

Pélagie:
An Acadian Musical Odyssey
a musical by Vincent de Tourdonnet and Allen Cole
based on the novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette*
by Antonine Maillet

a National Arts Centre English Theatre /
Canadian Stage Company (CanStage) (Toronto)
world premiere coproduction

Study Guide

THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES
2003-2004 SEASON

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About this Study 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 are meant for classroom display, but may also be photocopied for students. Here is an outline of the contents of each page with suggestions as to its use.

Page(s):		May Be Used To:
2-3	About The Play: Plot outline of the play, character descriptions, notes on the creation of <i>Pélagie</i> .	Aid students in appreciating the script and performance
4-5	Who Helped Put the Production Together? List of cast members, director, and heads of design and production. Biographies of Vincent de Tourdonnet, Allen Cole, and others.	Aid students in writing a review and relating to the production.
6	Biography of Antonine Maillet	Provide enrichment.
7-9	History of Acadia	Foster students' understanding of the politics of the period.
10-11	Acadian Culture	Foster students' understanding of the lifestyle of the Acadian community.
12-13	Songs from <i>Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey</i>	Provide reference material for activities.
14	Canadian Musicals	Provide enrichment.
15-16	Pre Performance Activities	Prepare the class for the performance.
17	Post Performance Activities	Aid in teaching students to reflect on and appreciate the show.
18	Curriculum References	Provide the teacher with connections between curriculum and performance.
19	Theatre Etiquette	Prepare students to be audience members.
20	Colour Page: Map of Acadia with Activities	Display in the classroom or distribute to students for activity.
21	Colour Page: Costume Design	Display in the classroom and connect to an activity.

About the Play (page 1 of 2)

Synopsis of *Pélagie: an Acadian Musical Odyssey*

The play begins with a prologue showing the Acadian people being deported from their fertile land in Grand-Pré to the distant British colony of Georgia. After 18 pointless years of near-slavery in the cotton fields, mother Pélagie decides that her extended family must risk the journey back home. Unable to afford passage on a sailing vessel and choosing to rescue as many exiled Acadians along the way as possible, they will go overland.

A small hand-pulled cart (a “charrette”), packed with the bare necessities of survival, becomes the centre of Pélagie’s struggle to keep her people alive. Among Pélagie’s group is the 93 year-old Bélonie, who lost his entire family in the deportation. The dark old storyteller insists that the phantom “wagon of death” is following closely at their heels. As they endure hunger, disease and danger, Pélagie is often thankful for the ministrations of the stubborn, club-footed healer Céline who is part MicMaq.

They encounter a ship captained by the mighty Beausoleil, mythical hero of the Acadian resistance, forever sailing his people to safety from exile. Pélagie is deeply touched by Beausoleil, and their common mission sparks romantic feelings.

However, tides are turning and Beausoleil spins idyllic tales of the new Southern Acadia: Louisiana. This is heresy to Pélagie, whose every bone yearns to return her people northward, to the land of their ancestors. Beausoleil also draws Pélagie’s son Jean into visions of rebellion against the tyranny of the English. Pélagie is devastated when Jean leaves to join the American revolutionaries.

After many trials and adventures, the tattered gang finally stumbles home, 22 years after they were deported. On arrival, they learn that the English and loyalist Americans are occupying all their lands, and that Acadia may never again exist as they knew it. Devastated, Pélagie comes to realize that although a land has been lost, through their struggle, a people has not just been saved: a people has been created. *“Wherever I walk, wherever I am, that will be Acadie.”*

The wagon of death, which recently caught up to old Bélonie (who at the last moment is reunited with his lost great-grandson), now comes for Pélagie as well. But her daughter Madeleine, leading the others still further northward, settles her budding family into what is today New Brunswick. As Pélagie looks from the wagon of death, she is satisfied that she has helped assure the survival of her family, her people, and her culture.

Principal Characters in *Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey*

Pélagie Leblanc (known in legend as “Pélagie-la-Charrette”): widow who, through her strong determination, leads her family and a band of exiled Acadians from Georgia back to her homeland in the Maritimes.

Joseph Beausoleil: legendary Acadian sea captain who rescues exiles and transports them either to Louisiana or back to the Maritimes.

About the Play (page 2 of 2)

Principal Characters (continued)

Bélonie Maillet: 93 year old Acadian man (and ancestor of Antonine Maillet, the author of the novel) who makes the journey with *Pélagie*.

Céline: club-footed healer of the group.

Jean, Charlécoco and Madeleine: children of *Pélagie*.

Charles-Auguste Cormier: young member of the group who falls in love with Madeleine and marries her along the way.

Death: the constant follower of the group.

Notes on the Creation of *Pélagie: an Acadian Musical Odyssey*

Vincent de Tourdonnet created the book and lyrics, Allen Cole the book and music. It was developed for coproduction by the Canadian Stage Company (aka CanStage) (Toronto), and the National Arts Centre (Ottawa), in association with The Atlantic Theatre Festival (Wolfville, NS).

The deportation and subsequent return of the Acadians is a vital chapter of Canadian history. Cole and de Tourdonnet are pleased that this project is so extremely Canadian, not simply because it tells a tale which happened to people in our land, but most of all, because it is a tale told from a perspective which is humanitarian, thoughtfully pacifist, and deeply aware of the contribution of women in forming community, culture and values – values which are pluralist, inclusive and universal. They feel privileged in being able to bring such a significant tale to the musical theatre with three of Canada's foremost theatrical institutions. It's quite wonderful that the 2004 production of *Pélagie* will mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of Acadia.

The Great Deportation. In 1755, France and England were at war. One consequence of this was the deportation of the Acadians wherein most of the population of what is today Nova Scotia, the French-speaking Acadians, were forcibly deported by the English from the land they had occupied for 150 years. They were divided and scattered across the American colonies in an attempt to forever wipe out the French presence in the Maritimes.

