

# MOTHER'S DAY

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# The art of parenting

Local author offers down-to-earth advice



ROB AMYOT / THE SUBURBAN

"It's about what I've done right but also what I've done wrong," says author Ariane Weathers.

By Nelson Afonso  
The Suburban

One of the great writing adages is write what you know. In her second book, *Sweet Pea in the Pumpkin Patch: an adventure in parenting*, mother of one and independent publisher Ariane Weathers takes readers into the entertaining and unpredictable world of child rearing.

Released last month through her own April Dew Publishing, *Sweet Pea* recounts some of the hard choices Weathers had to make as a parent, and the thought process behind them, as well as giving examples of the good and the bad decisions she made along the way.

"It covers my philosophy [on parenting] and what I've observed in 30-some years," the 54-year-old author explained. "It's about what I've done right but also what I've done wrong."

"When raising a child, I believe it's wise to listen to some advice, use some common sense, and go with what works for you."

With Mother's Day only a few days away, readers are also treated to a heart-warming story about a field trip to talk to animals and another one of mother and son camping in their car after a concert. The adventure that is parenting, she said, is at times trying, but definitely and

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# A true story of hunger

## Shyam Selvadurai releases new novel

By Walter J. Lyng  
The Suburban

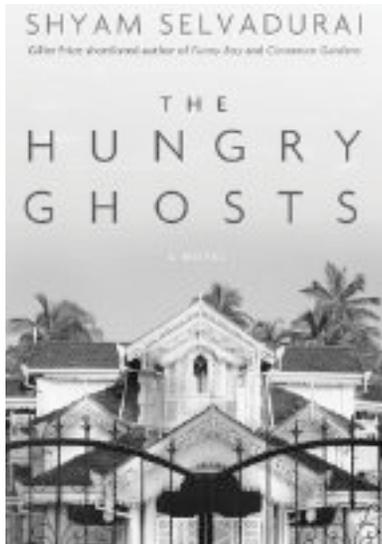
After a 13-year break in between novels, author Shyam Selvadurai has recently released his latest effort: *The Hungry Ghosts*. The book's title is a reference to Buddhist mythology, which suggests that the dead may be reborn as "hungry ghosts" if they have desired too much during their lives. While Selvadurai may not be doomed to such a ghastly fate himself, he has certainly hungered for the kind of acceptance sought after by the novel's protagonist, Shivan Rassiah. "It's an autobiography of time and place and feeling, but not an autobiography of character or plot," says Selvadurai.

The *Hungry Ghosts* opens with Shivan preparing to travel back to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to rescue his elderly and ailing grandmother, and bring her to Toronto to live out her final days. Framed as a strong matriarch, Selvadurai says the character was drawn on similar women from his youth.

"We had lots of grandmothers like that," he says. "They were strong women who brought a more robust notion of womanhood with them."

Much of the novel hinges on the conflict between grandson and grandmother, based in large part around the grandson's homosexuality. Shivan's story of integrating himself into Toronto's gay community is very close to Selvadurai's own experience.

"His arrival in Canada was very similar to how I felt, his alienation in the gay community was what I felt," he says. "The difficulty of going back was something that I did experience, as well as most people do who come from a place like Sri Lanka. Those feelings were real."



"I do understand that, for many readers, this is their first and, perhaps, only experience of understanding Sri Lanka," says author Shyam Selvadurai of his novel, *The Hungry Ghosts*.

"Just coming out and negotiating the gay community is hard enough. Then, there's the fact that you desperately want to belong. You feel invisible in the community. There is a hierarchy of beauty that is also based on race."

Winning the Books in Canada First Novel Award for his 1994 novel *Funny Boy*, and receiving further acclaim for his 1998 release *Cinnamon Gardens*, Selvadurai says his previous successes helped to motivate him when it came to writing *Ghosts*.

"The pressure is always there, but it's a different kind of pressure by your third book," he says. "With every book, you're trying to achieve something you haven't before. This novel comes with its own hurdles and challenges."

Although Selvadurai is in the seemingly ideal position to act as the voice of a community, he rejects the notion that this should be the responsibility of authors.

"I don't think writers should be doing that," he says. "It's not our role. I do understand that, for many readers, this is their first and, perhaps, only experience of understanding Sri Lanka. It's a kind of balancing act."

said to him, 'You're not the only child who did these things so don't be embarrassed about it,'" she said with a laugh, adding that today he is proud of his mother's literary effort.

Weathers said her book is for everyone, not just expecting mothers looking for some reading material before baby arrives. "Of course it's for first-time parents but also for all parents, regardless of their child's age. The book covers from childbirth to when they leave home, and every adventure in between."

Parenting isn't easy concludes the author, but parents need to trust their instincts when dealing with children that are being difficult.

Regardless of what the child has done, added Weathers: "Take a breather. Think before you give any discipline and always follow through."

### THE NUMBER 14

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consists of Chris Adams, Morgan Brayton, Stefano Giulianetti, Neil Minor, Tracey Power (until May 12), Sarah Rodgers (starting May 21), and Scott Walters. Altogether, they portray an impressively diverse array of 60 characters.

In the tradition of the Commedia dell'Arte, *The Number 14* makes use of masks in order to transform the performers into caricature versions of the typical assortment of people who would be spotted on the bus or train. Designed by Melody Anderson, the masks may seem familiar to anyone who saw the comedic production of *Don Quixote* at the Centaur in 2010. Used effectively in both productions, the masks often help to drive home the broad physical comedy at the heart of these plays.

The physical comedy itself ranges from slapstick to technically impressive.

The play jumps from a real-estate broker floundering about on a seat as she tries to simultaneously dress herself and negotiate a house sale to an "old woman" turned forcefully into a Cirque du Soleil prospect thanks to a reckless driver and his lead foot.

While some sketches feature extended passages of dialogue, there are few dated references and some updates have obviously been added which are themselves humorous. In one instance, a shrill young man holds up an obsolete Sony Walkman, bragging that it's a new iPhone 5 his dad got him, except that "it's bigger and plays tapes."

This two-hour dose of silliness is a nice way to wrap up a season that has seen its fair share of drama. Suffice it to say, if you've ever been dismayed by any display of bizarre behaviour on public transportation, you're likely to get on board with *The Number 14*.

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undeniably enlightening.

What makes *Sweet Pea* different from other parenting books, says Weathers, is that rather than using theories based on studies or rehashing statistics she wrote about what she knew.

"Several of my friends, as well as people that I met, kept asking me what I was doing right and for general advice," added the Pointe Claire resident. "A few years ago a friend of mine became a mom and she asked me the same questions. I just thought I should put all of this into a book."

Now 27, Weathers' son was initially hesitant about seeing his name in the book.

"At first he said he didn't want anyone to know he did this or that [as a kid], but I

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