



PLAYWRIGHTS CANADA PRESS

ANNUAL REPORT for the
BOARD of DIRECTORS of
PLAYWRIGHTS CANADA PRESS
&
PLAYWRIGHTS GUILD of CANADA

January 1 – December 31, 2022

Mission Statement

Playwrights Canada Press exists to raise the profile of Canadian playwrights and Canadian theatre and theatre practitioners through the publication of Canadian plays and the occasional publication of theatre criticism, history, biographies, and memoirs.

Board of Directors

At its annual meeting in October 2021 the board of the Playwrights Guild of Canada appointed the following directors to the Playwrights Canada Press board:

- Bilal Baig (Toronto)
- Rick Chafe (Winnipeg)
- Shauntay Grant (Halifax)
- Michelle Kneale (Vancouver)
- Josh Languedoc (Edmonton)
- Colleen Murphy (Toronto)
- Judy Wensel (Regina)

The Playwrights Canada Press board elected the following individuals to be officers of the company: Colleen Murphy, President; Michelle Kneale, Vice President; Bilal Baig, Treasurer; Josh Languedoc, Secretary; Shauntay Grant and Judy Wensel are members-at-large; and Rick Chafe is Past President.

Operations Overview

The following provides context for how Playwrights Canada Press operates.

Financial Responsibility

Officers and directors hold financial responsibility for the organization and will therefore sign cheques, contracts, and all documents as required by law, and will also review and approve all financial statements and auditor's reports as outlined in by-law one.

Banking

Playwrights Canada Press uses TelPay to remit all payments to vendors and playwrights, including electronic payments by direct deposit and printed cheques. Any two of the president, treasurer, any director, and the publisher may sign cheques or authorize payments. Ordinarily the publisher will be one of the two signatures.

The Press has a line of credit backed by \$107,651 in GICs (as of December 31, 2021). This includes the additional \$50,000 that the Press board authorized the purchase of in February 2020. The cumulative surplus was used to make this purchase. While the money is earmarked for upcoming book publications and other operating expenses our banking advisor suggested putting the money aside to earn some interest until it is needed. The funds from the February 2020 purchase can be withdrawn from the GIC at any time without penalty. The use and cost of the line of credit will be evaluated at each annual meeting of the Press board. The line of credit is accessed by the company Visa card.

Government Funding

Currently the Press receives funding annually from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Book Fund, and the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit. Project funding is applied for through Ontario Creates and Livres Canada Books.

The Canada Council announced a new grant competition for publishers in March 2022 with a due date of March 2023. Until the new applications are assessed in 2023, the Press will continue to be funded through our previously assessed grant of \$130,000. In addition to our regular operating grant from the Canada Council we received \$26,000 in 2022 from the Reopening Fund to assist with a return to in-person events.

Personnel

Staff

Annie Gibson, Publisher
Employed full-time since June 2005

Blake Sproule, Managing Editor
Employed full-time since June 2008

Avvai Ketheeswaran, Production Assistant
Employed part-time since August 2021

Staff Changes

In October 2022 Jessica Lewis, our long-time sales and marketing manager, announced her departure. Jessica had worked with the Press since January 2016.

Annie works in the Toronto office on a full-time basis. Blake work remotely from his home in Peterborough, ON, and Avvai works remotely as well, dividing her time between Lethbridge, AB, and Vaughan, ON.

Working with the Playwrights Guild of Canada

The Press works with the Guild in a number of ways. Beyond having shared board members for communication at the board level, there has been quite a bit of increased communication

between staff in recent years. In addition to ironing out kinks in our distribution systems, the publisher and executive director have had some very productive conversations on other matters, including ensuring rights have been secured when selling books to amateur theatre groups, the Carol Bolt Award, and floating around ideas for other shared marketing activities. A new operating accord between the two companies was signed in 2011.

The Playwrights Guild spearheaded an initiative to increase cooperation and communication between Canadian play publishers, including the Press, Talonbooks, Scirocco Drama, Coach House Books, and NeWest Press. Publishers meet with staff from the Guild to share ideas for collective marketing initiatives, and the Press has begun bringing other publishers' books to events. The Press also assists to liaise non-traditional book sellers, such as Citadel Theatre, with other drama publishers.

More recently, we've updated our consignment and shipping arrangement with the Canadian Play Outlet to ensure they can access our books from the UTP warehouse without having to hold much inventory themselves. The CPO also sells Playwrights Canada Press ebooks.

