

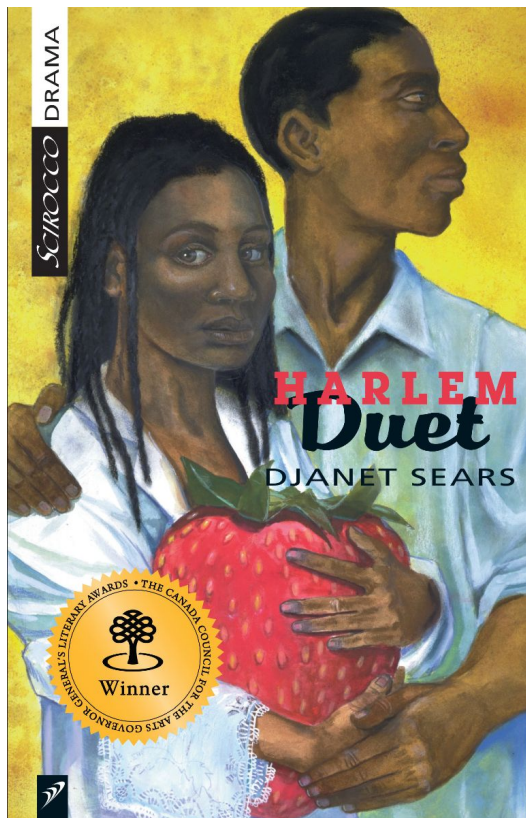


**J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD**

P U B L I S H I N G   I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

## ESSENTIAL READING



“... filled with intelligence and compassion, humour and anger, outrage and understanding.”

— *Toronto Star*

- Winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama
- Winner of the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award
- Winner of the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Play

[Harlem Duet](#), [Djanet Sears](#)' powerful award-winning drama, explores the complicated relationship of a Black couple during three key periods in the Black American experience: 1860, before the US Emancipation Proclamation; 1928, during New York's Harlem Renaissance; and in post-civil rights 1997. Each setting reframes the story of the woman,

her deep love for her partner, and her sacrifices – and resilience – in the face of his betrayal. With connections to Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Harlem Duet* explores important contemporary questions about race, privilege and relationships.

[See More](#)

## THE INTERVIEW

[Kanika Ambrose](#) is a playwright, librettist, and screenwriter. Her play [our place](#) was first produced by Cahoots Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille in November 2022, and *Truth*, her adaptation of *The Gospel Truth* by Caroline Pignat, is currently playing at Young Peoples Theatre. Her children's opera *Anansi and the Great Light* (with composer Nick diBerardino) premiered at Curtis Institute of Music (Philadelphia) in 2019. Her opera *Of the Sea* (with composer Ian Cusson) premiered at the Bluma Appel Theatre in March 2023, commissioned by Tapestry Opera and Obsidian Theatre Company. Kanika is a graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University and is Associate Artistic Director of Necessary Angel Theatre Company.



**Kanika, your powerful play [our place](#), which won the 2023 Dora Mavor Moore for Outstanding New Play, is the story of two undocumented workers struggling to find a way to stay in Canada. The play centres on two Caribbean women whose lives are made incredibly difficult by the barriers Canada has erected for immigrants from certain parts of the world. Why did you want to write this play? What do you want audiences to understand about women like Andrea and Niesha?**

I wrote the play for many reasons; there were a few things on my mind. One was, at the time, my husband and I were filing documents to try and sponsor his mother. So I was becoming intimately steeped in the immigration process and it brought my attention to the

barriers that were there. Some of the questions that they ask to fast-track somebody, or the criteria they use in order to consider somebody more “desirable”... There are certain people in the world that would in no way fit those criteria. For example, the country where my family comes from didn't have a university for a long time. How would you get a university degree unless you had money to leave the country? So there are those kinds of barriers that I recognized in the process. And then at the same time, somebody we were very close to was working at a restaurant (close to where I used to live) and told us about a co-worker there who was getting married to somebody for papers. This was something that I had been aware of since I was really young, like, it's not news. But I thought about that person who was marrying somebody who she'd just met, and the type of danger that she could be in, marrying somebody that she's only known a few weeks, being put in that precarious situation. I thought what could happen in such a power imbalance. So those were kind of the two central inspirations for it.

