

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School, A Class Act](#) » Arts and Culture in Québec Schools



In This Issue
By Way of Introduction
Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: <i>It's Second Nature</i>
Special Arts Education Projects
New Section: Arts Education
Training Session on the Cultural Dimension
Culture: A Shared Concern
Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops
Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie
Arts in Action
Credits
Archive
Français



Volume 15
Number 4
May 2007

Arts and Culture in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*

- Event Launch
- A Warm and Welcoming Tour
- Resources at Your Disposal



New Section: Arts Education

Creating Musical Works With Secondary School Students
Evaluating the Impact of Artistic and Cultural Education

Arts in Action

Giving Students a Voice: A Cultural and Artistic Experience
Geordie's Reputation for Professional English Theatre That Students Appreciate

Subscriptions





In This Issue

By Way of Introduction

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

Subscriptions



To Our Readers,

As the 2006-2007 school year draws to a close, it can truly be said that it was rich in new projects. Among the interministerial actions taken in the area of culture in schools, the new section of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) Web site, on-line since October and dedicated entirely to the various components of the Culture-Education agreement, was undoubtedly a major event.

The posting of the first electronic issue of *Arts and Culture in Québec Schools* in March is another example of the electronic shift being undertaken by the MELS in collaboration with the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC). We encourage anyone who has set up artistic and cultural activities for their students to send us their story ideas. This will enable us to share their initiatives with other readers.

A host of other events took place during the 2006-2007 school year as well. Some were initiated by arts teachers associations, such as the workshops offered at the Congrès 4 arts; others were organized by the MELS and the MCC, such as the launch of *Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools* and training sessions on integrating the cultural dimension into teaching and learning. We invite you to pay particular attention to the articles about school visits by musician Juan Sebastian Larobina and storyteller Jocelyn Bérubé.

The events, organizations and people featured in this issue of *Arts and Culture in Québec Schools* all played a part in making 2006-2007 a very fertile year for arts and culture.

Denis Casault and Georges Bouchard

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » By Way of Introduction



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*



Caroline Raymond

Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools is intended for all schools and centres for whom the arts and culture are important. It invites the education community to organize artistic and cultural activities that draw on all subject areas in the Québec Education Program, as well as on cultural resources in the community. This event is one of the promotion and awareness measures outlined in the Culture-Education agreement between the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) and the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC).

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You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » Special Arts Education Projects



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

Special Arts Education Projects

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

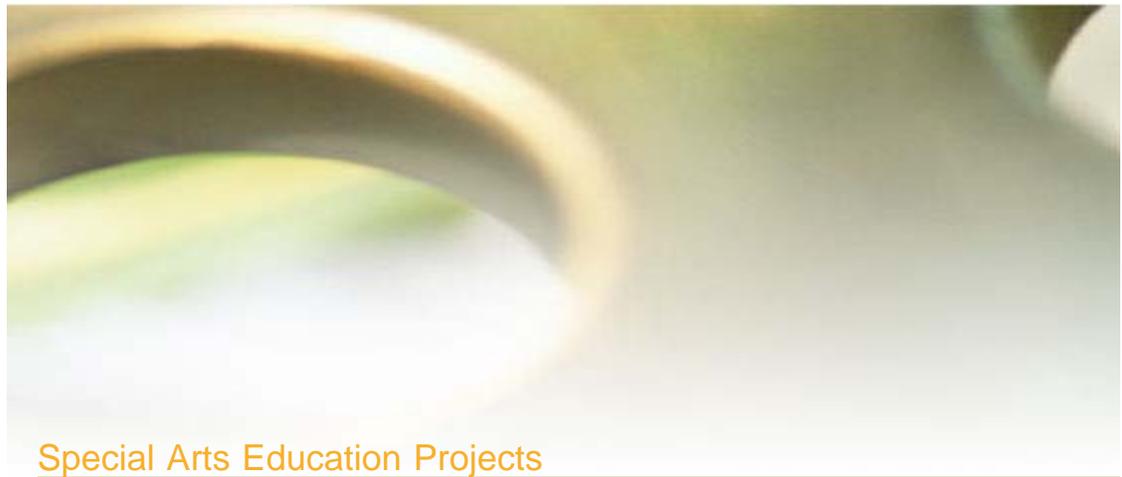
[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