The Novel. Francophone Acadian writer Antonine Maillet (perhaps best known for *La Sagouine*) is probably the most renowned chronicler of her people. Her novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (winner of France's prestigious Prix Goncourt) is a compelling narrative dealing with this dark time in Acadian/Canadian history. Ms. Maillet's feedback and perspective were crucial in the early stages of adapting the musical.

The Musical. *Pélagie* was in development for six years through the writing process, the dramaturgical input from CanStage's Iris Turcott, multiple public workshops, and the passionate directorial vision of Michael Shamata. The National Arts Centre was the natural partner with CanStage for the epic scale of this production, and for the national import of its content. The Atlantic Theatre Festival is located in Wolfville Nova Scotia, near Grande-Pré, the very heart of the land where the tale of *Pélagie* begins and ends.

Who Helped Put the Production Together? (page 1 of 2)

Principal Cast Members

Pélagie - **Susan Gilmour**
Beausoleil - **Réjean J. Cournoyer**
Charles-Auguste - **Shaun Amyot**
Jean - **Mike Nadjewski**
Madeleine - **Amy Walsh**
Charlécoco - **Stephen Guy-McGrath**
Bélonie - **Cliff Le Jeune**
Céline - **Mary Ellen Mahoney**
Death - **Jayne Lewis**

The Creative Team

Book and Lyrics by
Vincent de Tourdonnet
Book and Music by **Allen Cole**
Based on the novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* by **Antonine Maillet**
Directed by **Michael Shamata**
Set Design: **John Ferguson**
Lighting Design: **John (Jock) Munro**
Costume Design: **Charlotte Dean**
Sound Design: **John Hazen** and **Keith Handegord**
Musical Director: **Jeffrey Huard**
Stage Manager: **Tim Yakimec**

Biographies

Michael Shamata (Director) has been Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick and London, Ontario's Grand Theatre and won the Capital City Critics' Award – Outstanding Production for his direction of *Kilt* at Ottawa's Great Canadian Theatre Company. Other musicals he has directed are *A Little Night Music* and *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* for CanStage as well as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Music Man*, *Cabaret* for various regional theatres.

Susan Gilmour (Pélagie) has appeared in a multitude of musicals both in Canada and around the world. She had the roles of Mrs. Pearce in *My Fair Lady* and Jenny in *Threepenny Opera* at the Stratford Festival and the Narrator in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at the Drayton Festival. She toured North America, Asia and South Africa as Fantine in *Les Misérables* and has appeared as Eva Peron in *Evita*, Aldonza in *Man of LaMancha*, Reno Sweeney in *Anything Goes* and Nancy in *Oliver!*.

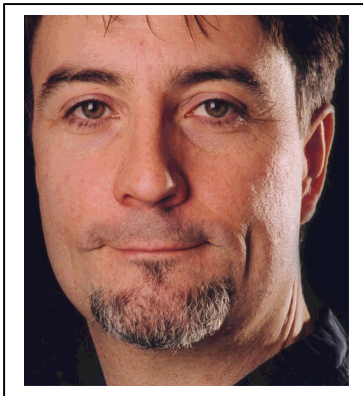
Réjean J. Cournoyer (Beausoleil) appeared as Gandalf in Theatre New Brunswick's production of *The Hobbit*, and as Cinderella's Prince and The Wolf in *Into the Woods* and Fedotyck in *Three Sisters*, both for Atlantic Theatre Festival. He also had a starring role in the feature film "The Event" for which he received a 2003 ACTRA Award (Maritimes).

Shaun Amyot (Charles-Auguste) appeared as Tobias Ragg in *Sweeney Todd* and Martin Guerre in *The House of Martin Guerre*, both for CanStage. He danced in the original Broadway casts of *Ragtime*, and *Seussical, The Musical* as well as in the 1999 Broadway revival of *Annie Get Your Gun*. He was in the premiere of the French version of *Chicago* in Paris and appeared as a reporter in the movie version filmed in Toronto.

Who Helped Put the Production Together? (page 2 of 2)

Biographies (continued)

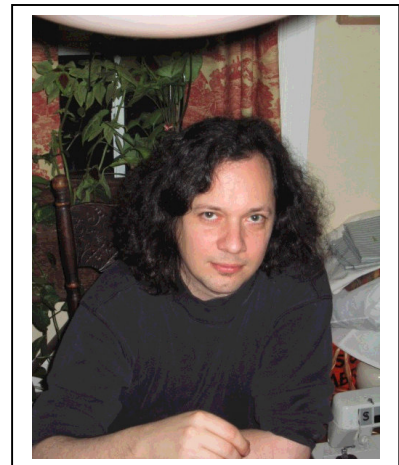
Vincent de Tourdonnet (Book and Lyrics) grew up in B.C., lived in Montreal and New York, and currently resides in Toronto. He is delighted that this musical incarnation of *Pélagie* is finally making her way home, with such a remarkable gang to accompany her.



A writer/director of musical theatre, Vincent's previous productions include *Snappy Tales* (Factory Theatre (Toronto)), *Jeanne, the Joan of Arc Musical* (Saidye Bronfman Centre and La Place des Arts (Montreal), La Capitole (Québec)), shows for Caravan Farm Theatre (British Columbia), and adaptations including *The Threepenny Opera* for Touchstone Theatre (Vancouver) and McGill University (Montreal). Vincent is president of the Canadian Association of Librettists, Composers and Lyricists, and has taught musical theatre writing at Long Island University in New York. An urban cyclist, Vincent works to support sustainable transportation.

Allen Cole (Book and Music) is one of Canada's foremost creators for the musical theatre. Over the last 20 years he has worked as composer, writer, lyricist, and/or musical director for musicals from coast to coast. In 2000 the National Post referred to Allen as "the new King of Canadian musicals."

As a collaborator, his primary commitment has been toward helping new works reach the stage. As a composer/writer, he is attempting to mine the territory that lies between the high art contemporary opera and the mainstream commercial musical; to create an intelligent, popular musical theatre that has its roots in the alternative theatre community.



