



CYCLO- RAMA



Cyclorama

Oct 11 – Nov 5, 2022

A creation by Centaur Theatre and Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui
Created and directed by Laurence Dauphinais

Teacher Guidebook by
Philip Dann

Synopsis

As we delve into the archives of theatre in Montreal you will be whisked between the two locales on a bus for an experience that asks the question, why are we so divided?

An exciting, historical event that joins two theatres: One English, one French, in a 360-degree view of our city. Brought to us by award-winning bilingual artist Laurence Dauphinais, this bilingual documentary theatre piece takes place in 3 locations: Centaur Theatre, Centre du Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui, and a bus – complete with a tour guide – that travels from one theatre to the next.

Like the beloved cycloramas of days gone by, this play offers audiences a panoramic look at the city and its history (“About”).

The Playwright (Theatre-Maker)- Laurence Dauphinais



Laurence Dauphinais is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada’s acting program, and works in multidisciplinary creation as an actor, author, director and musician. After premiering at the Festival Trans Amériques, Laurence’s solo piece *Siri* has toured internationally to cities such as Rio De Janeiro, Edinburgh and Dublin. After co-directing *iShow*, a performative theatre piece that toured Europe for a couple years, she’s recently co-written and directed *Aalaapi* at the Theatre Centre du théâtre d’aujourd’hui (CTDA). The piece marked her first solo direction, won the Playwrights prize at CTDA last year and is now embarking on a national and international tour. Laurence is currently dedicating her time to her new co-creation with Maxime Carbonneau; *In the cloud*, their next project inspired by AI, as well as her new play *Cyclorama*, [a] show that she’s writing, directing and acting in and that will premiere [this] fall. Laurence is the

recipient of a Gemini Award for her performance in the TV5’s Listen To This Story and has two active music projects: Darrick and A Gringa (“Cyclorama”).

Reading up further on Laurence Dauphinais’s biography on the Centaur Theatre’s website, Dauphinais is not only described as **a multidisciplinary artist**, but also as **a theatre-maker**. The

word choice is compelling because it is an inclusive word that incorporates many facets of the theatre. Theatre at its heart is a collective creation where playwrights, directors, actors, designers, all work together to mount a production.

Discussion & Activity

What are some similarities and differences between a playwright and a

What is a multidisciplinary artist?

Check out the *YouTube* series *The Art Discourse* to learn more. There is an entire episode on "What even is a multidisciplinary artist?"

<https://sparkboxstudio.com/20-what-is-a->

Laurence Dauphinais, Montreal, and Identity



Bâtarde / Bastard

Laurence Dauphinais learned at the age of 11 that she was born through artificial insemination. She wondered what she had inherited from her donor but could not confirm anything because the donation was entirely anonymous. Until something changes: DNA testing (Dauphinais).

In 2021, Laurence Dauphinais created a podcast in collaboration with the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui and Transistor Media. It was screened live on December 9, 2021 at Cinema Public, and now it has been made available through the support of the Centaur Theatre and Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui.

Bâtarde / Bastard and *Cyclorama* share many similar themes related to identity and Montreal's rich history.

Podcast available at the following link:

<https://centaurtheatre.com/shows/cyclorama/>

Scroll down to the bottom of the Centaur Theatre's webpage on *Cyclorama*.

Pre-Listening Discussion Questions

- 1- How might learning such news complicate a person's sense of identity?
- 2- What are some potential ethical concerns with artificial insemination?

Post-Listening Discussion Questions

1. How does Dauphinais's own identity act as a reflection of Montreal's identity?
2. What are some connotations of the term bastard, a term that some may find offensive? Why might've Dauphinais used the term as the title of her podcast?
3. How does Dauphinais initially react to learning about her origins?
4. How does technology facilitate Dauphinais's search for her identity?
5. What are some differences between Laurence Dauphinais's and Josh Stone's experiences with and views on artificial insemination?
6. What does Dauphinais want to learn from her conversation with Rabbi Adam Scheier?

Cyclorama: A Brief Summary

Cyclorama is a three-act play that explores Montreal's rich theatre history across the language divide. As a performer/character, Laurence Dauphinais, turns a research project into a theatrical experiment that bridges the divide, creating moments of connection and shared cultural history between the two language communities. The audience takes part in a collective creation that brings them directly into contact with the Centaur Theatre, the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, and the theatre spaces in between Montreal's Old Port and the Plateau.

