

CANADIAN SCREENWRITER

CANADA \$7 SUMMER 2016 VOL.18, NO.3

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A Tenacious Guild Is A Good Thing

When the Guild began a quarter century ago, the Internet wasn't a thing. Streaming wasn't a thing. Webisodes — also not a thing. Heck, most of us were still watching movies at home on VHS. At least one of us had a pick-up truck with an eight-track player in it. Yes, still in the early 1990s, it lived.

Who knows what will be around in another 25 years?

Some stuff will be predictable. But that's not the thing that will turn the world upside down.

I mean if back in the 1960s someone said that in a decade you'd be able to buy a metal box you put food in and cook it with radio waves, you'd be skeptical. Man, I groove to radio waves; I don't cook with them. (You'd say something like that because, hey man, it was the '60s.) You'd be convinced there would be a better chance of flying cars and jet packs than some box that cooked food with radio waves.

And yet the lack of affordable jet packs is still a sore disappointment for many of us. Okay, at least one of us.

And flying cars.... Well, let's just be thankful they haven't taken off.

But microwave ovens, they're everywhere.

New technology enters the market at an accelerating pace. Who thought you'd ever top having lasers play your music? And yet compact disc players dominated for what — only two decades — before being pretty much swept aside by other forms of digital recording.

Film was slowly replaced by videotape, but both seemed to have a solid and linear lock on things. Now you have movies and television and web shows being recorded on memory chips. And you have 3D and 4K and virtual reality.

Not only is the technology coming faster; it's cheaper and more accessible.

You can do things with a phone these days that would have seemed bizarre 25 years ago. When the Guild began, some of us thought technology had reached its heights through the innovation of twist caps that virtually rendered bottle openers obsolete. Who would possibly have fathomed that your phone could replace your point and shoot camera and family Super 8 or video camera — and many other things — all in one swoop?

Well, someone did. People do think about these possibilities.

All these things — the 'what-could-be' things — offer both challenges and opportunities. That's why the Guild is an essential resource for writers and the industry. After all, the Guild succeeded against some pretty big odds, as you'll see in this edition with our piece on the WGC's oral history. Looking ahead to the next 25 years, the Guild will continue to help define the opportunities and challenges and determine the best way to address them.

Because change is always coming, and more often than not, it's for the good — if you have a tenacious organization like the Guild to deal with it.

But I still miss that old truck. ■

— Tom Villemaire

Summer 2016

Laurie Channer is a Toronto writer specializing in dark fiction. Her debut novel, *Godblog*, has been optioned for a feature film. Her short fiction has also been published or reprinted in anthologies in the company of such luminaries as Bram Stoker, Stephen Leacock, and Anton Chekhov, all of whom she gets billed above in the alphabetical author bios.

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*.

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.

Steve Lucas is a Toronto-based writer-producer with 30 productions and more than 100 hours of films and TV shows to his credit. He also coordinates the Advanced Television and Film Script to Screen Program at Centennial College. He has been a Guild member since 1981.



Truth Only Comes From A Free Voice

Two sentences from the CRTC's 2016-2019 Three Year Plan are alarming:

"The CRTC will participate in a working group with the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm and Rogers Telefund to assist with implementing pilot projects in the area of Canadian content certification. The CRTC will process certification requests from the production sector in accordance with the pilot projects."

Obtuse? Absolutely. Here's what I think it will mean: some projects will qualify for the highest levels of funding and count toward broadcasters' CanCon requirements even if the writers, directors and actors are not Canadian. Although foreigners are taking the key creative roles, these projects will be certified as Canadian. This isn't just participation in a working group. The CRTC *will* certify these projects. And the big three funders *will* finance them.

Producers and broadcasters — and the CRTC and funders, along with them — want to make shows that sell in foreign markets. Big budgets. Multinational casts. "Exportable culture" minus the culture. Maybe it will only be one or two productions at first, but we are moving toward a system in which "Canadian" means nothing more than that the underlying rights are held by a Canadian corporate entity.

In the dwindling world of commercial television, big audience numbers are all that's important. Advertising is the

game. Sell those eyeballs. But that model is disintegrating before our eyes. Forget channels and networks. Consumers want access to big libraries of programming that they can consume at their convenience. They don't want gates, restrictions or the fast forward controls on their remotes disabled. And they definitely don't want advertising.

We've entered an era of infinite choice. When audiences have access to so much, how do you get them to choose your product? When HBO launched a subscription service, they had to attract an audience willing to pay for a product which was already free and abundant on network television. They bet on distinctive programming. They gave writer-creators creative control, allowing their unique voices to shine through as they took us deep into fresh story worlds and explored deep themes. Those early HBO series gave birth to our Golden Age of television, attracted loyal subscribers, generated lucrative licensing deals and built a profitable network. In 2015, HBO's revenue grew 5% because their subscriber base and licensing revenues continue to grow, despite Netflix and other market disruptors.

The mandate of the Danish public broadcaster, DR, is to attract large Danish audiences. In an initiative to create shows that their own people will watch, DR launched the One Vision system;

writers are given time, space, funding and freedom to create. The result? Series that Danes love. Plus the unexpected bonus that the same series are highly exportable — both the original productions and as formats.

In these two cases, the goal is attracting audiences. In both, success comes when writers lead the creative; when their passion for their tales and their unique voices imbue the final product.

In Canada, stories are one of our greatest natural renewable resources. We are a diverse people spread out across an immense and beautiful country. Our past, our present, our future, our dreams: these are the stories that the Canadian media industry has left unmined. It is time for these stories to be told, by Canadian writers who are passionate about telling them.

For decades, our broadcasters have been trying to make U.S.-style shows and movies in their hunt for commercial success and profits. It hasn't worked. Hiring U.S. showrunners and writers hasn't worked either. It's time to stop trying to make imitations of a product the Americans already make so well. It's time to hear our own voice and forge our own style.

What do we want from a Canadian media industry? Private broadcasters and some of the biggest production companies are driven entirely by a profit motive. The purpose of their businesses is to provide a return on investment for their

shareholders. The goals of the Broadcasting Act and behind government investment in TV production are different. They include job creation, growing the economy, and a cultural imperative.

Are we creating culture or are we making a product that sells internationally, returning profits to corporate shareholders? Are we building an industry that provides long term jobs or one in which corporations are continually cutting staffs and costs to maximize revenues? Are we telling Canadian stories to Canadian people or are we just making money?

These “*pilot projects in the area of Canadian content certification*” show the CRTC and its cohorts are leaning toward an industry with the sole purpose of increasing wealth for a small number of corporations. Cultural workers and creators be damned. And the audience? Not even a factor in the discussion.

These days that’s a dangerous position for government agencies to take. Voters and consumers around the world are fed up with governments that fuel gigantic corporate growth. A better idea would be to put the audience first. Canadians are, after all, the ones who pay for the content that’s made with their tax dollars and cable subscription fees. Let’s give them television that reflects their lives, their values, their stories.

Let the creator’s voice ring out. Let us tell stories that have meaning and depth. Stories filled with truth.

This is the route to attracting Canadian audiences: creating Canadian culture. It is also the only route to export success. ■

— **Jill Golick**

The WGC Policy Decoder



The Decoder is for anyone who could use a little help better understanding policy issues that concern Canadian screenwriters. This edition decodes the transaction that occurred when Corus Entertainment Inc. purchased the “media assets” of Shaw Communications Inc. (Decoded: Media assets = “TV channels.”)

What’s The Big Idea: The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has a long-standing policy that when one Canadian company transfers ownership to another, the CRTC expects financial contributions to be made for the betterment of the broadcasting system. In other words, there have to be “tangible benefits” from the proceeds. For TV that decodes as the creation of new programming, or the creation of initiatives such as the WGC-run Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program. But in the case of the Shaw-Corus transaction the CRTC ruled no benefits would be forthcoming. Why? Because the CRTC deemed

the two companies as being effectively controlled by the same person, JR Shaw, and therefore there was no “change in effective control.”

Why Care: Canada now has one of the most consolidated media industries in the world, among developed countries. It means three companies (Corus Entertainment Inc., Bell Media Inc. and Rogers Media Inc.) control over 80% of the television viewing audience in Canada’s English-language market. Decoded: not ideal for creators. Where once there were two companies operating separately, now there is one, which means one less door to knock on.

Where’s it Going: The transaction was approved on March 23, 2016, without an oral public hearing, which the WGC, among others, had asked for. The CRTC says the transaction means Corus is now “well positioned to succeed in the highly competitive domestic and international markets.” It is the Policy Decoder’s view that the CRTC seems to see



*Back row: Christopher Bernard, Vivian Lin, Nile Séguin, Jay Vaidya, Brandon Michael Mohammed
Front row: Deanna Cadette (Program Director), Natalie Guled, Steve Lucas (Workshop Leader), Renuka Jeyapalan, Amanda Joy*

the future of Canadian content being dependent, in large part, on international reach.

On April 1, 2016, a press release on executive restructuring at Shaw and Corus stated that Christine Shipton, the chief content officer, would be leaving, without any mention of a replacement. For a company and a transaction that's supposed to be all about making Canadian content, not having a content chief in place is, to be polite, "troubling." A request for clarification as to who would be in charge of content following Shipton's departure was responded to thusly: "We have no more details than those that were communicated in the press release on Friday, at this time." The Decoder eye-rolls, and trots out the inevitable weary cliché: Stay tuned.

Cue Trumpet Fanfare: WGC 25th Anniversary

The kickoff for the WGC's 25th anniversary took place in Vancouver in February as

members gathered to talk about the WGC's storied past, and to have a heck of a party. WGC President Jill Golick welcomed the crowd, a video about the WGC (written and produced by WGC councillor Denis McGrath) was shown, and there was a lively panel discussion hosted by WGC councillor Dennis Heaton. Panelists Fred Yackman, Chuck Lazer, Brad Wright, Susin Nielsen, Sarah Dodd, and Andrew Wreggitt shared their thoughts and stories. Many thanks to WGC staff Christine Rutherford, Li Robbins, and Holly LaFlamme for organizing the event. More festivities are taking place throughout 2016, most recently at the WGC Screenwriting Awards on May 2 in Toronto — and in this very edition of the magazine, where you can read an oral history of the WGC, created by screenwriter Steve Lucas.

WGC Partners with Toronto Screenwriting Conference

The WGC and the Toronto Screenwriting Conference

(TSC) joined forces this year to bring together the annual conference with the prestigious WGC Screenwriting Awards in a weekend devoted to screenwriters. Among the highlights of the weekend was the "Writing Room Intensive," featuring *Wynonna Earp* showrunner Emily Andras, who worked with six WGC members on breaking an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, later presenting their ideas in front of conference attendees. The WGC members selected to participate in the intensive were Laura Ashley Seaton, Tim Kilby, Priscilla M. White, Keri Ferencz, Matt Doyle, and Blain Watters. The WGC also co-hosted the "Screenwriters Social," held at The Fifth Social Club, where screenwriters had a chance to, you guessed it, socialize.

BMDS program salutes WGC members

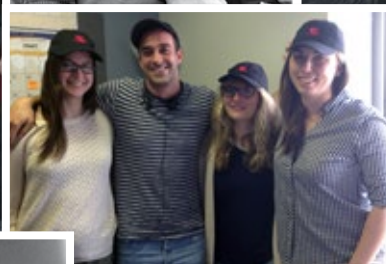
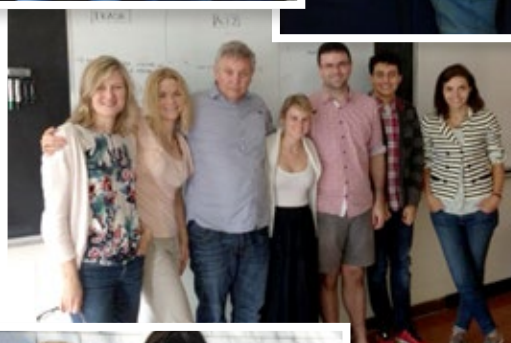
A final note on the very successful Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program which concluded its last workshop in January of 2016. The program owes a major part of its success to WGC members. Over the program's six years, there have been 10 sessions, 75 participants, and 473 applicants, and more than 100 WGC members have lent their time and expertise. They've been jurors, mentors, workshop leaders, and workshop guests. Many have formed strong bonds with program participants, particularly as mentors. Although the program winds up this year these relationships will live on, providing support for graduates, and talent for WGC members to draw upon, and bringing new perspectives to Canadian TV. ■

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

A Brief Oral History of the Writers Guild of Canada

Interviews Conducted and Compiled
By Steve Lucas

The Writers Guild of Canada was created in 1991 when writers made the bold decision to break away from ACTRA, the performer's organization, and become a self-sufficient Guild of independently contracted writers. By doing so, writers took control of their own affairs and were able to pursue the issues that mattered most to them. But it was no easy feat: the fledgling WGC had almost no money, very few employees, and literally no office furniture. What it did have was dedicated members and staff who, over the past 25 years, have shaped the WGC into the strong, forward-thinking organization that it is today. This is the WGC's story, as told by some of the members and staff who were there.







PROLOGUE

Peter Mohan: I remember Rob Forsyth on set one day telling me about an American producer who told him, “Boy, I love working in Canada. You don’t have to pay the writers!”

