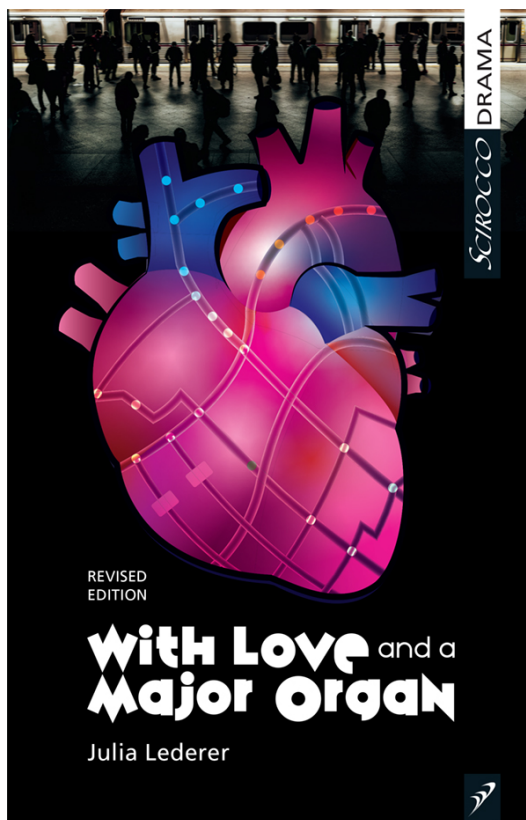




J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



"Explored with considerable charm... Lederer's dialogue is laced with sophisticated poetry and wry insight into the isolation faced by a generation." — *Los Angeles Times*

"A show that stands out above the others... just about perfect... rises to a rare level of universal truth, all while making us laugh. A lot."
— *NewCity Stage*

"Lederer has a deliciously twisted way with words... genuinely original... and the end result is pure elation."
— *Chicago Stage Standard*

"Beautiful and original. Poetic and heartbreaking." — *Broadway World*

Anabel sends her heart to a man she meets on the subway, and he disappears with it. George is on the run but keeps getting distracted by feelings he's never had before. Mona has resorted to virtual speed-dating to try and feel connected to the real world. Then a

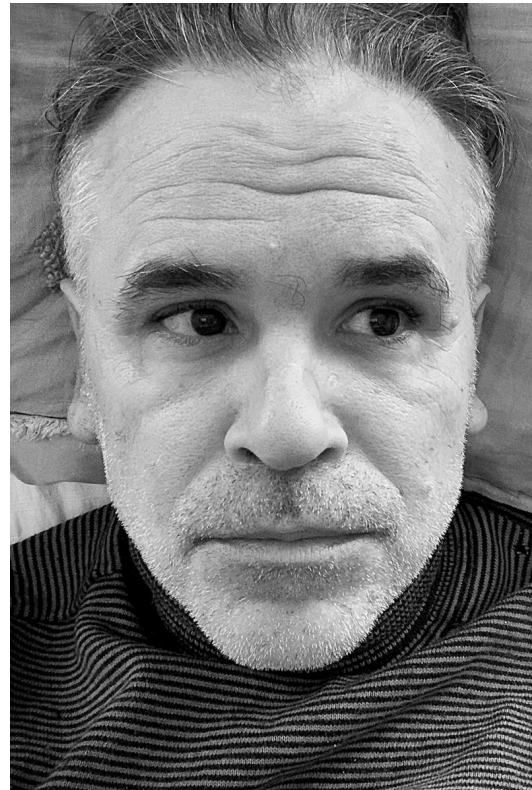
stranger appears on her doorstep in search of a missing heart... Poetic, funny, and deeply original, [*With Love and A Major Organ*](#) examines the universally trying task of reconciling the head and the heart, and the need for connection in our ever-changing world. [Julia Lederer's](#) very popular play has recently been released in a revised edition.

- * Nominated for Best Production: Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle
- * Nominated for seven StageRaw Awards, Los Angeles
- * Ovation Awards Recommended, Los Angeles
- * Best of Fringe, Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Production, Toronto Fringe

[See More](#)

THE INTERVIEW

[Sean Dixon](#) is a playwright, novelist, and banjoist. His plays include [Orphan Song](#), [Jumbo](#), [The Orange Dot](#), [The Wilberforce Hotel](#), [A God in Need of Help](#), [FRANCE — or The Niqab](#), [Right Robert](#), [The Gift of the Coat](#), [Lost Heir](#), [The Girls Who Saw Everything](#), [Aerwacol](#), [Billy Nothin'](#), [The Epic Period](#), [Sam's Last Dance](#), [The Painting](#), [District of Centuries](#), and [Falling Back Home](#). Sean lives in Toronto with his wife, the multi-award-winning documentary maker Katerina Cizek, and a daughter whose brilliant, funny, stubborn character permeates his current work.