Act One establishes the play's central concerns, the duality of French and English theatre in Montreal, introduces the two performers (Laurence and Antoine) and the two theatre historians (Erin and Alexandre), and places the very theatre that the audience is sitting in (the Centaur) into its historical and cultural context. Laurence along with the support of Antoine guide the audience through moments of theatrical performance, debates on identity, and personal histories. There is a mounting tension between Laurence and Antoine concerning their views on and experiences with English and French theatre. Intertwined into the action on the stage are Erin and Alexandre, who inform the audience about Montreal's theatre history and facilitate the dynamism between Laurence and Antoine. The academics and the actors play off each other in clever ways pushing the action forward and out onto the streets of Montreal.

Act Two ushers the audiences onto buses as they make their way to the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. The transition from the Centaur to the Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui immerses the audiences into the very city at the heart of the play: Montreal. With the assistance of voice over commentary, Erin and Alexandre along with a few celebrated Montreal-based playwrights, poets, and artistic directors bring Montreal to life as the windows of the bus capture landmarks that have shaped the city's theatre history.

Finally, Act Three concludes at the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, and the audience once again meets Laurence and Antoine on the stage while Erin and Alexandre are projected onto a large video screen. Just as in Act One, the final act provides a history to the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. However, this history, both of French and English communities, is grounded in the political, which inevitably can turn personal. Laurence and Antoine continue to spar, but Antoine's personal history takes centre stage, and they both eventually reconcile through a shared love of performance.

Characters

In *Cyclorama*, there are four performers, who are not exactly fictional characters. The performers are playing fictionalized versions of themselves on the stage.

Laurence (Laurence Dauphinais): A director, performer, writer, and multidisciplinary artist from Montreal, who graduated from National Theatre School and UQAM. She wants to bridge the duality of French and English theatre through turning a thesis into a theatrical performance.

Antoine (Antoine Yared): A performer who was born in Lebanon and raised in Montreal and whose love of Shakespeare brought him to the Stratford Festival. He performed with

Laurence in a production of *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare and now has been invited to share the stage with her to help bring her thesis to life on the stage.

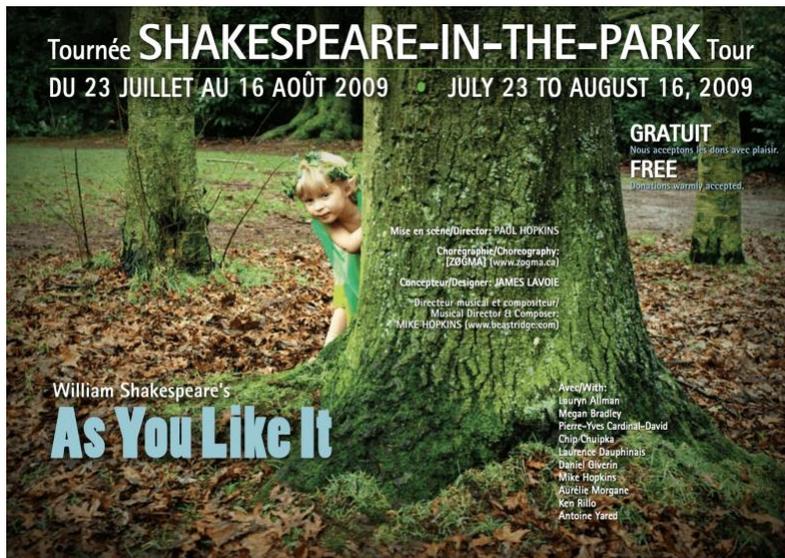
Alexandre (Alexandre Cadieux): A performer and historical advisor who teaches theatre history at UQAM. He provides historical, cultural, and political context throughout the play while also facilitating interactions between Laurence and Antoine.

Erin (Erin Hurley): A performer and historical advisor who teaches theatre history at McGill University. She provides historical, cultural, and political context throughout the play while also facilitating interactions between Laurence and Antoine.

Check out the full cast's biographies on the Centaur Theatre's website:
<https://centaurtheatre.com/shows/cyclorama/#cast-block>

After watching the play, compare the cast's biographies with the characters.