Chuck Lazer: It’s not that there wasn’t a Guild back in the 1980s; there was, there was even a Guild before that. It’s that the Guild was part of ACTRA then and there were less than 1,000 writers in a Guild of 8-9,000 actors. Now I love actors and I’ve worked with actors but I don’t want actors running my life.

Sarah Dearing: Maureen [Parker] and I were in the office after hours having drinks with the senior staff person at ACTRA. He was talking about negotiations and how one of his performer members had dramatically said they were entitled to all sorts of raises because actors save lives in the work that they do. And this staff person then dramatically said, “So the next time I have a heart attack and I’m lying in the street, I’m going to say,

‘Call for an actor!’” And that epitomized why we needed to separate from the performers because that was the level of dialogue at the negotiating table.

Fred Yackman: Everything came to a head at the ACTRA AGM in 1990. Our concerns were not the actors’ concerns and why should they be? We wanted more control over our affairs and our ideas didn’t go over very well. Basically they shouted us down.

Andrew Wreggitt: Some of the younger folks think the Guild is this big bad organizing thing they have to give money to and they don’t get a choice in it and they just have to do this stuff. They don’t quite understand that when you hear how the Guild got started way back, it was pretty rock n’ roll, you know? We’re going to do *what*? You want me to sign up for *that*? But it happened because people put themselves out there and believed in it and took a chance. It’s no different now. The issues are still big. They’re still trying to kill us out there.

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

- **Peter Mohan** is a Toronto-based showrunner and national forum delegate from 2004-08; 1998-99.
- The late **Rob Forsyth** was a Toronto-based screenwriter.
- **Chuck Lazer** is a Vancouver-based screenwriter and Pacific region councillor from 2004-12.
- **Sarah Dearing** has been a WGC staff member (full time and part time) since 1991.
- **Maureen Parker** is Executive Director of the WGC.
- **Fred Yackman** is a documentary screenwriter and Western region councillor from 1992-2006.
- **Andrew Wreggitt** is the Vice-President of the WGC and Western region councillor since 2007.
- **Bill Williams** is former Vice-President of the WGC (1991; 1994-98).
- **Jack Gray** served as WGC President from 1991-93.
- The late **Linda Zwicker** served as Central region councillor from 1991-93.
- The late **Tony Foster** served as a WGC councillor from 1991-94.
- **David Barlow** is a Toronto-based screenwriter and member of the IPA bargaining committee from 1995-2008.
- **Sharon Corder** is a Toronto-based writer/producer.
- **Jack Blum** is a Toronto-based writer/producer.
- **Briane Nasimok** is a Toronto-based screenwriter.
- **Pete White** was President of the WGC from 1995-2003 and Vice-President from 1992-94.
- The late **Phil Savath** was a member of the 2000-02 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Hart Hanson** is a television writer and producer.
- **Rick Drew** is a Vancouver-based screenwriter.
- The late **Michael Mercer** served as a WGC councillor in 1991.
- **Susin Nielsen** is a Vancouver-based screenwriter and Pacific region national forum delegate from 2000-05, 2012-15.
- **Denis McGrath** is a Central region councillor and member of the 2012-14 and 2015-17 IPA bargaining committees.
- **Leila Basen** is a Montreal-based screenwriter and Quebec region councillor from 2004-08.
- **Cal Coons** is a screenwriter/director and national forum delegate from 2004-08; 2011-12.
- **Mark Farrell** is a Halifax-based showrunner and member of the 2012-14 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Simon Racioppa** is a Toronto-based animation writer, national forum delegate, and member of the IPA bargaining committee since 2010.
- **Bruce Smith** is a Montreal-based showrunner, national forum delegate, and member of the 2006-08; 2012-14 and 2015-17 IPA bargaining committees.
- **Mark Ellis** is a showrunner, and Central region councillor since 2010.
- **Stephanie Morgenstern** is a showrunner.
- **Deanna Cadette** is the director of the Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program.
- **Lienne Sawatsky** is a Montreal-based animation writer, national forum delegate, and member of the 2012-14 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Jill Golick** is the President of the WGC and a Central region councillor since 1994.
- **Dennis Heaton** is a Vancouver-based showrunner, and a Pacific region councillor since 2012.
- **Konrad von Finckenstein** is former chairman of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) from 2007-2012.
- **Laurie Channer** is Director of industrial relations for the WGC.

THE EARLY YEARS (1991-1999)



Clockwise from top-left: Sam Marinucci; WGC Top Ten Awards party, circa 2001; Margaret Hollingsworth with Top Ten Award; WGC newsletter coverage of Top Ten Awards, 1998

Bill Williams: The groundwork for our dispute with ACTRA had actually been laid two years earlier, at the 1988 AGM. We proposed changing our name from the ACTRA Writers Guild to the Writer's Guild of Canada. It had worked for the Writers Guild of America (East and West) and the Writers Guild of Great Britain, so why not for us? But ACTRA took it as a slap in the face and emphatically rejected the proposal. That wasn't a very smart move.

Fred Yackman: In February of 1991 at my first meeting as a national councillor we — Jack Gray, Linda Zwicker, Bill Williams, Tony Foster and myself — were sitting around the table and we said, well, it's time to be the Writer's Guild of Canada and time to say goodbye to ACTRA and we said let's vote on it and that was it.

Chuck Lazer: It's like when I moved out of my parents' house when I was 16. To school. But it was time for me to get out of the house. I see us getting

away from ACTRA as the same thing. We — some of us, anyway — were ready to go live on a park bench if we had to.

David Barlow: I was directing a half-hour pilot written by Sharon Corder and Jack Blum for YTV. We were in a forest near Bracebridge, Ontario. Chuck Lazer and Briane Nasimok came walking through the trees. We were just about to break for lunch. Chuck has always had exquisite timing. At lunch, he and Briane revealed that they and some of their colleagues believed it was time for Canadian screenwriters to form an independent Guild. He and Briane were signing people up. I asked what the freight was. Chuck said, "It depends. Since you're working, it'll be a hundred dollars." I wrote a cheque. Chuck gave me a small lapel button. Black with white letters — W.G.C. Best one hundred dollars I've ever spent.

Chuck Lazer: The working writers were tremendously generous. All the big earners in the

THE EARLY YEARS (continued)



*Clockwise from above: Maureen Parker; Pete White;
David Barlow (left), Chuck Lazer (right)*



Guild agreed to a two per cent dues increase on their earnings with no cap and the rest of the membership followed. That's what made the whole thing possible.

Fred Yackman: There were three things we focused on: One, establishing a Guild that was for working writers and modernizing it; Two, letting our members know we were doing that; and three, negotiating a deal that would ensure we could keep our Fraternal Benefits. We had to accomplish all three things together. Once we did all that, we could hold a referendum.

Bill Williams: We were pitching radical change, which tends to make people nervous. We knew we had to help our members understand the issues and keep them up to speed on developments. Today there's an app for that, but there was no Facebook in those days. So we opted for a newsletter, a new logo and new stationery. We hired a young design firm and said, "Here's the job: make us look as solid and stable as a life insurance company."

Chuck Lazer: How did we structure things? We talked. And talked. There were a lot of meetings. We would meet every six weeks at the Wedgewood Hotel in Vancouver. Pete White would come to town. Phil Savath, Hart Hanson, Rick Drew, Michael Mercer.

Bill Williams: We were determined not to replicate the structural disadvantages of ACTRA. Branches were expensive and the source of a lot of political shenanigans. So we opted for one unified organization that operated nationally.

Fred Yackman: We had to reassure our membership that we were a phone call away. Give us a call and we will address your concerns.

Bill Williams: We introduced the concept of forums, one at the national level, and as many local forums as members felt the need for. The idea was to provide members with representation — and a channel to contribute to and influence Guild policy.

Fred Yackman: We expanded the council from five members to seven, a seat in B.C. and another seat in Quebec. This again was partially to address the fact we were getting rid of the branches.

Sarah Dearing: Why couldn't we make payroll? Why didn't we have office furniture? There was no money. So we focused on enforcing the agreement and grieving when we had to. That was a big change for us. Slowly the money trickled in.

Fred Yackman: The final step in leaving was to negotiate a deal with ACTRA and most importantly Fraternal. That was Bill Williams busting his ass for however long it took. We knew our membership would not come with us without a deal with Fraternal.

Bill Williams: In 1995 we finally hammered out a separation deal with ACTRA and a deal to remain in Fraternal. Now the stage was set for the referendum to leave ACTRA.

Fred Yackman: We had to make sure 33 percent of our members voted and then we had to have 50 percent plus one vote to approve it. Jack Blum took the lead in getting out the vote and we did it.

Chuck Lazer: Why was new leadership needed at the Guild? There was a feeling that the existing leadership was too tied to the past and not able to look to the future.

Susin Nielsen: The person who really deserves a shout out in this article — and she'll hate it — is Maureen. Because I don't know how she has been able to tolerate her job for all the years she's been doing it. She loves working with writers — that's the part that gives her pleasure. But sitting around with the bureaucrats in Ottawa and being across the table from the odd misogynistic pig producer saying horrible things to her, this cannot be a fun part of the job — but she sticks it out and she fights the good fight and she surrounds herself with good people.

Chuck Lazer: The 1994-96 negotiation was our first negotiation as a separate entity. It was long but it was good.

David Barlow: WGC president Pete White and executive director Maureen Parker had modest ambitions for this round of bargaining. Among other things: a total revamp of the structure of the written agreement, a raise in rates, and the expansion of the WGC's jurisdiction to include

story editors. It was going to be a long campaign. In one of the early sessions a particularly condescending and intransigent lawyer on the producers' team articulated why they would not agree to one of the Guild's key proposals and used a ten-dollar word to cap his comments. Guild member Phil Savath gave a succinct counter and concluded by pointing out that the ten-dollar word was, in fact, not an actual word. "And that's why producers need writers," Phil said. Both sides of the table laughed. Except for the lawyer. After that day, he never returned to the bargaining table.

Chuck Lazer: What was great about it was that we had a seat at the table. We could finally have those kinds of conversations. And we were lucky — or maybe we were just very good — in that David Barlow led our bargaining team at that time. He was well known and respected by the producers because he had actually produced series himself. His demeanor was (and still is) quiet, soft-spoken and non-threatening. Until provoked. And he's smart. He could summarize the producers' arguments and make our response to them without going off the deep end. Until they said something so disrespectful even David got angry. David Barlow angry is a righteous, beautiful sight.

Peter Mohan: I'm proud to have been part of the committee that put together the first awards and shaped that notion of an anti-award award show that was not about glitz and hype but about having a good time and celebrating writers. We told everybody that giving the awards away in the first year by putting the envelopes on a wheel with balloons and having people throw darts at them was to replicate the way Telefilm funds projects, you know, the scientific method Telefilm uses.

Denis McGrath: I think establishing the Canadian Screenwriters Collection Society (CSCS) in 1998 was one of the most forward-thinking things we have ever done. Much of Europe has a completely different system where writers are paid levies for secondary uses. The Guild negotiated and continues to negotiate agreements with those European countries to collect these monies. Our shows sell there but without the CSCS that secondary use money would stay in Europe. Maybe the time will come when writer compensation here follows a model more like the European or South American one and we'll have been way out in front of it. That's the strategic part. For the members, it's a cheque that comes out of nowhere. Who doesn't dream of that?

THE MIDDLE YEARS (2000-2009)



Clockwise from left: Jill Golick; (left to right) Showrunners Mark Ellis, Stephanie Morgenstern, Peter Mohan, and Tassie Cameron; Continuum writers' room; In the writers' room; Corner Gas writers' room

Leila Basen: Early on in my writing career, I was sitting with a [famous producer] in some Hungarian dive on Mountain Street in Montreal. He told me if he could get up early in the morning, he could be a director and if he had more time, he could be a writer. Producers actually think that.

Cal Coons: Gaining jurisdiction over story editors? The most obvious impact was it meant we could be of some help righting some wrongs. A group of writers could now be assembled, not producers but writers, which meant stories were no longer the act of a single writer but a group. If a script ran into troubles, everybody could pitch in and help. I always think of it as a school where no student gets left behind. More symbolically it cemented the idea that the writers' department could guide the script toward the production. The writers were going to be in charge of the script.

Andrew Wreggitt: The fight for animation really started in 1998. It continues to this day. Why have we fought so hard for animation? What were the biggest obstacles? Well, the producers were the biggest obstacles because they didn't want to do it for reasons that are pretty obvious but if we paid attention to that, they wouldn't pay us for anything. They'd just say, why don't you write a bunch of stuff and if we make any money, we'll give it to you — some of it, anyway.

Cal Coons: I think the other obstacles to getting animation covered were the animation writers themselves — how do you unite them? You had pockets of individuals wanting to write but who were afraid that if they made any noise, their employers would come down on them.

Andrew Wreggitt: The reason we finally got animation covered is the membership stood up and barked. They asked us, why don't we have an agreement? We said, well, it's really hard to get one with Canadian producers because they won't even talk about it. And the members barked again and we said, well, okay, you guys are passionate, are you willing to work on this with us? And some of them said, yes, and we went to work on it and in the end we got it. To me what was important was that it showed the membership that when you really want something, well, the Guild is here to give you what you need — but if we don't hear you and if we don't see you volunteering to participate in what we're doing on your behalf, then you're not necessarily going to get what you want. This is a participatory democracy here.

