

GRADE
9+



Photo by Kenneth Locke



ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

GRACIE

BY JOAN MACLEOD

A CO-PRODUCTION WITH THE BELFRY THEATRE, VICTORIA

DIRECTED BY VANESSA PORTEOUS

STUDENT MATINEE | 11:30am
WEDNESDAY, March 15, 2016

Contact & Information
ATPlive.com | tpeterson@atplive.com



Themes, Topics and Special Interest

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT	3
PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES	4
DIRECTOR'S NOTES.....	5
DESIGN	6
Costume.....	6
Set.....	7
THEMES & TOPICS	8
ADDITIONAL READING	10
What is the FLDS?	10
Polygamy.....	13
Keeping Sweet: Fundamental Mormon Polygamy	14

NOTE: *This play is a work of fiction, inspired by Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) communities in Canada and the U.S. Gracie, and all other characters and the events mentioned in the play, are works of fiction as well.*

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Joan MacLeod is a Vancouver born writer who studied creative writing at the University of Victoria. She began her career as a poet and novelist. In 1984 Joan went to Banff's Advanced Writers' Studio in Poetry. She met playwright Alan Williams there and saw him perform an excerpt from his one man show *The Cockroach Trilogy*. Between that and hearing an actor from the Playwrights' Colony perform one of her poems Joan decided on a life in the theatre. She began working on what became her first play *Jewel* a few months later. In

September 1985 Joan moved to Toronto, a first draft of *Jewel* in hand. She sent the script to Tarragon Theatre and was invited to join their Playwright's Unit. *Jewel*, a last minute replacement for a cancelled show, premiered at Tarragon's Extra Space in 1988. MacLeod was a last minute replacement for *Jewel*'s scheduled actor. With next to zero acting experience she performed the entire run of her play. This experience of course tremendously impacted the way she wrote for the stage. For seven years she was a playwright-in-residence at Tarragon Theatre. In 1994, Joan wrote a play for Canadian Stage Company's Berkley Street Theatre, *Little Sister*, which focused on teen anorexia and it was later toured by Green Thumb Theatre. She wrote a second play commissioned by the Canadian Stage Company in 1996 titled *2000*. *2000* focuses on the millennium and technological consumer culture versus nature. *Gracie* marks Joan MacLeod's fourth world premiere at Alberta Theatre Projects. Joan MacLeod has been the recipient of many awards including the Prix Italia for the CBC production of *Jewel*, the Governor General's Award for *Amigo's Blue Guitar*, the Chalmers Award for *The Hope Slide*, and the Jessie Award and Betty Mitchell Award for *The Shape of a Girl*. Her plays have been produced across Canada, England, the United States, Australia and Europe, and translated into 6 languages. Joan MacLeod was awarded the prestigious Siminovitch Prize for her outstanding playwriting achievements.

ORIGINAL PLAYS

- Jewel (1987)
- Toronto Mississippi (1987)
- Amigo's Blue Guitar (1990)
- The Hope Slide (1992)
- Little Sister (1994)
- 2000 (1996)
- The Shape of a Girl (2001)
- Homechild (2006)
- Another Home Invasion (2009)
- The Valley (2013)
- Gracie (2017)

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

By Joan MacLeod

I began researching this play by reading deeply about the FLDS – the sect that broke off from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints over a century ago. I travelled to both Colorado City on the Utah-Arizona border and to Bountiful in the south eastern corner of B.C. I didn't go beyond the No Trespassing signs in either community; I never intended to. Colorado City felt desolate. Many houses were unoccupied, the community much diminished since their prophet, Warren Jeffs, was sent to prison in 2008. We were followed, a little too closely, by a large pick-up with tinted windows and were glad to leave. Bountiful was different. It was lush and beautiful. We watched a dozen boys in the distance, doing tricks on their bikes, on a little jump they'd created in a pasture. But Bountiful is still a community where the majority of the population of around 1,000 are descendants of seven men. Perhaps mystery is at the heart of all religions and writing about a place that is full of secrets is impossible. But this play began the way all my plays do: by creating one voice and trying to figure out why that voice wanted to be heard.

The play takes place between 1992 and 2007; it begins when Gracie is eight and moves with her family to Canada when her mother is assigned to another man by the prophet in her former community.

