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Yes, Success is Still a Thing

These are the elemental truths that have propelled our species to where it is today: Men are great at math and science and writing about math and science. We're also great at finding our way around in a city without asking for directions. We are awesome at physics and mechanics — you know, man stuff. Women are great at making the home pretty and raising kids and sewing.

Oh, sure, some women have made inroads in math and science, and they have actually been proven to be faster at finding their way around a city (possibly because they ask for directions). Marie Curie was a very good physicist, winning Nobel prizes (yes, plural) and is still the only person on the planet to win a prize in two disciplines. Emmy Noether revolutionized algebra. Women also flood the fields of mechanics, once the domain of men. While men still outnumber women, the number of female mechanics doubled in the last decade when the numbers of male mechanics declined.

But as for writing, well, come on, it was William Shakespeare, not Wilma Shakespeare.

Except that...in Canada, at least, female screenwriters are quietly leading the way both with hit series and going from strength to strength.

Daegan Fryklind's *Bitten* television series has been attracting a lot of attention, drawing more than one million viewers per show and garnering a second season on Syfy, where it will reach into the American market.

Lost Girl wrapped up recently while still on top, with talented female writers like Sandra Chwialkowska, Ley Lukins and of course there's Tassie Cameron with *Rookie Blue*.

It's sad that it is still worth mentioning that women are doing well. And some would argue that by drawing attention to it, we are making it still worth mentioning.

It shouldn't need mentioning. It should be one of those invisible things that just is, like another safe trip home from work. No big deal, just a fact.

It was one of the concerns raised recently in Warsaw, Poland at the World Conference of Screenwriters. The International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, along with representatives of the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe, agreed to address the issue of gender inequality in the industry. A resolution setting a goal of having half of all scripts across genres and at all budget levels written by women was adopted unanimously. The resolution was presented by Writers Guild of Canada president, Jill Golick.

While it's great news that the resolution has the unanimous support of all involved, it's sad we're still in need of it. Ideally there simply would be a lot more female screenwriters working right now. And we wouldn't even notice. ■

— Tom Villemaire

Christina Gagic is a Toronto-based freelance photographer specializing in portrait, event and documentary photography.

Diane Wild is a Vancouver-based writer and editor who runs the TV, eh? website (www.tv-eh.com) about Canadian television.

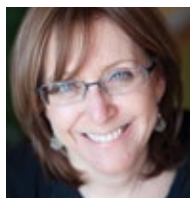
A freelance arts & entertainment writer, **Katherine Brodsky** has written for *Variety*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *USA Weekend*, *Mashable*, *Elle Canada*, *MovieMaker Magazine*, *The Independent*, *Stage Directions*, and many others. She has interviewed a diverse range of intriguing personalities, including Oscar, Emmy, Grammy, Tony, and Pulitzer winners. In her spare time she wears sunglasses at night and runs her own cult, Katherineology. Follow her on Twitter @mysteriouskat

Matthew Hays is a Montreal-based writer, author and university and college instructor. His articles have appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Vice*, *Maclean's*, *The Walrus*, *Cineaste*, *POV* and *The Toronto Star*. He teaches courses in film studies at Marianopolis College and Concordia University. His book, *The View from Here: Conversations with Gay and Lesbian Filmmakers* (Arsenal Pulp), won a 2008 Lambda Literary Award and he received the Concordia President's Award for Teaching Excellence for 2013-14.

Mark Dillon is a Toronto-based freelance journalist and former editor of *Playback* magazine. He is author of the award-winning *Fifty Sides of The Beach Boys*.

Dani Ng-See-Quan is a digital content manager, freelance writer and former Associate Editor of *Playback*. She is inspired and (slightly) intimidated by screenwriters and loves to geek out hearing stories from the writers' rooms.

Cameron Archer runs the Canadian television/media website *Gloryosky* (<http://www.sweetposer.com/>), and is also a freelance arts writer. He currently lives in Eastern Ontario.



Playing the Numbers to Create a TV Hit

The pressure is on. Canada needs to make more hit TV series. But how? Is there a magical formula? A quick check of Google returns three likely contenders: the Paint-by-Numbers method, the American Numbers Game and Denmark's One Vision system.

The Paint-by-Numbers rules usually go something like this: create a difficult man, build a world around him, give him a secret and cast a big star in the part. Or create a world with a deep mythology and loads of major roles for big stars, then kill off characters suddenly and frequently. Sounds a little more like chasing a hit than creating one.

The American nets prefer a numbers game in their search for hits. They take something like 500 pitches, commission 70 pilot scripts, produce 20 pilot episodes, make four to eight series of which only one or two will see a second season. And maybe neither of those will be a certifiable success.

Then there's what Denmark is doing. This tiny country is definitely producing more successful shows than it ought to be. Not only are their dramas like *Borgen*, *The Killing* and *The Bridge* enthralling Danish audiences; they are travelling around the world. They are watched in the original Danish with subtitles in countries that *really* don't like subtitles. They also are sold as formats and remade in local versions.

DR, the Danish public broadcaster, is the mastermind of the One Vision system. They put their faith in the writer-creator and his or her vision of the story. Everyone else is there to serve that writer's vision.

The creator and the writing room have enormous artistic freedom. Producers, broadcasters and even directors are specifically prevented from meddling in the story, characters and vision of the show. The creator and writing team build the show that they want to make.

DR's goal with One Vision is to make shows that Danes want to watch. And they have been crazy successful with *The Killing* episodes routinely pulling in 65% of the audience! It turns out that shows made specifically for Danish audiences work very well in the international market too.

There are also a few other elements to the One Vision system besides empowering the writer. DR

wants a certain kind of show, so they do set their writers some guidelines.

They want characters that the audience relates to. Rather than creating "aspirational" characters whom the audience might wish they could be or admire, they ask their writers for characters who are ordinary people. They want audiences to see themselves reflected back in the characters that people their shows.

DR also mandates that series should show the country and make use of their local visual resources. In Denmark where it rains a lot, the weather becomes almost a character in *The Killing*. The constant rain sets the mood.

DR wants shows with themes; shows that say something about society or ethics. Their intention is to give audiences something to talk about over coffee the next day; those water cooler conversations. The Danish writers I talked to admitted that some creators are more enthusiastic about this than others.

Another precept of the One Vision system is the amount of time writer-creators get for development. DR believes that creating a show takes time, money and love. They give writers plenty of all three.

If we're really serious about making hits in Canada, we have to look carefully at all three models. As good as our acting pool is, we don't have enough big stars to kill off to make the Paint-By-Numbers model work. And our broadcasters don't have the money or the manpower to play the American numbers game. So it makes a lot of sense for us to take the One Vision model for a test spin: give writers the freedom to make shows specifically for the Canadian audience. The added bonus of giving writers creative space and control to focus on making their shows is that it will free up time for broadcasters, producers and funders to focus on their jobs — financing, building audiences and selling our shows internationally. ■

— **Jill Golick**, President, Writers Guild of Canada

WGC at CRTC Hearings



There was no shortage of drama at the CRTC's "Let's Talk TV" hearings in September, much of it connected to "over-the-top" (OTT) services, in particular, Netflix. The Writers Guild of Canada weighed in on OTT regulation as well as many other important issues during its appearance in front of the Commission, with a strong team made up of executive director Maureen Parker, vice-president Andrew Wreggitt, writer Cal Coons, and director of policy Neal McDougall.

Wreggitt and Coons set the tone, sharing firsthand experiences as writers. Both underscored the need for a strong industry in order to ensure that Canadian writers have the opportunity to create the kind of high quality programs the CRTC is on record as stating it wants. The guild's overall presentation emphasized the danger of implementing too many major changes at once to the Canadian television system.

As to the hot button issue of OTT providers, the guild suggested

it's time they are fully included in the Canadian television industry, both contributing to and benefiting from the system. But there were plenty of other issues the guild commented on; for instance the negative impact that potential elimination of daytime exhibition rules could have on children's programming. And in light of possible changes to genre exclusivity, preponderance rules, and simultaneous substitution — and of course, the likelihood of the implementation of "pick-and-pay" — the WGC also urged the Commission to ensure a stronger system of expenditure requirements.

The presentation concluded with an excerpt from the WGC video, *Canadian TV Delivers*, which favourably impressed CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais, who said both the video and the WGC presentation were a good reminder of what the hearing was really about: the "content we're trying to get." In other words, the quality shows WGC members create.

Canadian TV Delivers

Canadian TV Delivers...a whole lot of viewers. The WGC video, featuring Canadian showrunners, was released in early September, quickly amassed over 10,000 views on YouTube, plus a wealth of positive comments and a steady stream of praise on social media by both fans of Canadian TV, and WGC industry partners. As well, the CRTC chose to screen the video in the lobby during the "Let's Talk TV" hearings. *Canadian TV Delivers* offers a glimpse into the talent and passion that go into creating hit Canadian TV shows, and can be viewed at the WGC YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/Writersguildofcanada).

WGC in the News

WGC president Jill Golick and executive director Maureen Parker were both in demand during the CRTC's "Let's Talk TV" hearing. Parker was interviewed on CBC Radio's *Metro Morning* and CBC TV's *The National*. Golick was interviewed by multiple CBC afternoon shows across the country. Both spoke directly to issues at the heart of the CRTC hearing, issues that will have a direct impact on writers, and on the Canadian television industry as a whole. The WGC's perspective was also the focus of features on both *Cartt.ca* (an influential website covering the cable, radio, television and telecom industries in Canada) and the online version of the industry publication, *Playback*.

IAWG/World Conference of Screenwriters

The WGC met up with other writers' organizations from around the world at the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG) meetings in Warsaw, Poland, at the end of September.

The IAWG works to further the cause of screenwriters worldwide by lobbying efforts and “collective action, mutual support and common representation internationally.” The meetings were held in conjunction with the World Conference of Screenwriters, attended by WGC president Jill Golick, executive director Maureen Parker, WGC councillor Denis McGrath, and WGC member Peter Mohan, all of whom participated in (and in some cases moderated) a range of screenwriting-related panels. One example was the panel Maureen Parker moderated, “Your Agent, Your Guild, Your Collection Society,” as the WGC is one of the only guilds in the world to start a collection society, the Canadian Screenwriters Collection Society (CSCS). WGC members note — joining CSCS means that CSCS can collect any available secondary rights money that may be available to you. Not only that, but WGC members can join the CSCS for free. You’ll find more information on the CSCS on the WGC website (www.wgc.ca).

Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters Success

It’s always rewarding when a goal is met, so it’s with pride that the WGC can say the Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program, now into year five, is achieving its number one goal of bringing more diverse screenwriters into the professional television talent pool. Grads can be found in the writers’ rooms of top TV series, winning awards, creating popular web series, and breaking into the world of video games.

Notable success stories include Alejandro Alcoba, working on *Degrassi*, and Mohamad El Masri and Todd Ireland on *Continuum*. Mohamad El Masri is also head of scripted research and development for Simon Barry’s production company, Reality Distortion Field.

In the feature film world, Shannon Masters’ *Empire of Dirt* won the 2014 Canadian Screen Award (CSA) for Original Screenplay, and Pat Mills’ film, *Guidance*, which he wrote, directed and starred in, screened at TIFF 2014 to excellent reviews.

In the fast-growing world of web series, JP Larocque won an LA Webfest Award for Best Series Premise, for *Gay Nerds*. Faisal Lutchmedial shot and edited *Burgundy Jazz*, which received a CSA nomination for Best Original Program or Series Produced for Digital Media (Non-Fiction). And Adriano Valentini’s web series, *The Age of Insecurity*, won best webisode at the HollyShorts Film Festival in Hollywood.

Two other grad success stories to note — James Nadiger has written for the blockbuster game, *Assassin’s Creed*, and Ashley Park was one of the five emerging screenwriters to receive a Telefilm New Voices Award at the 5th annual Toronto Screenwriting Conference.

Thanks goes to the many WGC members who have lent their time and talents as jury members, workshop leaders and mentors — much of the success of this program is due to them.

IPA Bargaining

Collective bargaining is underway, with a strong WGC bargaining team looking at a number of substantive issues. The current collective agreement, the Independent Production Agreement (IPA), runs until the end of 2014, and the guild is bargaining with the Canadian Media Production Association (national producers’ association) and the Association Québécoise de la Production Média (Quebec producers’ association). The results of two surveys with WGC members, a story editor survey and a survey on uncompensated work, were a

considerable help in shaping the guild’s approach. Bargaining began in Vancouver, and will also take place in Montreal and Toronto. Stay tuned for more details in the months to come.

Writers Talking Feature Film — and TV



The WGC launched its first Writers Talking Feature Film event with a screening of *The F Word*, written by Elan Mastai. Michael McGowan, writer of *Still Mine*, among other movies, interviewed Elan Mastai. As soon as the event was announced there was immediate buzz, and every seat at the venue, a cinema in the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, was snapped up within a day. The original series that the feature film event was modelled on, Writers Talking TV (WTTV), continues to be strong as well, most recently with a lively discussion about the program *Bitten*. Showrunner Daegan Fryklind spoke to Denis McGrath about adapting the popular books about the world’s first female werewolf for TV. Other WTTV events are also in the works, including one Nov. 20, at the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Details will be published on the WGC website as they become available.

WGC Awards Nominations

The 19th annual Writers Guild of Canada Screenwriting Awards, a celebration of Canada's screenwriters, takes place on April 27, 2015, at the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning's Koerner Hall. That means it's time for WGC members to nominate a script. The awards categories are as follows: Animation, Children and Youth, Documentary, Movies and Miniseries, Shorts and Web Series, TV Comedy, and TV Drama. The cut-off date is Dec. 1, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. EST. Find out more on the WGC website.

Canadian Screen Awards Update

This year's Canadian Screen Awards (Feb. 23-March 1, 2015) include a few significant changes that

could have an impact on screenwriters. On the positive front there is a new category, "Best Writing in an Animated Program or Series." In another change (potentially less positive from the perspective of documentary writers), "Best Writing in a Documentary Program or Series" becomes "Best Writing in a Documentary Program or Factual Series." Doc writers take note of this definition shift as well — the definition of a feature documentary has now changed to 45 minutes from 60. To see all of the rules, go to the Academy's website (www.academy.ca).

Missed Fan Expo? Watch the WGC Panels

We had three strong panels at this year's Fan Expo Canada mega-event, all focused on the

growing relationship between writers and fans. *Spotlight on Degrassi* featured showrunner Sarah Glinksy and her team: Matt Heuther, Matt Schiller, Scott Oleszkowicz, Zoe Whittall, and Alejandro Alcoba. Jill Golick, JP Laroque, Rob Mills and moderator Stephanie Kaliner gave web series writers much to ponder through the panel, *Monetizing the Web Series*. And showrunners Tassie Cameron (*Rookie Blue*), Daegan Fryklind (*Bitten*), and Graeme Manson (*Orphan Black*), with moderator James Hurst, looked at the influence of fans in The Writers Room and Fan Power. You can watch videos of all of the panels at the WGC's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/Writersguildofcanada) and download podcasts at iTunes, or listen at the WGC website. ■



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Jake Howell, *Shoot the Moon* (Toronto, ON)

Eisha Marjara, *Calorie* (Montreal, QC)

Daniel Rindress-Kay, *Frozen* (Montreal, QC)

Jordan Wilson, *Mack-Doe* (Vancouver, BC)

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Let's Talk Netflix: Q&A with Maureen Parker

by Li Robbins

Netflix customers typically love its boatloads of on-demand viewing, and its cost — less than ten dollars per month. It would take a cynical consumer to ask “what’s the catch?” For the answer to that and other questions about “over-the-top” (OTT) providers, we turn to WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker.

Q: What *is* the catch with Netflix?

A: The catch is that Netflix takes millions of dollars from Canadian viewers, pays no taxes on that revenue to our government, employs no Canadians, and has no Canadian content requirements, unlike Canadian broadcasters.

Q: Some would say OTT providers like Netflix aren’t broadcasters. So why should they play by our rules?

A: The *Broadcasting Act* definition is technologically neutral. It doesn’t matter if it’s over-the-air, through a cable system, on satellite or over the internet — broadcasting is broadcasting. Some Canadian video-on-demand services already are regulated — why not Netflix? Netflix currently falls under a digital media exemption, which some believe is already a form of regulation, requiring Netflix to submit information about activities in broadcasting to the CRTC. But although the CRTC requested Netflix to do so, they refused. The point here is that Netflix has the peculiar privilege of paying nothing into our broadcasting system. Why are they exempt?

Q: Why did Netflix become such a lightning rod during the CRTC hearing?

A: It started with Netflix’s CRTC appearance, when they refused to provide the Commission with information on things like Canadian viewership and expenditure on productions. Netflix’s claims that its concerns are about confidentiality is a smoke screen, in my opinion. It hides how little money they are putting into Canadian production. Netflix also became a lightning rod because

Minister of Canadian Heritage Shelly Glover and Prime Minister Stephen Harper both inserted themselves into the process, declaring there would be no Netflix “tax.”

Q: What would the WGC like to see happen — the so-called Netflix “tax”?

A: The Netflix tax is an unfortunate term, because regulation isn’t about a cash grab, it isn’t about lining the broadcasters’ pockets, it’s about levelling the playing field. Let’s be clear, we support Netflix being in Canada. It is good for consumers in many respects, and it brings innovation into the system. We’d also like to see them reap the benefits of fully belonging to the system. But that means contributing to the system as well, in order to create Canadian programming. To date Netflix says they are demonstrating an interest by reviving *Trailer Park Boys*. But that’s one show. And it became a hit based on funding stemming from Canadian regulation. It sounds like tokenism to me. Did they know the hearing was coming up?

Q: Do you think it’s likely that Netflix, and other OTT providers, will be regulated in future?

A: Yes, because it’s the right thing to do. And I’d like to believe that our elected officials will do the right thing, instead of the expedient thing. They have to look beyond the next election and further down the road. The government needs to step away and let the CRTC do its job. It took fifty years to build this broadcasting industry, it employs thousands of Canadians — it can’t only be about importing foreign content at low cost. Of course it’s very true that changes in technology have changed the industry. There are numerous OTT providers, from Google to the new Canadian OTT service, Shomi. This isn’t about protectionism, it’s about cultural survival. Canadians deserve that respect — we’re a unique, separate country. But one thing that obviously has to happen is review of the digital media exemption. It should be clear to all concerned that it’s long overdue. ■



DAEGAN FRYKLIND: SHE'S LEADER OF THE PACK

By Katherine Brodsky

Daegan Fryklind, showrunner for Space's popular werewolf series, *Bitten*, has been a writer for as long as she can remember. Still, writing — who makes a living from writing? So, she had Plan A: To become a lawyer. Writing was Plan B.>>



Whether she'd be scribbling poetry at home in Vancouver or daydreaming of becoming a foreign correspondent, Fryklind knew writing was in the cards. Every aptitude test she took confirmed this. After a brief flirtation with pre-law, Plan B kept kicking at the door. There was nothing left to do but to answer; she enrolled in the University of Victoria's creative writing program. Fryklind immediately felt that "these are my people," so much so that she went on to do a master's degree at Concordia University in Montreal, also in fiction. "For my thesis, I wrote a novel which about six people have read, including my thesis board," recalls Fryklind.

As fate would have it, a whole lot more people were about to discover her work.

Upon returning to Vancouver, Fryklind got her first break when her sister-in-law hired her to work as a researcher on a documentary. "It was just this fortuitous entry into the world of film and television, when I met (producers) Christine Haebler and Louise Clark." Haebler hired Fryklind to work on a feature she was producing called *Tail Lights Fade*; the film turned out to be a training ground for Fryklind. There, she learned production, budgeting and "sort of the machinations of how to make a film and the Canadian film environment."

Fryklind never imagined herself working in television. "I had always loved the medium but I never knew what the point of entry would be and

that's why I was pursuing fiction," she said. "I figured I would go on to be an editor or write novels or something of that nature."

For a while, she pursued the ivory tower of academia instead. The years Fryklind spent in creative writing programs, mimicking other writers, weren't for naught. They helped her find her own voice and hone her skills. "You read a lot of other writers, so it's like in mimicking other writers you crack through what their voice is to find your own," she says.

In discovering her own voice, Fryklind credits the strong showrunners she worked alongside on series like *Cold Squad* (Pete Mitchell) and *Robson Arms* (Susin Nielsen). "Pete took a huge flyer on me by hiring me in the first place," she recalls. "I hadn't done live-action before, let alone a dramatic hour. But he's someone who builds a room based on potential rather than pre-existing credits, which is a smart way to do it." Fryklind would go on to borrow that approach when it came to building her own writers' room for *Bitten*. "Pete was also generous about allowing me, as a baby writer, to explore and learn the workings of the show — visiting [the] set, being in meetings, watching casting — everything was available, which can only help hone your skillset as a writer."

