

2019-20

OCTOBER 15 - NOVEMBER 2, 2019



ICELAND

BY NICOLAS BILLON

PLAY GUIDE

theatre:
CALGARY
STAFFORD ARIMA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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THE BASICS

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

HALIM
PRANEET AKILLA

KASSANDRA
ARIELLE ROMBOUGH

ANNA
LARA SCHMITZ

PLAYWRIGHT
NICOLAS BILLON

LIGHTING DESIGN
CIMMERON MEYER

STAGE MANAGER
JUSTIN BORN

TC MENTORS PROGRAM -
DIRECTING
QUINN LAZENBY

DIRECTOR
JENNA TURK

SOUND DESIGN
ANDREW BLIZZARD

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
MEREDITH JOHNSON

SET & COSTUME DESIGN
HANNE LOOSEN

VOICE & DIALECT COACH
JANE MACFARLANE

HEAD OF LIGHTING
CATHARINE CRUMB

HEADS OF SOUND
BRONWYN BOWLBY
CHRIS JACKO

HEAD DRESSER
RACHEL MICHELLE SHERIDAN

ASSISTANT HEAD OF
LIGHTING
MIKE BOOTH

HEAD STAGE CARPENTER
SCOTT MORRIS



**THERE IS NO
MERITORACY IN
A COUNTRY THAT
SELLS LOTTERY
TICKETS.”**

THE BASICS

SETTING

Toronto's Liberty Village, post-2008 financial crisis.

SYNOPSIS

Set against the backdrop of the 2008 world banking crisis, a confrontation between a real estate agent and a tenant takes an unexpected turn. The characters we meet are Cassandra, Halim, and Anna. Through three very distinct monologues, we learn not only why they see the world the way they do, but what specific circumstances have connected them to each other. As their paths eventually cross, an unavoidable collision course with greed, power, and sex will force them to question why, in a moment of crisis, they make the choices they do.

"ICELAND" IS PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION

WHO'S WHO

HALIM

A first generation Pakistani-Canadian who considers himself "a capitalist"

KASSANDRA

A university student from Estonia, who has come to Toronto to study history.

ANNA

A Christian from rural Ontario, who is looking for an affordable condo in downtown Toronto.

EXPLORATIONS

“ICELAND IS A BEAUTIFUL SCRIPT; FIERCELY FUNNY AND WHIP-SMART.”

ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE JENNA TURK TALKS ICELAND AND MAKING HER DIRECTORIAL DEBUT.



ICELAND DIRECTOR JENNA TURK

What I learned in Toronto as an emerging artist is that you have to dive in. It's a hustle trying to make a living as an artist there."

Jenna Turk, an Ontario native, earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting at the University of Windsor, but moved to Toronto to realize her dreams as an artist, seizing any opportunity she could to learn and grow as a theatremaker. While taking a directing workshop with Tarragon Theatre's Artistic Director Richard Rose, she accepted a role as script coordinator for a new play there called, *A Brimful of Asha*. Little did she know, its creator was someone who would become important in her career: Ravi Jain. Observing him in the theatre, Jenna says it became clear why he was so successful at such a young age.

"He's smart and kind. He showed genuine interest in the people he worked with. There was no façade."

It was during this time that Ravi saw Jenna's talent and drive, and asked her to be the Assistant Director on a new work by playwright Nicolas Billon at Toronto's 2012 SummerWorks Performance Festival. That play was *Iceland*. For Jenna, this was a real introduction to Canadian theatre and what it means to make new plays in Canada.

"It was so inspiring working with Ravi. His energy is extraordinary. He is a real force," said Jenna. "It was also really eye-opening working with Nic. He was incredibly generous in his writing process, everyone had a voice and he welcomed our ideas."

It was after the experience of working with Ravi and Nicolas that Jenna wanted to focus on creating her own work, and she decided to further expand her knowledge and pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Guelph. After completing her Masters and having lived in Toronto for eight years, she decided it was time for a change, so she moved out west for her position as the Artistic Associate at Theatre Calgary.

Calgary's artistic community was a refreshing change for Jenna. Her experience living in Toronto was that everyone was labelled – be it an actor, director or playwright – but it was rare to make a living as more than one thing. "In Calgary, quite often an actor is also a designer/director/etc. And not just as a side hustle. But they are seen as a respected artist in both fields. Like, Mark Bellamy who directed *Noises Off* for TC and who will be onstage next in the new *A Christmas Carol* adaptation."