His musical, *Anything That Moves*, co-created with writer Ann-Marie MacDonald and Alisa Palmer, premiered at the du Maurier World Stage Festival and won Dora Awards for Best New Musical and Best Musical Direction. His bouffon opera, *Hush* (Theatre Passe Muraille (Toronto), 1989), received three Dora awards, including Best Production and Best Musical Director for Allen himself.

His innovative work with writer/director Alisa Palmer has been highly acclaimed. *A Play About the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Theatre Passe Muraille (Toronto), 1993), won her a Chalmers award and him a Dora award for Outstanding Music. Another collaboration, *Wearing the Bone*, received an Outstanding Music nomination.

Allen studied composition and performance at Boston's Berklee School of Music. He has received numerous grants and arts awards, including Canada Council Explorations, Commission for Canadian Composers, and Project Grants; Ontario Arts Council Chalmers' Fund, Seed Money and Workshop Grants; and Factor Recording Grants.

Antonine Maillet – author of the novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette*

Antonine Maillet is certainly one of the best-known Canadian writers on both the national and the international scenes. She is author of some fifteen novels, more than a dozen plays, a large number of radio and television scripts, several children books, and many feature articles. She is a visiting professor at several North American and European universities.

She has been awarded many prizes for her works. These include the Governor General's Award for *Don l'original* in 1972; both the Prize of the City of Montréal in 1973 and the Prix France-Canada in 1975 for *Mariaagélas*; the Chalmers Canadian Play Award from the Ontario Arts Council in 1980 for *La Sagouine*; and the most prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1979 for *Pélagie-la-Charrette*. Companion of the Order of Canada (1982), Member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Officer of the National Order of Québec, she has received honorary degrees from more than 25 universities in Canada and abroad.

In line with a long tradition, Antonine Maillet is above all a storyteller; but she distinguished herself by recounting her stories in writing. Most of these stories relate to Acadia and celebrate her people and her culture. Using their own language, which has similarities to the French spoken in the 17th and 18th centuries, her characters are mostly poor, illiterate, and irreverent, yet very courageous and strong-willed women. Living on “the wrong side of the track”, they embody her forgotten people. While clashing with the local establishment, they grapple with the harsh realities of life; never-the-less, they maintain their sense of humour and are still able to marvel at little things.



Published in 1971, *La Sagouine* established Antonine Maillet's reputation first in New Brunswick, then in Québec, and finally throughout the rest of Canada. In it, a 72-year-old charwoman and former prostitute who is married to a fisherman tells her life's sad story. While scrubbing the floor, she comments on politics, social injustice, religion, the history of the Acadian people, education, and even the moon landing. However naïve and simplistic, her views often express those of voiceless people and make a lot of sense.

The awarding of the Prix Goncourt to Antonine Maillet for *Pélagie-la-Charette*, the first non-French citizen to receive such an honour, earned her international praise. With that epic novel, she no doubt gained recognition for Acadia as she herself became known throughout the world as a spokesperson for her people. In addition, her extraordinary heroine became the symbol of resistance to English assimilation and the inspiration for an Acadian renaissance. Although she recounts the British Army's 1755 brutal destruction of the Acadian settlements (in what is now the province of Nova Scotia) and the cruel dispersion of the Acadian people along the eastern coast of North America, Maillet chose to highlight the return of the scattered families to their homeland after an odyssey of ten years, under the strong leadership of Pélagie.

Antonine Maillet's works and success have undoubtedly stimulated literary creation among the Acadians and no one questions her huge contribution to the resurgence of the Acadian culture. *exerpted from Jacques Cotnam. http://collections.ic.gc.ca/heirloom_series/volume6/238-239.htm*

The History of Acadia (page 1 of 3) The Founding of Acadia

Shortly after John and Sebastian Cabot visited the Grand Banks in 1497 French fishermen began to visit this incredibly rich fishing ground. Usually sailing the area twice each year to fill their holds with cod, they would go ashore each summer to build temporary salting and drying stands for their fish. By 1519, the French, the Portuguese, and the English had set up summer depots on Newfoundland, Cape Breton Island, and along the St. Lawrence River. By the mid 1500s valuable fur trading with the Indians began to draw still more interest to the New World.

In the spring of 1604 Pierre de Monts set off with Samuel de Champlain and a tiny fleet to sail around the southern tip of what is now known as Nova Scotia. They were searching for a suitable place for a permanent settlement to lay better claim to this rich land for France. He discovered the Annapolis Valley, charted the Bay of Fundy, and, on tiny Saint Croix Island near the mouth of the river that today divides New Brunswick from Maine, established a colony of 79 men. After a disastrous winter in which many of the men died of scurvy the settlement was moved the following spring to the Annapolis Valley site because it afforded better shelter, the alluvial soil was very fertile and the MicMaq Indians of that area were found to be hospitable. The community facing onto the well-protected Annapolis basin was named Port Royal and the land around it the colonists called "L' Acadie", a name derived from the ancient Greek writer Virgil's Arcadia, an idyllic, imaginary land "of uncommon and extreme beauty" inhabited by simple, virtuous people. There is another theory about the name: that it was derived from the MicMaq word *quoddy* or *cadie*, which meant "fertile" or "beautiful landscape". The Acadians were here to stay.

Although Spain still claimed much of North America, its powers were weakening and the Atlantic Seaboard was starting to become more crowded. In 1608 the French established Québec. The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Six years later the Dutch put down in a place now known as Manhattan. Settlement of what was to become the United States and Canada continued to pick up speed: Boston was founded in 1630; Trois Rivières was set up by Samuel de Champlain in 1634; the colony of South Carolina was settled in 1663; William Penn established Pennsylvania in 1681.

The perpetual animosity between England and France spilled over into the New World. Hostilities between the English colonists and the French settlers resulted in intermittent raids and skirmishes. Settlements were repeatedly burned and provisions stolen. Treaties between the powers resulted in the exchange of ownership of the new lands several times. French preoccupation with its home affairs often resulted in neglect of its colonists but the Acadians found that their rich land and bountiful sea supported them well without much help.



