

# *The Wrong Son*

by Allen Cole

An NAC English Theatre production  
in collaboration with The Arraymusic Ensemble (Toronto)

## Study Guide

**THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE  
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES  
2006-2007 SEASON**

**Peter Hinton  
Artistic Director, English Theatre**



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

This Study Guide was researched and written by **Jim McNabb** for the National Arts Centre English Theatre, August, 2006. It may be used solely for educational purposes.

**The National Arts Centre English Theatre** values the feedback of teachers on the content and format of its Study Guides. We would appreciate **your** comments on past Study Guides and/or on this current one, or suggestions on ways to improve future Study Guides. Please direct your comments to **Martina Kuska**, by email to [mkuska@nac-cna.ca](mailto:mkuska@nac-cna.ca) or by fax to (613) 943-1401.



Generously supported in part by



## About This Guide

This study guide is formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They may be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes. The two colour pages found at the end of the Guide are meant for display in the classroom but may also be copied for distribution.

Table of Contents	Page(s)
About the Play .....	1 – 2
Setting; Plot Synopsis; Characters .....	1
Style; Themes; What to Watch For in the Production .....	2
Who Helped Put the Production Together? .....	3 – 4
Creative Team and Cast .....	3
Selected Bios .....	3 – 4
A Warm Welcome to Our New Artistic Director, Peter Hinton .....	5 – 7
Bio .....	5
Peter Talks About <i>The Wrong Son</i> .....	5
Peter Hinton Answers Some Questions .....	6 – 7
Allen Cole, playwright/composer .....	8 – 9
Bio .....	8
Allen Talks About <i>The Wrong Son</i> .....	8
How <i>The Wrong Son</i> Came to Be: Film Noir Meets Ancient Greek Tragedy .....	9
Literary and Musical Influences for <i>The Wrong Son</i> .....	10
The Film Noir Style.....	11 – 12
An Excerpt from <i>The Wrong Son</i> .....	13 – 15
The Proust Questionnaire – Character Study.....	16
Suggested Movies, Books, and Websites.....	17
Activities Before and After Seeing the Play.....	18 – 20
How to Write a Play Review.....	21
Theatre Etiquette.....	22
Acknowledgements .....	23
Colour pages of Designs for <i>The Wrong Son</i> .....	24 – 25

## **About the Play – Page 1 of 2** *(See Activity 1)*

### **SETTING**

Nova Scotia, 1949, specifically The Club Flamingo, a bar near the waterfront in Halifax; a lonely stretch of highway; and an isolated cottage on the Bay of Fundy shore.

### **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

Ryle, the pianist at The Club Flamingo, and his girlfriend Maggie are closing up early when Ryle's long-estranged wife Peg suddenly shows up demanding that he take her back after all these years. When Peg ends up shot in the back outside the club and Ryle finds the murder weapon in his hand and Peg's blood all over his coat, he realizes that he must run from the police. Now on the lam, Ryle is hitchhiking on a storm-lashed stretch of highway when he is picked up by an exuberant and inebriated fellow named Cornell who is driving to meet his long-lost birth father and to collect his promised fortune. When the car crashes and Cornell is killed, Ryle—now covered in Cornell's blood—decides to follow Cornell's map to the isolated cottage where he hopes to hide from the police. He assumes the identity of the dead man in order to gain the old man's confidence. However, when the police, then Maggie, and finally a very unexpected visitor show up at the cottage, things get tense and more blood flows.

### **CHARACTERS**

**RYLE RAWLINS** – A piano player at The Club Flamingo, a Halifax nightclub. A former World War II pilot, he has been psychologically scarred and is not adapting well to post-war life. His wife Peg left him several years ago (we learn the reason for that breakup later in the play) and he is now involved with Maggie, a nightclub singer.

**MAGGIE LENNOX** – A sultry singer at The Club Flamingo who helped make Ryle's recent song a recording hit. She hopes to marry Ryle in the near future.

**CORNELL TREMBLE II** – An elderly paranoid recluse living in a cottage on the Bay of Fundy shore. After his wife left him many years ago, he gave up his infant son for adoption. He now wants to be reunited with his son and make amends.

**CORNELL TREMBLE III** - A hard-living young man about Ryle's age who was given up for adoption as a child. When he learns that his birth father has a fortune waiting for him, he decides to take advantage of the situation.

**PEG RAWLINS** – Ryle's estranged and bitter wife who has been living in Florida for a number of years but returns to revive the marriage when she learns that Ryle has achieved financial success with his hit song.

**LIEUTENANT DICE** – A tough female cop investigating the murder of a woman on the Halifax waterfront.

**SERGEANT DOUGLAS** – The male police officer assisting in the murder investigation.

**CHORUS** – Ryle's inner thoughts or conscience, commenting on his actions and mistakes and possibly predicting the future. The Chorus is played by the two police officers.

## About the Play – Page 2 of 2

### **STYLE**

The play is created as a jazz musical in the *film noir* style. The music refers back to the sounds of the 1940s and '50s, particularly to the soundtracks of Hollywood suspense or crime melodramas.

The tension inherent in both the story line and the psychological turmoil of the characters is heightened by suspenseful music inspired by great movie soundtrack composers such as Bernard Herrmann, Elmer Bernstein and Henry Mancini. The songs vary from obvious "songs" such as "Falling In Love With You," sung by Maggie in the nightclub, to less melodic "recitative" sections. (Recitative refers to "a style of musical declamation, intermediate between singing and ordinary speech, commonly employed in the dialogue and narrative parts of operas".) The lead character is Ryle Rawlins, a small-time musician whose tastes have evolved from boogie-woogie (a rebellious and somewhat violent form of music he preferred before the war) to a more melancholy bluesy jazz after he returns from fighting in Europe, and subsequently (after he has started to come to terms with his past) to the folk songs of rural Nova Scotia.

The *film noir* style is explained on pages 10 and 11 of this Study Guide. Students should become familiar with this visual style and the moods that it evokes. For *The Wrong Son*, director Peter Hinton and his gifted designer Dany Lyne chose to augment the *film noir* world with elements of dreams and myths. We are distanced from the reality of the play by the setting, which suggests the action is taking place in a recording studio. Individual locations for the story are suggested by two-dimensional set pieces that appear from above or below. Hints of the work of Canadian artist Christopher Pratt can be seen in some of these pieces. (To read a brief biography of this Newfoundland realist painter and view examples of his work, visit [http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/pratt\\_christopher.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/pratt_christopher.html) or <http://www.godardgallery.com/cpratt.htm>.)