After working with Theatre Calgary's Artistic Director, Stafford Arima, and being embraced by the team, Jenna's contract became permanent. And an opportunity presented itself that she never thought would come about. "I had put directing out of my mind as a possibility within my role at Theatre Calgary. So, when Stafford and the artistic team here offered me the chance to direct *Iceland*, it was a surprise. But a really wonderful one. It felt like Stafford trusted and believed in me. It was exciting."

Jenna hopes *Iceland* will appeal to a Calgary audience. "*Iceland* is a beautiful script; fiercely funny, and whip-smart. And, this is a business-minded city with a big heart, but it can be difficult to balance the two.

Capitalism is a huge part of our lives, navigating booms and busts; I think people will be able to relate to this story."

As Jenna reflects on her journey of getting to this point and making her Theatre Calgary directorial debut, she is thankful for the people who have supported her and cheered her on along the way. Mentorship is important to Jenna who as Artistic Associate facilitates Theatre Calgary's mentorship program, TC Mentors. "It's not always easy to find mentors though. It takes a lot of work and patience to be one! I have actually started considering people around my age, colleagues and friends in theatre, as my mentors. In Calgary, there are some powerful women I admire and who make me excited about the future. Like, Jamie Dunsdon and Jenna Rodgers. Tara Beagan, Clare Preuss, Pam Tzeng. There are many! And that is thrilling."

"I'm so grateful to Stafford for giving me this opportunity and entrusting me to bring this show to our stage. In a way, it's really walking the walk, not just supporting emerging artist through programs like TC Mentors, but taking a risk on me and allowing me to continue to grow as well. I am very lucky to be where I am." ●

BY HEATHER OLIVER



JENNA TURK DIRECTS LARA SCHMITZ DURING REHEARSALS FOR ICELAND



JENNA TURK (R) & TC MENTEE FOR DIRECTING - QUINN LAZENBY (L)

EXPLORATIONS

“HOW DO WE EVOLVE PAST HUMAN GREED?”

ACTOR PRANEET AKILLA SHARES HIS ACTING JOURNEY AND BECOMING HALIM



ACTOR PRANEET AKILLA

Praneet Akilla calls himself and his fellow acting community empathy machines. His greatest reward in his career is impacting lives with stories, putting smiles on faces, tears in eyes and laughter in bellies. He says he wants to evoke feelings from the audience. And within the play *Iceland*, he's sure to evoke a mixed bag of emotions playing Halim.

Praneet was born in Mumbai, and after living in Kuwait, his family immigrated to Canada to seek better education, opportunities and lives for him and his sister. This is what put Praneet on the path to entering the world of oil and gas, and pursuing a career as a chemical engineer.

Praneet attended McGill University in Montreal, but did not just focus on his engineering pursuits. Praneet had developed a passion for the arts and acting during his grade school years,

and while in university, he would feed his desire by acting in a musical theatre group.

“Every summer I’d come back to Calgary and intern with oil and gas companies and see old friends, and everyone would be surprised to hear the career I had chosen. All my friends thought because of my love of the arts, that’s where I’d be.”

Over 2013-2014, Praneet began to feel like he was in ‘auto-pilot’, questioning his life path and where his passions and ambitions lied. To continue to feed his burning interest in acting and film, he decided to work on a project called *Jewel Fools*. Praneet shares he would go to school all day, and film all night to make the film, burning the candle at both ends. After the film premiered at the Calgary International Film Festival, he had a wakeup call, and realized he wanted to fully immerse himself as an actor.

“I had started working with Suncor as a chemical engineer at this time, but people started to be laid off.

I knew my path there would only lead to a certain point. So I followed my heart, and fully pursued my acting career.”