“All [Montreal’s] A Stage”- *Cyclorama* as Metadrama



Poster for Repercussions Theatre's 2009 Production of *As You Like It*.

Laurence Dauphinais and Antoine Yared both performed together in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* for Repercussions Theatre's Shakespeare in Park back in 2009. In *Cyclorama*, the characters Laurence and Antoine both perform a short scene from *As You Like It* at the beginning of the play. The lines between the actual lives of the performers and the characters become blurred.

One notable passage from *As You Like It* states that “All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players” (Shakespeare 2.7.139-138). These lines act as a metaphor for the ways

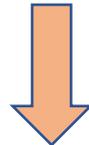
that theatre link performers and audiences together into a larger, dynamic relationship, where the joys and sorrows of life move off the stage, out of the theatre, and into the world. This idea is sometimes referred to as metadrama.

At its heart, **metadrama** is the concept of a play within a play, or “*drama in which the subject of the play is dramatic art itself, especially when such material breaks up the illusion of watching*”

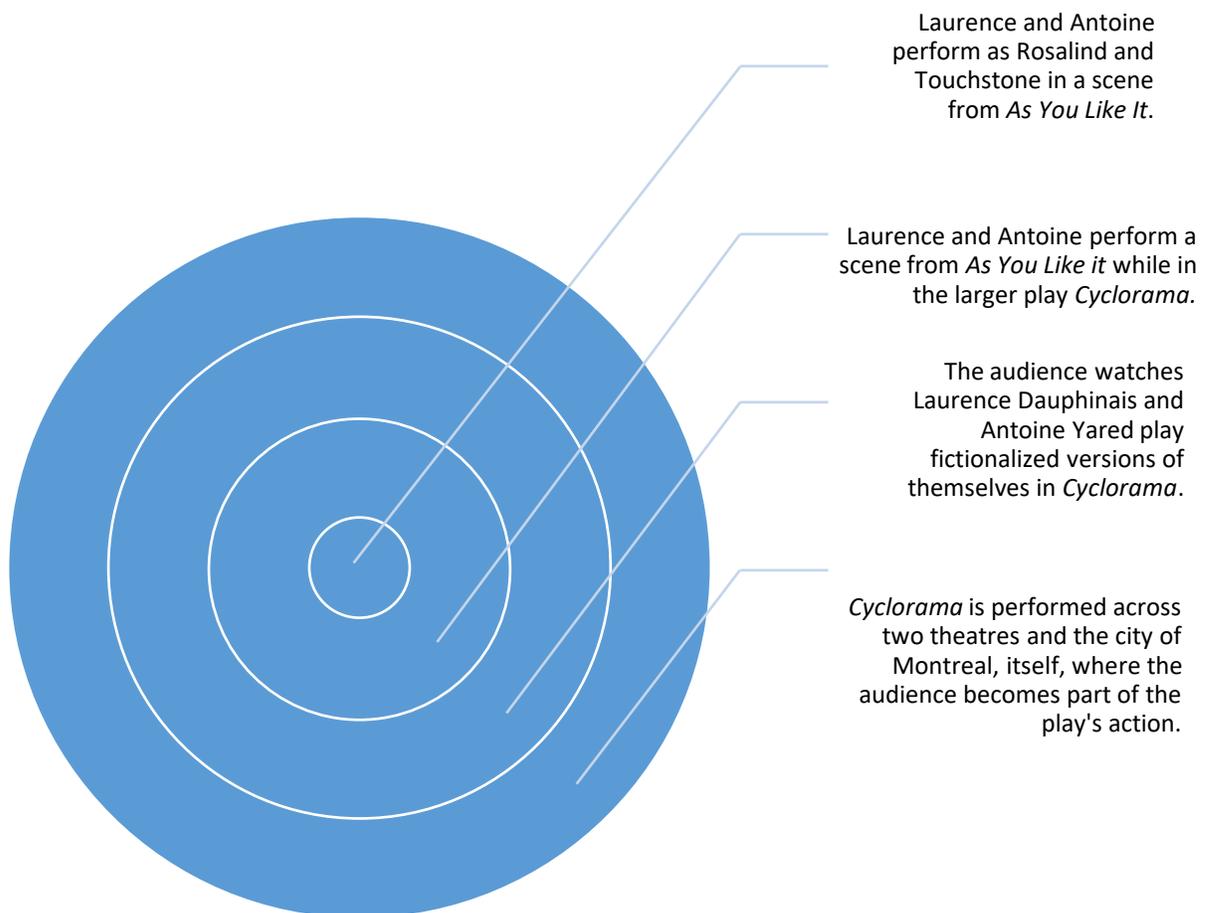
reality” (*Wheeler*). Think of concentric circles emanating outwards from a play within a play all the way out beyond an audience who is being watched by larger forces, a city perhaps?

