

Mary's Wedding

by Stephen Massicotte

Study Guide

**THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES
2002-2003 SEASON**

**Marti Maraden
Artistic Director, English Theatre**

This Study Guide was written and researched by **Jim McNabb** for the National Arts Centre English Theatre, September, 2002.

This document may be used for educational purposes only.

Teachers' Guide

The events in *Mary's Wedding* take place in a dream experienced by Mary the night before her wedding. This has been a recurring dream in which Mary relives meeting her beloved Charlie, falling in love, receiving his letters from the trenches of World War I and imagining his life there as he experiences the horrors of battle. The Romantic view of war left over from the Nineteen Century did not prepare the soldiers or those left at home for the reality of modern warfare – the machine guns, the deadly mustard gas attacks, the filth and disease of the trenches and the mutilated bodies of fallen comrades.

The fact that this is a dream allows the play to take on a strange quality in which times intermingle, locations blend together, and scenes of great clarity and reality are juxtaposed with scenes of surreal ambiguity. The NAC production enhances this very appealing story of two young people in love by adding the magical touches of lighting and sound; a unit set which symbolizes, in a way, the destruction of their world; and the imaginations of the actors that allow them to transform from one character into another within the space of a breath. Characters can speak directly to the audience, can speak to each other even though an ocean divides them and can vividly see in their imagination the unspeakable events of “the war to end all wars”.

In order to prepare a young audience for this play it is important for them to understand the world of Canadian teenagers in the second decade of the Twentieth Century and to know something of the events and terrible results of the Great War of 1914-1918. Since the style of the script and production is quite different from that of most movies or television shows it is also important to make them aware of styles other than the realism normally seen by today's audiences. Finally, acting activities to free the students to imagine what it would be like to be inside a dream or a war or waiting for a friend to return from danger might help them relate more closely to the experiences of the characters in the play.

In this package you will find some resources on the production and the era and some suggested activities which hopefully will help your students enjoy the play more completely.

About This Guide

This study guide is formatted in easy-to-photocopy individual sections. They may be used separately or in whatever combination works best for your class. Here is an outline of the contents of each section with suggestions on how it may be used.

The Section Titled

Activities for Intermediate Students – classroom activities for Drama or English classes, levels 7 – 10.

Activities for Senior Students – classroom activities for Drama or English classes, levels 11 – OAC.

Plot Synopsis – a basic story outline and comments on style of production.

Who Helped Put the Show Together – list of cast and heads of production, plus costume design sketches.

Marti Maraden, Director – bio and interview - Marti talks about why the play is relevant, about the style of the production, and of her future plans for NAC English Theatre.

Biographies – brief bios of the playwright, set/costume designer, and actors condensed from interviews.

Photo of Model of the Set – resource sheet.

Theatre Etiquette – Tips on accepted theatre behaviour

Poems by Alfred Lord Tennyson – 2 poems quoted in *Mary's Wedding* which infuse the attitudes of the characters.

Poems by Poets of the Great War – poems by McCrae, Owen, and Sassoon.

Movie Reviews – Comments on movies set during World War I.

World War I – A Brief Chronology – time-line of events leading to war as well as some of the battles.

Heads of State – picture page of those in power in 1914

Propaganda – resource page offering a sampling of posters and cards from the era.

May Be Used For

Aid teacher with pre- and post-performance ideas.

Aid teacher with pre- and post-performance ideas.

Prepare students for theatrical style of plot and design.

Aid students in writing reviews.

Inform students on background of the play and the NAC.

Give students insight into training and background.

Help students appreciate style.

To be shared with the students.

Help students gain insight into the minds of the characters.

Help senior students appreciate the reality of war.

Suggested video viewing.

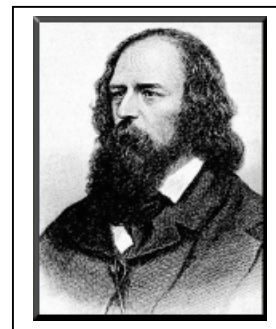
Help students place events of the play into context.

Help students recognize names mentioned in the play.

Fill in atmosphere of the times.

Pre-show Activities to Prepare Intermediate Students for *Mary's Wedding*

1. Distribute copies of the poems "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and "The Lady of Shalott" by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) provided herein. Portions of these poems are quoted by Mary and Charlie in the play. Tennyson was a remarkably popular poet during the Victorian era and his poetry would have been studied and memorized by Canadian school children as early as Grades 2, 3 or 4. Discuss with the students how these poems reflect the Romantic view of the glory of war and of dying of a broken heart. The charge of the Light Brigade Cavalry during the Crimean War of 1853-56 is reflected in Charlie's heroic but futile charge as a member of the Canadian Cavalry against the German machine guns.