Cal Coons: Mobilizing the membership before social media? When you were a forum delegate in those days, you would have a party and invite all the



writers in your region and you'd ask them to tell you what they thought the issues were. It was like word of mouth, really. You'd talk to an individual who'd talk to an individual; it just sort of slowly spread. Luring writers with drinks is pretty simple stuff.

Sarah Dearing: Early on there were really only a few people who came to those sad Christmas parties. So Maureen put a great deal of effort into trying to convince writers to take ownership and having more interesting Christmas parties and pulling more people in.

Mark Farrell: The Writers Guild having the Showrunner Award was important. I mean, it's part of pop culture now. People, even line producers, want to be called showrunners and I think it's great the Guild has piggybacked on that momentum and is helping people understand what a showrunner is and does.

Simon Racioppa: The Guild has played a massive role in promoting the idea of the showrunner here in the past 10 years. TV is a writer's medium. In the States, they've known that for years. Here it has been a producer's medium. I think that's starting to change.

Bruce Smith: You know, television is a machine that runs on paper. If you can personally fix the paper,

you can correct the machine as it runs. So there's a good business reason why writing showrunners became the sort of de facto model.

Denis McGrath: The big first step was the establishment of the Showrunner Award at the WGC Awards. I know there are some people who have been showrunners since the 1990s who say this is what I negotiated and I always had this degree of power and influence on the show but for people like me it was a lot more rare — we had the thing where you had lots of responsibility and no ability to effect change. I think the establishment of that award really announced that we need to be part of what's happened in television and what's made television great certainly in the U.S. system, which is the empowerment of the writer-producer.

Bruce Smith: I work largely in the Quebec model on this show, meaning minimal resources for the writing room, but I have real creative freedom and control over *19-2* in a lot of ways that used to be super rare but as people like Mark Ellis and Stephanie Morgenstern have real success and move on is becoming a lot more common. As flawed as the world is and the limits of working in Canada are, my sense is that it's never been better than it has been in the last 10 years. Who knows what the next 10 years will be like?

THE LATER YEARS (2010-present)



*From left: WGC IPA Bargaining Committee, 2012-2014;
Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters, Eastern Canada, 2012-2013*

Susin Nielsen: I remember, before joining the Guild, sitting in a room with three producers. Door closed. They told me the good news: They'd chosen me to write the treatment and draft for a movie project. They then slid the contract across the table. I read it. The fee: \$750. Even though I was young and naive, my heart sank. They slid a pen across the table. There was a pause. They all knew what they were doing was rather despicable. But I picked up the pen. And I signed. And I remember thinking, "I will never be taken advantage of like this again." Shortly afterward I joined the Guild.

Cal Coons: Positioning the role of the screenwriter in our lobbying and policy work? I guess we did two things. First, we argued that the writer was responsible for the idea and if there was no idea, there would be no show. The other thing we did was we usually presented the screenwriter as levelheaded.

Andrew Wreggitt: It's actually really simple: Maureen Parker and the staff are really organized. So that when the writers show up at the CRTC, everybody knows there's no crying or whining or histrionics. It's all hard facts and well-researched material and it's a reasonable argument. Not everybody who shows up at the CRTC is reasonable or has done their homework and we always do our homework. It's about being professional and ready to walk into that place.

Cal Coons: It makes you very nervous. You go into a small, low-ceilinged room and these seven people or whatever are waiting and sometimes you wonder, are they actually awake? Is this person friendly or hostile? Is this person a political appointee with an agenda? Does this person know what they're doing or are they a specialist in an area that's not creative?

Andrew Wreggitt: It's a bit like the chickens asking for a meeting with Colonel Sanders. When you go in there, it's, like, writers? That's what we have for breakfast here. That's why the Guild has to be smarter than everybody else who turns up there. Otherwise the Commission would just devour us.

Cal Coons: I don't remember a lot of laughs in the CRTC sessions, to be honest with you. What I liked was the amount of bonding, the camaraderie afterward. The best times were when you were having dinner or a cocktail and trying to figure out what your next move was going to be. We laughed a lot then.

Andrew Wreggitt: There was one time we were there for the CBC license hearings and it happened to be the night the Stampeders were in the Grey Cup. So I go to this place in Ottawa that has a million screens and a big screen and there's this

guy sitting beside me and he's kind of loud and all of a sudden the referee calls a penalty and this guy doesn't like it and he says, "Fuckin' CBC!" And I say, "well, a) it's TSN and b) the network doesn't actually call the penalties in football." Fuckin' CBC, which just had me on the floor. The next day I worked it into our address to the commission. It was not quite as funny to them as it was to me. I thought it was hilarious.

Mark Farrell: The Diverse Screenwriters Workshop? I've participated twice and I hope that I've helped. I don't know what more the Guild can do — it's doing it. I mean, I laugh all the time — every time I've been told to write a diverse character by a network or a production company exec, every single person who has told me that in the last 20 years has been white. So hats off to the Writers Guild for trying. You won't see the results of this for five to 10 years but I think it's a great program. CBC picked it up? I didn't know that, that's great. Deanna Cadette is great, she's fantastic.

Simon Racioppa: Younger writers tend to be more excited, less jaded. They want to do stuff and make TV. As jobs go, it's a pretty good one. Which means you often accept issues, deals, problems you probably shouldn't accept.

Lienne Sawatsky: I've been writing for 15 years. My mother is a journalist, editor and journalism professor and has always been very active in unions, so I was basically brought up believing in them. Maureen cornered me at a meeting before the 2012 negotiations and said, "You. You are going to be on this committee, you have no choice." And I said, but, but — and she said, "No, we need you, you're on the committee."

Simon Racioppa: I've been a member since 2002. I'm proudest of the bargaining I've done. Everything starts with us. For a long time, it was just another job. You hire the writer the same way you hire a grip but we are the creators. We're not replaceable. We have unique voices. Don't you want that? Don't you want writers with strong unique voices?

Lienne Sawatsky: In a nutshell the issue was that animation writer rates had actually been going down for the past decade. We decided to stop that, to establish a basement. We needed to start somewhere, we needed to set a number down and we did. As you're doing it, you're thinking, "Am I ever going to get hired again?" But being guided by Jill Golick and Maureen, who are literally union

rock stars, and bargaining alongside established, articulate and passionate writers like Bruce Smith, Mark Ellis, Mark Farrell, Denis McGrath and Dennis Heaton was inspiring and reassuring.

Simon Racioppa: Bruce Smith had written a show about Sir John A. MacDonald. I remember seeing Bruce transform into Sir John A. and make some of the most eloquent and wonderful arguments for our side in bargaining, usually leaving the room silent because the producers had no possible response, because there wasn't one. We were making a small number of very fair requests. Bruce left them with no option other than to realize they had no ground to stand on.

Bruce Smith: It's very touching to hear that. I'm glad people feel I had an impact. It's hard for me to comment. What happens in negotiation I rarely talk about outside negotiation but I have done a fair bit of it for the Guild now. I find it really important, it's maybe the most important thing as a member I feel I can do for the Guild because it's tricky. It's a pretty thankless job.

Mark Farrell: The animation bargaining in 2012? Oh, yeah. I sat in on that. Maureen was great, Jill was great. I think the agreement should be lauded more. I thought the other showrunners who came in from outside animation — people like Bruce Smith, he does these things all the time, he's a great guy — were great but that was a tough one.

Lienne Sawatsky: I was kind of in awe of how dedicated everyone was to the cause — how members were willing to put their own concerns aside to fight for minimums in animation — and it really reinforced for me how important our union is and how effective it can be when we all dig our heels in.

Denis McGrath: The community of writers? That's a big thing. I struggle with it. When I first came in and starting getting jobs, one of the things that prompted me to get involved with the WGC was wondering, where is this community of writers? Part of what we came up with just recently, which is modeled on something the WGA does, is the new writer outreach. When somebody becomes a new member now, we match them up with an established WGC member who is somebody they can call. The senior members take them out for coffee, they explain things like, here's your I & R, here's how your RRSP works. Both sides report back that they find that a rewarding experience.

Bruce Smith: Another thing that's really unique is the real collegiality and support, the sort of well-wishing that goes on among the senior Canadian talent I've worked with, particularly writers and showrunners. I find that culture right up to the senior people very supportive and encouraging. One does have a sense like I do that a show like *Orphan Black* is good for everybody. I love that part of the culture.

Mark Farrell: My favourite thing is talking to other writers who have been through similar things to me. For me, I never get to do that. Things like the national forum and the Writers Guild Awards and the Diverse Screenwriters program — they give me a chance to do that and it's fantastic. I also think the outreach the Guild does is important. Since I joined in [1995], it's improved exponentially.

Susin Nielsen: My husband — he's an engineer, right, he teaches up at UBC — all through my life when I get to go somewhere for Guild business, he will always say, "You're so lucky. You're actually looking forward to going on these trips. You actually know you're going to have fun. When I go off to an engineering conference, fun is not the word that comes to mind." I do think that's so true. There's something about bringing a group of writers together — I never laugh as hard as I laugh with that group of people and I also never drink as much as I do when I'm with that group of people.

Simon Racioppa: CanCon going forward? I see it as two things. On the political side, there has to be the will to compete with the U.S., which has 10 times our population and way more money. Because our cultures overlap, it's like softwood lumber or cars. Sometimes we need a little help to level the playing field. Would you want your kids to grow up watching only U.S. TV? Do you only want to watch U.S. media, news, drama, and films yourself? The other side is the craft side, creating a community where young people can go and practise their craft, contribute to the culture and make a show.

Denis McGrath: I really think the answer is writer-centered development. You look at the Scandinavian shows that are doing so well, they've all got this great specificity of time and tone and place and quality. They got there because there was a distinct change in the culture there. Everybody that was part of the system — the networks, the commissioning editors, the production companies — all said if we're going to take a shot at this, we need to support the writers and their vision. When you get notes there, it's all basically the same note: What are you trying to

do? How far are you going to go? What is this show about? Does it say anything essential about the human condition? And once we decide that this is where we're going, how can we help you get there? Rather than here's what you must do for a U.S. sale. When you support the creatives, you're rewarded with quality shows that sell all over the world and become these phenomena.

Bruce Smith: We are a tiny little English country sitting in the shadow of the United States — and everywhere else in the world countries that aren't literally attached to the United States have to grapple with protecting their culture from 24/7 American cultural product. So for all the business arguments that are really important to us — that we are a sector that employs a lot of people and that culture is not just lighting money on fire — we also have to make the argument that it's incredibly important just to have a culture and it requires investment and desire from the people who want to be represented. It comes down to lobbying the government and lobbying the public. You're never going to win that argument, you just have to keep making it forever.

Bill Williams: What am I proudest of? Two things. One is that we had the perseverance to endure nearly a decade of internecine warfare because some people objected to the idea that writers were entitled to take charge of their collective working lives. The other is the staff. While members were getting a prolonged crash course in politicking and knife fighting, the staff got on with the business of policing our collective agreements and providing the level of service we all take for granted.

Chuck Lazer: I think it's important to remember that God didn't create the Guild on the eighth day. Those things we all value — the Guild, our production fee, insurance and retirement, coverage for animation writers — it's important to remember that they weren't always around. Our union brothers and sisters fought for them. When I look back on breaking away from ACTRA to form the Writers Guild of Canada, I think it's a really good thing that we did.

Cal Coons: The thing I was most proud of was when Konrad acknowledged to Maureen that the WGC had been right about the 1999 policy change being wrong. Just having them say the WGC had been right and the error needed to be corrected, having [CRTC Chair] Konrad von Finckenstein acknowledge that in session was pretty gratifying. I often wondered whether he was awake but it turned out he was.

Andrew Wreggitt: He didn't go to ACTRA, didn't go the DGC, didn't go to the producers; he went to Maureen and said you were the one who changed my mind about this. I was proud of that.

Mark Farrell: I think the Guild is a driving force in getting knowledge about TV writing and what it takes out there. They're up against so much and they've done so much. It's amazing how hard they — the people at the Guild, the administrators, the policy people and the writers who sit on the Council — work. I often lament

that when I'm running a show I'm trying to compete with shows that have a lot more resources; i.e., American shows. But the WGC is in the same boat when they bargain with producers or intervene at the CRTC. The Guild does so much with so little. I saw this in bargaining. Laurie Channer and everyone else — it's amazing what they do, I'm impressed.

Sarah Dearing: What am I proudest of? Building something and having it become viable and succeeding. There was quite a bit of skepticism. So, yes, just succeeding.

ADDENDUM

Maureen Parker: I was pretty young when I became Executive Director of the WGC in 1996. I didn't know as much as I should have but times were different. We were in crisis mode and I was a warm body, already working here. We needed plenty of help so I reached out to the best professional help available and I found it. I'd like to thank those people now:

David Zitberman, partner and head of the Entertainment Law Group, Goodmans LLP, was a real mentor. He taught me everything about the entertainment business and how to read contracts, including our own collective agreement. I really wouldn't have succeeded without him. When I was starting out and other industry lawyers refused to take on the Guild as a client, David was my guide. It didn't hurt that he was and is the top entertainment lawyer in our industry. He also set up our Canadian Screenwriters Collection Society (CSCS) and continues to advise us whenever we call. A mensch is our David.