The fertile Annapolis Valley gave them crops enough to feed themselves, with some left over for trade with the thousands of settlers now pouring into Massachusetts. By the 1640s, enterprising Yankee traders had begun to send ships to Acadie to buy cattle and garden crops. And there was another important realization: they were beginning to think of themselves as a distinct people. They were still allied with France but were now something more. They were the settlers of Acadie. They had become a distinct society, the Acadians. Over the next century immigrants swelled Acadia with

The History of Acadia (page 2 of 3)

settlements ringing the Bay of Fundy and encircling the Nova Scotia peninsula.

The Treaty of Utrecht signed by several European powers ceded Newfoundland and Nova Scotia to England forever and ended French emigration and support for the Acadians. However by this time the population had grown to between 6000 and 7000 in Acadia, and the high birth rate raised this figure considerably over the next half century. England began demanding that the Acadians sign an oath of allegiance to the British crown, but the Acadians, fearing that they would be forced to fight against their cousins in New Brunswick and Québec, refused. They were initially granted the status of “Neutrals” agreeing to fight against neither the French or the English. Over time, however, the greed of English colonists for the rich lands of Acadia grew stronger and the patience of the English governors with the stubborn Acadians grew thinner. In 1754 Governor Charles Lawrence decided to solve the Acadian problem once and for all.

“Le Grand Dérangement”, or The Deportation

In the fall of 1755, the course of history in the New World was changed forever by the deportation of more than 5,000 French Acadians from Nova Scotia. Almost overnight, these Acadians found themselves homeless, stripped of their possessions, torn from their families, and forced to sail southward on overcrowded, under-supplied ships.

In his book, *History of the Acadians*, Bona Arsenault writes of the events leading up to the day when the ships and their destitute passengers left the Bay of Fundy. He quotes John Winslow, an English army officer who was stationed at Beauséjour, Nova Scotia during the upheaval:

"We are now hatching the noble and great project of banishing the French Neutrals [Acadians] from this province ... If we can accomplish this expulsion, it will have been one of the greatest deeds the English in America have ever achieved; for, among other considerations, the part of the country which they occupy is one of the best soils in the world..."

A fleet of small schooners and other sailing ships used for coastal trade were rapidly converted to handling human cargo and hastily assembled. English troops occupied the French Acadians' villages, burned their homesteads and arrested anyone who resisted. All of the area' s Catholic priests were arrested as well, and their churches converted to barracks or burned. In some places, the execution of these orders led to bloody fighting between English soldiers and Acadians. At Fort Cumberland, many were taken prisoner and deported almost immediately, forced to leave wives, children and homesteads behind.

In other areas the fighting gave some Acadian families a chance to escape together and avoid the fate of so many who were separated from their loved ones. Fighting at Miramichi allowed some 200 families to escape into the forests, where they spent a hungry, desperate winter. In Port Royal, the Acadians' oldest settlement, about half its population of 3,000 managed to escape, but many British soldiers and Acadians were killed.

On September 2, 1755, Winslow issued orders for the arrest of the Acadians at Grand-Pré: *"His Majesty's commandments (are) that your lands and tenements and cattle and livestock of all kinds are all forfeited to the Crown ... and that you yourselves are to be removed from this province ... and I hope that in whatever part of the world you fall, you may be faithful subjects, and a peaceable and happy people."*

On September 10, Winslow ordered the first group of Acadians - 230 young men and boys - to board the waiting English ships:

"I ordered ye prisoners to march. They all answered they would not go without their fathers. I took hold of [a prisoner] and bid march. He obeyed and the rest followed though slowly, and went off

The History of Acadia (page 3 of 3)

“Le Grand Dérangement”, or The Deportation (continued)

praying, singing and crying, being met by the women and children all the way, which is 1½ mile, with great lamentations, upon their knees ... Thus ended this painful task of so many heart-breaking scenes.”

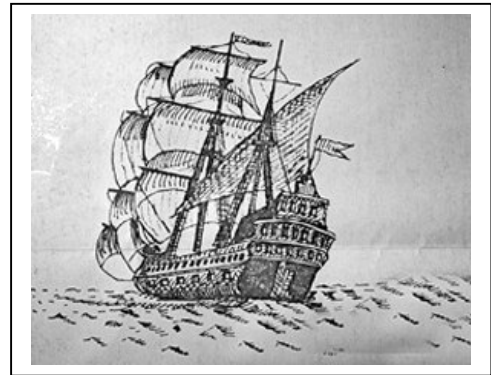
Those prisoners filled the waiting ships and remained aboard them, separated from their families, until more ships arrived on October 8. Acadian women and children, and the elderly and sick, were quickly forced aboard. Hundreds were separated from their relatives as they were embarking.

“The inhabitants, with great sorrow, abandoned their homes ... It was a scene of confusion, despair and desolation ... Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, fiancés and friends, believing they were merely separating for a few days, were never to meet again on earth, the ships having far distant destinations.”

The various destinations of the ships had been assigned by the English so that the Acadians could not easily regroup to return to Nova Scotia and would therefore be integrated into the English colonies of the Eastern seaboard.

On October 17, the ships finally left the Bay of Fundy carrying some 5,000 Acadian exiles. Arsenault's account states that 2,000 were bound for Massachusetts; 700 for Connecticut; 300 for New York; 500 for Pennsylvania; 1,000 for Maryland; 1,200 for Virginia; 500 each for North and South Carolina; and 400 for Georgia.

“In this way,” Arsenault writes, “the Acadians were cruelly banished from their country and plunged overnight into abject poverty. These thousands of victims [of] one of the most sorrowful upheavals in history, left behind all the possessions they had accumulated in four, five, even six generations.”



Conditions on the sailing vessels were terrible. The holds which had been built only four feet high were stifling and passengers were seldom allowed on deck for fresh air. The spaces were so overcrowded that there was not even room enough for everyone to lie down and sleep at one time. Much of the food spoiled immediately and rations were meager. Sanitary facilities were lacking and illness became rampant. Typhoid and smallpox took the lives of hundreds of passengers.

