



**J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD**  
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

## ESSENTIAL READING



*"The Society For The Destitute Presents Titus Bouffonius is deranged, darkly funny, and perverse, but its subversiveness also serves a purpose, and it makes for an unforgettable experience."*

— Andrea Warner, *The Georgia Straight*

*"It's bloody, bawdy and grotesquely perverse... This may not be for everyone. You may find yourself outside of your comfort zone, but *The Society For The Destitute Presents Titus Bouffonius* is strikingly original and delivered with enough verve and "you-can't-do-that-on-stage" style to take your breath away, while leaving you with lots to talk about after the show."*

— Colin MacLean, *GigCity*

Five characters who shelter at the Society for the Destitute get a \$500 grant from Arts Educational Outreach to put on a play. They decide to do Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* because it has the most murders—but as you might predict, this is not your average night of Shakespeare.

Shocking, outrageous and stupidly funny, the characters often forget their lines, forget what play they are in, say whatever the hell they want, or refuse to stay dead when they are killed. And, as only clowns can, they turn the tables on the audience and present us with our own foibles in a way that is both hilarious and inevitable. [\*The Society For The Destitute Presents Titus Bouffonius\*](#) is an unflinching look at war, rage and grief through the eyes of characters who yearn for beauty in the grotesqueness of our world today.

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## THE INTERVIEW

*[Marie Beath Badian](#) is a Toronto playwright, actor, and dramaturge. Her work includes *Prairie Nurse*, *The Making of St. Jerome* (nominated for three Dora Mavor Moore Awards), *Mind Over Matter*, and *Novena*. In addition to a CBC Radio Drama adaptation of *Novena*, she has also written for CBC Radio's *Outfront*. Marie Beath has been playwright-in-residence at fu-GEN Asian-Canadian Theatre Company and with Project Humanity. Marie Beath was a member of the HotHouse Playwright Unit at Cahoots Theatre Company and a member of the 2013 Tarragon Playwright Unit. She spent two seasons as director of the Blyth Festival Young Company, two seasons as co-director of Youth Programs at Nightwood Theatre, and two seasons as Associate Artistic Director/Associate Artist at Theatre Direct Canada. Marie Beath is a graduate of the Ryerson Theatre School.*



### **Who or what are some of your playwriting influences?**

SO MANY! I love the rhythm and lyricism of Lisa Codrington, the playfulness and word acrobatics of Anna Chatterton, the super-sharp translations by Leanna Brodie, the scope of worlds written by David Yee, the depth of emotion of Keith Barker.

The most influential play I read early in my career was *Pop Song* by Sean Reycraft. It was part of the Buncha Young Artists Having Their Say Festival from Theatre Direct in the early 2000s, and I believe it is published in an anthology by the same name. That play captured huge emotional truth and depth of character with such an economy of language. And so funny, and heart-breaking and timelessly in-tune with the pressure-cooker of teenage emotions. All in a 20-minute play. I love that play so much. Lastly, I am inspired by Sarah Ruhl, especially her stage directions—they are direct, whimsically badass and empowering.

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

Lately, the thing I like best is that I think my ten-year-old kiddo finally understands what I do for a living. I've caught them reading some of my discarded drafts, though I honestly think they are just reading them to point out my typos.

Outside of my kiddo-editor, my favourite part of playwriting is when I get to hear a draft out loud for the first time. It is absolutely nerve-wracking, but worth it to finally hear out loud what has been living in my head for so long. That moment when a character speaks and I get that chill and think “Oh, there you are!” It’s when the isolation of playwriting suddenly becomes the party of collaboration.

[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!*



*This month we interview [Mark Brownell](#) and [Sue Miner](#), theatre practitioners and educators who are also life partners and the co-artistic directors of Toronto’s Pea Green Theatre. Mark is an award-winning playwright and librettist, the author of *Monsieur D’Eon* *Is a Woman*, *High-Sticking*, *Medici Slot Machine*, *Clique Claque*, and *War of the Clowns*, and librettist for the opera *Iron Road*. He teaches at *George Brown Theatre School*, the *Toronto Film School*, and the *University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies*. Sue was shortlisted for the *Siminovitch Prize* for directing in 2007, and she has twice been named one of *NOW Magazine’s “Top 10 Theatre Artists.”* She is currently the *Program Director* at *George Brown Theatre School*.*

**Since it may be a while before many of us will be able to attend theatre again, could you each tell us one favourite memory of a night in the theatre?**

**MARK:** Theatre is one of those art forms that has intense peak experiences. Live performance is always thrilling for us both on stage and in the audience. Many people don’t like opening nights but we love them because they provide us with an incredible creative rush when the audience applauds at the end of a great performance. (They don’t have to do that, you know.) For us, there is no better feeling than that.

