

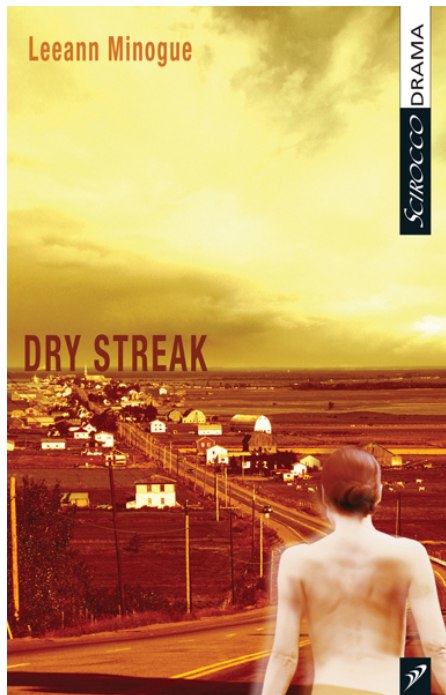


J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD

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

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



"Though the play is uproariously funny, it also makes poignant points about families and priorities and change and home, and viewers will leave simultaneously thinking about these deeper issues and chuckling about their favourite moments from the play. *Dry Streak* represents a great achievement for the arts in Saskatchewan, and it is well worth the time to visit Stony Valley. And make sure you pray for rain." — *The Sheaf*

"It's *Corner Gas* for the live stage, with a little more wit." —Entertain This Thought

"Minogue has created a critic-proof play." — *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*

August's featured book is the comedy [Dry Streak](#) by Leeann Minogue. When the play begins, Kate, a young woman from the city, moves with her boyfriend to his family's Saskatchewan farm. A vegetarian who listens to punk rock, she is not exactly the kind of girl John Richards's parents had expected him to bring home. After months of unrelenting heat, dust, and the endless complaints of everyone around her, Kate makes a very public promise: if only the drought will break, she'll run naked through the streets of town. When the media picks up the story, things get interesting in Stony Valley, Saskatchewan!

Life on a Saskatchewan farm has changed a lot since 1988, the year *Dry Streak* is set. But despite cell phones, precision seeding technology, and GPS steering,

weather still rules this way of life. In 2021, farmers across the prairies have been drawing comparisons to the late 80s while watching their crops dry up during this year's hot, dry summer.

Dry Streak is a favourite of both professional and community theatres. It was nominated for a Saskatchewan Book Award in 2006.

[See More](#)

THE INTERVIEW

Mark Crawford's plays include *New Canadian Curling Club*, *Stag and Doe*, *Bed and Breakfast*, *The Birds and the Bees*, and *Chase the Ace*, as well as a play for young audiences, *Boys, Girls and Other Mythological Creatures*. Mark's plays have become some of the most frequently produced plays in Canada, and have been performed across the country, often breaking box office records. As an actor, he has performed on stages across the country. Mark grew up on his family's farm near Glencoe, Ontario, studied theatre at University of Toronto and Sheridan College, and now lives in Stratford.



What do you like best about being a playwright?

The collaboration. Whether it's working with a dramaturge, a director, or a group of actors, I love collaborating with other theatre artists to make a script better. Writing plays is not about crafting a perfect PDF on your computer; it's about creating a text to be performed. I don't necessarily agree with or incorporate every piece of feedback I get, but I love hearing it, bouncing ideas around, and letting all of that information create a stronger, clearer, more dynamic play.

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

"Playwriting is rewriting." — Miles Potter

Who or what do you count among your inspirations and influences?