Josh Phillips, Managing Partner, Ursel Phillips Fellows Hopkinson LLP, was articling as a union labour lawyer when I first met him at one of our sad Christmas parties. He had had a previous career in the theatre as well. We immediately became friends. I hitched the WGC's collective bargaining and industrial relations to Josh's rising star. He was cheap and brilliant, plus a ton of fun, which you need in those dark hours of bargaining. Josh has been with us for umpteen years now helping us close the deal.

Colette Matteau, previously with Matteau Poirier Avocats Inc., was our Quebec legal counsel. She retired right after the WGC's last bargaining session. That says something. Colette was invaluable. She was the best negotiator I have ever met. Bargaining or grieving or anything is so difficult in Quebec, way more so

than anywhere else in this country. Without Colette I would have jumped off a bridge. She taught me how to compromise and hold my temper. Good lessons. Colette's labour lawyer partner, Chantal Poirier, is our new Quebec counsel.

Finally I have to thank **Peter Grant**, counsel, past chair of Technology, Communications and Intellectual Property Group in Toronto, McCarthy Tétrault and 2011 recipient of the Writers Block Award. The WGC didn't become involved in public policy in Canada until 1998. Up until then we were focused on survival and had too much bargaining to do. But we all have strong writing skills and under Pete White's tutelage we discovered we were good at policy work from the start. Each of us had a role. I was the friendly one! But the machinations of the CRTC in particular went way beyond our level of expertise. We needed a regulatory and policy genius — and Peter Grant was our guy. Like David Zitberman before him, Peter had no qualms about giving a union advice. Peter is Canada's top expert in regulatory policy. I don't know how we got him but we did. Again we faced all sorts of conflict-of-interest rules. The big guys can block us from retaining the best lawyers simply by engaging them to do anything, at which point it becomes a conflict for their firm to take us on. That is what we were and are up against. Peter fought for all Canadian talent by focusing on the reversal of the 1999 TV policy. It took until 2010 to get that policy reversed with a minimum spend for drama imposed on our broadcasters. I know we love to compare bad times, but in the depths of those horrid 11 years I remember one summer when the only Canadian drama on the air was *Train 48*, which was being made for \$48,000 an episode. Peter, with his brain and dedication, saved our domestic industry. Let's hope he can do it again. ■

OPTIMISM RULES!

BY MATTHEW HAYS

The landscape for writers has always been treacherous, and everyone knows if you want to hear the truth, the best thing to do is to find a writer and ask them how things are going. But there are cases for optimism, and *Canadian Screenwriter* felt that anniversary celebrations presented a good moment to survey a few of the most successful scribes in the business to let us in on their best moments and related points of advice.

Start Your Own Production Company

Stephanie Morgenstern and Mark Ellis, the co-showrunners and co-executive producers of the CBC series *X Company* (which heads into its third season this fall), say one of the best things they ever did was form their own production company. There was one main reason the writing-producing duo felt this was in order: “We just wanted to make sure that our creativity was protected through the development phase,” says Ellis. “It helped to have the blessing of the CBC, which meant we could file our applications through the CMF.”

Some of doing their own producing work meant simply that “there was more money for hiring writers and filling a room,” says Morgenstern. “Some of the strongest shows have producers who are also writers.”

Both are quick to add that as they grew close to a green light, they approached another production house with a strong record, Temple Street (they also produce *Orphan Black*). And they realize that part of being able to set up their own shop for developing was because of their landmark hit *Flashpoint*, the cop episodic that sold on both sides of the border. No matter your level of experience, Ellis says, “you should still try to set up your own production company. It’s something everyone should try.”

Remember: You’re a Content Creator

Simon Barry, who created *Continuum*, a show he wrote, produced, and directed for, says it’s important for writers to keep a certain fact in mind: without writers, shows simply wouldn’t exist. “Something that was very important for me was to realize that everything I write is content,” says Barry, who’s now writing for the series *Van Helsing*. “Portraying yourself as a content creator, and thinking of yourself that way, is vital. You’re providing something the marketplace is hungry for. There’s actually a ton of demand, given how much TV is being created. Take your ideas directly to that marketplace. I would urge people to be far more independent, and to figure out what your brand is early on. What’s your specialty? Horror? Comedy? The type of show and genre you are enthusiastic about will help you to find your work.”

Concerns about being pigeonholed? “It’s only pigeonholing if you’re doing stuff you don’t want to do. Most writers are happy to find that sweet spot where you’re writing what you love. Frankly, if you’re worried about being pigeonholed, that means you’ve done something right. You can always diversify once you’ve found that success. You can reinvent yourself — writers do it all the time.”



Clockwise from above: Tassie Cameron; Stephanie Morgenstern and Mark Ellis; Simon Barry

Stop Thinking About Money and Write the Script of Your Dreams

Tassie Cameron (*Rookie Blue*) says she knows what people will say about this bit of advice: “I realize I was able to do this after the luxury of coming off of six seasons of a show,” she concedes. But, insists the writer now showrunning for *Mary Kills People* (slated for broadcast in 2017), it remains great, sage advice: “Write a spec script, something completely new, something you know you may never be able to sell, but something you really love and really believe in.”

And yes, this recommendation is born of personal experience. “In the past year, since *Rookie Blue* ended, it was a pivotal time for me. It would have been easy in a way for me to take another writing job right away, but instead I forced myself to take some time to stare out the window. And then, I just worked to have faith in myself. What if I just wrote something that I really loved, and didn’t consider it particularly saleable? I broke my own rules. I rebranded myself in a way as a different kind of writer. I really strove to write from the heart.

“I came up with a spec script, titled *Ten*

Days in the Valley. And then I ended up pitching it around L.A. It’s about a showrunner of a cop show whose daughter goes missing. It’s set within the industry — a major no-no — but I wasn’t concerned about breaking the rules. It’s a world I know really well, and an interesting one. Again, I didn’t worry about selling it, I wanted to take as many chances as I felt I wanted to, and write something really personal. And then, when it was done, I did find someone who was interested: Skydance Media. So it’s in development now.

“I can’t really even put into words what a great sense of freedom there was in writing with no network, no notes, no partner, no cast in mind. Sometimes taking all expectations off of something is very important. To not even consider getting paid for something is in a strange way really liberating. I realize I had six seasons of *Rookie Blue* behind me, but writing the spec script wasn’t actually that time consuming; it took me a month to write it. Sit down and write from your gut. Don’t be afraid to not get paid to write something you love.”



Suzanne Bolch and John May

If It Were Easy, Everyone Would Be Doing It

Suzanne Bolch, who creates children's TV series with her partner John May, says it's extremely important to accept just how hard the act of writing is. "Sure, getting work can be tough at times," says Bolch, whose Heroic Film Company is behind series like *Our Hero* and *How to Be Indie*. "And doing the work when you finally get it, even tougher. When things are super hard, I often go back to one day, early in my career. It had been a tough slog getting our show to air. It was one of our first so there were so many struggles and because of our relative lack of experience, we didn't have systems in place and had to reinvent the wheel every day just to get through it. Sort of at the depths of that show, when I was truly, deeply exhausted, we were trying to decide what kind of worms to put in a kid's hair for a gag. Flat worms? Earth worms? What was going to sell the bit? There was a really spirited debate about it. And that's when John and I looked at each other and giggled and said, "We're at work now! This is what we do." Working in TV is lots of fun. But if it were easy, everybody would be doing it. I try to remember that when things are at their worst: to keep plugging along, never giving up, doing the hard work to get and keep the job. Because at the end, there will be worms."

There's No Place Like Home

John May, half of the duo (with Bolch) behind Heroic Film Company, says it's imperative to embrace the work, and emphasizes that writing can be done from anywhere. "I fell into this business when I accidentally created and sold a kids show when I was 26, and Suz [Bolch] and I have been busy in the genre for decades since," May recalls. "At first, I thought: where's my prime time series, my Oscar, my hobnobbing with Sorkin and Clooney? But then I realized I loved the variety and reach of the kids' world, a place where we could stage robot battles or send talking cats around the world. But the real epiphany came with the explosion of the net and social media, when we discovered the impact of the shows. There was the email from the guy in the U.K. who repaired a relationship with his troubled sister via one series, or seeing long, heartfelt threads in comments sections in Polish or Spanish about another. Or learning that one of our shows was a favourite of Michael J. Fox and his kids, or that another had helped inspire viewers to become real life scientists now at Yale and MIT. It all proved we were really in the right place, making a difference doing what we loved — at home in Canada, no less!"



Above: Hart Hanson;
Right: Semi Chellas



When Something Good Happens, Take in the Moment

Hart Hanson is now well known as the creator and executive producer of *Bones*, the long-running series that enters its 12th and final season later this year. That success provided Hanson with a good deal of liberty, including shifting formats and taking the time out to write a book, which “allowed me to use language beyond just narrative or dialogue.” But he is careful to remind everyone that writing is such a rough-and-tumble business, it’s extremely important to take in the good moments when they arrive. “There was an episode of *Bones* that I set in England,” he recalls. “We went over for the shoot, and we were in Oxford. And someone took me on a private tour of Convocation House, which was incredible. As I sat in that hall it was overwhelming to consider the history of the place: it was where King Charles had run his parliament during a civil war, and it was also where Oscar Wilde was handed his one-year expulsion from Oxford. It was very emotional. These stories I’d written, they brought me to this room, where a King sat and history was made. All because I had a story in my head and typed it into a keyboard. It was a very high point of my experience as a writer. I was writing this murder show that moved enough people that I could go there. That was a high point. But you know, even when you’re at the most successful point, the writer’s life is a

lot about rejection. *Bones* was getting 16 million viewers, which is about 3% of the population. That means 97% have rejected you. “That’s why it’s really important to savour the good things when they happen.”

Guess what? That Amazing Epiphany May Never Happen

Brace yourself: but Semi Chellas, the seasoned writer who has worked on such hit shows as *Mad Men* and *Eleventh Hour* (both as a writer and producer), warns that anticipating a great, big, epic breakthrough can make about as much sense as waiting for Godot. “I wish there was a point, an epiphany, a light that comes on,” she says. “Mostly it’s like you get in a car and say, *I’m going to drive to the ocean!* But there’s no map. So sometimes you stay on main roads, sometimes you think another path might turn out to be a shortcut, sometimes you drive across a field. There’s always been bad and good news in this business. You can go be in some other business, but you probably would have done that already if it felt like an option to you. What you’ve chosen is the process, not the breaking through. The terrible secret is there may not even *be* an ocean, so you better roll down the windows and turn up the radio and start singing along.” ■

WORDS FROM THE TOP

By Mark Dillon

To mark the WGC's 25th anniversary, *Canadian Screenwriter* speaks with the Guild presidents past and present, who share memories of their time steering the ship.

“A producer once told me, ‘Why should we pay you? I could get better work from my secretary.’”

Jack Gray (president, 1991-1993)

Jack Gray was a driving force in moving the Guild out of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), and he became the WGC's first president. A screenwriter who started at CBC in the 1950s, he served as ACTRA president (1978-1981) and later as a writer's representative on the ACTRA council.

He recognized early on the need for a strong body to protect writers' interests. “In those days it was demeaning for many writers,” he recalls. “A producer once told me, ‘Why should we pay you? I could get better work from my secretary.’”

Separating from ACTRA wasn't easy. The performers largely objected as did the playwrights, as ACTRA represented various kinds of writers. But after a couple of referendums, an independent WGC was agreed upon. It was a concept not entered lightly.

“We had to be sure we could afford it, so we did a

thorough analysis of the cost of administering national agreements, where the money was coming from, and what the reality for writers would be,” Gray says. “We concluded we could afford an office. The performers didn't believe it and said, ‘We'll watch you go bankrupt.’ We didn't.”

And that was thanks to a groundswell of meaningful support from WGC members. “What indicated this is what the writers wanted was they sent in money. And some of them sent a lot. When writers cough up money, they're serious,” Gray says with a laugh.

With the WGC office up and running, Gray was ready to pass the baton. He went on to serve as chair, policy and research group, for the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG). Pete White, his successor, credits Gray with negotiating a production fee for writers, thus allowing Canadian scribes to survive as freelancers.

“I went on my way never expecting to come back to guild activism”

Pete White
(president, 1994-2003)

By the time Pete White became WGC President, it had been three years since the agreement was struck to form the WGC outside of ACTRA. White took the baton from Jack Gray.

White, meanwhile, had headed the ACTRA Writers Guild from 1986 to 1988. “I went on my way never expecting to come back to guild activism,” he recalls. But with the formation of the WGC he convinced himself to run for VP representing the Pacific Region and served in that role in 1992 and 1993.

He went on to serve as president for five terms. He came to the office with a Ten Point Plan that sought to make the Guild a more structured, efficient organization that accurately collected royalties and dues. He fought for collective agreements to be enforced. Greater emphasis was placed on communications, a members’ directory was produced, and the Guild elevated its profile at industry events.