Subscriptions



Special Arts Education Projects

Annie Côté

In 1915, Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin founded the choir school Les Petits chanteurs de la Maîtrise de Québec. In doing so, he created one of the Québec education system's first special arts education projects!

Special arts education projects designate what are widely known as a *concentration* or *arts-study program*. These projects emanate from a desire and a need to give students special arts education that will enrich their overall development and, in some cases, prepare them for higher education in the arts. They are closely tied to the school's mission and give focus to the school's educational project.

At the secondary level, they are defined as projects aimed at enriching one of the ministerial programs of study in effect. At the elementary level, schools can offer their students an arts education program that takes up more time and offers a greater diversity of activities than what is usually contained in the arts curriculum.

Although some of these projects have existed for quite a while, the last 15 years have seen the emergence of the greatest number of arts projects. The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports has approved nearly 40 of these projects across Québec.

The document¹ *Developing Local Programs of Study Related to Special Arts Education Projects* groups projects into four types.

Name	Type	Description
Arts-study	Preparatory	Aimed at enriching student education in one or

		several arts subjects in preparation for postsecondary studies.
Concentration	Monodisciplinary	Aimed at enriching student education in a specific arts subject.
	Multidisciplinary	Aimed at enriching student education in several arts subjects.
	Interdisciplinary	Aimed at enriching student education in an interdisciplinary context that brings together arts subjects and those of other subject areas.

Special arts education projects are an important aspect of the new curriculum. They are a reflection of schools' creativity and enable all communities to highlight their own culture and traditions through artistic expression.

Source: Carole Bellavance

1. This document is available on-line at the following address:

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgjf/projets/artet/index.htm>.





Ministère

Élèves et étudiants

Parents

Réseau scolaire

Loisir et sport

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » New Section: Arts Education



In This Issue

By Way of Introduction

Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*

Special Arts Education Projects

New Section: Arts Education

Training Session on the Cultural Dimension

Culture: A Shared Concern

Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops

Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie

Arts in Action

Credits

Archive

Français



- [Creating Musical Works With Secondary School Students](#)
- [Evaluating the Impact of Artistic and Cultural Education](#)

Subscriptions





In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

**[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension
Culture: A Shared Concern](#)**

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

Subscriptions



Training Session on the Cultural Dimension Culture: A Shared Concern

Marie-Josée Lépine

As part of the 2006-2007 offer of service by the Direction des programmes, a two-day training session on the cultural dimension is offered to all regions in Québec. It aims to highlight the role of culture in developing arts competencies.

The cultural dimension plays a fundamental role in students' education, notably by engaging them in a process of learning about the world. Through artistic and cultural activities, students develop a sensitivity to the world around them, make contact with other creators and discover world-views that are different from their own.

Training on the cultural dimension—for whom?

This training session, now being offered for a third time, is intended for all school boards in Québec and takes into account the characteristics of each school, cultural community and the community at large. Education consultants, staff in charge of this area or designated teachers should contact their regional office for information. Cultural partners are also invited to these meetings.

Based on the Québec Education Program, the session delves into the [dynamics and components of the culture-education plan of action](#) and aims to inform participants of the actions being carried out under the MELS-MCC plan of action.

Many interesting cultural projects are being carried out in various schools across Québec. As well, the numerous workshops being given during these two days will help schools take their projects even further, by stimulating reflection and exchange and fostering a better understanding of the school, cultural and community context in which each school board operates.

