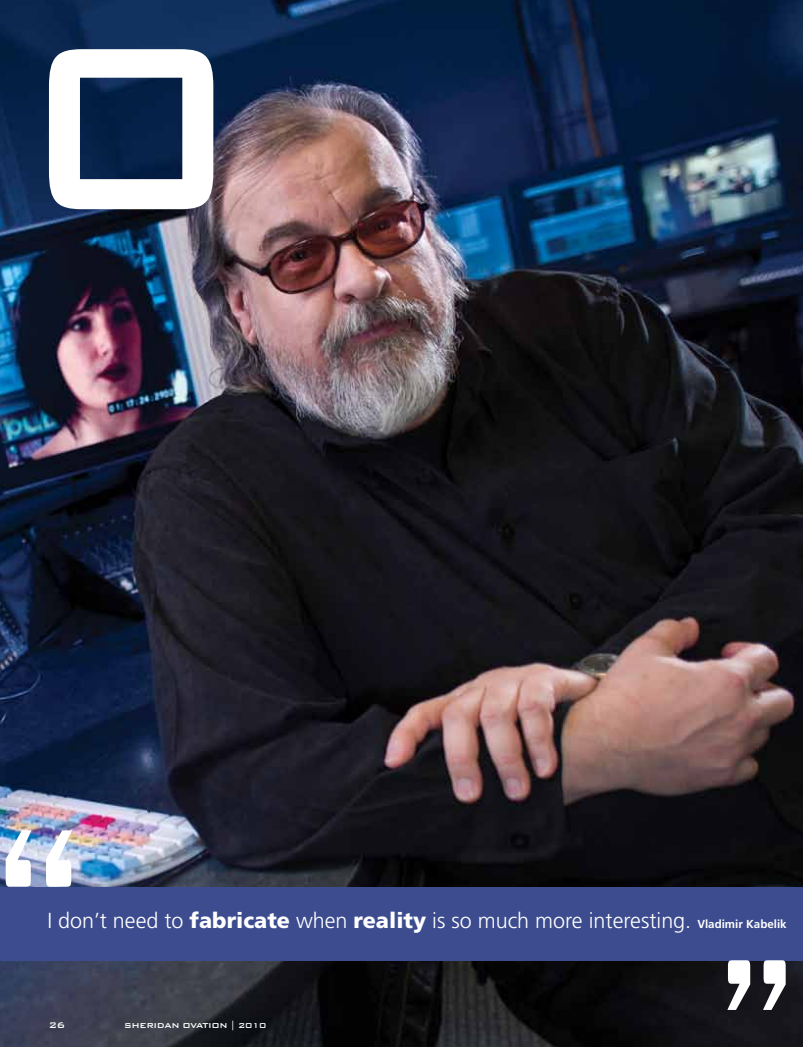


## VLADIMIR KABELIK

*Life Through the Lens*By Nathan Howes, *Journalism – Print '11*

I don't need to **fabricate** when **reality** is so much more interesting. Vladimir Kabelik

When people ask Vladimir Kabelik why he came to Canada, he has a difficult time responding. "Either we will not talk about it, or we need the whole evening and a bottle of red wine," says the filmmaker and Sheridan professor. "It's a long story."

He did, however, agree to share some background about his upbringing and his latest documentary, *So Far From Home* – even without the red wine.

Kabelik's story begins in Czechoslovakia, where he was born and raised. He studied filmmaking at FAMU, one of the oldest film schools in Europe, earning both BAA and MFA degrees. After graduating, he was hired by Short Film Studios in Prague, where he specialized in documentary filmmaking. The future looked bright. But in 1981, the strain of living under an oppressive communist regime led Kabelik to covertly flee the country with his wife and two young sons (a daughter was later born in Canada).

The family ended up as refugees in Switzerland for a year before emigrating to Canada where career opportunities in film and television beckoned. Kabelik landed on his feet in Toronto and was soon producing shows for CBC, TVO and Vision TV. Introduced to Sheridan through his CBC crew, Kabelik eventually joined the Media Arts faculty at Sheridan. That was 25 years ago.

He has overseen many documentary projects since then, but his most recent film took him back to those early years of upheaval and uncertainty. *So Far From Home* documents the stories of five exiled journalists from some of the world's conflict zones. The film offers a unique window into their experiences, their efforts to come to terms with their past and their struggle to build a future in Canada. It was written and directed by Kabelik, who spent almost three years with the journalists, learning about them and seeing first hand a reflection of his own past life in Czechoslovakia.

"I think the subject is very timely. Look at the world around you. There's so much talk of freedom, truth, hope and democracy, but we still see a lot of oppression," says Kabelik. "It's almost like a mirror into your place in the world and the position of others."

*So Far From Home* aired last fall on OMNI Television, which financed its production. The documentary was also screened at the Royal Ontario Museum and at Sheridan's Trafalgar Campus. It has since been nominated for a Golden Sheaf Award at the Yorkton Film Festival and received the Special Jury Award in Political/International Issues at the Houston Worldfest Film Festival held in April. One-third of the people involved in the film's production are from Sheridan, many of them graduates,

including Stephen Barden, Marc Cohen, Michael Burshtyn and Jake Chirico.

Like virtually every profession today, filmmaking is going through change and transformation, says Kabelik. "Developments in technology could bring three-dimensional reality and interactivity into our living rooms sooner than we think."

But regardless of the technological advances, filmmakers still must find their own voice to create truly exceptional documentaries, he adds. "It's not as much about the films as it is about one's philosophy of life. The ability to put life onto film requires experience. I don't need to fabricate when reality is so much more interesting."