



# The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch  
of the California Writers Club

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## ON NOVEMBER 5TH: The Power of Myth in Story Telling

By Heather Bradshaw, CWC-SFV Speaker Chair

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome author, philosopher and lecturer, Vincent Virom Coppola, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, November 5 at 1:00 pm via Zoom, with a presentation titled, "The Power of Myth in Story Telling."

Vincent Virom Coppola lectures at UCLA. As well as studying the classics and English Literature, he has a PhD in philosophy and an MFA in Film and TV. His filmmaking career spans the full spectrum, from concept to composite, working in preproduction, production, and postproduction. Also, he was a script doctor at Paramount and Columbia. Films he has worked on include; *The Conversation* and *Godfather II*, as well as writing for the TV show, *Hotel*.

Coppola has just finished a screenplay called *The Street of Chance*. His most recent book is *Supermetaphysics*, and he is working on a novel.



**Vincent Virom Coppola**

This in-depth and fascinating presentation will explore the root meaning of the word Myth and see it in light of its power and passion in works of art from the Greeks to the present.

Nietzsche said all storytelling must have passion, Dionysius must be present: "We will see that it is so in flesh and blood, that it is the characters or actors who bring

the story alive for us. In brief, we shall take in the heart and soul of a story, however that story is told, whether on stage, screen, or on an iPad, and in that truly see the power of Myth."

*Note that members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact VP/Zoom host Monte Swann by noon on November 4th at [cwcfvhost@gmail.com](mailto:cwcfvhost@gmail.com) for an invitation. Other guests may purchase single-day admission at [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) by noon on November 4th which will be followed by a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.*

# Karen's Corner

By Karen Gorback, CWC-SFV President



I love Thanksgiving. I devoted a chapter in my novel to a family's preparation for the storied harvest feast of 1621.

One of my favorite childhood memories was the Thanksgiving ritual of polishing my mother's silver. These special eating utensils were stored in a rosewood box with red felt lining. Each type of implement was cradled in its own slot, so it wouldn't scratch, or otherwise harm, the other pieces. But even with the custom storage unit, the forks, knives, and spoons, along with the larger serving pieces, tended to tarnish between turkey days.

Today, while pursuing the internet for November celebrations that didn't involve large fowl and shiny objects, I saw something wonderful that I think you'll appreciate. It turns out that National Authors Day, is celebrated each year on November 1. I had never heard of it, but I *kinda* love it!

Here's the scoop: According to <https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-authors-day-november-1> "National Authors Day began in 1928, when Nellie Verne Burt McPherson, president of the Bement, Illinois Women's Club, had an idea of setting aside a day to celebrate American authors. McPherson was a teacher, and throughout her life, an avid reader. While she was recuperating in the hospital during World War I, she wrote a fan letter to fiction writer, Irving Bacheller. She told him how much she enjoyed reading his story *Eben Holden's Last Day A' Fishin*. Upon receiving her letter, Bacheller sent her an autographed copy of another story. It was then that McPherson realized she would never be able to thank him adequately for his gift. McPherson decided to show her appreciation by submitting an idea for a National Author's Day to the [General Federation of Women's Clubs](#). In May of 1929, the club endorsed a resolution for National Author's Day to be observed honoring American writers. The United States Department of Commerce recognized this day in 1949."

Pretty cool, and even nicer when we acknowledge that the term "author" refers to all of us who write anything, published or not, in any genre or format. My colleague who writes a weekly blog is an author. So is my friend, the journalist who writes for a local newspaper. Everyone who contributes to our club's newsletter is an author. Whether you write poetry, short stories, magazine articles, memoirs, technical manuals, or essays, congratulations! You are an author.

Also, as you know, November is National Novel Writing Month, aka NaNoWriMo! If you plan to participate in this event, congratulations! Maybe you can document the experience to submit for consideration in a future edition of the Valley Scribe.

So, whether November finds you madly pounding a keyboard and/or feasting with family and friends, I hope the month brings you fulfillment, good health, and joy.

And I'll see you in the Zoom room on November 5 when our speaker will be Vincent Virom Coppola who will speak to us on "The Power of Myth in Storytelling"—maybe like the beloved myth behind the story of the first Thanksgiving.





# Short Stories Will Always Be Told

October Speaker Review by Elaine L. Mura, CWC Secretary



**O**n 10/1/22, CWC was fortunate to have **Beverly Olevin**, prize-winning author of short stories, memoirs, plays, and novels, as guest speaker. Beverly spoke on “The Power of the Pen – Short Stories and Beyond.”

She described short stories as a unique fiction genre which are often overlooked by serious writers. She opined that short stories were the one-night stand, while novels were the long-term affair. However, she pointed out that short stories were a wonderful way to introduce a new author- and a good way to get re-acquainted with authors you haven’t read for years. She also reminded the audience that short stories were one of the oldest types of literature, originally in the form of myths, legends, fairy tales, and stories which surfaced all over the world from the time of cave dwellers – even though the modern short story dates from the early nineteenth century. Authors differ on what they consider critical inclusions in the short story – from plots to characters, and even to whether or not a short story must have a beginning or an end.

In fact, many famous writers, renowned authors like Hemingway, have penned short stories at some time in their careers. Beverly suggested that short stories must have retrospective inevitability: “At the end of the story, there must be enough plot, character, theme, or other elements to make the reader say, ‘Ah...it was inevitable that the story should have ended up this way.’” She emphasize that the short story must go for a single effect created by economy, a concise narrative, and a simple plot: “The characters will not be an fully developed as they are in novels, but they must grab your attention...you can use dialog to enliven them...and, mainly, you must offer a satisfying treatment of character and subject.”

