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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



“Throughout the 90-minute one-act, there is the sickening reminder that what happens on the internet stays on the internet. The characters must deal with all that goes on within a forum that exposes everyone, forever...It’s a messy play that ends with a shocking punch to the gut.” — *Edmonton Journal*

“By the end I found I’d been clutching my reading glasses so hard in one hand I’d bent them out of shape...In a repertoire of foregone conclusions, this new play is impressively fearless.” — *12th Night*

“*Tell Us What Happened* artfully fits in enough to keep us talking for the next ten years.” — *Edmonton Journal*

In [*Tell Us What Happened*](#), Charlie and her two roommates have been running a secret online girl group that boasts over 400 members and prides itself on being a safe space for young women to disclose their stories and support each other. Tensions rise when a

handful of members come to realize they have all been sexually mistreated by the same guy—and that he happens to be Charlie’s best friend, Josh. Alliances are stretched to the breaking point as the girls pursue justice while Josh and Charlie fight for their friendship. This powerful drama by emerging playwright [Michelle Robb](#) is a charged investigation into the subject of sexual assault in the age of social media.

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THE INTERVIEW

*This month, [Tracey Erin Smith](#) joins us to talk about her new book [Flying SOULO](#), and her life as actor/writer/teacher, and the driving force behind the hit television show *Drag Heals*. Tracey is the founder and driver of SOULO Theatre, which originated in Toronto, and conducts workshops in New York City, Tel Aviv, San Francisco, Vancouver and the UK. Tracey won the Best Theatre Instructor (Diamond First Place) twice in the Toronto Star Readers’ Choice Awards; her work has been seen Off-Broadway, and she has been awarded Best of The Fringe for her solo shows *The Burning Bush!* and *The Big House (NYC/Toronto)*, as well as the Broadway World Award (NYC), and the Audience Choice Award (NYC). Most recently she received the INSPIRE Lifetime Achievement Award.*



Tracey, you have such an extraordinary career that it's hard to know what to ask you about first. But let's start with your own work as a writer and actor of solo shows. I believe you just got back from New York City with a show?

Yes! It's a brand-new show based on a character that I discovered, a German-Jewish

immigrant to New York in the 1800s named Fredericka Mandelbaum. She looked around at the options that were available for women back then—which was to basically be a mother, a seamstress or a sex worker, whatever it took to keep your children fed. The poverty was unbelievable. The child mortality rate was insane. And she was Jewish. She, this woman, is credited as being the mother of organized crime. It took a woman, a Jewish woman, to put the “organized” in organized crime! And she made millions of dollars. She helped so many people; she gave them skills... it's not like they went to law school—they learned pickpocketing and all kinds of things. She gave generously to her synagogue, and everyone was on her payroll. Judges, lawyers, you name it. And she engineered what was at that time, the largest bank robbery in New York's history. Anyway, she was a genius. I've been looking for a mentor, because I became obsessed with *Tuesdays with Morrie*, and I was like, “Ah, I wish I had a mentor!” Part of the what the show is about is that if you feel like you never really had a mentor, or if you still dream of having a mentor, you can conjure one, you can invent one. And so that's what I did. In the play, I travel through a time-space portal from 2024 Calgary, to her luxurious salon in the east side of New York City in 1884, and we have this amazing night together, during which she and I both have to make life-changing decisions.

How many other solo shows have you written and performed? Would you like to tell us a little bit about one or two of them?

Absolutely. So I think this is number eight or nine. It's my favorite addiction, creating solo shows and helping other people create them. I learn something profound about myself and my life every time I do a new show. I created my first show at Studio 58 Theater School in Vancouver. We had to create a twenty-minute, one-person show in order to graduate, and what surprised everyone, including myself, was that mine had no words—because I like to chat! The style of the show was that of a silent movie. I used a technique I had learned from Morris Panych and Wendy Gorling, of silent storytelling set to classical and other forms of music. My solo show teacher was the amazing John Lazarus.

