

Mother and son duo grow in Seed

SEED: Sitcom gave William Ainscough and Nicole Oliver the chance to act together

Première

Seed

When and where: Citytv,
8:30 p.m. Mondays

GLEN SCHAEFER
THE PROVINCE

The mother and son acting duo of Nicole Oliver and William Ainscough were juggling jobs for much of last fall, as nine-year-old William scored a lead role in the new Halifax-filmed TV comedy series *Seed*.

The show stars Toronto's Adam Korson as a happy-go-lucky bartender who is reunited with the offspring of an anonymous sperm donation he made a decade earlier.

Vancouver's Ainscough co-stars as Billy, the offspring in question.

"For my kid to want to do what we do for a living, it's all around them so it's not that big a stretch," says Oliver, who also has seven-year-old son Grady with her musician husband Chris Ainscough.

William had got a taste for acting by doing voice-over work for cartoons — something that keeps his mother busy as well — and last September he won the role in *Seed*, which meant his mother had to clear her schedule to accompany him.

Oliver had just finished work on the upcoming Vancouver-filmed crime series *Rogue* when they headed east.

Then it turned out there was the *Seed* role of Billy's prim teacher to be cast.

"When the producers figured out I was his mom, they were like, oh, great, OK perfect," says Oliver, who found herself playing opposite her son on two *Seed* episodes as teacher Mrs. Anderson.

"It was really special to work with him, something I don't take for granted, but it was very surreal — I look across at this little boy I'm working with and it's my son."

She had to stifle the proud parent in her — the fictional Mrs. Anderson has issues with fun-loving Billy.

"She's not a big fan of Billy, she thinks he's a little bit of a misfit," Oliver says.

"His quirkiness is what makes him endearing, but for Mrs. Anderson it's a little annoying. She's probably a tad unfulfilled."

William is back at his own Vancouver elementary school, now in Grade Four, after *Seed* wrapped in December.

Mother and son sit down for a chat at lunch hour, as William swings his feet under a chair, rubs his nose, and



William Ainscough plays Adam Korson's recently rediscovered son in *Seed*. With his curly hair, Ainscough fit the role perfectly — CITYTV



Actor William Ainscough, 9, and his mom, Nicole Oliver, both have roles in the new sitcom *Seed*, filmed in Halifax. STUART DAVIS / PNG

makes quick work of chocolate milk and a ham sandwich.

The *Seed* role was part of a double whammy for William — he was also cast this summer in the Vancouver-filmed thriller *Hidden*, which wrapped as *Seed* was about to start filming.

That film, due out this year, stars Alexander Skarsgard (*True Blood*)

and Britain's Andrea Riseborough in a story about human survivors sheltered in a bunker from some unspecified plague.

But you'll get nothing out of William.

"It's a non-disclosure agreement, I can't talk about it," he says. "You're not allowed to tell 'cause it's a surprise."

With his curly dark hair and rumpled manner, he's the mini-me to *Seed* star Korson. The show's producers clearly hit the jackpot when they found him.

William says he likes being funny. "I do weird voices, I just naturally do those things."

His parents might have seen this coming.

Oliver's husband works as a composer for film and TV, and the pair first met at the 1998 Toronto Film Festival debut of the B.C.-filmed indie thriller *The Falling*, in which Oliver starred while Ainscough did the music.

When her boys were small, Oliver hosted the Vancouver reality TV series *Crash Test Mommy* and kept busy with voice-over work, returning to onscreen acting when the boys were older.

Oliver was onset in Halifax as William's chaperon, but for the days when they were both filming, her mother came out from Toronto to help out.

Actresses have to be in hair and makeup hours before little boys do, so William would sleep in when his mom had a 5:30 a.m. call time.

"There's a lot more work needed

on my face than on his," Oliver says. "Hair and makeup would rub his head, give him noogies and he was ready to go. His makeup consisted of chapstick."

Mostly, Oliver was off-camera watching as William filmed 42 of the show's 52 filming days.

"I'm an actor so I get this business, but as a parent my challenge is, how do I keep him as normal as possible in this incredibly abnormal world? To just enjoy it and not take it too seriously? Because everything can change in a heartbeat."

She notes that William's experience is unusual so far for any actor, adult or child — he hasn't yet auditioned for a role he didn't get.

"It came on so suddenly, it wasn't predetermined.

"He's had tremendous success quite quickly, as opposed to lots of rejection and getting a thick skin," she says.

"We've had a talk about that. Everything just seemed to line up — the characters, who he was. He's just being him, not trying to be anyone else, and that's good advice for any actor."

glschaefer@theprovince.com
twitter.com/glschaefer