She indicated that she began her fiction writing career with short stories. Within one year, she had 55 published short stories. So just maybe writing short stories is not a dead end but the beginning of something big. Beverly described four short story genres

deserving attention. First, she spoke of the science fiction short story: “These are about science fiction and technology and how they impact on the future... or predict possible futures...science fiction is useful to anticipate the future of our digital world...there’s a sense of possibility...writers have predicted cloning, artificial intelligence, satellites, Wi-Fi, drones, robots, bionic limbs, and even antidepressants.” She cited Arthur C. Clark’s stunning forays into science fiction.

The second short story genre she outlined was that of magical realism, as evidenced by Gabriel M. Marquez, John Cheever, and Isabel Allende: “They combine facts but add magical elements...but it’s definitely not fantasy.” Her third short story genre described adventure stories: “Even though they may have strong characters, they are usually plot driven... and sometimes theme driven.” She noted several good examples, including Hemingway’s “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and “Old Man and the Sea,” Ray Bradbury’s “Sound of Thunder,” and Daphne du Maurier’s “The Birds.”

Finally, Beverly mentioned her fourth important short story genre, that of social impact: “Those are short stories that are socially relevant...often with moral themes.” She noted Annie Pool’s “Brokeback Mountain” and Guy du Maupassant’s “The Necklace.”

At the end of the talk, Beverly briefly alluded to memoirs, offering the following advice: “Don’t talk about your whole life...instead, take a little slice of time that was transformative.” As an example, she shared a video of herself reading from one of her own short stories, “Little Lies and Serious Indiscretions.” The story only covered three years (from when she was 14 to when she was 16) about her father’s pen pal friendship with a convicted murderer who was eventually acquitted and lived with her family. Finally, she added, “Use dialog...that makes characters come to life...and, for memoirs, imagine dialog if you must.”

Beverly Olevin’s presentation was enlightening and fascinating. She provided her email address for CWC members in case they had further questions: [beverlyolevin@gmail.com](mailto:beverlyolevin@gmail.com).



Whether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join us for monthly Saturday meetings via Zoom to learn more about the craft and business of writing. See [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) for membership information and single lecture admission prices. This series is free for CWC-SFV members.

## CWC-SFV SPEAKERS FALL 2022



**SEPTEMBER 10, 2022**

**Christobel Kent**

*"Writing Setting: From Italy to Britain"*

By sharing her own journey from her first book set in Italy to becoming a Sunday Times bestselling author, Christobel Kent explores the importance of setting in our stories.

Follow Christobel on Instagram @christobelkentnovelist



**OCTOBER 1, 2022**

**Beverly Olevin**

*"Power of the Pen: Short Stories and Beyond"*

Author, memoirist, playwright, and director, Beverly Olevin hopes to inspire you to craft your own tale by discussing what makes a short story great as well as making a memoir come to life. Visit [www.beverlyolevin.com](http://www.beverlyolevin.com) for more info.



**NOVEMBER 5, 2022**

**Vincent Virom Coppola**

*"The Power of Myth in Story Telling"*

UCLA Professor and author, Vincent Virom Coppola will take us on a journey to the heart and soul of a story, however that story is told, whether on stage, screen, or on an iPad, and in that truly see the power of Myth.



**DECEMBER 3, 2022**

**Dacre Stoker**

*"Stoker on Stoker: The Mysteries Behind the Research and Writing of Dracula"*

Blow the dust of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and read it again, Stoker's great-grandnephew will be here to share the story behind the story of the greatest vampire tale ever. Visit

[www.dacrestoker.com](http://www.dacrestoker.com) for more info.



Whether you have been published or have always wanted to write, please join us for monthly Saturday meetings via Zoom to learn more about the craft and business of writing. See [www.cwc-sfv.org](http://www.cwc-sfv.org) for membership information and single lecture admission prices. This series is free for CWC-SFV members.

## CWC-SFV SPEAKERS 2023



**ANGIE CHATMAN**

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“The First Drafts Club.”**

As with any product, your story needs beta testing. Having a carefully chosen critique group is necessary to iron out any wrinkles in your text. Pushcart prize nominated writer and WEBBY award winning storyteller, Angie Chatman, will discuss the criteria to use so that you can get help to polish your piece for publication.



**LAURA JENSEN WALKER**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“Writing by the Seat of my Pants: From Memoir to Mysteries.”**

A Self-described ‘pantser’, Agatha-nominated and bestselling Amazon author, Laura Jensen Walker, will share her journey (including mistakes) of writing memoirs and mysteries by the seat of her pants. Visit [laurajensenwalker.com](http://laurajensenwalker.com) for more information on this sought-after speaker and her work.



**MANDY JACKSON-BEVERLY**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (ZOOM)**

**“Getting Your Book Published in the Modern World.”**

This workshop by author, teacher and podcast host, Mandy Jackson-Beverly, explores traditional, hybrid, and independent (self) publishing and gives you the knowledge you need to decide which style works best for you and your books. Visit [mandyjacksonbeverly.com](http://mandyjacksonbeverly.com) for more info on this popular speaker.