The exiles were not greeted warmly at their destinations. Only Maryland, with its large Irish Catholic population, reached out to the Acadians. In most other places, however, the English "viewed the Indians and the French with equal horror." Most of the colonies didn't even know the Acadians were on the way so there were no resources to feed, house or clothe the destitute refugees. Many fled into the forests, most others were separated and sent to colonists' farms for slave labour. Children were often separated from parents and assimilated into English homes. Most of the exiled Acadians, over the next decade, trekked southward over land, by river or the Atlantic coastline to the swamps and bayous of Spanish-owned Louisiana which had a resident French culture. These Acadians eventually prospered and came to be known as the Cajuns of USA. A few exiles returned to France but were treated there as foreigners and deported to the East Indies. Some managed to find their way back to the Beaubassin area of Nova Scotia, to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or to other points in Canada.

Pélagie is the story of one band of exiled Acadians who, led by a determined mother, makes its way overland back from Georgia to their homeland in the Canadian Maritimes.

Acadian Culture (page 1 of 2) Culture and Lifestyle - Then

The isolation of Acadia from France during the period from 1604 to 1755 necessitated the independent spirit of the settlements. Communities were based largely on agriculture and fishing, with hunting the plentiful waterfowl and wildlife in the forests to supplement the food for their families. However, all the other trades necessary for the maintenance of the communities were established: tanning, harness making, blacksmithing, boatbuilding, sailmaking, and pottery making were some of the trades associated with most communities. Gristmills to grind grain into flour, lumber mills to cut and plane lumber for building homes were also part of each settlement. The spiritual and educational needs of each community were in the hands of priests who most often were Jesuits from France. Gardening, preserving of fruits and vegetables, cheese manufacture, the making of chokecherry or dandelion wine, weaving and clothing making were undertaken by each woman of a household. The men made furniture or ropes by hand during the long winter months.

Some of the richest land the Acadians found was often along the border of the Bay of Fundy where extreme fluctuations in the tides exposed vast salt marshes twice a day. The Acadians developed an ingenious system of dykes and sluices for reclaiming this rich land and desalinating the soil. Hay for their cattle could then be grown, cured and harvested in abundance.



Dyke building on a salt marsh



Jew's Harp

Music is a most important part of Acadian culture. The typical Acadian home included a musical instrument - either a piano, fiddle, accordion, organ, or guitar. Easily portable instruments were the jew's harp played by plucking a metal band which resonated in the mouth, and, of course, spoons slapped against thighs for keeping rhythm. The musical compositions are typically simple and melodic, their origin either in the northwestern provinces of France or original to the Acadians themselves. Dancing was a favourite activity at social celebrations - reels, jigs, quadrilles or stepdancing. Check out the following website to hear some traditional Acadian folksongs: <http://www.terriau.org/music.htm>.

Herbal remedies, many learned from the MicMaq aboriginals who were valued mentors were the principal methods of healing. Céline, the healer in *Pélagie*, uses a variety of herbs during the long trek home: Yarrow for cholic, senna for stomach upset, cress for goiter, wildwoods tea and raspberry root for sore back, and burdock root for a general tonic.

In celebration of the marriage of Pélagie's daughter Madeleine on route home, Pélagie bakes a traditional dessert, a "tourteau", a kind of cheese cake with origins in France. You might like to try to make this dessert, and serve it with maple syrup. A recipe for it can be found at http://chocolateandzucchini.com/archives/2004/03/tourteau_fromage.php

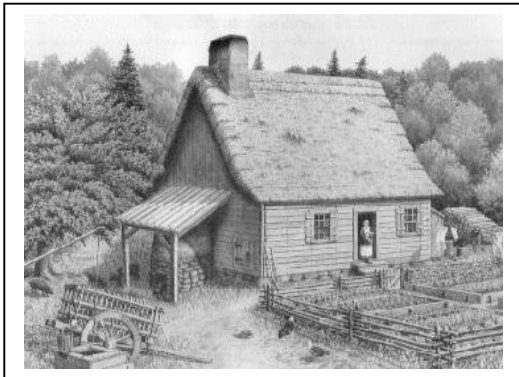


Yarrow

Acadian Culture (page 2 of 2) Culture and Lifestyle - Now

The founding of the Université de Moncton in 1963 in the heart of the Acadian region triggered a creative explosion in artistic growth. Publishing firms, theatre companies, art galleries and artist centres sprang up through the 1970s and 1980s. Artists in all disciplines reflect a brand new image of Acadie and give it a voice that attracts public attention everywhere.

Performing artists such as Édith Butler, Angèle Arsenault, and Ronald Bourgeois are finding an audience. Visit the website of the popular music and comedy group Barachois from PEI (<http://www.barachois.com>) or the website of the New Brunswick folksong group, Bois Joli (<http://www.bois-joli.com/>) and hear audio clips of Acadian songs. Visual artists, beginning with those who first studied with sculptor Claude Roussel, exhibit their works, and several have reached national and international eminence, including Nérée DeGrâce, Élizabeth LeFort, and Yvon Gallant. Initiated by Léonard Forest, Acadian cinema is emerging. It is now enriched by creators such as Phil Comeau, Anne-Marie Sirois, and Paméla Gallant. Herménégilde Chiasson, Melvin Gallant, and Germaine Comeau represent a mere fraction of successful Acadian authors getting their books published while building solid literary careers. Refer also to the page herein on Antonine Maillet who is one of the great Acadian authors.



An important Acadian community is today found in northeastern New Brunswick centered around the town of Caraquet. It is now the home port for a large Atlantic fishing fleet and has a fisheries school, boatbuilding facilities, and fish-, crab-, and oyster-packing plants. Historical associations are reflected by its Acadian Museum and the nearby reconstructed Acadian Historical Village. “Le Village Historique Acadien” is a remarkably authentic historical site which portrays the lives of Acadians between 1770 and 1939.