**SUE:** In our third year of theatre school we created a clown show that was going to tour local schools. Our opening night, however, was to the student body and teachers in the NTS gymnasium. The show started with one of us hiding backstage, waiting for a sound cue to run out and introduce the show, which in turn cued the rest of us to run in from the back of the gym to fantastic klezmer music and say hi and interact with the audience before getting up on stage to do our acrobatics and such. But on this first night we had no

idea that SO many people would show up and they had to hold the house. Unfortunately, nobody had conveyed this to the student hiding backstage so when she heard a certain sound cue she just ran out and introduced the show. And frantically ran around the stage hoping upon hope that we might join her. We were all chatting happily in the dressing room down the hall when the stage manager ran in and screamed "DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! JUST GET ON STAGE!" And this, throughout my entire life and career in the theatre, has been my motto.

**The two of you have been a dynamic duo on the Canadian theatre scene for a while now. Can you tell us about how you first met and got to know one another?**

*SUE:* We met on the very first day of theatre school in 1980. I was coming straight from high school and Mark had done a year at Queen's. The summer before I had a job at Ontario Place and met some people who had gone to high school with Mark. They described him as "weird." This made me happy because I didn't like them particularly, so I was intrigued at who they would consider weird. On the first day of school we all gathered and his was the first name called, being a "B." I was a smidge disappointed as he looked normal and lovely to me, but I made a beeline for him first chance I got on the school tour, which was the library.

*MARK:* We first met in the library at the National Theatre School in Montreal and we bonded as friends and classmates in our first year of study. Our class was quite small so we spent a lot of time together—teachers paired us up in a lot of scenes. It being Montreal, love soon followed.

**Your book *Break a Leg* is a fun introduction to theatre terms and traditions for students and others just beginning a theatrical career. Can you tell us about the genesis of the idea for the book?**

*MARK:* Sue was teaching Continuing Education at Central Tech and was working with students who didn't really have a background in theatrical nomenclature. She would say something like, "Everyone needs to be off book by Thursday" and then she would be met with blank stares. So she began compiling a list of phrases unique to the profession to give them as a gift upon finishing the course. That list soon grew very large and we both stumbled on the idea of publishing this in an entertaining way; adding strange little theatrical quirks and superstitions that we had both picked up over the years. We were fortunate enough that Scirocco Drama was interested in publishing *Break a Leg* and it has certainly been one of our bestsellers over the years thanks to their guidance and support. That said, we have a copy of the book that is there for us to add things to as we learn more about theatre and its traditions.

### Read the Full Interview

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.

## JANUARY 27 IS HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY



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## COMING ATTRACTIONS

*With the advent of the Omicron variant and new restrictions in some provinces, some of the theatre listings from previous newsletters have changed. We have noted these changes in this month's listings.*

### • IN THEATRES •

***The Runner*** by Christopher Morris, [Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, CANCELLED

***Beneath Springhill: The Maurice Ruddick Story*** by Beau Dixon, [Neptune Theatre](#),  
Halifax, NS, January 25–February 13, 2022

***Salt Baby*** by Falen Johnson, [Magnus Theatre](#), Thunder Bay, ON, January 27–February  
12, 2022

***The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale*** by Haley McGee, [Soulpepper Theatre](#), Toronto, ON,  
February 11–March 6, 2022

***The Runner*** by Christopher Morris, [Great Canadian Theatre Company](#), Ottawa, ON,  
February 24–March 6, 2022

***Controlled Damage*** by Andrea Scott, [The Grand Theatre](#), London, ON, RESCHEDULED  
TO 2022/23 SEASON

***Light*** by Rosa Labordé, [Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, NEW DATES TBD

***The Runner*** by Christopher Morris, [Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, March  
30–April 16, 2022

***Orphan Song*** by Sean Dixon, [Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, March 23–April 24, 2022

**The Herd** by Kenneth T. Williams, [Citadel Theatre](#), Edmonton, AB, April 2–24, 2022

**The Herd** by Kenneth T. Williams, [Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May 11–June 12, 2022

• ONLINE •

**Year of the Rat** by Rosa Labordé et al, [Factory Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, February 24–March 6, 2022

**Deer Woman** by Tara Beagan, [Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, Manitoba, April 20–24, 2022

• ON SCREEN •

**The Swearing Jar** by Kate Hewlett

Starring Kathleen Turner, Adelaide Clemons, and Patrick J. Adams

[Spring 2022 release](#)

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