The WGC also achieved some lobbying goals, including the creation of a publicly financed program that would directly fund screenwriters to bring outlines to treatments and treatments to first drafts. White, whose screenwriting credits include *The Beachcombers* and TV movies *The Legend of the Ruby Silver* (1996) and *Peacekeepers* (1997), knew the terrain and was instrumental in drawing up the plan.

The Guild and French-Canadian equivalent SARTEC then had to sell it to Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps and her deputies, including most prominently, Michael Wernick, now Clerk of the Privy Council. He formerly was Assistant Deputy Minister and then Associate Deputy Minister at the Department of Canadian Heritage (1996 to 2003). The result was the 2000 launch of Telefilm Canada’s Screenwriting Assistance Program, which put development dollars for feature films into writers’ hands.

Other WGC missions included getting jurisdiction for story editors and story consultants in its Independent Production Agreement (IPA) with the Canadian Film and Television Producers Association (CFTPA), now the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec (APFTQ), now the Association Québécoise de la

Production Médiatique (AQPM). White believed negotiations should reflect industrial reality, and so working writers should be on the WGC committee, especially in this case a story editor/showrunner. To that end he recruited Phil Savath (*African Skies*).

“I told Phil, ‘I want you to sit at the table away from the middle where they don’t notice you, and just when they’ve forgotten about you and you see an opportunity, come charging in from the side and have a go at them,’” White says.

He recalls that after the Guild presented its proposals, an entertainment lawyer on the CFTPA’s industrial relations committee, closed with, “In respect to the matter of story editors, as any producer could tell you with succinctity, the answer is no.” Savath saw his opening and jumped in with, “Well, as any writer could tell you, ‘succinctity’ isn’t a [expletive] word!”

“We broke up laughing,” White recollects. “But the producers also laughed. You’d think they hadn’t had a laugh in 10 years. They must have laughed for five minutes.”

The negotiations remained tough, but the Guild team, which also included Executive Director Maureen Parker and writer and committee Vice Chair David Barlow, prevailed for story editors. “It comes back to Phil cracking them all up,” White says. “It broke the ice. It’s a hell of a lot harder to face somebody when they’ve made you laugh. It taught me the importance of humour as a weapon.”

Sometimes threats help, too. The Guild next sought jurisdiction over animation writers, a motion tabled by future President Jill Golick, who did substantial legwork with Parker. White doubted they could succeed, however, because the Writers Guild of America did not have it either.

Sure enough, the WGC found itself in another stalemate. On a final conference call, the producers still wouldn’t budge. As a last resort, White, himself a CFTPA member, played on the group’s fears of a potential impending ACTRA strike. Pretending to lose his temper, he bellowed, “I can’t believe you! You’re going to put us out on strike at the same time as the performers?”

A long silence ensued, and the CFTPA reps said they would call back. Ten minutes later, the phone rang. “Alright,” they said, “you win.”

“It was part bluff and part fluke,” says White. It counts as one of the biggest victories for both him and the Guild.

“When I became President,
lobbying seemed daunting ... I’m not
a natural politician. I don’t think most
writers are. But then I realized it
wasn’t that scary at all.”

Rebecca Schechter
(president, 2004-2010)

Rebbecca Schechter’s membership dates back to the 1980s, when she worked as a researcher – a position then covered by the ACTRA Writers Guild. In the next decade she sat on the bargaining committee for the CBC agreement, and when Maureen Parker asked her to join the WGC Council, she did.

When she took over as President she found the Guild in good shape, which she attributes to Pete White’s leadership and a 1990s production boom that helped build the organization’s coffers. As she assumed command, the WGC and its partners in the Coalition of Canadian Audio-visual Unions were trying to persuade the CRTC to reverse its 1999 Television Policy decision eliminating conventional broadcasters’ Cancon spending requirements.

“I spent a lot of time in Ottawa with Maureen [Parker],” recalls Schechter, whose writing career spans such shows as *North of 60* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, and who currently teaches screenwriting at York University. These trips to the capital entailed presentations for the regulator, broadcaster licence-renewal hearings, and appearances before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

“When I became President, lobbying seemed daunting,” she admits. “I’m not a natural politician. I don’t think most writers are. But then I realized it wasn’t that scary at all. Nearly all the politicians are nice to you – even the ones not on your side. That’s their job.”

Her tenure coincided with the rise of Stephen Harper’s Conservative Party, which tabled the omnibus Bill C-10 containing a clause that would allow Heritage to deny tax credits to productions it considered offensive due to sexual or violent content. In 2008, the WGC joined Directors Guild of Canada (DGC) and ACTRA to argue against this form of

censorship before the Senate committee on banking, trade and commerce.

The actors were represented by Wendy Crewson and Sarah Polley, whose film *Away from Her* had recently netted Academy Award nominations for her script and for lead actress Julie Christie. Schechter and Parker walked up to Parliament Hill right behind the thespians.

“There were camera crews following Sarah up the hill. I had never experienced close-up and personal what it is to be that kind of media star. It was fun,” Schechter recalls with a laugh.

As to her experience inside the Red Chamber, she says, “The parties actually were not hostile to one another. They treated each other like they were all on the same team trying to vet this bill.” The WGC and its allies got what they wanted; the unpopular proposal was removed.

Schechter is particularly proud of the Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters Program (2010-2016), which has offered emerging and mid-career writers a one-week boot camp with industry leaders followed by a mentorship with a story editor to help develop a portfolio. Some participants also received paid internships in writers’ rooms. When the WGC pitched CTVglobemedia (as Bell Media was then called), it expected to speak with a financing executive. They were surprised when president and CEO Ivan Fecan took their meeting instead. Schechter recalls the initial push was for CTV to direct its benefits-package dollars to more production, but the broadcaster declined. So she came up with a plan B.

“I was just starting on *Mosque* and we could not find Guild writers who were Muslims. And at the industry parties you saw few people of color,” she notes. “So I said, ‘Why don’t we do a program to train up diverse writers?’ And they jumped on it, because it fit nicely into the ‘giving back to the community’ mandate of the benefits.”

“One reason I wanted to become President was that I saw the business model changing, and I think it’s going to change radically.”

Jill Golick
(2010-present)

Jill Golick has been involved with the WGC since before the beginning. She sat on the ACTRA Writers Guild council and was present for the great separation, which she characterizes as an “exciting and difficult time.”

The prolific kids and animation writer (*The Smoggies*, *Magic Adventures of Mumfie*) has continued to seek better conditions for animation scribes after pushing to get them under Guild jurisdiction in the 2000 IPA. During her presidency, the WGC has also gotten minimums for animation writers.

“We’re slowly moving it toward having it compensated with regular writing,” says Golick, who also teaches TV writing and transmedia at York University.

She was a past awards chair and looks back fondly at the early awards shows, held in low-key bars where winners were handed a shot before accepting their prizes. But she’s proud that under her watch the event has moved to Toronto’s Koerner Hall. “Now everybody can hear how funny our show is in this beautiful auditorium, and then we still go out and have a great party,” she says.

She cites the WGC’s national forum – timed with the screenwriting awards and bringing together elected representatives and invited writers from across the country – as an occasion to incubate strong ideas. One such initiative is the member outreach program, Writer-to-Writer, which pairs every new WGC member with a veteran member who helps show them the ropes.

She is similarly proud of the revamped, user-friendly online members’ directory that promotes WGC writers to producers here and abroad, and she wants to market it further at international conferences.

Golick sees the digital space as a huge part of writers’ futures and wants the Guild to be at the forefront of industry dialogue. She’s a pioneer of interactive content herself and owns a 2014 Canadian Screen Award for the online *Ruby Skye P.I.: The Haunted Library*.

“One reason I wanted to become President was that I saw the business model changing, and I think

it’s going to change radically. With my skillset and interests I wanted to be at the table when decisions are made about this new way of creating and how it’s going to work,” she offers.

Last fall, at a meeting of the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds in Israel, she put forward the unanimously carried Tel Aviv Resolution, which calls on ISPs to contribute to the creation of scripted content and compensate creators.

But despite such accomplishments she’s quick to shift credit to others, particularly Executive Director Maureen Parker, whom she calls “the Guild’s greatest asset.”

Golick’s presidency began after a round of CRTC hearings near the end of Konrad von Finckenstein’s term as chair. Her first meeting was with other industry stakeholders at the Banff World Media Festival. In walked von Finckenstein with some CRTC colleagues.

“He sat down directly across from Maureen, spoke only to her, and said, ‘I credit you with changing my mind and helping me make the decision to put expenditure requirements back into place for broadcasters,’” Golick recalls. “We went from a time after [the 1999 Television Policy] when we had only six primetime dramas on the air to now, when we’re thriving, and a lot of that is due to Maureen’s lobbying.”

Then she spreads the kudos further throughout the Guild. “We have a very professional staff and a well-structured organization, and any accomplishments since I’ve been President are because of them and the presidents who came before me who set this up so well,” she offers. “I can only be credited with staying out of the way and turning up at just the right time.”

That may be Golick’s view but Parker says the President is too humble.

“Jill is tough when she needs to be, she’s funny when she needs to be and when she’s negotiating, she does not weigh what’s important for her career in the mix with what’s on the table. When she’s negotiating, she is all in for Guild interests and that’s her strength. She’s a leader at the bargaining table and the negotiating room.”

“All of our Presidents have been selfless examples, it’s a tough, altruistic, job,” says Parker. ■



CHILDREN

Numb Chucks, Season 2 "Witless to the Prosecution"
Written by **Evan Thaler Hickey**

DOCUMENTARY

Deluged by Data
Written by **Josh Freed**

FEATURE FILM

A Christmas Horror Story
Written by **James Kee** and **Sarah Larsen**
and **Doug Taylor** and **Pascal Trottier**

MOW & MINISERIES

The Book of Negroes: Episode 1
Story by **Lawrence Hill**
Teleplay by **Clement Virgo**

SHORTS & WEBSERIES

Goldfish
Written by **Michael Konyves**

TV COMEDY

Schitt's Creek, Season 1 "The Cabin"
Written by **Amanda Walsh**

TV DRAMA

Orphan Black, Season 3
"Newer Elements of Our Defense"
Written by **Russ Cochrane**

TWEENS & TEENS

Some Assembly Required, Season 2
"Rocket with a Pocket"
Written by **Jennica Harper**

SPECIAL AWARDS

WGC Showrunner Award - Frank van Keeken
Writers Block Award - Peter Mohan
Alex Barris Mentorship Award - Clive Endersby
Sondra Kelly Award - Penny Gummerson





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EVAN THALER HICKEY — Children

Numb Chucks, Season 2 “Witless to the Prosecution”

Evan Thaler Hickey prefers writing cartoons to writing about himself in the third person, and is glad he does more of the former than the latter. He is currently the executive story editor of *Inspector Gadget* alongside the incredible Josh Saltzman (who he should have gotten to write this bio for him). This is his second WGC Screenwriting Awards nomination.


JOSH FREED — Documentary

Deluged by Data

Josh Freed has written and directed over 30 one-hour documentaries shot everywhere from Mongolia to the North Pole. They’ve been broadcast in over 50 countries and won numerous awards — including two U.S. “Chris” awards and the New York Film International Festival World Medal. He is also the recipient of the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour. He is currently writing and directing *The End of The Line* for the documentary channel on CBC. This is Josh’s fourth WGC Screenwriting Awards nomination for Best Documentary writer.


JAMES KEE — Feature Film

A Christmas Horror Story

James Kee is a screenwriter, author, and Emmy-nominated actor. In addition to working with Copperheart Entertainment on *A Christmas Horror Story*, he wrote on their acclaimed series *Darknet*, and is adapting Clive Barker’s *Zombies* into an animated feature. He created and co-wrote the *Roxy Hunter* series of films on Nickelodeon, and the accompanying books for Penguin, and is launching *Tales from the Haunted Library*, a multi-platform collection of spooky stories.


SARAH LARSEN — Feature Film

A Christmas Horror Story

Sarah Larsen is a trilingual writer and editor from Thornhill, ON. She got her start in broadcast TV as a promotional producer for Teletoon Studios before becoming lead editor for a Toronto digital content agency. Her writing credits include *A Christmas Horror Story*, *Darknet*, the horror anthology series executive produced by Vincenzo Natali, and the upcoming Syfy series, *Aftermath*.


DOUG TAYLOR — Feature Film

A Christmas Horror Story

Doug Taylor is a Montreal-based writer of feature films and television. His credits include *The Atwood Stories*, *Splice*, *Darknet* and the upcoming feature, *The Bequest*. Doug’s writing has occasionally been described as “deeply disturbed.” He assumes they mean that in a nice way.


PASCAL TROTTIER — Feature Film

A Christmas Horror Story

Pascal Trottier attended the Director’s Lab at the Canadian Film Centre in 2005, where he wrote and developed several screenplays including *The Colony* (2013), the sci-fi thriller starring Laurence Fishburne and Bill Paxton. He is the sole screenwriter of *Hellions*, directed by Bruce McDonald, which had its world premiere at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. In 2013, he wrote for the horror TV series *Darknet*, produced by Steve Hoban and Vincenzo Natali.