Similarly, Nielsen also introduced Fryklind to a supportive, "true family" environment, where the best idea would win: "Susin ran the show with such diplomacy and support that, as a writer, you never

"You read a lot of other writers, so it's like in mimicking other writers you crack through what their voice is to find your own..."



PHOTO: CHRISTINA GAPIĆ; INTRO SPREAD PHOTO: CHRISTINA GAPIĆ

got the sense of any producing politic. Maybe there wasn't any. Or, if there was, it never trickled down into the writers' room."

Both series had already established a firm tone by the time she came on board, but still allowed Fryklind to bring her own voice into the mix. On the other hand, working on shows like *Being Erica* and *Motive* during their first seasons gave her the chance to help shape those voices from the get-go.

"It's an interesting thing," says Fryklind, "because in the case of *Bitten*, a lot of times the show is what the show is, and you're bringing yourself to it; you're bringing your experience and your own personal stories."

Bringing her own sensibility to the story is what ultimately won her the job.

For Fryklind, *Bitten* presented the first opportunity to showrun. "It seemed like it happened overnight," she recalls, "but it was one of those overnight things that [was] ten years in the making."

Those years were spent moving up the ladder: she began working in the story department, then became a story editor, before moving up to co-producer, producer and co-executive producer.

During that time, she learned valuable lessons about being flexible when a story goes sideways, yet stubborn when "protecting the path." Then there are basic but essential things like trying to walk the dog a few times a day, not neglecting to eat (or use the bathroom), skipping (most) parties, and never forgetting to have fun. That sense of balance is a characteristic she took from her mother, a businesswoman and a boss first and foremost, but also a woman who managed to raise three kids on her own. The lessons she has learned from her mother could fill 10 volumes, says Fryklind. There's one piece of advice that's been particularly instructive: "If it comes down to working with a mad genius who's an asshole or a competent artist who is kind, choose the former if it's short term and the latter if it's long, but always choose the latter because life has a way of taking you on a course you never expected, so try to be with decent people for the ride."

She particularly credits *jPod* for catapulting her career. J.B. Sugar, an executive producer on *Bitten*, first served as her producer on *jPod*, the first show where she was really encouraged to go to the floor with her episode, to work with the director one-on-one and to work with the cast.

Ultimately, working on shows that empowered her and afforded her an opportunity to go to the floor with her own episodes gave her a taste of what it's like to showrun. "So, when I made the leap to showrunner," recalls Fryklind, "there were a number of things I already understood in terms of how the production machine moved."

And then it finally happened; she got her own show.

As the story goes, *Bitten*, based on the popular book series by Canadian author Kelley Armstrong, was originally in development as a feature film starring Angelina Jolie. But, when the rights expired, *Hoodwinked*'s John Barbisan and Patrick Banister scooped them up and brought them to Sugar. Together, through No Equal Entertainment, they took the project to Space, where the commissioning executive, Rebecca DiPasquale, happened to be a huge fan of the books.

"...a lot of times the show is what the show is, and you're bringing yourself to it, you're bringing your experience and your own personal stories."

"We loved the idea of taking a fresh look at the werewolf genre, putting a strong female protagonist front and centre," recalls DiPasquale.

A lengthy search ensued and a number of potential showrunners were asked to give their take on what the series would be if they were to adapt it. Since Sugar had already worked with Fryklind on *jPod*, he invited her to take a stab at it, too.

"At that time, I was doing a lot of living in Vancouver and working in Toronto," she recalls, "and this [character] was somebody who was trying to live two lives at the same time, so that really spoke to me; trying to keep the two worlds in play and the complications of that. Also, she's the only woman, surrounded by men and that's sometimes the reality in story rooms as well. So, I understood her as a character."

The decision was unanimous. Fryklind was the top contender and the rest, as they say, is history.

The show has caught on with audiences and has risen to become Space's top-rated original series. Fryklind attributes that success to cohesion of vision. "Everybody just gets the show and is really right in the pocket of what the show wants to be and how to move it forward."

She admits she was nervous taking the reins. "It's a big leap to go into that chair," she admits, "and

that element that all other showrunners had that I had talked to, about empowering your team and that they'll support you, too, really is truth." From the get-go, she recalls, *Bitten* was a well-oiled machine.

According to DiPasquale, a large component of the show's success is due to the top writing talent that Fryklind managed to assemble — it's a "testament to the calibre and reputation of the producing team and the source material that so many great writers have been enticed to join."

For the largely-female audience, having a strong female protagonist, a feminist theme, a love story and a focus on family issues has proven irresistible. "One of the things that Space wanted to do with this show was to bring more female viewers to the network," explains Fryklind. "When you go to Comic-Con, there's a big population of women who are going and I think Space really wanted to provide something that spoke to that audience, that element ... I think they're really recognizing that audience in a powerful and respectful way, which is really cool."

"When you're a writer, you contribute in a way to your own individual episode, but when you're showrunning, it's the entire picture of everything."

According to DiPasquale, "Daegan and the other producers have easily understood the Space audience from the beginning and have worked hard to bring our viewers a smart, sexy, action-packed thrill ride every week with stories and characters that are simultaneously relatable and epic."

Even after all these years producing television, she sees herself as a writer first, but finds the producer skills, especially at the showrunning level, both inevitable and invaluable. From script to budget, shooting constraints and personality management, the job is about wearing two hats at once. "[That's] something that you just acquire along the way," says Fryklind. "I don't know if there's a way you can be taught that. It's such an innate skill-set that showrunners have to have as well."

Being both a showrunner and writer gives

Fryklind an opportunity to mould and shape the story in more elaborate ways than when she's just writing. "It's the amount of input that you have across the board," she says, noting she has a say in everything from what the sets look like, to wardrobe, casting, soundtrack, edits — and, of course, story. "When you're a writer, you contribute in a way to your own individual episode, but when you're showrunning, it's the entire picture of everything."

When it comes to her own characteristics as a showrunner or writer, Fryklind insists that being female is far down the list. But, she admits, on a show with a female lead character, having "a slightly more in-tune understanding of how that feels to be a female in a man's world" helps. "I don't look at the men in my room on whether they can write the female voice right or not," she says, "They can. And they're terrific at it. It is just in the small details that we're bringing in."

She has noticed some subtle differences, however, in how men and women approach conflict management. "Neither one [is] better or worse, just different."

Fryklind wants her team to have a sense that they are all in this together; it's a disarming approach. She strives to be even-tempered, compassionate, respectful and empowering because those are the characteristics of showrunners she has admired. "So those are the elements that I hope I'm bringing to my own experience as a showrunner," she says.

"Daegan has what you need to be an excellent showrunner," says Grant Rosenberg, a writer and executive producer on *Bitten*. "She's got a complete grasp of the underlying material and the concurrent ability to translate that source material into a quality, weekly series. And, like all top-notch writer/producers, she has a great work ethic and she's fast, which is critical when you're in the writing trenches."

Rosenberg recalls how Fryklind settled in like a seasoned pro back in the first season. "It was a joy to run *Bitten* along with Daegan. She's very collaborative and giving, which can be rare these days," he says. "It helps to create a wonderful, positive family atmosphere ... and when you [and the crew] are working such long hours, sometimes in harsh conditions, that's the kind of thing that makes the difference between a great experience and a less than happy set."

DiPasquale couldn't agree more. Not only does she value Fryklind's intelligence, creativity and talent as a writer, she also brings that special, elusive quality that it takes to run a show. "[As] anyone in this business will tell you, being a good showrunner requires so much more than talent," she says. "Daegan is responsible for creating and maintaining the vision for this series in every respect and she does



Left to right: Larry Bambrick, Wil Zmak, Daegan Fryklind, Garfield Lindsay Miller, Jenn Engels, Michael MacLennan

“She would be the first to tell you that it’s a team effort, which is true, but her passion and positive attitude have helped to set a ton of camaraderie behind the scenes that is not always found on a series.”

-Rebecca DiPasquale

so with keen focus and a collaborative spirit, which is a testament to her grace under pressure. She would be the first to tell you that it’s a team effort, which is true, but her passion and positive attitude have helped to set a ton of camaraderie behind the scenes that is not always found on a series.”

Fryklind has experienced her share of less pleasant showrunners. “You know, it’s nice to have both sides so that you can see when it’s my turn at the bat, how did somebody else do it successfully and how can I emulate that experience where it felt like a safe place to pitch? [The] story department is a team that’s building a house together and that house is a season.”

Among the team working on *Bitten*, according to Fryklind, there is a sense of family that carries from the screen to the cast and crew. “Coming to work every day is like hanging out with family, and it’s a very functional family; it’s not dysfunctional at all.” Despite rumours to the contrary, not all families are dysfunctional, insists Fryklind.

Due to the popularity of the show, there’s a strong possibility *Bitten* will be running for some time. That prospect doesn’t frighten Fryklind. “What it comes down to is there’re still so many more stories that we want to tell with these characters in this world. We’re not done telling the stories yet.” ■

KEEPING IT FRESH

By Dani Ng-See-Quan

There are more than 20 new one-hours hitting primetime TV slots this season. There's an ever-expanding stable of channels, platforms and original content producers that has joined the fray. But there's only a finite amount of attention viewers can give to their carefully curated consumption, which, for TV creators, makes a season renewal these days a weighty victory.

Entertaining stories make for good hooks, good gossip and good listicles (*Sharknado*, anyone?), but the series that endure and prevail through the noise are the ones that keep viewers coming back whether they've binge-watched the show or have faithfully tuned in every week during the show's original timeslot (no PVR). Here, four Canadian screenwriters dive into how they infuse a fresh feeling into their storytelling.

Build An Evolving World

It starts with a concept that allows for change and evolution within the framework, says Simon Barry, creator and showrunner of sci-fi series *Continuum*, which wrapped its third season on Showcase and Syfy in June.

"A show that is too bogged down in terms of its intentions for the characters and storytelling structure can be harder to shift without noticing it from the audience's perspective," he says. "Whereas

when you have a concept that launches the show, it's not specific in the way the show has to be structured. You have the flexibility to make adjustments season to season — and [in a way that] it always connects to the character and what you've established ... The characters are supporting that model."

With *Continuum*, Barry says the show has a broad set-up — a cop from the future trying to stop terrorists, also from the future. "It [the set-up] didn't limit in how we tell that story," he explains. "We could use cross-cutting between the present and future to expand the story that would have a payoff in the present."