**LUZMARIA ESPINOSA**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 2023 @ 1PM (INPERSON / HYBRID IF AVAILABLE)**

**“POETRY: A Method of Reflection, Reconsideration, and Revision of Your Thoughts, Beliefs, and Actions.”**

Ventura County’s Poet Laureate, Luzmaria Espinosa, will read some of her poetry and share how her own life experiences, culture and community activism have shaped her work.



**ADAM PLANTINGA**

**SATURDAY, MAY 5<sup>TH</sup> 2023 @ 1PM**

**“Writing Realistic Police Procedures.”**

Writing a crime novel? 21-year police veteran and Agatha-nominated author Sgt. Adam Plantinga will talk about various aspects of real-life police work crucial to writing a crime-related novel or screenplay.

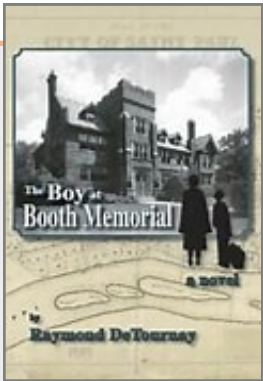
Visit [adamplantinga.com](http://adamplantinga.com) for more information on Adam and his work.



Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

## CWC-SFV Member Ray DeTournay's Semi-Biographical Book:

### *The Boy at Booth Memorial*



When fourteen-year-old Rene stepped off the streetcar in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1949, he entered a situation he could never have imagined. His mother had taken a position as head nurse at the Salvation Army's Booth Memorial Home and Hospital where they would live on campus. For

the next year he would be surrounded by ten women who had dedicated their lives to God, and fifty young girls...all pregnant...all unmarried.

To hide that embarrassing fact from new classmates, he walked around the block before boarding a streetcar for school. To bond with neighborhood kids, he tried playing hockey even though he didn't know how to skate.

Although his religion censured it, he took an interest in the home, the women running it and in the lives of the girls there to hide their condition. He learned how hard it was for them to give up their babies and felt the pain when difficult births and deaths visited the home. Inevitably, there came a time when he learned that life's decisions are not always easy...and not without consequence.

Those experiences at Booth Memorial guided Rene in his first steps toward being the responsible man that he was someday to become.

[the boy at booth memorial raymond detournay - Search \(bing.com\)](https://www.bing.com/search?q=the+boy+at+booth+memorial+raymond+detournay)

# Remembering Ray DeTournay

By Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* Editor

One morning last month, the sad news spread quickly among the residents of the Motion Picture and Television Fund: Resident Ray DeTournay had passed away. Soon after, the *Spotlite*, the newsletter of the MPTF facility reported:

*The world, the MPTF, and the Volunteer Guild lost a member in October. He will be missed by a very large community and many friends.*

*Raymond DeTournay, a former head of production at L.A.'s Channel 2, who ran his own industrial and corporate communications production outfit for decades, wrote a semi-autobiographical novel, "The Boy at Booth Memorial," when he moved with his wife, Louise, from their Woodland Hills house onto the MPTF campus several years ago.*

Ray was my friend—and as we discovered during our first conversation a few years ago — we had lived just a few blocks from each other in a Woodland Hills suburb but had never met. Apparently, I had walked my dog past his home countless times. He had jogged near my home many mornings. How odd that we had our first conversation at a CWC-SFV meeting. At the time, I was in my second year as editor of the *Scribe* and I confided to Ray, who seemed savvy about editing and the writing trade, that I was sometimes unsure that I was the editor the club needed. I felt like I had too much to learn. He replied, "Don't worry. If you follow your instincts and do the best work you know how to do, you'll be fine." I was grateful for Ray's support and I took his advice to heart. And here I am, several years later, still happily editing *The Valley Scribe*.

I will remember Ray when he joined our group. He stood to introduce himself at our meeting and revealed that he was writing a book and wanted to learn about self-publishing. Ray continued to attend our meetings and asked many questions in the discussions after our speaker presentations. It wasn't long before he triumphantly introduced his published book to our group and then asked me to read the book and publicize it in our newsletter. I was curious to read this story of a teen boy who lived with his nurse mother at home for pregnant teen girls. I enjoyed the read, told him so and gave the book a page in our *Valley Scribe*. Ray and I continued to have conversations at meetings and online.

When the COVID shutdown prevented our club from meeting at the MPTF, Ray stayed in touch. He spoke about his work with the facility's inhouse television station, Channel 22. He'd come to realize that the residents, completely cut off from visitors and on-campus and off-campus activities, badly needed inhouse entertainment. Ray started a new show on Channel 22, titled WANDERING the WORLD WIDE WEB or WtWWW. A team of reporters—all volunteers—searched the Internet looking for interesting news (often humorous) items happening around the world. At the time of his passing, Ray, with the help of Phyllis Butcher, was preparing for me a special report on the WtWWW for the December *Valley Scribe*.

Next month, thanks to the efforts of Phyllis and the team of WtWWW reporters, you will be able to read this story.

# Please Welcome Two New Members of the CWC-SFV

## Carol Leish and Ed McBride

### Carol Leish—Call Her Capable

I have taught elementary school. I have been giving Motivational Talks (Call Me Capable), since 1997 about coping with my own physical and emotional challenges. These talks show that we are all more similar than different.

I focus on the importance of having a positive attitude, with humor. I also focus on ways of accommodating various situations. I also created and co-developed the Call Me Capable (C) Game, which was published for 15 years between 2002-2017, and sold internationally.