In a nutshell, the show was about a woman living in the 1920s who was involved in an automobile accident where her hand was severed at the wrist, and for the first time in medical history, they were able to attach a new hand. So we catch up with her; she's at home recuperating, and she has a big (pretend) scar around her wrist to signify what's happened. She slowly realizes she has no control over this new hand; she gets into a fight with it, and it knocks her out. She passes out, and then the hand reaches around, grabs a glass of water and throws it on her face to wake her up. But the hand and the woman realize that if they try hard enough, they can work together, but it's difficult because this hand literally has a mind of its own and the other is connected to *her* brain. But they start to work together, and this leads to getting along, and this leads to falling in love. And that leads to getting married. (There's a whole scene where I put a white veil on my hand.) And then the final scene of the show is where they're lying on the couch together, and there's a radio announcement, 1920s style. And it says the mystery has been solved about who the hand belongs to. The wrong hand had been attached to the woman, and it belonged to a female serial killer. So the final image of the show is the woman and the hand breathing together in unison, staring at each other as the lights go down. Where does this stuff come

from? I have no idea.

The other show I'll tell you about is from around the same period, while I was in theatre school. In the middle of the night, two words came to me, and they were "stripping preacher." I was like, "Whoa! Stripping preacher! What's that about?" And as it evolved, because my background is Jewish, it became a stripping rabbi. So that show was about the world's first stripping rabbi (or preaching stripper). The name of the show, and her stage name, was *The Burning Bush*. That show took me coast to coast in Canada and to New York a few times.

As the artistic director of SOULO Theatre, you not only write and produce your own solo shows, but you lead intensive workshops for people from all walks of life who want to create shows or other works of art based on the method that you use. Could you tell us a little bit about that aspect of your career?

Oh, absolutely. After I had taught my first class at Act Two Studio (then Ryerson, now Toronto Metropolitan University,) which was called "Awakening the Creative Spirit," the artistic director of that school at the time said, "Pitch us any course and we'll run it." And that's when I put everything I'm passionate about into a cauldron, stirred it up, and created SOULO Theatre. The process is about excavating raw material from your life, from your lived experience, and using many different techniques to transform this raw material into something that not only helps and has an impact on you, but within it contains a gift for the audience. It's a kind of theatrical alchemy. And I've done that now with hundreds and hundreds of people in the last twenty-two years.

This work has been about me walking with people through a process of discovering what's inside them. What have they lived through? What decisions have they made that led to other things? We take what has happened to them and I help them turn that into a story that's creative but also cohesive enough that the audience can follow it. I often say, "Victim stories make shitty theatre," so if people come in feeling like they've been hard done by, I will help them examine what really happened and how many sides of it can we see. It's always better to let the audience come to a conclusion than to present them with a conclusion. (That's why we love procedural courtroom shows so much. We humans love finding the evidence and putting together our own conclusion.)

Click on the link below to read more of our conversation with Tracey.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

BEHIND THE SCENES



This month [Sharon Bajer](#) spoke to us about her work as an intimacy coordinator. Sharon is an actor/playwright/director who is based in Winnipeg. Her plays include the recent hits *The Outside Inn* and *Afterlight*, and *Molly's Veil*, which is published by *Scirocco Drama*. Earlier this year, Sharon was awarded ACTRA Manitoba's Woman of the Year Award and the Winnipeg Arts Council's Making a Mark Award.

Because the role of intimacy coordinator is relatively new, maybe it would be a good idea to start out with a brief description of what the job is.

Intimacy coordination became a formalized role in film and television in 2017, with a show called *The Deuce* on HBO, which was about the porn industry. During the first season, it became apparent that they needed to put some protections in place. So they brought in a woman named Alicia Rodis, a fight coordinator with a film background, to make sure that the sex scenes were done in a respectful way, that the actors were fully consenting to the action, and that people felt safe doing these intimate scenes. It was around the time that the #MeToo movement was happening—right when there was a real re-examining of the power dynamics in the film and television industry, as so many stories were coming forward about actors being forced to do things that they didn't feel comfortable with. There were some other people who were doing this work, too; Tonia Sina, who had been introducing consent-based work in universities in the States, and Siobhan Richardson, a fight director who was starting to bring this work to theatre in Canada. Lindsay Somers founded the Canadian version of the intimacy directors and coordinators organization, which is called [Intimacy Coordinators Canada](#) and is based in Toronto.