The image of concentric circles fits the overall structural and thematic dimensions of *Cyclorama*. The play positions these circles of performance and spectatorship on a living map of Montreal, where English and French audiences see their city and its theatre history in a few 3-D perspective. Circles are symbols of unity rather than the linear lines of duality.

See diagram.



Concentric Circles of Metadrama



In the centre of the concentric circles, the characters on the stage can be positioned as the focal point; however, *Cyclorama* also places the audience in the centre circle several times

throughout the play. Metadrama asks an audience to also see themselves as active participants in the unfolding drama.

Vocabulary

Cyclorama- a large pictorial representation encircling the spectator and often having real objects as a foreground

cyclorama de jérusalem in Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré is the largest cyclorama in North America.



Cyclorama- in theatre, background device employed to cover the back and sometimes the sides of the stage and used with special lighting to create the illusion of sky, open space, or great distance at the rear of the stage setting.

Duality- a difference between two opposite things: a division into two opposite groups

Mimesis- *Mimesis* is a term with an undeniably classical pedigree. Originally a Greek word, it has been used in aesthetic or artistic theory to refer to the attempt to imitate or reproduce reality since Plato and Aristotle. *Mimesis* is derived from the Greek verb *mimeisthai*, which means "to imitate" and which itself comes from *mimos*, meaning "mime." The English word *mime* also descends from *mimos*, as do *mimic* and *mimicry*.

A priori- *A priori*, Latin for "from the former", is traditionally contrasted with *a posteriori*. The term usually describes lines of reasoning or arguments that proceed from the general to the particular, or from causes to effects. Whereas a posteriori knowledge is knowledge based solely on experience or personal observation, a priori knowledge is knowledge that comes from the power of reasoning based on self-evident truths.

Paradox- "Using contradiction in a manner that oddly makes sense on a deeper level. Common paradoxes seem to reveal a deeper truth through their contradictions, such as noting that

"without laws, we can have no freedom." Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* also makes use of a famous paradox: "Cowards die many times before their deaths" (2.2.32)" (Wheeler).

Dramaturgy- the art or technique of dramatic composition and theatrical representation

Immersive Theatre- According to Her Copper, immersive theatre has three key characteristics: 1. Immersive theatre surrounds the audience with the world of the story, 2. The audience is active, and 3. It needs to be theatre: live performers telling a story.

Historical Terms

Wolfe vs Montcalm- the French and British officers who battled each on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. "Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm was a career soldier, he served in many campaigns in Europe before coming to fight in North America during the Seven Years' War. He directed the defence of Quebec City in the summer of 1759 during the siege by British Major General James Wolfe" (Venière). General Wolfe and Montcalm were wounded during the battle, and they both eventually died from their wounds. "The British victory was a turning point in the Seven Years' War, leading to the capture of Montreal in 1760 and the acquisition of Canada by Britain in 1763" (de Bruin).



*The Death of
General Wolfe* by
Benjamin West

Durham Report- "In 1838, the British politician Lord Durham was sent to British North America to investigate the causes of the rebellions of 1837–38 in the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada. Durham's famous *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (1839) led to a series of reforms and changes. These included uniting the two Canadas into a single colony, the Province of Canada, in 1841... The report also paved the way for responsible government ... Durham was culturally biased against the French Canadians. He called them "a people with no literature and no history." He recommended assimilating them by

uniting the Canadas in a way that would allow the English-speaking majority in Upper Canada to dominate” (Mills).