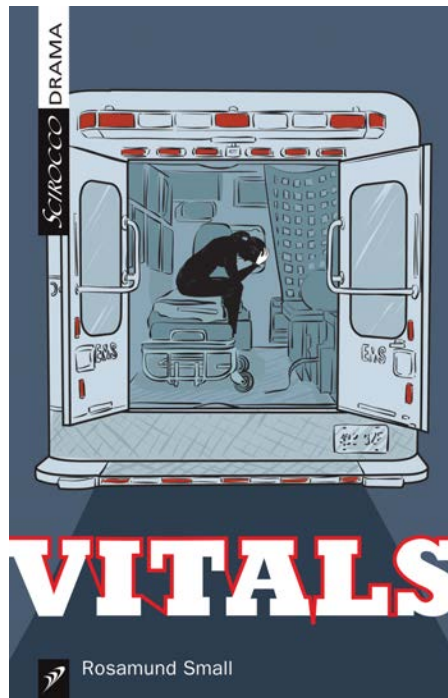
I get inspired by many things, but often the impetus to write a play is actually about three or four ideas that coalesce into one bigger idea. I might be inspired by an article I've read, and a story I've heard, and a type of play I think I'd like to write, and a bigger issue or question I'm interested in exploring. I'm also inspired by audiences:

Who are they? What is going on in their world? What are the stories or conversations they might be interested in at the theatre?

[Read the Full Interview](#)

CLASS NOTES

*Want to share your story about how you use JGS titles in your classes?
Let us know. We'd love to talk to you!*



Vitals is a solo show about Anna, a Toronto paramedic, whose daily routine is life, death, bureaucracy. Based on interviews conducted with EMS workers, *Vitals* weaves together a canvas of poignant and disturbing emergency stories and explores their impact on first responders.

Rosamund Small is an award-winning playwright and Artistic Associate at Outside the March Theatre. Her plays include *Vitals*, *Maven*, *Sisters*, and *TomorrowLove*. She also writes for television.

We asked Rosamund about her experiences visiting post-secondary classrooms.

You've done several classroom visits recently. Can you tell us a little bit about them?

I had the pleasure of visiting groups of students at the University of Toronto, Waterloo University, and the University of New Brunswick this year, and in previous years I have spoken to students at the University of Guelph, Humber, Sheridan, Brock, George Brown and Windsor. Many of these classes were studying my plays, but through very different lenses. One class read my play *Vitals* through the lens of studying public health; another sci-fi English class read *TomorrowLove*, my series of short plays. Other classes focused on the craft of playwriting, and other classes were theatre acting or producing classes, mounting one of my plays. I've also had the pleasure of speaking to continuing ed classes that study plays out of sheer joy, or as part of a creative writing class.

Why is it important for students to engage with working writers?

Visiting classrooms is always an incredible gift, a way to show students that the

document they hold—one of my scripts—is meant to be a living template for a gathering of people experiencing and creating live drama (or over Zoom, as the case may be). I remember university as a fairly “dusty” time—the works we studied felt not *alive*, and I have a great desire for live connection. I hope my visits with students help them feel that liveness.

I find exchanging ideas with students incredibly valuable. They often have deep political insights into my work, and how they want to engage with it. They also have curiosities about behind-the-scenes stories, how a first draft gets written, and how a play gets produced and rehearsed. It’s always a joy to lift the curtain on these backstage stories of joy and struggle. I find it satisfying to bring relief to students who want to write but find it intimidating—I do too! And sharing process and the challenges I have faced, I hope, makes them feel better and more curious about their own creation processes.

When you were a student, did you ever have professional theatre people come in to speak to your classes? If so, how does that affect what you do with students?

I have many memories of writers visiting my university and even once my high school classroom. For me, these were life-changing interactions that broadened my horizons, helped me learn what opportunities existed in Toronto and elsewhere for a young artist, and fed my creative curiosity. They also turned into professional relationships later in life.

What are students most interested in hearing about? What kinds of questions do they ask?

I find students usually ask a version of *How did you do that?* when I visit. How did I mount a play? How did I research my subject? How did I get started? I think they are instinctually looking for paths forward to emulate, and they desire honesty about creative work, life in the arts, and the nature of the creative process. I find they also want to engage with their political questions around identity, sexuality, and more. I love all of these questions, as to me, they indicate a feeling of curiosity and safety.

Many of our authors are available for classroom visits, in person or via Zoom. If there's an author you'd like to invite to your class, [contact us](#) for more information.

BACK TO SCHOOL



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:
[Lighthouse Festival Theatre](#), July 23–August 8, 2021
[Theatre Orangeville](#), August 11–20, 2021
[Festival Players of Prince Edward County](#), August 24–29, 2021
[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 Clemens, and Patrick J. Adams, has a release date of Spring 2022.

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