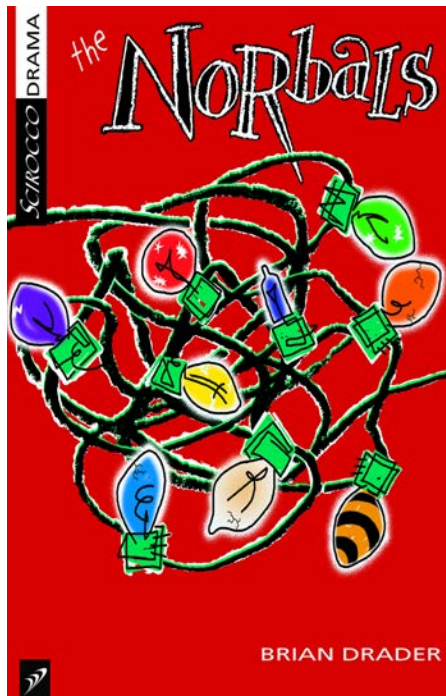




J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



"The Norbals' struggle is symbolic of the universal balancing act performed by all adult children as they wrestle with maintaining the family they're born into and nurturing the one they create when they strike out on their own ... stylish and slick, it puts a fresh, wildly funny face on family – an institution struggling to re-define itself." — *Winnipeg Sun*

"Drader's many years multi-tasking as an actor, director, and writer have come into full gale force in this hilarious two-hour show ... a dynamic, galloping script ... Drader's ability to blend keen character observations, poignancy and wit make *The Norbals* a real Canadian Classic." — *Winnipeg Free Press*

This heart-warming comedy by [Brian Drader](#) will make you feel a whole lot better this holiday season about those strange people you call relatives.

[The Norbals](#) gives us a front-row seat to a loving but dysfunctional family in the throes of a holiday crisis. Danny and Penny are broke, Randall is bringing home his fourth partner in four years, Bee is transitioning, and Mom has decided to celebrate Winter Solstice instead of Christmas. But Sean's surprise outdoes them all!

Winner of the Herman Voaden Playwriting Competition

See More

THE INTERVIEW

This month's featured playwright is [Sarena Parmar](#). Sarena's first play, [The Orchard \(After Chekhov\)](#), premiered at the Shaw Festival; she was the first South Asian playwright produced in the festival's history. The play went on to a second production at The Arts Club in Vancouver.

As an actor, Sarena has performed in theatres across Canada as well as in film and television. She is a graduate of the National Theatre School and the Birmingham Conservatory. Sarena lives in Toronto.



Sarena, your first full-length play, [The Orchard \(After Chekhov\)](#) is based in part on your own experience growing up on an orchard in the Okanagan region of BC. The play featured a cast of thirteen, premiered at the prestigious Shaw Festival, and went on to the Vancouver Arts Club—an extraordinary feat for a novice playwright! Can you tell us a little about why and how you wrote the play and why you think it resonates so powerfully with audiences?

I grew up on our family orchard in Kelowna, BC. It was farmed by my grandparents, my mother, and my aunts and uncles. As a child, I worked in the fruit stand. About 15 years ago (time flies), my mother called to tell me my family had cut down our beloved orchard. And suddenly I understood Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* in a whole new light. My family had been farmers in Punjab, India for generations. But when we cut down the orchard, it was like our final ties to India were severed.

I shared my personal discovery with long-time mentor Nina Lee Aquino, and without hesitation (even though I'd never written a play) she gave me the seed money to begin a first draft. It took six years to write the play and I learned a lot along the way. I think it resonates so beautifully with audiences because it still carries the hallmark themes of *The Cherry Orchard*, like loss, family and identity. But it shines through a truly Canadian lens. A Punjabi-Sikh family struggling to save their orchard in rural Canada. I am proud it also reflects the beauty of carving a new life in a new land and the growing pains of assimilation.

Sarena, you're a graduate of the acting program at the National Theatre School and you are well known for your acting work. (Many readers will remember you as

Chandra from How to Be Indie, and fans of Pretty Hard Cases may know you as Detective Breann Chattopadhyay.) Can you compare and contrast the two art forms? What do you get from writing that you don't from performing, and vice versa? Also, what was it like to perform in your own play?