FLQ- “The *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ) was a militant Quebec independence movement that used terrorism to try and achieve an independent and socialist Quebec. FLQ members — or *felquistes* — were responsible for more than 200 bombings and dozens of robberies between 1963 and 1970 that left six people dead. Their actions culminated in the kidnapping of British trade commissioner James Cross and the kidnapping and subsequent murder of Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte, in what became known as the October Crisis” (Laurendeau & McIntosh).

Dramatists and Cultural Figures

Jacques Languirand- “dramatist, essayist (born 1 May 1931 in Montréal, Québec; died 26 January 2018). In the 1950s and 1960s he was Canada's most important exponent of the theatre of the absurd, having been much influenced by playwrights in vogue during his stay in Paris, 1949-53 . . . The host of a number of radio and television shows, he was appointed member of the Order of Canada in 1987” (Doucette).

Gratien Gélinas & *Ti-Coq* “Gratien Gélinas, man of the theatre (born 8 December 1909 in St-Tite, QC; died 16 March 1999 in Montréal). The multiple activities of Gélinas - actor, director, producer, playwright - laid the base for contemporary Québec theatre . . . *Ti-Coq*, created in 1948, grew out of *Fridolin*. The drama of the bastard who did not want to leave bastards behind him, the unemployed conscript, the soldier sent to England who never really came home, contrasted in the play with vivid, moving tableaux of traditional family life” (Mailhot).

David Fennario- “David Fennario, né Wiper, playwright (b at Montréal 26 Apr 1947). David Fennario grew up in Pointe-Ste-Charles, an anglophone working-class area in Montréal . . . *Balconville*, which contains one-third French dialogue, was billed as Canada's first bilingual play and the first to describe the language tensions between the English and French, who had recently elected the Parti Québécois, a separatist government. *Balconville* played across North America, was produced in London's Old Vic theatre, and broadcast on CBC-TV in 1985” (Coates).

Michèle Lalonde- “Michèle Lalonde, poet, playwright and essayist (born 28 July 1937 in Montreal, Quebec; died 22 July 2021 in Montreal). With a degree in philosophy from the Université de Montréal, Michèle Lalonde is best known for her committed poetry and her political views regarding Quebec and the language issue. Her most famous poem is *Speak White* . . . *Speak White*, first recited in 1970 during the famous *Nuit de la poésie* in Montreal. Written in an incantatory style, the poem describes the inferior cultural, social and economic conditions under which French Canadians live. It also calls for the solidarity of oppressed peoples against all forms of colonialism and imperialism” (Rochon).

Marco Micone- “The Italo-Québécois poet and playwright Marco Micone startled the Quebec literary world when he responded to Michèle Lalonde’s “Speak White” with his own poem “Speak What” (first published in 1989), calling for a more inclusive Quebec society and suggesting that immigrants have replaced the Québécois as the new exploited class.” (Kellett-Betsos).

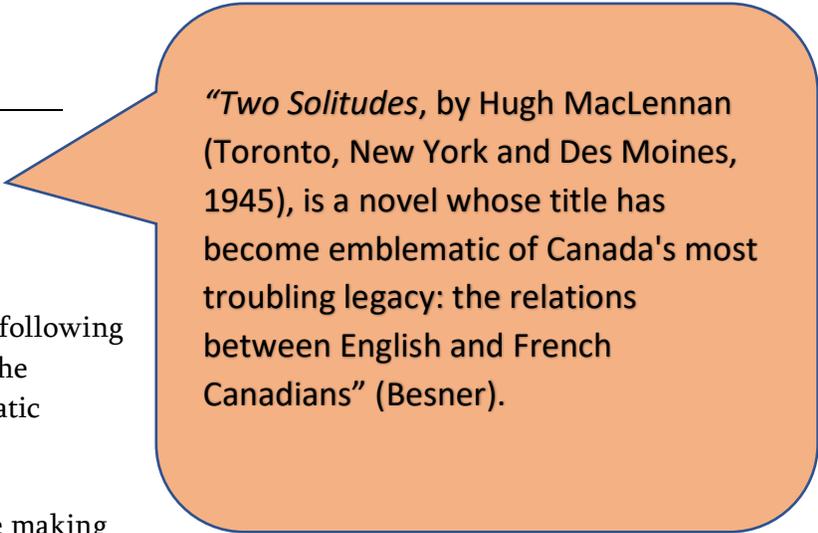
Michelle Rossignol- “Michelle Rossignol, actor, director, artistic director (born 4 February 1940 in Montreal, QC; died 18 May 2022 in Montreal, QC). Michelle Rossignol studied theatre at Théâtre du nouveau monde and with Tania Balachova in Paris during the 1950s. A brilliant career covering a half-century established her as a major actor in Québec theatre, television and film. This spirited and energetic performer, known for her piercing gaze and leonine hair, appeared in numerous works on stage before turning to directing. She headed the Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui from 1988 to 1998” (Bertin).

