.

"Coming Home" was the theme of ACTRA Montreal's 2009 Annual General Meeting, attended by nearly 200 members on Monday, November 9th.

For years, we at ACTRA Montreal have been preoccupied by our ability to encourage American production to come shoot here. Many hours at previous membership meetings have been devoted to this very topic. In an effort to understand how our industry works, ACTRA Montreal has gone to great lengths to analyze those factors that explain why Hollywood would come in droves one year, only to ignore us the next.

As we rode the emotional roller coaster that came with following the ups and downs of American production, ACTRA Montreal was in the process of losing its way. This year, we snapped out of it. We got off that roller coaster

and asked the following question; "How can we help create a stable environment that allows Montreal performers to make a decent living in this industry?"

Our best shot at creating that stable production environment that provides adequate work opportunities comes by accentuating those things Montreal has going for it right here, right under our noses; video games, bilingual and double-shoot productions, and local Montreal-based producers.

Holly Gauthier-Frankel presented on video game producer Ubisoft, which this year, became the second largest engager of ACTRA Montreal Members, after Muse. Holly explained that our Members earned over \$1,000,00 of revenue working on Ubisoft productions this year, which is significantly more than the Member revenue generated by all other video game companies across Canada.

Our recent discussions with Ubisoft have involved a very interesting possibility, something they refer to as "*convergence*", or the development of video games and feature films at the same time. This past spring and summer, Ubisoft experimented with this type of production and hired many Members to perform on a web series called "Lineage", which tells the back story of the main character in their recently released video game "Assassin's Creed 2". We're very much looking forward to all of the many types of projects that Ubisoft will be producing in Montreal.

Taylor Baruchel presented on two kinds of projects that are only possible in Montreal - bilingual films (like *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*, where some actors perform in English and others perform in French) and double shoots (like *Ciao Bella, Nouvelle France*, and *Territories*, where actors perform in both languages.

The film is then edited into two original productions; one English and one French).

After many years of disputes between ACTRA and Union des Artistes on one side and the producers' association on the other, we finally reached an agreement which respects our jurisdiction and demand that, for double shoots, performers must be paid separately for the two finished productions.

Thor Bishopric then presented on the local industry. He pointed out that in the best production years, Montreal was able to count on the stability of three significant local producers. These engagers would provide a base of employment opportunities and US production was simply seen as a bonus. Due to a combination of corruption, greed and bad luck, accompanied by an increasingly uncompetitive tax credit regime in Quebec, our three local companies disappeared and local production has been struggling ever since.

Fortunately, 3 new companies have emerged from the rubble: Incendo, Galafilm and Muse. Still missing was a tax credit regime that would permit these three to produce - right here in Montreal - at a high level year after year, and encourage smaller players to get their projects off the ground. That's why ACTRA Montreal, along with the DGC, researched and documented the the problem and brought together a coalition of unions, producers and suppliers to lobby the Quebec Government for improved tax credits. Within months, we got everything we asked for. Since then, local production has increased significantly.

Our guest speaker for the evening was **Michael Prupas**, President of Muse Productions. He expressed his appreciation in working with ACTRA Members on his many productions. He also discussed his experiences working with ACTRA in our successful lobbying campaign.

Tyrone Benskin reported on our National television drama campaign and lobbying efforts to have the CRTC change it's television policy (see **ACTRA Storms Parliament**, p. 6-7) The meeting also featured a report on finances from Branch Treasurer **Cary Lawrence**, a report on ACTRA Fraternal Benefit Society by **Bob Underwood** and a report by ACTRA Regional Executive Director, **Raymond Guardia**.

Thank you to everyone who attended.



1. Branch Councillor Taylor Baruchel, Muse President Michael Prupas, ACTRA Montreal President Don Jordan; 2. Matt Holland; 3. Regional Executive Director Raymond Guardia, cracking up the head table; 4. Branch President Don Jordan; 5. National Vice President Tyrone Benskin; 6. Danny Blanco-Hall and Hondo Fleming; 7. Alison Louder; 8. Una Kay and ACTRA Steward Carmela Algeri; 9. George Knight, Roy Elliot, Kevin Ward and Peter Hurley

TAKE CENTRE STAGE Volunteer Your Time

by Eramelinda Boquer



Too much time on your hands because there is not enough work? Well you can do one of two things. Complain about it endlessly to your fellow artists, or put that time and energy to good use and Volunteer!

