

# Andrew Chown

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**T**hese days, humility and modesty are not words commonly associated with actors but then again local thespian, Andrew Chown, is not your average young man.

A graduate of St. Thomas Aquinas School in Oakville sporting a love of Shakespeare and classical theatre, the 18 year old is now well on his way to making acting a large and permanent part of his life.

He is determined to make a career as a working actor in Canada and has begun this journey with an education at the National Theatre School in Montreal.

"I am lucky to have a passion and to be going to the National Theatre School," said Chown. "It's not like going to university, it's specific training, but I feel very lucky that I found something I like and to have the chance to go to this school."

Typical for the modest Chown, he did not expect to get into the National Theatre School. While the audition experience was nerve-wracking, it was also a good experience for him.

"I was amazed at how professional and how much fun the auditions were, they gave a sense of how much is left to learn," he said.

Despite being a relative newcomer to the trials characteristic of theatre life, Chown's ability to nail such a critical audition is not much of a surprise to those who have worked with him.

"He's a very talented man," said Edward Darayani of Stratford's Shakespeare School, which Chown attended during his high school summer breaks. "I expect to be working with him when he's finished."

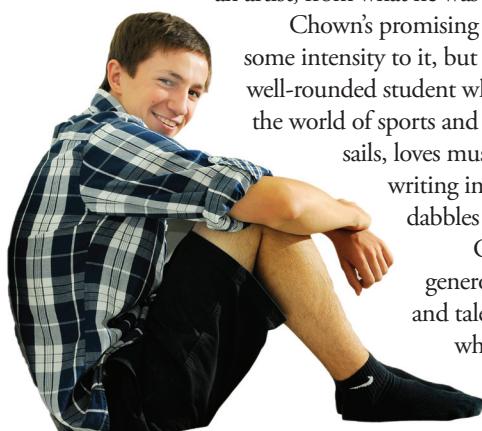
Darayani, whose extensive credits include work as director, assistant director, actor, voice actor and teacher with Stratford, CBC, SummerStage Theatre in Colorado, National Theatre School, Humber College, George Brown College and the National Ballet School, understands well what it takes to succeed in the acting business.

"Andrew is probably one of the hardest working students I've encountered."

That work ethic will pay off for Chown in the coming years at the National Theatre School, as will his experience at Stratford's Shakespeare School. "We're creating for them, a slice of what theatre school is like, what is expected in first year," said Darayani of the programs. They're a lot of fun, but they're also tough; full days of study from 9:30 in the morning to 5 in the evening and then a show at night to top it all off. The students delve into the workings of Shakespeare as an artist, from what he was creating, which was theatre.

Chown's promising start as an actor clearly has some intensity to it, but it's not all he does. He's a well-rounded student who bridges the divide between the world of sports and the arts: he plays basketball, sails, loves music, finds photography and writing interesting, plays piano and dabbles in filmmaking.

Chown has been described as generous, genuine, hardworking and talented. He also understands what dedication means and his mother Mary Ellen, knows this first hand. She



## sets the stage



Andrew Chown was the recipient of the 2010 Performing Arts Award at Cogeco Stars Among Us.

was struck by the knowledge that Andrew was going in with eyes wide open.

"He told me, 'You can't go in with a backup plan, you've got to go with both feet in,'" said Mary Ellen. "He just simply loves theatre."

Supportive of Andrew's choice, they understand calling. "We're very proud of Andrew. This is his thing, it's a passion that he's developed on his own," she said.

Both Chown and his mother point to positive experiences within the school system and from the community as important in the forging of an artist. Both also noted the positive effect of Chown's participation in Oakville's *Cogeco Stars Among Us* arts awards.

"It was a wonderful experience applying for the arts award," remarked Mary Ellen. "It was a piece of the puzzle that helped support him in his choice."

For Chown himself, the awards experience offered a layered effect. "The awards were a good stepping stone for me, it gave me confidence, with that monologue in particular, and it helped me get into the Stratford program – thank you to the Oakville Arts Council," he said.

In addition, Chown was able to make connections to other artists and engage in the kind of creative cross-pollination that is pure gold to the arts sector.

"I met Peter at the awards and it led to doing his play," said Chown, referring to Peter Gruner and his play *Laundromat*, also a winner in the Literary Arts 2010 category.

What does Chown himself think theatre contributes to society? "I'm young and inexperienced and will probably look back on myself and think differently," muses Chown. "I think that a good story in theatre has the ability to make people empathize and the ability to empathize may be something that is getting lost. Theatre can change lives really."

*For more information about theatre events and groups in Oakville, visit [www.oakvillearts.com](http://www.oakvillearts.com). If you are interested in applying for Cogeco Stars Among Us, look for application forms on our website in December 2011.*