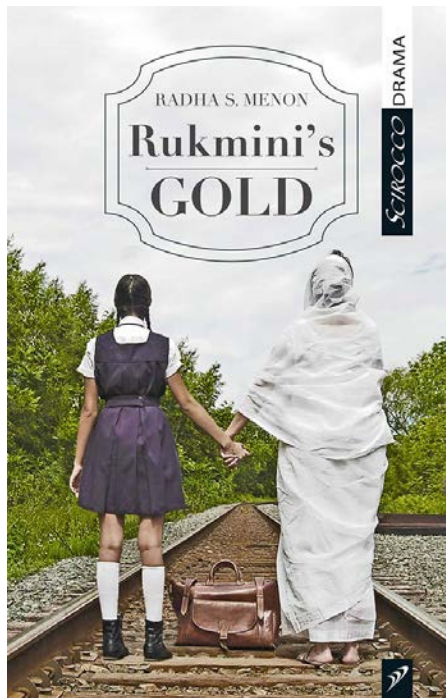




**J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD**  
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

## ESSENTIAL READING



“A work of graceful eloquence, *Rukmini’s Gold* is a must-see.” — *Hamilton Spectator*

“Every character Menon has written is given a chance to prove themselves beautifully complex as they explore their connection to their family and their culture, their hopes and their regrets... A witty and honest commentary on the way our cultures meet and change, and how family pushes us apart but ties us together.” — *Mooney on Theatre*

In [Rukmini's Gold](#) by [Radha Menon](#), an old woman in a white sari sits on a deserted train platform, burdened by a decaying suitcase and an old jewelry box. Suddenly a young girl appears. “Can I sit beside you?” she asks the old woman. “I’m going with you.”

*Rukmini's Gold* features ten stand-alone yet interconnected scenes set in train stations around the world. Through the eyes of the matriarch, Rukmini, the play tracks the passage of one South Asian family, crossing continents and spanning a century. Exploring themes including love, class and caste, women’s struggles against patriarchy, colonialism, and the global movement of labour, Radha Menon’s cast of characters takes us on life journeys where trains are missed, opportunities are squandered, and family members are separated in space and time.

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## THE INTERVIEW

[Minh Ly](#) is an actor and writer. He trained at Studio 58 in Vancouver, BC, and has been working as an actor in film and television ever since.

Ly's plays include the solo show *White, Another F#\$king Identity Piece!* and [Ga Ting \(Family\)](#).



***Ga Ting (Family) tells the story of a young gay white man who goes to visit the Asian-Canadian parents of his lover, who has died. In the frank theatre production at the Cultch in Vancouver, the play was performed in English and Cantonese (with surtitles) to very diverse sold-out crowds. Why do you think that there was such an overwhelming audience response?***

I think it was because at the time very few plays featured mature Asian actors in their 60s—and the bilingual aspect of the play was integral to the storytelling of the piece. Hence, many people who had probably never before felt seen at the theatre finally did. I think the subject matter—queerness in Asian cultures and generational/cultural clashes—also brought in many marginalized audience members.

***Minh, you tackle many difficult subjects in the play, including homophobia and mental health. Why did you feel it was important to initiate a conversation around these issues?***

Well, any talk of gayness and mental health is quite taboo in Asian, or more specifically, in Chinese culture. I wanted to write a piece that would spark discussion about those topics, especially in those communities. My hope was for people to see themselves in the play and hopefully someday have some important conversations with their loved ones, or at least know they are not alone.

***For many years, Asian artists have been underrepresented on Canadian stages. In 2022/23, plays by more than twenty Asian playwrights have been programmed across the country, including Lady Sunrise by [Marjorie Chan](#) (Factory Theatre), New***

by [Pamela Sinha](#) (RMTC and Canadian Stage), *Cockroach* by [Ho Ka Kei](#) (Tarragon Theatre), and *The Waltz* by [Marie Beath Badian](#) (Blyth Festival and Great Canadian Theatre Company). Do you think that's a hopeful sign that we are moving in the right direction?

