

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Riverbend Publishing of Helena and the Sterry family of Hingham are pleased to announce that the 2015 Meadowlark Award for women writers has been won by Beth Hunter McHugh of Hamilton for her novel, “The Actor.”

McHugh, 31, was raised in Helena and is a graduate of the University of Montana where she earned an M.F.A in Creative Writing. McHugh’s fiction has appeared in literary magazines, but “The Actor” will be her first book.

“I am incredibly humbled and honored to accept this award,” McHugh said. “I’ve been working on this book for a long time; it’s a story close to my heart, and it feels right that it should be represented by a Montana publisher.”

“Her novel is captivating,” said Riverbend publisher Chris Cauble. “We had nearly fifty entries, including several top contenders that may yet become books, but Beth’s quality of writing, her strong characters, and her novel’s narrative force were clearly superior.”

“The Actor” will be published by Riverbend Publishing in September. The award also provides a \$1,000 cash prize.

The Meadowlark Award is named for the best-selling book “When the Meadowlark Sings,” by Nedra Sterry. Written when Sterry was 82 years old, “Meadowlark” is a memoir of growing up along Montana’s Hi-Line. Before her death in 2013, Sterry established the award with an endowment from her book royalties. Her goal was to encourage women writers. The endowment is administered by the Montana State University-Northern Foundation.

More information about the award is available at [www.riverbendpublishing.com](http://www.riverbendpublishing.com).

## *Synopsis of The Actor*

By Beth Hunter McHugh

Publication date September 2015

In the summer of 1967, life seems almost dangerously idyllic to fifteen-year-old Grace Birch and her ten-year-old sister Franny. Their mother is Nora, a beautiful and educated woman who writes haunted love poems when she isn't working as a law professor at the local university. Their father is David, an actor turned drama professor. As the children of independent, bohemian parents, Grace and Franny spend their days entertaining themselves and their evenings observing the delicate dance that is their parents' relationship. David's dedication to his craft makes him magnetic to his students, but challenges his devotion to his two young daughters and his wife.

When Ivan, a young actor, comes to stay with the family, Nora and David's relationship faces its greatest test. David falls in love with Ivan, and Grace and Franny realize that their parents' relationship holds an ancient and long-buried secret. Eventually, David leaves his family to follow Ivan to New York, and Nora moves with her young daughters to a run-down farm house on the outskirts of town. There, Grace and Franny befriend Susan, the daughter of Jack Leroy, a man with close but mysterious ties to their mother's past. In the new home, Grace and Franny work to slowly reconcile their past life with their present as they grapple with their own adolescence and a mother who is slowly reinventing herself.

*The Actor* examines the divide between secrecy and truth and what it means to grow up on such a precipice.

## *Biography*

BETH HUNTER McHUGH

McHugh, 31, was raised in Helena, Montana, and is a graduate of the University of Montana where she earned a B.A. in English (2006), an M.F.A in Creative Writing (2009), and an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction (2015). She taught writing at Bitterroot College and currently teaches English at Hamilton High School. Her work has appeared in literary magazines, including *Orange Quarterly* and *Writing Tomorrow*. She lives in Hamilton, Montana.

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