Alfred Lord Tennyson

2. A Creative Drama Exercise: "**The Surreal Dream**" - The students are to think of a bad dream they have had, maybe a recurring nightmare. If they can't remember such a dream they could think of a surreal scene in a movie where reality is not adhered to, where bizarre things happen and perhaps time and location are distorted. They should be formed into groups of five or six and each member of the team relates the full story of his or her dream or episode paying attention to details and good storytelling techniques. The group then chooses one of these on which to work. Be sure that the person who had the dream does not play his or her own part. The piece should have a structure (beginning, middle and end), variety of levels, strong focus, interesting pacing, and a strong attempt at creating the surreal nature of the episode. Members of the team may play animate or inanimate beings, may transform themselves, create sounds or not. Particular attention should be paid to conveying the atmosphere of a dream. If there is easy access to props, levels, lights, or music, these may be used as needed, but consideration should be paid to why they are used and how they affect the work.

3. Another Creative Drama exercise: "**The Fantasy Dream**" - Each student thinks of a fantasy situation that he or she has had, such as surfing in Hawaii, floating like an eagle feather and so on. They are to focus on the feeling created by the fantasy more than the actual situation, i.e. the elation of winning, the energy of a conflict, etc. With the students formed into teams of about six, they share the fantasies and describe the resulting feelings. After all members of the group explore physicalizing each situation, they should attempt to physicalize the resulting abstract feelings. When all the situations have been worked on, the group should place them into a sequence so that by using transitions they can portray in movement the situations and/or feelings from beginning to end. For example, one or two might perform a fantasy while the remainder provides atmosphere by portraying the abstract feeling involved. Rehearse the sequence paying attention to variety in movement and pacing which progresses the piece towards a satisfying conclusion.

4. Distribute copies of the *Mary's Wedding* plot synopsis and brief history of World War I section of this Guide. Discuss with the students if anyone in the class had ancestors who fought in that war or perhaps the Second World War on either side. Did any of their ancestors emigrate from countries where war or political unrest devastated their lives? What would it mean to be involved in life-threatening situations? What would it be like to be the relative or sweetheart of a modern rescue worker who risks his or her life to save others? Perhaps the students could imagine they are on a peace-keeping mission abroad and write a letter home expressing their feelings.

5. If time permits have the class view one of the movies listed in the **Mini Reviews of Movies Involving WWI** section of this Study Guide dealing with World War I. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is highly recommended for older intermediate students.

continued...

6. Another Creative Drama exercise:

“**Dangerous Rescue**” – Using chairs, blocks, tables and other articles found in the Drama room, create a complicated obstacle course. Working in pairs the students must help each other to traverse the room from one end to the other without touching any of the obstacles or making any sounds. One of the pair must be blindfolded and the other must pretend that they have only one leg. Imagine that the class is a group of injured soldiers trying to return from ‘No Man’s Land’ at night. Dim lighting and sound effects of distant battle could increase the atmosphere and believability of the situation. The teacher is to listen for any sounds and flicker the room lights if something is heard. The students are to imagine that this signals the enemy to scan the area with search-lights and shoot anything that appears alive. If one of a pair is shot others may wish to come to the aid of the disabled partner. See how many of the class are able to reach the safety of the other side.

7. Show the students the photograph of the set for *Mary’s Wedding* and discuss the style of the design. Keeping in mind that the play is a dream and has many locations such as a pasture field in Alberta, an old barn, a tea party, a troop ship crossing the Atlantic, the trenches of France, and a cavalry charge on enemy lines, ask the students to imagine how the actors might move around the stage to give the audience the impression of where we are at any given time. The students might be interested in the brief bio of designer Christina Poddubiuk included herein.

8. To demonstrate their understanding of the function of all aspects of a production in passing a message on to an audience you may wish to assign a written project to be completed after viewing the play. This could take the form of a review to describe and evaluate the acting, set, costumes, lighting, sound, etc. of the production and how they were coordinated to achieve an overall effect. With this in mind you might like to encourage the students to make detailed observation notes on all of the aspects immediately after viewing the production. For instance, they should note three ways that the actress portraying Mary physicalized her character; two techniques she used to transform into another character; five detailed ways of describing the set; six different sound effects; four different lighting effects; and so forth.

9. Students may enjoy reading the bios of the two young actors in *Mary’s Wedding* included herein.

10. Discuss with the class the accepted Theatre Etiquette (included herein) that enables all members of the audience to fully enjoy the show.

Post-show Activities for Intermediate Students

1. Discuss and share the observations made by the students about the various aspects of the production and ask them how each part helped to tell the story and achieve a final feeling and effect. Their written review can use all the shared observations and discussion points. They should finish by expressing how the play made them feel and what they learned about life at that time and about how a play is put onto a stage.

2. Students may enjoy creating improvised scenes based on different parts of the play. What scenes do you suppose the playwright Stephen Massicotte experimented with but decided not to use?

