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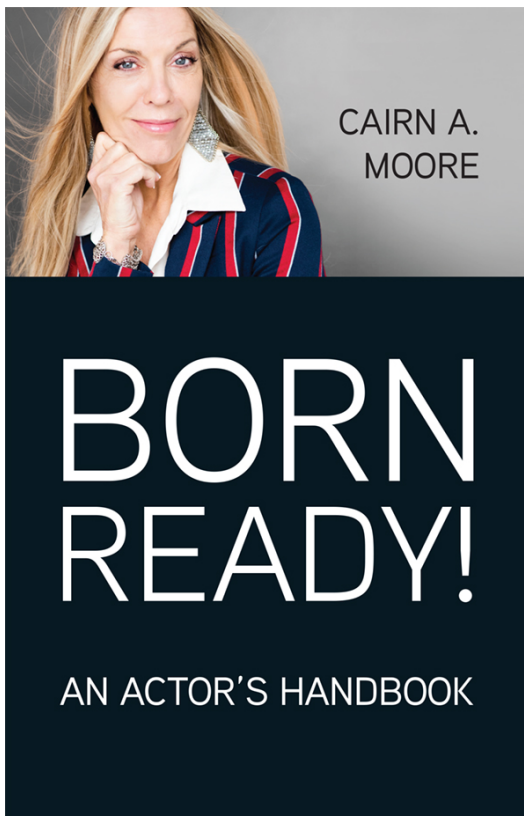


J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD

P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



“Taking the first steps from the street to the stage can be both confusing and challenging. *Born Ready!* takes the mystery out of the process, offering a clear, encouraging roadmap that guides aspiring actors with warmth, humour, and hard-earned wisdom, helping them build the confidence to take the stage and own it.”

—Tom Stroud, Senior Scholar at the Department of Film and Drama, University of Winnipeg

“Using the same empathy, thoughtfulness, and sense of humour with which Cairn teaches her classes, *Born Ready!* details all the steps an actor's process should take with such clarity and concision that anyone who reads it, regardless of their acting experience, will feel confident enough in themselves and their performance to step into the spotlight.”

—Maia Woods, Honours Acting grad, University of Winnipeg

Distilled from many years of working with post-secondary and adult students, *[Born Ready!](#)* is essential reading for actors. In addition to insider tips on theatre dos and don'ts, it is packed with powerful, practical tools and techniques for combatting the anxiety that can prevent an actor from realizing their full potential, accessing emotion without jeopardizing mental health, analyzing scenes, and creating safe rehearsal practices.

Actor, director, and award-winning playwright [Cairn A. Moore](#) has been teaching and inspiring first-year performance students at the University of Winnipeg for more than twenty-five years. She is the former Associate Education Director of Prairie Theatre Exchange School and the founder and proud owner of Actors Studio with Cairn Moore.

See More

THE INTERVIEW

[Michele Riml](#) and [Michael St. John Smith](#) are BC writers with award-winning careers in theatre and film. They have also been married to one another for 28 years.

The two co-authored Scirocco Drama's recent release [The Cull](#) and this month JGS spoke to them about that experience.



I'd like to start by asking you a little bit about the process of writing *The Cull*. Is this the first time that you have worked together on a play or a screenplay?

Michele: We worked on a small piece called *The Bridge* for Pi Theatre Company, a twenty-minute play that was part of a series of plays. So we did work together on that.

Michael: We were aware of the risks!

How did you come up with the idea for *The Cull*?

Michael: We had a friend who invited us over for dinner, and at the time we weren't thinking of working on anything together. But there was a government employee at the dinner who had been working on the wolf cull, and he started talking about it. I think there were about six or seven people at the dinner discussing it. Afterwards, we both got into the car and we said, "Boy, you know, that would be a great idea for a play!" The metaphor of the way wolves conduct themselves and the way people conduct themselves. Morals and the idea of morality, the idea of the good of the pack and that sort of thing. So we were kind of fascinated with that idea.

Michele: And I think there was an obvious connection, which was this friend of ours often

hosts what he calls a “meat party” or “carnivore party.” And it was one of those, so he had all this meat there. And then we were talking about wolves! So the connection between the meat and the wolves, that became a big image in the play, this red meat. It connected metaphorically and visually right away.

Also, I think one of the reasons we chose to write this together was that it's a play about marriage. It's a play about long-term relationships, friendships, marriages, and men and women. So it felt really right for both of us to have input into that. It was really fun to work through the various characters. We did a lot of character work, a lot of backstory, figuring them out, going back and forth with our own points of view about why people do what they do. That was the fun part of the process for sure.

Michael: It was important that the characters were friends, but that there was also someone who had *not* grown up with them, so that there were these differing, subterranean motives going on, which emerged slowly. That gave it a sense of tension and a dynamic within the context of what we were trying to do. It was fun to work on.