Gracie, it must be emphasized, is a work of fiction. There is no character or event meant to represent actual people or events in either community. Currently three people from Bountiful are on trial for allegedly removing girls from the community there and taking them to be wed to much older men in the the community in Colorado City in 2004. A verdict will be handed down by the Supreme Court in February. Winston Blackmore — the leader from Bountiful who we most often see on the news defending the right for religious freedom under our Charter — is the younger brother of one of the men going to trial. It's estimated that at present he has fathered over 140 children.

Joan

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

By Vanessa Porteous

Gracie is torn between two worlds: her childhood world of faith and family, and the outside full of unknowns. What path will she choose?

Her situation is not something we hear about a lot, except in TV segments when there's a bit of news. We get a blurred glimpse of her in the background, headed somewhere else, her head turned away – then she disappears.

The play invites us to go deep inside Gracie's secret world, to see it through the eyes of its most innocent member. It's a close up view that beckons us not to easy judgment but to a kind of righteous compassion. It is hard to believe that Canadian girls are living this way, but it's true, and young women around the world would relate. Across the globe, many girls are raised to serve the dominant values of their culture, whether or not those values nurture their autonomy or keep them safe.

Someone once described Joan MacLeod's work as being 'like the tide coming in.' Gentle at first, its impact becomes inexorable, overwhelming. Her gift is to layer on detail after detail until a very intimate story starts to take on the outlines of the universal. No matter what kind of childhood we had, we all want to feel secure. We want love from our families; we want to believe the faith that gave us comfort as children; we want to trust that adults mean the best. Like Gracie, we want to belong.

But the play asks, what do you have to give up to belong? What sacrifices do we ask of each other in order to fit in? What personal needs must be abandoned to be part of the family, to be welcome in the community? Good questions to ask, these days.

I'm a mother, so stories about what adults do to children hit me harder now. I want to protect Gracie, all the Gracies. I want to put my arm around her, tell her everything will be all right. I want to keep her safe – but I want to set her free. Whatever path she chooses.

Vanessa

DESIGN

Costume Design

by Catherine Hahn

Like many other religious groups, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has a dress code. Its origins can be traced back to the late 19th century, a time when polygamy was still common in mainstream Mormonism. Those familiar with the FLDS say the women's attire is not just a matter of tradition or preference. Rather, they say, fashions are dictated by very strict rules imposed and revised by sect elders to promote modesty and enforce religious devotion.



The FLDS dress code requires women to wear a simple prairie dress. The universal pattern for this dress been dictated by the prophet Warren Jeffs. The pattern is passed from woman to woman, and can be made of only solid-pastel fabric, the belief being that "a lighter color is more conducive to the spirit of God."

A temple garment, also referred to as *Mormon underwear*, is a type of underwear worn by adherents of the Latter Day Saints after they have taken part in the endowment ceremony. Garments are worn both day and night and are required for any adult who previously participated in the endowment ceremony to enter a temple. The undergarments are viewed as a symbolic reminder of the covenants made in temple ceremonies and are seen as a symbolic and/or literal source of protection from the evils of the world. Adherents consider them to be sacred and not suitable for public display.



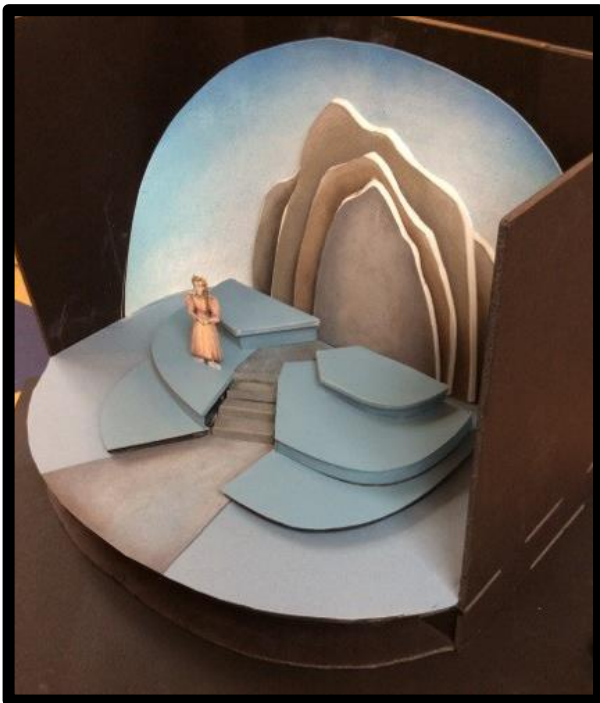
Set Design

by Catherine Hahn

Gracie is set in a polygamous community in British Columbia. The set design uses the recognizable backdrop of the Rocky Mountains to set the stage for this story. The different platforms and levels that have been incorporated into the set design allow the director to help to define a change in location or time during the retelling of Gracie's story. Since this is a one person show the different heights and levels also assist in keeping the action and movement on stage engaging and interesting for the audience.



