

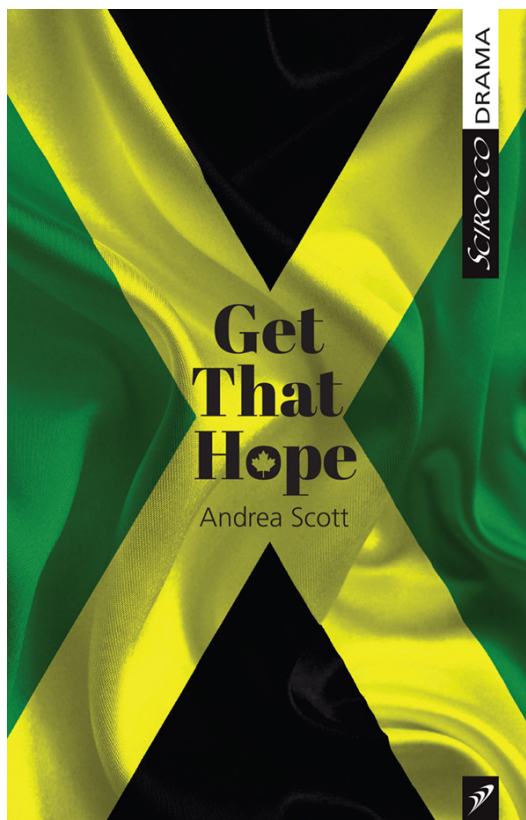
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J. GORDON SHILLINGFORD
P U B L I S H I N G I N C

BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

ESSENTIAL READING



Get that Hope is a short and sweet Jamaican Independence Day's journey into night." — *The Globe and Mail*

"While Scott's world is specific, the play's themes and its characters will have you nodding along and laughing in recognition." — *Toronto Star*

"Can it be hard to search for hope amidst the rubble of gentrification, aging parents, and a crumbling housing market? Absolutely. But...Scott and Sills' directive is crystal clear: You can't wait for hope to arrive. You have to go get it." — *Stratford Beacon Herald*

In [Andrea Scott's](#) smash hit [Get That Hope](#), Daddy wants to win the lottery, Mommy is still bitter about getting knocked up at twenty, Simeon has war-related PTSD, and Rachel just wants to move out of her parents' place—but first there are a few things she's got to get off her chest. It's Jamaica's Independence Day, Toronto is sweltering, and the jackhammers

gentrifying the neighbourhood have put everyone on edge. *Get That Hope* looks into the heart of a Jamaican-Canadian family on a day when everything changes.

[See More](#)

THE INTERVIEW

[Corey Payette](#) is an award-winning interdisciplinary storyteller, writer, composer, and director whose work challenges conventional narratives by infusing Indigenous perspectives into mainstream music, theatre, and film. A member of the Mattagami First Nations with French Canadian and Irish ancestry, Payette's large-scale musical creations have been shared extensively across Canada and around the world, igniting conversations about resilience, cultural healing, and reconciliation.



Corey, you are renowned for your epic musicals such as [Children of God](#), [Les Filles du Roi](#), [Sedna](#), and [Starwalker](#). Musicals are usually considered to be the most mainstream theatrical form, but yours often advocate for social change, and your work has been called “transformative.” Can you tell us a little about your philosophy of theatre?

I believe theatre has the power to transform individuals and communities by creating space for stories that challenge, heal, and inspire. My philosophy of theatre is rooted in the idea that storytelling is a necessary part of being alive—one that has been central to all human cultures since time immemorial. When I create musicals, I aim to bridge the deeply personal and the universal, drawing audiences into worlds where they can feel connected to the characters' struggles, joys, and resilience.

For me, the musicals I create aren't solely for entertainment. They're tools for inspiration, advocacy, and education, a place where we can shine a light on difficult truths, such as the legacy of residential schools in *Children of God*, or the erasure of Indigenous women's voices in *Les Filles du Roi*. At its best, theatre is a communal experience that opens hearts and minds to new perspectives, encouraging empathy and action.

I approach every project with the belief that art must be in service of the communities it represents. This means ensuring cultural safety, following proper protocols, and working collaboratively between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. My musicals often explore themes of resilience, identity, and reclamation, blending stories with contemporary forms. This intersection of the old and the new is where I feel the most innovation happens—it's where we can honor the past while imagining a better future.

Ultimately, I strive to create work that feels alive, urgent, and in conversation with the communities they're created in. Theatre has the potential to leave audiences transformed, and I see my role as helping to guide that journey—not just through spectacle, but through truth, heart, and a deep respect for the stories we share.

You are an incredibly talented and versatile artist—you often write the book, the music, the lyrics, and then direct the show! Do you make a conscious switch from one role to the other? Or are you working on everything all at once?