Fresh TV's Tom McGillis and Jennifer Pertsch, co-creators of the *Total Drama (TD)* tween-targeting animated franchise, landed on a format that worked after some experimentation. After a massive hit in the first-season of the reality show parody, McGillis recalls they tried different formats for seasons two and three — with less success. So, when the fourth season came around, they went back to what worked



Tom McGillis; Simon Barry

with the setting and structure of the first season. And once the *TD* franchise was going strong, (it recently passed the 100-episode mark this winter), McGillis says the Fresh TV team identified a new creative avenue to expand the original story world with the spinoff, *The Ridonculous Race*.

Expanding the stories from the framework is the delicate art.

And the rich storytelling that results — the tropes, the surprising couplings, the cliffhangers — is the product of keenly mapping out the seasons in advance and sometimes mapping out deep character arcs — and histories — years ahead of time with a long-term plan in mind. Echoing Barry's point, the stories evolve through the characters' relationships, interactions and individual story arcs.

Heather Conkie, executive producer and writer for *Heartland*, which is now filming its eighth season, says the team plans seasons thematically — focusing on, for example, growth in one season: hardship, loss — and always connecting to the audience in an emotional way.

One of *Heartland's* strongest elements is that it's a family saga and, so, part of the show's secret sauce is to introduce new characters in the age group that the existing main characters are growing out of. "Viewers are deeply involved because of the believability of the cast and the idea that they're watching a family grow up and change, as they would

with their own families. People are introduced all the time; babies are born, as in life — things just keep going in a very organic, believable way," says Conkie.

Barry says the *Continuum* writers' room set Rachel Nichols' character, series protagonist and hero Kiera, on a track that resulted in a three-year journey of self-discovery.

"It allowed the show to evolve in ways that didn't feel like it was the same show every year. Every season felt like a chapter of a book. Each chapter was unto itself a self-contained story, at the same time telling individual stories of the week and telling the larger giant story of the series," he explains.

Barry further explains that *Continuum's* third season had a very clear set of goals in terms of how much the story was going to change, structured around Kiera's point of view and culminating in a turning point with her new awareness of her reality — which was ultimately a payoff for the audience as much as for the character. Unpacking that story, he notes, required creative restraint in slowing down the process to mine the small moves.

Back to cliffhangers for a minute: They're a classic convention, but they work; in fact, even more so in an era where PVR, binge-watching and instant gratification is the new normal.

A cliffhanger, or at least throwing a wrench in the works, energizes the series by turning people's worlds upside down and giving viewers an incentive



Heather Conkie; Peter Mohan

to come back, says Peter Mohan, executive producer and writer for *The Listener*, which ran for five seasons (65 eps) on CTV before ending this year.

“It changes the game and changes the ground rules for all the characters. It often really gives a fresh energy to the affair,” he says.

But it doesn’t always have to play out as a dramatic “Who shot JR?” moment. It can be subtler and more nuanced — like bringing a character from an earlier season back or a substantial life event that changes the context of the characters’ lives.

With *The Listener*, for example, Mohan’s wrench in season three was to have Craig Olejnik’s character Toby join a special unit and help the team with his gift of reading minds, which he had previously kept a secret. And then, by the end of season four, Lauren Lee Smith’s character, Sgt. Michelle McCluskey, was pregnant, so she came back in the fifth season “as a mother, with all the new concerns that a mother might have doing this dangerous job,” says Mohan.

That said, planning aside, he stresses some of the best new arcs and ideas come out of a chemistry that organically and unexpectedly develops between two characters. “You’ll want to strengthen that and play into it — you can have a big picture and loose ideas of where you might be a couple of seasons down the line, but some of the strongest things that come up are out of where the characters are this season.”

Take A 360-Degree Approach

In addition to the human interactions on-screen, it’s the other moving parts of creating a series that bring a new sparkle to the show, says Conkie — like bringing new directors to the table. This season, veteran director Bruce McDonald came on board to direct block two of *Heartland*.

“He’s a very cinematic guy, which is great because that’s what we strive to do every week, but his look at the show was completely fresh and new and the shows just leap off the screen because of a new director’s eyes,” she says.

Heartland uses the same few directors for two of its nine blocks, but Conkie says they often bring on new directors that have never worked on the show.

“They’re not used to what we’re used to. Different angles make a huge difference; there are different takes on the way the show looks,” she notes, adding that DOP Craig Wroblewski keeps the show within the bounds of its overall template.

Heartland also leverages its setting in High River, Alberta to keep the show fresh. With 18 episodes per season, approximately 11 days of its 15-day blocks shoot outdoors (with the remaining days in studio), so the scenery is constantly changing. This keeps the audience involved because they, too, see every season and really feel like they’re seeing a year in the life of the characters, says Conkie.

And Fresh TV's McGillis notes the flexibility of an animated series like the *TD* brand provides more time to play in the edit room — and with 18 pairs of characters in *The Ridonculous Race* to manage, for example, while accurately imitating reality show conventions — it's crucial to come back later in the process.

"One of the biggest strengths of the *Total Drama* brand is being able to constantly play around in post. Something may look hilarious on the storyboard, but when it comes to picture, it's not funny anymore — there's only one way to make sure it stays funny," says McGillis. That's how, after cutting out animations that weren't working in *TD*, the team decided to use confessionals to bridge plot points, which has become a seamless and well-received element of the show.

Listen To The Audience

Social media commentary is the new laugh track — the audience reacting in real time. That's the new currency and it's worth (at least) a million bucks, or at least another season, to have access to direct and immediate audience feedback.

The four industry professionals agree: listen or ask.

For shows with wide and active fan bases, there are blogs and social feeds to mine and letters to pore over. And fans will be among the harshest critics if they see inconsistencies in the storyline or think a show has strayed from its core — or worse, if it's failed in its attempt to keep things fresh.

"Shows that jump the shark, traditionally they are reacting to something that is not what the show is about. They make adjustments to save themselves and this is usually a failure because it belies the integrity of the show. This is ultimately the show's downfall — it changes gears in a way that is in opposition to the intent," says Barry.

Mohan reinforces a notion that's all the more applicable in this new two-way creation and consumption landscape and, perhaps even more importantly, a gauge for longevity.

"You're responsive to the audience because it's not just [you] coming up with something out of [your] head. Telling a story to an audience is a conversation. If the audience isn't listening, why are you telling it?" ■

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THE BENCHMARKS OF OUR SUCCESS

By Diane Wild

What would you rather have for your TV show: great ratings, great Twitter buzz, or a great review in the mainstream media?

Trick question. If it were me, I'd want all three. Plus a pony.

But realistically, what means the most when measuring success in the Canadian television industry?

Wait, that was another trick question. First we have to know what our definition of success is: creative vision, degree of fan devotion, sheer numbers of viewers, renewal, all of the above?

To help untangle these tricky questions, we talked to three writers (Graeme Manson of *Orphan Black*, Emily Andras of *Lost Girl*, and Tassie Cameron of *Rookie Blue*), three professional critics (John Doyle of *The Globe and Mail* and freelancers Bill Brioux and Amber Dowling), and three network executives (Phil King of Bell, Christine Shipton of Shaw and Richard Kanee of CBC).

What Is This Success You Speak Of?

"It's hard as a writer not to go down the path of saying 'Was my vision realized? Did we put on screen what we set out to do?'" says Emily Andras. "But even in this day and age if you create something and no one sees it, you haven't succeeded. The cold hard truth comes down to: are people watching it and are people enjoying it?"

Graeme Manson defines success as "a green light on season three with a potentially growing fanbase, coupled with a returning, dedicated writing and production team."

"I think the two most obvious ways to measure a show's success are ratings and critical acclaim," Tassie Cameron comments. "Ideally, you have both, but in many cases, you're relying on one or the other to gauge whether your show is hitting the mark. Numbers aren't an exact science, as we all know, but

they're a pretty crucial part in determining whether your show is reaching its audience, and whether you're going to get another season."

Foreign sales are another measure of success on the business side, because they add to a show's financial viability.

But Amber Dowling sees value in independence, too. "Co-productions especially might make sense financially, but creatively they can be a nightmare because there are so many network opinions to consider and balance. I consider something like *Saving Hope* or *The Listener* a success because despite being cancelled in the U.S., they continued here."

The sense that a show sings creatively, a cadre of passionate fans, critical acclaim — they're all great individually, but getting another season is a common thread. Another season means at least some of those elements and maybe more came together in a complex and capricious formula to justify another greenlight.

Some renewal decisions even seem simple. *Saving Hope* got over a million-and-a-half viewers; it got a new season. *Cracked* got a third of that and it didn't. But don't try to do the math, there's no magic number networks look for, and different networks have different ratings expectations and financial considerations.

"There're so many factors that go into ratings. If you look at the competition, if there's a live event we're up against. You want to look at the repeat factor. You have to look at how much of our marketing budget was apportioned to the show," says Shaw's Christine Shipton. "You take all of that into account so it's never one specific number."

Murdoch Mysteries was famously cancelled by City despite good ratings while *The Listener* took its bow near the top of its ratings game. *Seed* and



Clockwise from top left: Amber Dowling, Christine Shipton, Graeme Manson, Phil King, Emily Andras

Package Deal were renewed despite sagging between higher-rated shows.

So there's no magic number, but there's often a magic story. Some higher-rated shows likely become too expensive as they age; some don't fit the network brand anymore. Some lower-rated shows might get another chance because they were up against stiff competition, aren't as expensive as others, lend the network some critical cachet, or the executives aren't confident that what they have in development is ready to do better.

Flashpoint seemed to be one of the rare shows where the creators genuinely wanted to move on and were allowed to end the show on their terms.

It's A Numbers Game

"If nobody watches you're not a success even if you think it's the best show ever," says Bell's Phil King, who says ratings are paramount, including PVR and VOD numbers. He points out he's more interested in trends than averages. If a show's ratings are growing, it may be a better bet for renewal as opposed to one that would end up starting the next season with a diminishing audience base.

"And then there's financial success — what does it cost to produce versus what does the advertising revenue bring in. You can get a show that gets massive ratings but it costs too much to produce."



Clockwise from top left:
John Doyle, Tassie
Cameron, Richard Kanee
and Bill Brioux



Bill Brioux tracks ratings on his TV Feeds My Family website and believes that measurement is still the bottom line of success — literally the financial bottom line. “Can you sell a program? Can you tell an advertiser people are watching?” He points out another flaw in the data, in that overnights are what’s often reported “but at best that represents 80 percent of a show’s take these days.”

John Doyle isn’t always confident in the ratings numbers provided, either. “It is much more difficult to find out the real figures for viewing numbers in Canada than it is in the US, where the press has much easier access to Nielsen data.”