Can you tell us a little more about the mechanics of how you worked together? Did you set parameters for when you would work on the play, or did it take over your lives at times?

Michele: Our son was living at home at the time and he was about seventeen. So we still had our life and everything. But I think that one of the good things about it was that we could be standing in the kitchen having a coffee in the morning and have an idea about something and start talking. An hour or so could go by as we were working out a scene. So we did set certain times to sit down together and to talk about the play first; we worked on the characters and the backstory, but then we began to talk more specifically about scenes. Our son even came out from his bedroom a couple of times going, “Are you guys fighting?” And we weren't fighting. We were trying to take on the voices of the characters and enact what they were enacting.

We have separate offices: Mike has a shed out back and I have my own office. So when it came to the actual writing, we each took on particular scenes. I wrote the first thirty pages of the play, and then Mike picked it up and reviewed it, and he wrote the next twenty pages, or whatever. Then we started picking scenes that we wanted to try. We would switch them over to each other.

Michael: In this process, which could be quite antagonistic in some ways, with egos and all that, one of the things that really helped both of us is something that Michele's very good at. What really trumped everything else was the good of the play, and we both really held that. People always laugh and ask, “How'd you stay married?” But frankly, it wasn't that big a deal, because of that overriding principle. I think we both saw that. Plus, I think we had a lot of fun while we were doing it, because it was a really good idea. It had a lot of mileage in it, you know what I mean? It was good.

Michele: Also, I've written a lot of plays, and I didn't feel that this was a play I wanted to or

could write by myself. So we each had respect for what the other brings to the table, and those things are slightly different. For example, I write with a lot of humour, and Mike has more interest in the deeper philosophical themes. It really helped that we have different things that we bring to the table, but we also have a shared aesthetic—we like the same stuff. That said, we had arguments, and we have a slightly different process when we actually write a scene and then present it to the other one. Mike's process is: he just puts it down. And then from there, he's going to work on it. I tend to work it out a bit more before I show it to anyone. So there were a couple of times where Mike would see my scene and he'd go, "Yeah, great. No, I really think we're going somewhere with this. We can work on this." And I'd read his scene and go, "What are you thinking? This isn't it at all." To his credit, he didn't take it personally. But we did have a couple little fights while still understanding that we were both just coming at it, trying to work something out. And we always did. Like Mike said, if you put the good of the play first, then it's just better. Which is interesting, because that's the theme of the play, putting the good of the pack above your own ego and agenda. Even when we disagreed and walked away from each other, each of us came back at different times to go, "Yeah, you're right."

The only time I got legitimately frustrated with Mike was when he'd start editing the wrong draft!

Click on Read the Full Interview for more on the pros and cons of collaborating in the writing process.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

BEHIND THE SCENES



This month JGS spoke with renowned costume and set designer Charlotte Dean about her extraordinary career.

Photo: The chorus from White Christmas at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, 2010. Director: Stephen Schipper; Costume Design Charlotte Dean; Set Design Michael Gianfrancesco.

Charlotte, you have a very impressive career that includes designing both costumes and sets for theatres across Canada. How did you first get interested in theatre design?

This is a childhood story. I grew up on a fruit farm, but my mom and dad both loved Shakespeare, particularly my dad. I have two older sisters, and when each of us turned ten, we were taken to Stratford to see a musical and Shakespeare. I saw *Cinderella*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I think was the one with Christopher Newton and Christopher Walken, designed by Leslie Hurry. And those fairies! I was just swept away by the woodland magic that was going on onstage. I think that stuck with me for a long time, but I didn't really know what I was going to do. I remember when I was fourteen or fifteen, phoning up all the millinery stores in Hamilton to try and get a job. Now, at that point, there were only three millinery stores left, and none of them were hiring because, you know, hats were disappearing. But I always did crafty stuff and sewed and painted. I'd get up in the middle of the night and make things on the kitchen table. And then in my last year of high school, I heard about Theatre Production at York University, and I went, "Oh, well, I better start taking some courses." I went to Winona High School, and they did have art class, but

I'd just taken one art class, and it was really a technical school. So I took three years of drafting in a single year. Anyway, I got myself into York University, and I guess the rest is history!

How great that you've gone on to do so much work at Stratford, and also Shaw, of course. What's it like to work at a big theatre festival? Do you have a large team to work with?