From training to application

This training session is a unique opportunity to strengthen partnerships between the various regional educational organizations and their cultural partners. Fertile exchanges between bearers of culture can help launch or consolidate collaborative efforts that will foster the creation of new associations and the realization of new artistic and cultural activities.

This training can also serve as an opportunity to set up or strengthen the school board's cultural committee, to put one's creative potential to use, or to give students access to a cultural heritage that is essential to their development by enriching the teaching provided. Certainly it is an excellent way to ensure that culture is a shared concern!

For example, a training session given for the first time in the Gaspésie–Bas-Saint-Laurent–Îles-de-la-Madeleine region last February produced conclusive results. It led school players and cultural partners to become aware of the importance of integrating the cultural dimension into school and the need for them to play an active role in this process. At the end of the session, the participants agreed to ensure greater outreach of the cultural dimension, throughout their community and in the school, by setting up an inter-school directory that would list all cultural activities in the region. Since then, training sessions have also been given in Outaouais, Montréal, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Mauricie.

Source: Sylvie Delisle





Ministère

Élèves et étudiants

Parents

Réseau scolaire

Loisir et sport

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » Congrès 4 arts 2006



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

CONGRÈS 4 ARTS 2006: The Workshops

As announced in our March issue, here are a few summaries of workshops given at the conference.



[Dance](#)

[Art and Multimedia: A Winning Combination](#)

[The Artist: A Thinker and a Model for Visual Arts Students](#)

Subscriptions





In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Juan Sebastian Larobina A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie

Sébastien Boulanger

He is Mexican at heart, Argentinian in his soul, and Gaspesian by adoption

It has now been almost 10 years since Juan Sebastian Larobina left the commotion of the sprawling Mexican capital for the quiet shores of the St. Lawrence estuary.

Juan Sebastian Larobina was born in Argentina to an artistic family. In the early 1980s, his family emigrated to Mexico to escape the waves of repression that were sweeping his native country. While studying and teaching music in Mexican schools, Larobina started a promising parallel career playing with several different music groups, enriching his repertoire of folksongs from various Latin American countries.

In 1997 he settled in Québec—more specifically Gaspésie—and studied to be a specialized educator. For the last few years, Larobina has been making a name for himself on Québec's arts scene. He also gives workshops in elementary and secondary schools on a regular basis.

Here, the artist tells us about his far-from-ordinary personal and artistic path.

Why did you choose to settle in Québec?

"When I was in Mexico, I met a woman from the Gaspé, and we decided to come here for the summer. I arrived in Québec in 1997, and went straight to Gaspésie. Later, we had two children, and I finally settled here, in Douglstown, near the ocean."

Subscriptions



Music has been part of your life since you were a child...

“For as long as I can remember, my mother made music. I started learning to play an instrument when I was 12 or 13: first the guitar and the flute, then percussion, saxophone and clarinet. I sang with my mother, who taught me the folklore of my country. She sang and played traditional music, including the tango. Now that I'm far away, I'm rediscovering the music from my native land.

“When I was 10, I emigrated to Mexico, a country that is extremely rich in traditional music. I lived there for 17 years, and for those 17 years I soaked up the music of that part of the world. That may be what helped me adapt to Québec society, because it opened up my horizons. I am attracted to the Latin character of Québec. I love La Bolduc and La Bottine Souriante.”

In this respect, is language a barrier to your artistic progress?

“My first contact with traditional Québec music was during a trip to the Magdalen Islands in 1999. Today, I'm starting to integrate these traditional songs into my own folksongs, resulting in a new sound that I call Latin-Gaspesian. Although songwriting and music can be used to communicate a message, French is still new for me. My mother tongue is Spanish, and circumstances led me to learn Portuguese and Italian, but French is a complicated language to write. Still, I've recently started to write some songs in French.”

A multiple musical heritage

In 2002, this singer-songwriter won the Prix du public at the Festival en chanson de Petite-Vallée. To date he has produced three albums, including *Norte-Sur spectacle* (from his show of the same name), which is a reflection of his multicultural heritage.