Absolutely! There's been a lot of growth from when I started in this industry 15+ years ago. I'm thrilled and excited to see so much Asian talent and so many Asian stories presented on our Canadian stages. Hopefully, this is just a start and we will see more marginalized artists, especially artists with disability, get the space they deserve to tell their stories and be seen.

[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!*



The [WeeFestival](#) in Toronto opens on May 16<sup>th</sup> and runs to June 11<sup>th</sup>. Since 2014, this festival has been presenting theatre created especially for children 0-6 years and their families. This year's festival features eight productions in various venues across the city. Lynda Hill is the Artistic Director of the WeeFestival, as well as the former Artistic Director of Theatre Direct.

***Lynda, why is it important for very small children to experience theatre?***

I suppose the short answer is—because it is their right to experience and participate in arts and culture in all its forms. It is their right from birth. But I also feel it is important to offer as wide a range of artistic experiences as possible as part of their aesthetic education. Just like we want to offer children a balanced and varied diet and expose them to quality and nutritious food, it's the same for their cultural diet!

I also believe it is essential we offer the highest quality of theatre and performance that speaks directly to the child's social and emotional experience and that honours their intellectual capacity. I think we underestimate the negative impact patronizing and poor-quality theatre experience has on children and their willingness to participate in future arts activities. But when they receive an inspiring and moving theatre experience, that impact is long-lasting and can produce a lifelong love of the arts. Furthermore, I believe that when parents experience arts through the eyes of their children and witness the powerful impact it has on them, they will be more motivated to seek out additional arts opportunities and hopefully even advocate for their regular inclusion in their child's school when it comes time for their children to enter kindergarten.

***The WeeFestival features work by theatre-makers from around the world, but it also commissions Canadian writers. Can you tell us about any past or upcoming commissioned plays?***

Commission, yes, more like seed funding support for new works as we work with limited resources. Nevertheless, we've been so proud to support the development of productions such as *Tweet Tweet* from le femme du feu, *Flying Hearts* by Michelle Silagy (and me), *Old Man and the River* by Thomas Morgan Jones (and me), and *Yassama and the Beaded Calabash* by Lua Shayenne. In addition to a wee bit of funding, I offer mentoring and dramaturgical support to the project and its artist as well as opportunities to research and test the work in schools or daycares. This year we're supporting the development of two small-scale pieces for daycare playgrounds created by Afsaneh Zamanyi and Hilary Wheeler as well as projects by Derek Kwan with Heather Marie Annis and Marcia Johnson.

It is essential we invest in the development of new work for early years (and young audiences in general!) but we have a very limited capacity as we're still really only a project-based company. Hopefully as we grow, we can also grow this important part of our mission.

***In conjunction with the productions, the festival offers conference sessions and professional development workshops for artists and educators. Can you tell us a little about the conference aspect?***

I'm so excited about this aspect of the festival because we will have close to 30 artists participating in master classes, workshops, studio sharings, and test presentations with our partner school and daycare. This will be a wonderful week of learning and exchange. In addition to these activities for professional artists, we offer a day of workshops and performances for Early Childhood Educators to enrich their creative skills for the classroom.

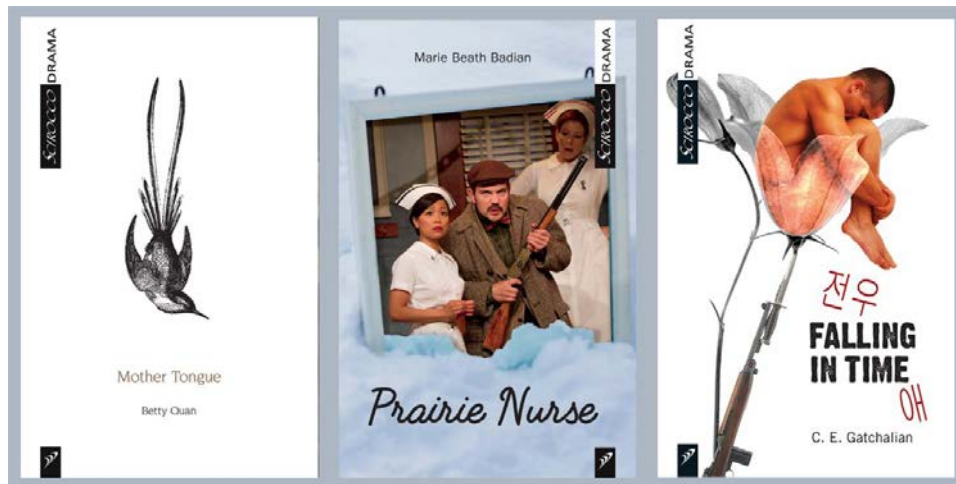
***What do you think artists who create theatre for adults could learn from theatre for the very young?***