Since 2018, it's been a growing movement. TV shows like *Bridgerton* helped to publicize what intimacy directors and coordinators did, and there were a bunch of shows on Broadway that had coordinators come in. As well, intimacy coordination has been featured a lot more in the media. So it's a movement that's really had widespread reach in a short time. We don't have it in our ACTRA agreement yet; we're working on that, but the goal is that all productions that have any simulated sex or nudity or hyper-exposed sexual scenes would employ an intimacy coordinator. When I describe the job to people, I like to compare it to what a fight coordinator does on a film. A fight coordinator ensures that all of the

performers are doing things safely, but also, they can have a hand in crafting the look of the scenes and helping to realize the director's vision—while making sure everybody feels empowered in their workplace.

Are intimacy coordinators now part of theatre and film education?

Well, they're definitely talking about it at the university level. There's a certified intimacy coordinator at the University of Winnipeg, Aria Evans. I'm really glad they have her there. And more directors have been bringing coordinators in to talk to the students and educate them on this consent-based approach.

Would you say, Sharon, that most of your work is in film and television? Or is it split fairly evenly between film/television and theatre?

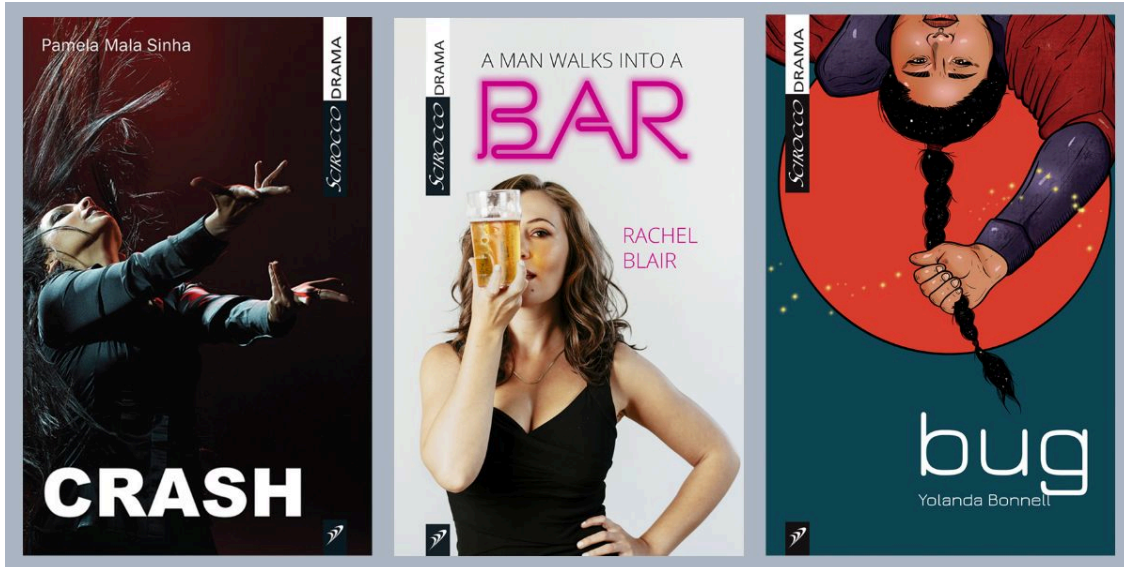
Right now it is fairly split between theatre and film/TV. I was at The Stratford Festival in 2017 when I saw a production of *The Bacchae* that had used an intimacy director and I became very curious about what that was, so I registered for the first training cohort, which was in Urbana, Illinois. I was the only Canadian. And at the time I was doing a lot of directing in theatre, and I was just curious about it; I thought, oh, that might be an interesting piece to add to the other stuff I was doing as a director. When I was there, and I met Alicia and saw what she was doing with film and television, I identified that as being more of a need here in Winnipeg. Because I've worked a lot in film and television as an actor, I thought that I had the right kind of skill set to be able to kind of introduce it to productions here, which I did. So after the training and certification, I came back to Winnipeg and started working as an intimacy coordinator. At first, I was on a lot of sets where they had no idea what one did, and we all had to figure it out. It was a little bit of a dance at first to see how the role functioned, because productions weren't used to having them. And now when I go on sets, the American production companies work with intimacy coordinators all the time, and all the crew that I've worked with here, they know what I need, and it's lovely. And there are other intimacy coordinators now being trained. I always wanted to be a pioneer in something or to at least bring something new — so that feels really satisfying!