### **THEMES**

Watch for themes like:

- the inescapability of fate
- the passing of flaws from generation to generation
- the need for cleansing of wounds and sins
- the value of family, roots and traditions in the cleansing process

### **WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE PRODUCTION**

- the high-gloss black floor that lighting designer John Munro is able to transform from linoleum interior flooring to an icy road to dark water at night
- Munro's use of stark, angular lighting to create eerie moods
- the elevators and trapdoors in the floor of the set that allow objects and people to rise from or sink into the floor/"water"
- the pegboard walls that can create the effect of a starry sky when lit from behind
- the blackness of the room that creates the illusion that we are seeing what Ryle sees in his imagination
- the contrast of the enveloping "studio" set with the highly realistic set pieces that rise from below or fly down from above
- the effect of the use of strong primary colours in the set and costumes to perhaps suggest a fairy tale

## Who Helped Put the Production Together? – Page 1 of 2 (See Activity 4)

### The Creative Team

Director:	Peter HINTON
Playwright/Composer:	Allen COLE
Orchestrator:	Allen COLE
Set/Costume Designer:	Dany LYNE
Vocal Music Director:	Richard EVANS
Orchestra Music Director:	Bob STEVENSON (Artistic Dir., Arraymusic)
Lighting Designer:	John (Jock) MUNRO
Sound Designer:	Peter McBOYLE
Movement Director:	Jo LESLIE
Fight Director:	John KOENSGEN
Assistant to Director:	Amanda KELLOCK
Musicians:	The Arraymusic Ensemble
Stage Manager:	Laurie CHAMPAGNE
Assistant Stage Manager:	Stéfanie SÉGUIN

### The Cast (in alphabetical order)

Maggie:	Tamara BERNIER
Sgt. Dice/Chorus:	Randi HELMERS
Cornell Tremble II:	Martin JULIEN
Ryle:	David KEELEY
Peg:	Corrine KOSLO
Lt. Douglas/Chorus:	John MILLARD
Cornell Tremble III:	Frank MOORE

### BIOS OF SELECTED CAST MEMBERS

#### David Keeley (Ryle)

David last performed at the NAC nearly 20 years ago when he played the Prince to Karen Kain's *Snow White*. Since then, he has married a wonderful woman, Laura Burton, and they have had two great kids, Aidan and Leah. Oh yes, and he has continued to act. He originated the role of Sam in *Mamma Mia* on Broadway and he won a Dora Award for his portrayal of Officer

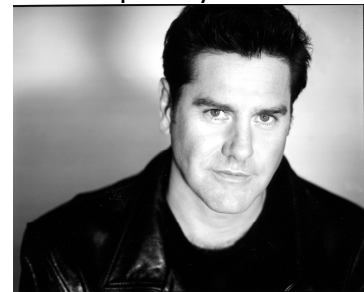
Lockstock in *Urinetown*.

A number of years at the Stratford Festival saw him in *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Changeling*, *Coriolanus*, and *The Three Musketeers*.

While in Edmonton at The Citadel Theatre under Robin Phillips, David was seen in *Oedipus*, *As You Like It*, *Fallen Angels*, and *Oliver*.

He learned the part of Benvolio in 3 days to step into Robert Lepage's storied production of *Romeo and Juliet* that saw an actor lose a battle with a tire-iron. Not surprising!

Film and TV credits include *Hotel*, *Missing*, *Due South*, *Robocop*, *Sue Thomas*, *Forbidden Secrets*, *A Saintly Switch*, *FX*, *Powerplay*, and he had the time of his life playing the "bad" Secret Service Agent Anderson in Jonathan Demme's remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* with Meryl Streep and Denzel Washington.



## Who Helped Put the Production Together? – Page 2 of 2 (See Activity 4)



### BIOS OF SELECTED CAST MEMBERS, cont'd.

**Corrine Koslo (Peg)** Corrine is the daughter of RCAF fighter pilot Patrick Koslo and water colorist Reta May Gretzinger. She was born in France, and grew up in Halifax, C.F.B. Southport, Manitoba and C.F.B. Edmonton with her 3 older brothers (all of whom are artists). After a year of music college in

Edmonton, Corrine set out to study at the Vancouver Playhouse Acting School headed by David Latham. After graduating in 1981, Corrine has spent the last 25 years working in theatres across this great country, from the Caravan Farm Theatre, to seven seasons at the Shaw Festival.

Until 2003, Corrine made her home on the West Coast. She appeared in many productions with the Vancouver Playhouse, favourites include *Love & Anger* (Jessie Award), *Fallen Angels*, *Private Lives*, *Waiting for the Parade*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Cherry Orchard* (Jessie Award). Other favourite roles included Mrs. Lovitt in *Sweeney Todd* (Jessie Award), for the Arts Club Theatre; and *Shirley Valentine* and *Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, both for Alberta Theatre Projects. Before relocating to Toronto to appear as Rosie in the Mirvish production of *Mamma Mia* in 2003, Corrine appeared in *The Memory of Water* for the Tarragon Theatre, *The River* (a theatrical concert of Joni Mitchell songs), for PTE in Winnipeg. Last season, Corrine received a Sterling Award for her performance of *Madama Arcati* in *Blythe Spirit* for the Citadel Theatre, and a Dora Award, for Chester the Cat in *Bunnicula* for LKTYP in Toronto.

Corrine's favourite film and television credits include *Made in Canada*, *The Rick Mercer Report*, *The Cathy Jones Special* and *Best in Show*, and *Hard Core Logo*.

Corrine is thrilled to be appearing in *The Wrong Son* and to be taking part in Peter Hinton's inaugural season.

**Tamara Bernier (Maggie)** Tamara is delighted to be making her debut at the National Arts Centre! She recently enjoyed performing on Broadway as Tanya in *Mamma Mia!*

During her fifteen year career, Tamara has had the pleasure of performing at The Stratford Festival (four seasons), in Toronto for Necessary Angel Theatre Company (*Seven Years*), at Tarragon Theatre (*It's All True*), for Nightwood Theatre in The World Stage Festival (*Anything That Moves*), and for The Canadian Stage Company (*Outrageous and Proof*). She then went on to play Tanya in *Mamma Mia!* at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, which subsequently sent her to Broadway.

She was a recurring voice for the cartoon series' *Maggie and the Ferocious Beast*, *Timothy Goes to School*, *Ace Lightning* and *Brace Face*.

Tamara is delighted to share this gig with her husband, Richard Evans (Vocal Music Director), and is terrified to leave her new baby girl, Meredith, with a sitter every night she is performing here!! In the last three years, Richard and Tamara have called Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Las Vegas and Los Angeles home! One day they'll settle down. Love to all the Ottawa and North Bay family that are here to help us with Meredith....



TAMARA BERNIER

## A Warm Welcome to Our New Artistic Director, Peter Hinton

(See Activity 4)

(This page and the two following were originally prepared by NAC English Theatre publicist Laura Denker for the September 2005 issue of Stages, our English Theatre subscribers' newsletter.)