“*Norte-Sur* was presented in 2005 and featured 23 artists. It was a multi-sensory musical adventure made up of songs, music, sound effects, noises, smells and projections of images symbolizing the North-South duality. It was a unique artistic experience combining cumbia and the reel, chacarera and the jig, where languages were interwoven and tango, salsa, chacha and funk embraced each other on stage,” he explained.

“Immersion in another culture made me more aware of the values that coloured my personal and artistic path. My musical style is a kind of synthesis of what I am culturally and artistically: someone who listened to British rock and progressive music when he was younger, but who was also shaped by the music of his family and of the countries he left behind, in particular the Brazilian bossa nova and Argentinian tango. And now, without necessarily being styles that I practise, I am influenced and touched by the musical genres of people like Richard Desjardins, Jean Leloup and Daniel Bélanger.”

Touring the schools 





Ministère

Élèves et étudiants

Parents

Réseau scolaire

Loisir et sport

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » Arts in Action



In This Issue

By Way of Introduction

Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*

Special Arts Education Projects

New Section: Arts Education

Training Session on the Cultural Dimension

Culture: A Shared Concern

Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops

Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie

Arts in Action

Credits

Archive

Français



- [Giving Students a Voice: A Cultural and Artistic Experience](#)
- [Jocelyn Bérubé: Inveterate Storyteller](#)
- [Geordie's Reputation for Professional English Theatre That Students Appreciate](#)

Subscriptions





You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » Credits



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

Credits

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

Subscriptions



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You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [New Section: Arts Education](#) » Creating Musical Works With Secondary School Students



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

New Section: Arts Education

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Creating Musical Works With Secondary School Students

Francine Gagnon-Bourget

Well before the arrival of the new music programs for secondary school, Isabelle Fillion was giving her students the opportunity to create their own musical works. École secondaire Les Seigneuries, located in Saint-Pierre-Les-Becquets, under the Commission scolaire La Riveraine, is benefiting from the know-how this teacher has developed over the last 13 years teaching in the school system and elsewhere. Her studies at the Conservatoire de musique de Rimouski provided her with a solid music education. In fact, in her final examinations, she was awarded two first prizes for her performances on saxophone and percussion.

It is precisely rhythmic creation that Fillion uses to have her students address the competency *Creates musical works*.¹ In this context, music is combined with voice and body movements through body percussion and percussion produced by various objects. Students are invited to work in teams to develop a scenario, using a stimulus for creation concerning an issue that interests them. Most of the time, the students make the choice themselves, based on their areas of interest and concerns.

What about knowledge and skills?

It is through the creative process that students mobilize the musical knowledge they need to create their musical works. Fillion believes that all students must acquire new skills and knowledge to enhance their personal toolbox. In Secondary I, for example, at the beginning of the school year, students are reminded of the six basic rhythms. Following this review, students work in teams to create a rhythmic duet, using two or three sound sources. Their creation is represented graphically using traditional or nontraditional codes. Then, each team

Subscriptions



plays its creation in front of the class. From learning about rhythmic elements to appreciating musical works, observation and analysis are used to help students enhance their musical understanding. Knowledge acquisition and skill development are two essential elements for equipping students with the self-confidence they need to progress in their learning. In this way, they can achieve the ultimate goal of creation: self-expression.

Pretexts for musical creation

To date, projects carried out have included *Cromlech*, *La guerre des gangs*, *La guerre des deux roses*, *Yin Yang Tao*, *Ha Ha Family* (elementary level) and several others. Students perform their creations using various sound sources and techniques.

La guerre des gangs (The Gang War) addresses issues such as bullying, taxing and violence. In this work, students emphasized fundamental values such as solidarity, justice and equality between people.