**You have worked as an actor as well as a playwright and librettist. You've been Associate AD of Necessary Angel Theatre Company, Artistic Producer at the Paprika Festival, and you're also the founder of a Dominican bélé dance group, Mabouya Dance Company. Does your work in these other disciplines inform your playwriting? If so, how?**

I started out writing and performing my own work, so a lot of the characters, a lot of the stories I created through the body, through my acting training. I would do physical exercises to explore character, which then went into the writing. I don't do that so much anymore, but I still do very much start with character, and I do feel myself inhabiting the characters when I write, so I guess that's part of the acting training.

I worked in administration at a large theatre company for a long time, and then, as you mentioned, I'm still the Associate Artistic Director at Necessary Angel Theatre Company. I think those pieces are important because they help me to recognize the structures in which our art is carried and held, and it also gives me more respect for the people who produce the work. You know, I really have an intimate understanding of what it takes and what goes into it, and so I feel like I have an appreciation for it. Sometimes when I'm speaking to some of my friends who don't have that background, they're like, “Well, why did they do that? Why did they choose that image? Why did they put that out at that time?” And I'm like, “Well, I can really break it down.” I understand the reasons why it had to happen that way, and it doesn't stress me out. And I let people do their jobs. It serves me well—I just stay in my lane.

And then as a dancer, I think, the appreciation for the body. For one thing, I've just had a baby. Every time my body shifts, I'm trying to reconnect to it. Dance really helped me connect to my body and then to connect to my creativity. And so even though I don't dance anymore, I need that connection. I just had a long walk with my kids trying to connect my body and my spirit. So I think that's where all those pieces work together to create me as a playwright.

# BEHIND THE SCENES

A behind-the-scenes look at some of the most innovative work being done at theatres across North America.



*This month JGS talks with sound designer Richard Feren. Richard has been creating music and soundscapes for theatre, dance, and film since 1992. Richard has won seven [Dora Mavor Moore Awards](#), the [Pauline McGibbon Award](#), and was the first sound designer ever shortlisted for the [Siminovitch Prize](#). Richard is based in Toronto.*

**Richard, it's no exaggeration to say that you are the preeminent sound designer working in Canadian theatre today. How did you come to have a career as a sound designer?**

Unexpectedly! I was trained as a classical musician from a very young age; at six years old, I was learning to play violin and learn music theory. And so I had the classical music background, and then I also developed an interest in tape recording stuff. I had a little cassette recorder as a kid, and I graduated into multi-track, four-track cassette recording. A friend of mine and I would compose music and record it and produce it on that.

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### **How old were you when you were doing that?**

Well, that was more late teens, I guess. But in my early teens, I was only about 13, I started volunteering at the college radio station in Guelph, CFRU FM. And I had some mentors there who kind of showed me the ropes. I actually had a weekly radio program from the time I was 13, for about the next ten years. So I learned a lot of audio production—fairly basic, at the time it was still all tape, analog. I was producing some of the news programs, which would have been on a reel-to-reel, so it was a lot of transferring from one tape to another, then editing, splicing.

So anyway, by the time I was in my early 20s, I had released a bunch of cassette music. Fiona Griffiths, who was working with the Theatre Resource Centre (at the time, she was teaching at University of Guelph) had bought some of my cassettes. She liked the music, and she hired me through a grant for young people just out of school to work at the Theatre Resource Centre in Toronto. So I actually moved back to Toronto, which is where I was born. I was working basically in the office there as office manager. Ian Wallace [well-known theatre artist and clown] was still there at the time, too, and he got me to deal with the audio for their productions and workshops. So, I started to make cues on tapes for that.