I was still going to university when I first worked at Stratford as a costume decorator and costume painter for a couple of seasons. And then I went to Shaw, and I feel like I got my Master's at Shaw because I was there for three or four years in a row; I started out as the dyer and finished as a designer. By the time I got to Stratford to design, I was used to that larger theatre thing where you've got people to do the dyeing, and you've got people to do the boots and shoes, and you have a team of cutters—depending on the size of show you're doing, in Stratford you might have seven cutters with teams. Those Shakespeares, they really can add up, lots of armies and lots of characters! I think one of the most fun times I had at Stratford was when we did *Ghosts* by Ibsen. Not too many characters, and we got to do a kind of an abstract set with birch trees that we hauled out of the woods and something like eight costumes. So we could get really, really picky about trim and all that kind of stuff. If you're doing a musical or one of those big shows, it is sort of like dressing an army. In these days of budget consciousness—which has always been there; we shouldn't pretend that it was always lots and lots of cash flowing—there are trade-offs, if you've got a bunch of money for this, then you don't have money for that. But it's definitely a different experience than with smaller theatres, where budgets can be tiny. At Stratford, I remember we were building six or eight monks for *The Brothers Karamazov*, Russian monks. And the best fabric that we found happened to have a great quantity of silk in it, like 95%. My assistant and I looked at each other and went only in Stratford would it be the best possible thing to use silk for the monks, right? But it was that kind of rough silk, and it lights better. Silk really does light better, even with the, you know, new magic lights they have.

I would imagine that lighting greatly affects your work.

Yes, when the new LED lights were introduced, I had a moment of: "Why is everything a different colour? Oh, no!" This is talking out of school, but a lot of lighting designers are men, and there is a greater amount of colour blindness in the male population. So there are some lighting designers that I'm positive are colour-blind because costume designers end up explaining, "You see that? It wasn't brown when we bought it, and it's not meant to be brown."

Do the large festivals have a lot of costume storage?

Stratford does, but they also have sales every once in a while. And there's a certain point where after you've used a pair of breeches for, you know, half a dozen shows, you can't use them anymore, although the theatres all stretch that. You always have to pull x percent of stock; that's in your contract these days. You know, you might be required to have 65% stock. You sometimes think, "But I know there isn't 65% stock there..." The same items tend to get used often, either because they're neutral, or they have enough character that you go, "Oh yeah, I like this pair of breeches. It goes with this vest and the wig colour we

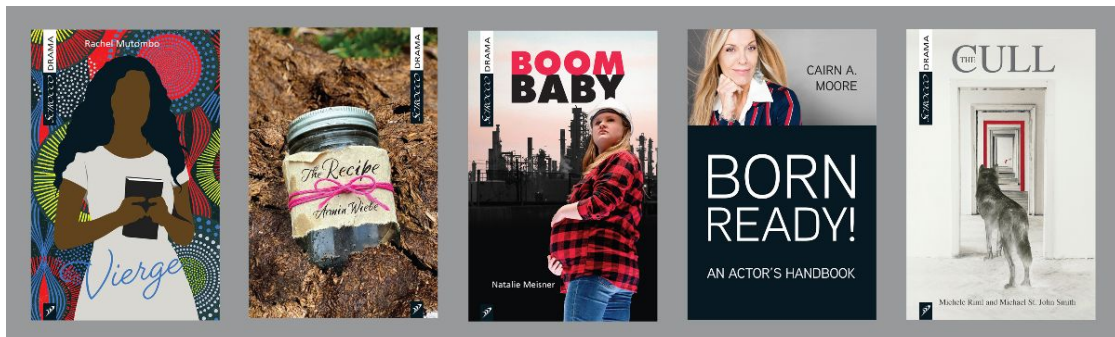
were thinking of. It's all going to work." A certain piece might get used a lot because of its neutrality, or just that it's a better costume than some awful pants where somebody chose the wrong fabric.

There's a room in Stratford called "The Cage," which used to be a cage where all the fabric was kept locked up at night. Now it's a big room. But I remember going in there with Patrick Clark, and I found a bolt of fabric that I had bought for the first show I ever did at Stratford. And it was a bad choice, like a *really* bad choice. And of course, nobody had used the fabric—twenty years later it was still there! I said, "Patrick, do you think we could take this out to a field and burn it?" So as not have my mistake glaring me in the face every time I walk in for a piece of trim. I don't know what possessed me to buy that yardage other than nerves. When you're young, you make mistakes; you don't realize how the *hang* of the fabric is so important, because it's got to move. This particular bolt wasn't flowy fabric at all. It was solid, nasty fabric. Anyway.

Click on Read the Full Interview for fascinating insights into the work of costume and set designers, and what it takes to become one.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

NEW RELEASES



IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to [Tara Beagan](#), winner of 2025 Governor General's Literary Award for Drama in English. Tara was actually nominated twice for the prestigious award, for [The Ministry of Grace](#) published by Scirocco Drama, and for *Rise, Red River*, for which she won, published by Playwrights Canada Press. Congratulations also to Scirocco author [Catherine Banks](#), who was nominated for her play [Downed Hearts](#).