A conflict pitting two powerful English families against each other serves as a backdrop to *La guerre des deux roses* (The Wars of the Roses). This historical event, which took place between 1455 and 1485, involved the House of York and the House of Lancaster, who fought each other for the crown of England. The name of the war comes from the coats of arms of the respective families, each depicting a rose: the White Rose of York and the Red Rose of Lancaster.

1. http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/dp/programme_de_formation/secondaire/qepsecfirstcycle.htm

(Video in french only)

Another way Fillion encourages her students to create is by focusing on a complex or difficult concept, such as transposition, repeats or media messages. For example, keeping the rhythm of a well-known song, students are invited to create a new melody using four different instruments (transposing instruments). With regard to media literacy, students in Secondary Cycle One create jingles, often resulting in some of their most important works.

Fillion observes that the act of creation, as experienced in her classrooms from Secondary I to V, is of great interest to students often labelled “difficult,” especially boys.

Feedback and reflective sharing about the creative experience form the basis for consolidating and transferring what students have learned. In fact, Fillion's experience has shown this to be an essential step for both the student and the teacher.

Teachers who wish to integrate creation into their music class should adopt particular attitudes. Risk-taking, allowing the freedom to make mistakes, keeping an open mind,

listening to others and adapting to the situation, both during and after class, are all key elements for developing new practices.



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You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [New Section: Arts Education](#) » Evaluating the Impact of Artistic and Cultural Education



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

New Section: Arts Education

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Evaluating the Impact of Artistic and Cultural Education European and International Research Symposium

Lynda Fortin, director, Direction de la diffusion, de la formation artistique et des programmes jeunesse, Ministère de la Culture et des Communications

From January 10 to 12, 2007, an international symposium on evaluating the impact of artistic and cultural education on children and young people was held in Paris. An initiative of the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research and the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the event attracted some 50 researchers from Europe and around the world, gathered to share their observations on the subject.

When it comes to artistic and cultural education, there is a wide diversity in the objectives sought by policies and practices. Depending on the people involved, the very meaning of the term *artistic and cultural education* can vary greatly. This leads to different practices according to the context and country. One only has to think of the differences between countries in Europe, North America or Sub-Saharan Africa to realize that it is impossible to speak of a unified cultural experience.

In light of this diversity, what can be measured and evaluated? This Symposium showed that there are few studies that can attribute undeniable direct and exclusive effects to artistic and cultural education. This is easily understood upon consideration of the complexity of the object under study.

Children's behaviours cannot be grasped easily in all their complexity and richness through an evaluation process. We cannot study children in the same way we conduct experimental research, for example, by exposing one group to a rich artistic and cultural education while

Subscriptions



depriving a comparison group of these things.

Moreover, the potential effects that we seek to observe are not always clearly defined. Are we looking for intrinsic effects of artistic and cultural education (development of children's sense of aesthetics, sensitivity to the arts, etc.) or extrinsic effects (academic perseverance, openness to diversity, improvement of spatiotemporal reasoning, etc.)? Is the goal of artistic and cultural education to make our children better citizens, to open their minds to the diversity and forms of artistic expression, to raise their awareness of art, or to empower them to appreciate a work? Is it a means to improve their perseverance or performance in the various academic subjects? The objective and angle for evaluation vary, depending on the circumstances.

Stakeholders emphasized the ambiguity of justifications used for arts and culture education, which place artistic education in a marginal or secondary role in curricula. "Has anyone ever considered turning the question around to examine the role that mathematics play in the development of children's artistic competencies?" some researchers asked.

Finally, determining the time scale for judging whether or not an action has produced an effect is delicate. Some effects are directly linked to the child's developmental stage; the maturation time of projects must be respected. In some cases, the effect might take several years to become evident, suggesting that longitudinal follow-ups of cohorts of children are required.

The Symposium did not reveal any studies linking artistic and cultural education to the artistic and cultural practices of children, whether this be their attendance habits or their practices at home (the "culture of the bedroom").

