

History of The Wrong Son

By Allen Cole
Playwright and Composer

The first draft of the libretto of *The Wrong Son* was written in a beautiful cabin on the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia in the summer of 1990. Throughout the creation of this piece, narrative and lyric has come before composition of music. In the fall of 1990, I travelled to Paris, where the first draft of the music for Act 1 was composed.

When I returned to Toronto in 1991, Tapestry Music Theatre decided to commission the completion of *The Wrong Son*.

Over the next two years I worked with Wayne Strongman and Banuta Rubess as dramaturges. This period culminated in a workshop of the first act through Tapestry in 1994.

Peter Hinton became interested on behalf of Canadian Stage at this point, and the decision was made to shift gears dramaturgically to working with Peter. This was a crucial move in the development of *The Wrong Son*, as Peter's affinity with the piece, his insight both formally and thematically, have been invaluable to the process.

In 1995 I produced an independent workshop in Toronto. This workshop culminated in a performance of the whole musical, fully orchestrated. Many of the actors I now see as central to the production were first involved in this workshop. (Holly Cole, Ted Dykstra, Frank Moore, John Millard, Randi Helmers, Martin Julien).

At this point in its development, *The Wrong Son* was essentially a traditional book musical, with a few experimental sections that extended the form to a more through-composed work. It became clear to Peter and I that these through-composed sections were the most original and dramatically effective parts of the play. So I set about taking almost all of the dialogue and setting it to music, using a kind of jazz groove film noir recitative. This was the last big piece of the puzzle that completed the journey of the writing of *The Wrong Son*.

In 1997, Peter produced a workshop of *The Wrong Son* at Playwright's Theatre Centre in Vancouver.

This National Arts Centre production of *The Wrong Son* is the world premiere.