This is the original set design rendering. This initial sketch is used to give the director a visual idea of the set design concept.



These are the images of the Final Maquette. This is a built to scale model of the set design. This model is used by the builders of the show to ensure all elements are the correct shape size and colour and also by the Director who will reference the model when blocking the show.

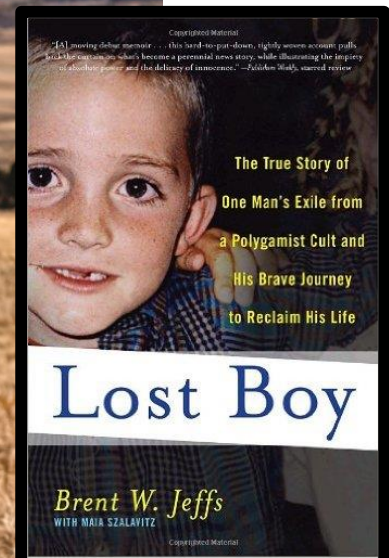
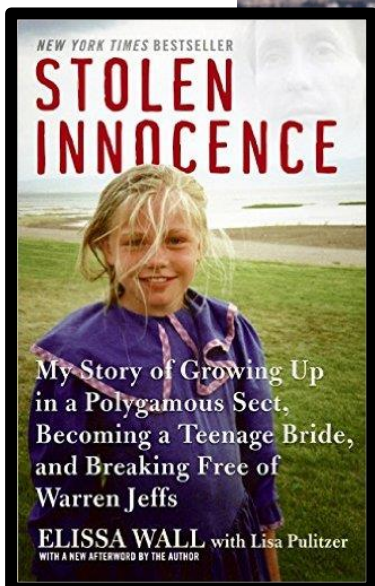
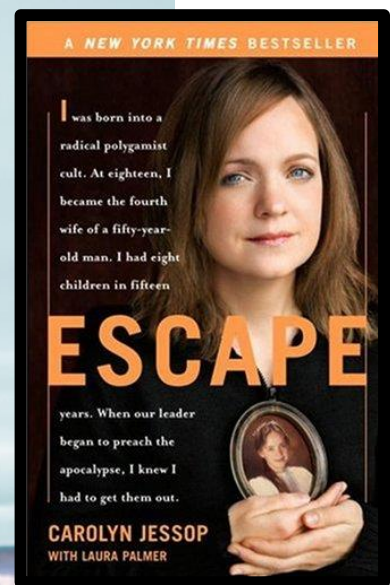
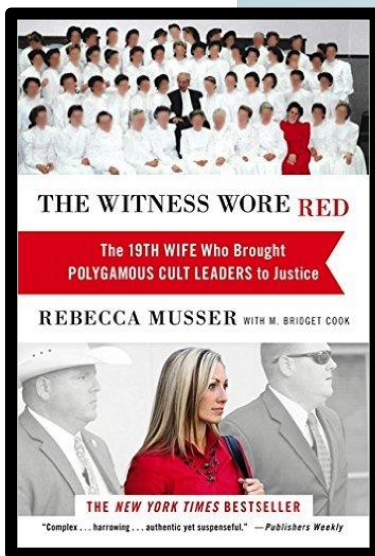
THEMES AND TOPICS

Themes
<p style="text-align: center;">Gender Roles</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Loss of innocence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Control- Different tactics used to maintain control over a group of people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Becoming a product of your environment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ignorance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Indoctrination</p>
Post Show Discussion Topics
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What techniques does the playwright evoke to give us clues to Gracie's situation? 2) How are gender roles represented in this piece? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How is the role of women in the family and the community depicted in the world of this play? How does this compare to what we see in our own community? 3) Discuss the influence access to information has on our free will. Without access to information can we truly act autonomously? 4) What methods of control do you see utilized in the community Gracie lives in? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How are fear tactics used to the benefit a community such as the one represented in Gracie? b) Discuss what you think might have prevented Gracie and the others in her community from leaving? 5) Why do you think Gracie would choose to return to her community? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What does this say about the human tendency to associate what is familiar with safety?