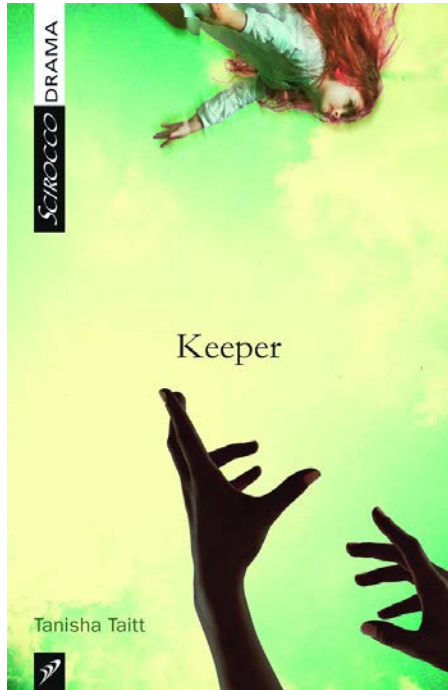
Writing is wonderful because I can imagine the entire world. It allows my imagination to play in a bigger sandbox. The landscape is limitless. With acting, so much is already dictated by the playwright, the director, the costume designer, the set... all those creative limitations provide a kind of friction that pushes the art further.

Acting in my own play was surreal! It was deeply moving to experience the play with the audience night after night. At the Shaw Festival the play was performed in the round, which created an even more intimate experience. Hearing and seeing the reactions of Sikh-Canadians in the audience, in real time, is one of the most profound theatre experiences of my life.

[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 had a lively conversation via Zoom with Professor Lisa Anne Ross of St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB and Toronto playwright, director, musician, and educator [Tanisha Taitt](#), who is currently the Artistic Director of Cahoots Theatre.

Tanisha recently did a virtual classroom visit to Lisa's students, who have been studying her play [Keeper](#).

The following is an excerpt from our chat. Click on the See More link below for the whole conversation with Lisa and Tanisha about how both the students and the writer are affected by the experience.

JGS: Lisa, what course did you teach *Keeper* in?

Lisa: Actually, I taught *Keeper* in two courses; I teach Introduction to Theatre which is in the English Department at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB, and I also teach another course which is vaguely entitled "Performance Foundations" and that's a second-

or third-year course and that's in the Fine Arts Department. And so Tanisha joined us in Introduction to Theatre, but I did asked students from both groups to purchase the book and we did a scene study in both classes.

JGS: Why did you choose Keeper?

Lisa: This is a long story... But during the lockdown, it's not that I had an excess of time, but I did have time to do some of the deeper work, which we never have time to do during our regular artistic lives when we are just running from one fire or project to the next, and there's never any breathing room, no reflection time. The pandemic gave me reflection time, and I came across a lecture that Tanisha gave. I think it was posted on the...

Tanisha: The Canadian Theatre Educators Conference site.

Lisa: That's right! A colleague sent me the link and said I'd really enjoy this lecture, so I watched. And it really moved me. Basically, the lecture was a call to white theatre educators to bring more diversity into their classrooms in terms of the plays they were teaching, and to not be afraid to do that. More than that, it was their *duty* to do it. I was moved by that, and I felt it gave me the permission I needed to do that... There's all these amazing lists out there right now, so I ordered a lot of new plays, and the following year I introduced a new segment in my class called "The Global Majority Scene Study." It was very much inspired by Tanisha, and I gave an introduction to students about what we were doing, and I quote you multiple times (*Laughter.*) And then I reached out to Tanisha and told her that she changed my teaching. I make light, but really, you did.

Last year we did Andrea Scott's play *Controlled Damage*, which, luckily, had its world premiere at the Neptune Theatre just before the pandemic hit. It was a huge success and the echoes of that continue. You might not hear all that news in Toronto, but here it's created a real Viola Desmond resurgence. Anyway, we had a chance to meet Andrea the same way that Tanisha and I met, through Zoom. Andrea Zoomed in to our class and the students got to ask questions about process and it was just amazing on a number of levels. Everyone was, like, that was the best part of the class and we have to do it again.

So I thought maybe I should go to the source of this inspiration, and I had of course ordered *Keeper* and I really enjoyed it. It's a good contrast to *Controlled Damage*, which is a massive piece. What I loved about *Keeper* is that it is theatre at its best: a story about two people. Two people who are struggling and move through the conversation to find their way through it, or at least by the end we have an inkling that they will find their way through. And to be honest, it's easier to teach first-years to analyze a play when there's only two characters. And then I was lucky enough that when I asked Tanisha if she'd join us, she said yes!

JGS: Tell us a bit more about Tanisha's visit. What were some of the aspects that the students were interested in talking about? And also, what were the highlights of that visit for each of you?

Lisa: I just finished marking... I'm not super-interested in marking; as a theatre artist I'm interested in creating artists and engaging my students in bigger ideas and having a conversation about what it means to be an artist in the world. But you have to give them assignments, too, so they did an analysis of *Keeper*. And I was really excited by what the students wrote and how much they connected with the characters, how much they were drawn in by the story. I always ask them about the stakes for the characters... students tend to think of this as, you know, are the characters falling out of an airplane or are they on fire, but this play really helped them to see that emotional stakes *are* fire. I was really excited to read that the students really connected with that.