Then there’s the conundrum of whether they’re the right ratings. Advertisers still care about that 18 to 49 year-olds sweet spot, which is rarely reported.

And while fans often decry the fact that viewers who watch online aren’t counted in traditional ratings, Shipton says that’s still such a small percentage that they count toward fan engagement more than ratings.

“What is different now is you have that big 360 view to be considering rather than just a pure ‘here are last night’s ratings,’” she adds. “You want to watch the catch-up online, you want to watch the PVR

numbers that come in seven days later, you want to be gauging the online community chatter, you want to be gauging the press reaction and not just specific critics but actors being asked to appear places.”

The Critics’ Choice

When everyone has a Twitter account or blog, do professional TV critics and columnists still have clout? The uproar on social media after a negative review in the mainstream media, or worse yet, no review at all, would suggest so. But if ratings is the base currency of success, the relationship between critical acclaim and ratings is tenuous at best.

“What a critic thinks is successful I think is very different from ratings,” says Brioux. “I thought *Michael: Tuesdays and Thursdays* was successful because it was original, it made me laugh, it was surprising.”

“But if a show gets nothing but love from social media and critics and still only got the ratings that *Michael* got, there’s nothing that will save that show. There’s just a bottom line.”

“It certainly has some influence,” says Doyle, speaking of critic and columnist attention. “*The Globe and Mail* as a company puts time and effort

into knowing who its readers are and what they're interested in. People will go to theatre based on a review, and they will watch a movie or a television show based on what our columnists and critics say."

Andras believes that while genre shows like those she's worked on tend to be somewhat critic-proof, a professional critic provides legitimacy, "which reaches a certain kind of audience. If something is critically reviled, we're only human — it's maybe harder to take a lot of pleasure in something that's been critically panned."

I'm Big On Twitter

Critics have a voice on social media too, but what's changed over the last few years has been the growth and mainstream-ization of the virtual watercooler of fans with direct access to show creators, for example.

Yet if the Internet were representative of the viewing public at large, CBC's one-season western *Wild Roses* would be entering its seventh season judging by its ability to garner over 300 comments to a single blog post, and *Bomb Girls* and *Endgame* would have returned after online save-our-show blitzes by well-organized fans. Writers, critics and networks point out that social media represents a small fraction of the overall fanbase, and not necessarily a representative one.

"Social media is great but it doesn't pay the bills, let me tell you that," says King.

"I feel like social media engagement can function in a few different ways, when it comes to a show's success," says Cameron. "It can be part of a kickstart movement that helps you get more viewers, especially off the top; and it can help keep those viewers loyal and committed and willing to move their PVR around to catch you when you're airing. Both of which contribute to consistent ratings. And then it's also the icing on the cake — it's a huge part of the fun of making a show that people are engaged with and caring about, which can be immensely gratifying and also mildly terrifying."

"But in the case of *Rookie Blue*, we're just as interested in the people out there who are steadily, quietly watching the show alone or with their friends and families, and keeping us alive just by tuning in."

"It's a whole new component," Manson says of social media. "Arguing over the value of that component seems to be the new cause célèbre for all involved: creatives, networks, actors, etc. Everyone seems to know it's important, but — occasionally conveniently — no one seems to know quite how to measure its value."

"I definitely think it's changed everything," says Andras. Andras says she thinks we are on the precipice of changing how we define success.

"Audiences are getting smaller and everyone's getting a smaller piece of the pie. With social media you really can see whether or not people are engaging in the product. Savvy networks and producers are using social media to bolster their brand. And as a writer, social media is so gratifying. You know whether you have something special and unique."

Shipton points out the downside for writers to have such immediate access to their fans: "Be careful what you wish for, you're getting notes not just from networks but from millions of Canadians now, and you can't react to those notes other than to defend your choices."

Doyle says not only can Twitter accounts buy followers and solicit friends and family to rally online, but even a legitimate following on social media creates a bubble of a certain kind of fan. "Two years ago, I was at a presentation in L.A. by CBS's chief research officer Dave Poltrack, and he said CBS research indicated that 90 percent of the national conversation in the U.S. about TV took place offline."

"I think when you're measuring sentiments online, you're measuring the sentiments of your core fans," says CBC's Richard Kanee. "And considering that the broadcast business model is predicated on how big your audience is, I think it's a bit of a false measure, in some ways. You can have a very dedicated diehard fan base, but it doesn't necessarily make you a successful broadcast property. The business is not oriented to figure out how to leverage that passion."

Head of Digital for CBC, he sees the most value in social media in the development process, to help online creators build a significant audience online via YouTube, for example, which could be ported to a broadcast network.

What Does It All Mean?

As audiences become more fragmented and have more choices in where and how they watch a show, and as social media gains prominence in building and sustaining an audience, and as networks figure out how online engagement and viewership can be monetized, the formula for success has gotten more complicated over the years, a trend that's sure to continue.

What seems clear is that whatever the formula: ratings + fan engagement + critical acclaim + XYZ, the result to a network is a financial bottom line, which strongly correlates to but is not quite the same as ratings. Add in complicating factors like Canadian content requirements, a limited number of primetime slots, slashed CBC budgets etc., then living with some mystery in how fates are determined, might be the only path to sanity in the Canadian television industry. ■

THE DRAMATIC PROMISE OF THE CBC

A senior director of CBC programming discusses the future of drama at the public network

By Matthew Hays

The news from the CBC has been mighty grim over the past year, with the national public broadcaster losing the broadcast rights to hockey >>

and with it, all of the accompanying advertising revenue. This has led to another round of deep cuts.

With that has come (yet) more existential pondering of the future of the Ceeb. Can it keep going in the same spirit or form? For Canadian screenwriters, the challenges are particularly harsh, given that the Ceeb has traditionally been more committed to dramatic programming than its private sector counterparts.

The CBC strategy in the face of this rather extreme funding cut, is to discuss the idea of more with less: high quality programming but less of it. As the WGC's Executive Director stated in September during the CRTC hearings, "sometimes less is just less. We need a robust industry, and sufficient quantity, to create the quality everyone wants."

Canadian Screenwriter magazine set out to ask one of the executives in charge of CBC programming about how they were going to respond to the cuts, and how, precisely, the network was going to continue creating dramatic programming with less revenue. We spoke to Helen Asimakis, a 13-year veteran of the CBC, who is now Senior Director, Drama Commissioned and Scripted Programming, about the Ceeb's new direction.

Canadian Screenwriter: Obviously, these are very challenging times for the CBC.

Helen Asimakis: We're not alone. Yes, we have our challenges, it's no secret, but the entire industry is shifting, the sand underneath our feet is shifting. The other broadcasters are facing their own set of challenges. They've had to let people go. The

industry is changing, and we're going to have to change with it. We can't sit back and watch. Having said all that doom and gloom, and I don't want to minimize the human toll, but in my department, this is kind of an exciting time. Yes, we're going to have to work harder to get projects made, but in terms of the creative material that's coming in, it's quite energizing.

CS: The statement from the CBC has been that they are going to stay the course with commitment to dramatic programming, despite the cuts.

HA: I think what has been decided in terms of strategy and direction is to prioritize the prime time schedule. We are looking at any opportunity, wherever there's an opportunity, to redirect dollars to content. That's what we are, a content company. So wherever there are dollars that can be shaken out, that money will go back to programming. The way we're looking at it, from a drama side of things, yes, there are fiscal challenges but there are also opportunities. The way we're looking at it is, we're reinventing ourselves, we're recalibrating. One of the things we've discussed in the past couple of months is, we're hitting the reset button. We're looking at who we are, how we move forward, distinguishing ourselves more clearly, more distinctly, from the private broadcasters.

CS: In what way?

HA: In terms of the kind of programming that we want to offer. We don't want to play in the same sandbox as the privates. They do what they do really



Laurie Finstad Knizhnik is the showrunner and one of the creators of CBC's *Strange Empire*. Above shows three of the main characters: Tattiawna Jones plays Isabelle Slotter, Cara Gee is Kat Loving and Melissa Farman is Dr. Rebecca Blithely.

well; we want to start shaping our own brand, if you will, very clearly. It comes down to the kinds of programs we are putting on the air. We've talked about going a bit more in the premium cable direction if we can, and working more closely with other public broadcasters around the world, looking for synergies that might work for both of us.

CS: Here's the problem some Canadian screenwriters might have with that: you have a show like *The Tudors*, which is fantastic, and it's a copro, but it doesn't tell much in the way of Canadian stories.

HA: The example that I would use is something called *The Book of Negroes*, which will air in January. It's us and BET came in as a partner in the US with us. It works beautifully for us, we don't have to change anything in our storytelling, but it works for their audience as well. It is a challenge, but we're still driven to tell Canadian stories and to have the Canadian element be the driver, but it's a challenge. It's walking the fine line, it's a balance. There may be some projects where maybe we're the minority partner in the production. I look at the projects that we have on the go right now, they all have Canadian writers.

CS: What the guild is seeing is a lot of copros, but they're not seeing a lot of actual new Canadian programming —

HA: I think you will be seeing it. We've been talking about going in this new direction, and you will be seeing it as early as this fall. And in this telecast year, we have *Strange Empire*, it's fantastic. It's the kind of thing we're talking about. You know Laurie Finstad from *Durham County* — it's smart, it's sophisticated, complex characters. Very strong group of writers, and it's very different for us. We wanted to make sure that, when we were talking about this new direction,

we're very lucky, because we're at a place where we can show people where we're going very soon. We have a new project with Stephanie Morgenstern and Mark Ellis too, titled *Camp X*. It takes place in France and we're shooting in Hungary, but it's no less Canadian. The writing team is all Canadian. Both of those projects are also going to be very interesting to international broadcasters too. Yes, we have financial challenges, but we're trying to up the caliber of the programming that we put on the air.

CS: We can talk about doing more with less, but at the end of the day, the budget has been cut. Doesn't that just mean fewer opportunities for writers?

HA: I don't think so, necessarily. Our aim is to put as much on the screen as possible. If there's an opportunity to divert money into programming, we're going to do that. My development slate is full of bursting right now. I have a range of programs in development with writers all across the country. All of the production executives have been taking pitches from across the country, to try to maximize the opportunities. I don't know what you've heard from individual writers, but the feedback we got at Banff was great enthusiasm about the direction we're taking. I think writers are excited to have an outlet for projects they were dying to do, but weren't sure where they were going to take it. This is the place where we're going to try to do different kinds of programming.

CS: How do we convince Canadians that Canadian programming is worth it? Because I think many Canadians don't think it is.