I would say that the roles of writing, composing, and directing are deeply interconnected for me, so I rarely experience them as completely separate. When I'm writing the book, I'm already imagining how a scene might flow into a song. When I'm composing the music, I'm thinking about how the staging will bring it to life. And as I direct, I'm constantly refining the text, lyrics, and music to ensure they work harmoniously in the space.

That said, there are moments when I have to focus more deliberately on one role. For example, writing the book requires stepping back to think about the larger structure and arcs of the story, while composing allows me to delve into the emotional core of a character or moment. Directing brings it all together—interpreting the material in collaboration with the cast and creative team, shaping the show into a cohesive and dynamic experience.

I think of the process as a constant dialogue between these roles rather than switching between separate hats. It's about listening to the story and letting it guide my decisions, whether it's through a lyric, a melody, or a staging idea. Ultimately, it all serves the same goal: to tell the story in the most powerful and resonant way possible. Being so involved in every aspect allows me to ensure that the vision is cohesive while also being open to the incredible contributions of the team, which always elevates the work.

***Children of God* is a powerful play that centres on a family that is deeply affected when the children are sent to a residential school. Can you tell us how the play was received—both by Survivors of the residential school system and by other theatregoers?**

The reception of *Children of God* has been deeply moving and humbling. From the very beginning, I knew this story would carry immense weight for audiences, particularly for Survivors of residential schools and their families. The play was created with a deep sense of responsibility to honour their experiences, and their responses have been some of the most meaningful feedback I've ever received.

For many Survivors, the play became a space where they could see their stories reflected and acknowledged in a way that felt like a validation of their lived experiences, and for others, it opened up conversations with their families that they hadn't been able to have before. There were tears, moments of healing, and a profound sense of connection in those post-show discussions. Many Survivors and intergenerational Survivors have shared their own stories, prayers, and songs in these post-show conversations.

For other theatregoers, particularly those unfamiliar with the history of residential schools, the play was often eye-opening. Many expressed feeling a mix of heartbreak, anger, and gratitude—heartbreak for what they learned about this chapter of history, anger at the systemic injustices, and gratitude for the opportunity to witness a story that deepened their understanding of a history that they felt was kept from them.

One of the most frequent comments I received was about the balance of pain and hope in the piece. Audiences were moved by the resilience of the characters and the strength of the family at its heart, even in the face of unimaginable trauma. That balance is central to my work—it's about acknowledging the truth but also shining a light on the love, strength, and resistance that carry us forward.

The response reinforced for me the power of theatre to foster empathy and understanding, and I'm deeply grateful to every Survivor, family member, and audience member who came to share in this story. To me, it shows the need we have in every community for these conversations to continue and for these truths to be heard.

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

[Read the Full Interview](#)

BEHIND THE SCENES



This month JGS talks with inclusive publishing expert Laura Brady.

Laura has more than 25 years of trade publishing experience, the past fifteen spent creating and converting ebooks and consulting about inclusive publishing and accessibility workflows.

For people who aren't familiar with accessible publishing, can you give us a quick overview of what it is?

So, this is a big question, but how I want to answer that is that accessible publishing is publishing for every single one of a book's potential readers, including people with print disabilities. So, it means paying attention to the entirety of the marketplace because print-disabled readers can be up to 20% of the population at any given point in time. It's an elastic number, it ebbs and flows as people cycle in and out of situational disabilities, but if you're publishing accessibly then you are paying attention to the entire market and catering to the needs of everybody who might want to read your content.

What are some of the most common barriers that print-disabled readers face when trying to access books?

It can be really hard to find books that are accessible and to figure out which ones are going to suit your needs. I've spoken to loads of print-disabled readers in my life who download a sample of an ebook, see if it will work with their assistive technology and then buy it or borrow it. Or they actually buy or borrow it and then return it and get a refund when it doesn't work with their assistive technologies. So, finding books that meet their needs means finding books that have accessibility metadata in them and that metadata is exposed at the retailer level. And that's fairly rare, to be honest. More and more publishers are putting energy and attention into accessibility metadata but displaying that metadata is an ongoing challenge and we're not quite there yet.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that you are one of the leading experts in accessible publishing in Canada. Almost everything that I know about accessible ebooks is from watching your various online tutorials. What drew you into a career in accessible publishing and how did you train for it?

One thing I do want to say is that the accessible publishing space in Canada is built on collaboration, and this is critical to success. I call myself an accessibility busybody because I just like to make sure things are moving and gently nudge things in the right direction so that the needs of readers with print disabilities are front and center. It doesn't always work, but I try.