I also have been doing contract writing for the 'Ventura Breeze' since 2013. My main focus has been writing about issues related to mental health and to seniors. To find out more about me, please look at my website at: [www.callmecapable.net](http://www.callmecapable.net).

I started writing in college, at CSU San Bernardino. I wrote for two years for the 'Cal State Chronicle.' I also created and wrote for a camp newsletter, the 'Bloomfield Star,' for a summer camp, 'Camp Bloomfield,' in Malibu, California. I also wrote Guest Columns for the 'VC Star' for two years. I'm hoping to write a memoir sometime soon. I'm grateful that Karen Gorback introduced me to this writing group.



Carol Leish

### A Writer of Many Genres: Ed McBride



Ed McBride

As a new member of the CWC, I've been asked to introduce myself with some history and biographical information, so ... In the academic world:

I am the author of a widely used five-level, story-based textbook series for teaching English, *Downtown: English for Work and Life*, published by National Geographic

Learning.

In June, '20, in the midst of the pandemic, I retired from a 30 year teaching career at LAUSD, where I was also the lead writer for the Adult Division, responsible for creating hundreds of hours of teaching materials for the Division's English Literacy and Civics Education Program.

I also edited (and wrote for) a weekly District newsletter and wrote grant proposals that brought in millions of dollars for the Adult Division.

Prior to writing the *Downtown* series, I earned an MFA from UCLA where I won the Jack Nicholson Prize in screenwriting. In that previous life (prior to teaching) I published numerous stories, both fiction and non-fiction, for a wide variety of periodicals including: the LA Times, the LA Daily News, LA Weekly, Playgirl, and Television and Families magazine, as well as *Crosscurrents* and other literary journals. I also wrote three novels (with limited success) in that earlier life.

Since retiring from teaching, I've gone back to writing fiction in a serious way and am currently working on two different novels and a collection of linked short stories. F. Scott Fitzgerald famously said, "There are no second acts in American lives."

I'm happy to say that Scottie was wrong. I feel that I am currently working on my third or fourth act, returning to the unfinished business of fiction writing that I never quite conquered in my twenties and thirties, and looking forward to working with other CWC writers as part of that process. As Yogi Berra famously said, "It ain't over till it's over."

# FOCUS ON CAPABILITIES INSTEAD OF DISABILITIES

by Carol Leish, M.A.

It's human nature, unfortunately, to focus on what people can't do instead of what they can do. This also includes making assumptions of what others are or aren't capable of doing.

The harm of making assumptions of others capabilities, because of their disabilities is sad.

Stereotyping people because of their challenges, along with making assumptions, is wrong.

And, seniors need to be revered and appreciated for who they are or have become, instead of making assumptions of what they can/can't do.

By focusing on what people can't do, people tend to think that they are superior to others who can't do something. This leads to people viewing their opinions and actions, along with their behavior, as being superior to others.

It is unfortunate that others make assumptions of people with challenges by thinking that they can't accomplish various things. They may also assume that someone else is inferior to them, not intelligent, or lazy if they can't accomplish the same things that they are able to accomplish.

Stereotyping of individuals with disabilities is wrong because labeling is not the right thing to do. People may assume that my intellect is affected since I have a slight speech impediment. Or, they may think that I'm not paying attention to them because of my left eye wandering as a lazy eye. Or, they may think that I'm lazy because of doing part time work instead of full-time work, even though I'm just pacing myself due to eye fatigue. Or, with coordination challenges, they may think that I have cerebral palsy.



Carol Leish. Photo by Softtouch Photography

I tell them that it's similar to having cerebral palsy, but dealing with the after affects of a head injury as an infant, is not having cerebral palsy, or even epilepsy, which they may also assume that I have, after hearing about the head injury that occurred to me.

Seniors have many passions and desires, just like everyone else. However, if a senior has a slight memory or mobility problem, others should not assume that they must have dementia. That's stereotyping, too!

Awareness of various challenges is important to have in order to realize that, yes, their may be limitations. However, all people definitely have more capabilities than disabilities. By focusing on capabilities, attitudes will change. Others will realize that it is better to focus on others abilities and what they can do instead of what they have trouble with or can't do.

Personally, I can relate to, Helen Keller. Like her, I am thankful for my challenges, for through them I have found my work (Motivational Speaking & Journalism), my God and myself." We all need to view what we can do instead of what we can't do. Thus, reflect upon the words of Emily Dickenson, who said, "I dwell on possibilities."

*Carol Leish, MA, is a public speaker on the topic of understanding disability by sharing her personal journey with visual and speech challenges. You can find more information about her and her work at [callmecapable.net](http://callmecapable.net).*

This article was first published in the October 2022 issue of:







Presenting the opening chapter of Ed McBride's new novel:

## Our Brooklyn



The call came from Blue, Butch's little sister. Of course, she wasn't little anymore. She was a grown woman with a teenage daughter of her own. But to me, and to the people we grew up with in our particular pocket of Brooklyn, she would always be that: Butch's little sister.

"Hello, *strangah*," she said in that same Brooklyn accent, not even slightly diminished by the Florida sunshine. Just hearing the accent brought up a wave of memories like a dusty old photo album from the floor of a closet: pictures of the old neighborhood, summers in the city, the people we were. "How have you been? *Lowng* time no see."