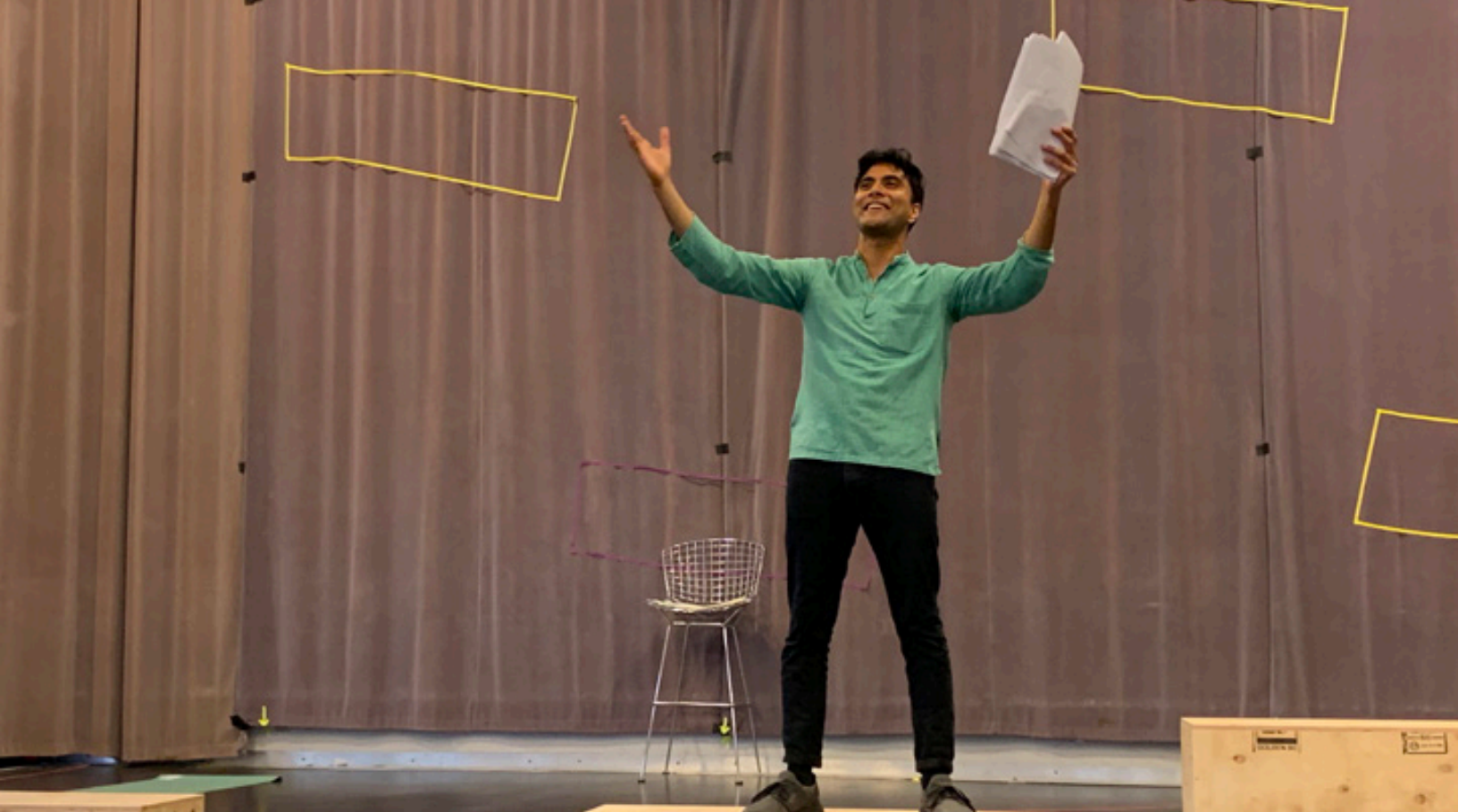
In 2016, Praneet landed his first general audition with Theatre Calgary. “I had no idea what I was doing, but they gave me a chance,” said Praneet. “It was a risky thing to do, but it was tried and tested

for me, I had accumulated the data, I knew I could do this and had seen the reception to it. That’s the engineer in me. And I knew if I failed, I had a backup plan.”

Praneet continued to build up his acting career in Calgary, and joined Front Row Centre Theatre doing community theatre for about one year. He finally got an opportunity to work at Theatre Calgary though, playing the role of Orlando in the 2017 Shakespeare by the Bow production of *As You Like It*. While honing his skills as an actor, Praneet shares the greatest challenge that he still faces is the insecurity of the business.

“We actors in some ways are anxious narcissists. With the volatility and competitiveness of the industry we’re in, especially when there is no job security, we constantly second guess our abilities and look for external validation. I’m sure as I continue down my career path, this will become less of a challenge, but it’s there for me now.”

But Praneet’s hard work and dedication to his craft is paying off and he is now a full-time actor. He plays one of the main characters in the soon-to-be released and highly anticipated Netflix series, *October Faction*, and in *Iceland*, takes his first major role and second appearance on the Theatre Calgary main stage.



PRANEET AKILLA DURING REHEARSALS FOR ICELAND

Praneet shares he is excited for his return to Theatre Calgary, calling it his home theatre because it is where he got his first professional opportunity when playing Dick Wilkins in the 2017 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

"I wanted this role to work with Stafford Arima (Artistic Director) and Jenna Turk (Director, *Iceland*). They are both visionary artists, and it will be my first time working with Jenna as a director which I'm really looking forward to."