Peter Hinton is one of English Canada's most respected playwrights, directors, and dramaturges. In his twenty-year career, he has been an integral part of the Canadian theatre landscape, working as an Associate Artist of the Stratford Festival of Canada, Associate Director and Dramaturge at Theatre



Passe Muraille, Associate Director and Head of the New Play Development Program at the Canadian Stage Company in Toronto, and Dramaturg in Residence at Playwrights' Workshop Montreal. He is passionate about Canadian theatre, and is proud to have developed new works by John Mighton, Guillermo Verdecchia, Marie Clements, Larry Tremblay, Blake Brooker, Normand Charette, Maristella Roca, and Greg MacArthur to name a few. An accomplished playwright, Mr. Hinton's early plays include *Façade* which was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Artistic

Innovation and Excellence, and *Urban Voodoo* (co-written with Jim Millan). Peter was writer and dramaturge on the Canadian Stage Hour Company collective creations *i.d.* and *Tabu*, which both received Dora Awards for outstanding new play for theatre for young audiences. Recently, his trilogy of three full length plays entitled *The Swanne* premiered at the Stratford Festival of Canada to great critical and audience acclaim. Mr. Hinton has also written the librettos for two operas with composer Peter Hannan; *The Diana Cantata*, and *120 Songs for the Marquis de Sade*, which was awarded the Alcan Performing Arts Award. A respected teacher, Mr. Hinton has taught play creation for actors at the Ryerson Theatre School and playwriting and period study at The National Theatre School of Canada. Mr. Hinton's critical and dramaturgical essays have been published in *Theatrum*, *The Canadian Theatre Review* and *Between the Lines: a collection of interviews and articles on Dramaturgy in Canada*, edited by Judith Rudakoff.

In November 2005, Mr. Hinton took the helm of the National Arts Centre English Theatre as Artistic Director, and in March of 2006, he announced his first season, *The Artist in Society*. In the 2006-2007 season, Mr. Hinton will direct the world premiere of Allen Cole's *The Wrong Son*, Gloria Montero's *Frida K.*, and Marie Clements' *Copper Thunderbird*.

### Peter Talks About *The Wrong Son*

"This is an extraordinary piece that explores every form of jazz of the period. You go from your classic jazz standards to a kind of Henry Mancini-esque piece by one of the characters to a very modern and free form style. It's a piece that celebrates the music of [the 40s and 50s]. [We have] an audacious and wild grouping of musicians and artists to tell this extraordinary story. Allen [Cole, the playwright and composer] has been at work on *The Wrong Son* for over ten years, in between other projects. It's one that I think is really close to him, really personal. He wrote it at a time when he was really re-visioning what his work might mean and might be. ... I'm thrilled to include the world premiere of *The Wrong Son* in my first season at the NAC."

## **Peter Hinton Answers Some Questions – Page 1 of 2** (*See Activity 5*)

*Soon after he arrived at the NAC, Peter was handed the Proust Questionnaire<sup>1</sup> so that Ottawa audiences could get to know him a little better. Here are his intriguing answers.*

### **What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

An impossibility: a clear conscience and no debt. So I guess what I really mean is a loaded conscience and indebted to everyone.

### **Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

Marcus Brutus.

### **Which living person do you most admire?**

The great stage directors: Peter Brook, Peter Stein, Ariane Mnouchkine, Deborah Warner, Anne Bogart, Nicholas Hyntner, Lee Breuer, Denis Marleau.

### **What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

Never having fallen in love.

### **What is your greatest extravagance?**

Smoking cigarettes, hotel rooms and taxis.

### **What is your favourite journey?**

Strictly a metaphysical one.

### **On what occasions do you lie?**

To protect the dignity of someone else.

### **Which living person do you most despise?**

John Carey [Democrat, Oklahoma State Rep.], Mike Harris, Diane Lemieux [Parti Québécois MPP for Bourget], Tom Hanks, the guy who created *Girls Gone Wild*, people who contrast arts funding with health care, generally anyone who reduces the complexity of art by defending economic tyranny with notions of popular taste.

### **What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

Teaching.

### **When and where were you happiest?**

The summer of 1998 at Playwrights' Workshop Montreal—in the thick of it, writing my play *The Swanne*. Then again, maybe at a bar in Madrid, *el sueno eterno*, in the fall of 1996, but hey—let's keep it professional.

### **Which talent would you most like to have?**

To sing like Daniel Taylor and dance like Rex Harrington.

---

<sup>1</sup> A series of questions posed to famous subjects about their lives, thoughts, values and experiences. The name comes from the French writer Marcel Proust (1871–1922), who was asked to fill out questionnaires at two social events: one when he was 13, another when he was 20. Proust did not invent this party game; he is simply the most extraordinary person to have played it.



## **Peter Hinton Answers Some Questions – Page 2 of 2**

### **What is your current state of mind?**

Excited, nervous, nostalgic and thoughtful. Like New Year's or like adolescence, I am sorting out an enormous change in my life. This has been my summer of '42: saying goodbye to one way of life while eagerly anticipating the next one.

### **What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

Living my life, awake and listening.

### **If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?**

A dog. Or maybe the owner of a "Mom and Pop" variety store. Give me a *dépanneur*<sup>2</sup> or I don't come back at all!

### **What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

Shame, poverty and friendlessness.

### **What is your favourite occupation?**

Reconsidering the past.

### **What is the quality you most like in a man?**

Extroversion... and of course deep feeling.

### **What is the quality you most like in a woman?**

Introspection, anger and a great sense of wit.

### **Who are your favourite writers or playwrights?**

Thomas Dekker, John Webster, William Congreve, Nahum Tate, Oliver Goldsmith, Washington Irving, Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, Marie Clements, John Mighton, Toni Morrison, Edward Bond... I could go on.

### **What is your motto?**

It is never too late to forestall the death of love.

---

<sup>2</sup> The term used in Quebec for a convenience store.

## Allen Cole, Playwright and Composer *(See Activities 2 and 13)*



### Allen Cole Writer and Composer

Originally from Nova Scotia, Allen Cole has worked variously as composer, musical director, lyricist and/or book writer on musicals such as *Hush* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *The Crimson Veil* (directed for the Caravan Farm Theatre by Peter Hinton), and *Anything That Moves* (Tarragon Theatre, co-created with Ann-Marie MacDonald and Alisa Palmer). His musical *Pélagie* (co-created with Vincent de Tourdonnet) was first co-produced by the NAC and CanStage in 2004, and toured the Maritimes both in English and en français for Two Planks and a

Passion in 2005. Allen has won numerous awards, including four Doras and a Best Film Score Award from the Atlantic Film Festival. With librettist Maristella Roca, he composed an opera, *How It Storms*, for the Evergreen Club, a Toronto based gamelan orchestra. Allen is also a regular musical contributor to the Shaw Festival. He is currently writing and composing a music theatre piece for glass instruments, called *The Sandman*. He's also co-writing a musical comedy called *La Marquise* with his partner, Melody Johnson, and playwright Rick Roberts (a different sort of partner). Allen would like to dedicate *The Wrong Son* to his late grandparents, Nanny and Bompie, and to his boy Dashiell, the right son.