Fiscal Year 2022

Referring to the company's audited financial statements, reviewed by the accounting firm Kurin and Partners, for the fiscal year January 1 to December 31, 2022, the accountants report a net loss in the year of \$10,632. At the end of the year, the Press has an accumulated surplus of \$179,768.

This loss was planned as most of our accumulated surplus has been budgeted to be spend on books to be published. In 2020 and 2021 we were not able to publish all the books we'd signed up but maintained a financial cushion to see those books through. As work ramped up 2022 and more books were published the funds were spent.

The Press made good use of the Canada Council's Reopening Fund, which we had deferred in 2021. The funds helped us attend several in-person conferences to sell and showcase books and bring playwrights along with us to talk about their work.

We saw a small dip in sales of Playwrights Canada Press titles, and a much larger decrease in the sales of the foreign books that we distribute. We are used to these cycles, however, as we always see higher returns in one year, then better sales the next. Ebook sales increased once again, this year by 5%.

The Press received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, and a contribution from the Support for Publishers component of the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Book Fund. We are up to date with our claims to the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit and will be submitting the 2022 claim in the coming months.

We saw increases in our marketing expenses as events took place once more, and especially as we paid for travel. Some administrative expenses saw large increases, including an 18% increase in our insurance costs, and a 26% in our bookkeeping invoices. We are planning to spend more money on outside bookkeeping in the future so it doesn't fall on the publisher's shoulders.

To provide some context for our current financial situation, overall the Press is in great shape. We have a sizeable surplus, but much of that money is earmarked for books that have been contracted but not yet published; we're not sitting on money that could be used for new projects or initiatives beyond what we've already got on the go. Our priority remains hiring new staff to assist with current operations to ensure those books can be published in a timely manner.

Distribution

As of January 1, 2011, Playwrights Canada Press outsourced distribution to University of Toronto Press. This has been an incredibly successful move both in terms of sales and profile. Being distributed by a larger firm gives us access to the bigger book retailers like Amazon and Indigo who now order our books regularly. Amazon is our single biggest customer (after sales through our own website). Paired with solid bibliographic data, our books are more visible than ever. While we do pay a percentage of sales to UTP (10%), using an outside distributor allows staff to spend much less time packing and shipping books in favour of making, marketing, and selling books.

Inventory

Inventory is taken on the first business day of the new calendar and financial year and is written down at a rate of 25% per year. The write-down works in the following manner: titles published in 2020 are not written down, nor are reprints in that year. After that they are written off at 25% a year until any remaining stock is written off, generally five years after publication. Royalties are paid to authors at the same rate as when initially published, regardless of the inventory value the books hold for the Press.

Lease

The Press office is located at 269 Richmond St. W. on the second storey of a converted row house. It is a perfectly sized office for us and staff are very happy in our current location. We have signed a two-year lease on the space, extending our tenancy to June 2024. We received a notification from our landlord in 2019 that they have been levied a property tax increase of 40% for 2018 and beyond however the matter is still under dispute and this expense has not yet been passed along to us as a tenant. For the Press, it means an increase of about \$3,500 a year on rent: not ideal but not unmanageable.

2022 Publications & Reprints

See attached list of titles published and books reprinted in 2022.

2023 Forthcoming Titles

See attached list of forthcoming titles for 2023.

Editorial Committee

The Playwrights Canada Press Editorial Committee is made up of five members: Dian Marie Bridge, Santiago Guzmán, Jenna Rodgers, Deneh'Cho Thompson, and Colin Wolf. In their summer 2022 meeting the committee met to discuss and recommend plays to the publisher. From those discussions, the Press has expressed interest in five plays and is in various stages of contracting to publish:

- *Happy Anniversary* by Vanessa Cardoso-Whelan
- *Peace Country* by Pedro Chamale
- *There is Violence and There is Righteous Violence and There is Death or, The Born-Again Crow* by Caleigh Crow
- *Freedom: A Mixtape*, edited by Marcel Stewart with Suitcase in Point
- *我的名是张欣恩 (Gimme chance leh)* by Kris Vanessa Teo

Some of these plays are in development, or had their premieres affected by the pandemic, so the Press will work with playwrights to ensure the version of the play that's published is the one they want out in the world.

The Committee will meet again in the summer of 2023 to go over new work coming out and make new recommendation.

