



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release — Thursday, May 12, 2022

Play Right Prize winner, Avery Raine, delves into the fascinating life of Albert Einstein's first wife Mileva Marić

Psychology and dramatic arts student Avery Raine is the winner of the 2022 Play Right Prize competition. Raine's play, *Relativity, Etc.*, is an imagined rendition of the life of one of the true icons of the 20th century.

Raine was honoured along with second and third-place winners Carter Debusschere and Achilles Friesen. Since 2008, Terry Whitehead (BA '94) has been inspiring future playwrights through the Play Right Prize, awarding \$2,500 annually to student playwrights and highlighting the winning entries at a public play reading.

For the winning script, Raine focuses on Albert Einstein's first wife, Mileva Marić. She explores the tangled family dynamics of their sons, Hans and Eduard, and ruminates on the life that could have been for their daughter Lieserl, as she is suspected to have died of scarlet fever before the age of two.



"I looked more into Mileva's life, and originally, it was just going to be about her. I wasn't going to focus on their kids as much, but there was so much there," says Raine. "I'm very interested in Canadian feminist theatre, so that was a big part of wanting to tell Mileva's story. I want it to be about her, but as it went on, it became about her and her children."

Raine's submission was praised by the jurors of the prize for its excellent composition, its lyrical take on ancestry and legacy and its unique perspective on mental health. This is Raine's second win in the competition, having received the third-place prize in 2021. Raine receives \$1,500 for her win this year and dramaturgical support to develop her script further. A reading of her play will take place at ULethbridge in the fall.

Winning second prize is dramatic arts student Carter Debusschere for his submission, *Pressure Drop*. Loosely based on a real-life air crash, Debusschere's play uses an

imaginatively crafted structure to tell a compelling story in a theatrically mature and innovative way. He utilizes an expressionist style that puts readers in the mind of the plane operator, who faces their demons while in the air.

“The main dramatic convention is that the play works through memories,” says Debusschere. “Essentially, in these final moments of consciousness as the plane is going down, the lead character is able to go back to any specific memory in his past and relive it as if he was there.”

“I was very surprised, pleased and honoured to have won. Two very close friends of mine are the first and third place winners, so getting to share this honour with them has been very gratifying,” he adds.

The jurors had especially high praise for the way the high stakes plot line engages the audience from the intriguing beginning to the shocking conclusion. Debusschere receives \$750 for his submission and will also receive dramaturgical support from a member of the adjudicating jury.

The third prize goes to Achilles Friesen, a dramatic arts student minoring in philosophy. Their philosophy background shines within their play, *So Long*, which explores three young lost souls and the limbo-like state they find themselves in, tackling existential questions related to death, mortality and the afterlife.

For Friesen, they based the characters off of themselves during a time of significant change in their life, highlighting the importance of genderqueer characters in play writing.

“On top of educating people about philosophy and what it looks like in an artistic realm, it's also important to bring in all the genderqueer students and show them that there's roles for them here,” says Friesen. “I'm making sure I have that genderqueer element in everything I do. I feel like a lot of people have very similar struggles that these three characters have.”

The jury notes that Friesen's characters, reminiscent of Pirandello and Camus, are carefully crafted to challenge these existential questions with a philosophical punch that will keep viewers thinking long after the ending. Friesen receives \$250 for their play and dramaturgical support from the jury.

“We're so grateful to Terry Whitehead for his longstanding support of playwriting at the University of Lethbridge, and every year we continue to celebrate the outstanding work of our students,” says Dr. Shelley Scott, interim dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts. “Many past winners have gone on to continuing careers in theatre, and this award is a real incentive and encouragement to keep working on their creative craft.”

The 2021 prize went to dramatic arts student Jessica Syrratt, who presented her play at a virtual reading last year.

The 2022 Play Right Prize jury is made up of Drama Faculty members Dr. Shelley Scott and Dave Smith, as well as Trevor Rueger from Alberta Playwright's Network, who will coordinate dramaturgical support for the second and third place winners.

Read more about the winners and their scripts here:
<https://stories.ulethbridge.ca/2022-play-right-prize/>.

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/play-right-prize-winner-avery-raine-delves-fascinating-life-albert-einstein%E2%80%99s-first-wife>

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca
@ULEthbridgeNews