Sean, your plays *Jumbo* and *Orphan Song* both feature innovative use of language. In the case of *Jumbo*, the central character in the play is an elephant. In *Orphan Song*, parents and child speak different languages. Can you tell us a little about how language works for those characters?

I try to cultivate a text that will demand a heightened physical engagement from

performers. This has always been my goal since the early days of making text for the collective creations of Winnipeg's Primus theatre.

In my early playwriting efforts, I had a strong belief in tapping into a certain kind of rhythm and to use the energy of storytelling to heighten everyday experiences to the level of myth. I knew I was succeeding because I was inspiring other artists: a xerox of the stage manager's copy of my early play *The End of the World Romance* was smuggled out of the Blyth Festival and studied by a teen with writerly aspirations who used it as a springboard to pen his indie bestselling debut novel. Later, a colleague sat at the back of the theatre to watch my solo play *Falling Back Home* over and over again. He wouldn't tell me why, but later when I went to the opening night of *his* play, I heard the effort to emulate my cadences in his storyteller character. These sounded pretty laboured to me, so I was chastened at the end when the audience rose to its feet.

Beyond the rhythm of storytelling, I've come to love the energy of passionately inarticulate characters. I think I have at least one aria of incoherence in every play I've ever written, but *Orphan Song* gave me the chance to create a symphony of the musically inarticulate: in a story about the life-and-death necessity for communication under conditions that make it all but impossible (adoptive human parents of a neanderthal child), I was challenged (by director Richard Rose) to cut all stage directions and fill the script with noise — screams, cries, barks, growls, whistles, notes (and a small collection of elliptical words) along with musical staves (for the neanderthals' musical language) — whose intentions would have to be uncovered through the process of humming and howling through them. And I gave the human characters a vocabulary limited to just a few dozen words, using a linguistic tool called the Swadesh list. It's remarkable to me how expressive you can be within that kind of limitation. Some critics mocked me for it (I was a bit shocked by the controversy, frankly), but it did what I wanted it to do and I was content.

Orphan Song is written with a lot of gibberish. When preparing it for publication, I tried to make the text more readable by providing notes and letters, essays and photos and pleasing images of the music (which was provided thanks to the skills of Phoebe Hu, who corrected my poor transcriptions of the Neanderthal's sung language.)

But I would recommend to readers that, if they want to understand the play itself, they should read it out loud.

As for *Jumbo*, a favourite memory about that project was being told by the sound designer Deanna Choi that she relished the opportunity to create an emotional sound palette for a character that could not speak. I do feel an essential job of a playwright is to create challenges for the collaborators, and even to find scenic excuses to inspire the collaborators to merge their disciplines, as for example when a costume also works as part of the set.

Do you have a philosophy of theatre?

I've never forgotten the garish, wordless, full-face character masks that we were shown in

school, which had the miraculous power to escape their destiny by transforming their literally carved expression into its opposite: the mask's metamorphosis happens through a change in intention and behaviour: so the cynic's twisted smile of contempt transforms into a wild idealism. The puritanical nun dances and becomes lascivious. The cretin raises his ground-sniffing nose to the sky and becomes a spiritual being. They're simply miraculous — 'simply' being the operative word. I think the best theatre is simply miraculous. It can happen without any magic beyond the performers committed to their bit.

I saw a great piece of theatre just the other day at Theatre Direct's season launch — in a library basement with fluorescent lights: *Guardians of the Gods*. Its two characters are kids telling one another about their experience of grownups. Some anecdotes are lighthearted, some are absurd, others are harrowing, heartbreaking, tragic. They change their perspectives at will, becoming new characters with new stories and you're never sure whether that is the game this child pair is playing, or whether the actors are really giving us a vision of a hundred kids. It feels like the former, like true play between this pair standing in front of their plain metal trunk. Occasionally they reach into a hat and read sentences that have been written by real children in other parts of the world. At the end of the play, the performers shed their child personas and offer the members of the audience the opportunity to write down their own thoughts on their own strips of paper, messages that will travel overseas and be read aloud by other actors in other countries playing the children in this play. It's transformative for us, for the audience, more powerful than any main-stage show with a million-dollar budget. That's my philosophy of theatre.

Click on Read the Full Interview for more on the challenges of working as a writer in different genres, the changing literary landscape, and advice for aspiring writers (or not!).