Awards

Three Press titles were finalists for the 2022 Governor General's Literary Award for Drama: *Everybody Just C@!m the F#ck Down* by Robert Chafe, *Lady Sunrise* by Marjorie Chan, and

In regional book awards, *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* was shortlisted for Dartmouth Award for Fiction (Atlantic Book Awards) while *The Millennial Malcontent* by Erin Shields in *Voices of a Generation* was the winner of the Quebec Writers Federation Prize for Playwriting. Bilal Baig's *Acha Bacha* was a finalist for the Dayne Ogilvie Prize for LGBTQ2S+ Emerging Writers.

Contract

There have been no major revisions to the contract this year from earlier editions. We aim to make the contract author-friendly and as readable as possible. The contract is signed by a director and the publisher—currently Colleen Murphy, President, and Annie Gibson.

Marketing Activity

The extensive marketing we do as a small press is made possible by the support we receive from the Department of Canadian Heritage's Canada Book Fund. In 2022, marketing expenses (excluding salaries) were around \$78,000, the bulk of which was spent on advertising, promotional events, and travel to those events. We were pleased to receive an additional \$26,000 from the Canada Council's reopening fund so we could attend a wider variety of events, and make a bigger splash at some of our regular events. We also now pay authors for their work in promoting their books.

Events and Book Displays

A large part of the Playwrights Canada Press outreach strategy is getting books in front of readers, and as we publish in a niche market Press staff are often the best representatives for our books. We target events throughout the year that put our books in front of academics, theatre professionals, and theatre lovers.

With the return of in-person events, the Press attended quite a few events including the Pat the Dog's PlaySmelter Festival, (Sudbury, ON), the Canadian Association for Theatre Research conference (Lethbridge, AB), the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators

conference (Hamilton, ON), as well as the conferences of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (Detroit, MI) and the American Society for Theatre Research (New Orleans, LA).

Joining us at CATR were editors Jessica Watkin (*Interdependent Magic*) and Michelle MacArthur (*Voices of a Generation*) and playwrights Chris Dodd (*Deafy*) and Nam Nguyen (*A Perfect Bowl of Pho*).

We also continued to attend events virtually, such as The FOLD (Festival of Literary Diversity) and the Ontario Library Association Superconference, which featured readings by Susanna Fournier (*The Empire*), Andrea Mapili, and Byron Abalos (*Through the Bamboo*).

Advertising

The Press does a considerable amount of print advertising, including placing ads in such publications as *Canadian Theatre Review*, *Atlantic Books Today*, and *Quill & Quire*, and in various literary magazines such as *Brick Magazine*. Ads are also placed in theatre programs and other publications for special events or tie-ins. Lately we've been placing fewer ads in each publication but still work to cover the same amount of territory by advertising in regional and local book publications as well as academic and theatre-oriented journals and magazines. We also advertise online on sites like Open Book and promote posts on both Instagram and Facebook for greater reach for events and other significant posts. Paid promotion on social media helps to reach our people who are already following our accounts as well as those with related interests.

Complimentary Books

Fifteen copies of a new title are issued to the playwright and additional copies of the title are sent to other contributors to the book, like the cover designer or introduction writer. Review copies are sent to journals, magazines, and blogs. Authors may also purchase additional copies of their books at a 45% discount, and all our authors may purchase each other's books at the same 45% discount. Each year, board members are sent the catalogue and encouraged to select complimentary books from it.

Academics may request review copies of our books to consider for course adoption. This is a very inexpensive way to get material out to interested parties. The Press is very generous when it comes to requests for review material as we have found it to be an extremely affordable way to market our book to the decision makers who will purchase them. The Press also donates complimentary copies of books to theatres across the country, which use them for fundraising activities.

Catalogue

As of spring 2021, Playwrights Canada Press no longer releases a printed catalogue on the advice of our sales force, the Canadian Manda Group via the Literary Press Group. Bookstores and libraries aren't using print marketing resources in the same way they used to, preferring electronic versions. The sales force now uses PDF catalogues pulled from BookNet Canada's [CataList](#) instead. CataList is a catalogue-building system built on publishers' bibliographic data, perfect for the needs of bookstores, libraries, wholesalers, and other business accounts.

The Press will continue to issue our own digital [seasonal catalogues](#) announcing upcoming books. They are readily available on our website and can be provided by email to anyone asking for a list of new titles.

Website

Playwrights Canada Press created and launched a new website in 2018. Built on the Readerbound platform, the website is populated by our existing bibliographic data so staff only have to create a single listing for each book. The site is also customized for a play publisher to include casting information on each book page, [browsable subject and casting listings](#), a page for our [custom course bundles](#) and [specialty collections](#). With the new site we've outsourced order fulfillment to University of Toronto Press, removing part of the workload from staff. Customers can also select to pick their orders up from our Toronto office to save on shipping. Since UTP is fulfilling orders, we can also now sell the books we represent from Nick Hern Books and Theatre Communications Group on the site. While we haven't seen a huge upturn in the orders for those titles having the listings means the books are more visible and Playwrights Canada Press is more easily recognized as the official distributor.