For the past three years, I have been working with local and national community groups on a movement called "*Initiative to Increase Volunteerism in Canada*". We have been urging governments on all levels to do more to encourage all Canadians to put time aside each week and commit to community service.

This includes these four main points:

1. Increase the tax credit for charitable donations,
2. Recognize and quantify the time given by an organization or a volunteer, to a charitable organization as a tax credit.
3. Provide incentives for all schools to include volunteer projects in their curricula.
4. Municipal governments should open volunteer offices in each district for the promotion and training of volunteers to assist the needs of the community to serve existing organizations in that community or create new ones to meet their needs.

I've received many letters of support from leaders across the country, including one from recently re-elected to her fourth term - Parc Extension City Councilor **Mary Deros** - who has agreed to a pilot project in Parc Ex for a volunteer office to assist community projects.

When it comes to community leadership, we all have to do our part too. You cannot just vote for a leader once every four years and think: "That's it, my job is done!" You need to demonstrate as much community commitment from yourself as you expect from your leaders. With the economy in bad shape and social service budgets being slashed everywhere, it is our community and charity groups that must pick up the slack.

With such a strain on existing volunteer groups, and with the same faces beginning to suffer burn out, each one of us needs to give more. Whether it is time or energy or money - we need to be part of the solution. Instead of complaining endlessly about problems, or wasting your time twittering and texting, watching TV or playing video games, you can use that time to help an elderly neighbor with their groceries or join a neighborhood watch program, or become a Scout or Guide leader or Big Brother/Sister.

If you have more time, then find a cause that's dear to you and join up: collect food for a food bank, help feed children in economically challenged areas, collect funds for your favorite community group, etc. Basically, give more and you will feel better. The end result: "*Spare time*" becomes "*care time*" that you can give to your community. It will be very much appreciated, you'll feel good....and everyone benefits!

And here's an excellent example. ACTRA Montreal Member **Sylvia Stewart** took volunteering to the extreme. She jumped (safely) off a building for a good cause. Way to go Sylvia!

ACTRA Montreal Member Sylvia Stewart Jumps Off Building for a Good Cause



Sylvia Stewart rappelling for charity

On Sept 22nd, 2009, ACTRA member **Sylvia Stewart** rappelled off a 26 storey building for charity (approx. 400 feet). Sylvia took part in an annual nationwide event put on by Easter Seals in the effort to raise money for disabled children and their families. "I walked by the building all summer long and read the poster every time I passed, thinking that I could do it. So I did. I joined 2 weeks before the event and raised the minimum amount within days mostly by harassing people to give to my charity. I thought it would be a great way to combine my love of action and charitable giving."

Sylvia believes that everyone has the capacity to make a difference in another person's life. Sylvia Says, "I have always given privately but I realise that by giving publicly, I can inspire others to give. The message is that you don't have to be a billionaire to be a philanthropist."



Sylvia Stewart at the ACTRA Montreal 2009 AGM

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

by Shannon Joutel, ACTRA Montreal Steward

We recently received two reports of members who had been subjected to inappropriate comments and behaviour from certain directors. While these violations to performers' dignity were dealt with, the incidents underline the importance of knowing your rights.

Here are a few helpful tips for you to consider next time you go to work;

- Think about what your own limitations are and make them known to your agent. Sometimes you may be tempted to agree to something that you aren't really comfortable with in order to get the gig. Once you have a clear idea of your own limitations, it will be easier to protect your rights.

- Make sure your agent is asking all the right questions when they receive the casting breakdown. Does the character smoke? What is expected of you? Will you be handling any machinery, tools or vehicle? Where will this be shooting?