Another company, Pow Pow Unbound—it's no longer around, but it was Darren O'Donnell's theatre company back in the early 90s—did this show called *Field* at the Rhubarb Festival that I happened to see when I was just starting out in the business, and they had a guy playing electric violin with a bunch of pedals. It was very odd, and I kind of liked it; it was quirky, they were all in long underwear! So after the show, I went up to talk to this guy, just to ask, kind of shop talk, you know, about what kind of pickup was he using on his violin. And he was like, "Oh, you play electric violin?" And I was like, "Yeah." He said, "Because they're remounting this show in two months and I can't do it. So let me introduce you to Darren." And so they basically brought me in to take over from this other guy. And so that was my first time; but it was more of a live performance thing. I didn't really do the tapes for that. But then they asked me to do the sound designs and the compositions for Stephen Seabrook, who's still a friend to this day. He had me work on some of his shows and then I worked for Nadia Ross and her company [STO Union], and then [Daniel] MacIvor and Daniel Brooks. So, you know, this is what people needed. And I knew how to do it. Even though I was just kind of making it up as I went along! But I had the radio background, I had the music training, I had the multitrack recording experience. So I just put that all together and kind of developed my own style.

### **Speaking of the technology, how has the advent of digital technology changed the way that you work?**

It's changed it totally from top to bottom, in pretty much entirely a good way. Working with tape was very limiting. And of course, losing fidelity at every stage of the process when

you're transferring from one tape to another. Digital has been very empowering. The only drawback has been that there are so many choices when you start on something, it's like, what do I even use? So now I try to impose parameters on myself—otherwise you just get lost in there being so many options. But what's remarkable is that in the first few years that I was doing this, we only had tape and you know, very few theaters actually still used reel-to-reel. It was mostly all cassette. And so if there were 40 sound cues in a show, then there were 40 cassettes and the technician would have to rewind them all. You put it in, press play, and then you stop it when you hear a sound; and then you turn it back a quarter turn, and then put them in their little cases. You'd have all these cassettes and you're just swapping cassettes back and forth. We went from that to burning CDs when we could do that. The quality of that was a lot better. And of course, the cueing was a little easier because you just had to line up at the top of the track.

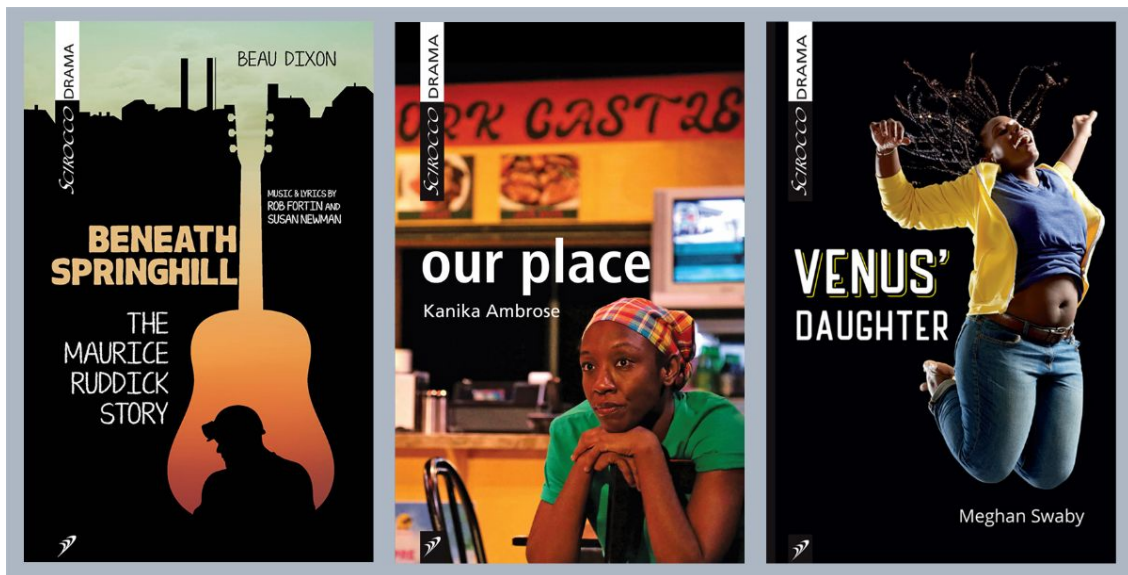
And then when computer playback emerged, it started very clunkily with a notoriously bad program called SFX, which only ran on PCs. But, you know, that introduced being able to program the sound cues and automate them. Then when QLab was released, I embraced that, you know, right from version one; I've been using that since 2008, and of course, that's the industry standard now. You're losing a bit of the live operator vibe, but, you know, you can't count on them even knowing how to do any of it anymore. It's great being able to program it and have so many layers that you can be running at the same time. And then editing-wise, with tape, you had to redo it, you had to go back and record over to correct something. Whereas now if you need to shift the timing, you can grab a chunk of audio and just shift it a little bit. It's amazing.

