

Timothy Findley



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[Timothy Findley](#) was born in Toronto in 1930 and died in 2002. Oddly enough, he too had a connection to Mazo de la Roche (See posts [Nov 2](#) and [19](#).) In 1972, he and two others adapted her *Jalna* novels for television, producing a series called [The Whiteoaks of Jalna](#). The films won an ACTRA award.

Findley began his career as an actor. He joined the Stratford Festival in 1953, met Alec Guinness and went to England to study drama. In London, he attended the Central School of Speech and Drama, where he met and worked with [Thornton Wilder](#) and [Ruth Gordon](#).

After Findley won a short story contest, Gordon challenged him to write, and he did. He published his first novel in 1967. Rejected by Canadian publishers, this and his next novel came out in England. It was ten years later that [The Wars](#) (1977) placed Findley firmly on the literary map of Canada, winning him the Governor General's Award. One scene I find unforgettable portrays the mother of protagonist Robert Ross unable to step into the church, knowing her son is off to war. The power of the prose strikes the reader like a physical blow.

Findley also had a humorous side. One of his funny stories describes how as a child, he came downstairs and heard his mother tell his father, "The King is going to marry Mrs. Simpson." "Why?" asked young Timothy, thinking they were speaking of the unprepossessing family housekeeper, also called Mrs. Simpson.

His affinity to the theatre remained strong, and Findley published many plays, the most famous of which is *Elizabeth Rex*. This gender-bending and Shakespeare-tweaking piece of theatre was first produced in Stratford, Ontario in 2000. Here in Vancouver I had a good seat at an early Arts Club Theatre production at the Stanley. More recently it was staged in New York in [2008](#), and Detroit in [2011](#). It is currently running at the [Chicago Shakespeare Theatre](#).

That night at [The Stanley](#), I was pleased to see Timothy Findley and his partner in attendance. Not long afterward, he died, in spite of having earlier quipped that he couldn't die, because there were so many books he had yet to write. Still, Timothy Irving Frederick Findley, or TIFF, the man [The Guardian](#) obituary called "popular and beloved," managed to write many, and they were enough.