### Allen Talks About *The Wrong Son*

*"Noir' was born out of the guilty conscience of post-war, late-40s North America. The atrocities of the holocaust and Hiroshima had not yet been glossed over by the happy faces of the 50s. This was particularly true for the young men of that period, so many of whom had difficulties returning to the reality at home. My grandparents, who grew up on the Bay of Fundy, occasionally spoke of this dark period. So many young Nova Scotia men died in that war. So many others, like Ryle in The Wrong Son, came home damaged. And those who didn't go to war (like my grandfather, who had polio as a child and was deemed unfit) often felt enormous guilt. The complexities of this period of history, along with the foggy streets of Halifax and the lonely coastline of the Bay of Fundy, are what led me to marry the 'noir' genre to my home province.*

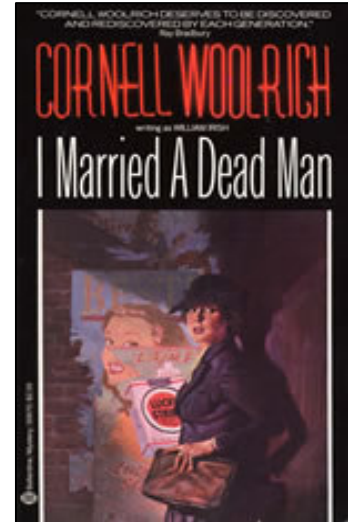
*It's a Nova Scotia story, which is a very important thing to me, being from Nova Scotia. In fact, there's a lot of my grandparents in it, even though they're not alive any more. It's set in Halifax in a bar called The Club Flamingo, which actually was a bar in Halifax for quite a while. I played in that bar, in fact, but it doesn't exist anymore, sorry to say. A murder is committed just outside that bar near the waterfront, and the piano player in the club band is accused of the murder. He goes out on the road, hitchhiking to the Bay of Fundy, which is where much of [the play] takes place, in a cottage. And, of course, I did have a cottage on the Bay of Fundy where I spent a lot of time when I was a kid—although nothing like this happened, thank God."*

## How *The Wrong Son* Came to Be: Film Noir Meets Ancient Greek Tragedy

(See Activity 6)

Allen Cole began writing *The Wrong Son* as early as 1990, but put it aside to work on several other projects in the intervening years. Cole had long been fascinated by the pulp crime thriller novels and short stories of the 1940s and '50s, their bleak hopelessness and guilt-ridden angst, their theme that a man's fate is inevitable, that one can't run from one's past, that retribution always catches up. After viewing a particularly inspiring production of *The Oresteia*, the trilogy of ancient Greek tragedies dealing with the gods' revenge on the House of Atreus in the aftermath of the Trojan War, Cole began thinking more about the theme of fate and about creating a musical based on the genre of so-called "romans noirs."

The American author Cornell Woolrich (who sometimes wrote under the pseudonym William Irish) became very popular in France in the 1930s and '40s, and his series of novels, often with "black" in the title—*The Black Alibi*, *Rendezvous in Black*, etc.—and all with a dark and hopeless mood, gave rise to the so-called "romans noirs." Other writers, such as Jim Thompson and Dashiell Hammett, followed in his footsteps to create a great body of works based on crime, detectives, men with troubled pasts, shady women, dingy settings, flashbacks, convoluted narratives and thrilling plot twists. The female characters were almost always of two types: dutiful, trustworthy, loving women, or "femmes fatales" who were gorgeous, double-crossing, manipulative, tough-sweet and predatory. During the 40s and 50s, movies based on these short stories and novels came to be known as the film noir style. Typically they were shot in black and white with dark, moody lighting. (See Study Guide pages on "Film Noir Style".) This was the mood Cole wanted to create for his bleak musical dealing with a man running from the law for a murder he didn't commit and assuming the identity of a dead man. One of Cornell Woolrich's early novels, *I Married a Dead Man*, tells the story of an unwed mother who takes the identity of a woman killed in a train accident in order to provide security for her unborn child. She is accepted by a wealthy family as the widow of their son but is threatened when her former lover shows up and tries to blackmail her. Cole reversed the gender of the protagonist, altered the reason for taking the new identity, and provided new complications for *The Wrong Son*.



The sound of his musical references the soundtracks of the suspense thrillers of the 40s and 50s, with jazz stylings inspired by some of the greatest film composers of the period, particularly Bernard Herrmann, Henry Mancini and Elmer Bernstein. Cole was also inspired by the sounds of musical theatre geniuses such as Leonard Bernstein and Kurt Weill and even the singing of Tom Waits. (See page 10 of this Study Guide, "Literary and Musical Influences".) We also hear snatches of the Celtic folk songs of Cole's native rural Nova Scotia as sung by the elderly Mr. Tremble.

But how does this modern jazz musical resemble an ancient Greek tragedy? It rests on the premise that a man cannot escape his fate. If Ryle is running from a murder he did not commit, is it not because of a terrible sense of guilt for previous wrongs? Ryle must eventually pay for his violent past. The chorus—another parallel to Greek theatre—haunts Ryle's brain with admonitions and advice. *The Wrong Son* differs from the Greek mould, however, in the exploration of the psychological effect of the father/son relationship: Ryle's search, albeit unintentional, for his father and his roots results in the start of the healing process. The male/female chorus perhaps represents not only threatening authority figures but also the missing parents both Ryle and Cornell need. As Allen Cole says, he has filled the Greek and film noir "Jell-O mould" with new content.

## Literary and Musical Influences for *The Wrong Son*



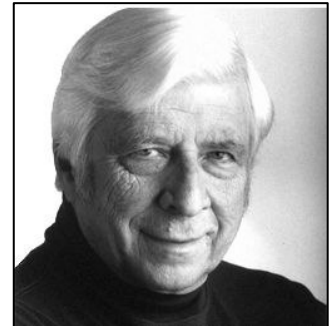
**Cornell Woolrich** (1903–1968) was a New York writer of two dozen novels and over 200 stories, often published in pulp magazines of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. His works are so dark (many of them contain the word "black" in the title) that he has been called "the Poe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." In France, where his novels became very popular, they became known as *romans noirs* ("black novels"). Because of the many movies based on his work—most famously Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and Truffaut's *The Bride Wore Black*—he is often referred to as "the father of film noir." Strongly influenced by F. Scott Fitzgerald, his crime stories usually feature a main character thrust into situations totally out of his control.

**Bernard Herrmann** (1911–1975) was one of America's most influential film composers. In over 40 movies he enriched the work of such directors as Orson Welles (*War of the Worlds*, *Citizen Kane*), Alfred Hitchcock (nine scores including *Psycho*, *North By Northwest*, *The Birds*), Francois Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*, *The Bride Wore Black*), and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*). Herrmann was a master at evoking psychological nuance and dramatic tension through music, often using unusual instrumental combinations to suit the dramatic needs of a film, such as the shrieking violins in *Psycho* and the theremins (among the earliest fully electronic musical instruments).in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.



**Henry Mancini** (1924–1994) was a noted American composer and arranger best known for his music scores for TV (*Peter Gunn*, *Remington Steele*) and film (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Pink Panther*, *Wait Until Dark*). Though much of his work is classified as "easy listening," he was also capable of creating suspenseful and powerful scores.

**Elmer Bernstein** (1922–2004) was an American composer best known for his music for film and television. A gifted pianist at an early age, he went on to write scores for more than 200 films and TV shows, including *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Great Escape*, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. He was honoured with a multitude of Grammy, Tony and Academy Award nominations and wins. Most of his compositions, particularly his movie themes, are recognizable for being syncopated or off-beat.