As part of the website relaunch, we also started a [blog](#). The blog allows us to publish articles about our books and interviews with our playwrights, as well as reading lists, excerpts, and contests. Posts are written by our sales and marketing staff, and the blog is updated every two weeks, or as needed.

Social Media

Playwrights Canada Press maintains active [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) profiles. We post regularly to all three accounts, sharing information about new books, events, and looking for ways to engage followers.

Instagram is our most active social media platform. Posts receive the most engagement there, and we use Instagram Stories fairly regularly to increase the footprint of our announcements.

The Press releases a monthly newsletter, announcing new titles, promoting events, and directing folks back to the blog to read Q&As with authors, recent news, and more. While the number of subscribers is growing slowly, we want to highlight our open rate: the final newsletter of 2022, which featured the announcement of spring 2023 titles, had an open rate of 59%, far exceeding the industry average of 34%.

Book Launches

Playwrights Canada Press held three virtual book launches through 2022. Two were group launches for recently released books in the spring and summer, and one was a launch for *Interdependent Magic*. We used our Gather site for the spring launch, but received negative feedback from some attendees who didn't want to have to turn their cameras on to attend the event. The playwrights, however, were happy to be able to move about the Gather space and mingle with both guests and other readers.

The spring launch featured Amy Rutherford (*Mortified*), Ho Ka Kei / Jeff Ho (*Iphigenia and the Furies (On Taurian Land)* & *Antigone: 方*), Michelle MacArthur and Erin Shields (*Voices of a Generation*), Michaela Di Cesare (*Successions*), and Susanna Fournier (*The Empire*). The summer launch included David James Brock (*a million billion pieces*), Andrea Scott and Nick Green (*Every Day She Rose*), and Robert Chafe (*Everybody Just C@lm the F#ck Down*).

We were also able to partner with bookstores around the country to hold in-person book launches. On Paper Books in Sydney, NS, hosted Daniel MacIvor for the launch of *Let's Run Away*, Saint Henri Books in Montreal, QC, hosted Christine Rodriguez with *Simone, Half and Half*, and McNally Robinson in Saskatoon, SK, hosted Daniel Macdonald for the launch of *Blow Wind*.

We now regularly provide closed captioning for book launches as well as ASL interpretation on request. We also make available the text of the excerpts that will be read so attendees can follow along if they so desire.

Sales Force

The sales force is the Canadian Manda Group via the Literary Press Group. As a smaller publisher we levy the collective nature of the LPG to have our books presented by Manda to booksellers and libraries across Canada. The Press pays a sales commission on the sale of each book, but this has vastly improved our reach and representation.

Copyright

The effects of the changes made to the Copyright Act in 2012 continue to be felt at the Press. The “fair dealing” exemption for education is having an impact on the revenue we collect for the photocopying of published plays through Access Copyright as well as the perception among educators that all written work can be used freely, without compensation to the author. On an individual level we try to speak with teachers and profs at events about this but not much will change until the law is changed. Much of the information below has been provided in previous years but it is repeated here as background for readers.

Several years ago Access Copyright filed a lawsuit against York University, claiming the school was copying material illegally. York University countersued Access Copyright, questioning the legality of the former tariffs they'd been charged. The case wound its way through the courts until finally being heard by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in the spring of 2021. The SCC announced a judgment in July of 2021 and unfortunately dismissed appeals from both parties, leaving the Federal Court of Appeal's (FCA) earlier ruling, that tariffs certified by the Copyright Board are not enforceable, in place. Disappointingly, the SCC did not offer a ruling on York's fair dealing guidelines. These guidelines—which are identical to those used by most K-12 and post-secondary institutions across Canada—had previously been found by the Federal Court to be illegal in both their terms and in their application, a decision that was upheld by the FCA in 2020.

The SCC decision reinforces that Canada's copyright framework is broken. And fixing it has now shifted back to the federal government.

