



**J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD**

P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

## ESSENTIAL READING



"This powerful musical explores the residential school experience from the point of view of siblings Tommy and Julia and their friends. The play exposes the wrongs done while celebrating the resilience of the Indigenous cultural spirit." — *Prairie Books Now*

"This is a brave work, and a starting point for important conversations... See it." — *The Georgia Straight*

"Powerful and profound... This is theatre that resonates on a deep emotional level." — *Ottawa Citizen*

"*Children of God* is must-see theatre for Canadians." — *Globe & Mail*

July's featured book is Corey Payette's *Children of God*, which tells the story of an Oji-Cree family whose children are taken away to a residential school in Northern Ontario. Julia and Tommy struggle to survive in the school's harsh religious environment that is determined to rob them of their identities, while their mother, Rita, never stops trying to get them back. Despite the devastating impact of this experience on all their lives, the story moves toward redemption. *Children of God* offers a thrilling blend of ancient traditions and contemporary realities, celebrating resilience and the power of the Indigenous cultural spirit.

In light of the recent and ongoing discoveries of unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools, this play is a timely opportunity for both education and reflection.



[Trailer](#) for the Urban Ink production of *Children of God*.

[See More](#)

## THE INTERVIEW

Julia Lederer is a playwright and actor from Toronto. [With Love and a Major Organ](#) premiered at the 2012 Toronto Fringe Festival where it was “Patron’s Pick,” “Best of Fringe,” and named “Outstanding New Play” by *NOW Magazine*. In 2015, it had its US premiere at Chicago’s Strawdog Theatre. Julia’s other plays include: *Frame*, *Reality Theatre* (winner of Driftwood Theatre’s Jury Prize), *Boxed In* (Hysteria Festival/Buddies in Bad Times), and her first play for young audiences, *It’s Nothing*, developed as part of Roseneath Theatre’s inaugural Playwrights Unit in 2014.



### **What do you like most about being a playwright?**

I love being surprised by what someone else brings to something I've written, whether as an artist or audience member. I love to build things: stories, characters, worlds — and with theatre, they can grow in so many different directions, far beyond my own skill set and brain and experience. There is something so magical about

that.

**What's the best piece of playwriting advice that you've ever received?**

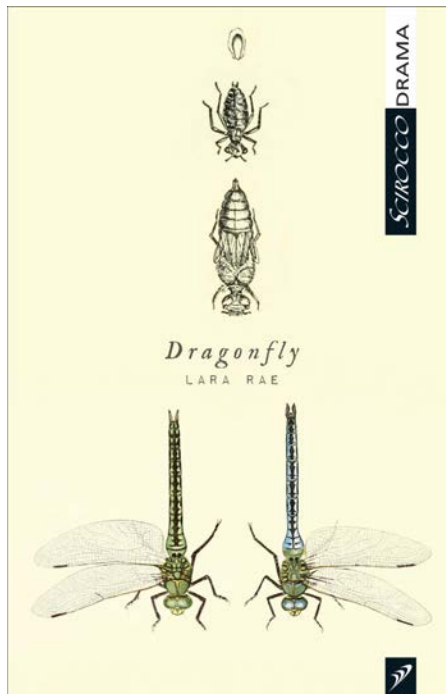
To admire and learn from other writers' work, but don't try and do what they're doing. Do what you do. Write like you. Have the courage and gall to write with your own voice no matter what is being produced in any moment.

**Do you have a favourite memory in the theatre you could share — either at one of your own plays or someone else's?**

With any production I have favourite memories, whether I've been there for the rehearsal process or just on the day, or even just watching on a computer. More recently and specifically, R.H. Thomson was in a staged reading of my play, *U-R-U*. He found a discarded construction helmet backstage and told Heather [Marie Annis, who directed] and I that his entire character was in that helmet. Could he wear it? It seems all three of us have a shared love of props. (YES. He wore it).

[Read the Full Interview](#)

## CLASS NOTES



Lara Rae's *Dragonfly* tells the raw and heartfelt story of the author's half-century long (and counting) gender odyssey. *Dragonfly* presents us with two actors who illuminate the inner life of a transgender woman from her Scottish childhood in the 1960s to the present day. Matching our inside to our outside is always hard, but for transgender people it's often a matter of life and death. Stripping away the visual cues that both define and imprison transgender people, *Dragonfly* is a call to all of us to forge creativity from chaos.