[Read the Full Interview](#)

BEHIND THE SCENES



This month we spoke with playwright [Rosamund Small](#) about site-specific and immersive theatre.

*Rosamund's plays include [Vitals](#), *Sisters*, *Maven*, and *TomorrowLoveTM*, an immersive theatrical experience about love, technology and the future. *Vitals* was honoured with Dora Mavor Moore awards for Outstanding Production and Outstanding New Play, as well as the Nora Epstein National Literary Award and the JP Bickell Award for Drama. This spring she performed her newest play, *Performance Review*, in a café in Toronto.*

Rosamund, let's begin by talking about *Vitals*. For people who are not familiar with that play, tell us a bit about it.

Vitals is a solo show about a Toronto paramedic. When I was 19 or 20, I was babysitting for a woman who was a paramedic. And that wonderful person, Kelly O'Brien, mentored me and encouraged me and shared so much about what her job entails. Inspired by that and some other medics, some research, and my imagination, I created this story about Anna, who spends her days dealing with all different kinds of emergencies, from the mundane to the most terrible, and to the mundanely terrible. We follow her through these difficult events and the culmination of them becomes her own emergency—her work really takes a toll on her own mental health.

Vitals has had a wonderful production history and it brought me a lot of recognition early in my adult life. It still gets produced; about once or twice a year, someone out there is doing it. (Obviously, it was published by Scirocco Drama, and that's such a special thing for me.)

Rosamund, can you tell us about where the initial production took place?

The show was premiered in 2014. It was produced by Outside the March and directed and produced by the lead of that company, Mitchell Cushman, who is still a very close collaborator of mine. He and his company were really excited about starting to do immersive and site-engaged work. I was also getting interested in that, partially through meeting them, partially through things I had seen from other cities. I was inspired by Mitchell's work, and I had actually had the thought that maybe this play could live outside of a theatre space—more *in the city*, as it's so much about all the parts of the city going on around you.

Mitchell had his own vision that was that, and more! So our audience met us with their tickets, and they got sent out, almost like they were on a call, to an address for a house in Roncesvalles. Inside the house was a metaphorical, beautiful scenic design...it was as though you were walking into this character's memories, essentially, and her experiences. During the show the audience walked from space to space, following the actor as she told the story. *Vitals* is just one significantly long monologue that has very little physical action and no other characters, so it really lent itself to that kind of “just dive right into her head” format. It was such a creative production. I'm so proud of *Vitals*. There was a lot to love about the making of it and the sharing of it.

You recently performed in your solo show, *Performance Review*, which was also a site-specific production. What can you tell us about that experience?

Performance Review is a big first for me. It's my first show inspired by my real life. It's just *inspired* by...but I'm Rosamund, my character is named “Rosamund,” and she's had a really similar life to me! It's my first time doing that, and it's my first time being in one of my own shows, or really, performing at a professional level. So that was an interesting impulse. I didn't want to pretend it was completely imagined, and I also wanted to name the character my own name, and I wanted to do it myself. So that was huge.

I also knew when I was creating this show that, essentially, I was creating stories of the workplace: different jobs and different professional workplace experiences, and I wanted the audience to feel really, really, *really* welcomed and held, and like they were close to me. That's what I wanted for the show: I wanted to tell the story right to the audience and make them feel like their best friend was levelling with them.

So I took that impulse and looked at the show as a whole. The first story in the show is from when I'm 18 and I'm doing my very first job, which is as a barista at Second Cup—and I'm terrible at it. But I'm so excited. Like, this is my big break. I really needed a job, and this is it; I'm going to do it! Through my own process, I became interested in the idea that I would serve some coffee while I did the show. Mitchell got involved, and he became interested in taking that further by putting us into a café space. So the audience, they come in; they can interact with the space like you would a regular café. It's not a *set*, it's a café, and you can get a coffee and sit down and do all the things you do in a café. And then I come out, and I start clearing dishes and I start working at the cafe, and then I start telling stories. And even though I then I tell another story that isn't set in a café...and we sort of

leave, and leave, and leave...there's a metaphor deep in it, of this person going back to her innocence and who she was when she was that age. When that was what her idea of what a big job was, this little cozy space. And that's where we are. So it has a nice meaning, and it has nice audience interaction.

Click on Read the Full Interview for more on the pleasures and perils of site-specific theatre.

Read the Full Interview

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST DAY—OCTOBER 25



IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to the Scirocco Drama authors nominated for [Montreal English Theatre Awards](#)! Kudos go to [Yvette Nolan](#) on her nomination for the META for Outstanding New Text for her play *Jordan*, and to [Mark Crawford](#), whose play *Bed and Breakfast* was nominated for the META for Outstanding Independent Production.