- Read the entire script, not just to study your character, but to identify any scenes that may pose a potential risk. Is it an outdoor shoot, or is the shooting at a distant or remote location? Does the scene involve a disturbing subject, like rape or abuse? Are there animals on set? Once you've identified scenes that trouble you, talk to the ACTRA Steward to understand the rules and what can and cannot be asked of performers.

- Remember that it is your right to refuse any instructions that would be in breach of the minimum terms and conditions in the ACTRA agreement and in your contract or rider.



- If you're unsure of yourself, blame ACTRA. Like: *"Sorry, but I'll get in a whole lot of trouble with my union if I do that"*. Or, *"My union says I can't, and I'm pretty sure ACTRA will grieve production if I do this."*

- Stay cool... don't yell or make insulting comments. Calmly say what needs to be said. If the situation is serious, simply refuse to work and calmly walk off set.

- Act in solidarity, if a fellow cast member stands up to a bully director or production person, let everyone on set know that you support their actions. While a cast member may feel intimidated, collectively, you have the power to protect your rights.

- Report all incidents as soon as possible to ACTRA. Write out the sequence of events, what was said or done by whom and the timelines.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the performers and talent agents involved on these two projects (you know who you are and I will never forget you). Despite suffering such horrendous ordeals, you courageously came forward to report these unpardonable incidents to ACTRA.

I encourage you to share your shocking experiences with others, in order to bring awareness to fellow members and also to make the point that it is crucial to have the courage to stand-up for yours and your fellow performer's rights.



Congratulations
to new ACTRA Montreal
members...

Carolina Bartczak, Corey Beauchamp, Daniel Beirne, Joseph Bellerose, Vince Benvenuto, Regine Borno, Donna Byrne, Manny C. Tuazon, Rebecca Croll, Julian D'addario, Frederick De Grandpre, Marie-France Denoncourt, Martin Doepner, Anthony Ecclissi, Marina Eva, Félix Famelart, Andrew Farrar, Jozy Fever, Odellia Firebird, Elana Gale, Stefano Gallo, Alain Goog Gauthier, Marc Gourdeau, Dan Haber, Sarah Hansen, Benjamin Hatcher, Marie-Christine Labelle, Jean-François Lachapelle, André Lacoste, Huguette Lafond, Andre Lanthier, Aric Yuh-Dar Lee, Jasmine Legault, Catherine Lipscombe, Daniel Lortie, Marie-Helene McCormack, Samantha Moore, Amber Mullin, Annie Murphy, Nicolas Paulhus, Mike Payette, Martin Picard, Nathan Pronyshyn, Sabine Rondeau, Maxim Savaria, Arielle Shiri, Eric Tadros, Natalie Tannous, Vikki Wong

MONTREAL CHILDRENS' THEATRE

CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

by Dr. Florence Schreiber

When the alumni of *The Children's Theatre* gathered to create the biggest cast party ever, I was thrilled to be among them.

Both Dorothy Davis and Violet Walters have been honoured many times for their vision as innovative founders of a theatre school that is now celebrating its 75th

Anniversary. Both taught classes that made the studio and rehearsal hall comfortable places to be. Add the smell of greasepaint, and a swirl of painted faces and costumed bodies in constellation about them; it was a recipe for magic with solid underpinnings of technique.

To the accolades for these two enormously creative women, I want to add the personal voice of a student whose life was changed when she first *took drama* at the age of 8.

My TV career began in 1952 with Frank Heron on *Small Fry Frolics*. Beyond the lights and cameras stood my *agent* (no payment required!), Dorothy Davis. Seven years later, with work on radio, film and stage to my credit, I won a part on CBC's *Chez Helene*. Once more my *agent* was Dorothy Davis. I was 17 with 10 years of passionate involvement in *the business* behind me!



Montreal Children's Theatre founders, Dorothy Davis and Violet Walters



Dorothy Davis became my mentor, but first there was Violet Walters, my teacher. She is described repeatedly in print as vibrant, sparkling, spontaneous and graceful. More to the point would be her delivery of a sound foundation of stagecraft. She insisted on the *mantra* "Observation, Concentration, Imagination" which we all took seriously participating eagerly in the class exercises that promoted these three methods of engagement and focus. We were taught to be fearless and allowed to be silly. These last most important when one is discovering the many voices within.