Listen to samples of Herrmann's Hitchcock scores at [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000004BR9/ref=m\\_art\\_li\\_15/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000004BR9/ref=m_art_li_15/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174)

Listen to samples of Mancini's scores at [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000002WF9/ref=m\\_art\\_li\\_16/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000002WF9/ref=m_art_li_16/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174)

Listen to samples of Bernstein's scores at [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0007XTQ14/ref=m\\_art\\_li\\_1/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0007XTQ14/ref=m_art_li_1/002-4858323-5324813?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance&n=5174)

Listen to samples from an album entitled *Crime Jazz* by various artists at [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00000344Z/ref=ase\\_martinsfilmnoirPA/002-4858323-5324813?s=music&v=glance&n=5174&tagActionCode=martinsfilmnoirPA](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00000344Z/ref=ase_martinsfilmnoirPA/002-4858323-5324813?s=music&v=glance&n=5174&tagActionCode=martinsfilmnoirPA)

## The Film Noir Style – Page 1 of 2 (See Activity 7)

These pages are excerpted from the Thinkquest website, a free source of much valuable teaching material:

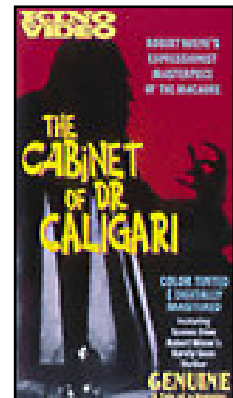
<http://library.thinkquest.org/C0118600/index.phtml?menu=en%3B3%3Bci3012.html>



**Film Noir** (literally “black film,” so named by French film critics because of the dark atmosphere and themes of many American crime and detective films released in France after World War II) is a style of American films that evolved in the 1940s (reflecting the post-war ambience of anxiety and suspicion) and lasted in a classic period until about 1960. Film noir is a distinct branch of the crime/gangster sagas from the 1930s—e.g., *Little Caesar* (1930), *Public Enemy* (1931), *Scarface* (1932)—but different in tone and characterization. The crime element in film noir is a metaphoric symptom of society's evils, with a strong undercurrent of moral conflict. Strictly speaking however, film noir is not a genre, but rather the mood or tone of a film.

The primary moods of classic film noir are melancholy, alienation, bleakness, disillusionment, disenchantment, pessimism, ambiguity, moral corruption, evil, guilt and paranoia. Heroes (or anti-heroes), corrupt characters and villains include down-and-out, hard-boiled detectives or private eyes, cops, gangsters, government agents, crooks, war veterans, petty criminals, and murderers. These protagonists are often low-lives from the dark and gloomy underworld of violent crime and corruption. Distinctively, they are cynical, tarnished, obsessive (sexually or otherwise), brooding, menacing, sinister, sardonic, disillusioned, frightened and insecure loners, struggling to survive and ultimately losing.

The female characters in film noir are of two types: dutiful, reliable, trustworthy and loving, or femmes fatales—duplicitous, double-crossing, gorgeous, unloving, predatory, tough-sweet, unreliable, irresponsible, manipulative and desperate. The male protagonist in film noir inevitably has to choose (or have the fateful choice made for him) between the women, and invariably he picks the femme fatale. Film noir films (often shot in greys, blacks and whites) show the dark, cynical and cruel aspects of human nature, and they emphasize the brutal, unhealthy, seamy, shadowy, and sadistic sides of the human experience. Film noir is marked by expressionistic lighting (recalling its roots in German Expressionism of the 1920s and 1930s, seen in such films as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) or Fritz Lang's *M* (1931)), disorienting visual schemes, drifting cigarette smoke, existential sensibilities, and unbalanced compositions. They are often set in gloomy interiors with dim lighting and Venetian-blinded windows. Exteriors are often night scenes with deep shadows, wet asphalt, rain-slicked streets, and flickering neon signs. Locations are often murky and dark streets, dimly-lit apartments and big-city hotel rooms. An atmosphere of menace and pervading themes of pessimism, anxiety, suspicion that anything can go wrong, dingy realism, fatalism, defeat and entrapment are stylized characteristics of film noir. Storylines are frequently complex and convoluted, typically featuring flashbacks and/or reflective voice-over narration.



## The Film Noir Style – Page 2 of 2



The earliest films noirs were detective thrillers, often adapted from literary works, preferably best-selling, hard-boiled pulp novels and crime fiction by Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain or Dashiell Hammett. Film noir stories often featured a male protagonist (played by, e.g., Robert Mitchum, Fred MacMurray, or Humphrey Bogart) who encountered a beautiful but promiscuous femme fatale (e.g., Veronica Lake, Barbara Stanwyck, or Lana Turner) who used her sexuality to manipulate him into becoming the fall guy, often after a murder. After a double-cross, she was also destroyed, often at the cost of the hero's life.

One of the first detective films to use the shadowy, nihilistic noir style was the work of director John Huston: the classic *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), famous for Humphrey Bogart's cool private-eye hero Sam Spade. A quintessential early film noir was director Jacques Tourneur's *Out of the Past* (1947), with Robert Mitchum playing the doomed, double-crossed private eye opposite one of the best of the femmes fatales, Jane Greer.

Early classic non-detective films noirs include Fritz Lang's fatalistic *Scarlet Street* (1945), one of the moodiest, blackest thrillers ever made; *The Third Man* (1949); and the nightmarish *D.O.A.* (1950), the story of a poisoned and doomed protagonist.

Romance noirs—twisted, shocking, melodramatic films noirs featuring deadly femmes fatales on a path of romance and self-destruction—include Billy Wilder's adaptation of James M. Cain's novel *Double Indemnity* (1944); Michael Curtiz' melodramatic mother-daughter classic *Mildred Pierce* (1945); the stylish and moody *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), with Lana Turner as the libidinous, restless platinum blonde in a roadside diner; Orson Welles' *The Lady From Shanghai* (1948); and Rita Hayworth's sultry performance as *Gilda* (1946). Another of Welles' films with significant noir features was his expressionistic *Citizen Kane* (1941).



Modern films noirs include Roman Polanski's noirish detective thriller *Chinatown* (1974); the twisted, sexy noirish *Body Heat* (1981), Lawrence Kasdan's directorial debut, about a lawyer enticed to murder a woman's husband; Ridley Scott's sci-fi thriller *Blade Runner* (1982); the Coen Brothers' feverish debut film, *Blood Simple* (1984); and the '50s Hollywood crime drama *L.A. Confidential* (1997), starring Kim Basinger as a Veronica Lake look-alike.

**Excerpt from Scene 6 of *The Wrong Son* – Page 1 of 3** (See Activity 3)

(**Bold type** indicates text that is sung.)

