



**RICK MERCER TO RECEIVE ACTRA TORONTO'S 2012
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

The 10th Anniversary of the ACTRA Awards in Toronto: February 25, 2012

For Immediate Release: Toronto, October 17, 2011 – ACTRA Toronto is thrilled to announce that Rick Mercer will be the recipient of ACTRA Toronto's 2012 Award of Excellence. The upcoming 2012 celebration marks the 10th Anniversary of the ACTRA Awards in Toronto since their rebirth in 2003.

"Rick Mercer's talents as a comedian, political satirist, actor and writer are, quite simply, astounding," said Heather Allin, President of ACTRA Toronto, "and his creative accomplishments are amplified by his charitable work and activism on behalf of performers and Canadian culture. We are proud to honour Rick."

Mercer burst onto the Toronto scene in the early '90s with his successful one-man stage shows, penned at the age of 21. He followed up with tremendous success on television with *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, *Made in Canada*, and *Talking to Americans*. In 2004 he was described by *Maclean's* as "one of television's most bankable commodities." His reach has grown to weekly audiences of over a million on CBC's *Rick Mercer Report*. Along the way, he has garnered over 25 Gemini Awards, a Governor General's Performing Arts Award in 2004, 7 Canadian Comedy Awards, 3 Writers Guild of Canada Awards and the Sir Peter Ustinov Comedy Award. He holds honorary degrees from six universities.

His charitable work includes Spread the Net which provides mosquito nets to children in Africa, Casey House and the Walk for Life which raises funds for people living with HIV/AIDS and It Gets Better, Canada, a video campaign to help LGBT youth overcome bullying. He has entertained Canadian Forces troops in Afghanistan and is the sole civilian recipient of the Canadian Arms Forces Commander Land Force, Command Commendation. Recently, he became an Honorary Patron for Hope Air which arranges free flights for low-income Canadians to get to healthcare.

For ACTRA, he has leant his considerable celebrity to our fight for Canadian culture since 2003, when he was quoted as saying, "It's hard to believe Canada could make an even bigger mess of its broadcasting system, but that's what we're about to do, if things don't change. We are surrendering the most powerful medium we have. If we don't change course right now, Canadians will be listening to and watching Americans 24 hours a day, seven days a week on every channel they can click to."

"Rick, of course, doesn't need any encouragement to take an interest in politics," adds Heather Allin. "But, at ACTRA Toronto, we think all Canadians should be grateful that he does."

The annual ACTRA Awards in Toronto recognize outstanding performances by ACTRA Toronto members and celebrate accomplishment and excellence in our industry. Three juried awards will be presented in addition to the Award of Excellence: the ACTRA Awards for Outstanding Performance, Female and Outstanding Performance, Male, and the ACTRA Award for Outstanding Performance, Voice. The 2012 ACTRA Awards in Toronto will take place on Saturday, February 25, 2012, at The Carlu in Toronto.

ACTRA Toronto is the largest organization within ACTRA, representing over 15,000 of Canada's 21,000 professional performers working in the English-language recorded media in Canada. As an advocate for Canadian culture since 1943, ACTRA is a member-driven organization that continues to secure rights and respect for the work of professional performers.

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