**Pre-show Activities to Prepare Senior Students for
*Mary's Wedding***

1. Refer to the activities found in the section for **Intermediate Students** for some ideas that may also be used at the Senior level.
2. Give students copies of both of the Tennyson poems and those of the Post-War poets provided herein. Have them discuss the obvious differences between the Romantic style of Tennyson which inspired Charlie and Mary and the more realistic and brutal approach of the poets who actually endured fighting in the trenches. Compare the imagery used to create specific feelings in the reader.
3. Give the students copies of the section on **Styles in Theatre** which outlines the characteristics of each. Discuss when each style would be appropriate in a production. Have them read the comments by Marti Maraden, the director, as well as those of the designer, Christina Poddubiuk, on the style used in *Mary's Wedding*. Let them examine the photo of the model of the set. After the show they might discuss whether the choices made by the director and designer were effective.
4. If time permits, rent the video of the 1930 movie *All Quiet on the Western Front* and have them view some of the scenes of battle. Other movies in the **Mini Reviews of Movies Involving WWI** section of this Study Guide might be recommended for home viewing.
5. Encourage them to make notes about the writing, acting and the various aspects of the production immediately after viewing the play with the view of writing a review afterwards.
6. Review **Theatre Etiquette** so that all members of the audience are better able to enjoy the performance.

Post-show Activities for Senior Students

Allow time for class discussion on the observations made during the show and the feelings the play brought out. Rereading the poems distributed earlier might again be interesting. Writing a review of the play should help each student solidify his/her views and observations.

Mary's Wedding *Plot Synopsis*

The events of *Mary's Wedding* take place as a dream the night before Mary Chambers is to be married. In this surreal dreamland, during a thunderstorm, we experience Mary's first meeting with Charlie Edwards, a handsome young farmer and horseman living in Alberta. As their romance develops and Mary's mother's opposition to their friendship builds, the clouds of war darken over Europe. Charlie is caught up by his patriotic duty to enlist in the Canadian militia and, against Mary's wishes, joins up to fight overseas against the Germans. The Great War of 1914-1918 unfolds as Charlie travels on a troop ship to England for training in the cavalry, then on to the fearful trenches of France. His letters home describe the horrifying situations that the brave men must undergo. He writes of his friendship with his troop leader Sergeant Flowerdew a.k.a. "Flowers" so vividly that Mary comes to know him thoroughly and can even take on his role in her dream. Mary is also able to relive the dreadful cavalry charge in the Battle of Moreuil Wood as the War nears its end and Flowers wins his medal – the Victoria Cross for extreme bravery. Mary now waits to wake up on the morning of her wedding having somehow come to terms with the events of the war that also changed her life.



“Vin

The **style** by which the play *Mary's Wedding* is presented is one which hopefully will enhance the concept that this is a dream – Mary's dream – on the night before her wedding. In the writing, Stephen Massicotte, ignores chronological time sequences, blends events in different locations together, and has his characters speak directly to the audience at times. As in a dream some scenes are very real while others take on a bizarre other-worldly quality, and senses are sometimes overwhelmed by the barrage of sounds or lights. Mary even takes on the role of Charlie's friend, Sergeant Flowers. The set also creates a surreal environment – a series of platforms that resemble the collapsed walls of a barn. There is enough ambiguity in these levels that we can imagine that we are at times in the trenches or on the Canadian prairies. The backdrop is a group of three enormous screens on which images of the sky or barbed wire can be projected. The soundscape of ambiguous sounds of wind or incoming missiles, of thunder or artillery fire helps to immerse us in Mary's dream with her.

Mary's Wedding

National Arts Centre English Theatre production
October 17-November 02, 2002

Who Helped to Put the Production Together?

Playwright: Stephen Massicotte

Director: Marti Maraden

The Actors:

Charlie: Stephen Holmes

Mary: Jenny Young

Set and Costume Design: Christina Poddubiuk

Lighting Design: John (Jock) Munro

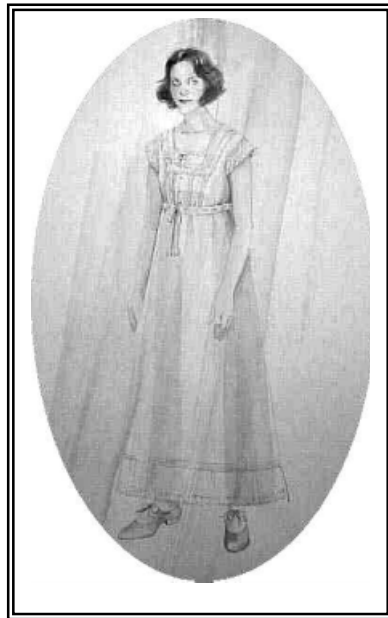
Sound Design: Peter McBoyle

Assistant to the Director: Natalie Joy Quesnel

Stage Manager: Rebecca Miller

Assistant Stage Manager: Tobi Hunt

Apprentice Stage Manager: Jaime-Rose De Pippo



Design for Mary's Costume



Design for Charlie's Costume

Designs by Christina Poddubiuk

**Marti Maraden - Director of *Mary's Wedding*
Artistic Director, National Arts Centre English Theatre**



Marti Maraden, one of Canada's foremost stage directors, was appointed Artistic Director of the National Arts Centre (NAC) English Theatre in September 1997.