(*At the police station. Sgt. Douglas begins to type.*)

LT. DICE:     **That woman in the bar—  
Was she a brunette, Maggie?  
High heels, tacky red dress?**

SGT. DOUGLAS:   **Yes?**

MAGGIE:       **Yes.**

LT. DICE:       **She and Ryle had a fight?**

MAGGIE:       **No, not exactly ...  
It was more like a... like a...**

LT. DICE:       **A disagreement?**

MAGGIE:       **I guess so, but what—**

(*Sgt. Douglas stops typing.*)

SGT. DOUGLAS:   **We found that woman down by the harbour.  
She'd been dead since twelve forty-five.**

MAGGIE:       **Dead?  
What happened to her?**

SGT. DOUGLAS:   **A bullet in the back.**

LT. DICE:       **Somebody killed her,  
And Ryle's the only suspect we've got.**

MAGGIE:       **Ryle?**

LT. DICE:       **That's right, Maggie.**

SGT. DOUGLAS:   **That's right, Maggie.**

**Excerpt from Scene 6 of *The Wrong Son* – Page 2 of 3**

LT. DICE: **Now listen real close—  
this is important.  
Did he try to contact you at all last night?**

MAGGIE: **He called me shortly after I got home.  
He said to come and meet him at the dock.**

LT. DICE: **And did you go?**

MAGGIE: **Yes.**

SGT. DOUGLAS: **You did?  
What did you find there?**

*(Flashback to Peg and Ryle at the dock. Peg is dead. Ryle is holding her and has a gun in his hand. Maggie enters.)*

MAGGIE: Ryle? Ryle...? There you are. Oh, my God. What's going on? Is that a gun? Put it down.

RYLE: *(Still holding the gun)* What are you doing here? I thought you were going to drive...

MAGGIE: **PUT DOWN THAT GUN, RYLE!** *(He puts down the gun.)*  
Tell me what happened.

RYLE: **I was back in the dressing room, cleaning up the place  
I heard a shot, and my heart began to race  
I went outside the bar, but I couldn't find a trace...**

MAGGIE: Hold on, slow down. You're absolutely certain you didn't see anybody else?

RYLE: **I ran to the water, but I couldn't hear a sound,  
So I walked on the dock, and I found  
Blood, lots of blood, in a pool on the ground.**  
Jesus, Maggie... This is my wife lying here.

MAGGIE: Your wife? Doesn't she live in Florida?



**Excerpt from Scene 6 of *The Wrong Son* – Page 3 of 3**

RYLE: She just got back. Tonight.

MAGGIE: But... why didn't you tell me she was your wife back in the bar?  
What were you planning to...

RYLE: **The woman is dead.  
Somebody shot her down, Maggie—  
I don't know how it happened—  
Somebody must've been waiting here.**

**I'm telling the truth!  
I couldn't hurt a fly, Maggie.  
But no-one will believe me!  
What am I going to tell the cops?**

MAGGIE: You're not going to tell the police anything. It's too dangerous.  
You've got to get out of town and find a safe place to hide for  
awhile. Have you got your car keys?  
*(Pause; Ryle says nothing.)*  
Ryle, have you got your keys?

RYLE: Yeah, I've got them. You know, I think maybe there *was*  
someone else down here when I—

*(A police car siren is heard.)*

MAGGIE: The police! Ryle, come on!  
*(She pulls him to his feet, sees his bloody coat.)*

You have to get rid of that coat. Quick!  
*(He pulls off the coat and flings it toward the water.)*

Now go find a motel somewhere out of town. Call me in a couple  
of days.

RYLE: You do believe I'm innocent, don't you, Maggie?

MAGGIE: Of course I do. Now go!

*(Ryle exits. Maggie slowly returns to the police station.)*  
[End of scene]

## **The Proust Questionnaire – Character Study** *(See Activity 5)*

A fun quiz to help learn about personalities.  
A more complete list of questions can be found at  
<http://www.chick.net/proust/question.html>

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

**Which living person do you most admire?**

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

**What is your greatest extravagance?**

**What is your favourite journey?**

**On what occasions do you lie?**

**Which living person do you most despise?**

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

**When and where were you happiest?**

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

**What is your current state of mind?**

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, who/what do you think it would be?**

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

**What is your favourite occupation?**

**What is the quality you most like in a man?**

**What is the quality you most like in a woman?**

**Who are your favourite writers or playwrights?**

**What is your motto?**

## Suggested Movies/Books/Websites (See Activity 7)

### Movies



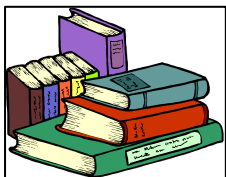
***No Man of Her Own*** (1950), starring Barbara Stanwyck, is the tale of Helen Ferguson, an unwed mother on the run who is mistaken for a fellow passenger killed in a train wreck. She gives birth to her child and is accepted by the family of the dead woman's husband (who was also killed in the wreck). She continues the ruse while falling in love with the dead man's brother, but her former boyfriend finds out where she is and blackmails her. This is a film version of the novel *I Married a Dead Man*, one of the inspirations for *The Wrong Son*.

***The Man Who Was't There*** (2001), written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, starring Billy Bob Thornton, Frances McDormand and Scarlett Johansson. Using the classic black and white film noir style, the Coen Brothers tell the story of a small-town barber who blackmails his wife's boss and lover for money to invest in dry cleaning, but the plan goes terribly wrong.

***The Maltese Falcon*** (1941), a classic film noir starring Humphrey Bogart as private eye Sam Spade and Mary Astor as the femme fatale who is not who she says she is. While Spade is investigating the murder of his partner, he finds himself surrounded by a host of strange characters who are all after one thing: a statue of a falcon reputed to contain priceless jewels.

Visit <http://www.imdb.com/chart/filmnoir> to see a list of 50 movies voted the best examples of film noir style.

### Books



***I Married a Dead Man*** by Cornell Woolrich (Ballantine Books;1948, 1983). A young unmarried pregnant woman assumes the identity of another woman killed in a train accident and stands to inherit wealth from her new in-laws, until a man from her past appears. When the man is mysteriously shot, both the woman and the man she hopes to marry suspect each other of the crime. Allen Cole's musical *The Wrong Son* is loosely based on this tragic story.

Any of the pulp thriller or crime novels/short stories by Cornell Woolrich (*The Bride Wore Black*, *Rear Window*, *The Black Curtain*), Dashiell Hammett (*The Maltese Falcon*, *The Red Harvest*) or Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep*, *The Lady in the Lake*) make easy and fascinating reading and will begin to prepare the viewer for the noir style of *The Wrong Son*.

### Websites



<http://www.thinkquest.org>

Created by students for students, this massive website contains the Thinkquest Library of over 5,500 educational websites, including material on movies, drama, art history, mathematics, history, science, etc., all available for classroom use.

<http://www.crimeculture.com/Contents/Film%20Noir.html>, <http://www.filmsite.org/filmnoir.html>  
Everything you ever wanted to know about the film noir style.

## Activities – Page 1 of 3

### Before Seeing the Play

1. Students should be familiar with the basic plot line and style of *The Wrong Son* so they will be prepared for the complex structure of flashbacks, the musical genre and the “noir” look of the production. Distribute copies of pages 1 and 2 of the Study Guide (“About the Play”) for perusal.