I do both theatre and film/television because I've worked as an actor for years in both areas. But I think that in order to do the film stuff, you really have to have been an actor for a while. You have to understand the power dynamics on film and television sets. I wouldn't suggest to anyone who hasn't worked a lot in film to do intimacy coordination work in film.

Click on the link below to read the rest of our chat with Sharon.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

**NOVEMBER 25 IS INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**



IN THE NEWS

The [Playwrights Guild of Canada](#) recently announced the winners of the 2024 Tom Hendry Awards. Congratulations to Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, whose play *Diggers* won the Carol Bolt Award, and to Rose Napoli, whose play *Innocents* won the PGC Comedy Award.

And congratulations to us! J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing/Scirocco Drama received the 2024 Honorary Membership Award! We appreciate everything that PGC does and this award is a great honour. Thanks, PGC!

COMING ATTRACTIONS

The Recipe by Armin Wiebe

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, November 6–23, 2024.

A Christmas Carol by David van Belle

[Citadel Theatre](#), Edmonton, AB, November 23–December 24, 2024.

A Christmas Carol by Geoffrey Simon Brown

[Theatre Calgary](#), November 29–December 29, 2024.

Controlled Damage by Andrea Scott

[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, January 14–February 2, 2025.

For Both Resting and Breeding by Adam Meisner

[Talk Is Free Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, January 15–31, 2025.

The Strange and Eerie Memoirs of Billy Wuthergloom by Eric Woolfe

[Eldritch Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, January 29–February 9, 2025.

Perfect on Paper by Marcia Johnson

[Talk Is Free Theatre](#), Barrie, ON, January 30–February 8, 2025.

The Secret to Good Tea by Rosanna Deerchild

[Grand Theatre](#), London, ON, February 18–March 8, 2025.

The New Canadian Curling Club by Mark Crawford

[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, February 25–March 23, 2025.

No Big Deal by Michael Kras

[Roseneath Theatre](#), Touring ON, Spring 2025.

Bed and Breakfast by Mark Crawford

[Theatre Orangeville](#), Orangeville, ON, March 13–30, 2025.

Casey and Diana by Nick Green

[Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre](#), Winnipeg, MB, March 19–April 12, 2025.

Feast by Guillermo Verdecchia

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, April 1–27, 2025.

Casey and Diana by Nick Green

[Neptune Theatre](#), Halifax, NS, April 22–May 18, 2025.

Casey and Diana by Nick Green

[Arts Club Theatre](#), Vancouver, BC, April 24–May 25, 2025.

The Runner by Christopher Morris

[Harold Green Jewish Theatre](#), North York, ON, April 26–May 4, 2025.

I'm in Love with Your Sister by Norm Foster

[Theatre Orangeville](#), Orangeville, ON, May 1–18, 2025.

Macbeth: A Tale Told by an Idiot by Eric Woolfe

[Eldritch Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May 7–18, 2025.

After the Rain by Rose Napoli and Suzy Wilde

[Tarragon Theatre](#), Toronto, ON, May 27–June 22, 2025.

Reading: *Serving Elizabeth* by Marcia Johnson
New Stages, Peterborough, ON, June 14, 2025.

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