However, it did raise questions about the conditions that enable a pedagogical mechanism to produce maximum effect. Evaluating the efficacy and efficiency of an artistic action also means determining the conditions that will allow a process under way to be carried out as planned. To this effect, the impact of partnerships between artists, teachers, schools and cultural institutions was highlighted.

Moreover, several presentations drew attention to the positive effects on children who were introduced to an artistic practice by bringing artists into the school.

Participants also emphasized the specific effects of arts education in schools catering to disadvantaged children and youth: transformation of relationships among students and between students and teachers, renewal of teaching methods and, ultimately, renewed student motivation for school.

"How do we move from evaluating experimental actions to evaluating policies?"

The Symposium ended on this question. It seems that there have been no empiric, wide-scale studies and that most research has been carried out over a limited time period, while longer, longitudinal studies are what is needed.

During the closing session, the two French ministries that had organized the event committed to launching a longitudinal study of a large cohort of French children in order to respond to this need for knowledge as expressed by most of the stakeholders.

Documentation on the Symposium and the complete scientific program can be found at the following address: www.centrepompidou.fr/symposium.educart.paris2007.





Arts and Culture in Québec Schools

In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

CONGRÈS 4 ARTS 2006: The Workshops

As announced in our March issue, here are a few summaries of workshops given at the conference.



Dance

[From All Points of View:
The Artist, the Teacher and the Students](#)

Caroline Paré

Subscriptions



As part of the Congrès 4 arts conference, artist Harold Rhéaume gave a two-part workshop. First, he addressed the importance of making sure students are adequately prepared to see a contemporary choreographic performance. Then, he offered a practical workshop where participants experimented with a creative process that could easily be adapted to a classroom setting. It was during the first part of his workshop that students in Secondary IV gave testimonials on the tremendous value of such a cultural outing in developing the competency *Appreciates dances*.

The work of the artist

Harold Rhéaume is a professional choreographer living in Québec City. In addition to being a sensitive, warm and passionate artist, he is an entrepreneur, just like his father—who was the source of inspiration for his company's name, *Le fils d'Adrien danse* (Adrien's son dances).

Rhéaume explains that his creative fibre has taken over his career as an



artist: he gradually moved away from performing as a professional dancer for nationally and internationally renowned choreographers to devote all his energy to his own creative process. To date, he has created more than 20 contemporary works.

Since his arrival in the provincial capital, this choreographer has shown a genuine desire to integrate contemporary dance into the region's artistic and cultural landscape. His welcoming spirit has gained the appreciation of the general public. He frequently opens the doors to his studio, inviting people young and old to observe and comment on his work. He then reconsiders his artistic and choreographic choices in light of the message he is trying to send. It is within this open context that he has come to know today's teenagers and decided to talk to them through dance movements. This is how two of his most recent creations took shape and came to life: *Full* and *Clash*.

Supporting the teacher

His workshops highlighted one of his artistic concerns: breaking the fourth wall.¹ Students from Collège de Champigny were among those who had the privilege of attending a performance of *Clash* in March 2006. Before a cultural outing, Rhéaume always visits the students to prepare them. The students learn an excerpt from the choreographic work, thus becoming witnesses to the creation process and privy to the language of dance. The teacher remarked that this preparation enhanced students' attention during the performance.

What the students thought

Audrey Harrison-Boisvert, Léonie Julien and Joanie Landry, students at Collège de Champigny, were invited to Congrès 4 arts to share their impressions of *Clash*. They experienced the appreciation process by basing their critical and aesthetic judgment on what they saw (the use of light as an accessory, a work built in tableaux, variations in movement dynamics) and felt (tenderness in the face of intimacy, amusement at the power struggle, desire to shake off immobility, etc.). They recognized themselves in the dancers' authentic and spirited attitudes, and remained captivated throughout the performance, which was both humorous and touching. Through the students' precise choice of words and sensitivity, participants at the conference were able to grasp the essence of *Clash*.

