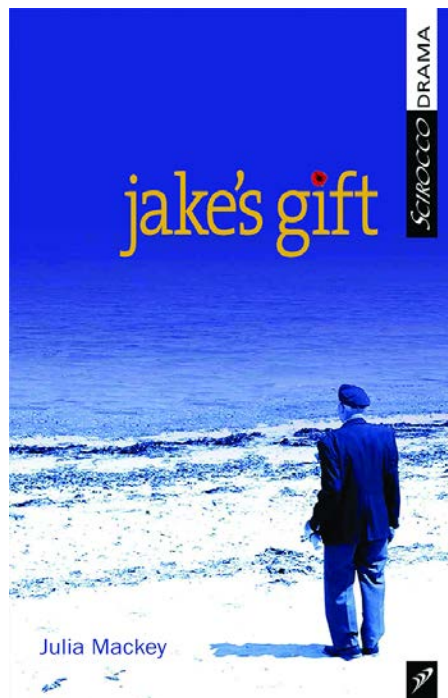




J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL LISTENING



"If I could give this play six stars, I would."

— *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*

"This is a jewel of a show you simply can't afford to miss."

— *Calgary Sun*

"*Jake's Gift* is the most theatrically pure show I have ever seen. It is an original, superbly constructed, tour de force tearjerker. See it: but be prepared for throat-lump inducing moments, tracks of fresh hot tears and racks of laughter. It thoroughly deserves every standing ovation it gets."

— *CBC Winnipeg*

In honour of Remembrance Day 2022, Scirocco Drama has just released the audiobook version of *Jake's Gift*, Julia Mackey's play about a World War II veteran who returns to Juno Beach for the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

While there, Jake encounters Isabelle, a precocious ten-year-old from the local village whose inquisitive nature challenges the old soldier to confront some painful memories—most notably, the wartime death of his older brother. By revealing the very personal story behind one soldier's grave, *Jake's Gift* takes us to the heart of remembrance.

Learn more about *Jake's Gift* and upcoming performances of the play at:

<https://jakesgift.com>

See More

THE INTERVIEW

This month we talk with [Liza Balkan](#), author of *Out the Window*. Liza is an Ontario-based actor, theatre and opera director, librettist, writer, and educator. She written text for music works produced by Tapestry Opera, Bicycle Opera Project, Brooklyn Art Song Society (NYC), Scrag Mountain Music (Vermont), and Five Borough Songbook 2 (NYC). Most recently, Liza wrote the libretto for the Dora Award-nominated opera *Gould's Wall*, composed by Brian Current (Tapestry/Koerner Hall/RCM 21C Festival). Through an artist residency at the Theatre Centre, she developed her documentary project [Out the Window](#) and directed its original workshop production in 2012. In 2018, Toronto's International Luminato Festival produced the show, directed by Sarah Garton Stanley. Liza has directed and performed across Canada, and she received a Dora Award for her performance in Theresa Tova's *Still the Night* (Theatre Passe Muraille/Tapestry). Upcoming: the libretto for the Canadian Premiere of Lembit Beecher's *After the Fires* (Koerner /RCM).



Liza, Out the Window is a verbatim theatre piece based on a terrible incident that you witnessed in 2000, the death of Otto Vass, and the aftermath of that. What were some of the challenges you faced as you set about examining this incident through the lens of theatre?

There were many challenges—each of them became my teachers guiding me forward in some fashion. I am grateful. These were some of them:

- Placing myself as a character in the story, using my words on the stand, while trying to keep enough artistic distance to be able to collaborate well, shape the piece and make compelling choices.

- The navigation of theatrical storytelling of an incident I was involved in personally, yet was not about me, but rather about a multi-tentacled subject, that also involved Mr. Vass' family, the lives of others, the justice system, police culture, systemic racism, ableism... And bumping up against my own naivete—as both an artist and a citizen.
- The seemingly endless amount of research coupled with the private, dogged desire to uncover material that might highlight 'the thing' that would change *all* things—including a verdict.
- Recognizing the impossibility of finding "that thing."
- The humbleness of letting go of some material and of control, for the piece to grow into itself more fully.
- The challenge of re-energizing the project for each new iteration through some personal and artistic questioning and sense of overwhelm.
- Revisiting the incident, sometimes daily, over a period of years.

In addition to the text of the Luminato version of the play, which featured a partially-scripted third section, Out the Window also includes unscripted dialogue and interactions with the audience. What did this interactive section add to the production?