LAWRENCE HILL — MOW & Miniseries

The Book of Negroes: Episode 1

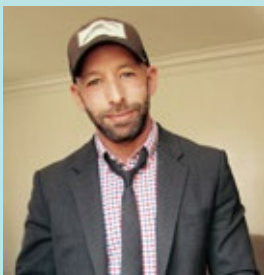
Lawrence Hill is the author of ten books, including *The Illegal* and *The Book of Negroes*, winner of The Commonwealth Writers' Prize and CBC Radio's Canada Reads. Hill delivered the 2013 Massey Lectures, based on his non-fiction book *Blood: The Stuff of Life*. He co-wrote the adaptation for the six-part television miniseries *The Book of Negroes*. He is writing a new novel and a children's book, and co-writing a television miniseries adaptation of *The Illegal* for Conquering Lion Pictures. He volunteers with Crossroads International, the Black Loyalist Heritage Society and Project Bookmark Canada, and lives in Hamilton, ON and Woody Point, NL.



CLEMENT VIRGO — MOW & Miniseries

The Book of Negroes: Episode 1

Clement Virgo has received wide acclaim for his work in both film and television. His CBC/BET miniseries *The Book of Negroes* debuted to record-breaking numbers in 2015. Additional credits include his first feature *Rude* (1995 – Cannes, Un Certain Regard), *The Wire* (HBO), *American Crime* (ABC), Baz Luhrmann's upcoming Netflix drama *The Get Down*, and the upcoming OWN network drama series *Greenleaf*, on which he serves as executive producer with Oprah Winfrey.



MICHAEL KONYVES — Shorts & Webseries

Goldfish

Michael Konyves is an award-winning screenwriter best known for the films *Barney's Version* starring Paul Giamatti, Dustin Hoffman and Rosamund Pike, and *The Last Knights* starring Clive Owen and Morgan Freeman. *Barney's Version* won the Golden Globe for best actor, the Leoncino d'oro Award at the Venice Film Festival, the Audience Award at the San Sebastian Film Festival, seven Canadian Screen Awards, the Golden Box Office Award and the WGC Screenwriting Award for Best Feature Film. Michael has developed various TV series for CBS studios, Showtime, Hulu, and Fox Studios.



AMANDA WALSH — TV Comedy

Schitt's Creek, Season 1 "The Cabin"

Amanda Walsh is a writer and performer, originally from Montreal. Now based in Los Angeles, Amanda enjoys life on both sides of the camera. She spent two seasons writing on *Schitt's Creek* (CBC) and recently sold a pilot to 20th Century Fox. In September, her one act play *Lucky* premiered as part of the Unscreened Summer Series. Past projects include Sarah Jessica Parker's *Washingtonienne* (HBO) and the Lorne Michaels' produced *Sons and Daughters* (ABC). Amanda loves to stay true to her Canadian roots (she is a former MuchMusic VJ after all!) and just finished an arc on Showcase/SyFy's *Lost Girl*.



RUSS COCHRANE — TV Drama

Orphan Black, Season 3 "Newer Elements of Our Defense"

Russ Cochrane is the co-executive producer of *Orphan Black*. He also served as executive producer and writer of the hit drama series *Rookie Blue*. His past work has been nominated for a WGC Screenwriting Award, a Prism Award, and a Gemini. He considers himself a lucky bastard to have worked with such incredibly cool and talented people over the years — and to have convinced his amazing wife and daughter he's worth keeping around for a while.



JENNICA HARPER — Teens & Tweens

Some Assembly Required, Season 2 "Rocket with a Pocket"

Jennica Harper was a writer and consulting producer on the fourth season of *Motive* (CTV), as well as a writer/co-executive producer on the teen sitcom *Some Assembly Required* (YTV/Netflix). Before that, she spent three seasons writing and producing the YTV/Disney XD hit *Mr. Young*, for which she was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. She stubbornly continues to live in Vancouver.

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Charles Johnston
Odd Squad,
Season 1 "Puppet Show"

DOCUMENTARY

Mina Shum
Ninth Floor

FEATURE FILMS

Pascal Trottier
Christmas Horror Story
Christina Ray
End of Days, Inc.

MOW OR MINISERIES

Clement Virgo
The Book of Negroes:
Episode 1

TV DRAMA

Nikolijne Troubetzkoy
19-2, Season 2 "Property Line"



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FRANK VAN KEEKEN

The WGC Showrunner Award

Frank van Keeken is the winner of this year's WGC Showrunner Award, for his strong vision for every show he runs, his bottomless enthusiasm for the work, and his notable generosity to other writers. In the past year Frank ran the fourth season of *The Next Step* while launching a spin-off, *Lost & Found Music Studios*. Writers who've worked for Frank note that he leads by example, demonstrating the importance of fighting hard for your show, and of the toughness and determination needed to be a showrunner. As well, Frank is esteemed for striving to help each individual become a stronger writer and for equipping them with the tools to ultimately become showrunners themselves.



PETER MOHAN

Writers Block Award

For Service to Canadian Screenwriters

Rarely do you meet someone who is a consummate professional, a great talent, and a true gentleman *and* who consistently gives of himself to his peers and his professional organization. But Peter Mohan is exactly that sort of man. For the past twenty-five years he's always "been there" for the WGC, by serving on National Forum, by joining the IPA collective bargaining team (even when in production), and by being a positive spark when times are tough. With this award we celebrate Peter's long term commitment to helping raise the profile of Canadian screenwriters.



CLIVE ENDERSBY

Alex Barris Mentorship Award

Clive is well known for his talents as a writer and story editor for children's television, but also for his strength as a mentor. Writers Clive has mentored attest to this: Meghan Read describes him as someone who "genuinely listens" to new writers' ideas. Katherine Sandford calls Clive her "Yoda." Steven Westren says writers look forward to getting notes from Clive, because his feedback is always "a shot of creative adrenalin." The WGC is proud to present Clive with the 2016 Alex Barris Mentorship Award in recognition of his great generosity in sharing his skills, his extensive knowledge of the industry, and his positive energy with other writers.



PENNY GUMMERSON

The Sondra Kelly Award

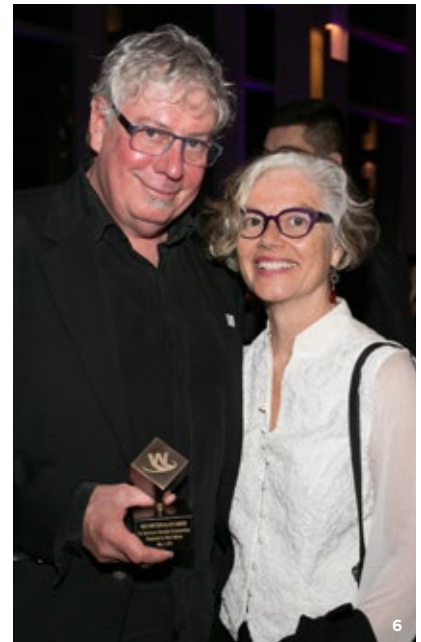
The 2016 Sondra Kelly Award goes to Penny Gummerson for her feature project, *Forgive Me, Father*. It's inspired by a true story about a young Aboriginal lawyer and a young conscience-stricken priest who take on the Catholic Church in an epic fight for Aboriginal justice, culminating in the first residential school class-action suit in British Columbia. Penny has written on shows including *Strange Empire*, *Arctic Air*, *Blackstone*, and *Moccasin Flats*; as well she has worked extensively as a playwright. The Sondra Kelly Award will enable Penny to continue developing her feature film, *Forgive Me, Father*.





1. Elvira Kurt, WGC Screenwriting Awards host
2. Evan Thaler Hickey, winner of Children's
3. Screenwriters and awards presenters, Sudz Sutherland and Jennifer Holness
4. Frank van Keeken, WGC Showrunner Award winner
5. Screenwriter and awards presenter Karen Walton;
Sondra Kelly Award winner Penny Gummerson
6. Former WGC President Rebecca Schechter, Alex Barris Mentorship Award
winner Clive Endersby, WGC President Jill Golick
7. Screenwriters Jeremy Boxen and (WGC Councillor) Dennis Heaton
8. Amanda Walsh, winner of Comedy, and her father, Gordon McVicar





1. Josh Freed, winner of Documentary
2. Jennica Harper, winner of Tweens and Teens
3. James Kee, Doug Taylor, Sarah Larsen, and Pascal Trottier, Feature Film winners
4. Former WGC V.P. Bill Williams, WGC President Jill Golick, WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker, former WGC Councillor Fred Yackman (photo: Tannis Stewart)
5. Screenwriters Sugith Varughese, Simon Racioppa, Cal Coons, Derek Schreyer
6. Writers Block Award winner Peter Mohan, and Diane Mohan
7. Clement Virgo and Lawrence Hill, MOW & Miniseries winners
8. Producer Jen Littlewood, awards show co-writer Jeremy Woodcock, and screenwriter Heidi Brander

ADULT CONTENT

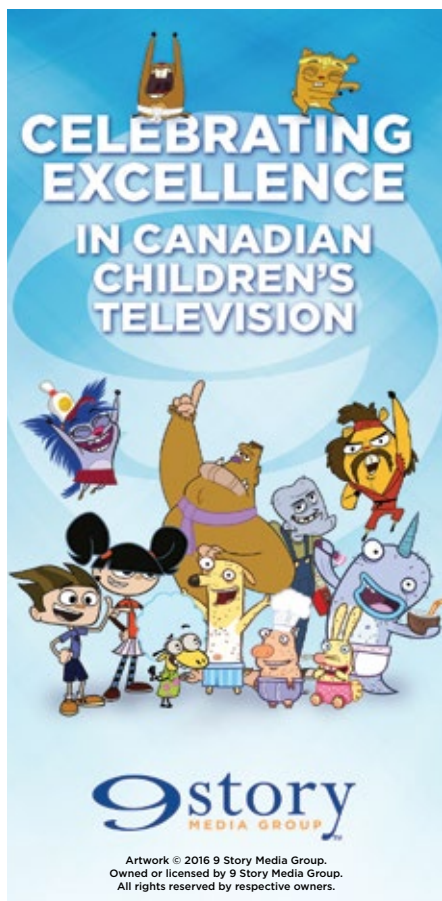
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COLE BASTEDO
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CHILDREN

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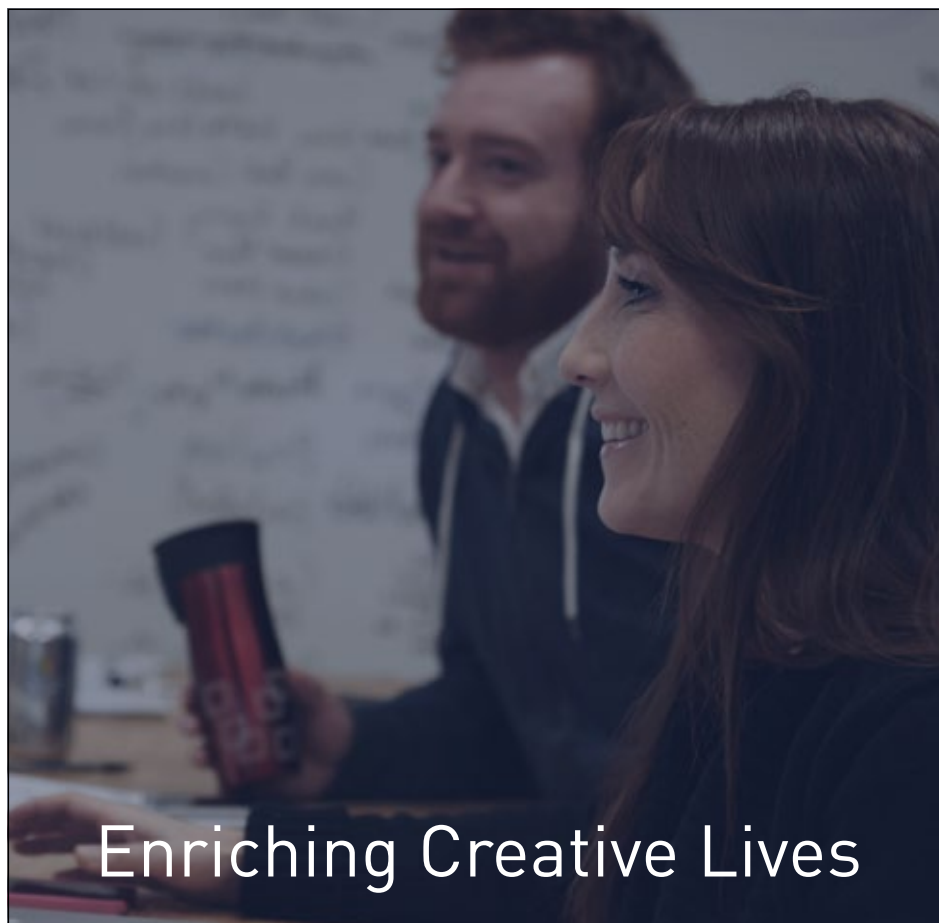
& Christina Ray

Feature Film — End of Days, Inc.

On their 2016 WGC
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*shared nomination

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WHAT'S AHEAD

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FROM NEWER MEMBERS

By Tom Villemaire

A 25th anniversary is great cause to look back at all the high points, challenges faced and advances the Guild and its members have achieved. It's also a time to look ahead, and the best way to do that is to talk to some new members. We talked to eight young screenwriters to get their sense of the future. And it looks promising.

