



J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD

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

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING

SCIROCCO DRAMA



Mother Tongue

Betty Quan

"A poetic and often moving exploration of the aching desire to overcome separations." — *Georgia Straight*

"*Mother Tongue* by Vancouver playwright Betty Quan is one of the most beautiful and moving plays to have appeared this Toronto season."
— *Classical 96 & 103 FM*

Mother Tongue was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama and Vancouver's Jessie Award for Best New Play.



Our featured title for October is the family drama ***Mother Tongue*** by Betty Quan.

Mimi Chan is a second-generation Canadian whose widowed mother speaks only Cantonese; her brother Steve is deaf and signs, in English. Mimi is the communication bridge between family members—until the day she receives a scholarship to do graduate work at Queen's University and decides to leave home.

This innovative play weaves together Cantonese, English, and sign language as it examines family loyalties, youthful dreams, and generational and cultural differences.

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THE INTERVIEW

Eric Woolfe is an actor, playwright, puppeteer, and magician, and the Artistic Director of Eldritch Theatre, a Toronto theatre company specializing in horror plays using puppetry, live actors, and parlour magic. Woolfe's work for Eldritch Theatre includes [*Dear Boss*](#), [*Space Opera Zero*](#), [*The Harrowing of Brimstone McReedy*](#), [*The Haunted Medicine Show*](#), [*Madhouse Variations*](#), [*The Babysitter*](#), and [*The Eldritch Plays: The Strange & Eerie*](#), [*Memoirs of Billy*](#), [*Wuthergloom*](#), [*Grendelmaus*](#), and [*Sideshow of the Damned*](#). He has been nominated for more than a dozen Dora Mavor Moore Awards, both as an actor and playwright. He is also a three-time nominee for the prestigious KM Hunter Memorial Award. Eric lives in Toronto.



What do you like most about being a playwright?

Honestly, the very best part of being a playwright is being able to lock myself in a basement office for days on end, without having to face other people, and say that I am working and not merely giving in to my anti-social tendencies.

Aside from that, I am very fond of storytelling, and of conquering the challenges of staging scenes in ways that may have never been seen before. I believe that the subject matter we are used to seeing explored in the theatre is remarkably limited. How many plays have we seen about failed love affairs, or broken families gathering in a kitchen for a special event, or political essays disguised as drama? I'm much more excited by, say, alien invasions, or undead monsters, or how average people deal with demented elder gods rising from their slumber to consume humanity. I'm not saying there isn't a place for, I dunno, a two-act domestic drama about estranged siblings at their father's funeral. I just think the evening would be more entertaining if the father gets up out of his coffin and tries to eat them.

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

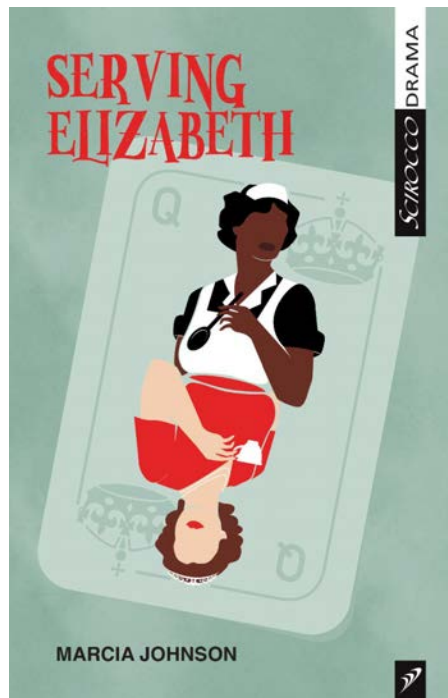
If I am confined to playwrights for my answer, I will say Charles Ludlam, Charles Busch, Henrik Ibsen, and Arthur Miller. But the list really needs to include EC

Comics, George Romero, HP Lovecraft, Stuart Gordon, Universal Horror Films, The Grand Guignol Theatre of Paris, carnivals and sideshows, Buster Keaton, Sam Raimi, travelling medicine shows, fake spiritualists, sidewalk pitchmen, and Raymond Chandler. There are also some magicians who attempted to rethink magic as a narrative art form who have been very influential to my work, like Christian Chelman, Ricky Jay, and Eugene Burger.

[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!