It had been a long time. Almost six years since the last time I'd seen her in Tampa, but I could picture her face as clearly as a framed portrait over my bed, immutable from six years and 2500 miles away. From the distance she was still the cute, blue-eyed, long-haired teenager with Butch's dimpled smile and bronze skin in a young woman's soft, curvy body. We had always kept up over the years but had been letting it slip away recently like I'd been letting so many things slip away. My son? My marriage? "Time flies when you're having fun," I said.

She laughed, as I knew she would. "Are you still having fun out there in California? You better tell me what you're drinking or eating out there. I could use a little more fun in my life. Fun seems to be the first thing to go, right along with perky, upturned boobs."

"I'm sure your boobies are still spectacular," I said, "but why the phone call? I'm used to Christmas cards and e-mails."

"This is something different," she said in a tone that was also suddenly different, the silliness, the flirtiness, gone. "Something we need to talk about."

*Okay.*

"I'm having a party for Butch's birthday. I want you to come."

That set off a powerful ripple of something painful, a cocktail of complex emotions, conflicting feelings, that buzzed through my body like a Taser. I held the phone for a minute without saying anything. I hadn't seen Butch in almost twenty years. The last two words he'd said to me back then were *fuck* and *you*.

Butch was my first friend, and best friend for a major part of my life. But there are some things people don't get over. Some damage that is beyond repair. Some mistakes that can't be unmade.

"I don't think Butch wants to see me," I said. In fact, that's what he'd said in our last conversation. Exactly that: "Stay out of my life. I never want to see you again!" It wasn't ambiguous. Butch was nothing if not clear about his feelings. I'd never known Butch to hold anything back, and I knew him, probably still knew him, better than anyone else on earth.

"I think you're wrong," Blue said.

*(Continued on page 10)*

Butch’s birthday, I knew of course, was July 4<sup>th</sup>. The whole neighborhood used to celebrate it, along with Independence Day, with food and fireworks and gallons of legal and illegal beverages. Beverages that Butch could always handle better than anyone else. It was one of the biggest days of the year for us, almost up there with Christmas.

“How is he?” I asked.

“Not so good.”

She hesitated for a minute, then offered a few sketchy details. But she didn’t have to say much for me to understand what she was telling me. It was already more than I wanted to hear, much more.

“This is important, Bobby. It’s important for him, and its important for you too.”

It was Blue being Blue, the way I’d always known her, trying to make things right, trying to hold people together, trying to keep the puzzle from coming apart even after some of the pieces no longer fit.

“Let me think about it,” I said. “Give me a couple of

days to think about it.”

“You can think about it,” she said. “But the answer better be yes. I’m not kidding, Bobby. This is serious.”

After I clicked off the phone, I poured an extra tall Jameson’s, sat at my desk and thought about Butch. The picture I saw of him, the most prominent of the hundreds of Butches that still filled space in my head, was the military Butch home in full uniform after his Advanced Infantry Training and before Vietnam. The Butch with tall, beautiful Christina on his arm. That Butch was the best looking and bravest human being that Crown Heights, Brooklyn had to offer. That Butch was the most optimistic, the most confident, the best-known person in all of our vanishing little community. That Butch seemed to be blessed and indestructible. Or almost indestructible.

From the age of six, through the dramatic and violent ‘60s and ‘70s, Butch and I had helped each other learn how to live. If what Blue had told me was true, and if Butch did want to see me now, maybe we could help each other learn how to die.

## Ed’s Best Sellers: Five Books of Comprehensive Language Skills



Edward McBride has published a five-level, integrated skills series titled:

### Downtown: English for Work and Life

[Downtown: English for Work and Life by Edward J. McBride | Goodreads](#)

Here’s a quote from the Amazon Bookstore:

“Downtown books give adult learners the comprehensive language skills needed for success in everyday life. With Downtown's traditional grammar sequence and solid coverage of federal, state, and local standards, teaching to the standards has never been easier.”

The five Downtown books have 5 matching workbooks.

# The Inheritance Review – A Must-See Production for all Theater Lovers

By Elaine L. Mura



Jay Donnell, Israel Erron Ford, Adam Kantor, Avi Roque, and Kasey Mahaffy – Photo by Jeff Lorch

shuttered American society of the past 100 years. All of this surrounding the inheritance – a huge, classic home in upper New York State owned by Morgan – who, sensing a kindred spirit in Eric – bequeaths him the house, secrets and all, in a hastily scrawled note to his husband as he lay dying. But Henry’s adult sons, sensing the possible loss of their inheritance, burn the note – and thus hangs the tale.

Part 2 focuses on the inheritance of the play title and how powerfully it impacts on the lives of everyone involved. There is Eric, who must acknowledge his own needs and wants and grow in self-

knowledge. There is Henry, who must soften his reliance on wealth and power and allow compassion in. There is Leo (Bradley James Tejada playing a dual role), a poor, undeveloped look-alike Adam, who must learn how to function effectively in the bigger society. There is Margaret Avery (Tantoo Cardinal), who finally accepted her dying AIDS-ridden son and now must offer love and solace to others. And, finally, there is Toby, who must grow or bring disaster upon himself and anyone close to him. In fact, each character has his own story.