Congrats to the winners of the [Playwright Guild of Canada's Tom Hendry Awards](#), including

Jordi Mand, whose play [*In Seven Days*](#), published this spring by Scirocco Drama, won the Carol Bolt Award, and **Leanna Brodie**, whose translation of Catherine Léger's *Home Deliveries* won the PGC Comedy Award.

Congratulations to **Kristen Da Silva**, whose play [*Beyond the Sea*](#) has been nominated in the Fiction category of the Hamilton Literary Awards.

Congrats to **Scott Nolan**, who is the co-author, along with Brandi Vezina, of "Paper Town," the song that won the Faye Walker Song of the Year songwriting award at the [*Manitoba Country Music Awards*](#) this month! You can listen to "Paper Town" [here](#).

And congrats to the Scirocco authors who recently won [*Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards*](#), including: **Jessica B. Hill**, whose play [*The Dark Lady*](#) at Bard on the Beach won the award for Outstanding Direction in the Large Budget Division (Moya O'Connell), and to **Nick Green**, whose [*Casey and Diana*](#) at the Arts Club won awards in the Large Budget Division for Outstanding Performance in a Dramatic Lead Role (Damien Atkins) and Outstanding Performance in a Dramatic Supporting Role (Nora McLellan). Both plays were nominated for numerous awards, and plays by **Corey Payette**, **Andrea Scott** and **Nick Green**, and **Tom Arthur Davis** and **Jivesh Parasram** also received nominations.

The [*Scirocco Drama Manitoba High School Playwriting Program*](#) is back for its 26th year! Four Manitoba high school playwrights are selected for the program and paired with dramaturgs to embark on a play development process. Workshops and a public presentation of the plays in the spring of 2026 will feature actors from Manitoba Theatre for Young People's theatre school. The application deadline is **Friday, January 9th, 2026**—spread the word!

COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

Playing Shylock by Mark Leiren-Young
[Polonsky Shakespeare Center](#), NYC, NY, running currently.

The Christmas Market by Kanika Ambrose
[Crow's Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, November 4–December 7, 2025.

Gertrude and Alice by Evalyn Parry & Anna Chatterton, with Karin Randoja
[Touchstone Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, November 6–23, 2025.

Serving Elizabeth by Marcia Johnson
[Prairie Theatre Exchange](#), Winnipeg, MB, November 11–23, 2025.

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

[Théâtre Bluff](#), touring France, November 13, 2025–April 30, 2026.

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, 2025–January 4, 2026.

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.

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 Rimi 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.

Sugar Road by Kristen Da Silva

[Thousand Islands Playhouse](#), Gananoque, ON, May 22–June 14, 2026.

The Long Weekend by Norm Foster

[Port Stanley Theatre Festival](#), Port Stanley, ON, June 10–July 4, 2026.

Schoolhouse by Leanna Brodie

[4th Line Theatre](#), Millbrook, ON, June 30–July 25, 2026.

Sugar Road by Kristen Da Silva

[Port Stanley Theatre Festival](#), Port Stanley, ON, July 8–25, 2026.

Sexy Laundry by Michele Riml

[Drayton Festival Theatre](#), Drayton ON, August 12–30, 2026.

Farley Mowat's And No Birds Sang by Dave Carley

[Capitol Theatre](#), Port Hope, ON, August 14–September 6, 2026.

Ship to Shore by Norm Foster

[Port Stanley Theatre Festival](#), Port Stanley, ON, August 19–September 5, 2026.

A Woman's Love List by Norm Foster

[Lighthouse Theatre](#), Port Dover, ON, August 26–September 12, 2026.

A Woman's Love List by Norm Foster

[Lighthouse Theatre](#), Port Colbourne, ON, September 16–27, 2026.

• ON SCREEN •

Starwalker by Corey Payette

Starring Dillan Chiblow, Jeffrey Follis, and Stewart Adam McKensy. The film version of *Starwalker* opened at the Inside Out Festival in Toronto in May and went on to play at the Vancouver Queer Film Festival; the Flickrs Rhode Island International Film Festival, where it won the Grand Prize Alternative Spirit Award; the Asinabka Film Festival in Ottawa; and the Portland Film Festival, where it was the opening night narrative feature film. The film version of *Starwalker* will play at the Whistler Film Festival in December.

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.

Café Daughter by Kenneth T. Williams

Starring Viola Davis, Tom Lim, and Sera-Lys McArthur and is directed by Shelley Niro. Now streaming on Paramount+.

Steel Toes by David Gow (adapted from *Cherry Docs*)

Starring David Strathairn, Andrew W. Walker, and Marina Orsini. Directed by Mark Adam and David Gow. Now streaming on Amazon Prime.

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