"The script is what really drew me to this opportunity. Billion won the Govenor General award for this play and it is an incredibly timely and riveting piece of art that speaks to the problems we have today."

Praneet will also be flexing his acting muscles, performing his first-ever monologue playing what is a divisive character. He shares he

will be drawing upon his personal experiences working as an engineer and tapping into his capitalistic frame of mind that once drove him in his former career.

"I used to be Halim in some ways. I was money-hungry and I thought success equated to money. I also know many people like him more than I want to know," said Praneet. "My character is a very meaty character. It's very easy to make him the villain of the piece because he says what most people won't say out loud. But I can't judge my character, I have to see where he's coming from."

Praneet shares he loves studying and researching human behaviour, and through his own experiences he can come up with a version of Halim based on this and the people he's met in his life.

But he's going deeper into the

character he's building.

"I could have easily become a Halim, and the irony of that is not lost on me. It's easy to play the idea of Halim, the real estate investor, the person all about success and money. But to really prepare, I am trying to find my own voice through Halim."

Praneet knows that this play will provoke many feelings and emotions, but it's not a feeling he wants the audience to feel so much as it is a question he wants to pose.

"How do we evolve past human greed? Greed is instinctual, so how do we move past that? We keep telling the same stories but we never learn." ●

BY HEATHER OLIVER

EXPLORATIONS

TERMS TO KNOW

ATONE

To make amends or reparation.

1 BRAVE NEW WORLD

A dystopian novel by Aldous Huxley. Set in a futuristic World Stage, inhabited by genetically modified citizens that exist in an intelligence-based social hierarchy. The term 'brave new world' is often used to refer to a new and hopeful period in history resulting from major changes in society.

BURSARY

A scholarship to attend a college or university.

CAPITALISM

An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

FREE SPEECH

The right to express any opinions without censorship or restraint.

2 HIBACHI

A portable cooking apparatus consisting of a small grill over a portable heater (usually using lighted coals).

HOUSE FLIPPING

A term used to describe the process of buying, quickly renovating (or rehabbing), and selling properties for a profit.

3 JACK LAYTON

(1950-2011) A Canadian politician and the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) from 2003 to 2011. He previously sat on the Toronto City Council, and occasionally held the title of acting mayor or deputy mayor during his tenure.

4 LIBERTY VILLAGE

Liberty Village is a neighbourhood in Toronto bordered by King Street West, Dufferin Street and the Gardiner Expressway. It has become a trendy neighbourhood for young professionals and artists who are pushing farther west for areas with less gentrification.

MERITOCRACY

Government or the holding of power by people selected on the basis of their ability.

OVER LEVERAGING

A term used to describe a company (or bank) who have taken on too much debt.

PRIVATIZATION

The transfer of a business, industry, or service from public to private ownership and control.