Interpreters in period costumes staff the more than 40 buildings and bring the ancestral customs and traditional trades back to life. Women’s tasks include wool preparation, weaving, making clothes and blankets, maintaining a kitchen garden, cooking and preserving foodstuffs. Carpentry, shingle making, blacksmithing, leatherworking as well as farming and fishing are demonstrated by men. Visit the website at <http://www.villagehistoriqueacadien.com/main.htm>.

The Acadian flag, seen everywhere around their communities, is based upon the French Tricolor. A “Star of Mary”, situated in the upper left-hand corner, is supposed to guide the Acadian people through their hardships.

400 years after the establishment of the first permanent European settlement in the Canadian Maritimes, Acadia, is ready to celebrate its anniversary. Visit www.acadie400.ca to learn all there is to do in Acadia in 2004.



Another highly informative website for culture and activities in Acadia during 2004 is <http://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/Cultures/en-CA/Categories/NAcadianCulture.htm>.

Songs from *Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey* (page 1 of 2)

Beausoleil's song "The Vigneault Chose the Islands"

BEAUSOLEIL

No, not to Grand-Pré, but all across the safest shores of the Maritimes!
VIGNEAULT CHOSE THE ISLANDS
ST. PIERRE AND MIQUELON
AND THE ARSENAULT AND GALLANT
CHOSE THE ISLAND OF ST. JEAN;
THE CHAISSON TO CAPE BRETON;
AND ALONG THE GREAT GASPÉ
WENT THE RICHARD, AND THE BERNARD
AND THE FAMILY GAUDET.

MARIE

AND WHERE'D YOU PUT THOSE ROBICHAUD?

BEAUSOLEIL

THE PETITCODIAC.

CÉLINA

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BELLIVEAU?

BEAUSOLEIL

THEY HEADED FOR QUEBEC;
THE GAUDIN SETTLED UP ALONG THE RIVER OF ST. JEAN;
AND AS USUAL, WHEREVER YOU GO
THERE'S PLENTY OF LEBLANC!

Excerpt from *Pélagie's* song upon reaching Acadia

PÉLAGIE

BUT I WILL CARRY GRAND-PRÉ WITH ME
DOWN INSIDE MY POCKET
WHERE IT WILL NEVER BE STOLEN FROM ME AGAIN;
AND I WILL TAKE ALL OUR TALES
OUR LEGENDS AND OUR LANGUAGE
AND PLACE THEM ABOVE MY HEART BELOW MY TONGUE

Traditional Acadian Folksong included in *Pélagie*

AH, J'AI DU GRAIN DE MIL
ET J'AI DU GRAIN DE PAILLE
ET J'AI DE L'ORANGER
ET J'AI DU TRI
J'AI DU TRICOLI
J'AI DES ALLUMETTES
ET J'AI DES ANANAS
J'AI DE BEAUX, J'AI DE BEAUX
J'AI DE BEAUX OISEAUX

Songs from *Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey* (page 2 of 2)

Jean's Song – Act I, Scene 9

MAMA PLEASE UNDERSTAND
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU
CHARLÉCOCO AND MADELEINE
I NEED YOU TO KNOW:
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS
YOU MEAN THE WHOLE WORLD TO ME
I WILL HOLD YOU INSIDE ME
WHEREVER I GO.

BUT THIS LAND YOU ARE LEAVING
HAS A MILLION TOMORROWS.
MAMA, GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING
RIGHT HERE IN OUR TIME!
MAMA, RICH MAN AND POOR MAN
ARE STANDING IN UNITY
I'VE GOT A CHANCE TO FIGHT TYRANNY
BY THEIR SIDE!

MAMA, I FEEL SO ALIVE NOW!
I HAVE NEVER BEEN STRONGER!
A THOUSAND MEN FIGHTING ALL AROUND.
YET THE FLAME IS AS ONE
NOW I'M BURNING FOR FREEDOM
AND MY FIRE IS NEEDED!
BY OUR GUNS, WITH OUR FLAGS UNFURLED
WE WILL CHANGE THE WORLD.

AND I FEEL SO ALIVE, NOW!
I HAVE NEVER BEEN STRONGER!
A THOUSAND MEN SHOUTING ALL AROUND.
YET THEIR WORDS ARE AS ONE.
THERE'S A YEARNING FOR FREEDOM
IN THE BLOOD OF THIS YOUNG LAND!
AND THOUGH I LOVE OLD ACADIA
AMERICA, NOW WILL BE MY HOME.

AND MAMA, I PRAY
THAT SOME DAY YOU'LL FORGIVE ME.
I WILL LOVE YOU FOREVER;
REMEMBER YOUR JEAN.

Canadian Musicals

Canada has a long, if not illustrious, history of musical theatre starting with, of course, aboriginal ritual/theatre. The very first theatrical presentation by Europeans in the New World, *Le Théâtre Neptune en la Nouvelle France*, in 1606 did in fact include music. However, this could hardly be considered a Canadian musical. Over the next centuries, Canada was served by touring companies from Europe presenting operettas and burlesques with a few local amateur groups and garrisons creating musical revues of their own.

In the 1900s, musical revues became made-in-Canada with the popular soldier-entertainers The Dumbells (who toured into the 1920s), Gratien Gélinas' famous revues, *Les Fridolinades* starting in 1938, and the annual satirical revue from Toronto, *Spring Thaw* starting in 1948. In 1957, the huge success *My Fur Lady* began at McGill University and went on to become a national phenomenon.

With the foundation of the Charlottetown Festival in 1964, the creation of true American-style musicals made in Canada exploded. The most notable from that company is, of course, *Anne of Green Gables*, with music by Norman Campbell and book by Donald Harron. This famous show, the family-oriented tale of an orphan and her adoptive parents, has become the longest running musical in the history of this nation. It has had innumerable tours across the country and around the world and been presented every summer since 1964 in Charlottetown. The Festival has also been responsible for *Fauntleroy*, *Kronborg: 1582* (a rock musical based on *Hamlet*) and a musical adaptation of Gordon Pinsent's *The Rowdyman*.