Rhéaume appreciated the generosity of these young people and reaffirmed his desire to continue to bring dance to an ever-greater audience.

Thank you, Harold Rhéaume, for this overview, which demonstrates that artists, students and teachers alike benefit from this kind of mutually enriching experience!

Terms used by the students to describe the key features ➡

1. *Fourth wall: imaginary wall separating the audience from the stage, creating a theatrical illusion. The spectator witnesses an action that is supposed to be taking place as if he were not there. He is a voyeur who sees everything but cannot do anything. The adoption or not of the principle of the fourth wall determines the relationship between what happens on stage and the audience: illusion, participation, distance, identification, etc.*

Translated from: <http://www.cndp.fr/revueTDC/780-41236.htm>



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You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [Congrès 4 arts 2006](#) » Art et Multimedia: A Winning Combination



Arts and Culture in Québec Schools

In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

CONGRÈS 4 ARTS 2006: The Workshops

As announced in our March issue, here are a few summaries of workshops given at the conference.



Visual Arts and Multimedia

Art and Multimedia: A Winning Combination

Marie-Josée Lépine

Maryse Gagné, a secondary school teacher at École Père-Marquette, under the Commission scolaire de Montréal, and Georges Baïer, who helped write the arts programs for Secondary Cycle Two, jointly led a workshop entitled *Arts plastiques et multimédia* (Visual Arts and Multimedia).

Day-to-day life is filled with examples of how multimedia is taking on a growing role in our society. Not only do we feel the need to master the basics of computers and other communications technologies, but we are also becoming increasingly aware of the practical and artistic possibilities. In Secondary Cycle Two, to diversify the situations in which students in visual arts, drama, dance and music can develop their arts competencies, the new arts programs offer an additional option that combines each of the four arts with multimedia.

To make the creation of projects combining visual arts and multimedia possible, Gagné's classroom contains 15 computers arranged around the work tables. "I believe that we can add the computer to the traditional tools we are already using to develop students' creativity," said the visual arts teacher. "As with any tool, I integrate multimedia into the visual arts class for its specific characteristics: networking, movement, time, light, interactivity and its direct connection to young people's reality."

Travelling through the neighbourhood

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Even with limited technology at your disposal, it's possible to set up motivating projects for students. For example, in Secondary II, students made gnomes out of papier maché and gouache. Then, working in pairs, they travelled their neighbourhood, gnome in tow, and used a disposable camera to take pictures of it in different places, much as Amélie did in the movie of the same name. Back at school, each team presented its photos to the class, explaining the significance of the settings chosen. The project also helped students develop methodological, personal and social cross-curricular competencies.

Travelling through art

In another project, students in Secondary II and III used more advanced technology to go on a fantastic voyage through a painting! In pairs, the students selected a pictorial work by navigating through the Web sites of museums and galleries. Based on their observations of the work, which they had recorded in a notebook, the students then imagined travelling through it, and came up with a script for a video. They filmed the video in a room set up for this purpose. Then, using editing software, they inserted their video inside the painting. Once the project was complete, students showed their videos in class, allowing participants to appreciate the work of the other teams.

When the teacher began this project, she quickly realized that students would need support to carry it out. She therefore trained volunteers to serve as resource people for their peers, once they had completed their own projects. As well, to foster student autonomy, the teams were given a step-by-step procedure to follow.

Integrating technology into art helps students develop the competencies set out in the program. As an example, Gagné pointed to the key feature *Shares his/her experience of personal creation*. "Showing their work on the Internet or by means of another electronic medium gives students a bit of distance to reflect on their work during their creative process," she said.

During this workshop, Baïer offered several clarifications about the optional program *Visual Arts and Multimedia* for Secondary Cycle Two. From the outset, he specified that the visual arts creative process must take precedence over the purely technical learning of multimedia. "The language of the image should be encouraged. There has to be an artistic meaning to what we do."

To find out more, visit the Web site of Gagné and her students at the following address:

http://www.csdm.qc.ca/P_Marquette_s/gagnemar/.