I'm delighted to hear that you've learned a lot from those tutorials. That's great. I regularly regret that some of those courses are locked behind a paywall because that means that not everybody can access them. Last year, I re-recorded some of my courses, and they're now openly available on the APLN (Accessible Publishing Learning Network) and on my [YouTube channel](#), so they're not behind the paywall. I like to do research and think through issues in accessible publishing and then make them openly available because I operate on the principle that a rising tide lifts all boats. So, the more this knowledge about how to publish accessibly is openly available and everyone can benefit from it, then the more accessible content there is in the marketplace. That's my hope anyway.

And so, what drew me to a career in accessible publishing and how did I train for it? Training? What training? Mostly it's a lot of research and development, getting angry, banging my head against my desk, and then figuring something out. There was not really any formal training but I'm always learning. I think that's really important because the space changes constantly. It is vibrant and it evolves and standards adjust to new realities.

I got into accessible publishing partly through helping to program the ebookcraft conference that was part of BookNet Canada's Tech Forum. We ran workshops and keynote presentations. Through the course of programming, I became really interested in accessible publishing and offering a well-thought-out and fully fledged set of talks and workshops around publishing that included accessibility. As part of that, I was contacted by [NNELS](#) (National Network for Equitable Library Service) to help out with what they did, and boy, I love NNELS so much. They were such innovators in the space.

I also think it's important to say out loud that I'm not a disabled person and that doesn't mean that I don't have empathy and some understanding of the space, but people with the lived experience of a print disability will always know more about the space than I do. And so, it's really important to always involve people with the lived experience of a disability in the testing or creation or thinking through problems because their experience trumps almost everything that I know in general.

You said that the accessibility space is constantly evolving. How much do you think has changed since you started working in the accessibility space?

When I first started making ebooks we were not paying any attention to accessibility. And now I think that if you're not paying attention to accessibility then you have your head stuck in the sand. Everybody is thinking about and talking about accessibility in some way, shape, or form. I think most publishers are now aware and put thought and intention into image descriptions. Years ago, I would say it was the rare publisher who was aware of image descriptions. So that's the evolution of thinking about accessibility in these spaces — it's just more front and centre.

I know that the EU Accessibility Act goes into effect next year. Canada has done some work to invest in accessible publishing in the country but how do you think

Canada ranks against other countries in terms of accessibility?

Yeah, the European Accessibility Act is due to effect seismic change in book publishing. How it gets enforced is an open question and there are a lot of unknowns, but it will impact Canadian publishers. There's no question about it.

I think partly because of the Accessible Book Initiative, which ran from 2019 to March 2024 and was a giant pot of money that was used to help build capacity for accessible publishing in Canada, Canadian publishers are in pretty good shape.

That funding meant that folks could write and put thought and research into how to solve accessible publishing problems. eBOUND Canada got a healthy grant to think through accessibility metadata and how to implement it a little bit better. A lot of publishers used that money to make audiobooks, to help work at workflow kinks in-house, or to hire NNELS to help them with testing. The main thing that the Accessible Book Initiative did was raise awareness of accessibility issues so I think among countries in the world Canada's fairly well-positioned.

Well, it's good to hear. What are the biggest challenges the industry is still facing to make books accessible for everyone?

I think the other side of the coin of the Accessible Books Initiative is that the grant money wasn't tied to using Canadian labour so a ton of that work went overseas. We're relying on cheap foreign labor and we're not capable of solving our own problems.

What is your hope for the future of accessible publishing and how can readers, authors, and publishers contribute to that goal?

One of my near-term hopes is that the end of the Accessible Books Initiative from the Department of Canadian Heritage does not mean that publishers stop paying attention to accessibility. I am so nervous that publishers will say, "Okay, that was fun, but we're done and we're going to just carry on how we have done in the past." It makes me nervous that the grants and the support have gone away.

I would love to see some kind of accessibility legislation in this country that governs the commercial marketplace and pushes people to do better because what I find is that sticks work quite well. Carrots are nice, but sticks work even better. The business case is there and it's solid: 20% of your readership has print disabilities and when you make an accessible ebook that ebook is better for everyone who wants to read it, not just the print-disabled readers. Even though the business case is really clear, the sticks do come in handy and I wish Canada had a few sticks up its sleeve.

One of my long-term hopes is that we put folks like NNELS and CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) out of business so that these organizations don't have to use the copyright exemption to make accessible formats for their clients because accessible formats already exist in the marketplace and people with print disabilities can buy or borrow them easily already.

If folks want more or want to hear about things that change around accessible publishing, then I would strongly recommend signing up for the newsletter from [APLN](#). I'd also recommend [inclusivepublishing.org](#), a website run by the Daisy Consortium, which is a

major player in the accessible publishing space. They have a series of webinars that are useful, as well as their inclusive publishing newsletter.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

NEW RELEASES



COMING ATTRACTIONS

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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