A desire for audience engagement in some form has always been intrinsic to the storytelling for this project. Initially, in '07, it involved direct address to the audience and allowing them to wander around in the installation I created. For the workshop production I directed in 2012, six audience members joined the actors on stage in Act 2 for the (recorded, transcribed and edited) luncheon I had had with two of the key lawyers involved in the case. The servers were played by the actors who were playing the cops.

There was a desire to explore ideas around personal accountability and investigate the meanings and intersections of words like "witness" and "participant." These audience members would eat and witness the verbatim interaction—and had an opportunity to engage in conversation, if prompted—while the rest of the audience was witnessing from their seats. This proved an interesting exploration of these themes. It almost worked. Not quite. Certainly, it was a first step, though one not deep enough.

For the Luminato Festival /Theatre Centre co-production in 2018, the project was re-investigated, reimagined and directed by the incomparable Sarah Garton Stanley. Sarah's envisioning of the show, and the artists and activists she invited to engage in the material, forwarded these and other essential themes that reflected the needs and conversations occurring in 2018.

In her director's' notes, Sarah speaks to a "responsibility as a storyteller to seek to find true places. Of transformation both for the subjects (of the play) and for the audience." She continues, "we know that the legal system works for precedence and not justice. What new can be gained or learned or felt?" Sarah guided a condensation of the written piece—originally three acts of primarily verbatim text—to two acts. The third act became what Sarah describes as an opportunity to take a "break, and figure out how, as a community, actors, and choir, along with the audience can build together a communal experience that required the involvement of everyone...The theatre can be a place to recharge and its rituals can help to unlock our inner resistance to change— or perhaps, more persistently it can help us imagine possible worlds through recounting worlds of limited possibility." Sarah

also mentions having had a private wish, one that is intrinsically linked to the interconnectedness of “witness” and “participant”: for the audience and artists on stage to take a bow together. And this occurred at each performance. It was a profoundly beautiful thing.

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.

LEST WE FORGET



[See More](#)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

The Waltz by Marie Beath Badian

[Factory Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, October 22–November 13, 2022.

New by Pamela Sinha

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, November 3–19, 2022.

Jake's Gift by Julia Mackey

[Rose Theatre, Brampton](#), ON November 10–12, 2022.

Hurry Hard by Kristen Da Silva

[Cow Patti Theatre](#), Lacombe, AB, November 17–December 18, 2022.

Let's Run Away by Daniel MacIvor

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, December 1–17, 2022.

Controlled Damage by Andrea Scott

[Grand Theatre](#), London, ON, January 17–January 29, 2023.

The Gig by Mark Crawford

[Theatre Aquarius](#), Hamilton, ON, March 8–25, 2023.

Our Ghosts by Sally Stubbs

[Firehall Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, March 18–April 2, 2023.

The Birds and the Bees by Mark Crawford

[Persephone Theatre](#), Saskatoon, SK, March 29–April 23, 2023.

New by Pamela Sinha

[Canadian Stage](#), Toronto, ON, April 25–May 14, 2023.

The Birds and the Bees by Mark Crawford

[Globe Theatre](#), Regina, SK, May 4–21, 2023.

• ONLINE •

My Sister's Rage by Yolanda Bonnell will be available to watch digitally beginning

November 16th at: <https://www.tarragontheatre.com/plays/my-sisters-rage/>

Buffy, a five-part podcast about Buffy Sainte-Marie by Falen Johnson.

[CBC Listen](#). All episodes online now.

5 Short Films Inspired by the Five Senses featuring “Taste” by Mark Crawford and Britta Johnson, and “All the Colours” by Marcia Johnson and Danika Loren, [Bad Hats Theatre](#),

Online now.

• ON SCREEN •

The Swearing Jar by Kate Hewlett.

Starring Adelaide Clemens, Douglas Smith, Patrick J. Adams, and Kathleen Turner. Now playing at select Canadian theatres.

IN THE NEWS

- Congratulations to Scirocco playwrights Beverley Cooper, Corey Payette, and Marie Beath Badian on their wins at the Playwright Guild of Canada's recent [Tom Hendry Awards!](#)
- Beverley Cooper won the Bra D'Or Award, presented to an individual for his/her/their efforts in supporting and promoting the work of Canadian women playwrights.
- Corey Payette was awarded the Dan School of Music Musical Award.
- Marie Beath Badian won the Playwrights Guild Drama Award for best new drama by a PGC member.

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