Brilliantly directed by Mike Donahue, THE INHERITANCE has amassed the talents of so many in portraying this story. Kudos to every skilled cast member, each of whom makes his character pivotal and intriguing. THE INHERITANCE also harnesses the talents of a splendid production team. Jaimie Todd’s scenic design is clever and effective – never distracting the audience from the major issues – but also highlighting the camaraderie and affection the members feel for each other. Lighting (Josh Epstein), sound (Veronika Vorel), costumes (Sara Ryung Clement), fight director (Julie Ouellette), composer (Paul Englishby), and intimacy choreography (Amanda Rose Villarreal) – all deserve congratulations for their excellent work. And their ability to help dissolve the space between audience and actors. AUDIENCE ALERT: There is brief nudity in service of the plot.

THE INHERITANCE is definitely a must-see production. It is writing, talent, and strength personified and will provide a measure of theatrical excellence for years to come. And don’t worry about the length of the show. Time really does fly as the absorbing story catches and holds audience attention from beginning to end. For those familiar with “Howards End,” you’ll be intrigued by the parallels between novel and play. Don’t fail to see this production if at all possible. THE INHERITANCE runs through Nov. 27, 2022, with performances at 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, at 1 p.m., 7 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. ALERT: You must schedule Part I and Part 2 separately on two evenings/days. Each part is just over 3 hours in length.

This play is recommended for individuals 16 and over. The Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse is located at 10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Tickets range from \$39 to \$129. For information and reservations, call 310-208-2028 or go [online](#) (fees may apply).



Tantoo Cardinal and Bradley James Tejada – Photo by Jeff Lorch

When first invited to review THE INHERITANCE, a six-hour (plus) play divided into two parts of three acts each, I was not sure if I could handle a marathon of this size. Was I ever wrong! Time literally flew by as the uber-talented cast of over a dozen kept every theater goer in the room glued to their seats. This is theater as it was meant to be – relevant, timely, fascinating, lively, emotional, intellectual, gripping, entertaining. Sad to say, magazine space does not permit more superlatives; but I am sure that the reader gets the idea.

Playwright Matthew Lopez was inspired by E. M. Forster’s novel, “Howards End” – and Morgan, a major character, is very close to a quasi-biographical depiction of E. M. Forster himself (full name Edward Morgan Forster). Forster conceived of the novel in 1908 and completed it in 1910. It was not until 1917 that he reportedly “came out of the closet” when he had a homosexual encounter with a wounded World War I soldier; however, he was open about being gay only with close friends – and definitely not with the general public. Remember that this novel was written over 100 years ago (even if Forster died in 1970 at the age of 91). For an author who dealt with social conventions, codes of conduct, and relationships at the turn of the century, Forster would have been very aware of the prejudices of the time. It is only recently that Matthew Lopez incorporated “Howards End” and flashes of Forster’s life story into THE INHERITANCE, which opened in 2018 in London (winning four Olivier Awards) and in 2019 on Broadway.

The overriding theme of THE INHERITANCE concerns the gay experience, especially during and after the AIDS era. But this play is so much more as it delves into each complex individual’s psyche and explores topics which are

meaningful and important to all of us, gay or straight. Set in present-day Manhattan, Toby (Juan Castano) and Eric (Adam Kantor) are a happy, thriving gay couple living in Eric’s family’s precious rent-controlled apartment. Toby has written a play called “Loved Boy,” which purportedly celebrates his charmed childhood and adolescence. He is in the process of casting the main character when the couple meet Morgan (Bill Brochtrup), an older sophisticated man married to Henry Wilcox (Tuc Watkins), a business tycoon. At the same get-together, they also meet Adam (Bradley James Tejada), a bright, well-heeled, and manipulative young man fated to star in Toby’s play – and in his life. Love and loss figure heavily in Parts 1 and 2 of this epic drama.

In many ways, THE INHERITANCE feels like a soap opera which follows multiple characters through thick and thin – but again it is so much more. For sandwiched between events and often gut-wrenching situations are periods of profound soul-searching and questioning tapping into politics, social values, and the history of being gay in the



Bill Brochtrup, Kasey Mahaffy, and Adam Kantor – Photo by Jeff Lorch

# If I Forget Review – We Live in Memory

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By Elaine L. Mura



Samantha Klein, Valerie Perri, Matt Gottlieb, Jerry Weil, and Jacob Zelonky in IF I FORGET - Photo by Jenny Graham

Tony Award-winning book writer of “Dear Evan Hanson,” playwright Steven Levenson freely admits that he borrowed from conversations and conflicts within his own family in order to populate IF I FORGET, a powerful drama that delves into the hidden dynamics that haunt every family. In a recent interview, Levenson opined, “The past is never neutral, and history is never settled. This play doesn’t attempt to offer any answers; but I hope, in its own small way, it can help to articulate why it is so vital that we continue to ask difficult questions, to grapple with painful, uncomfortable subjects.” Directed by Jason Alexander of “Seinfeld” fame, IF I FORGET poses questions about family history and heritage, responsibility, the Holocaust, Zionism, prejudice, dealing with aging parents, and – most importantly – what makes a Jewish family tick in today’s world - with the central question never far from anyone’s mind: Can Jews ever forget the Holocaust?

Michael Fisher (Leo Marks) and his non-Jewish wife Ellen (Sile Bermingham) have come to Washington DC to visit family. University professor and questioning intellectual, Michael has just published a controversial book, “Forgetting the Holocaust,” and is reeling from negative feedback. Michael is, as always, reluctant to see the Fischer family, especially his 75-year-old failing father. Michael’s problematic daughter Abby (Caribay Franke) is on a “roots” journey to Jerusalem, where cultural issues appear to trigger a mental breakdown which may have been in the making for years. Enter the Fischer family, including Michael’s rapidly declining father Lou (Matt Gottlieb), his controlling and very dominant sister Holly (Valerie Perri), Holly’s Casper-Milquetoast husband Howard (Jerry Weil), Michael’s liberal sister Sharon (Samantha Klein), and Holly’s and Howard’s quietly rebellious, overtly disinterested adolescent son Joey (Jacob Zelonky).