With the occasional success and the growth of an industry (not to mention the training of talent in the acting and music institutions), the theatre in Canada hovered between so-called Broadway-bound works (like the ill-fated *Duddy* or *Flowers for Algernon* at Citadel Theatre (Edmonton)), and products that were uniquely Canadian like *Klondyke*, Ken Mitchell / Humphrey and the Dumptrucks' prairie-version of *Othello*, *Cruel Tears*, and the smash-hit collective creation, *Paper Wheat*. Typically, most Canadian musicals have been small and intimate, such as the two-hander *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, or the small scale productions of *Love is Strange*, *Fire*, *Don Messer's Jubilee* or *Rock and Roll*.

There have even been some attempts at the larger-scale musical genre. *Starmania* the Alain Berger / Luc Plamondon phenomenon, has played across the country several times, been a smash in France and is slated for adaptation into English. Although a mega-musical version of the St. Joan story, *Jeanne*, was not a financial success it was seen by 80,000 spectators. And, though it received disastrous reviews when it opened in London, England, there may be some attempt to revive the made-in-Canada musical *Napoleon* by Andrew Sabiston and Timothy Williams.

In 1999, Plamondon's new musical, based on Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* arrived in Montreal from its sold-out success in Paris. It broke Montreal records for advance ticket sales and went on to tour to huge success. Carol Shields' *Larry's Party* and Brad Fraser and Joey Miller's *Outrageous* played at Canadian Stage in Toronto in recent years. This year we add to this list of Canadian musicals the CanStage/NAC coproduction of Vincent de Tourdonnet and Allen Cole's *Pélagie: An Acadian Odyssey*.

Excerpted from <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=musical%20theatre>.

Pre Performance Activities (page 1 of 2)

- 1.** Vocabulary builder: Following are some vocabulary words from the script for *Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey*. Have your students find a definition for each word. If yours is a drama class, divide students into groups of 3 or 4, assign each group one of the words and have them create a short improvisation built around that word as a theme or vital ingredient. If you have an English class have students write a paragraph or short story in which an assigned word is an integral part.
odyssey, brine, cockeyed, deportation, disarray, dominance, prowess, lard, morbid, parables, rank, resilience, suffice, skewer, treason, tyranny, vengeance.
- 2.** *Pélagie* dramatizes the plight of the displaced Acadian people. Their struggle and determination to reclaim their homeland is one of inspiration and pride that is not often seen in our Canadian history. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have them list 10 points or ideas that they feel determine one's right to claim a homeland. Have each group present its list to the class and combine common ideas to create a list that represents the entire class' thoughts. Post the list in the classroom and refer to it in discussion following the play.
- 3.** Have each student write two or three descriptive paragraphs about their "homeland". Many students may have been born in other countries or cities, while others will be National Capital Region natives. However, all students should be encouraged to speak with other family members about their place of birth, whether it be Canada or abroad, before they begin writing. Their work should include the geography, vegetation, and people as well as their own feelings towards this place. They should be encouraged to share their work in class.
- 4.** Have each student read the history of Acadia provided on pages 7–9 herein. Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and choose a section from the history to improvise a scene. The groups should create their own characters and situation but be true to the description of the event in the outline. Present these scenes to the class and discuss the moments in history and the students' choices in how to interpret them dramatically.
- 5.** Included on page 22 herein is a sketch of one of designer Charlotte Dean's costumes for the production. It is for the character of "Death", who appears only to Bélonie, an old man on the journey, and who, in the designer's interpretation, is not like our anticipated representation of Death. Discuss with your students the nature of collaboration and interpretation and then have each draw or write about his/her ideas for a character called Death. How would their design look compared to that of the designer and what do they think is important to depict in this character?

Pre Performance Activities (page 2 of 2)

6. Co-creators Vincent de Tourdonnet and Allen Cole adapted the novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* by Antonine Maillet. The result is a piece of serious musical theatre.

i) Discuss with the class the choice of adapting a novel into another form such as a play, TV mini-series, film, or musical. Include in the discussion the strengths and weaknesses of each genre. Have students use novels they have read in class or on their own (or even a reading of *Pélagie-la-Charrette* itself) and discuss the wisdom of adaptation into another art form.

ii) What are the components of a musical that make it different from other forms of storytelling? Encourage your students to talk about other musicals they may have seen and what they liked and disliked about this particular theatrical form. You might have them read the page herein on Canadian Musicals (page 14). Have any of them seen a Canadian musical before?

7. The journey made by *Pélagie* and her followers is a long and arduous one, starting out in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia (near present day Wolfville) from which they are deported. They are transported by ship to Charleston, Georgia. After many years as virtual slave labour they begin their journey back home “*overland close to the sea*”. The places mentioned in the musical are Hope Island (near Savannah); the coastal swamps of the Carolinas; Yorktown, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; Boston and Salem, Massachusetts; Grand-Pré; and finally, Memramcook, New Brunswick (near present day Sackville). Using maps try to trace the route taken by the Acadians.

Journal Questions

1. Where do you think of as your home, and why?
2. Do you ever talk with your family about your family history? Are you interested in where your ancestors came from? Why?
3. What do you do, if anything, to remember those who have gone before you, either within your own family traditions or in your own way?
4. What would you be willing to sacrifice for your family and friends?
5. Try to imagine yourself 20 years in the future, living away from your childhood home. What do you think would be your most vivid memories of the place where you grew up? What would you miss the most? What would you be grateful to have left behind?
6. How do you feel that your family’s specific cultural background contributes to creating Canadian identity?