Take **Amanda Fahey**, a strong advocate for women characters and writers. Amanda says she loves stories with a woman's point of view and says she's been lucky to work with many amazing women on shows featuring women characters with a lot more going on than just their hair colour or latest fashion or whatever the latest stereotype concerns themselves with, you know, for character development.

She started out as the story coordinator for *Being Erica* where she co-wrote two episodes with showrunners Jana Sinyor and Aaron Martin, to whom she credits her career.

She then went on to write for *Saving Hope* during its first three seasons and got to be a part of a room where women were the majority.

Now she's on *Mohawk Girls*, a rare all-female room. So, on one hand she says she feels she's been incredibly spoiled. On the other, she still "gets depressed when someone refers to a show about women as a chick flick or when people use prestigious drama as code for male antihero."

She "worries about young girls and who their role models are."

She grew up on *Buffy*, "a show that probably wouldn't get made now."

That's why she's excited about the web and the potential it offers for creativity, like webseries.

Truth be told, her generation doesn't watch television anymore. She hopes with her webseries *Kristal Clear* that she'll be able to reach the younger women.

Josh Sager and **Jerome Simpson** are an animated pair whose professional partnership provides the synergy for their success. They met studying Radio and Television Arts at Ryerson. They were B-list friends, and say, while they may not have had each other's phone number, both secretly thought the other was funnier. After graduating they went their separate ways.

Fast-forward seven years and dozens of jobs. Jerome was a spelling bee judge in Mexico City and Josh a piano teacher in Toronto. They contacted each other to collaborate on a script, but quickly decided to team up and become actual big-boy screenwriters. Jerome moved to Toronto, Josh "sold his extra children to buy ink," and they were off!



*Clockwise from top left: Amanda Fahey,
Josh Sager and Jerome Simpson,
Julie Puckrin, Thomas Pound*



The initial process was slow. They wrote specs. They created a shared email address. They got jobs where they could write while getting paid to do something else: Josh as a concierge, Jerome as an AV technician.

They invited story editors for coffee. They pitched to development execs. Every connection they made they clung to greedily, sending emails every couple months asking to pitch on shows.

Like most writers, Josh and Jerome owe a debt of gratitude to those who gave them paid work when they were unproven and green. Their first job came when Heather Walker at Switch Animation hired them to develop a book series and write the pilot. That led to scripts on *George of the Jungle*, which led to signing with Meridian Artists... and the ball was rolling!

Three years later, Josh and Jerome have written over 40 episodes of comedy animation, including on *Wishfart*, *Counterfeit Cat*, *Camp Lakebottom*, *Fangbone!*, and *The Bagel and Becky Show*. They're currently showrunning the digital shorts for *Bagel and Becky*, and developing an animated comedy with Radical Sheep.

They see Radical Sheep as an example of the type of collaboration in the future of Canadian animation. Radical encourages writers to be a bigger part of the production process — they share artwork and leica reels [a step in producing animation often using rough animation, storyboards and other elements], and invite writers to recording sessions. This involvement and community-building creates a greater personal stake, and provides a form of apprenticeship to become showrunners. They view it as a great model in an industry where you can write several episodes on a show without seeing one drawing or meeting anyone in person.

Josh and Jerome are living their dream job already, but their DREAM dream job is to be showrunners on their own original comedy. Their dream dream DREAM job is dinosaur veterinarian.

Amy Benham is a Toronto-based kids' TV writer and is hopeful for the future of screenwriting in Canada.

"It's probably the last job the robots will take from us."

Amy attended Ryerson University for Radio and Television Arts. In her final year she was hired by Nelvana as the assistant to the executive assistant, and stayed on, eventually becoming the production manager for several projects including *Detentionaire*, *Babar*, and *The Backyardigans*.

Most recently, Amy has written for *Dot, Odd Squad* and *Fangbone!* She spent the majority of 2015 working in writing rooms and found the experience

profoundly rewarding aside from the fact that, "you have to hold in your farts, like all the time."

Despite her insistence that she's "just kinda just whiteknuckling it," Amy is aiming to be a showrunner on her own projects.

She intends to build engaging, groundbreaking and lucrative properties with diverse characters of equal gender representation. When asked how she intends to accomplish this both worthy and lofty goal she replied, "Oh I got a bunch of A.I.s. on that. ...What? It's them or us, you guys."

Then there's **Thomas Pound**. In the four years since Thomas started working, he has written on hit series *Motive* and *Rookie Blue*, and co-wrote/executive produced the horror film *Torment*.

Splitting his time between Toronto and Los Angeles, Thomas continues to develop his original series with broadcasters north and south of the border while consulting on upcoming shows such as *Private Eyes*, and *Hardwood* from executive producer Steve Nash.

In the years to come, Thomas has set his sights on creating original series with the same international recognition as those he's "had the privilege to work on."

"This ambition has been nurtured by the supportive response from the Canadian television community. Entering into television during the boom of international streaming," he has witnessed "so many incredible Canadian series spread globally." He finds a kinetic energy in television today; that homegrown stories journey out into the world and reach audiences who previously wouldn't be found.

And Thomas is positive about the future. "There is more opportunity than ever before to tell our tales."

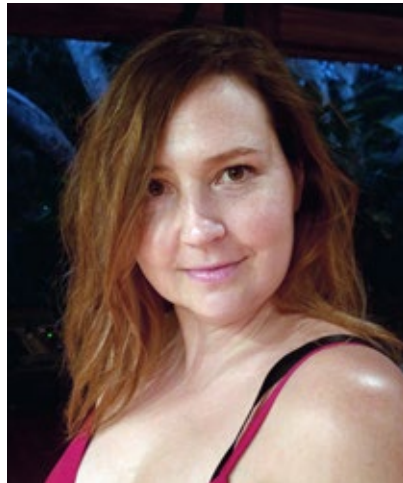
Recently relocated to Toronto, screenwriter **Julie Puckrin** has worked up and down the west coast in the U.S. and Canada.

She recently completed her third season on CTV's *Motive* as writer/executive story editor.

Her credits also include *Gracepoint*, the Fox TV adaptation of the hit British series, *Broadchurch*, and the Emmy-award winning *Mad Men*, where she interned under showrunner Matthew Weiner.

Working closely with auteur showrunners, award-winning actors, and acclaimed directors, Julie has a "keen appreciation for the importance of creative collaboration, and the central importance of the showrunner's vision."

And she is also optimistic about the future. "The way audiences consume television may be changing, but there will always be an appetite for compelling storytelling. The more writer/creators are



Left to Right: Jason Filiatrault, Amy Benham, Chris Roberts

empowered as showrunners, and the more networks are willing to take risks on fresh, unique stories, the more we produce strong television shows with authentic voices.”

Julie hopes to bring that knowledge to bear as an executive producer/showrunner on her own projects. She has created two one-hour dramatic series currently in development: *Homecoming* at Vancouver’s Lark Productions, and *Badged* at Sphere Media Plus in Toronto.

You might imagine **Jason Filiatrault** explaining the apparent rarity of his situation using little bunny-ear quotes: he is a “screenwriter” living in “Calgary.” And yet, is it?

Nevertheless, while living in Calgary, he wrote the upcoming indie feature *Entanglement* (starring Thomas Middleditch), wrote with Bruce McCulloch on *Young Drunk Punk* for CBC (shot in Calgary), and served as a story editor for *Spun Out* on CTV.

Jason is currently developing his “inexplicably popular” Twitter account @SarcasticRover into an animated series produced by ShadowMachine (*Bojack Horseman*) and Mila Kunis. His latest feature comedy *Three To Get Ready* was recently optioned by Darius Films and Jason is also writing a feature called *Taking Care of Business* with Randy Bachman (which is as crazy as it sounds).

“As far as the future goes,” says Jason, “I’d love to keep working with people who inspire and challenge me. Writing comedy, especially the way I do it, is never easy and having the support of really creative producers and directors is the best motivation.

“Canada is an amazing place to find a voice and learn the craft. There’s so much opportunity here, so

many passionate creators looking for a writer who can take their project to the next level, but even better, from my point of view, is how supportive Canadian producers are of original ideas. If I want to develop a sitcom about two women plotting a murder, or a feature about world’s worst Mountie — I know I can find someone in Canada to at least hear me out.”

Charmed life sums up our last example. **Chris Roberts**, currently working in Toronto, says he’s “so far enjoyed a charmed career.”

Here’s why: when he graduated from the CFC in 2012, Chris was snatched up by the breakout hit *Orphan Black*, going from story coordinator to co-producer over four seasons. It didn’t end there.

He’s developed a number of projects with Shaw and Bell Media and consulted on the *John Cardinal Mysteries* [now called *Cardinal*]. Before breaking into TV, Chris worked in feature development for Lumanity Productions (*Born to be Blue*).

Chris is “encouraged by the quality of sci-fi and fantasy series produced by Canadians.”

He wants to contribute with stories that “challenge our notions of normalcy and underscore the complexities of the world we live in.”

“No single creator can make a series soar,” says Chris and if he ever runs his own show he hopes to “draw on our wealth of established writers and help pay his own success forward by empowering new, diverse talent.”

Chris’s experience on *Orphan Black* taught him that “Canadians can compete on the world stage, and with international demand for content growing, I’m hoping to find new outlets to share our stories with the world.” ■

News from WGC Members

Shelley Eriksen and **Alan McCullough**, co-showrunners of *Private Eyes*, want to thank **Derek Schreyer, Marcus Robinson, Marsha Greene, Tim Kilby,** and **Tara Armstrong** for their excellent work in launching the first season, and especially for all the synchronized clapping.

Carolyn Saunders' first feature, *The Wasting*, was shot in November on location in the U.K. and is now in post-production in Toronto. Carolyn wrote and directed the drama thriller, which stars Alexz Johnson, Gray O'Brien, and Lauren McQueen, recently named one of the U.K.'s Top 12 Actors to Watch.

Between staring blankly at his MacBook, Kindle, and TV screen, **Allen Markuze** is busy writing several episodes of the new Teletoon series *Chop Chop Ninja*, among other secret projects he can't talk about.

Anne-Marie Perrotta recently signed a deal with Amazon Studios for her animated pre-school series called *Bowie & Babs*. She is currently in development with them and Bejuba! Entertainment. When not writing in the third person, she can be found writing for other animated series, including *Chop Chop Ninja* (Teletoon), *Ping & Pong* (TVO), and *Max & Ruby* (Treehouse).

Alan Resnick finished *Luka and the Land of XO*, a family animated feature, currently in production and starring Sofia Vergara.

Tom Mason continues to write the *Captain Awesome* books for Simon & Schuster. His deal with

Little Bee Books has expanded from four books to six, while he continues to write and consult on *True and the Rainbow Kingdom* for Guru and Netflix.

Amanda Smith is excited to be working with Sheila Dinsmore and the team at Nelvana, writing on season six of *Max and Ruby*.

After premiering in Czystachowa and Warsaw in March and April, the Polish language version of **Seymour Blicher's** hit comedy, *Never Judge a Book by Its Cover*, will be touring Poland.

Shaun Graham's feature screenplay *Dead Future* scored 9 out of 10 on its first Black List evaluation. *Must Escape*, a short film Shaun wrote, screened at the Short Film Corner at Cannes Film Festival in May 2016.

Julian Doucet just wrapped season two of *Killjoys*. His six-part limited series *St-Nickel* for UNIS premiered on May 24. He is currently developing the second season now.

Jacob Potashnik recently wrapped up writing the narration for *Montreal Housemates*, produced by Montreal's Zone 3 for AMI TV. His feature script, *Valparaiso*, is in play, again... maybe three times is the charm? Just finishing his new script, *The Audit*, a comedy set in a tax auditing office and the theatre world — true!

Jill Girling, Lori Mather-Welch, and Cottonwood Media's TV series, *Paris Opera Ballet*, has been greenlit by German network ZDF. Set in

modern-day Paris, the show is about a time traveling ballerina from 1905 who finds herself at the Paris Opera Ballet school in 2017. They will serve as showrunners and the show will shoot entirely in Paris.

Silver Donald Cameron has completed the script for the environmental documentary *GreenRights*, which he is also producing and narrating. He continues to host and produce long-form monthly interviews for his website, The Green Interview.

WGC members **Nicolas Billon** and **Diana Frances** completed the CFC Primetime TV Writing program.

As foretold by Nostradamus on December 10th, 1548 (look it up), **David Acer** and **Matt Holland** have collaborated on *The Poverty Line*, a comedy series idea which was recently optioned by Groupe Fair-Play (SNL Québec, Comedy Tonight)

Ken Cuperus, Jeremy Winkels, Matt Kippen, Cole Bastedo, Rupinder Gill and **Sara Hennessey** just wrapped an incredible second season of *The Stanley Dynamic* for YTV. Huzzah!

Elizabeth Stewart is currently story editing on *Border Security: America's Front Line* (Global) and will soon move on to *The School* (CBC-TV).

In April 2016, **Céline La Frenière** had an event at the Kentish Town Library in London U.K. reading from her latest work *Glaston Town*. She is currently adapting her screenplay *BreakAway* into a novel to be published in 2017.



Production has wrapped on the short film *Ganji*, a drama about a former boxer with pugilistica dementia. **Ben Ratner** stars in the film, which he wrote and directed, along with Aleks Paunovic, Zak Santiago, and Donny Lucas. Tony Pantages produced.