Additional topics

Stories of Survivors:

- The Witness Wore Red by Rebecca Musser
- Stolen Innocence: My Story of Growing Up in a Polygamous Sect, Becoming a Teenage Bride, and Breaking Free of Warren Jeffs by Elissa Wall with Lisa Pulitzer
- Lost Boy by Brent W. Jeffs with Maia Szalavitz
- Escape by Carolyn Jessop and Laura Palmer



ADDITIONAL READING**What is the FLDS(Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)?**

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS Church) is one of the largest Mormon fundamentalist denominations and one of the largest organizations in the United States whose members practice polygamy. The FLDS Church emerged in the early 20th century when its founding members left The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church aka Mormon Church). The split occurred largely because of the LDS Church's suspension of the practice of polygamy and its decision to excommunicate its members who would continue the practice.

The exact number of members of the FLDS Church is unknown due to the relatively closed nature of the organization. However, the FLDS Church is estimated to have 6,000 to 10,000 members residing in the sister cities of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona; Eldorado, Texas; Westcliffe, Colorado; Mancos, Colorado; Creston and Bountiful, British Columbia; and Pringle, South Dakota.

The FLDS Church headquarters were originally located in what was then known as Short Creek in Arizona, on the southern border of Utah. The settlement eventually expanded into Utah and became incorporated as the twin municipalities of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona. The historic location of the church was in Hildale and Colorado City, but the church also has a long-standing colony in Bountiful, British Columbia.

From 2007 to 2011, the leadership of the FLDS Church was unclear. On November 20, 2007, after the conviction of then leader Warren Jeffs, attorneys for Jeffs released the following statement: "Mr. Jeffs resigned as President of The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Inc." This statement does not address his position as prophet of the church, but merely addressed his resignation from his fiduciary post as president of the corporation belonging to the FLDS Church. According to a Salt Lake Tribune telephone transcript, there is evidence that, when incarcerated, Warren Jeffs made statements naming William E. Jessop, a former first counselor, as his successor. FLDS leaders have refused to clarify who is considered the Prophet of the FLDS church. To add additional confusion to the issue of succession, a 2012 CNN documentary insists that Jeffs still leads the church from prison.

Prior to November 20, 2007, the church was being led by Warren Jeffs, who succeeded his father, Rulon Jeffs, in 2002. For nearly two years, Warren Jeffs had been wanted on sex-crimes charges. From May 2006 until his arrest in August 2006, he was on the FBI's Ten Most-Wanted List. On September 25, 2007, Jeffs was found guilty of two counts of being an accomplice to rape and was sentenced to ten years to life in prison. This conviction was later overturned. On January 28, 2011, Jeffs again asserted his leadership of the denomination. Warren Jeffs has since been sentenced to life in prison plus 20 years along with a \$10,000 fine after his conviction on aggravated sexual assault and sexual assault charges.

Life conditions:

Boys: Due to the high demand of girls in the communities the young men are often fighting with their fathers or older men from the same community to get a first wife or to get more wives. They believe that having at least 3 wives will let them reach the highest Kingdom in heaven. Due to the lack of girls among the communities some of the young unmarried men are banished from the communities. They are given the title *Lost Boys* and are pushed out of the community with little education or life skills. These boys often have no money and little knowledge of the outside world and after being shunned from their community they are left to fend for themselves.

Girls: At very young age the girls are already planning their wedding. Usually around the age of 12 to 14, they are married and ready to start having children. Since there is a lower amount of girls in those communities, it rarely happens that they are rejected by their families. It is also extremely hard for them to leave the community. The young girls are taught at a young age how to run a house, how to be a good wife and how to become a mother. They are not allowed to wear dresses that are shorter than the ankle and are not allowed to cut their hair.

Wife: Once the girls are married, they become the “property” of their new husband. In some cases the wives have been written into wills to be married off to the husband’s friends or relatives upon their death. The first wife is considered to be a prestigious and coveted position. The first wife has a higher position compared to the other wives and has a higher authority between the other wives.

School: The children in polygamist communities are often home schooled or attend a school on the community grounds. The curriculum taught in these schools focuses on teaching the religious

practice of the community. Because the members of these communities are required to marry at a young age many students do not progress in their studies past grade 10.

Leaving the community/ Excommunication: Leaving the community requires the person leaving to cut all ties with the community, including all friends, family and loved ones. Once a member chooses to leave, or is forced to leave all members of the community are required to shun that individual. Once someone has been shunned there is no way back into the community. There are organisations like *Holding out Help* that assists people that leave the community to make the transition into society.