Post Performance Activities

1. While the play is still fresh in their minds, have your students write a review for Vincent de Tourdonnet and Allen Cole's *Pélagie: An Acadian Musical Odyssey*. Have them read reviews in *The Citizen* or *Express* to give them an idea of the standard approach to theatrical criticism. A suggested outline for writing a review can also be found online on page 12 of: http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/allaboutthenac/publications/chekhov_guide.pdf. Students may have received programs at the matinée or may refer to page 4 herein (Who Helped Put the Production Together?) to use for the correct information on people involved in the production about *Pélagie* in their reviews. The areas the review should cover, in general and more specifically when merited are: all design elements (lighting, sound, set, and costumes), performances of the actors, the musical score, the direction, the basic narrative and the central theme(s).
2. Refer to page 12 herein (Songs from *Pélagie*) to find the words to *Pélagie*'s song upon reaching Acadia. At the end of her journey, as she discovers that Grand-Pré is lost, she still remains true to her commitment. Discuss with the class how we all may remain true in retaining our connection to the past. What things can we do today to remember and uphold our family history?
3. As *Pélagie*, her family, and followers travel north from their exile in Georgia, her son Jean decides to leave the group to fight against England in what we now call The American Revolution. On page 13 (Songs from *Pélagie*, p. 2) are the lyrics to Jean's song as he leaves to join the fight. Discuss with the class his decision and what it was that he was looking for. How could it be that he would want to fight when his entire family had upheld their neutrality throughout all the suffering that they had received? What did the LeBlanc family gain by refusing to fight and what could Jean hope to gain in breaking that family code?
4. As in Question 6 of the Pre Performance Activities (page 16), after seeing the play, have your students suggest another medium for the story of *Pélagie*. Do they feel that the musical form served the telling of the Acadian story? Why?

Activities listed on these pages formed in collaboration with Patty Jarvis of CanStage.

Curriculum References

The Ontario Curriculum: The Arts

A visit to see a live stage production helps fulfill the following curriculum expectations:

Drama and Dance, Grade 8

Specific Expectations:

- demonstrate understanding of the appropriate use of voice, gestures, and the level of language in different dramatic situations.
- write in role in various forms, showing understanding of a dramatic situation and using appropriate vocabulary, tone, and voice for the character portrayed.

Critical Thinking

- review drama and dance performances, orally or in writing, critiquing the use of elements and techniques in the particular genre of the piece.

Dramatic Arts, Grade 9

Theory: Overall Expectations

- demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing.
- demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dramatic expression.

Theory: Specific Expectations (Role)

- identify the skills necessary to remain engaged in role and the drama (e.g. concentration, listening, interpreting, questioning).

Analysis: Specific Expectations (Evaluation)

- identify the characteristics of a receptive, discriminating audience (e.g. engagement, listening, focus).
- use specialized vocabulary in discussing and writing about drama (e.g. production value, role development, stagecraft, comic relief, satire, irony).
- identify the main aspects of a production (e.g. acting, set design, lighting, costume).

Dramatic Arts, Grade 10

Theory: Specific Expectations (Role)

- demonstrate an understanding of techniques used to re-create roles (e.g. observation, research, improvisation).

Analysis: Overall Expectations

- use the vocabulary of dramatic arts to discuss, critique, and review drama presentations in the school and the community.

Dramatic Arts, Grade 11 (University/College Preparation)

Analysis: Overall Expectations

- evaluate dramatic performances presented in the school and the community.
- explain how dramatic arts represent, influence and contribute to culture and society.

Dramatic Arts, Grade 11 (Open)

Theory: Specific Expectations (Role/Character)

- describe the process of portraying a character in a script through voice, gesture, props, and the character's relationships with other characters.

Dramatic Arts, Grade 12 (University/College Preparation)

Analysis and Evaluation: Specific Expectations

- explain how theatre can reflect issues, societal concerns, and the culture of the community, the country and other countries.

Dramatic Arts, Grade 12 (Open)

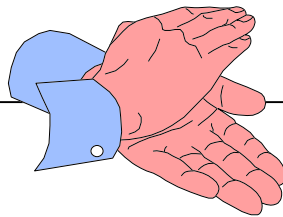
Theory: Specific Expectations (Role/Character)

- describe how dramatic elements (e.g. costumes, make-up, props, lighting, set design) are used to develop character and theme.
- describe how acting techniques are used to develop characters that are in keeping with the themes in the script.

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 by all audience members:

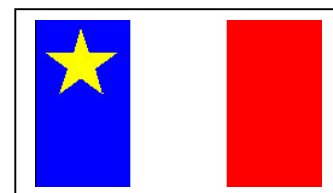
1. Matinées at the NAC are for students and the general public. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance so others do not lose their immersion in the "world of the play". Unlike movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience and will give their best performances when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors' performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others inappropriately 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, pagers and anything that beeps must be turned off so that the atmosphere created by the play is not interrupted by 21st Century devices. Cameras and other 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 and 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 Arts Centre Theatre, all odd numbered seats are on one side and all even are on the other, so, for example, seats 12 and 14 are actually beside each other.
4. A trip to the washroom before the play starts is a good idea. Anyone leaving during the show will unfortunately not be allowed back into the Theatre. The play has two acts. There will be one 15-minute intermission.



Map of the Acadian Regions of the Canadian Maritimes



1. Read the history of Acadia (pages 7-9) and locate the site of the first short-lived settlement in the new world in 1604 and then locate the site Champlain and his men decided the following year would be a better site for the permanent settlement. Locate the area that Pélagie and her neighbours were driven out of by the English in 1755.
2. The small Acadian flags on the map above indicate where large populations of Acadian families now live. Referring to the History pages note where the original settlements were and where the present populations lie. Can you explain this? Refer to the words to Beausoleil's song found on page 11 of this Guide and find where the various families returning from exile ended up.
3. Refer to the biography of Antonine Maillet (page 6) and locate the place where she was born and in this way determine where the band of Acadian exiles led by Pélagie Leblanc and Antonine's ancestor Thaddeus Maillet (Bélonie's great-grandson) eventually settled.



The Acadian Flag –
The French Tricolor with a Yellow

Costume Design Sketch



Costume Design by Charlotte Dean for "Death"



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