Ryan W. Smith has joined the writers' room of *ReBoot*, where he is serving as senior story editor, under showrunner **Larry Raskin**.

In his review of **Peter Behrens'** new novel *Carry Me* in the New York Times, Dennis Bock said "Behrens captures his narrator's naïveté and the casual anti-Semitism of the times with great skill and intelligence . . . as true an observation about human nature as there is."

Anna Bourque is working in Singapore at The Moving Visuals Co. where she's supervising producer on many different shows, mentor to the staff, liaising with networks, and developing pitches. It's a busy, busy world!

Children's and animation screenwriters **James Backshall** & **Jeff Sweeney** have partnered on three original series pitches, and writing for season three of *Paw Patrol*, *Doki*, and *Justin Time*, and can't wait for even more series to make it to season three... and then hire them!

Mark Leiren-Young has been swallowed by a whale named Moby Doll. His new book *The Killer Whale that Changed the World* is being released by Greystone and the David Suzuki

Foundation on Sept. 2. He's currently in post on a feature-length documentary about Moby Doll and a BravoFactual short about *The Hundred Year Old Whale*.

Kate Hewlett was named first runner up in the CFF's Harold Greenberg Screenwriting Competition for her feature film script, *The Swearing Jar*, based on her stage play.

After finishing up *Cold Squad* in 2006 **Matt MacLeod** bought a sailboat, sailed through the Panama Canal, sailed the Caribbean for a several years. He's been living in Santa Monica since 2012 and worked on several shows. He just sold a pilot to Sony, producing with David Shore.

Miklos Perlus is currently serving as executive producer and executive story editor for *Opie's Home!*, a new spin off of the celebrated TVO series *Hi Opie!* Both series are produced by marbledmedia.

Jennica Harper wrote on season four of *Motive*. She has a YTV show in development with co-creator Dan Signer (*Some Assembly Required*), and is writing an animated feature for the producers of *The Intouchables*.

Willem Wennekers just finished showrunning season three of *Fugget About It*, and his feature film script, *Kiss & Cry*, wrapped in March.

It's already Christmas! **Donald Martin** was commissioned to write the original Christmas TV movie for NBC Universal, *The*

Christmas Sing-Off, and then he was contracted to rewrite the Hallmark Christmas TV movie *Operation Christmas*, both slated for Christmas 2016.

Writer/Director **John Walker's** feature documentary, *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, premiered at Hot Docs in April at TIFF Bell Lightbox. Walker is co-writing with Bob Sandler his next project, *Assholes: A Theory*, based on the book by Aaron James.

Merrily Weisbord was story editor of John Walker's new film, *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, his profoundly personal love-and-longing letter to Quebec. (500,000 Anglos Quebecers left home after the Quiet Revolution, and Walker's family was torn apart.)

Natasha, **David Bezmozgis's** second feature, was released by Mongrel Media in May. Menemsha Films will release in the US. David directed, and adapted the screenplay from first book, *Natasha and Other Stories* (HarperCollins Canada, 2004).

Sarah Dodd joined Frank Spotnitz's writers' room in London. She is a writer/co-executive producer on the new one-hour drama series *Ransom* for CBS, TF1, and Corus, which will shoot in Toronto and France later this year.

Jeremy Alexander Rafuse was a quarter-finalist at the 2015 American Zoetrope Screenplay contest, judged by Francis Ford Coppola and the American Zoetrope Staff. ■

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

Mikisew Keemiwan Productions, Ltd.

Principal: Norman Champagne

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

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/index.html

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.

Please note that CSCS may require writers to furnish contracts in support of their claim. According to CSCS regulations, if a writer does not claim his or her monies within two years of being posted on our website these monies revert to the operating expenses of CSCS.

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 Aaron Unrau at a.unrau@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9975 ext. 5270

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

NFB - contact Aaron Unrau at a.unrau@wgc.ca
1-800-567-9975 ext. 5270

Laszlo Gefin - *Revolution's Orphans*
Janos Szanyi - *Revolution's Orphans*
Gilles Toupin - *Cycling: Still the Greatest*
Peter Vogler - *Ernie's Idea*

MEMBERSHIP, FEB. 1, 2016 — APR. 18, 2016

Welcome

Sheryl J. Anderson Westchester CA

Jim Annan Toronto ON

Rene Balcer Los Angeles CA

Ivon Bartok Toronto ON

Michael Chernuchin Los Angeles CA

SB Edwards Vancouver BC

Mazin Elsadig Mississauga ON

Ingrid Haas Toronto ON

Brandon Hackett Toronto ON

Todd Ireland Burnaby BC

Stephen William Kemp Toronto ON

Caroline Labreche Montreal QC

Steeve Leonard Montreal QC

Jonathan Malen Toronto ON

Todd Messegee Fairfax Station VA

Phil Moorhead Toronto ON

Al Mukadam Toronto ON

Lisa Nanni-Messegee Fairfax Station VA

Alyssa Pankiw Toronto ON

Ashley Park Mississauga ON

Bryn Pottie Toronto ON

Adam Greydon Reid Vancouver BC

Erica Schreiber Valley Village CA

Elena Wurlitzer Los Angeles CA

THE LONG GAME

By Laurie Channer

The vigilance never wanes...on the frontlines of the WGC.

Though this grab bag of cautionary tales has been absent for a few years, the WGC remains ever-watchful. Here's a one-shot to present a few of the more outrageous items we've encountered, some of which have also taken years to unspool.

Exhibit 1 – Special(ty) Snowflakes

Many years ago, a Category A specialty channel began making original documentary lifestyle programming. The Guild approached it about putting those shows under its agreement, with nifty things like access to WGC members, and minimum fees and copyright protections. The broadcaster declined to go union in any way. In 2016, reps from this same broadcaster contact the Canadian Screenwriters Collection Society (CSCS), the collection society that the WGC established for collecting secondary use monies. Since the channel took copyright in the non-union writer contracts for its shows, and has now collected the producers' share from elsewhere, can they collect the authors' cut now? That's a hard NO, specialty channel. That small change belongs to our writers.

Exhibit 2 – Euro Clash

A Canadian producer develops a series, but partway along, sells the project to a foreign production company. Three of the Canadian writers' episodes are retained and produced, and still subject to the WGC terms. Guild staff has much to-ing and fro-ing with the

European prodco when it tries to insert the foreign EP/showrunner's name into the writing credits, which, of course, handily reduces the production fees to the Canadians. The EP did rewrites as a story editor, and as such, doesn't get a writing credit under the IPA. It cannot be stressed enough how many times these basic rules must be relayed to the production staff, both before, during and after principal photography in order to get correct credit notices and finally, with equal difficulty, correct payments. Eventually, the prodco gets it, because the show airs at last, with the correct (Canadians') credits. Yay!

About a year later, CSCS (remember them?) attempts to collect author's levies for the show in that county, but now the collection society there disputes the Canadian claim. Why? Well, that European EP has told them *he's* a co-author, and he's a big showrunner in their country, so they believe him. So now zee Canadians must share weeth heem, *oui*? Um, no, says CSCS, firing off credit notices and Netflix screen caps and all necessary things to correct the Canadians' credits. The foreign collection society's response is, effectively: ㄟ(ツ)ㄟ

Entrenchment ensues, on both sides. Now, more aggravatingly, the production company even goes on record to back up the EP in denying the Canadians as sole authors of their episodes again. Not so fast, says the WGC, because you're back in our house now, and we fought this all out before. The Guild grieves the producer for knowingly providing wrong credit information to other parties and we win a retraction from them, upholding the correct credits naming the Canadian writers.

Exhibit 3 – Default Lines

A supposedly fully-financed feature in production falls farther and farther behind in payments so that by wrap date, the prodco is in serious default to not only the writer, but virtually the entire cast and crew, plus, incredibly, even the payroll company. Without paying the writer, the producer does not have any rights to distribute the movie. All the unions grieve, and one takes the producer to the provincial Labour Board, where the discovery process turns up documents evidencing other very shady shenanigans at the prodco, including a faked financing letter. Many moons later, the formal hearing still slogs on, but unions



at the Labour Board have at least won an interim order to keep the provincial tax credit money from going to the prodco while the issues of payment are still unresolved.

The film has now been finished enough to be selected for a major film festival, though — and has a big ol’ U.S. distribution deal, to boot. The only party a producer wants to make happy at this point *is* the distributor, and the last thing a distributor wants to hear is that the chain of title stops cold at the first link. Which is what exactly what the WGC tells it. The Guild also alerts the festival the film is heading to that any public screenings it may be planning are totally out of bounds. The producer now becomes very invested in sorting out the writer payment, and the writer is finally, fully paid almost two years to the day it was due. (As, shortly thereafter, are the cast and crew). Somehow, the big U.S. distributor still kyboshes their deal with this prodco, can’t think why they no longer want to deal with it.

Exhibit 4 – Can’t Top This

(What follows is a much-abridged version of the story — all the twists and turns could fill this entire column.)

A tiny company has a pair of Ren and Stimpy-like two producer-partners. They owe a writer \$40K in fees and fringes. Promises to pay dissolve, and a claim that the money has already been wire-transferred is patently false. The WGC grieves them for non-payment, but there is no blood coming from this stone through any channels open to us.

But the writer can, and does, take individual action. It takes time and paperwork, but he sues the producers in small claims court. Genius partner tells Sidekick he’ll handle it, but fails to file any defence (in which he could easily have argued they aren’t personally responsible for their company’s actions). So a pleasantly surprising default judgment goes to the writer. To collect, the writer (after more homework) files a writ against the titles to Genius and Sidekick’s homes, and hires a bailiff agency, which puts their houses on the market. Genius concocts a fraudulent “notice” that the WGC received payment for the writer to get out of this predicament. One mistake: he leaves it to Sidekick to forward the notice to the bailiff. Seeing the WGC’s logo on the document, Sidekick

helpfully *emails it to the Guild as well*. We see it has a forged WGC staff signature, plus the “witness” signature of a provincial judge, whose office we contact to discover (as we suspected) his signature is *also* forged. Bailiff and RCMP are notified of same by us and the judge, but this doesn’t affect the house-up-for-sale situation. Genius is finally preparing to appeal that original judgment, also finally claiming the corporation protects him individually. But the writer has already learned that this only holds if Genius hasn’t personally broken the law. The writer sends the forged document and particulars to Genius’s lawyer. Lawyer promptly advises Genius to pay the writer pronto or chance going to jail.

Genius’s house isn’t quite sold yet to make the payment, however. But when his wife discovers her home is on the block, she pitches a justifiably hairy fit, and goes to *her* lawyer. She comes up with the \$40K, and we have no current information on the state of *that* partnership or what else her lawyer is working on. Suffice to say, this writer’s tenacity has earned him the ultimate mic drop of atrocity stories. ■

CANADIAN SCREENWRITERS ARE...

Writing what Canada Watches

WRITING
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ON ALL SCREENS

Writing what
SELLS
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Telling Canadian stories... to the World.



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ALPERN GROUP

congratulates
Writers Guild of Canada
on its 25th anniversary



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818.528.1111

May

25 — Writers Talking TV TIFF Bell Lightbox wgc.ca

28-29 — TO WebFest towebfest.com

28-June 5 — Leo Awards leoawards.com

June

12-15 — Banff World Media Festival banffmediafestival.com

July

15 — *Deadline* — Bell Fund, various programs bellfund.ca/deadlines

August

25-Sept. 5 — Montreal World Film Festival ffm-montreal.org/en/home.html

September

1-4 — Fan Expo fanexpocanada.com

8-18 — Toronto International Film Festival tiff.net

15-22 — Atlantic Film Festival atlanticfilm.com

21-Oct. 2 — Calgary International Film Festival calgaryfilm.com

29-Oct. 8 — Edmonton Film Festival edmontonfilmfest.com

29-Oct. 14 — Vancouver International Film Festival viff.org

October

3 — *Deadline* — Bell Fund, various programs bellfund.ca/deadlines

17-19 — International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, Paris iawg.org



MERIDIAN ARTISTS

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416-961-2777

Los Angeles

1664 Greenfield Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-479-2777





WGC Screenwriting Awards



Writers Guild of Canada



Congratulations to our winners!

CHILDREN

Numb Chucks, Season 2
“Witless to the Prosecution”
Written by **Evan Thaler Hickey**

DOCUMENTARY

Deluged by Data
Written by **Josh Freed**

FEATURE FILM

A Christmas Horror Story
Written by **James Kee** and **Sarah Larsen**
and **Doug Taylor** and **Pascal Trottier**

MOW & MINISERIES

The Book of Negroes: Episode 1
Story by **Lawrence Hill**
Teleplay by **Clement Virgo**

SHORTS & WEBSERIES

Goldfish
Written by **Michael Konyves**

TV COMEDY

Schitt's Creek, Season 1 “The Cabin”
Written by **Amanda Walsh**

TV DRAMA

Orphan Black, Season 3
“Newer Elements of Our Defense”
Written by **Russ Cochrane**

TWEENS & TEENS

Some Assembly Required, Season 2
“Rocket with a Pocket”
Written by **Jennica Harper**

SPECIAL AWARDS

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