It was all there in the beginning; deep breathing from the diaphragm, warm up exercises for the voice, and high expectations for quick study memory work.

Dorothy taught us what to do with all of the above. First the audition. Arrive 10 minutes before audition time. Rejection? Not a word associated with not getting a part. Moreover, Miss Davis herself had an extraordinary talent; when she spoke to you, you felt that she was totally there for you and you alone. Whether praise or critique it was absolutely authentic, delivered with eyes that expressed the full extent of her involvement in your perfection or your miserable flaw. New Age language would recognize this as *being in the moment*.

Dorothy the actress was present at rehearsal for the Saturday morning radio show *Calling All Children*. I learned there that radio acting was such terrific fun because, like Dorothy, I could vocally change and play one or more characters.

What was most valuable to me as I began to teach in the school was Dorothy's admonition "Remember Florence, those who are not our actors will be our audience."

For many, the best part they ever had was the part they played in the longest running hit – *The Montreal Children's Theatre*.



Florence portrayed *Susie Mouse* in the children's series *Chez Helene* (1960-73)

MERLEE SHAPIRO

IT'S STORY TIME

by Jennifer Seguin



“Age is just a number,” says **Merlee Shapiro**, the larger-than-life actress who turned 85 this year. Merlee has been playing the role of the Storyteller in ***Caillou***, Montreal’s homegrown and adored children’s animation series, since the very beginning in 1998.

During her childhood in the 1930’s, it was a well-known “fact” that Hollywood-style actresses had a reputation of being *harlots* and *hussies*. Merlee was too shy to tell her parents she wanted to be an actress. “I couldn’t tell them because in those days, it just wasn’t acceptable”.

At the age of 18, Merlee went to Los Angeles to visit her aunt and that changed everything for her. With so much *show biz* happening in California, Merlee discovered that she had talent and opportunities all around her. She eventually auditioned for classes at one of the great institutions of the American theatre, the ***Pasadena Playhouse***. Not only did she learn how to perform on stage, she also took classes in radio. “In those days, you had your demo on an LP record. They broke mine at customs!” Merlee had certainly learned her way around a microphone and several years later she passed her knowledge down to the likes of **William Shatner** when she taught at the **Dorothy Davis** acting school in Montreal, ***The Children’s Theatre***.

Merlee spent years acting her heart out on Montreal stages, doing as many amateur plays as possible. She was involved with the ***Canadian Art Theatre*** and **MRT (Montreal Repertory Theatre)**, where she did shows with great Shakespearean actors, like **Leo Ciceri**. “I told him to take his teeth out when he acted!” Merlee comments, adjusting the frames of her huge red glasses. She also has faded memories of performing a **Chekhov** play opposite **Christopher Plummer**. “Before the Boer war,” Merlee says, brushing it off.

At the age of 50, with years of amateur experience and three children, Merlee was discovered by radio producer (and ACTRA member) **George Morris** at ***Listen Audio***. “He heard a cassette I made, and loved it. He helped me get all

the credits I needed to get into ACTRA”. A new door had swung open and Merlee marched in. “She was great! She filled a niche and so I hired her whenever I could,” says Morris.

“That was thirty-some-odd years ago” Merlee remembers. An ACTRA member in her fifties, Merlee Shapiro finally started her professional acting career. She was scooped up by **Mollye Reisler**’s talent agency and Merlee started doing commercials and films. When slating her auditions, she would look in the camera and say, “I am Merlee Shapiro, I am with Reisler Talent and I am a Madame!” She liked the shock value, according to self-proclaimed kibitzer Merlee.



