

Actor Art Hindle strives to make a difference

By Mark Pavilons

Many of us remember that exceptional high school English teacher or history professor.

We were taken by their unbridled passion and enthusiasm, and hopefully we absorbed some of that ourselves.

Art Hindle is a lot like your favourite art teacher or football coach.

He's engaging, passionate, well read and a tireless champion for good causes. He's also a sucker for a good Hollywood tear-jerker.

He's been in one or two of them himself.

The Gemini Award-winning Canadian actor, director, film-maker and lobbyist is a natural resource of sorts. He's one of the leading cheerleaders for the film and TV industry in this country. And we're fortunate he's chosen to pass on his passion to others.

The King Township resident believes in people, and places a lot of faith and optimism in our youth. After all, they are the movers and shakers of the next generations to come, so we all have a role to play in helping them prepare for the future.

Hindle, best known for the hugely successful Canadian drama *ENG*, is an advocate for improving our education system ? the future depends on it.

As a father of five, ensuring our youth are protected has always been a priority for him.

?The economy will only keep growing if we turn out productive people,? he said. ?We have to take care of our kids.?

As someone who's benefitted from the film and TV?industry, Hindle is in a great position to give back. He's currently vice-president of external affairs for ACTRA?Toronto (the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists), the union representing more than 15,000 performers in the film, radio, television and new media industries in this province.

He sings the praises of the foreign and domestic film and TV industry here in Ontario, one that contributes \$1.2 billion annually. But it requires dedication and constant lobbying to maintain and enhance what we have.

Dealing with all levels of government, Hindle and ACTRA leverage tax credits and incentives to make places like Ontario enticing to film-makers. He hopes any changes in the provincial government won't kill this ?golden goose.?

He observed that every industry needs government on its side, and the entertainment business is no exception. Subsidies, trade pacts and positive relationships among governments and politicians are vital to the health of Ontario's film industry.

Years ago it was the Canadian dollar and beautiful scenery that attractive U.S. movie-makers to our land. Today, Canada's reputation, talent and state-of-the-art studios speak for themselves.

?Ontario is a production destination,??he said. ?We have to maintain that.?

Many Hollywood blockbusters and current TV dramas are filmed in and around Toronto. Business has been booming over the past few years.

Hindle's battle cry is rallying the troops to move forward, so we don't get left behind in this competitive business.

?We can't be complacent,? he said. ?Things can always be improved.?

One of his roles is being a touchstone for young film-makers. Through ACTRA, Hindle is more than happy to provide advice, recommendations and strategies to up-and-coming directors and producers. At the heart of every good production, big or small, are professional actors. Well acted performances are key.

And ensuring quality and consistency in the industry is the union, which has rules to protect workers and employers alike.

Hindle had worked on getting a bill introduced at Queen's Park that would have protected non-union child actors. The entertainment industry is the only one that can employ kids of any age and this legislation is vital to protecting their interests. Unfortunately, the bill got bogged down, and is now shelved during the current election campaign.

But that hasn't deterred or frustrated Hindle.

He beams when he speaks of the incredible Canadian talent ? actors, producers, directors and film crews.

Helping foster such creative prowess are places like Ryerson, George Brown and the Toronto Film School. Hindle regularly engages students, giving them some of his own valuable insights which have come from a career that has spanned more than 45 years.

He jokes that he's building quite a resume of ?shorts? lately.

His advocacy draws him to young people, and seeking young talent.

?We're turning out terrific young actors,??he observed. ?There's fabulous talent here. The climate in Canada is conducive to artists.?

Hindle admits he's ?eternally optimistic??and he's excited about giving back to young, up-and-comers. Call it a legacy if you will, but Hindle wants to contribute something of substance.

?If everyone left some sort of legacy, the world would be a better place.?

Hindle's career path included many twists and turns. The free-spirited teen became a father at 19 and had to earn an income. He ended up being a successful stock broker during lucrative times in the mid-1960s.

But acting kept calling and he gave up the secure job, willing to do anything to land on stage.

His journey to stardom began with an unlikely tool ??a shovel. He had to clean out an abandoned factory in downtown Toronto that became a theatre. He paid his dues and learned by doing. It was an uphill climb, but some creative exaggerations on his first resume got him in the door.

He credits hard work and constant learning from the pros as key ingredients to his success over the years. While he has never been an A-list box office draw, he's a solid, consistent B?actor, enjoying steady TV and film work.

He has no need to fudge his current resume, which contains an impressive lineup of accomplishments. From the landmark Canadian films such as Face-Off, Black?Christmas and Cronenberg's The Brood, to TV dramas like ENG and Paradise Falls, along with guest appearances on almost every prime time drama, Hindle has been blessed.

He's still in demand and has just wrapped up filming the Hallmark TV movie, The Memory Book.

Hindle is part of the Canadian entertainment landscape, and in many ways, helped shape it.

Who better to be one of its main promoters?

And he's still ?plugged in? to the current scene. There are countless stories yet to tell, and Hindle is always looking for a ?truth that I can tell.? He really likes inspiring stories about children.

He's always promoting Canadian content on prime time TV. We're at the point where Canadian productions deserve to be front and centre.

So we need to pressure politicians at all levels to support education, arts and culture.

Just like those memorable high school teachers, we need people with passion and compassion to make a difference today.

Art Hindle fits the bill

