

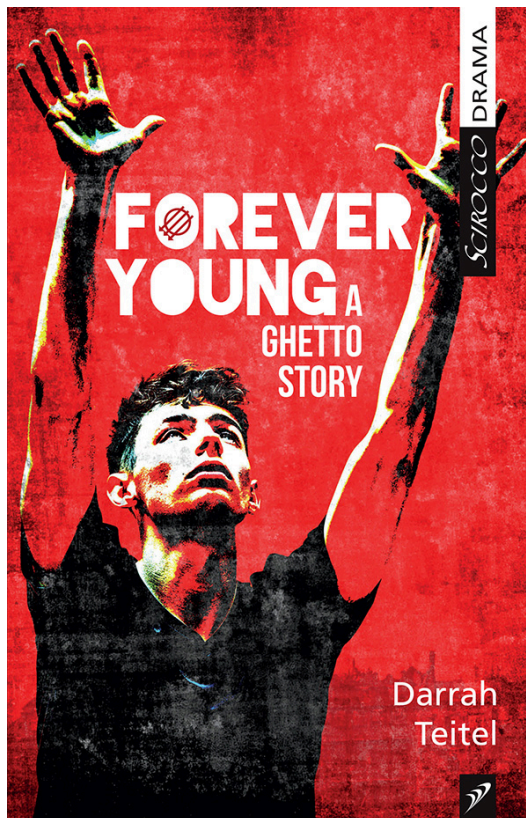
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J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



“The dizzying diversity of Jewish life in the pre-Holocaust era is one of Hitler’s least-known victims. Chasms of class, ideology, religion and values divided Jewish communities that effectively lived in different worlds until the Nazis shoved them together in ghettos, trains and camps. Darrah Teitel revives and literally rejuvenates the fierce debates that lit up the Jewish world before the great darkness. Their passion and edgy sparkle will dance in your head for days.”

— Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein

Forever Young: A Ghetto Story takes place at the height of the Second World War, as a group of youths organize what will become known as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Izzy, Eden, Joshua and Christian are young socialist revolutionaries from different backgrounds who are trapped in a room under hopeless circumstances. Their task is clear: they must

form a new military organization against the Nazis and convince their elders that the Ghetto must fight. The cadre of brilliant, brave and often hilarious characters express their passions and desires as fiercely as they fight for their right to exist in the face of annihilation. [Darrah Teitel's](#) story of youth, revolution, and betrayal in Poland, 1943, is written for today, with a clear message about how to fight for the changes we need.

Winner of the Broadway World Ottawa Award for Best New Play or Musical

[See More](#)

THE INTERVIEW

[Christopher Morris](#) is a playwright, director, and actor, and is the artistic director of the Toronto-based theatre company Human Cargo. His plays include [The Runner](#) (winner of 2019 Dora Awards for Outstanding New Play and Best Production), tremblements, Our Beautiful Sons, The Road to Paradise (co-written with Jonathan Garfinkel), and Night and Return: The Sarajevo Project (co-playwright).



Christopher, a few years ago Scirocco Drama published your play *The Runner*. Could you tell us a bit about the play and then perhaps touch upon the events of last year, when *The Runner* became the centre of some controversy?

The Runner is a one person-show about Jacob, a religious Israeli Jew who volunteers for ZAKA. ZAKA is an organization of emergency responders. Volunteers arrive at accidents/terror attacks and collect the remains of Jews to ensure they can be buried according to religious custom. I first heard about ZAKA when I was in high school and the

thought of people doing this work really stuck with me because it's the kind of work I could never do. So in 2008, I decided to write a play about ZAKA and made my first trip to Israel and the Occupied Territories to start doing research. Ten years later, after multiple trips and workshops, *The Runner* premiered at Theatre Passe Muraille in 2018.

During the research I did for the play, it was important for me to try to absorb the complex world my character was living in. I spoke with lots of members of ZAKA, spending time in their homes. And because of my Canadian passport, I could easily travel in and out of the Occupied Territories, making over twenty trips to Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus. At the beginning of my research, I wanted to explore the circumstances around the 17-year-old Palestinian girl Ayat al-Akhras, a straight A student who blew herself up at a Jerusalem supermarket. It happened in 2002, and one of the victims was an Israeli teenage girl her age. The al-Akhras family lived in the Dheishe Refugee Camp, and through various contacts, I managed to meet Ayat's parents. On multiple occasions I met them in their home and spoke with them about their daughter. It was a very sobering experience.