PUNASTAB

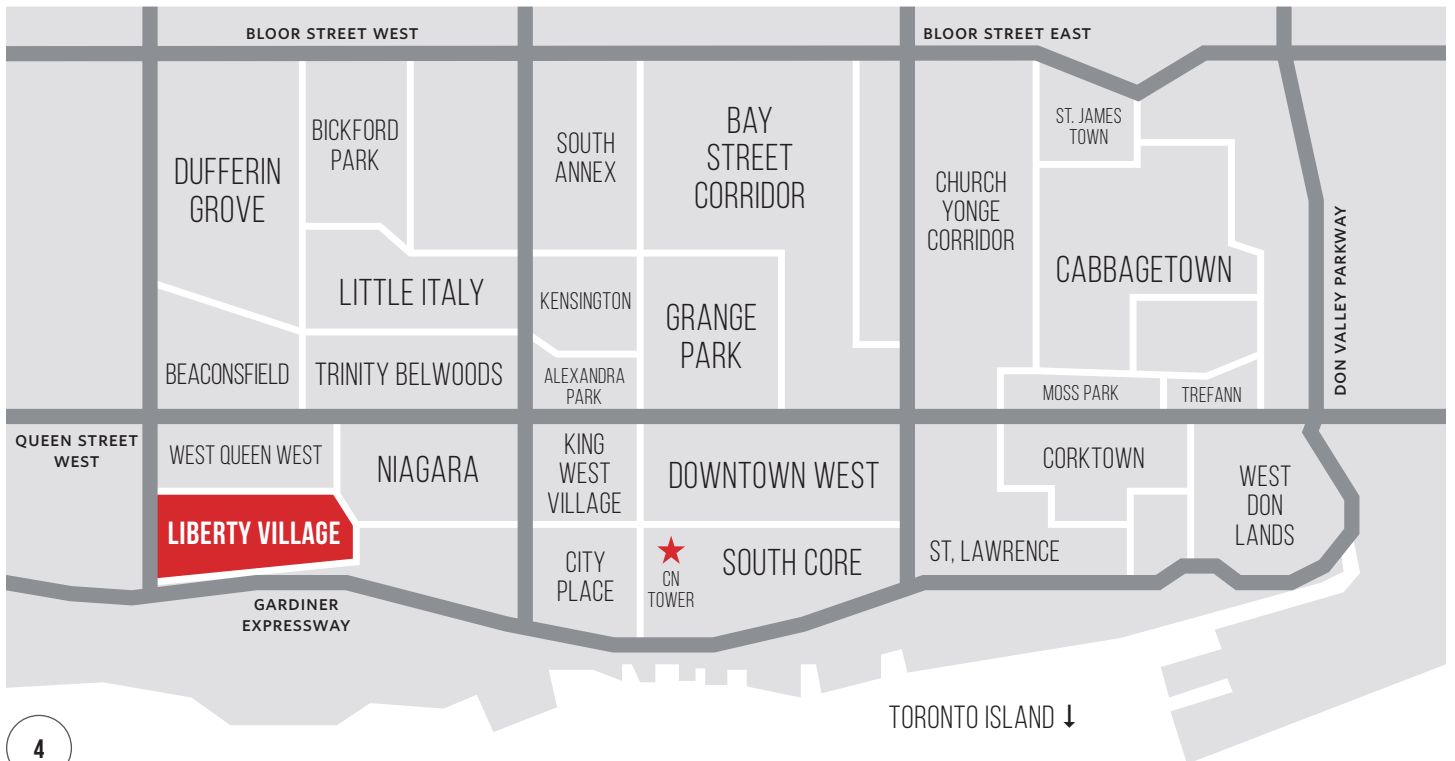
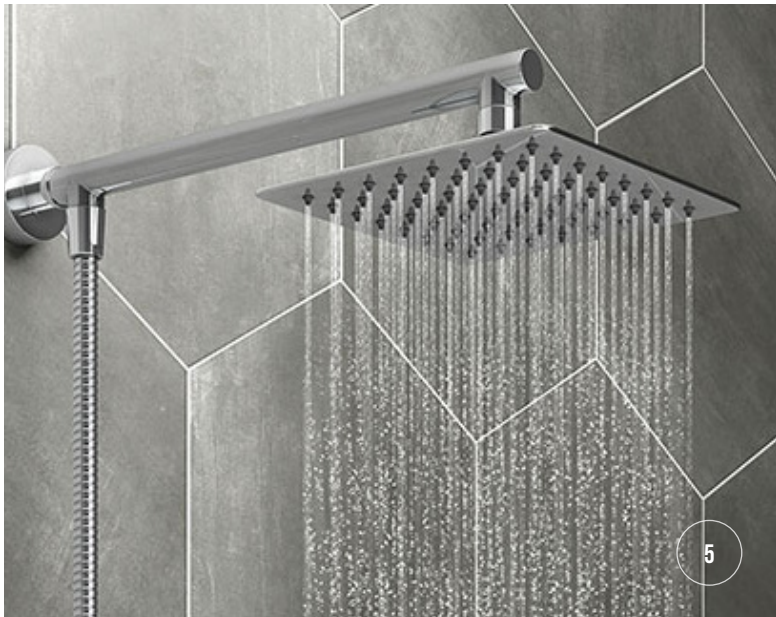
An Estonian word meaning "blushes."

5 RAINFOREST SHOWER

Rainforest showerheads are designed to give the experience of showering in the rain. Usually consisting of a thin square or round disk shaped head with many small holes in which water can flow out steadily and evenly.

SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

A mutually beneficial relationship between different people, groups, or even animals.



EXPLORATIONS

THE 2007-08 CRISIS: A TIMELINE

While its underlying causes are varied and still subject for debate, it is widely acknowledged that the global financial crisis in 2007-2008 was triggered by the surge and collapse of United States housing prices in the 2000s.

ADAPTED FROM THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

**2001-
2004**

In response to a 2001 economic recession, The U.S. Federal Reserve (the country's central banking system) reduces interest rates, making it easier for households to carry larger amounts of debt. This resulted in an increased demand for U.S. housing, and in turn, increased housing prices.

**MID
2000s**

U.S. housing prices start showing many of the signs characteristic of a "bubble." These occur when investors make purchases based on the expectation of being able to sell the asset (in this case, a house) later at a higher price, and not on the qualities of the asset itself.