Ms. Maraden began her directing career in 1985 in Toronto, co-directing with Eric Steiner at Equity Showcase Theatre (Toronto). Since then she has directed extensively for major theatres across the country and in the U.S., including the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, The Canadian Stage Company (Toronto), the Manitoba Theatre Centre (Winnipeg), The Grand Theatre (London), and The Children's Theatre of Minneapolis, as well as the NAC. As an actor, Ms. Maraden spent six seasons at the Stratford Festival and seven at the Shaw Festival, and has appeared at major theatres across Canada and the United States.

Ms. Maraden has in the past been an Associate Director of the Stratford Festival Theatre, Director of the Stratford Festival Young Company, and President of the Board of Equity Showcase Theatre, and has served on the board of The Canadian Stage Company.

An Interview with Marti Maraden

Jim McNabb – Why did you choose *Mary's Wedding* for inclusion in this English Theatre season?

Marti Maraden – I was looking for a new Canadian play that was very special. I read quite a few very good ones but when I read *Mary's Wedding* it went from the page straight into me. It's a beautiful play that has a lot to say but doesn't preach at you. It makes you laugh, it makes you cry, it's so charming, it's a great love story of two young people, it makes you care about them and it makes you question what war is about but without ever telling you that.

JM – The play is set in Canada and France during the First World War period. What makes it relevant to today's audience and particularly to a young audience?

MM – Firstly, the only two people on stage are a young man and a young woman and they range in age from about 16 to 22: Mary - the play is her dream - and a young farm boy, Charlie, from Alberta who goes off to World War I. And Mary also plays - becomes in the dream - Charlie's sergeant. So she has to play a guy, a British sergeant-major in the war, as well as playing her own role, all the time dressed in a white nightgown. Secondly, look at the literature that came out of the First War, the Great War as they called it [and compare it to pre-war literature]. Before that war, people had a romantic notion about going to war. They thought about Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade", which is what Charlie thinks about when he goes, and about the greatness of the soldier and how it will be an adventure and a proof of manhood. And that War and there were so many cases of superiors, of officers in general, who made ill-thought-out decisions which sent many young men to their death needlessly. It was the first time, I believe, that we saw chlorine gas being used in a war. You have the juxtaposition of people who think they're going to fight a war on horseback with sabres and bayonets – and instead you've got machine guns mowing them down. So it teaches you of the brutality of war, it teaches you the senselessness of it; it does not diminish the great heroism of soldiers who fought valiantly to improve people's lives. It doesn't mean that there is never a reason for someone to be a soldier, but it does teach you of the brutality of war and of how much thought should go into why a war is conducted – is it really necessary? – who gives the orders and who thinks about the young men and women who go to fight it? I don't think I have to say much more than look at the world today around you and you know exactly why the play is being done right now.

JM – The script has a very surreal quality about it – people find themselves suddenly on horseback or changing from one character to another, almost mid-sentence. How are you going to meet the challenges of this surreal script as a director?

MM -- Well, the first thing is that it's a good kind of challenge, because the whole thing is a dream. Dreams are sometimes totally real, and then they seem a little weird, and then they're real again. It's a freeing experience, because it gives you a lot of permission when you've got something as a dream. You can try a lot of different things, so every production of this play will be a little different in the treatment of the dream. For me it all began by talking with a wonderful designer, Christina Poddubiuk. She has created for us a set that is built of four platforms at odd angles to each other, and at different heights. And these platforms, if you look closely, are really the blown-down walls of an old barn that is now that silver grey that wood gets when it's exposed to the elements. So you'll see barn windows or shingles or a little outline of a door. And they're held up by great big bags which could be stone or they could be grain bags or they could be sand-bags in the trenches of World War I. So this is a unit set which allows us to pretend that at one time we are in a barn, or in town where Charlie is loading grain bags. And all of a sudden that grain bag becomes a sand-bag in the trenches and he's building the wall of the trench. So we have something that allows our imagination to be free. We also have a screen in the back for Jock Munro, the lighting designer, to project images on, whether it's stars or barbed wire or a landscape or a sense of artillery fire. So we can create with light and sound. The sound, created by Peter McBoyle, will sometimes be – "Is that thunder or is it artillery fire? Is that a prairie wind or is that the whistling of a shell about to explode?" We will never quite know, and it gives us a lot of freedom. Our view of this play is not to put a real horse on stage nor something that we're trying to pretend is a horse. We're going to use our imagination. There'll be very few props. There'll be a few things – the grain bags – but the least we can use to tell the story. All you need to suggest a horse, in my view, is to say: I'm standing on the floor; what if I took a step up there and another step up there. That's the stirrup, now I'm on top of the horse. And with the lighting and the actors' imagination and the audience's imagination we're now on horseback. Sometimes the simplest things are the best way to tell the story because the playwright is asking us to use our imagination.

JM – Is there a name you can put to the style that you're using? Clearly it's not Realism.

