

WIDC 2011 PERSONNEL BIOGRAPHIES

Acting Ensemble



SARAH ALLEN, Toronto, ON

Sarah was born and raised in the scenic mountain town of Nelson, BC. A quiet, near sighted girl growing up, she took early to jazz dance and choir, and was introduced to the world of community theatre by the age of nine. As a teenaged actress Sarah competed in countless drama festivals while pouring over the biographies of Carol Burnett, Marilyn Monroe and Barbara Stanwyck, hoping to uncover the path to stardom. But offers from Hollywood were not forthcoming so after high school Sarah travelled east to Montreal to begin her classical training at the National Theatre School of Canada. Throughout her theatre school years Sarah tempered her semesters of Shakespeare with summers on the fringe festival circuit, travelling across the country as part of a collective creation ensemble. After graduating Sarah found work in theatre for young audiences, touring around the entire province of Quebec. Shortly thereafter she relocated to Toronto where work with the Blyth Festival and the tarragon Theatre followed. It was then that she began to audition for various film and television shows. Notable credits include a supporting role in the award-winning miniseries *Human Trafficking* with Donald Sutherland and Mira Sorvino, and recurring roles on *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Little Mosque On the Prairie*, and *Warehouse 13*. Sarah was thrilled at the opportunity to spend ten months in South Africa filming a lead role in the CBC TV series *Jozi-H*. In 2009 Sarah decided to return to school, enrolling at the Canadian Film Centre where she explored acting techniques with Noraman Jewison, Sarah Polley and Keifer Sutherland. Most recently her work has been seen at the Toronto and Vancouver International Film Festivals where she starred in Nadia Liz's directorial debut, *How to Rid Your Lover of Negative Emotion Caused By You*. She can soon be seen in the American remake of hit BBC series *Being Human*, premiering in early 2011.



HEATHER ALLIN, Toronto, ON

Heather Allin is appearing in *Small Town Murder Songs*, by acclaimed Director Ed Gass-Donnelly, and in *let him be* as the supporting character Babs Barker. Allin is also in *George Romero's Survival of the Dead*, she's shot episodes of: Dan for Mayor, Flashpoint, The Ron James Show and has just shot an episode of *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, with Charlotte Arnold and Stephen Brogren.

"It's breathing life into an paper being and building her from scratch, bringing her to life, that interests me most as a performer."

She has worked with such stars as Hugh Dillon, Amy Jo Johnson, David Paetkau, Michael Cram, Charlotte Arnold, Ron James, Peter Stormare, Aaron Poole, Fred Ewanuick, Paul Bates, Marcia Gay Harden, Ray Romano, Gene Hackman, Rip Torn, Elizabeth Perkins, Scott Bakula, Athena Karkanis, Tom Selleck, Kate Levering, Elizabeth Peña, Caroline Dhavernas, and Kathleen Munroe.

Her Film and TV Credits in addition to the above include: *Stone Cold*; *Wonderfalls*; *What Girls Learn*; *Suburban Madnness*; *Welcome to Mooseport*; *Kevin Hill*; *Witchblade*; *The Fugitive Kind*; *Eu'tha'na'sia*.

Theatrically, Allin has just performed the role of Barbara in the new Canadian play *Goodnight Amherst*, and previously helped develop the role of Stella in the new Canadian play *Asleep at the Wheel* by Jordan Hall. To date, she has work-shopped to performance, six new Canadian plays.

Allin's stage credits include: *Lucy*, *Lying on the Escarpment*; *Clarence and Queen Elizabeth*, *Richard III*; *Amelia*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Lady Capulet*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Aggie Rose*, *Boiler Room Suite*.

Born in Toronto where she continues to make the city her home, she has been acting professionally for over 17 years. Allin is a proud supporter of Canadian Artists, their creativity, generosity, and dedication to the work. She is deeply involved in the Campaign for Canadian Drama. As President of ACTRA Toronto, she oversees an Actor's union serving over 13,000 members; she is on the board of ACTRA National and PRS/SRD, with 21,000 members. She is both board and founding member of the Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union; a member of the ROI board; the Advisory Board for the Seneca Drama program; a former board member of Green Screen Toronto; a former board member of Shakespeare in the Rough, a visual artist and an avid skier.