2. To create the “world” of *The Wrong Son*, playwright/composer Allen Cole wrote a story in the style of the pulp thriller novels and B movies of the 1940s and ‘50s and combined it with the jazz sounds of the period. The play is a piece of serious musical theatre.

i) Discuss with the class the choice of adapting a novel/short story or movie to another form such as a play, TV miniseries or musical. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each medium? Have students use novels they have read in class or on their own and discuss the challenges of adapting them to another art form.

ii) What components of a musical make it different from other forms of storytelling? Encourage your students to talk about other musicals they may have seen, perhaps presented locally by the NAC or Orpheus, or in movie form such as *Chicago*, *Moulin Rouge*, *The Lion King*, or *Rent*. Have them discuss what they like and dislike about this particular theatrical form. Musical are often cheerful and upbeat with a happy ending. Have them discuss the effect of a serious topic for a musical and the power of serious operas. The students can find out more about Canadian musicals by consulting page 14 of the Study Guide for *Pélagie: An Acadian Odyssey*, posted on the NAC’s ArtsAlive website:

[http://www.artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/pelagie\\_guide.pdf](http://www.artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/pelagie_guide.pdf). Have any of them seen a Canadian musical before?

iii) Writers use verse or song to accentuate the emotional state of their characters. We create poetry or speak in iambic pentameter because simple prose is not potent enough. Characters break into song when their love, anguish, hope, etc., is too great to be expressed in ordinary speech. Recitative is one step up from prose, and song is another level above recitative. Have the students discuss these statements with reference to the excerpt from *The Wrong Son* or to other instances from their literature classes.

3. Distribute copies of the excerpt from Scene 6 of *The Wrong Son* found on pages 14–16 of the Study Guide. (Students should be aware that dialogue shown in bold type is meant to be sung, either to a melodic tune or in recitative style. Of course, they need not try to reproduce this quality while reading the passage aloud or performing it in class.) Have the students read the excerpt aloud in class to become familiar with the rhythm of the dialogue. In poetry, musicals or operas, rendering a thought in verse or song serves to elevate and intensify the emotions involved. Have the students reread the material and identify why the composer has set certain sections to music and left other sections as dialogue. If time permits, divide the class into groups of four (or five if one person takes on the job of directing) and have the students rehearse the scene, trying to meet the challenge of blocking in the two locations, the police station and the waterfront. Are they able to reproduce the intensity of emotions without the use of music?

### Activities – Page 2 of 3

#### Before Seeing the Play (cont'd.)

4. Distribute copies of Peter Hinton's bio (page 5) and "Biographies of Selected Cast Members" (pages 3 & 4). These artists have worked with theatre companies across Canada. Have students use information from the Encyclopedia of Canadian Theatre (<http://www.canadiantheatre.com>) to create a research project on one or more of the following companies or venues: the Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage Company (CanStage), the Shaw Festival, Theatre Passe Muraille, the Royal Alexandra Theatre, or the National Theatre School. Compare the mandates of the various theatre companies, the size of the theatre(s), and the importance of the company/school to the existence or progress of Canadian theatre.
5. Distribute copies of the "Proust Questionnaire – Character Study" found on page 17 of the Study Guide as a fun method of self-analysis. Friends in the class may like to compare answers to learn more about each other. Distribute the answers given by Peter Hinton, the new Artistic Director of the NAC English Theatre, and compare similarities and differences to the student's own. Choose a fictional character from a novel or play the students have recently studied and try to answer the questions as he/she would. After viewing *The Wrong Son*, try to fill out the questionnaire as Ryle or Peg might.
6. Students may initially find the non-realistic format of the musical genre difficult to accept. Have them read page 9 of the Study Guide, "How *The Wrong Son* Came to Be," in order to gain insight into the playwright's choices and the amalgam of jazz, film noir and Greek theatre. See also page 12 of the Study Guide, "Literary and Musical Influences," to examine some of the inspiration for the musical style. If the classroom is equipped with the appropriate technology, samples of movie scores by the various artists can be played (download from the Amazon.com website).
7. Students may not be familiar with the film noir style of the 1940s and '50s, although a few recent movies have experimented successfully with the style. Have the students read the essay on "The Film Noir Style" on pages 10 and 11 of the Study Guide. Several movies are listed on page 17, "Suggested Movies, Books and Websites," and a list of the top 50 films noirs can be found on the Internet Movie Database website at <http://www.imdb.com/chart/filmnoir>. Many of these movies can be found at popular video outlets, and most can be rented from Glebe Video (613-237-6252, 779 Bank Street, Ottawa), which has an extensive collection of film noir movies. Playing a few scenes from any of these movies in class will give the students a sense of the dark mood of this style, particularly the lighting and choice of locations.
8. **Any trip to the theatre should also involve the students being made aware of proper theatre etiquette while at the NAC. See the handout on page 22.**

## Activities – Page 3 of 3

### After Seeing the Play

9. The teacher could conduct a class discussion on the following topics:

- Style of acting chosen for this show;
- Effect of music on the impact of the play;
- Production aspects such as costume/set/lighting design;
- Relevance of this material set in 1949 to today's audiences.

10. While the play is still fresh in their minds, give students the assignment of writing a review of *The Wrong Son*. Have them read reviews of other plays in the *Ottawa Citizen* or *X Press* to give them an idea of the standard approach to theatrical criticism. A suggested outline for writing a review can also be found on page 21 of this Study Guide. Another excellent guide to writing a review can be found on the Theatre Ontario website at [http://theatreontario.org/content/play\\_reviews.htm](http://theatreontario.org/content/play_reviews.htm). Students can find complete production information for their reviews from the house programs distributed at the matinée, or they may refer to page 3 of this Study Guide (“Who Helped Put the Production Together?”). The review should cover the following areas, in general and more specifically when merited: all design elements (lighting, sound, set and costumes), the performance of the actors, the direction, the basic narrative, the dialogue, and the central theme(s) of the script.

11. Have your students suggest another medium (e.g., comic strip, TV show, etc.) for the story of *The Wrong Son*. Do they feel that the musical form best served the telling of the Nova Scotia story? Why or why not? Did the “noir” style help or hinder?

12. “Ideas for Designing a Set” can be found online on page 12 of the NAC Study Guide for *Earshot* at [http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/allaboutthenac/publications/education/earshot\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/allaboutthenac/publications/education/earshot_guide.pdf). Many more ideas on designing sets, costumes, lighting, etc. can be found on the ArtsAlive website, <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/design>. Examine these pages and the colour pages of designs found in this Study Guide and then have the students discuss choices made by the director or designers for *The Wrong Son*. Discuss use of colours, lines, shapes, or motifs in the set design and costume styles.

13. Playwright and composer Allen Cole uses a variety of jazz styles throughout the musical *The Wrong Son*. Have the students discuss the sounds chosen for each character or situation and decide if they were effective in portraying character, setting and mood, or giving meaning to the situation.

14. Check out the story board created by set/costume designer Dany Lyne by visiting [artsalive.ca http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/design/storyboard.html](http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/design/storyboard.html). The story board is a scene-by-scene compilation of photos of Dany's model or maquette in its various “looks.” Discuss how the artists involved in the production of *The Wrong Son* might benefit from the existence of this creative “tool.” Artsalive.ca stresses the collaborative nature of theatre. How many ways could a story board be part of a collaborative process?