MM – You know it's funny. It's very important when we're studying Theatre and Literature to use all those terms, like Expressionism or Symbolism or Naturalism or Realism. I think what happens to us as we work in the theatre more and more, is that it becomes hard to have an exact term for something. Certain plays we can say are absolutely Naturalistic and others are very Expressionistic. For this play I would use the word "heightened", maybe Heightened Realism and Theatricality all together. It's beyond what's real - though sometimes a scene will play just like you're in a movie watching two young people - but then something will happen and it will be surreal, it will become more than real, other than real. Therefore it will be heightened; sounds will be a little louder, or stranger, or lights will be a little brighter.

JM – What do you think is the overriding message or theme of *Mary's Wedding*?

MM – The playwright never stands on a box and tells us that war destroys young lives, but that's what it does. You've got two young people who've got their whole lives to look forward to. So it's about hope and it's about carrying on, and it's about letting go. If you suffer loss you have to grieve, but you also have to let go. Life is about carrying on.

JM – As Artistic Director of English Theatre at the NAC you've successfully made some valuable changes. Do you have more long range plans or dreams?

MM – I have a million dreams. Well, one of my dreams is coming true next June with the very exciting Magnetic North Theatre Festival. I hope some of the people reading this will come out to it. Mary Vingoe, the Artistic Director, will choose eight or ten plays from all over Canada. They'll be anything from a wonderful Fringe show to a full-blown great big show. They'll be things no one will have seen here in Ottawa. Some of them will be very experimental, some of them outrageous. The main thing is they will be wonderful pieces of Theatre that should be seen and toured. So that's the most exciting thing in the immediate future. Next, we'd love to create or be partners in a kind of translation network that would bring plays from other countries to be translated or adapted by our writers, also to get our plays in other parts of the world. We have some really exciting ideas for young people. We dream of things like having an arts camp. Long term, I'd like to see a Young Company here made up of wonderful young artists from across the country that could work hard, maybe during the summer time, in creating one or two pieces of Theatre that then could tour in Canada. More work with broadband technology. I taught my first class - I taught a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to a class in British Columbia just to see how it would work - and now we've devised a series of experiments. We want to see what broadband can do and what it can't do. We want to work both in Ottawa and all across Canada to see how we can use that technology to share information with students across Canada.

The Playwright



Stephen Massicotte is a young Calgary based writer and actor. He grew up in Thunder Bay, went to college in Sudbury and then to the University of Calgary. He has written several autobiographical pieces that have won awards at various Fringe festivals, but *Mary's Wedding* is his first full-length fictional play. Still, he found that writing *Mary's Wedding* became a human story very close to home. Although he started out to write a play about the First World War and specifically the Strathcona Regiment's heroic charge on Moreuil Wood, the love story of Charlie and Mary closely mirrored personal events in his own life. He found that he was inserting lines that he and his own girlfriend had exchanged during the course of their relationship. As a result of the intensity of that relationship, the love story became the heart of the play with the tragedy of the Great War as a backdrop. He feels

that he was helped enormously through reading great authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Kurt Vonnegut and Robert Graves who wrote of the war experience in such a moving way. After the success of *Mary's Wedding* he thinks he can now actually consider himself a playwright.

The Set and Costume Designer



Christina Poddubiuk has been based in Stratford for the past 20 years. She has designed many productions for the Stratford Festival, but as a free-lance designer has also worked in all parts of the country. Her most recent design for the Stratford Festival was for the widely acclaimed Paul Gross production of *Hamlet*. Included in her Shaw Festival credits are the costumes for the production of *Candida* touring to the NAC later this fall, as well as the costumes for last season's *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. After High School in Montreal, Christina earned a degree in English Literature with the aim of becoming a teacher. However, because of her experiences with the theatre group at McGill University, she chose to enroll in Theatre Design at Montreal's National Theatre School. «*Set and costume*

designers work closely with the director of the play and examine the text for clues to the physical requirements for the acting space and the clothing, but also for the more subtle messages that allow the designer to expand on certain ideas. For Mary's Wedding, the idea that holds the design together is the 'dream', while the space also refers to real places and moments in the story. At the same time, the 'reality' of the barn and the trenches is made more abstract by treating them as a series of acting levels that allow a free interpretation.» Christina Poddubiuk

The Actors



Jenny Young who plays **Mary** in *Mary's Wedding* was born and raised in Vernon, B.C. where she had her acting debut as Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* in Grade 2. She and her older brother who is also a professional actor had their first community theatre performances when she was 7 as mice in *Cinderella* with her father appearing as an Ugly Stepsister. She continued taking Drama classes throughout High School, as well as getting a firm grounding in acting at the Vernon School of Speech and Drama. She was then accepted into the highly acclaimed 3-year

Acting Program at Studio 58 in Vancouver. One of her favourite roles - other than "Mary" - is in Joan McLeod's one-woman show *The Shape of a Girl* which has toured Western Canada and will be performed at the NAC Studio in the new year. One of Jenny's dreams would be to play the role of Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. To prepare for her role in this show, Jenny has been researching material on World War I for background information on Mary's character. Because, throughout the course of the play, she also takes on the role of Lieutenant Flowers, Charlie's commander, Jenny has particularly researched Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment in which Charlie served. She also had to heavily research the accents that she uses in the show.



