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Patrick and Kyra Sabongui are starting an acting school in New Westminster for video and tv acting.

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GETTING IN THE ACT

By Wanda Chow - New Westminster News Leader

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Patrick Sabongui still recalls coming out of his first professional film audition in his hometown of Montreal, all pumped about his performance.

He called his agent and asked what the casting directors had thought.

“Uh, yeah, they said you were very charismatic and you blasted them,” the agent said. “They could tell you were from a theatre background because you screamed a lot of your dialogue. That’s what the microphone’s for.”

Sabongui, now living in New Westminster, can’t help but laugh at the memory.

“I was probably all gesture-y and all over the place,” he added, waving his arms wildly.

He and his wife, fellow actor Kyra Zagorsky, hope to help aspiring actors avoid such embarrassment with their new acting school, ACT Vancouver, which will specialize in training for the film and

television industry.

Both Sabongui and Zagorsky have masters degrees in acting from the University of California (Irvine), which they both attended on scholarships and where they gained experience teaching undergraduate classes.

Sabongui's film credits include the Persian general in 300 and roles in Day the Earth Stood Still and The Terminal. His TV credits include parts on 24, Smallville and a recurring role as Kanaan on Stargate: Atlantis.

In between starting a family, Zagorsky has also landed roles in Stargate: Atlantis and films such as Green Season.

The couple moved to New Westminster from Los Angeles a year and a half ago to give their young family—daughter Ashé, three, and son Bodhi, 10 months—a healthier environment to grow up in.

They discovered an underserved market, especially outside of downtown Vancouver, for actors' training geared towards film and TV.

“It is the industry in Vancouver,” Zagorsky noted.

But there are major differences between training an actor to perform on stage and to do so in front of a camera.

In theatre, actors have a rehearsal process that lasts several weeks until the production becomes a finely tuned machine. Actors aim to recreate moments achieved during the rehearsal, she explained.

In contrast, film and television is more about capturing a moment on camera.

“You do all the work before the director says ‘action,’” Sabongui said. Film actors have to be prepared in such a way that when they're in front of the camera, they react almost unconsciously.

“You create a version of a continuous performance even though it's shot out of sequence,” he said. And you have to be able to pick up a performance at any point in a sequence.

Then there are technical details that they need to know, from how to perform for different shots, from wide angles to close-ups, and blocking. “When you're on set is not the time to start understanding that stuff,” he said. ACT Vancouver will offer classes for all age ranges, right down to workshops for toddlers where participants can get comfortable being in front of a movie camera and parents learn how to get their kids started in the industry.

When students are ready, Sabongui said, the school plans to invite agents, casting directors, producers and directors to lead workshops and attend mini-showcases.

For more information on ACT Vancouver, call 604-628-6519 or visit www.actvancouver.ca. Classes start Sept. 22.

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