Merlee Shapiro

After a few years’ hiatus, ***Caillou*** has returned, and Merlee is back, at the age of 85. It is much harder for her to get around, but with the help of her family and the kind crew at ***Caillou***, it is worth it. **John Stocker**, series voice director, loves working with her and says: “Merlee is great in the studio. She

always follows my two most important rules - be on time, and be prepared. She’s the consummate professional. Merlee may need help getting to her chair, but once in it, she’s in the driver’s seat.” According to Merlee, “I was trained in live radio, you gotta get it right the first time, that’s it!”

For this grandmother of five, acting has been a life-long passion. Merlee raised a family, doing whatever she had to do provide for them - including sweater and jewelry design - and has no intention of slowing down. In fact she would love to get more gigs. She loves seeing the expression on people’s faces when she tells them “I have to go to work.” Merlee stares off into the distance and recalls that her parents never knew she became a professional actress but then she just smiles and says “If my mother could see me now, she’d be so proud.”

ABOUT OURSELVES...

Congratulations to ACTRA Montreal Member **Christine Ghawi**, who won the **Gemini Award** for **Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series** win for her portrayal of **Celine Dion** in the television movie **Celine**.

We would also like to congratulate **Reda Guerinik** and **Tiio Horn** on their Gemini nominations.



Mark Antony Krupa in *The Wild Hunt*

Congratulations to ACTRA Montreal Members **Kyle Gatehouse, Trevor Hayes, Tiio Horn, Mark Antony Krupa, Ricky Mabe, Spiro Malandrakis, Kent McQuaid, Holly O'Brien, Nicholas Simard, Terry Simpson, Martin Stone, Victor Trelles** and **Nicolas Wright**. Their film, *The Wild Hunt*, directed by **Alexandre Franchi** and written by **Franchi** and **Mark Antony Krupa**, won the **Best First Feature Award** at the **Toronto International Film Festival**.

Congratulations to past Branch Councillor **David Schaap** and **Cindy Landerman** on the birth of their daughter **Mika Henna Schaap**, born September 10, 2009. We also wish the Schaap-Landerman family the best of luck in their new life in Toronto.

Create your demo reel or put yourself on tape for an audition in a relaxed, creative and supportive atmosphere. ACTRA Montreal Member **Bill Rowat** offers his services making *audition and demo tapes*.

For information, call Bill at 514-932-6382 and at www.billandfelicia.com.

Montreal's not-for-profit professional acting and performance training for young actors, continues to build character since 1998 through:

- Young Performers in Kids Take Action (10-14 yrs)
- Young Adults in Acting & Moving (15-20yrs)
- New: The On-Camera Gym (age flexible)
- Educational programs for children with special needs

'Showcase Festival of Original Works' May 14th & 15th 2010. View aspiring talent of all ages in vibrant original creations, live and on film, in a new state-of-the-art Theatre venue. Details: www.dtfonline.com , 514-591-6994

DYNAMIC THEATER FACTORY



Building Character

Radek Hajda 1974-2009



This past spring, ACTRA Montreal Member Radek Hajda passed away at the age of 35 from injuries sustained in an accident outside his home. Radek's agent, Susan Glenn, stated, "Radek was a very special client. He was always cheerful and looking on the bright side of life. He was very humble and loved the art of acting. I will remember and miss him very much."

Our condolences go to Radek's family and friends.

NOMINATE A MEMBER FOR THE 2010 ACTRA AWARDS

ACTRA Montreal is now collecting Nominations for Consideration for the 2010 Performance Awards.