Lou is no longer able to run the family store and has rented the space out to a Guatemalan family who run a bodega. Sharon has taken a shine to the 50-something married patriarch and supports the Hispanic family at every turn. As Lou ages, it has become apparent that he will require expensive around-the-clock care. The solution appears to be selling the store – but the store also represents generations of Fischers, a heritage they are reluctant to dismiss. Meanwhile, business tycoon Howard, who always had big bucks to spare, may not be in such good financial shape at the moment. Michael has been summarily dismissed from his University job and his daughter now requires serious and costly mental health treatment. Everyone in the family is feeling the money pinch. And each has a solution which is at odds with other family members. Where to go from here?

IF I FORGET is an intense family drama, and each family member knows just which buttons to push to get explosive feedback. At the same time, Levinson has woven humor into the often incendiary events. Throughout the play, an ethereal Abby ballets her way around and about the stage as cast members rapidly make scene changes. When Levinson is depicting family communication – or lack thereof – the writing is powerful and draws the audience right onto the stage. Kudos to Leo Marks and Valerie Perri, who manage to add intriguing dimensions to their roles. Other family members tend to be somewhat stereotypical – but will definitely trigger audience’s memories about their own families. In the case of Abby, it may have been more effective to have her remain a cipher who never appears. Some of the pivotal events in the show, while surprising, nonetheless strain credibility. Issues of the Holocaust vacillate between hard-hitting, harsh realism and academic abstraction, which is probably the point. IF I FORGET is a thought-provoking production. Without a doubt, IF I FORGET will keep viewers talking long after the curtain drops.



Jacob Zelonky, Leo Marks, and Caribay Franke – Photo by Jenny Graham

IF I FORGET runs through December 18, 2022, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays, and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45 (Mondays \$40 and Pay-What-You-Want subject to availability).

For information and reservations, call 323-663-1525 or go online: [www.FountainTheatre.com](http://www.FountainTheatre.com)

## Autumn Is

By Ray Malus

Autumn is the rekindled smoke of too-long-dormant hearths.  
The thrilling shiver of the year's first frost.  
The shrouded velvet dusk of hasty sunsets,  
and golden cider warmed and spiced with cloves.

Autumn is the waxy scent of freshly-opened crayons.  
The gleam of newly polished schoolroom floors.  
The smell of pristine notebooks, filled with promise.  
The must of textbooks, rife with unlearned lore.

Autumn is a tinkling harpsichord in muted, doiled parlors.  
The gleam of lemoned furniture in wanly sunlit dens.  
The camphor sting of cedar-chest-sequestered woolen blankets.  
The medicinal miasma of Vicks Vaporub.

Autumn is the caramel rainbow of a forward pass  
etched into an ice-blue sky, one Sunday afternoon,  
pomegranates, pumpkin pies and bowls of salted nuts,  
and dark arrays of sweet-sticky pitted dates.

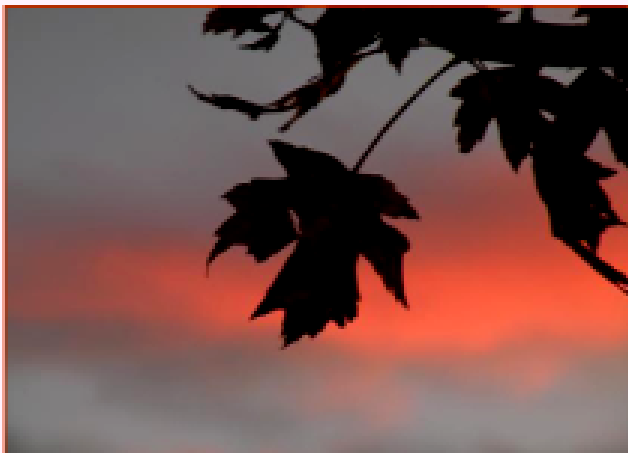
Autumn is a meditation on eternity,  
A celebration of dearly purchased wisdom.  
It is the grace before the evening family meal,  
the quiet prayer before a winter's sleep.



### TALKING TURKEY 2010

Please bow your heads. We gather together to feast with peaceful breaking of gluten-free bread, offering thanks or good thoughts or nurturing mindsets, to the Creator or The Source or The Universal Truth—yes, I know, Jesse, you don't pray, you meditate, whatever—for the bounty or produce or organic life forms, in memory of the Pilgrims or Anglo-Saxon Invaders, who feasted with the Native Americans or The First People, after surviving a hellish winter ordained by God or Buddha or Gaia. And so, I'm carving this tofu turkey, stuffed with pesticide-free products, and everyone will now pick up his or her knives and forks or chopsticks ... and dig in! Do I hear an amen?

