

Welcome!

My playwriting projects for 2023 range from stage plays to audio drama . . .

HIDING IN THE HOUSE OF TALENTS is a one-act play of 60 – 75 minutes.



INSPIRATION FOR THE PLAY

A nun's conviction that no one should waste God-given talents made an impression on me as a teenager. **What if** decades later I subverted the premise?

Under the unseen **Mistress of Divinity's** authoritarian rule, the remaining women of a secretive religious order must sacrifice their talents.

Isn't it ironic that through the ages women's talents were indeed lost?

Treasurer was a once gifted culinary artist and **Vigilant** a wordsmith. The unseen elderly **Doloria** has sacrificed her singing voice. Can the elderly devotees connect with a younger generation and reinvent themselves?

Living in **Tiohtià:ke / Montréal** with its ubiquitous churches and bell towers further inspired me to explore the fate of discarded or disregarded buildings, and inhabitants.

I grew up inside two convents in England. My first convent was a stately building later repurposed into luxury condos, and my second convent, not so blessed with architectural beauty, was razed.

PLAY NOTES

Hiding in the House of Talents is an atmospheric play interspersed with poetic text and archaic language, repetitive sonic elements such as bells, phones, news broadcasts, and chants. The time is contemporary, the setting a fictive religious order's dilapidated Sacred Building and its grounds, surrounded by a forbidding wall.

HIDING IN THE HOUSE OF TALENTS explores the lost lineage of women.

CAST: 3 w (2 senior, 1 in her 30s)

Does knowing and feeling closer to our female lineage soothe the soul, and does not knowing who our female kin—our foremothers—were, carve an absence (something we cannot tell is missing in ourselves, in who we are and believe our selves to be and become) because we have never heard their voices collectively?

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Feminist artist RVA is tracing her female lineage for a multimedia art installation. When her search for her late great-aunt leads her to the out of bounds archives of a secretive religious order, she must win over the last dutiful devotees who are defending their property from developers.

*for generous use, in street sign art and poem installation
(from RVA's multimedia art installation)*



Let us begin
 Ascension
 All rise
 Ascending
 Descending
 Birthed by women
 Join the line
 The lineage
 Back and forwards
 In time
 Nameless foremothers (forefathers' names on the statues)
 Nameless foremothers (forefathers' names on the boulevards, buildings, bridges
 Underlining Conquerors Warriors Inventors Explorers)
 Nameless women fetching firewood
 Water
 Not commemorated on tree-lined asphalt
 Monumentalized
 Memorialized on the morning's commute
 Evening's promenade
 Animals hunted have been captured in time but our fore-sisters (sisters)
 Fore-wives (wives)
 Fore-daughters (daughters)
 Dusted out
 Shaken
 No more visible than
 Sylphs floating
 Unheralded
 Let us rise

BUILDINGS OF FAITH: WHY CARE ABOUT THEIR FATE?

The House of Talents is courted by developers after the **Mistress of Divinity** starts negotiating with the city to sell the property. But **Treasurer** cannot abide a building's destruction because she abhors wastefulness. **Vigilant** cannot contemplate the removal of dearly beloved Sistren from the cemetery. When the unlucky **Mistress of Divinity** suffers a stroke, **Treasurer** seizes on **RVA's** talent for networking among artists and environmentalists to fortify the campaign against the bulldozer.



Up to 9,000 sacred buildings – 1 out of 3 – will disappear in a decade, says the National Trust of Canada.

If the principle “Never demolish” is put into practice, it contributes to climate action.

Preserving buildings offers historic continuity for present and future generations.

Heritage protection can foreground past injustices through education, tourism, culture, and art.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Actors performed opening scenes during **Alice Abracen's** introductory playwriting course at the **National Theatre School**.

Field research led me to the heart of old Québec City and Le Monastère des Augustines, a place of worship that houses a hotel, museum, restaurant, and art gallery. I also stayed in Le Manoir d'Youville and L'abbaye d'Oka, former religious buildings converted to simple lodgings, and L'abbaye Sainte Marie des Deux-Montagnes, an existing convent which opens its doors for silent retreats.

November 2022, script feedback from Kimberley Andrews, London Playwrights Workshop, UK: “An exciting play... . Very neatly structured... There is a really wonderful timeless quality to the more archaic language, and the sense of poetry really adds to the atmosphere. I really felt as though I was brought into the world of the play and the setting through the language.”

PROJECT STATUS

The third draft revision is in progress during the winter of 2023, strengthening the key theme of gaps and mysteries as I draw on Tania Hershman's writing prompts in her Arvon webinar, **Exploring Untold Stories**, a look at the lives of the women the history books left out.

OTHER DRAMA PROJECTS

The White Fiat in the Valleys, a 20-minute audio play (suspense). Ellie is a grieving widow lost in the wilderness, convinced her husband's car is visible in her rear-view mirror and guiding her home, while her sister Jan is desperate to rescue her and mend their relationship.

July 2022, the first three pages received script feedback from writer-producer Rick Toscan, as organized online by Play Cafe (California). No major revisions advised.

Excerpt:

ELLIE: (*on her cell via Jan's landline*) He could've passed on any of the passing lanes uphill. (*Rolls up car window*) Smelly. Swampy. Weird flowers. That incense you used to burn. Mom tossed it to keep the peace.

JAN: Swamp? What swamp? There's no—

ELLIE: Not bulrushes. Like pansies but ugly things. Yellowy-greenish? Creeping into the trees.

JAN: (*flicks pages in guidebook of wildflowers*) (*Off*) "Adoxa moschatellina! Favours the shade. Moschatel gives off a faint scent when wet." Can't be the Townhall Clock flowers. You filled up at the Shell?

Dream-Less Delta Dialogue, a 15-minute stage play (dark comedy), was submitted to Freefall literary magazine and shortlisted for the prose section. Before departing on his business trip, Matyldah's husband Byron leaves an undesirable gift on her pillow on Valentine's Day. The overachieving, interactive digital fertility tracker is programmed to assist but 30-something Matyldah wants to give up the dream of a family.

To Do List, a 10-minute audio play (dark comedy), is a London Playwrights member submission for script feedback in March 2023. When Rosita breaks the turkey thermometer on Thanksgiving Eve during the pandemic, she sends husband Cyril to the supermarket, with disastrous results.

SFX: SWEEPING OF SHATTERED THERMOMETER PARTS.

ROSITA: (MUFFLED) Broke it, fix it.

CYRIL: Sorry love?

ROSITA: Run and dump it. Don't forget your mask. Alexa, add fresh cranberries to my Thanksgiving shopping list.

CYRIL: Doesn't it close at 9?

ROSITA: 10. Don't breathe it in.

CYRIL: Do without it just the once, can't you?

ROSITA: And who they gonna blame if they get salmonella poisoning? You'll find food thermometers in the spatula section.

CYRIL: They'll microwave it all when they get home anyway. There's a spatula section?

ROSITA: Symptoms for listeria are diarrhoea and fever within 12 to 72 hours.

CYRIL: Realistically, love, what are the chances?

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

I am looking for dramaturgy and/or a development workshop for **Hiding in the House of Talents**.

I'd also welcome conversations and collaborations with creatives in **multidisciplinary arts, site-specific theatre, audio drama**.

Thank you for your time and consideration!