*Click the button below to read more from Richard about creative freedom, scoring for film vs. theatre and dance productions, and advice for young people on pursuing a career in sound design.*

[Read the Full Interview](#)

**FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH**





See More

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

### • IN THEATRES •

**Truth** by Kanika Ambrose

[Young People's Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, January 29–February 23, 2024.

**MacBeth: A Tale Told by an Idiot** by Eric Woolfe

[Eldritch Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, February 8–24, 2024.

**The Waltz** by Marie Beath Badian

[Great Canadian Theatre Company](#), Ottawa, ON, February 13–25, 2024.

**I Am William** by Rébecca Déraspe, translated by Leanna Brodie

[Carousel Theatre for Young People](#), Vancouver, BC, February 14–18, 2024.

**Boom YZ** by Rick Miller

[Western Canada Theatre](#), Kamloops, BC, February 22–March 2, 2024.

**Father Tartuffe: An Indigenous Misadventure** by Herbie Barnes

[Touchstone Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, February 22–March 24, 2024.

**3 Fingers Back** by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, February 27–March 24, 2024.

**Diggers** by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard

[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, February 27–March 10, 2024.

**Café Daughter** by Kenneth T. Williams

[Globe Theatre](#), Regina, SK, March 6–24, 2024.

**By the Light of a Story** by Kristen Da Silva

[Theatre Orangeville](#), Orangeville, ON, March 7–24, 2024.

**Rise, Red River** by Tara Beagan

[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, March 8–23, 2024.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls** by Dave Deveau

[Roseneath Theatre](#), on tour in Ontario, March 2024.

**Mad Madge** by Rose Napoli

[Nightwood Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, April 9–21, 2024.

**The Comeback** by Trish Cooper and Sam Vint

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, April 24–May 18, 2024.

**Greensleep** by Kelley Jo Burke

[Dancing Sky Theatre](#), Meacham, SK, April 26–May 12, 2024.

**The Outside Inn** by Sharon Bajer and Elio Zarrillo

[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, May 7–19, 2024.

**The Birds and the Bees** by Mark Crawford

[Alberta Theatre Projects](#), Calgary, AB, May 7–May 25, 2024.

**Doris and Ivy in the Home** by Norm Foster

[St. Jacob's Country Playhouse](#), St. Jacob's ON, June 19–July 6, 2024.

**Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz** by Alison Lawrence

[4<sup>th</sup> Line Theatre](#), Millbrook, ON, July 1–20, 2024.

**Halfway There** by Norm Foster

[Drayton Festival Theatre](#), Drayton, ON, July 3–21, 2024.

**Doris and Ivy in the Home** by Norm Foster

[Huron County Playhouse](#), Grand Bend, ON, July 11–28, 2024.

**Jim Watts, Girl Reporter** by Beverley Cooper

[4<sup>th</sup> Line Theatre](#), Millbrook, ON, July 30–August 24, 2024.



***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 •

***Les Filles du Roi*** by Corey Payette and Julie McIsaac  
Premiered at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, with upcoming screenings at the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Hamilton Film Festival, the St. Louis International Film Festival, and the Orlando Film Festival.

***With Love and a Major Organ*** by Julia Lederer  
Starring Anna Maguire, Hamza Haq, and Veena Sood. Finalist for the Grand Jury Prize, 2023 Nashville Film Festival, winner Best Feature Film, Reelworld Film Festival.

***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.

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