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REBECCA APPLEBAUM, Toronto, ON

Rebecca Applebaum is a Toronto native of mixed heritage who has always loved to act and perform. At university, she devoted much of her time to varsity swimming (she was “Rookie of the Year” and the Ontario University 200 Meter Breaststroke Champion) and her studies, securing competitive national scholarships from the Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. It wasn’t until she retired as a competitive swimmer and finished her M.A. in English that she decided to fully commit to the acting profession. Applebaum quickly booked the lead on the short film, UPSIDE-DOWN GIRL and her work on the film garnered her the Best Actress Award from the YoungCuts Film Festival and the film itself won the inaugural enRoute Film Festival, during which it was screened for millions of viewers on Air Canada flights. (The festival jury included Atom Egoyan, Piers Handling, Robert Lantos, and Donald Sutherland.) Next, Applebaum dove headfirst into stage work, and her debut play, DON’T LOOK, won her widespread critical acclaim as both a performer and a playwright. The play was later selected for the Next Stage Theatre Festival in Toronto, whose mandate is to serve as a springboard for critically successful independent theatre artists, with productions picked from across North America. Applebaum has since worked on independent short films such as THE PICKLE AND THE PATRIARCH (Petersburg Films) and THE SONG IS OVER (Katronx Productions), as well as the big budget REPO MEN (Universal Pictures) alongside Jude Law and Forest Whitaker. She has also appeared on the television series DEGRASSI: THE NEXT GENERATION (Epitome Films), and has worked on two Canadian Film Centre shorts: NIGHT and OLD WORLD REMEDIES. In theatre, she has worked with the Dora-winning playwright Tara Beagan in her play FOUNDLINGS, and performed in the Toronto 2009 Fringe hit 36 LITTLE PLAYS ABOUT HOPELESS GIRLS (Birdtown and Swanville), which featured a cast of thirteen women on a very small stage. She has also performed with Birdtown and Swanville for the Rhubarb Festival (Buddies and Bad Times) and HATCH (Harbourfront Centre). Applebaum has also been hired by Nightwood Theatre, Theatre Direct, and fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre Company to work as an actor on various play development workshops. She’s also done performance and facilitation work in theatre for social change at Mixed Company Theatre--for their homelessness project which toured shelters in Toronto, as well as their active, healthy living TYA touring show, *Project ACT*. In addition, she was a member of fu-GEN’s 2009-2010 playwrighting unit, under the leadership of Nina Lee Aquino. Apart from acting and writing, Applebaum is also a musician: she was a founding member of the now-dissolved independent pop band Europe in Colour, for which she was the lead female vocalist, played synthesizers and wrote catchy tunes. In her spare time, she likes to play pick up basketball. Applebaum is very excited about this opportunity to be working with the next generation of inspiring women directors.



MELANIE BRAY, Vancouver, BC

Melanie was born in Montreal to an Anglophone father and a Francophone mother. After her aunt told her that she was not good enough to be a dancer (her childhood dream), Melanie was saved by the discovery of acting in Grade 7. At the age of 13 she had the pleasure of being in the high school production of *Grease* in which she played Marty – the only other girl besides Rizzo who got to wear pants! The rest is history. Straight out of high school, at the age of 17, Melanie was accepted into Dawson College’s Dome Theatre program. She eventually moved to Vancouver, BC where she worked with Théâtre la Seizième, the only professional francophone theatre company in BC. Her role in *Comment Devenir Parfait en Trois Jours* in 2002 allowed her to tour extensively in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and resulted in a Jessie Richardson Award nomination. As a volunteer at a youth AIDS organization Melanie learned about Forum Theatre, an interactive type of theatre used as a tool for social change. She eventually went to New York to meet and work with the founder of Forum Theatre, Augusto Boal. Back in Vancouver she landed roles on shows such as *The L Word* and *Psych*. She began working with the French documentary film company Red Letter Films and was on two episodes of their docudrama *Eaux Troubles du Crime*. In 2007, Melanie attended Langara College’s Film Arts program (A Division of Studio 58). This was an advanced intensive in which she studied acting as well as producing. The short film that she co-produced and starred in, entitled *watermarked*, screened at the Montreal World Film Festival in 2008. In reference to *watermarked* Melanie says, “This film allowed me to play a strong and complex female character, something that is very important to me. Whether producing or acting I strive to find projects in which women are at the forefront.” That same year, Melanie played Sam in CBC’s radio drama *Swimming to China*, where she learned to fake swimming in large plastic bowls! She also had the privilege of playing Wendy in Sook-Yin Lee’s debut feature film *Year of the Carnivore*, which opened TIFF’s Canadian program in 2009. After that, she was reunited with several Langara Film Arts alumni when she played supporting lead Barbara Light in the drama *Rain Down*, a feature shot in the BC desert. Switching to comedy, Melanie played the lead in *Ms. Thing*, a short film directed by Karen X. Tulchinsky which is currently doing the film festival circuit. It premiered at the Vancouver Queer Film Festival in August 2010. Melanie currently lives in Toronto where she volunteers at two yoga studios, and is presently auditioning to be a volunteer audiobook reader at the CNIB. She continues to add to her special skills by taking dance classes, learning to shoot guns, and boxing.