HA: Well, I think if they just sample some of the things that are coming down the pipes from us, I think they're going to see this is really strong programming. The

“...of course we can’t do everything, that’s just the reality, and that’s at every network. But it really is about working with the Canadian creative community.”



Helen Asimakis

proof is on the screen. People will see it very soon and I hope that will help to begin to change people’s minds a bit, about what we’d lose if we didn’t have the CBC.

CS: Do you think the private sector will be able to step up a bit?

HA: I’d love to see the privates step in. When the tide comes in, all the boats rise, as the old saying goes. It would mean more work for the community. It would make for a more robust film and TV scene.

CS: I’m sure you saw John Doyle’s column about Canada missing the Golden Age of TV.

HA: Yes, I read it. My response is: we’re doing some interesting work, coming and in development. Maybe our timeline’s a little different, but we have a new regime here, and I think we know where we want to go, we have a very clear direction in terms of really distinguishing ourselves. The range of projects that is coming into us now, it’s come on the heels of fiscal challenges, but with those challenges come opportunities. The range of projects we have right now, I haven’t seen this range in a long long time. When it comes down to decisions about what to produce, of course we can’t do everything, that’s just the reality, and that’s at every network. But it really is about working with the Canadian creative community.

CS: Does the CBC stand a chance with Harper as prime minister?

HA: Well, we’re still here. He hasn’t been the only one who has had cuts for us. I don’t want to go there. That’s something that’s out of our control. What we need to do is take stock of our reality. How do you skin the cat? Our job is to put

programming on the air, and programming that Canadians want to watch. A lot of people are eager to work with us, and are pitching us shows. I’m optimistic. I’m a glass-half-full person. I think we are going to start seeing the kinds of programs that John Doyle was complaining weren’t happening. Hopefully Canadians will love them.

CS: Well, even if the glass is half empty, you can fill it up with vodka.

HA: You sound pessimistic.

CS: At the end of the day, if you have less money, you can’t hire as many people. I can see why there’s a draw towards copros, but when you have a number of different countries involved in a production, fewer Canadians will be hired, ultimately.

HA: Not all our shows are coproductions, though. They can work very well, but that’s not everything we do.

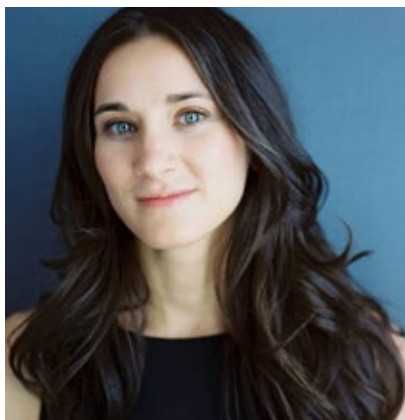
CS: But the fact remains: you still can’t hire as many writers if you have less money. The more-with-less sounds nice, and thinking outside of the box is a nice platitude, but at the end of the day, if you don’t have as much budget, it sucks.

HA: I’m glass-half-full.

CS: But all you’ve got left is a shot glass. There’s only so much spin you can put on this.

HA: I’m not spinning.

CS: You don’t have the budget to spin, only enough for a quarter twirl. ■



No limits: The benefits of not knowing the boundaries

By Mark Dillon

Thirty-six-year-old Hannah Moscovitch is often labeled “Canada’s hottest young playwright” and this year’s accomplishments probably sealed it. Her play *This is War*—in which Canadian soldiers offer varying accounts of a mission in Afghanistan—won a Trillium Book Award. She was subsequently shortlisted for the \$100,000 Siminovitch Prize in theatre, recognizing a three-year body of work. And the opera *I Have No Stories to Tell*, for which she penned the libretto about a female photojournalist dealing with the after-effects of war, opened to positive reviews in New York.

After co-writing a couple of episodes of the crime drama *Played*, she joined the writers’ room on *Camp X*, a Temple Street Productions/CBC drama by *Flashpoint* creators Mark Ellis and Stephanie Morgenstern that gives her another war yarn to spin. *Camp X* was a secret Second World War facility in Whitby, Ontario, where special agents were trained to wreak havoc overseas against the Nazis. Moscovitch spoke with us from the production office in Budapest.

You have had a very successful theatre career. Why move to TV?

I tend to choose projects based on what I find meaningful and [with] collaborators I admire and not based on medium. The showrunner on *Played* was Greg Nelson, with whom

I had worked for five years on the CBC radio drama *Afghanada* and whom I knew from theatre. I was excited to work with him again.

How did *Camp X* materialize for you?

Mark and Stephanie had seen *This is War* and read some of my other work and knew I have a weird amount of information in my head about [the Second] World War, Nazis and the Holocaust. Combining that with a writer’s brain, I can alchemize it and tell you awesome shit about Nazis you probably wouldn’t know unless you spent your time from 12 years old on in the [Second] World War section of the library.

Did the Holocaust touch your family?

The Ukrainian portion of my family that stayed sent their last letter to us in 1941. I grew up in Ottawa and there were a lot of Holocaust survivors at the temple I attended and many of my friends had grandparents who were Holocaust survivors. There were always people around who had numbers tattooed on their arms. When I was 15, I went to all the Polish concentration camps.

What is the biggest advantage of TV for a writer?

There’s actual collaboration that occurs between TV writers. When you’re a playwright, you’re in a room with designers and directors and performers, but you’re never around

other people who are on the inside of how [the] story works. So, for me, it’s really original to be in a room with other writers whose brains are wired like mine and who understand everything I’m saying. You have this feeling of comradeship.

What has been the biggest challenge in adjusting to TV?

How fast TV writers think. They can hold a whole five-act storyline in their minds and then take pieces out and put pieces in and do the math and you can see it flickering behind their eyes. I have moments in the room when I don’t know what we’re talking about anymore. In theatre, you mastermind less and allow things to emerge because it’s not so time-sensitive. I’m catching up and it’s rewiring my brain and now I can do it more.

What positives from theatre do you bring to TV?

Hard TV writers look at me and can’t believe I can work without structure. They say things like “I can only see three acts in that story,” and I go, “I can’t see any acts. I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I’m trying to learn their way. I’ll sometimes say things in the room that are slightly outside of how they’re thinking and I can see it working. There are advantages and disadvantages in me knowing less about the medium. I sometimes don’t think of what the limitations are and that can be helpful. ■

Unfair Engagers

The Guild has declared the following engagers “Unfair” for failing to abide by grievance procedures or the decision of a Joint Standing Committee. The WGC’s working rules prohibit members from working with unfair engagers.

All I Want Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Battered Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Christmas Town Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

FOTP Productions Inc.

Principal: Richard Rapkowski

**Guardian Films Inc./
En Garge Films Inc.**

Principal: Kirk Shaw

H & S Films

Principal: Nicolas Stiliadis

Hiding Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

High Seas Rescue Productions Inc.

Principal: F. Whitman Trecartin

Ice Planet (1) Canada Ltd.

Principal: Philip Jackson

Justice Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Kangaroo Court Productions Ltd.

Principal: Robin Payne

**Les Productions les Plus Belles Routes du
Monde Inc.**

*Principal: Andre Belanger
(not affiliated with Spectra Animation Inc.)*

Lester Beach Entertainment

Principal: Jeff Lester

Nikolai Productions

Principal: Cindy Lamb

Norfolk International Ltd.

Principal: William Macadam

Numb Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Perfect Stranger Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Prospero Entertainment Group Inc.

Principal: John Lambert

Richard Lowry Productions Inc.

Principal: Richard Lowry

She Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Spiritual Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

System Productions Inc.

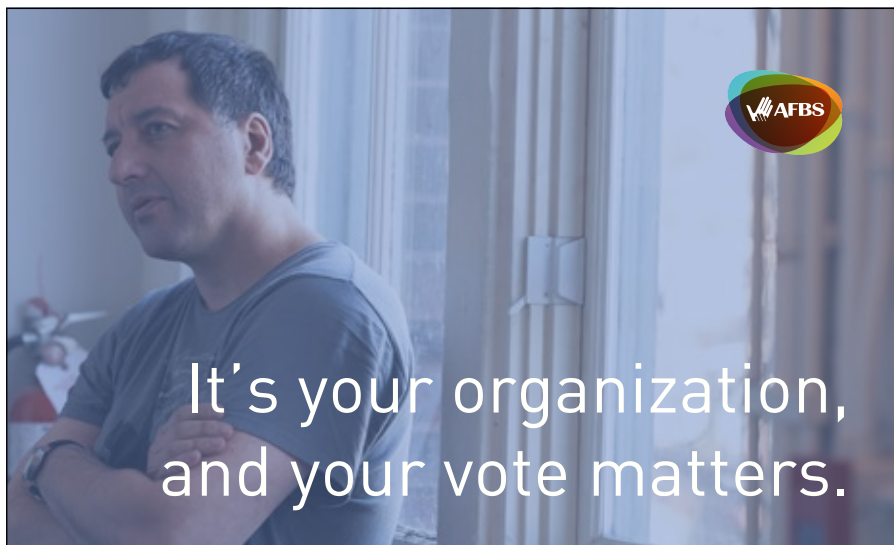
Principal: Kirk Shaw

T Man Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw

Zolar Productions Inc.

Principal: Kirk Shaw



It's your organization,
and your vote matters.

AFBS is a not-for-profit insurer owned by members of the Writers Guild of Canada and ACTRA. As an AFBS Member and a stakeholder, you play an important role in the governance of AFBS: you can vote for the Board of Governors. We are holding an election in 2015 for governors representing Canada's Western and Central regions. To make it easier to participate, you will be able to vote online or by phone, and early next year, eligible Members in those regions will receive instructions on how to vote. Play a part in your organization. Have your say. Vote. Follow us on Twitter @AFBSCanada for reminders.

Please Help Us Find These Writers!

The CSCS is holding foreign secondary authors' levies for writers

The Canadian Screenwriters Collection Society (CSCS) is holding foreign secondary authors' levies for a number of writers and uncredited productions. As CSCS does not have a current address for these writers or the productions do not have complete credit information we have not been able to forward any monies to the entitled writers. The complete list of writers and productions is available on the CSCS website at:

www.wgc.ca/cscs/hot_news

If you have any information that would allow us to contact any of these writers or their agents, or if you are a credited writer on the listed production, please contact:

Marisa King at m.king@wgc.ca
or call (416) 979-7907 ext. 5231 or
1-800-567-9974 ext. 5231.