Congratulations to all of the nominees for the 2025 [Tom Hendry Awards](#), including Scirocco Drama playwrights:

- [Jordi Mand](#), nominated for the Carol Bolt Award for her play *In Seven Days*
- [Leanna Brodie](#), nominated for the Carol Bolt Award for *Salesman in China* (written with Jovanni Sy) as well as for the Comedy Award for her translation of Catherine Leger's *Home Delivery*
- [Sean Dixon](#), nominated for the Theatre for Young Audiences Award for his play *A Boy, a Horse, and the North Wind*

IN MEMORIAM

JGS mourns the passing of [Kim McCaw](#) on September 26. As the longtime Artistic Director of Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg, Kim worked closely with playwrights across the country. McCaw also helmed the Banff Playwrights Colony, acted as guest dramaturg at the Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre, and taught directing, acting, and dramaturgy at the University of Alberta. Kim's obituary notes that he helped to "create an understanding that Canadian-made art is not only entertaining but, in fact, essential."

COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

Playing Shylock by Mark Leiren-Young

[Polonsky Shakespeare Center](#), NYC, NY, opens October 16, 2025.

Home to Roost by Kristen Da Silva

[Chemainus Theatre](#), Chemainus, BC, September 26–October 19, 2025.

Casey and Diana by Nick Green

[Yes Theatre](#), Sudbury, ON, September 25–October 19, 2025.

The Weight of Ants by David Paquet, translated by Leanna Brodie

[The Cherry Arts](#), New York City, NY, October 17–26, 2025.

The Christmas Market by Kanika Ambrose

[Crow's Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, November 4–30, 2025.

Pandora by Jessica B. Hill

[Here for Now Theatre](#), Stratford, ON, November 5–15, 2025.

Gertrude and Alice by Evalyn Parry & Anna Chatterton, with Karin Randoja

[Touchstone Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, November 6–23, 2025.

Footnote to Freedom by Beau Dixon and Lance Dixon

[New Stages](#), Peterborough, ON, November 9, 2025.

Serving Elizabeth by Marcia Johnson

[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, November 11–23, 2025.

The Right Road to Pontypool by Alex Poch Goldin (staged reading)
[Winnipeg Jewish Theatre](#), Winnipeg, MB, November 22–23, 2025.

Rogers vs. Rogers by Michael Healey
[Crow's Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, December 2–28, 2025.

Ruby and the Reindeer by Mark Crawford
[Here for Now Theatre](#), Stratford, ON, December 10–24, 2025.

Munsch Upon a Time by Debbie Patterson
[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, December 19, 2025–January 3, 2026.

Easter Someday by Tanisha Taitt
[Cahoots Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, January 17–24, 2026.

Mad Madge by Rose Napoli
[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, January 20–February 8, 2026.

Boom X by Rick Miller
[Theatre Aquarius](#), Hamilton, ON, January 21–February 7, 2026.

Casey and Diana by Nick Green
[Western Canada Theatre](#), Kamloops, BC, January 22–February 1, 2026.

The Golden Anniversaries by Mark Crawford
[Arts Club Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, January 22–February 15, 2026.

Holland by Trish Cooper
[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, February 4–21, 2026.

Rogers vs. Rogers by Michael Healey
[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, February 18–March 14, 2026.

The Cull by Michele Riml and Michael St. John Smith
[New Stages](#), Peterborough, ON, February 26, 2026.

Queen Maeve by Judith Thompson
[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, March 3–29, 2026.

A Killing Snow by Paul Ciufo
[Vertigo Theatre](#), Calgary AB, March 14–April 12, 2026.

Chase the Ace by Mark Crawford
[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, March 24–April 12, 2026.

The Golden Anniversaries by Mark Crawford
[Western Canada Theatre](#), Kamloops, BC, April 2–12, 2026.

On Native Land by Corey Payette
[The Cultch](#), Vancouver, BC, April 8–19, 2026.

• ON SCREEN •

Starwalker by Corey Payette
Starring Dillan Chiblow, Jeffrey Follis, and Stewart Adam McKensy. The film version of *Starwalker* opened recently at the Inside Out Festival and will be playing at theatres soon.

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, winner, Best Feature, Canadian Film Festival. Available to rent or buy on Google Play, AppleTV or Amazon Prime.

The Swearing Jar by Kate Hewlett
Starring Adelaide Clemens, Douglas Smith, Patrick J. Adams, and Kathleen Turner. Now streaming on Amazon Prime.

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