The conflict in *The Runner* comes after Jacob saves the life of an injured Palestinian teenage girl who's suspected of stabbing an Israeli soldier. And by doing this, Jacob's entire community turns on him. Throughout the play, Jacob is always trying to balance the contradictions of wanting to live in Israel and make an Israeli home, but at the same time, is trying to reconcile actions from his community he doesn't agree with that are being made towards the Palestinian population. Actions that he feels are dehumanizing. He also turns inward, challenging his own biases and the prejudice he grew up in. It's a powerful story about valuing human life, seeing the humanity in everyone.

The premiere was directed by Daniel Brooks, starred Gord Rand and had a set design by Gillian Gallow, which was a 24-foot-long treadmill that was always in motion. It was a very exciting piece of theatre about the complexities of being alive and co-existence. We won some awards and toured the production to five different cities across Canada.

So fast-forward to December 2023. We were preparing to tour *The Runner* to the PuSh Festival in Vancouver in January/2024 and then to the Belfry Theatre in Victoria in March/2024. Just before Christmas of 2023, I was notified by the Belfry that they were receiving pushback from people in Victoria who considered the play as being against Palestinians. At the same time, they also received large support from others in Victoria for the play to go on. This was around two and a half months after Oct 7th, 2023 had happened. The Belfry's immediate response was to put out a statement which didn't support the play, or me as the playwright, but rather to put the play's value in question (a play that they had programmed) and to decide whether they would present it. We were scheduled to take *The Runner* to the PuSh Festival three weeks later at the end of January and the run at the Belfry was happening two months later. The Belfry finally informed me that they had decided to cancel the show but weren't sure when they were going to make it public. I asked if they could wait to announce their decision until after we performed the show in Vancouver. I knew that cancelling it at the Belfry would fuel the vitriol that was just starting to be directed at our show in Vancouver. And I stressed that I was getting more and more concerned for our company's safety and well-being, as the environment there was

turning more aggressive and potentially dangerous. But The Belfry decided to announce the cancellation before we went.

The PuSh Festival, on the other hand, really supported us while there was the tension at The Belfry; Gabrielle and Keltie were amazing. The second there was word of something happening at the Belfry, they reached out to me, backed *The Runner* publicly and included me in all of their internal conversations about the pushback they were also receiving and discussed strategies on how to keep the conversations going in a positive manner. The PuSh festival had also programmed *Dear Laila*, an installation piece by a Palestinian artist Basal Zaraa that proposed an artistic dialogue between the two productions. But about a week and a half before we were to perform, PuSh received word from Basal that if *The Runner* was in the festival, he would pull his work from the lineup. The PuSh Festival then decided to pull *The Runner*.

Over the last two years, I've thought a lot about all that happened in terms of our theatre community. It was a very intense time for everyone involved in the difficult decisions that had to be made, but I feel saddened by the precedent the Belfry and PuSh set with their decisions. As a playwright, I write a play, share it with artistic directors/producers and in the end, they are the ones who decide whether it goes on or not. As was the situation with *The Runner* at that time. I wanted it to go on, but I had no control of whether that happened or not. We're living in disempowering times that are hard to navigate. So it doesn't surprise me that back then, and now, some people might want to oppose a particular voice or perspective. It can be a natural response to the destructive and turbulent times we're living in. But I feel differently. I see theatre as a communal experience. It's different from watching a movie or TV at home. In a play, you have to share a room with others whose points of view and opinions you might not agree with. Theatre is an opportunity to bring people together. It's an art form where contrasting ideas can live and be celebrated. Theatre can be a safe place to do that.

If the function of theatre is to show human conflict on stage, there will inevitably be different points of view that an audience witnesses. In *The Runner*, I'm asking the audience to come along on a particular journey. We're in the psyche of Jacob, a ZAKA member who treats a young Palestinian woman instead of an Israeli soldier. He does this out of a human instinct to help. And in doing so, his small religious Jewish community turns on him. Going on a theatrical journey with a guy like that is a great opportunity to hear challenging ideas in a safe environment. It also can lead to conversation, and I believe the need for conversation right now is crucial.

We need to encourage experiences that allow us to see each other's humanity, even those whose ideas or perspectives we might not agree with. To me, I see *The Runner* as a warning against demonization, showing the importance of finding humanity in ourselves and each other. But I understand the play is not for everybody. Though I'd like you to be part of that kind of discussion, you don't have to go see the show. But I feel the way through these challenging times we're in is to find ways that connect us more, to have empathy for each other and opposing views. Dialogue is the way forward. Without that we're going nowhere. Artistic directors and producers in Canada, myself included, need to

remember this.