2006

U.S. housing prices peak and activity in the housing sector slows. The U.S. economy begins to undertake a transition of investment and employment to other sectors.

2007

DECEMBER

The United States falls into recession.

When U.S. housing prices fell, many homeowners found themselves with debts that exceeded the value of their homes and went into default. Financial market liquidity dried up as banks became less willing to make loans.

2008

SEPTEMBER

Lehman Brothers, the fourth-largest U.S. investment bank collapses.

2008

OCTOBER

At first, the Canadian economy was little affected by the U.S. recession. But the U.S. financial crisis led to the collapse of oil prices and other Canadian exports causing the Canadian economy to fall into recession in October.

The Conservative government of Stephen Harper remains in power with an increased minority after the federal election on October 14, 2008.



2008

The recession forces General Motors into bankruptcy. Considered 'too big to fail' before the recession, the risk of a catastrophic collapse of GM's network of suppliers and industries forced the United States and Canadian governments to step in and take an equity stake in GM.

2009

MARCH

The Canadian dollar had depreciated by 20%, to less than U.S. \$0.80. This depreciation encouraged Canadian exports.

2009

MAY

One of the more decisive factors in the recovery from the recession was the strength of the Chinese economy during the crisis. Through the support of recovery in the price of oil and other resources, oil prices rebounded from U.S. \$30 a barrel in December 2008 to U.S. \$60 a barrel in May 2009.

2009

SUMMER

The Canadian economy starts to recover with rebounding business indicators and unemployment rate peaking during the summer.

2010

OCTOBER

Monthly Canadian GDP spending recovers its pre-crisis peak

2011

JANUARY

Canadian employment losses were absorbed.