Serving Elizabeth begins in Kenya in 1952, during the fateful royal visit of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. Mercy, a restaurant owner, is approached to cook for the royal couple. As a staunch anti-monarchist, how can she take the job?

Decades later, Tia, a Kenyan-Canadian film student interning in the London office of a production company doing a series about Queen Elizabeth, discovers that there may be more to the story of the royal visit than we have been led to believe. Although she's been a fan of princesses all her life, Tia learns that fairy tales and real life are very different things.

Karen Fricker, associate professor and undergraduate program officer in the Department of Dramatic Arts at Brock University, and theatre critic at the *Toronto Star*, tells us how she uses *Serving Elizabeth* in the classroom.

In which course do you teach *Serving Elizabeth*?

I teach *Serving Elizabeth* in the course DART 1P91: Introduction to Theatre and Performance at Brock University.

Why did you choose to use Marcia Johnson's play in your course?

This is a big first-year lecture course in which I introduce students to contemporary Canadian theatre and performance, and to critical theories. When I heard about and later saw *Serving Elizabeth* at Stratford, I thought it would be a great addition to the course.

How do you use *Serving Elizabeth* with your class?

I have paired the play with reader-response and reception theory; that is, with questions of how a reader or spectator's identity and experience shapes how they respond to art works. Someone who is an arch-royalist is going to have a different perspective on this play than someone who comes from a former colony. I'm looking forward to digging into this with the students and hearing their reactions to the play, from their specific generational, gendered, sexed, and national/regional/ethnic perspectives. An additional layer here is that Marcia Johnson wrote the play very much in reaction to a cultural text – *The Crown*. So we can see the play as a reader/viewer's response in and of itself. The play could also nicely pair with postcolonial theory, and I expect that perspective will inform our discussions as well.

***NOW Magazine* wrote that *Serving Elizabeth* is “Richly detailed with urgent ideas about representation, privilege, and cultural insensitivity.” Why is it important for students to explore and engage with this kind of material?**

Because it's where they live! In my experience, today's undergraduates are deeply attuned to questions of representation, privilege, and appropriation. I am hoping that their interest in such concerns will help them engage with this play.

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.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY IS OCTOBER 10



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COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

Hindsight by Alix Sobler

[Fault Line Theatre](#), Paradise Factory, NYC, September 18–October 23, 2021

Serving Elizabeth by Marcia Johnson

[Thousand Islands Playhouse](#), Gananoque, ON, October 7–30, 2021

[Belfry Theatre](#), Victoria, BC, November 23–December 19, 2021

Spinning You Home by Sally Stubbs

[Jericho Arts Centre](#), Vancouver, BC, October 7–October 31, 2021

Welcome to My Home by Falen Johnson (reading)

[Her Words Festival](#), [Soulpepper Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, October 24, 2021

True by Rosa Labordé

[Rendezvous with Madness Festival](#), [Workman Arts](#), Toronto, ON, October 29–November 5, 2021

Miss Caledonia by Melody Johnson

[Thousand Islands Playhouse](#), Gananoque, ON, November 4–28, 2021

The Runner by Christopher Morris

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, January 2022

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, March 31–April 16, 2022

Controlled Damage by Andrea Scott

[Grand Theatre](#), London, ON, February 22–March 12, 2022

Light by Rosa Labordé

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, February–March 2022

Orphan Song by Sean Dixon

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, March–April 2022

The Herd by Kenneth T. Williams

[Citadel Theatre](#), Edmonton, AB, April 2 – 24, 2022

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May–June 2022

• ONLINE •

Inose/Field Trip by Yolanda Bonnell

Imagining Climates, a project of the Guelph Institute for Environmental Research

Playing now at: <https://sites.uoguelph.ca/gier/field-trip/>

Switched by Anna Chatterton

[Theatre Aquarius](#), October 7–21, 2021

Year of the Rat, including a monodrama by Rosa Labordé

[Factory Theatre](#), February 24–March 5, 2022

PlayME dramas are now being broadcast on CBC Radio and Sirius XM. Scirocco plays such as *Prairie Nurse* (Marie Beath Badian), *The Runner* (Christopher Morris), *Vitals* (Rosamund Small), *Bed and Breakfast* (Mark Crawford), *Better Angels* (Andrea Scott), and *Lo (or Dear Mr. Wells)* (Rose Napoli) are available as PlayME dramas. You can also find PlayME plays on demand at: cbc.ca/playmeCBC

• ON SCREEN •

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

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