Excitement with every single thing

By Cameron Archer

Although Ramona Barckert has written two films (the 2008 TV movie, *For the Love of Grace*, 2009's *At Home by Myself... with You*) and works in various television genres (animation on *The Dating Guy*, sitcom on *The Smart Woman Survival Guide*), she is currently best known for teen drama. Barckert was story editor for the first two seasons of Family Channel's *Wingin' It* and has worked in various capacities — as writer, story editor and consulting producer — with Epitome Pictures/DHX Media's *Degrassi* franchise since 2011. Barckert is currently the showrunner and writer of *Open Heart*, an Epitome Pictures/DHX Media production to debut on YTV in Canada and TeenNick in the USA.

How do you attempt to balance scripts so they're relevant to the immediate teenage audience, yet evergreen? What lessons on *Open Heart* do you apply from *Wingin' It* and *Degrassi*?

I don't have a magical answer. The world moves very fast and what is relevant to teens today might be very different tomorrow. I just try to tell an engaging story that touches on universal themes that don't change — family, love,

empowerment, survival. One of my favourite shows is *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Watching it today, you often cringe. It couldn't be more awkwardly late-1990s, but the story and those characters hold.

From *Wingin' It*, I learned that anything is possible and if you work hard, you can come up with one million story ideas. From *Degrassi*, I learned you actually need two million.

What attracts you to programs like *Degrassi* and *Open Heart*? How loyal do you find teen and twenty-something audiences?

I find them obsessive. Obsessive is a better word than loyal, and I mean that in the best way possible. Social media has made it so easy for 'fans' of a show to become a 'fandom.' Engaging (and arguing) with one another is very important to how they experience these shows. What I love about writing for the youth audience is that they get excited about every single thing and they care. They care so hard.

What attracts you to *Open Heart*'s format, given that it's a serialized mystery/family drama set in a hospital? How hard is it to balance these elements compared to an established high school drama like *Degrassi*?

I don't worry about balancing the

various genres; I focus on telling the right story. *Open Heart* is sometimes a rom-com, sometimes a medical show, a night-time soap, a thriller and a comedy. As long as the story and the characters are correct, you can make that work. Also, I get bored easily. In the writers' room, I'm always like, "can that patient reanimate into a zombie? There hasn't been a fistfight in a while. Wait, they should just start making out!"

What tone shifts have you experienced in the teen dramas that are produced? *Degrassi*, for example has changed since 1999, and the teen audience is more likely to view a show online, bypassing conventional television.

The challenge is to get teens to watch live, but acknowledge that they don't. On the bright side, this audience is very spoiler-averse, but struggles to stay off-line for too long. With live-tweeting and instant GIFs on Tumblr, things get out very quickly. *Open Heart* has a ton of story — every episode is packed with hard hooks and gasp-y moments, but we work to make things clear and accessible for someone just tuning in. It's a constant conversation — how can we catch up new viewers quickly and not bore the viewers who've been on the ride the whole time? ■

News from WGC Members

Entertainment One Television is developing and producing a U.S. version of the racy Finnish fantasy drama series, *Nymphs*, to be written by **Miranda Kwok** (*Spartacus: Blood And Sand*, *Sanctuary*, and *Song Of Silence*, winner of the Slamdance Screenplay Competition).

Pierre Larouche is co-writing the horror feature, *Harmony*, with director Charles-Olivier Michaud, for Caramel Films and producer André Rouleau.

Screenwriters **Jill Girling** and **Lori Mather-Welch** have been hired by Muse Entertainment and Odyssey Networks to adapt the novel, *My Life as a Doormat* by Renee Gutteridge, for The Hallmark Channel.

Nicolas Billon's first feature screenplay, *Elephant Song*, premiered at TIFF and was the opening gala film of the Atlantic Film Festival. Directed by Charles Binamé, the movie stars Bruce Greenwood, Xavier Dolan, and Catherine Keener.

Bill Taub's book, *Automatic Pilot*, based on his UCLA Extension Writers' Program online workshop, is a best-seller in the Amazon screenwriting category. His new class starts in January, and as it is online, WGC members are welcome.

David Bezmozgis wrote and directed a feature adaptation of his short story, *Natasha*. His novel, *The Betrayers*, has been published in Canada, U.S. and the U.K.

Emma Campbell has recently worked as a junior story editor for Temple Street Production's *The Next Step*, and story editor for **Frank Van Keeken's** *The Music Room*. She was awarded the Banff Bell Fellowship for her supernatural drama, *Sarah Finn*. And she is in development with CBC for her original comedy, *Drop the Needle*, starring Maestro Fresh Wes, and for an original one hour, *Whacked*, with Thunderbird Films.

Larry Raskin is showrunning season three of the History Television/Paperny Entertainment documentary series, *Yukon Gold*, premiering in February 2015.

Amanda Smith-Kolic is both thrilled and honoured to be a 2014 Bell Media Prime Time TV program resident, working with executive producer in residence, **Brad Wright**.

After working on season five of ABC/Shaw's *Rookie Blue*, **Matt MacLennan** has joined the writers' room on ABC/CTV's *Motive*, and is currently co-writing a pilot and developing a series for with CBC.

David Schmidt is the head writer on two new medical recreation series for GRB Entertainment and Discovery Life. *Diagnosis Unknown* deals with medical cases that confound, and an as-yet-untitled

series focuses on incredible birth stories.

Gary Pearson's novel, the romantic comedy *Slapshot of Love*, is now available on Amazon.ca. He is also co-creator/showrunner with **Dan Redican** on the new sketch comedy series *Sunnyside*, for Rogers/CITY TV.

Jan Caruana is very happy to be visiting Winnipeg, writing for the new City TV sketch show, *Sunnyside* (airing in 2015).

Gary Jones is in development with Infinity Films on an original Canadian sit-com titled *Can You Hear Me Now?* As well, he and fellow comedian and writer, **Diana Frances**, are co-developing *Given Up*, a true-life adoption-based sitcom about Frances' life.

Ari Posner is a writer-producer on *Hart of Dixie* for The CW.

Writer **Cathryn Morris** with her producer **Lara Fitzgerald** participated in the NSI Totally TV bootcamp that took place Sept. 27-Oct. 3 in Toronto. They workshopped their original television series, *Hood*, about a cop who robs criminals.

Al Schwartz is working on the second season of *Nerds and Monsters* for Slap Happy Cartoons and YTV.

This year **Pablo Garcia** joined **Ron E. Scott**, creator, writer, and



director of the award-winning *Blackstone*, in the writers' room for the upcoming fourth season of the gritty drama that airs on APTN (and Hulu in the U.S.).

Kelly Fanson notes that summer may be over but the heat was on in Oaxaca, Mexico, for the Oaxaca Film Festival that ran Oct. 4-12. Her feature screenplay was accepted into the screenplay competition.

Jamie Kastner, last seen in these pages for the *Secret Disco Revolution*, has received the support of Superchannel, Bell Media's Canal D and the CMF-POV fund for his new documentary thriller, *The Skyjacker's Tale*. Production is set to begin early 2015.

Tom Mason is wrapping production as co-story editor on 52 episodes of *Bat Pat* for Atlantica, and just signed to write his 15th *Captain Awesome* book for Simon & Schuster (under the pseudonym "Stan Kirby"). He's also writing *The Pile*, a super-hero comic book for Space Goat Publishing.

On Oct. 15 **Mack Furlong**, co-creator of cult favourites *The Great Eastern* and *Sunny Days and Nights*, received the 2014 John Drainie Award for excellence in broadcasting.

Mark Leiren-Young is a Webster Award finalist for his CBC Radio Ideas documentary, *Moby Doll: The Whale that Changed the World*, which he's developing as a feature

doc for Middle Child Films. As well, he's the new editor of *Reel West Magazine*.

Mark Hoffs's first feature film, *Away from Everywhere* (2015), adapted from Chad Pelley's novel and directed by Justin Simms, is in pre-production with Morag Loves Company, Quiet Revolution Pictures and Mad Mummer Media co-producing.

Derek Harvie is writing, producing and directing season two of the half hour "hidden camera sitcom," *Meet the Family*, for Frantic Films and CityTV.

Dennis Heaton is currently executive producing and showrunning season three of *Motive*. **Sarah Dodd, Matt MacLennan, Karen Hill, Damon Vignale, Thomas Pound** and **Julie Puckrin** are his staff writers.

Michael P. O'Hara and **Jerome McCann** are producing an original independent half hour TV pilot through Indiegogo. *Talent Drivers* is a comedy about a motley group of drivers who work in the transport department of film and TV. The finished product — guest starring Jayne Eastwood, Robin Duke and Chris Elliott — will be shopped around to networks once completed.

Doug Molitor wrote for *Wild Grinders*, *Bat Pat* and *Thomas Edison's Secret Lab*, and his sci-fi rom-com novel, *Memoirs of a Time*

Traveler, will be published March 3, 2015 by Permuted Press.

October marks the release of *Dirty Singles*, the rom-com feature from writer-director **Alex Pugsley**. Executive produced by Shaftesbury and Global Mechanic Media, the film stars Paul Campbell, Lauren Ash, and Ennis Esmer.

Mina Shum is in post-production on *The Ninth Floor*, a feature documentary that she wrote and directed for the NFB. It's based on an event in 1969 Montreal, when six black students at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) charged a white professor with racism. She has also received a BC Arts grant for her next fiction feature, *Meditation Park*, which she also wrote and will direct.

Jason Whiting was accepted into the CFC's Bell Media Prime Time TV program, working with showrunner **Brad Wright**.

YTV has greenlit a second season of the hit animated series, *Nerds and Monsters*. Writers include executive producer and story editor **Vito Viscomi**, Leo Award winner **Greg Sullivan**, Leo Award nominated **Kendra Hibbert, Steve Sullivan, Al Schwartz, Craig Martin, David Elver**, and **Ursula Ziegler**.