An Article from the Belfry Theatre's Up Next Magazine:**Keeping Sweet: Fundamental Mormon Polygamy**

Photo by Ian Smith / Vancouver Sun

IMAGES OF YOUNG WOMEN IN PASTEL-COLOURED, PIONEER-STYLE DRESSES, THEIR HAIR POUFFED AND BRAIDED, CARRYING BABIES AND WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AT THEIR SIDES WERE MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF MORMON FUNDAMENTALISM. I was incredibly curious about the girls—who they were, what they believed, how they lived. Delving into Mormon history and culture was the gateway to what eventually became *Glossolalia*, my collection of poetry told from the points of view of the polygamous wives of Joseph Smith, founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS).

There are many aspects of the lives of the Mormon fundamentalists who live in Bountiful, BC and

multiple communities in the United States that differ from that of the general public, but it's their devotion to the practice of polygamy that attracts outsider attention.

While the mainstream Mormon Church distances itself from Mormon fundamentalism largely thanks to polygamy, they share the same historical foundation in which polygamous marriage, also known as plural or celestial marriage, was an important tenet of their faith.

Joseph Smith founded the church in 1830. It claims to be the restoration of the original church founded by Jesus, and reinstated various doctrines that they believed to be practiced during the

"golden age" when God communed directly with humans. Among the many revelations Smith received from God, he was told in the mid-1830s to restore plural marriage. He tentatively attempted this secretly a few times in the late 1830s, but in the early 1840s he introduced it to some of his closest friends. While we may never know the true number, it is believed that by 1844 Smith had married at least 33 women—some still married to other men, some sisters, some as young as 14, and none of them living with him publicly as wives. His first wife, Emma Hale Smith, never approved of the practice and once Smith was martyred in 1844, she falsely claimed he hadn't been polygamous.

After Smith's death, Brigham Young took control of the church and took the Saints out west to settle what would become Utah. There plural marriage was widely and openly practiced until 1890, when leader of the church Wilford Woodruff received his own revelation that plural marriages were no longer commanded by God. Church leaders continued to perform plural marriages in secret until 1904, after a second revelation to put a stop to it. The practice was forced underground.

In the 1920s, Mormon polygamists began to find each other. A group formed the "Council of Seven Friends" and claimed authority over the current leader of the Mormon Church. Most contemporary Mormon fundamentalist groups can trace their origin to these men, including the FLDS, the group in Bountiful, BC.

Because polygamy is a crime in both Canada and the United States, it's impossible to know precisely how many Mormon fundamentalists there are today. Estimates place between 15,000 – 22,000 polygamists within organized groups and with up to 15,000 independents. It's easy to see them as a homogenous group, but their beliefs and cultures can be wildly different.

Mormon fundamentalists have a nasty habit of marrying young girls to older men. It started with Joseph Smith marrying his good friend's 14 year-old daughter and continues today. While the most scandalous cases of 12 year-old girls being sealed ("married") to church leaders are relatively rare, marriages between girls 14 – 18 to men two to three or four times their age have been commonplace.

In the sect that *Gracie* belongs to, they practice the Law of Placing, in which young women are told by church leadership whom they are to marry through divine authority. These "placements," like so many things, reward the older men of the community. Girls are married off and impregnated as soon as possible, and the young men have to either leave the community or be overworked for little pay in hopes of gaining favour—and a wife—from church leadership. Perhaps it's

because Canada prides itself on religious freedom and upholding Pierre Elliot Trudeau's assertion that "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" that the community of Bountiful has mostly been ignored by authorities, and allowed these marriages to happen. This changed in the mid-2000s when some of the horrors of Warren Jeffs, the FLDS leader based in America, were discovered. (He is now in jail for life plus 20 years, and continues to lead a faction of the church.)

Bountiful is the face of polygamy in our country, but it's important to remember that not all polygamy has Mormon roots, and not all polygamy relies on child brides. Plural marriage will continue regardless of legislation, but we can and must work harder to protect children like Gracie. 📌

Marita Dachsel is the author of *Glossolalia*, *Eliza Roxcy Snow*, and *All Things Said & Done*. Her play *Initiation Trilogy* was produced by Electric Company Theatre, was featured at the 2012 Vancouver International Writers Fest, and was nominated for the Jessie Richardson Award for Outstanding New Script.