Stephen Holmes, who plays **Charlie**, recently got married and is currently based in Vancouver, although like most actors he finds himself much of the time travelling to perform in different parts of the country. He went to school in Victoria, B.C. taking on his first role as Dr. Frankenstein in *Monster Mash* in Grade 4 and continuing acting throughout Elementary School. Although he took Drama classes in High School he became too shy to perform in front of his peers. That ended in Grade 11 when he and his friends began performing a very popular improv Soap Opera. After High School he also attended Studio 58 in Vancouver at the same time as co-star Jenny Young's older brother. He found the program there highly beneficial in

finding a character and in connecting with a director's thoughts. One of his favourite roles up until now was his recent part as Cripple Billy in the Irish play *The Cripple of Innishmaan* performed in Victoria and Vancouver. The role was particularly demanding physically because he needed to be deformed in his face and body, breathe like he had tuberculosis, speak with an Irish accent, have a paralyzed arm – and act on top of that. He toured throughout Asia and Europe for a year and a half with the mime production of *The Number Fourteen* that will be coming to the Great Canadian Theatre Company this season.

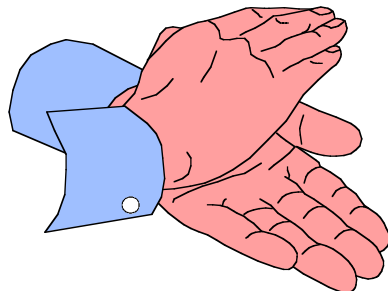


Model of the Set for *Mary's Wedding* – Designed by Christina Poddubiuk
NAC Production October 2002

Theatre Etiquette

Please take a moment to prepare the students for their visit to the National Arts Centre by explaining good **Theatre Etiquette** which will enhance the enjoyment of the play for all audience members:

1. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance so others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Unlike movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience and will give their best performances when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others during the show may be asked to leave the theatre.
2. It is important that there be no electronic devices used in the theatre. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off so that the performance, which is set in the period 1915 to 1920, is not interrupted by late Twentieth Century inventions. Cameras and recording devices are also not permitted in the Theatre.
3. Unlike movies, theatre seats are assigned according to row and number. It is important to find the seat indicated on the ticket rather than moving around disturbing others. It might be wise for teachers to pass out the tickets before arriving at the theatre so students can make sure in advance that they are sitting beside their best friend. Remember that in the NAC Theatre, all odd numbered seats are on one side and even numbered seats are on the other, so seats 12 and 14 are actually adjacent.
4. Since there is **no intermission** in this production of *Mary's Wedding*, a trip to the washroom before the play begins is a good idea. Anyone leaving during the performance will unfortunately not be allowed back into the theatre.



The Charge of the Light Brigade Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Half a league , half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
«Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!» he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

«Forward, the Light Brigade!»
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Someone had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
In the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging as army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death
Back from the mount of Hell,

All that was left of them,
Left of the six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made,
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred.

from *Poems of Alfred Tennyson*,
J.E. Tilton and Company, Boston, 1870



Balaklava – Sgt. Joseph Malone Gains the V.C.
from a painting by Henry Payne

The Crimean War, 1853-56, was fought between Russia on one side and Turkey, England, France and Sardinia on the other. Its immediate cause was the dispute concerning Russia's domination over the Holy Land. The Battle of Balaklava (October 1854), in which the charge of the Light Brigade took place was in what is now southern Ukraine. Through an error in orders the English light cavalry brigade of some 670 was lead in a hopeless charge on a heavily protected Russian position, and more than two thirds of the men were killed or wounded.

The Lady of Shalott

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

1833, rev. 1842

Part I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye
That clothe the world and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers,
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers «'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.»

Part II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear

That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot:
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two;
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
 And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead
Came two young lovers lately wed:
«I am half sick of shadows,» said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy,
The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

... continued

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
«Tirra lirra,» by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
«The curse is come upon me,» cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot:
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance –
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right –

The leaves upon her falling light –
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and field among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, «She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.»



The Lady of Shalott
painted by John William Waterhouse

In Flanders Fields

John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



John McCrae was born in 1872 and raised in Guelph, Ontario. He was more than a poet and was in fact a doctor, soldier, author, and artist.

He obtained his medical degrees at the University of Toronto and McGill University.

While serving as a medical doctor during WWI, he was in charge of a field hospital at the front where he treated the wounded from the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915. On May 13, the day after the death of a close friend, McCrae wrote «In Flanders Fields». While still serving in France, McCrae died of meningitis on January 28, 1918.

John McCrae's «In Flanders Fields» remains to this day of the most memorable war poems ever written. It is a lasting legacy of the terrible battle in the Ypres region in the spring of 1915.

One of the most commonly asked questions is: why *poppies*? The answer is simple: poppies only flower when everything else in the area is dead. The seeds can lie on the ground for years and years, and only when there are no more competing flowers or shrubs in the vicinity (for instance when someone firmly roots up the earth), these seeds will sprout.