The Government of Canada completed their [Statutory Review of the Copyright Act](#) in June 2019. Among the 36 recommendations offered was a call to “consider establishing facilitation between the education sector and the copyright collectives to build consensus towards the future of educational fair dealing in Canada.” The Association of Canadian Publishers characterized a high point of the report: “[T]he expansion of fair dealing to include education in 2012 has changed the behavior of educational administrators, educators, researchers, and students, and has resulted in a loss of revenue to Canadian publishers and creators. Importantly, the committee has stressed that fair dealing exceptions are meant to be applied on a case-by-case basis, which makes the establishment of bright-line criteria—like those adopted by the education sector after 2012—incompatible with Canadian copyright law.”

When the Government of Canada tabled Budget 2022 in April 2022 they confirmed their commitment to ensuring that the Copyright Act protects all creators and copyright holders, ensuring a sustainable educational publishing industry, including fair remuneration for rightsholders. However, Budget 2023 continued the pattern of inaction, with no new initiatives or legislative change announced. So again, we await reform.

On November 23, 2022, the Government of Canada announced that amendments to the Copyright Act will come into force on December 30, 2022, extending the term of copyright protection in literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works from 50 years to 70 years after the end of the year of the author’s death. This change in copyright law came about as a result of a key commitment made by Canada in the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). The term extension will not affect works that are already in the public domain. Any works whose copyright expired on or before December 31, 2021, will remain in the public domain.

Future Thinking

It’s looking like 2023 will be an incredibly busy year. We’ll be finding a new sales and marketing coordinator to ably promote and publicize our books. That will involve a certain amount of training as our company, bridging publishing and theatre, is somewhat of a unicorn.

We’ve been fielding a record number of requests for participation at various events around the country and will only be able to attend a small number. We’ll be missing our colleagues at several conferences.

Accessibility is increasingly important. As we are learning, the standard print book is not accessible to everyone, for instance people with visual impairments and some physical disabilities. The Press completed certification through [Born Accessible](#) from Benetech. This program verifies ebook accessibility and provides guidance on how to ensure that our ebooks are accessible from the time of publication. We have upgraded the accessibility of many older ebooks to ensure they meet current standards and will continue to do so as we are able with books that haven’t already been upgraded. We know that some readers prefer audiobooks for accessibility but can’t afford to create audiobooks for all titles at this time. Instead, we are pointing readers to the excellent PlayMe podcast that creates audio versions of many of the books we publish.

It is equally important that readers and potential readers have ways to engage with Playwrights Canada Press other than the books we publish. That means our marketing material and events need to be accessible as well. We therefore use tools like image descriptions and alt text on social media and host events in accessible online spaces, offering ASL interpretation and closed captioning as needed. Indeed, as the pandemic continues, online events are accessible for those who are immunocompromised or simply uncomfortable with public spaces. When we are more comfortable hosting events in person, we will ensure that venues meet minimum accessible standards so more guests can participate. Some of those standards include barrier-free access to the venue and washrooms, well ventilated spaces, places with a variety of seating options, and continuing to offer accommodations where needed.

Playwrights Canada Press is also looking to ensure that we approach our work from an **anti-racist and decolonial perspective**. Annie Gibson is currently a co-chair of the Association of Canadian Publishers's Diversity & Inclusion Committee, helping to continue this work at an industry level, and a member of the Literary Press Group's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. Staff welcome suggestions from directors and playwrights on ways we can carry out this important revolution from an organizational point of view.

Summary

This past year was a cautiously optimistic one for Playwrights Canada Press. While we continued to work through disruptions we made significant progress on many items on our to-do list, including upgrading older ebooks and publishing a great batch of wonderful books. Staff continue to discuss ways to work with authors and each other that embody grace, generosity, and flexibility. 2022 has been about connection with our communities, getting to meet and work with our colleagues in person once more.

We are thrilled that our financial situation is so secure, and grateful that our funders at all levels of government stepped up to ensure cash kept flowing to organizations like ours when our regular revenue streams, including sales to university bookstores, lagged. It's been a real boon to have a large ebook collection to be able to offer readers so access to our books was always available when bookstores weren't.

In 2022 we published 28 books containing 37 plays, including works in translation, and an audiobook. We have thirty-one books scheduled for 2023. We were once again honoured to have published three books that were finalists Governor General's Literary Award for Drama.

We aim to get many more books out into the world this coming year, sharing the fantastic writing we've discovered with the world. It is a true pleasure to engage new readers in our work and we are planning for continued success in 2023.

Colleen Murphy
Colleen Murphy (Aug 2, 2023 15:10 EDT)

Colleen Murphy, President

Aug 2, 2023

Date



Annie Gibson (Aug 2, 2023 15:10 EDT)

Annie Gibson, Publisher

Aug 2, 2023

Date