Themes

Possible themes- *Two Solitudes* as metaphor, Identity, Montreal as a living theatre, Duality, Theatre Making.

When working with theme, ask yourself the following question: what does the play suggest about the possible theme? The answer becomes a thematic statement.

For example: In *Cyclorama*, the art of theatre making can bridge the duality of a language divide through fostering creative and mutual understanding.



“*Two Solitudes*, by Hugh MacLennan (Toronto, New York and Des Moines, 1945), is a novel whose title has become emblematic of Canada's most troubling legacy: the relations between English and French Canadians” (Besner).

Pre-Show Questions

- 1- When thinking about the history of Montreal, how might taking the arts (especially theatre) into consideration broaden our understanding of the city’s history?
- 2- Why does a 360-view of a situation or a location allow for greater understanding?

- 3- Viewing duality as a dual that defines “either/or” relationships, how might a duality actually be more complicated? Think of “both/and” relationships? Can disconnection create connection?
- 4- When hearing terms like immersive theatre or documentary performance, what comes to mind? What do these terms suggest about *Cyclorama*?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

- 1- *Cyclorama* is an immersive theatre experience. What effect do the projections, videos, voice overs, and actual movement (audiences moving locations) create?
- 2- In the play, Erin states that “theatre is about transformation.” Who or what is being potentially transformed in *Cyclorama*?
- 3- How do Laurence/Antoine and Erin/Alexandre interact with each other throughout the play? As actors and academics what unites them and divides them?
- 4- What do the character’s personal histories suggest about identity, Montreal, and the theatre?
- 5- In the latter half of Act One, the scope of the project of the play moves towards “misconceptions of the subject.” What does it mean to “deconstruct” a stereotype or misconception?
- 6- What do the questionnaire responses reveal about the theatre-going audiences at the Centaur and at the Centre du Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui?
- 7- What agitates Laurence and Antoine in Act One? What is causing tension between them?
- 8- How does Act Two bring the city to life? Is Montreal one big stage?
- 9- According to Erin, what is unique about Céline Dion? Why has she been included in the play?

- 10- Erin mentions towards the end of Act Two that Laurence has already performed an autobiographical play at the Centre du Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui. How might this fact be related to metadrama?
- 11- At the beginning of Act Three, the technical title goes from “Redefinition of the subject” to “Why is Antoine in the show?” What is interesting about this switch?
- 12- What role does *Shakespeare* play in *Cyclorama*? How does he unite and divide at the same time?

Creative Activities

1. Give a 360-degree view of your own neighbourhood in Montreal. Describe the surroundings in rich detail, placing yourself in the centre of the circle view, or write a story combining your own history with the history of your neighbourhood.
2. Describe either the Centaur Theatre or the Centre du Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui as if they were an actual person. What kind of person would they be? Provide a character sketch in one or two paragraphs.
3. Create a collage that captures your own experience watching *Cyclorama*. Incorporate the map of Montreal into the collage. Highlight areas on the map, especially aspects of the play that spoke to you as an audience member.

Research/Essay Questions

- 1- Research the plots of either Gratién Gélinas’s *Ti-Coq*, Michel Tremblay’s *Les Belles Soeurs*, or David Fennario’s *Balconville*. Provide a plot overview that captures the essential conflicts of the chosen play. Also, provide a couple thematic statements on what the chosen play suggests about Montreal or Quebecois history.

- 2- Research either Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Repercussion Theatre's Shakespeare in the park, or the National Theatre School. Provide a definition of the theatre, a brief history, and a few notable productions.
- 3- Read Michèle Lalonde's "Speak White" and Marco Micone's "Speak What." Compare and contrast both poems. How do they form a duality?

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