There was enough rooted up soil on the battlefield of the Western Front; in fact the whole front consisted of churned up soil. So in May 1915, when McCrae wrote his poem, around him poppies blossomed like no one had ever seen before.

Dulce Et Decorum Est

-- Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

* "Sweet and fitting is it to die for one's country"



Counter-Attack

-- Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967)

We'd gained our first objective hours before
While dawn broke like a face with blinking eyes,
Pallid, unshaved and thirsty, blind with smoke.
Things seemed all right at first. We held their line,
With bombers posted, Lewis guns well placed,
And clink of shovels deepening the shallow trench.
The place was rotten with dead; green clumsy legs
High-booted, sprawled and grovelled along the saps
And trunks, face downward, in the sucking mud,
Wallowed like trodden sand-bags loosely filled;
And naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair,
Bulged, clotted heads slept in the plastering slime.
And then the rain began, -- the jolly old rain!

A yawning soldier knelt against the bank,
Staring across the morning blar with fog;
He wondered when the Allemands would get busy;
And then, of course, they started with five-nines
Traversing, sure as fate, and never a dud.
Mute in the clamour of shells he watched them burst
Spouting dark earth and wire with gusts from hell,
While posturing giants dissolved in drifts of smoke.
He crouched and flinched, dizzy with galloping fear,
Sick for escape, -- loathing the strangled horror
And butchered, frantic gestures of the dead.

An officer came blundering down the trench:
"Stand-to and man the fire-step!" On he went ...
Gasping and bawling, "Fire-step ... counter-attack!"
Then the haze lifted. Bombing on the right
Down the old sap: machine-guns on the left;
And stumbling figures looming out in front.
"O Christ, they're coming at us!" Bullets spat,
And he remembered his rifle ... rapid fire ...
And started blazing wildly ... then a bang
Crumpled and spun him sideways, knocked him out
To grunt and wriggle: none heeded him; he choked
And fought the flapping veils of smothering gloom,
Lost in a blurred confusion of yells and groans ...
Down, and down, and down, he sank and drowned,
Bleeding to death. The counter-attack had failed.

MINI REVIEWS OF MOVIES INVOLVING W.W.I

All Quiet on the Western Front – 1930, 130min. Probably the greatest anti-war film ever made, this very early talking picture follows a 19 year old German school boy into the mud, horror and degradation of the trenches of World War I where he learns that the patriotic idealism of the nation leads only to death and destruction. Although the acting is sometimes over the top, we get a gripping feel for the surreal and terrifying experience of war, its waste and its futility. Academy Awards for Best Picture and Director. Strongly recommended to prepare a class for *Mary's Wedding*.

All Quiet on the Western Front – TV movie, 1979, 150min. A very solid remake of the classic 1930 film about idealistic German schoolboys and the hardened old soldier who teaches them to grow up quickly in the trench warfare of World War I. Stars Ernest Borgnine and Richard Thomas.

Sergeant York – 1941, 112min. With an Academy Award performance by Gary Cooper in the lead, this is a fairly accurate true story of a mid-west American pacifist boy who becomes a World War I hero.

Gallipoli – 1981, 110min. Excellent Australian film starring Mel Gibson depicts the futile WWI Australian campaign against the Turks on the beach of Gallipoli. It focuses on the friendship of two western Australian youths in order to personalize the historical tragedy.

Lawrence of Arabia – 1962, 222min. A marvelous Academy Award-winning spectacle about the legendary British officer and his exploits leading the Saudi guerrillas in attacking Turkish strongholds in Palestine. An intelligent screenplay, stunning cinematography, masterly direction and a remarkable performance by Peter O'Toole.

Legends of the Fall – 1994, 134min. A rambling family saga of three brothers, some of whom go off to fight in World War I, starring Anthony Hopkins and Brad Pitt. Story line leaves something to be desired but cinematography is excellent.

Johnny Got His Gun – 1971, 111min. A slow moving anti-war film about a severely disabled soldier starring Timothy Bottoms.

The Great War of 1914-1918

«And all this madness, all of this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride.»

Bertram Russell

World War I – A Brief Chronology

1914

28th June: While visiting Sarajevo in Serbia, the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie are assassinated by nationalist extremists.

6th July: The German Government announces its full support for Austria-Hungary if it decides to take reprisals against Serbia.

13th July: After investigation of the assassination, the Austro-Hungarian government is convinced that members of the Serbian Army were involved in the plot.

21st July: Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary is convinced that Serbia should be punished.

24th July: The Serbian government appeals to Russia for help against the proposed attack by the Austro-Hungarian Army. Two days later Russia promises help.

28th July: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

31st July: Russia mobilizes its armed forces in support of Serbia and sends its troops to its borders with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

1st August: Germany, fearing a two-front war, declares war on Russia.

3rd August: Germany declares war on France. Britain warns Germany that it would go to war if Belgium, with whom it had signed a protection treaty in 1839, is invaded.