They loved it; they loved the play and they *loved* meeting you. We had so many conversations about it. And not just learning about the play and your process... This is a small province; many students come from small towns around the Maritimes, some are first-generation university students, a lot of firsts. They may never have met a professional theatre artist before, let alone someone who has created this amazing career in Toronto, right, where you're doing so many different things—you're a playwright, you're a director, you're an educator. For them to see that, it really resonated. "This is real; this can be real." And we have a handful of students who identify as people of colour, and for those Black students and the Latinx students, this is extra-extra special. This is a small community; there are not a lot of professional artists of colour working here; they just don't get to see themselves reflected in professional theatre, generally. (Although it's changing.)

[See More](#)

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.

DECEMBER 10 IS INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



[See More](#)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

Hurry Hard by Kristen Da Silva

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

The Breathing Hole by Colleen Murphy with Siobhan Arnatsiaq-Murphy

[The National Arts Centre](#), Ottawa, ON, November 30–December 10, 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.

Boom X by Rick Miller

[Western Canada Theatre](#), Kamloops, BC, January 19–28, 2023.

Okinum by Émilie Monnet

[Touchstone Theatre](#), New Westminster, BC, February 2–3, 2023.

Boom X by Rick Miller

[Grand Theatre](#), London, ON, February 7–25, 2023.

The Herd by Kenneth T. Williams

[Persephone Theatre](#), Saskatoon, SK, February 8–26, 2023.

Beneath Springhill by Beau Dixon

[Theatre Orangeville](#), Orangeville, ON, February 8–26, 2023.

Starwalker by Corey Payette

[Urban Ink](#), Vancouver, BC, February 16–March 5, 2023.

Hurry Hard by Kristen Da Silva

[Western Canada Theatre](#), Kamloops, BC, February 23–March 4, 2023.

The Gig by Mark Crawford

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

The Bluff by Kristen Da Silva

[Theatre Orangeville](#), Orangeville, ON, March 15–April 2, 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 Curst by Kelley Jo Burke

[Dancing Sky Theatre](#), Meacham, SK, April 28–May 14, 2023.

Where You Are by Kristen Da Silva

[Theatre Northwest](#), Prince George, BC, May 4–24, 2023.

The Birds and the Bees by Mark Crawford

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

Armadillos by Colleen Wagner

[Factory Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May 27–June 18, 2023.

New Canadian Curling Club by Mark Crawford
[Drayton Festival Theatre](#), Drayton, ON, July 12–July 29, 2023.

New Canadian Curling Club by Mark Crawford
[Huron Country Playhouse](#), Grand Bend, ON, August 3–20, 2023.

Where You Are by Kristen Da Silva
[Lighthouse Festival](#), Port Dover, ON, July 19–August 5, 2023.

Bed and Breakfast by Mark Crawford
[Orillia Opera House](#), Orillia, ON, July 26–August 12, 2023.

Where You Are by Kristen Da Silva
[Lighthouse Festival](#), Port Colbourne, ON, August 9–August 20, 2023.

Where You Are by Kristen Da Silva
[Port Stanley Festival Theatre](#), Port Stanley, ON, August 23–September 9, 2023.

Bittergirl: The Musical by Annabel Fitzsimmons, Alison Lawrence & Mary Francis Moore
[St. Jacob's Schoolhouse Theatre](#), St. Jacobs, ON, October 4–December 24, 2023.

• ONLINE •

My Sister's Rage by Yolanda Bonnell
[Tarragon Theatre](#) digital production, available until December 11, 2022.

Okinum by Émilie Monnet
[Touchstone Theatre](#), New Westminster, BC, February 2–5, 2023.

Reckoning by Tara Beagan and Andy Moro, Article 11 Theatre
[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#) digital production, available April 12–16, 2023.

Buffy, a five-part podcast about Buffy Sainte-Marie by Falen Johnson.
[CBC Listen](#). All episodes 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. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6692776/>

IN THE NEWS

- Scirocco Drama/J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing will once again be sponsoring the Manitoba Association of Playwrights High School Playwriting Program. The Manitoba Theatre for Young People Theatre School has come on board this year as a producing partner. The deadline for submissions is January 13, 2023.
<https://mbplays.ca/services/scirocco-drama-manitoba-high-school-playwriting-program>

IN MEMORIAM

Condolences to family and friends of Thomas Peacocke, the venerable actor, director, and teacher who played a leading role in building and shaping theatre in Edmonton and across Canada. As the head of the Drama Department at the University of Alberta, Peacocke was a mentor to many. He leaves a lasting legacy.

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