Willem Wennekers is showrunning the third season of *Fugget About It* with writers **Steven Clark, Laurie Elliott**, and **Andrew De Angelis**. ■

Welcome

Aaron Abrams Toronto ON
Jeremy Adams Santa Monica CA
Jon Blair Toronto ON
Sophie Naima Caird Toronto ON
Nadiya Chettiar Vancouver BC
Graham Chittenden Brantford ON
Jerrold Clark Los Angeles CA
Kirsten Clark Los Angeles CA
Lynn Coady Toronto ON
Dawn DeKeyser Los Angeles CA
Keri Ferencz Toronto ON
Matthew C. Flanagan Los Angeles CA
Alastair Forbes Toronto ON
Pablo Garcia Edmonton AB
Leah Gotcsik Brooklyn NY
Jacqueline Gould Vancouver BC
Cayman Grant Saint John NB
Brooks Gray Waterloo ON
Marsha Greene Toronto ON
Jonny Harris Toronto ON
Andrew Healey Toronto ON
Rikvah (Robby) Hoffman Toronto ON
Hannah Hogan Toronto ON
David Holstein Los Angeles CA
Naledi Jackson Toronto ON
Jennifer Kassabian Toronto ON
Stephen Kronish Valley Village CA
Rachel Langer Burnaby BC
Chris Leavins Los Angeles CA
Daniel Levy Toronto ON
Jane Maggs Toronto ON

Heather Maidat New York NY
Cindy McCreery Austin TX
David A. McHugh Los Angeles CA
Peter McKay Pittsburgh PA
Charles-Olivier Michaud St-Romuald QC
Garfield Lindsay Miller Toronto ON
Kaveh Mohebbi Toronto ON
Nathaniel Moher Burnaby BC
Tamara Moulin Toronto ON
Roslyn Muir Vancouver BC
Ariel Nasr Montreal QC
Wanda Nolan St John's NL
Dayna Lynne North Woodland Hills CA
Malek Pacha Toronto ON
Jamie Pachino Los Angeles CA
Seth Pearlman Santa Monica CA
Brian Peco Toronto ON
Thomas Pound Toronto ON
Julie Puckrin Port Perry ON
Chris Ross Toronto ON
Bryce Sage Toronto ON
Deborah Schwartz Santa Monica CA
Jennifer Siddle Burnaby BC
Francois Simard Saint-Eustache QC
Pascal Trottier Toronto ON
Bradley Vermunt Toronto ON
Anouk Whissell Saint-Eustache QC
Yoann-Karl Whissell Saint-Eustache QC
Jeremy Woodcock Toronto ON
James A. Woods Montreal QC
Nathalie Younglai Toronto ON

Our condolences

John Bassett Victoria BC
Martin M. Borycki Vancouver BC
Ruth De Graves Winnipeg MB
Harvey Frost Pacific Palisades CA

Michael Lavoie Toronto ON
Martha Morgan Cudworth SK
Farley Mowat Port Hope ON
Knowlton Nash Toronto ON

Money for Missing Writers

The Writers Guild of Canada is holding monies for the writers listed below. The WGC has been unable to locate the writers and forward the money to them. If you have any information that would help us reach these writers (or their agents or estates), please contact the staff member indicated below. These writers would thank you.

IPA - contact Paul Caston at p.caston@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9974 ext 5248

Dawn Cumberbatch — *Top Cops*
Elana Devine — *Student Bodies*
Warren Easton — *Odyssey II*
Gerald Fourier — *Littlest Hobo*
John Hollard — *Littlest Hobo*

NFB - contact Paul Caston at p.caston@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9974 ext 5248

Peter Bierman — *Twice Upon a Time*
Mariette Cooke — *Happiness Is Loving Your Teacher*
Gordon Fisher — *Wild in the City*
Ian Ferguson — *Canada's Capital* — *Behind the Scenes*
Laszlo Gefin — *Revolution's Orphans*
William Maylon — *Journey of the Blob*
Daniel Prouty — *For Angela*
Josef Reeve — *Canada Vignettes-NFLD*
Inger Smith — *Wood Mountain Poems*
Janos Szanyi — *Revolution's Orphans*
Gilles Toupin — *Cycling: Still the Greatest*
Peter Vogler — *Ernie's Idea*

CBC-TV - contact Mary Young at m.young@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9974 ext 5236

Fred Adams — *King of Kensington*
Peter R. Churchill — *20/20: Yorkville 1967*
Robert Cooper — *This Land*
Nancy Ryley Denovan (estate) — *The Passionate Canadians:*
Tom Thompson
Ronald Dunn — *Wojeck*
Donald Ettlinger — *Billy Budd*
Mary Fowler — *The Man at the Window*
Lindsay Galloway — *Wojeck*
Geoffrey Gilbert (estate) — *Sidestreet*
David Harriman (Harasti) — *Five Years in the Life*
Robin Herman — *King of Kensington*

Paul Jodoin — *Chez Helene*
Arthur Murphy — *G.M. Theatre: The Death*
Around Us
Gordon Myers — *Dr. Zonk and the Zunkins*
Irving Gaynor Neiman (estate) — *The Greatest Man in*
the World
James Taylor — *Man Alive*
Warner Troyer (estate) — *Front Page Challenge*
Robert Windsor — *King of Kensington*
Unknown writer — *The Nature of Things* (Dutch Elm Disease)
Unknown writer — *Hand & Eye* (Glorious Mud)
Five unknown writers — *CAPAC 50th Anniversary Show*

CBC - RADIO - contact Mary Young at m.young@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9974 ext 5236

Andrew Allan (estate) — *Snow Queen*
Ernst Behrendt — *Quirks & Quarks*
Tony Bell — *Nightfall*
Janet Bonellie — *Nightfall*
Martin Bronstein — *Royal Canadian Air Farce*
Neil Copeland — *Between Ourselves: The Titanic-*
Six Decades of Controversy
Norman Corwin — *Theatre of Freedom*
Dorothy Davis — *Sign Unseen*
Frank Deaville — *Woodhouse & Hawkins*
Ira Dilworth (estate) — *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*
Ted Ferguson — *A Perfectly Happy Life*
Harry E. Foster (estate) — *The German World*
Howard Griffen — *The Duel*
Hugh Kemp — *Stage 47: Two Solitudes*
Peter Lee — *Nightfall*
David Leicester — *Nightfall*
Joseph MacEastern — *Much Ado about Ronnie*
Art McGregor — *Woodhouse and Hawkins*
John McNaught (James Bannerman) — *Wind in the Willows*
Charles Rittenhouse — *The Thirty-Nine Steps*
Samuel Selvon (estate) — *Vanishing Point*
Henry Sobotka (estate) — *Johnny Chase*
Frederick Spoerly — *The Cable Car Incident*

“Oh Great Scribe...”

advice for the scriptlorn

By Harrington Gordonson

Noting that Canadian screenwriters were underserved despite the current proliferation in popular media of advice columns — and never one to let a bandwagon pass — Canadian Screenwriter has commissioned eminent screenwriter Harrington Gordonson as our own sage for seekers: sort of like Dan Savage for the folks who don't get out as much.

Send questions to “Oh Great Scribe,” c/o Canadian Screenwriter (editor@wgc.ca)

Harrington Gordonson, Q.C., O.C., EIEIO, had his seven-part miniseries about intrigue in a small Alberta town turned into the number one Telenovela in Chile, “Albertos!”. In 1993, during a legendary technical glitch, he kept CBC Radio on the air single-handedly for nine hours by performing his one-man improvised radio drama, “Diefenbaker’s Toque.” In 1974 he gave Marshall McLuhan a medium massage. He solves problems.

Oh Great Scribe — My show, the one I’ve worked like a dog on creating, shepherding, nurturing for two years; the one that seven writers spent months giving up weekends for to respond to endless network notes, is about to debut its second season. The network hasn’t run a single ad or billboard. They have one promo which recycles the same joke, and has been played 50,000 times, but only on weekends between midnight and 6 a.m. They’ve told me it’s time to “see if it stands on its own two feet.” I feel they’re strangling my baby in the crib. What do I do?

What we have here is a Classic Metaphorical Conflict. First of all, they’re not strangling your baby in the crib. It’s second season. Your

baby’s a toddler now. At best, they’re failing to pay child support and then murdering your toddler on its way to Pre-K. That’s sad, but tell it to B.C.’s teachers. Also, Daddy has a new baby now. And it’s shiny and fun and it doesn’t push back on notes at all. Everybody wins!

Oh Great Scribe — My daughter is obsessed with being skinny basic. Her boyfriend Jean-Pierre, keeps telling her to “Showmi you’ve got a Netflix Gap.” Now apparently, he wants her to start heavy streaming, but insists that they’re not genre exclusive. I keep telling her...

I’m going to stop you right there. There are like 16 people who get this joke. Next letter.

Oh Great Scribe — I read this really alarming article from a Stanford biologist who said that there are strong signs that Earth is entering its sixth mass-extinction cycle, and it’s our fault. So my question is, do I still have to have that first draft in by Monday?

There are few things as frustrating to a writer as looking out at the world and surveying the enormity of all the things we cannot fix. We are used to creating perfect,

hermetically sealed worlds, where the characters that strut and fret across the transom are governed by, and responsive to, our every directive and whim. In the comfort and safety of creation, even the most insurmountable problems can be solved, lessons can be learned, and eleventh hour fixes can be pulled out of the air, applied with breathless brio, and everything ends up in its right place. The world outside of our imaginations is, alas, not so easily saved or managed; our problem solving skills fall short, and fail in light of the quantum complications of millions of indifferent influences, which fall entirely outside our sphere of influence. It’s at these times I think it’s most important to remember that payment is triggered on delivery, so of course you should deliver Monday. Then later, when they still haven’t coughed up the money, you can complain that in the time since you invoiced, the Antarctic ice shelf melted. That sounds way more badass than “fifty-two days ago.”

Oh Great Scribe — I see from that recent video going around the web that “Canadian TV Delivers.” Can I get a pepperoni with mushrooms and tomato?

Will that be cash, credit card, or network web series licence fee? Zing! ■

November

- 3** — *Deadline* — **OMDC Film Fund** omdc.ca
6-16 — **Reel Asian Film Festival** reelasian.com
12-23 — **Montreal International Film Festival** ridm.qc.ca/en
20 — **Writers Talking TV, TIFF Bell Lightbox, Canadian International TV Festival** wgc.ca

December

- 1** — *Deadline* — **WGC Screenwriting Awards nominations** wgc.ca
8 — *Deadline* — **Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program (eastern Canada)** wgc.ca

January

- 5** — **Call for Entries, WGC Showrunner Award** wgc.ca
19 — **Call for Entries, Sondra Kelly Award** wgc.ca

February

- 3** — *Deadline* — **Bell Fund, Production** bellfund.ca
3 — *Deadline* — **Bell Fund, Development** bellfund.ca
23-March 1 — **Canadian Screen Week** academy.ca

March

- 1** — **Canadian Screen Awards Broadcast Gala, CBC** academy.ca
3 — *Deadline* — **Independent Production Fund, Webseries** ipf.ca
3 — *Deadline* — **Cogeco Fund, Development** cogecofund.ca
3 — *Deadline* — **Cogeco Fund, Production** cogecofund.ca
4-6 — **Prime Time in Ottawa** primetimeinottawa.ca
12 — **Writers Talking TV, TIFF Bell Lightbox** wgc.ca



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