2011

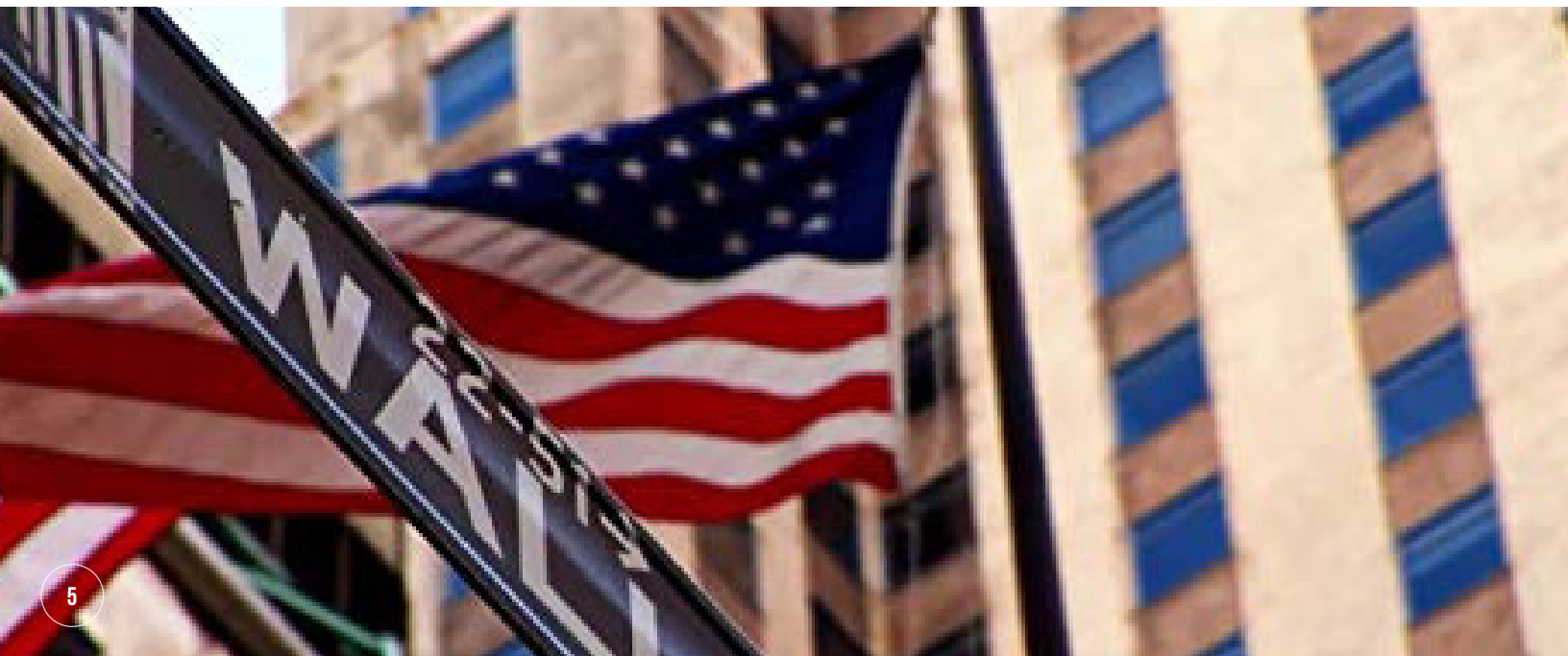
OCTOBER

Recovery was slower in the United States and Europe, and the slow growth of the world economy acted as a drag on Canadian economic growth after 2011. The Bank of Canada and other central banks were forced to maintain their policy interest rates at low levels, as inflation remained weak.

2017

It wasn't until 2017, nearly 10 years after the United States moved into recession, that Canada and the U.S. began to return to pre-crisis monetary policy stances.





CONVERSATIONS

ICELAND MOVIE NIGHT

1 THE BIG SHORT

In 2006-7 a group of investors bet against the US mortgage market. In their research they discover how flawed and corrupt the market is..

STARRING CHRISTIAN BALE, STEVE CARELL, RYAN GOSLING

2015 | Feature Film | 14A | 2h 10m | Director Adam McKay

2 MONEY MONSTER

Financial TV host Lee Gates and his producer Patty are put in an extreme situation when an irate investor takes them and their crew as hostage.

STARRING GEORGE CLOONEY, JULIA ROBERTS, JACK O'CONNELL

2016 | Feature Film | 14A | 1h 38m | Director Jodie Foster

3 HELL OR HIGH WATER

A divorced father and his ex-con older brother resort to a desperate scheme in order to save their family's ranch in West Texas.

STARRING CHRIS PINE, BEN FOSTER, JEFF BRIDGES

2016 | Feature Film | 14A | 1h 42m | Director David Mackenzie

4 AMERICAN PSYCHO

A wealthy New York City investment banking executive, Patrick Bateman, hides his alternate psychopathic ego from his co-workers and friends as he delves deeper into his violent, hedonistic fantasies.

STARRING CHRISTIAN BALE, JUSTIN THEROUX

2000 | Feature Film | R | 1h 41m | Director Mary Harron

5 DIRTY MONEY (TV SERIES)

A Netflix Original Series documenting various stories about exposing the greed, corruption, and crime spreading through the global economy.

2018 | TV Series | NR | 1h episodes

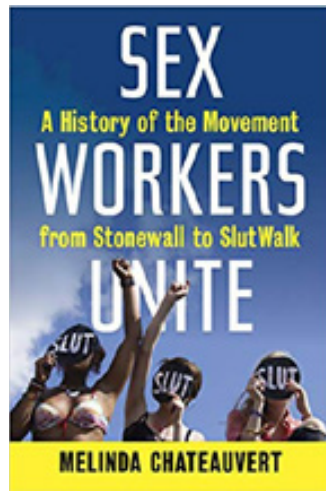
FURTHER READING



RECESSION-PROOF:
HOW TO SURVIVE
AND THRIVE IN AN
ECONOMIC DOWNTURN
BY **JASON SCHENKER**

In *Recession-Proof*, top-ranked economist Jason Schenker presents a series of proactive strategies to help you survive and thrive in the next downturn. He reveals strategies usually reserved for CEOs, central bankers, and ultra high net worth individuals.

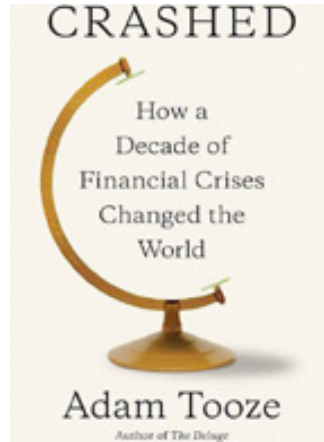
2016
Non-fiction



SEX WORKERS UNITE:
A HISTORY OF THE
MOVEMENT FROM
STONEWALL TO
SLUTWALK
BY **MELINDA CHATEAUVERT**

A provocative history that reveals how sex workers have been at the vanguard of social justice movements for the past fifty years while building a movement of their own that challenges our ideas about labor, sexuality, feminism, and freedom.

