Scirocco Drama is a Canadian drama press located in Winnipeg, Manitoba and was established in 1993. It is an imprint of J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, a literary publisher that also produces poetry and books about Canadian social history, politics, religion, true crime and biographies (please see: www.jgshillingford.com). Scirocco publishes plays for adults and young audiences and its authors include many of Canada’s most critically acclaimed playwrights, including Morwyn Brebner, Maureen Hunter, Djanet Sears, Betty Quan, Theresa Tova and Beverley Cooper.

To write this sponsor profile, I interviewed Glenda MacFarlane, Series Editor, about her work with Scirocco Drama and what our readers should know about the press.

Glenda, how did you get involved with Scirocco Drama?

I spent several years in the 1980s working for what was then Playwrights Union of Canada (now the Playwrights Guild of Canada and Playwrights Canada Press.) Dave Carley was the in-house editor for the press during those years. In the 90s, Dave went on to become the Series Editor at Scirocco. When he decided to step down from that position in 2000, Dave recommended me to Gord Shillingford, Scirocco’s publisher.

Working for Scirocco is a real privilege; I love the job.

What is it that you'd like Women in Theatre readers to know about Scirocco Drama?

Here are a few things that come to mind, in no particular order:

One of the things that distinguishes us from other publishers is that the nature of our operation allows us a lot of flexibility. For example, we sometimes bring out plays timed to coincide with a high profile production, or we are able to slot a hit play into a current season.

We are loyal to our “stable” of authors -- and we love discovering exciting new writers!

Playwrights Canada Press is obviously the largest publisher of drama in the country […] but

http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wit/index
Scirocco very often comes in second in terms of number of plays released per year. What is Scirocco's mandate? What kind of plays is Scirocco interested in publishing?

Our mandate is to publish good plays. Period!

We have an eclectic list, but outstanding writing is the common denominator.

Selecting plays is not an exact science. Sometimes plays are chosen because they are scheduled to have, or likely to get more productions. On the other hand, sometimes I opt to publish a play because I think it should have a wider audience. And sometimes there’s not a lot of reasoning involved -- I read a powerful manuscript and know immediately that it should go onto our list. That’s the best.

The readers of Women in Theatre are very interested in plays that have been written by women about women's lives and issues facing women. Could you name three plays that you have published recently that are either written by women and/or are about women's lives?

It’s funny that you asked for three recent plays by or about women. Our Spring 2013 season consists of four plays. Three of these are written by women: Jail Baby by Hope McIntyre and Cairn Moore, Miss Caledonia by Melody Johnson, and The Lonely Diner by Bev Cooper. The final play on the list is Café Daughter by Kenneth T. Williams – and it’s a one-woman show! Each of these plays has a female character at its centre and deals with issues common to the female experience.

I’d like to add that this isn’t unusual for Scirocco. A couple of years ago I chose an all female playwrights season […] and I didn’t realize it until it was time to plan the book launch!

The first play Scirocco ever published was by a female playwright, the wonderful Maureen Hunter. Our first Governor General's Award winning play was Djanet Sears’ amazing Harlem Duet. One of the first two plays I chose for the press was Morwyn Brebner’s Music for Contortionist, and it remains one of my favourites.

We’ve published plays by female collectives, including Bittergirl (Alison Lawrence, Mary Francis Moore, Annabel Griffiths), and The Attic, The Pearls, and Three Fine Girls (Jennifer Brewin, Leah Cherniak, Ann-Marie MacDonald). And sometimes we publish a book aimed primarily at female audiences, such as Generation Nexxxt, scene book anthology for female actors.

We’ve published work by playwrights such as Marcia Johnson, Theresa Tova, Cathy Ostlere, Marjorie Chan, Martha Ross, Colleen Wagner, Betty Quan, Sally Stubbs, and many more.

How important is it for women playwrights to have their plays published?

I think it’s important for good playwrights, male or female, to have their work published. Published plays tend to find their way into the hands of producers, which can lead to productions – the lifeblood of the playwright. No playwright ever got rich from book royalties; the market for published plays is a small, specialty one. But it is important to recognize drama as a key literary

http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wit/index
genre, and to recognize playwrights as some of our country’s best writers.

What advice do you have for women playwrights who would like to get their work published?

Getting published is the very end of the process of writing for a playwright. Before you even think about publishing, you have to have a good production of your play. Come into the rehearsal room with a solid first draft and a really clear idea of your characters and what they want. Work with people you trust: your play will go through an editing process as you discover what works on stage and what needs to be rewritten. If your director and actors understand your work, this process will be easier for you.

If your production is successful, you may even find publishers knocking on your door! It’s always best to submit your play to a publisher soon after it’s been produced, so don’t leave it too long after the production closes. However, you may be competing for a spot with plenty of other writers, so don’t give up if you don’t succeed at first. I have occasionally passed on a play only to have a writer resubmit it with additional information. (For example, that the play was being remounted for a national tour, or that it had been rewritten for a smaller cast.) Sometimes this kind of updated information can give your script a boost toward publication.

And of course, if you have a professionally produced play that you’d like Scirocco to consider for an upcoming season, I’d be happy to read it. Send an electronic copy to: brunswickavenue@sympatico.ca