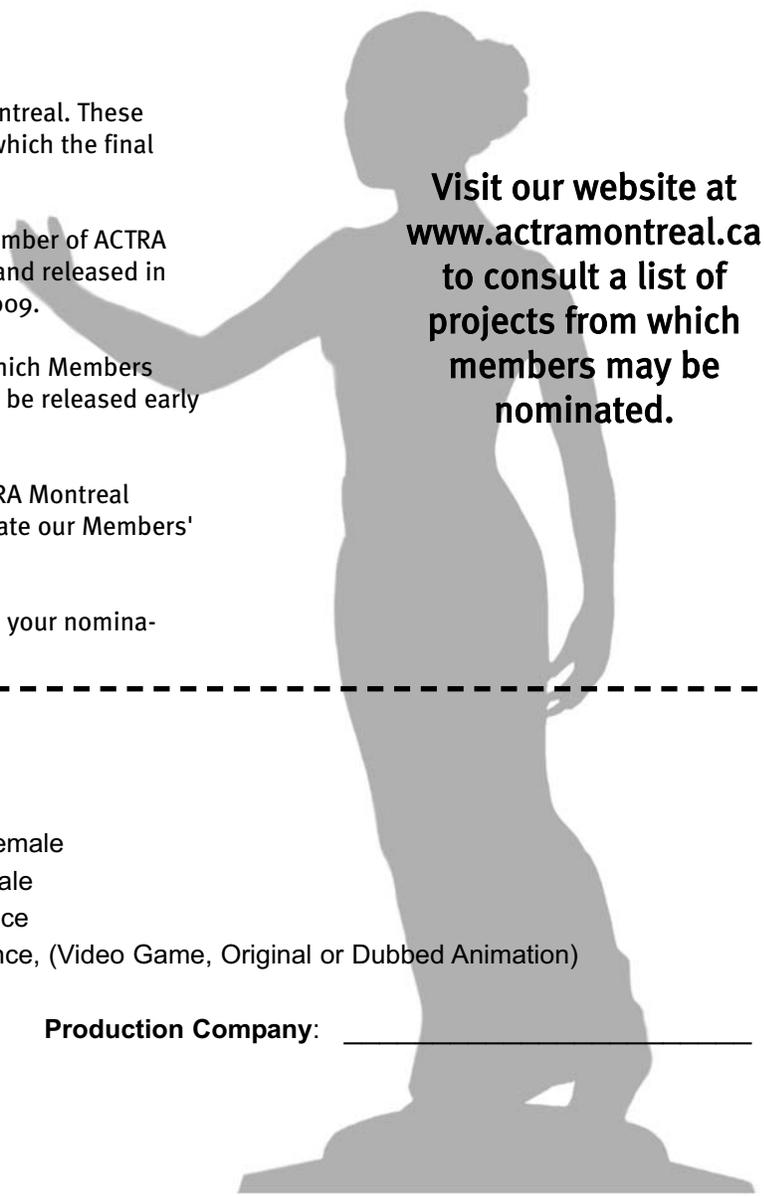
To nominate a Member, simply return this form to ACTRA Montreal. These Nominations for Consideration will make up the pool from which the final Nominees are chosen.

In order to be eligible for Nomination, the Performer must be a Member of ACTRA Montreal. Projects must have been filmed under ACTRA contracts and released in the two year period between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009.

A jury made up of Members will screen copies of the projects in which Members were Nominated for Consideration and a final list of Nominees will be released early in the New Year.

A final jury will then choose a winner in each category and all ACTRA Montreal Members will be invited to the Awards ceremony in 2010 to celebrate our Members' achievements.

The key to this, of course, is your participation! We're counting on your nominations.



Visit our website at www.actramontreal.ca to consult a list of projects from which members may be nominated.

Nominated Member: _____

Nomination Category:

- Outstanding Performance, Female
- Outstanding Performance, Male
- Outstanding Stunt Performance
- Outstanding Voice Performance, (Video Game, Original or Dubbed Animation)

Name of Project: _____

Production Company: _____

Can you provide a copy of the nominated performance?

Yes

No

Submitted by: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Cut out this form and return it to :
ACTRA Montreal, 1450 City Councillors #530, Montreal, Qc H3A 2E6 or by fax: 514-844-2068

ACTRA Montreal

1450 City Councillors, Suite 530, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2E6

Tel: 514.844.3318 Fax: 514.844.2068

Email: montreal@actra.ca www.actramontreal.ca

Publication Mail Agreement #40613589

2010 ACTRA AWARDS in Montreal

**The ACTRA Short Film Festival
will also return in 2010**



**ACTRA Montreal Members are invited
to produce and submit their short films.
Call ACTRA Montreal for more information: 514-844-3318**