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TANTOO CARDINAL, Burnaby, BC

An accomplished and celebrated actress, Tantoo Cardinal has advanced Aboriginal performing arts throughout the world. Known for her authenticity, she has brought to life complex and diverse Aboriginal characters and has worked to dispel stereotypes. Her performances on stage and in both film and television have helped to blaze a trail in an industry where few roles for Aboriginal women previously existed. Her 80 plus credits include *North of 60*, *Shattered*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Dances With Wolves*, *Black Robe*, *Loyalties*, *Education of Little Tree*, *Luna*, *Spirit of the Whale*, *Unnatural & Accidental*, *Sioux City*, *Silent Tongue*, *Smoke Signals* and *Mother's & Daughter's*.

Acting and speaking are but a few of the ways she contributes to society, dedicating her life to ensuring Aboriginal people, their cultures and the historic and current issues impacting their communities are fairly represented throughout the arts. A founding member of the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, she serves as an inspirational role model to aspiring youth. Her performances in projects like the *"Vagina Monologues"* seek to raise awareness of the shocking level of violence against Aboriginal women in Canada and to support women who are struggling with the issue of violence.

In 2010 Tantoo was inducted as a Member into the Order of Canada for her outstanding contributions. Other honors include a National Aboriginal Achievement award, the Harvard University Sunhill Award for excellence in Aboriginal film making and four honorary doctorates: University of Rochester, doctor of Fine Arts, University of St. Lawrence, Doctor of Arts; University of Calgary, Doctor of Laws; and, Fraser Valley University, Doctor of Letters.



ADAM LEBLANC, Montreal, QC

Adam was born and raised in the Montreal area, and began performing as a young teenager.

His love of theatre led him to continue his training at John Abbott College in the Professional Theatre Program under the BTW's Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award winning director Terry Donald, with whom he would work closely after graduation.

Passionate about honesty and storytelling, he threw himself into roles with a fervor and commitment that gleaned him the nickname of a "young DeNiro" and recognized him as one of the top actors in the Montreal Mirror's "Best of Montreal" Poll two years running. He is proud to have recently been nominated for the Gloria Mitchell-Aleong Award for commitment and exceptional talent in the performing arts in Montreal (to be announced January 2011).

He joined the Montreal Theatre Ensemble (mtlte.com) as a company member in 2008 and works continuously to produce critically acclaimed productions. MTE also works in collaboration with John Abbott College's "Stage II" program, in which the company members mentor the school's emerging actors, sharing experiences, rehearsals and the professional production process, and often volunteering additional time to help teach classes at the college.

Selected theatre credits include Eddie Carbone in "A View from the Bridge" (Montreal Theatre Ensemble) for which he earned rave reviews, Dreyfus in the "Pink Panther Returns" for which he was awarded the Best Leading Actor Award, Rudy in Martin Sherman's "Bent" (Altera Vitae Productions), Mortimer Brewster in "Arsenic & Old Lace" (Geordie), George Milton in "Of Mice and Men" (MTE), Dan in "The Elusive" (T'ableau d'Hôte), voted best play in the Montreal Mirror's 'Best of Montreal' poll, Camille Chandebise in "A Flea in Her Ear" (Hudson Village Theatre), Cliff in "The Woolgatherer" (MTE).