4th August: The German Army, needing a quick victory in France before tackling Russia, marches into Belgium as the most direct route to Paris. Britain declares war on Germany. Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden and his Ministers insist that as a close ally of Britain, **Canada is also at war**. Patriotic Canadians enthusiastically begin enlisting, claiming that the War will be over by Christmas.

5th August: Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia.

10th August: France declares war on Austria-Hungary.

12th August: Britain declares war on Austria-Hungary.

14th August: France invades Lorraine, a territory previously under French control. They are defeated and must retreat several days later.

22nd August: British Army arrives in France.

6th September: Battle of the Marne outside Paris begins. German forces had advanced to within about 15 miles of the French capital. The French forces begin a fierce battle that pushes the invaders back.

continued ...

1914 continued

15th September: French Army and British Expeditionary Forces join in creating a front to hold the Germans.

15th October: Battle of Ypres in Belgium. Germany had originally taken this medieval town when they invaded but British forces recaptured it. The first major attempt by German forces to regain it starting on this day caused heavy losses to both sides with about 135,000 German casualties and 75,000 British casualties. By the end of 1914 the line on the “Western Front” had become fairly fixed and the war had become one of “position”, confined largely to “trench warfare”, with a system of trenches stretching from the English Channel to the Swiss border. Although the front moved back and forth repeatedly its basic position remained in place for about three years.

16th October: Canadian troops arrive in Britain. They are mostly stationed on Salisbury Plain for training in the British Army.

29th October: Turkish (Ottoman) Empire, composed of Turkey, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and part of Saudi Arabia, joins Germany and Austria-Hungary in war because it fears invasion by Russia.

21st November: Anglo-Indian invasion of Mesopotamia (Iraq).

1915

14th January: South African (part of British Empire) forces invades German South-West Africa.

22nd April-25th May: Second Battle of Ypres. First use of chlorine gas.

25th April: English, Australian and New Zealand forces land on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey in their attempt to open up a supply route through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea to Russia.

1916

21st February- 11th June: Battle of Verdun. Over 650,000 French and German casualties

1917

6th April: United States declares war on Germany.

12th April: Canadian Army captures Vimy Ridge, a battle of great strategic importance which spelled the beginning of the German retreat. 11,297 Canadians killed or wounded on this day.

1918

8th to 11th August: Battle of Amiens (see map). At Moreuil Wood the Canadian Cavalry Brigade (in which the character “Charlie” serves) helps to drive back the German advance and the squadron commander, Lieutenant G.M. Flowerdew wins a Victoria Cross for bravery.

October: British forces under Field Commander Edmond Allenby joined with Arabian guerrillas under the command of Lawrence of Arabia reach Damascus and destroy the Turkish Army. The Anglo-Indian Forces had already taken Mesopotamia (Iraq). Turkey surrenders.

11:00 am, 11th November: Armistice signed, fighting stops and the Great War – “the War to end all Wars” – ends.

Over 418,000 Canadians served overseas during WWI with the Canadian Army. Sixty three of these won the Victoria Cross. The Canadian Expeditionary Force had 210,000 casualties, of whom 56,000 were killed or missing. Overall deaths numbered in excess of 60,000 as some Canadians served in other military forces. The wounded numbered 155,799.

Canada



Sir Robert Borden

Great Britain



King George V

Great Britain

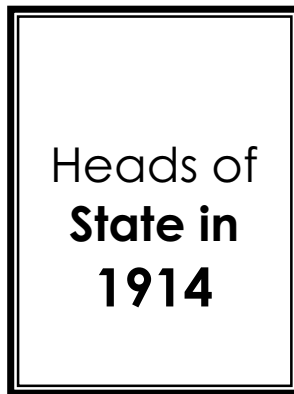


Prime Minister
Herbert Asquith

United States



Woodrow Wilson



Russia



Tsar Nicholas II

Germany



Kaiser Wilhelm II

Austria-Hungary



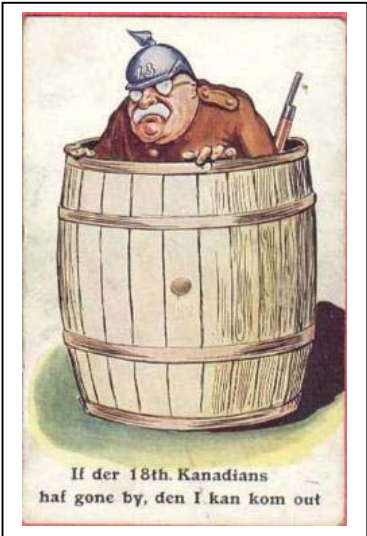
Archduke Franz Ferdinand
and Family – Heir to Throne
assassinated June 28, 1914

Austria-Hungary



Frank Josef
Emperor of Austria,
King of Hungary

An interesting fact: Kaiser Wilhelm II, King George V, and Tsar Nicholas II's wife Alexandria were all first cousins -- grandchildren of Queen Victoria of England.



Propaganda

Postcards and Posters sometimes used humour to build morale or shame to encourage men to enlist.