Read the full interview with Christopher Morris in which he shares his experiences of travelling to Ukraine to work on a play with a theatre company which was forced out of Mariupal by the Russian attacks, and then found itself collaborating with Russian artists.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

BEHIND THE SCENES



Colin Rivers is the President and Managing Literary Agent at [Marquis Literary](#), which manages, represents and promotes a select roster of writers, composers and directors within Canada and international markets.

Colin, how did you become an agent?

Through my work as a producer and general manager. When I began working at Marquis Entertainment (which was founded by Robert and Judy Richardson, and which I now operate in partnership with Rob), we were partnered on a select group of Canadian theatre projects with the creators. And as producers for the work, we also held the exclusive option to license the work — starting with the play *2 Pianos 4 Hands* (published by Scirocco Drama!) and this work led me to appreciate the strategy required to both promote and nurture the long life of a play/musical beyond its premiere production, especially a Canadian work.

Is it a career that you were always interested in, or was the path to Marquis less straightforward?

I had an early interest in both directing and producing, but sometimes life pulls you in certain directions and you just have to trust your instincts. I admittedly fell into my work at Marquis (and arts administration in general) by way of a couple of introductions from friends who were also colleagues that happened around the same time. And some great mentors who championed me.

For a playwright, what are the advantages of having an agent?

Strategy, promotion, connections, dramaturgical feedback, camaraderie — but not necessarily everything for every artist — each relationship between an agent and an artist is entirely unique.

Can you tell us about a project or projects that you are particularly proud of?

There are so many, to be honest, and I hesitate to name just one...but in the past few years we've launched (or relaunched) so many new works into the world that I feel deeply connected to because they required years of dedicated development work and evolved through many production steps. To name a few that Scirocco has specifically championed...*Casey and Diana* by Nick Green (which continues to flourish throughout Canada and is soon to premiere in the US), *Get that Hope* by Andrea Scott (which had a wonderful premiere production at the Stratford Festival and for which we are working on some exciting next steps), *Where You Are* by Kristen Da Silva (which has been produced coast to coast in Canada and now in multiple countries in Europe including Germany and Italy, and with new translations in development in Poland and the Czech Republic), *Serving Elizabeth* by Marcia Johnson (which premiered on the cusp of the pandemic and we feared the momentum would be scuttled, but then we landed a production at Stratford as part of their 2021 outdoor season and that led to many more productions than we could have ever imagined), and many plays by Mark Crawford (with a new one on the horizon,) and also Richard Greenblatt's books *Two of the Best* (about the 30 year journey of 2P4H) and *Text and Context* (which focuses on directing practice).

What are the challenges for an agent in today's theatre landscape?

Balancing between responding to trends in arts programs (both within Canada and abroad) and audience tastes, and at the same time advocating for new work that I personally believe should be showcased but may not yet be on the general industry radar. It's a very fine balance, because my role is to support both artists and be a liaison with arts leaders. I'm neither the creator nor the programmer, but I do need to champion awareness and openness to new plays, writers and stories. Those conversations require trust and confidence, but I also have to constantly and very carefully judge where the lines are in between, to make sure I don't overstep!

Do you have any advice for aspiring agents?

See and read as much theatre as you can (in both your hometown/country and beyond) so you can formulate a strong and detailed critical perception of all work as well as defining your own taste — which ultimately becomes your signature as an arts administrator. I also believe it's important to do try many roles in the theatre/arts industry before settling on one, because you will never really know that one path is right over others until you've had those experiences.

Read the Full Interview

VALENTINE'S DAY. IT'S COMPLICATED.



COMING ATTRACTIONS

• IN THEATRES •

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.

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.

Crash by Pamela Sinha

[Imago Theatre](#), Segal Centre, Montreal, QC, February 11–22, 2026.

The Dark Lady by Jessica B. Hill

[Bravo Theatre](#), Chapala, MX, February 13–22, 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, 2025.

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.

White Girls in Moccasins by Yolanda Bonnell

[Native Earth Performing Arts](#), Toronto, ON, March 22–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.

I Am an Island by Julia Lederer

[Here for Now Theatre](#), Stratford, ON, May 27–June 7, 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.

Intrepid by Alex Poch-Goldin

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, January 13–February 6, 2027.

Six Degrees in May by Santiago Guzmán

[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, May 4–23, 2027.

fareWel by Ian Ross

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, May 5–29, 2027.

• 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; the Whistler Film Festival, and the Portland Film Festival, where it was the opening night narrative feature film. The film version of *Starwalker* will play at the [Victoria Film Festival](#) in February.

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 Violah Beauvais, 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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