A voice actor, aspiring writer and most recently, a film actor, Adam has established himself in the Montreal acting community as talented and hardworking, eager to learn from and share with his colleagues.

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DAVID LEREANEY, Calgary, AB

David LeReaney has been acting, directing, coaching and teaching for a living since 1979, appearing in or directing over 200 plays at most of the professional theatres in Alberta. Most notably performing featured roles in *MEPHISTO* at the Citadel Theatre (Edmonton), *BILLY BISHOP GOES TO WAR* (Workshop West, Edmonton), *TWELFTH NIGHT* (Theatre Calgary), *7 STORIES* (Alberta Theatre Projects), *GUYS AND DOLLS* (Stage West Calgary), *CABARET* (Theatre Calgary), *FOR THE PLEASURE OF SEEING HER AGAIN* (ATP) and *SLEUTH* (Vertigo Theatre, Calgary) to name just a few.

He has a busy career in film and TV, appearing in MORE THAN 50 productions such as *HONEY*, *I SHRUNK THE KIDS*, *JAKE AND THE KID*, *CAITLINS WAY*, *HIGH NOON*, *AFTER THE HARVEST* (appearing with Sam Shepard), *RATRACE* (appearing with John Cleese), *THE CLAIM*, *JOHNSON COUNTY WAR*, *ROUGHING IT*, *BURN: THE ROBERT WRAIGHT STORY*, *THE INCREDIBLE MRS RITCHIE*, *DANGEROUS AQUAINTANCES* and *TOM STONE*, *LIES MY MOTHER TOLD ME*, *FRIEND OF THE FAMILY*, *COMEBACK SEASON* *THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES* and *PASSCHENDAELE*.

David is a respected coach and teacher of dialects and accents through his company, Dial/Act Inc. having taught at almost every college and university in Alberta. He has been the dialect coach on many made in Alberta films such as *PAPA'S ANGELS*, *JOHNSON COUNTY WAR*, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF NANCY EATON*, *LIES MY MOTHER TOLD ME*, *INTO THE WEST*, *BROKEN TRAIL*, *AND CAROLINA MOON*, coaching Eva Marie Saint, Jessica Pare, Rachel Ward, Cynthia Nixon, Brenda Fricker, Matthew Modine, Kerri Russel, Skeet Ulrich, Joely Richardson, Greta Scacchi, Clair Forlani and Jacqueline Bisset and many others. David is also founder and president of the Calgary chapter of Performing Arts Lodges of Canada, (www.palcalgary.ca) dedicated to the goal of providing affordable housing for low income members of the performing arts community.

AWARDS: 1993 - Best actor AMPIA (Alberta Motion Pictures Industry Association) award for *THE LIFE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT*,

2000 - HARRY AND MARTHA COHEN Award (for sustained and significant contribution to theatre in Calgary).

2007 - AMPIA for his narration of *THE CULT OF WALT*



DAVID SCHAAP, Toronto, ON

David Schaap is an Actor/Director/Teacher/Coach and Filmmaker whose career spans more than 35 years in New York, Montreal and now Toronto. A New York native, Schaap was born to a theatrical family and literally grew up in the theatre. He has studied at **Corner Loft Studios** with *Albert Hague* and *George Keathly*, at **HB Studios** with *Hal Holden* and the legendary, *Uta Hagen*, and with the acclaimed teacher/coach *Warren Robertson*. He has worked on musicals and dramas alike, including *West Side Story*, *Hello Dolly*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Sound of Music*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Thieves*, *The Shadow Box*, *Extremities* and *The Passion Of Hubert*, to name a few.

David has worked in NY in Off-Broadway development where he found himself work-shopping new material with some of Broadway's heavy hitters, like *Martin Charnin* (*Annie*) and *Albert Marre* (*Man of La Mancha*). David has collaborated on original and new works for film and theatre and was an ACTRA counsellor in Montreal for 10 years. He has created teaching programs and workshops for various schools and organizations, including his own successful acting school, *TheatreWorks*, in Montreal.