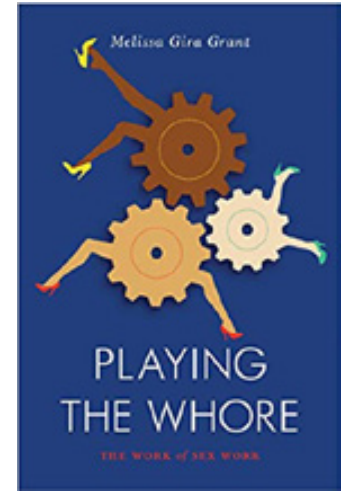
2014
Non-fiction



CRASHED: HOW A
DECADE OF FINANCIAL
CRISIS CHANGED THE
WORLD
BY **ADAM TOOZE**

Looks at the ways that current dramatic shifts in the domestic and global economy have their roots in the 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath - exploring novel themes in the way the crisis has played out for the past decade and will influence the future.

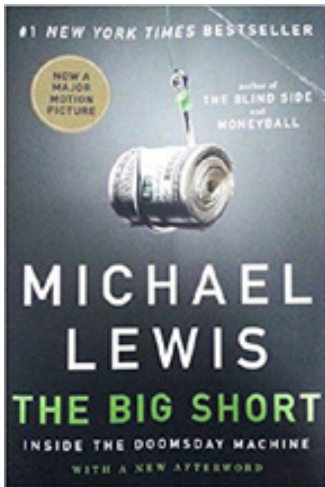
2018
Non-fiction



PLAYING THE WHORE:
THE WORK OF
SEX WORK
BY **MELISSA GIRA GRANT**

In *Playing the Whore*, journalist Melissa Gira Grant turns these pieties on their head, arguing for an overhaul in the way we think about sex work. Based on ten years of writing and reporting on the sex trade, and grounded in her experience as an organizer, advocate, and former sex worker, *Playing the Whore* dismantles pervasive myths about sex work, criticizes both conditions within the sex industry and its criminalization, and argues that separating sex work from the "legitimate" economy only harms those who perform sexual labor.

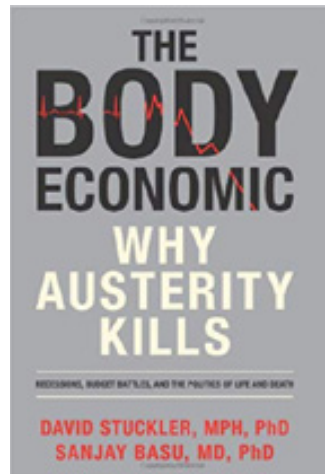
2014
Non-fiction



THE BIG SHORT:
INSIDE THE
DOOMSDAY MACHINE
BY **MICHAEL LEWIS**

The real story of the crash began in bizarre feeder markets where the sun doesn't shine and the SEC doesn't dare, or bother, to tread: the bond and real estate derivative markets where geeks invent impenetrable securities to profit from the misery of lower--and middle--class Americans who can't pay their debts. The smart people who understood what was or might be happening were paralyzed by hope and fear; in any case, they weren't talking.

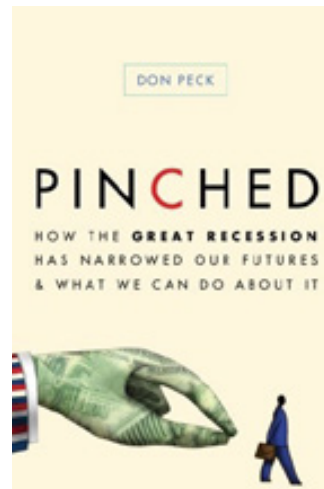
2011
Non-fiction



THE BODY ECONOMIC:
RECESSIONS,
BUDGET BATTLES,
AND THE POLITICS
OF LIFE AND DEATH
BY **DAVID STUCKLER**

In *The Body Economic*, Dr. David Stuckler and Dr. Sanjay Basu provide hard evidence to reveal the tragic human toll of the ongoing recession worldwide. From a rise in alcoholism in the UK to scores of suicides in California to HIV outbreaks and abandoned children in Greece, the book tells the stories of people who were not bailed out and who are now bearing the brunt of the 2007 stock-market crash.

2012
Non-fiction



PINCHED:
HOW THE GREAT
RECESSION HAS
NARROWED OUR
FUTURES AND WHAT
WE CAN DO ABOUT IT
BY **DON PECK**

Based on an article Peck wrote for "The Atlantic, *Pinched*" uses a mix of history, news, reported vignettes, data, new academic findings, and cultural commentary to paint a devastating portrait of what American life will look like in the long aftermath of the Great Recession.

2011
Non-fiction