

From the Casting Couch To Fame

film

by Fif Fernandes

Fif Fernandes is an independent filmmaker and producer of Arts Alive television program.

The next Arts Alive program is the FANS Award special which airs November 1 and 6 at 10:30 p.m. on Rogers Community Television.

The December program (December 6 at 9:30 p.m.) features Anna Wyman's *School of Dance Christmas production*, Francis Smily, the internationally renowned designer, Lynne Carrow at The Vancouver International Festival Trade Forum and reporter Rachael Cohen in an interview with Norman Jewison.

Photo: West Vancouver resident and casting director Lynne Carrow

As she leaves the front of the room, she is swarmed by scores of people clamouring for her attention. She stops to shake hands and talk. No, she is not a film star, she is the one who helps make them.

Lynne Carrow, CSA (Casting Society of America), is one of this city's most respected casting directors, and this West Vancouver resident was invited to speak on a panel at the Vancouver International Film Festival's Trade Forum's "Casting Couch" session.

Many would-be actors listened intently to the words of wisdom the panelists had to offer.

GETTING STARTED

Breaking into the industry means getting some training. Whether it is a full-time program, part-time classes or weekend workshops, training is crucial (check the library or the *Georgia Straight* for listings). Carrow strongly recommends getting into amateur theatre, the Fringe Festival and actors co-ops. "Just get out there and do it." And remember: send complimentary tickets to casting directors and agents for your shows.

FINDING AN AGENT

Like any job, you will have to knock on doors (there are about 30 agencies in Vancouver), leave your resume, 8 x 10 black-and-white head shot and a covering letter. If you have not heard back within a week, follow-up. Whether you are starting out, or seeking new representation, make sure you have a good rapport with your agent. Don't be discouraged if the top agents don't take you on. They may not have the time to push for you the way you deserve.

AUDITIONING

Whether you are auditioning for an agent or for the director, be relaxed and self-confident without being cocky. You may be asked to do a two-minute audition piece, a cold reading or perhaps sing. Enjoy the audition. Whatever the outcome of the audition, treat yourself well! It takes a lot of guts to audition. And remember, you may have to go through several auditions to find an agent, but if you do the work, your efforts will pay off.

When you do get an audition for a feature, movie-of-the-week or a series, your agent and Carrow (or another casting director) will work together. You walk into the room and, unlike a job interview, it is better not to shake hands (with the director, producer and casting director). Again, be relaxed and self-confident. If you don't get cast, it may not have anything to do with you.

In the forum Carrow related an incident between a producer who wanted an American actor, but the director was adamant about a Canadian performer. They finally decided to arm-wrestle! The director won.

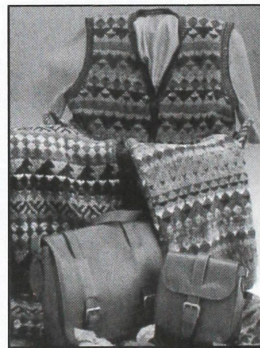
In another situation, Carrow had completed casting an eight million dollar American feature film with Canadian talent. When a major American star was cast in the starring role and the budget rose to \$60 million, the roles were recast. Carrow's hard work was tossed out the window, and the hopes of many of the

Canadian performers with it. But that's show biz.

Carrow works hard in building up indigenous Canadian films and is currently casting an Ann Wheeler film. Her credits are impressive: *Jumanji*, *Time Cop*, *Free Willy III* and *X-Files* (for which she garnered the 1994 Casting Society of America nominee—Best Dramatic Series Casting).

Carrow can relate the challenges actors face, as she originally trained as an actor at the University of Calgary with the founder and guru of Theatresports, Keith Johnstone. She began her career in children's theatre and has been a casting director for 16 years.

Why is she a casting director rather than an actor? "I guess I can live vicariously through the actors, without going through the rejection." ☺



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