Theatre for Early Years has more in common with performance or performance art than it does with traditional theatre. It sits in the relational more than the presentational. In my opinion, at its best, TEY offers a model for all theatre-makers to create work that doesn't favour one sense over the other and therefore works in a multi-sensory and multidisciplinary approach. When you're creating for the under-sixes, you have to confront your "view of the child," your assumptions. You really have to listen to your audience, research and test. One is constantly humbled by them. I've raised two children but that doesn't mean I'm an expert on children. I still have to test my assumptions. Are they neurotypical? How do you know? Are they physically able? What about their caregivers and parents? What are we assuming about them?

Very young children don't know the rules of being a "good" audience member. That's wonderful! At its best, TEY proposes a space of radical inclusion and radical hospitality as it attempts, as playwright Veronique Côté says, to have a conversation with the beginning of the world. Theatre for the Very Young is truly future theatre.

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.

## MAY IS ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH & JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH



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## COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

**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.

**Boom X** by Rick Miller

[Crow's Theatre](#), Toronto ON, May 10–28, 2023.

**Armadillos** by Colleen Wagner  
[Factory Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May 27–June 18, 2023.

**Every Day She Rose** by Andrea Scott and Nick Green  
[Hollywood Fringe Festival](#), Los Angeles, CA, June 4–24, 2023.

**Dragon's Tale** by Mark Brownell and Chan Ka Nin  
[Tapestry Opera](#), Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, ON, June 15–18, 2023.

**Bed and Breakfast** by Mark Crawford  
[Lighthouse Festival Theatre](#), Port Dover June 28–July 15, 2023.

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

**The Waltz** by Marie Beath Badian  
[Blyth Festival](#), Blyth, ON, July 12–July 29, 2023.

**Prairie Nurse** by Marie Beath Badian  
[Capitol Theatre](#), Port Hope, ON, July 14–30, 2023.

**Bed and Breakfast** by Mark Crawford  
[Lighthouse Festival Theatre](#), Port Colbourne, ON, July 19–July 30, 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.

**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 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.

**The Real McCoy** by Andrew Moodie  
[Blyth Festival](#), Blyth, ON, August 24–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.

**The Waltz** by Marie Beath Badian  
[Great Canadian Theatre Company](#), Ottawa, ON, February 13–25, 2024.

• ONLINE •

**A Time to Dream**, a documentary about the extraordinary women of the CASA project.  
[Playwrights Guild of Canada](#) production, available online now.

**Inose/Field Trip**, a sound walk created by Yolanda Bonnell in partnership with Dr. Jesse

Popp that encourages participants to connect with the natural world.

[Common Boots Theatre](#). (A video ASL version of *Inose/Field Trip* is now available.)

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

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

• ON SCREEN •

**[With Love and a Major Organ](#)** by Julia Lederer.

Starring Anna Maguire, Hamza Haq, and Veena Sood. Coming to theatres soon!

**[The Swearing Jar](#)** by Kate Hewlett.

Starring Adelaide Clemens, Douglas Smith, Patrick J. Adams, and Kathleen Turner. Now available to buy or rent on various streaming services including Apple TV and Digital TIFF Bell Lightbox.

## IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to Scirocco author [Darla Contois](#), whose play [The War Being Waged](#) has been nominated for two Manitoba Book Awards: The Eileen McTavish Sykes Award for Best First Book and the Manitowapow Award!

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