By Kathy Highcove, 2010



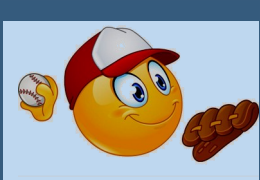
A photograph of a sunset over a large body of water, likely a lake. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and pink, with the sun low on the horizon. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted branches of a tree. A semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

## **FADING WATERCOLORS**

**your smile quivers  
sequins of light caught  
within corners of my vision**

**slowly I search  
curve of your smile  
contours of your image  
embrace of your voice  
while fading watercolors  
reveal your presence  
in shades of gray**

**Lillian Rodich 2022**



# DODGER FANS: THERE'S NO CRYING IN BASEBALL!



By Kathy Highcove

Sad but true. In 2022, the Dodgers are not the Golden Boys of October. Yes, Dodger fans, that's a crying shame. Weren't the Dodgers, who recorded 111 wins last season, supposed to be the Dream Team? Last summer, we were assured that they were going all the way, just like in 2020. In October, The Baseball Fates have spoken. Dodgers are benched after flunking out of the first round.

Now the millions of Dodger fans will have to sit back and watch the battle between the Phillies and Houston Astros. But as a long time Dodger fan, I'm very accustomed to being an onlooker as two other teams vie for the big trophy.

I wasn't always a Dodger fan. In fact, for twenty-some years of our marriage, I totally resented the time my husband spent watching Dodger games on television. I thought, What's the attraction? Baseball doesn't have the rough and tumble action of football nor the dizzying back and forth court action of basketball. Where's the thrill? We need to go get some groceries, damn it!

Baseball was not popular in my youth in the rainy Northwest and was paid little attention by my father and brother. Baseball teams in our school systems played afternoon games attended by the players' parents and girlfriends. Occasionally, in my high school's homerooms, our principal would dutifully take the mic and announce a win by our

baseball team and there'd be a spattering of applause in a few classrooms. No big deal. Meh. How's our JV basketball team doing, Principal Ashenbrenner?



And that was my POV on baseball, until the year the Dodgers were in the 1988 World Series. By then, my spouse and I were suburban homeowners with a mortgage and three young kids. That summer, when my husband watched the Dodgers on our big color TV in the center of house, I became intrigued. I began to watch the innings with him. Slowly but surely, step by step, I was drawn into the drama of the play-offs.

In a crucial play-off game, Kurt Gibson limped to the plate and, after two strikes,

whacked out a winning home run and determinedly circled the bases, I screamed louder than I would scream during the Northridge quake. Joe bellowed his joy. Our children thought we'd lost our minds.

I was hooked! I was Dodger blue! And that hue has only deepened over the years. I can talk baseball moves like a pro.

But my baseball moment of truth came a few years later when we went to Dodger Stadium to watch a game. We drifted in from the parking lot, climbed a couple flights of cement stairs, entered the gates and headed for our reserved seats.

I still vividly recall the moment that I first stood at the top of our tier and beheld the bright green grass, the neatly laid out diamond and the hundreds, thousands of baseball fans waiting for the show to start. I caught my breath ... it was so drastically beautiful, this verdant scene laid out in the bright Los Angeles sunshine! A short time later, I watched the Dodger players come running out of the dugout, and take their positions. They reminded me of young boys running to play with their pals.

For the past thirty years, I've been slowly learning the ins and outs of baseball. I have learned that this game's action starts with just three active players: the catcher, pitcher and batter. Add an umpire. The whole stadium, all the cameras, closely watch the home plate action and the ref's call on the pitch. Then, a batter may strike out or hit the ball. If he hits the ball all kinds of things can happen. The ball can go foul, or it can sail across the field to a home run. It can be a skillfully aimed grounder which is swiftly fielded and thrown to a base for an out. It can be pursued and caught in the outfield for an out or grabbed and lobbed to the infield. There's so many variations on these basic baseball plays. Why did I ever think that baseball was static, boring? Baseball has been called the Chess of Sports!

In 2020, we were entertained – sustained - by baseball during the COVID shutdown. The baseball teams managed to carry on with their 2020 season in semi-seclusion, with only cardboard fans who silently represented all the baseball fans stuck at home, day after day, with few links to normal life. And something wonderful happened during the toughest year of our lives: our team won the 2020 World Series!



After decades, our World Series drought had ended! In the middle of a national pandemic, our boys in blue delivered! Los Angeles Dodger fans finally had good news, a golden moment of triumph! All over the city, fans discarded their masks and cheered! That night, fireworks blossomed over neighborhoods all over our far-flung city.

So never lose heart, Dodger fans. In baseball, at the end of every grueling months-long season, anything becomes possible.

**There's always next year!**

## THE CWC-SFV WRITERS CLUB: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The California Writers Club has been in existence for over 100 years, and the SFV Branch for over 20 years. Our mission is to encourage excellence in writing, fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as to reach out into our community and mentor writers at all stages of their writing journey. We hold Zoom meetings on the first Saturday of each month from 1 PM to 3 PM. Meetings are free for all members.

Our meetings feature presentations from published writers, editors, and other writing industry experts who speak on topics ranging from how to improve their writing, overcome writer's block, get published, and promote their work. Check out our website for more information: [CWC-SFV.org](http://CWC-SFV.org).

In addition, we host six critique groups which meet monthly or bi-monthly to give CWC-SFV members feedback from their CWC-SFV peers. They meet in person, on Zoom, or in hybrid groups.

For further information about our critique groups, contact Pat Avery at:

[cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com](mailto:cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com)

For information and reviews on prior monthly speakers please go to:  
[monthly editions of the Scribe.](#)

To learn more about our club, visit us on Facebook:

[cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com](mailto:cwcsanfernandovalley@gmail.com)

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