## **How to Write a Play Review** (See Activity 10)

The review may take different approaches depending on the grade level. At the lower levels the focus could be largely on relating the story and making observations on aspects of the production. At higher levels the focus could be more comprehensive, and could include a critical analysis of the effects of the choices made by the director, designer(s), composer and actors.

Here is a suggested content outline for a play review:

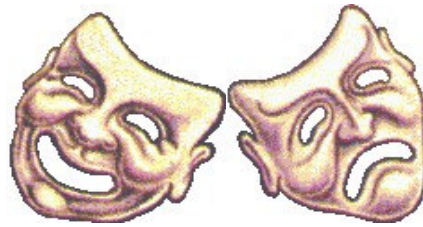
*Paragraph 1:* Identify the production: give information about the play title, playwright, company, venue, run dates of the show. It's also helpful to provide the names of some of the important people on the creative team, such as the director, the designer, and several actors.

*Paragraph 2:* Provide a brief plot synopsis of the play(s), giving the sequence of events. (If students have been given material from the NAC's Study Guide, they should be encouraged to put the synopsis into their own words. They may wish to reveal the surprises, plot twists and events that conclude the play.)

*Paragraph 3:* This paragraph should include detailed observations about the set, costumes, lights, and music—in other words, the technical aspects of the production. It may also include comments on how the various elements worked together to achieve an overall effect, such as creating a mood and atmosphere. What was the overall “world” of this production, and how effectively was it conveyed? All judgments or opinions should be backed up with reasons for that decision.

*Paragraph 4:* Share your observations on the acting and directing. Describe the actors' use of voice and movement and their methods of characterization, and the choices made by the director to create an overall concept for the play.

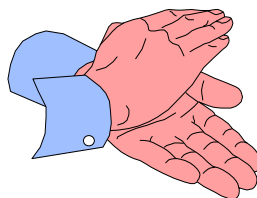
*Paragraph 5:* Summarize your overall impression of the play and how well it achieved what it set out to. Did it accomplish what the playwright intended?



### ***Theatre Etiquette***

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

- 1.** *The Wrong Son* will be performed in the Theatre of the NAC. Matinee performances at the NAC are for students and the general public. 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 movie actors, 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. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors' performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others during the show may be asked to leave the Theatre.
- 2.** It is important that no electronic devices be used in the Theatre so that the atmosphere of the play is not interrupted and others are not disturbed. Cell phones, pagers and anything that beeps must be turned off. Cameras and all other recording devices are not permitted in the Theatre.
- 3.** You will be seeing *The Wrong Son* in the Theatre of the NAC. Tickets with assigned seats will be distributed by your teacher, and to avoid confusion it is important to sit in your designated seat. All even-numbered seats are on the left side of the theatre, and all odd-numbered seats are on the right. This means that seats 10 and 12, for example, are actually side by side.
- 4.** House programs may or may not be distributed at this student matinee. However, information about the artists who put this play together can be found in this Study Guide for those who wish to use it in writing a review. Programs can be made available to teachers upon request as a teaching aid to show how a program is put together.
- 5.** The play is performed in 14 scenes with one 15-minute intermission. Anyone leaving while the play is in progress may unfortunately not be allowed back into the Theatre.







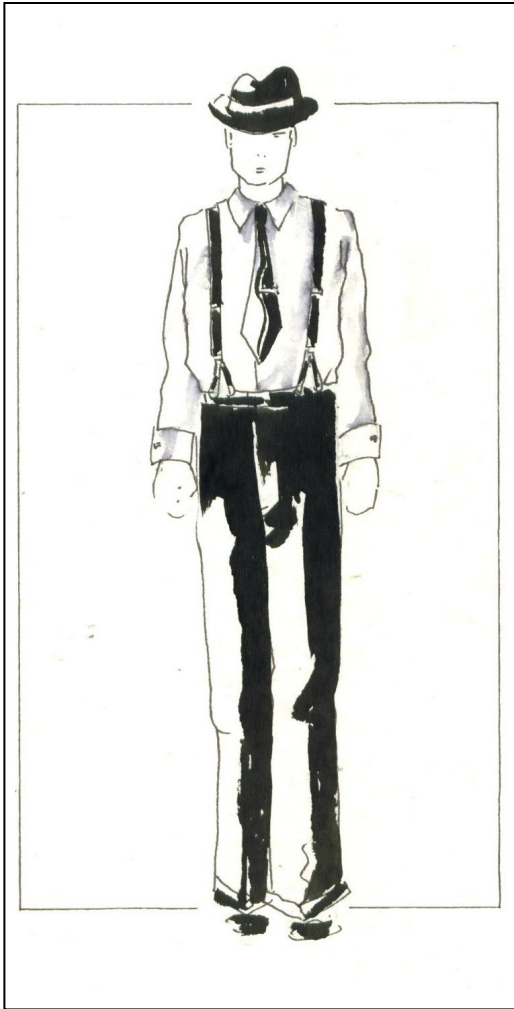
NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

**The National Youth and Education Trust**

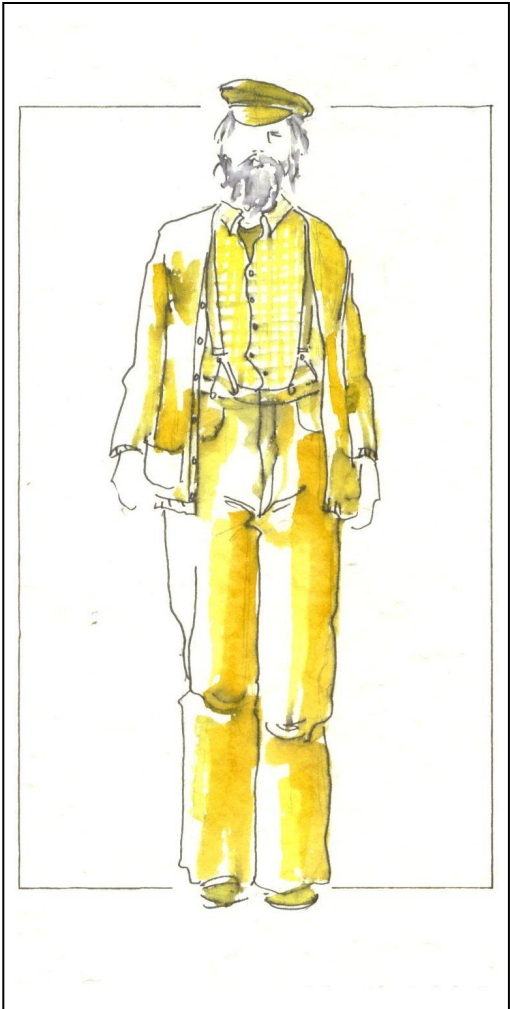
Investing in young Canadians through the performing arts: as young audiences, through professional training and in classrooms across the country. Supported by Founding Partner TELUS, SunLife Financial, True Energy Inc., Michael Potter and Véronique Dhieux, supporters and patrons of the National Arts Centre Gala, and the National Arts Centre Foundation Donors' Circle.



Peg



Ryle



Tremble

Costume Designs for *The Wrong Son* – Designer: Dany Lyne



View of Maquette for *The Wrong Son* – Designer: Dany Lyne