*Dragonfly* is available in both [paperback](#) and [ebook](#).

Brian Drader, Executive Director, Manitoba Association of Playwrights, on how he uses *Dragonfly* in his classroom:

**In what course do you teach *Dragonfly*?**

**Why did you choose to use *Dragonfly* in your course?**

I worked with Lara dramaturgically on the play, so I know it well. But beyond that, it's a beautiful story beautifully written; it's a superb example of blank verse inviting collaboration with designers, actors, and a director; the nature of the story encourages my students to explore personal and autobiographical subject matter, and it exposes them to an historically marginalized voice.

**How do you use Lara Rae's *Dragonfly* with your class?**

I start my Playwriting One course with discussions, reading and unpacking plays. Before we dive in and start *writing* plays, we explore the form on the page with scripts that have proven themselves on stage, in production. What makes them good plays? Why do they work theatrically? Ms. Rae's play satisfies these prompts and generates deep and thoughtful conversations.

***Dragonfly* shares the author's experience as a transgender woman. Could you reflect on why you think it's important for students to study the work of a transgender author?**

Our youth, especially our artistically inclined youth, are so much more sophisticated and mature than we sometimes give them credit for, particularly as it pertains to issues of social justice and inclusion. My students accepted the introduction of *Dragonfly* onto the curriculum not only with deep sensitivity but, frankly, with an attitude of "Yes, of course we should be looking at this play." There was nothing sensational about it; it was approached with the same energy and interest and investment the other plays were, and — I share openly — received the same scrutiny as the other plays. The fact that Lara was a trans author was second to the fact that she was a playwright. I loved that! Of course, it's important to expose our young artists to historically marginalized voices, but it's encouraging to see that our young artists are already there. The trans author in question is a playwright with a story to tell, just like all the other playwrights. The sooner we commit to turning that corner — giving equal voice to all our storytellers — the sooner we will arrive at the destination we're all craving: storytelling as an expression of the rich mosaic that we call humanity. Simply put, *Dragonfly* gives my students permission to tell their own stories.

**NEW RELEASES**



[See More](#)

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

*Beneath Springhill: The Maurice Ruddick Story* by Beau Dixon:

[Festival Players](#), July 21—Aug 1, 2021

[Vancouver Arts Club](#), August 5—29, 2021

*Café Daughter* by Kenneth T. Williams:

[Blyth Festival](#), August 25—September 5, 2021

*Chase the Ace* by Mark Crawford:

[Blyth Festival](#), September 8—September 19, 2021

*Serving Elizabeth* by Marcia Johnson:

[Stratford Festival](#), August 28—September 26, 2021

[Thousand Islands Playhouse](#), October 7—30, 2021

*Miss Caledonia* by Melody Johnson:

[Thousand Islands Playhouse](#), November 4—28, 2021

*The Runner* by Christopher Morris:

[Tarragon Theatre](#), January of 2022

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), March 31—April 16, 2022

*Controlled Damage* by Andrea Scott:

[Grand Theatre](#), February 22—March 12, 2022

*Light* by Rosa Labordé:

[Tarragon Theatre](#), February—March 2022

*Orphan Song* by Sean Dixon:

[Tarragon Theatre](#), March—April 2022

*The Herd* by Kenneth T. Williams:

[Citadel Theatre](#), April 2—24, 2022

[Tarragon Theatre](#), May—June 2022

The film version of Kate Hewlett's *The Swearing Jar*, starring Kathleen Turner, Adelaide Clemons, and Patrick J. Adams, has a release date of Spring 2022.

## IN MEMORIAM

The Winnipeg theatre community mourns the recent death of Chris Johnson, who had an enormous impact during his many years as professor of drama at the University of Manitoba.

The Halifax theatre community lost dramaturge, actor, director, and writer Jenny

Munday on June 10. In her capacity as the Artistic Director of Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre, Jenny worked with many of our authors.

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