It is David's experience in the theatre and on set as an actor, coach and director that gives him an acute eye for what works. Schaap has played a large range of characters and can be seen in projects such as: *Lassie*, *After Amy*, *Aftermath*, *Rudy: The Rudy Giulliani Story*, *15/Love*, *10.5 Apocalypse*, *Infected*, *Stardom*, *Sum Of All Fears*, *Plastic Man*, *Un Capitalisme Sentimentale*, *Long Gone Day* and *Get Smart*, to mention a few. David has worked with actors such as: *James Woods*, *Dan Aykroyd*, *Tchéky Karyo*, *James Cromwell*, *Patrick Bergin*, *Bridget Fonda*, *Gil Bellows*, *Judd Nelson* and *Ray Stevenson* - the list goes on. He recently moved to Toronto and before he could even settle in, David was on set shooting an episode of *Flashpoint*. He made his directorial debut in Toronto with *Peeler*, in the 2009 *Toronto Fringe Festival*. Look for David in the soon to be released independent film *Long Gone Day*. As well as the upcoming suspenseful film noir, *The Anonymous Rudy S*, slated to premier this year. The film was written specifically for him by innovative director *Benjamin Paquette*, where Schaap plays the title character, Rudy S, a lonely man accused of being a stalker.

With his partner, Cindy Landerman, David has created *Learning Curve Productions*, a company that offers a full range of services and workshops to actors. Through *Learning Curve Productions*, Cindy and David want to empower people and help them realize the full potential of their inner artist. David is pleased and honored to be part of this years WIDC!

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SIMEON TAOLE, Toronto, ON

Born in Ottawa Ontario, Simeon Taole spent most of his formative years living in the town of Mafikeng in South Africa. A small developing town hours away from any major city center, it did possess an excellent community arts program that would plant the seeds for his future creative pursuits.

Simeon first ventured into creative writing at the tender of age of ten when he started a school newspaper. Dubbed "The Daily Bunch", it was unlike most newspapers in that the stories were entirely fictional and, by most accounts, humorous. Each week, he would entertain requests from his fellow schoolmates eager to have stories written about them - the more fictional the better. "Looking back, I suppose what I created was more akin to an elementary school tabloid than a serious journalistic publication." A few years later, fiction and comedy would take a back seat when Simeon entered the Mmabana National writing competition and won first prize with a poetry entry about the reflections of a young boy in apartheid South Africa.

In his adolescent years Simeon developed a strong passion for acting and writing that he satiated on the stages of the International School of South Africa. "I loved acting and I loved writing and the school freely afforded me the opportunities to bring the two together with my fellow students." He would eventually write, direct, and act in an award-winning presentation for a One-Act Play Festival, one of his fondest memories.

After high school, Simeon returned to Canada and settled in Vancouver. A Bachelors degree in Psychology from the University of British Columbia followed by a certificate in New Media from Vancouver Film School gave Simeon a broad liberal arts background and a range of skills he would draw on working as a multimedia designer and video editor. But ultimately something was missing. "It's not that I didn't enjoy spending hours glued to computer monitors waiting for sequences to render, but I really wanted to be part of more than just the post production process."

In 2004 Simeon won his first principal lead role in Vancouver's first three-camera shot sitcom pilot, "The Rev". The experience was invaluable and soon led to a principal recurring role on the Nickelodeon series "Romeo". Simeon also returned to his writing roots and began work on a project very close to his heart - a feature screenplay called The Space Between - about memories of his childhood sweetheart and his experiences growing up in apartheid South Africa.

In 2008 Simeon won a role in the Lifetime TV movie "High Noon" based on the Nora Roberts novel. More recently, he has begun developing his own short and feature length projects. "It really is no small thing to be able to look back on your work and feel that you have contributed something of value. I'm nowhere near that in reality. But it's a place I would like to get to in my life."

His motto:

"I want to live a life of personal and passionate creative exploration and illuminate my world and the lives of others through that process of discovery"