You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [Congrès 4 arts 2006](#) » The Artist: A Thinker and a Model for Visual Arts Students



Arts and Culture in Québec Schools

In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

[Arts in Action](#)

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)

CONGRÈS 4 ARTS 2006: The Workshops

As announced in our March issue, here are a few summaries of workshops given at the conference.



The Notebook as a Creative Tool

The Artist: A Thinker and a Model for Visual Arts Students

Marie-Josée Lépine

Artists are often perceived as creators who respond intuitively to their impulses and emotions. Francine Gagnon-Bourget, a professor in visual arts education at the Université de Sherbrooke, led a workshop entitled *Démarche de création, carnet de traces et éveil de la conscience créatrice* (The creative process, notebooks and awakening the creative conscience). She believes that artists are also researchers and thinkers.

In addition to creating works, artists often record their thoughts, observations and sketches—all testimony to their creative process. Whether it's a student notebook or a notebook containing the revered scribbles and sketches of Leonardo da Vinci, Frida Kahlo or Paul-Émile Borduas, these recordings are essential for self-evaluation and understanding one's own creative process. Gagnon-Bourget therefore decided to introduce her students to the benefits of keeping a notebook. By making use of the creative dynamic, these future teachers became aware of their creative potential. This helped them develop their creative identity, ultimately enabling them to transfer what they had learned in art to their teaching. Just as the notebook was beneficial for these university

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students in their research, it can be beneficial for students in elementary and secondary school.

Tips for setting up a notebook

According to Gagnon-Bourget, because consciousness is at the heart of creation, the notebook is a tool that can help students to reflect on their creative process, artistic choices and creative potential. Once students have chosen a format for their notebook and personalized the cover, they identify components of the project to be carried out (such as the technique and the materials) as well as the elements they must take into account, notably the evaluation criteria (for example, control of transforming gestures, use of visual arts language and organization of space).

In their notebooks, students write down what they know about the components of the project. Then, they begin their search for the idea that will best respond, in a personal way, to the stimulus for creation. The students record any useful information, sketches and other elements resulting from their research. Once this step is completed, they personalize their project by drawing a final sketch.

From the experimentation phase—where students become familiar with the materials and target material qualities and specific elements of visual arts language—to the production phase, they write down their thoughts, comments and observations that underscore their values and choices. Then, they reflect on their work and write down elements about what they learned about creating, art history, themselves and their abilities, as well as the strategies that were most effective in carrying out their work. Finally, in the last phase, they identify their strengths and set themselves challenges for the next project.

The Québec Education Program advocates making use of the creative process in each arts subject. Arts educators must therefore integrate this into their teaching. For younger students, however, Gagnon-Bourget suggests simplifying the tasks. The important thing is not that the notebook be exhaustive, but that it be useful to the student. “Using a notebook helps students become aware of their artistic choices and of

their progress.”

You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [Arts in Action](#) » Giving Students a Voice: A Cultural and Artistic Experience



Arts and Culture in Québec Schools

In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture](#)
[Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

Arts in Action

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Giving Students a Voice: A Cultural and Artistic Experience

Nicole Turcotte

The October 2006 issue of *Art et culture à l'école* (in French only)

[\[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/cultureEducation/index.asp?page=prm_revueArtCulture&annee=2006\]](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/cultureEducation/index.asp?page=prm_revueArtCulture&annee=2006)

featured an article about an innovative project carried out with 20 groups of students from eight elementary schools in the greater Montréal area in collaboration with the festival *Les Coups de théâtre* and the dance company *Cas public*. The project, entitled *Des chorégraphes en herbe parlent d'amour*, gave students in Elementary Cycle Three a chance to become choreographers. We wanted to find out what these young people thought of this adventure. So we visited École Marguerite-Bourgeoys, one of the participating schools in Montréal, on two occasions to hear the comments of these apprentice choreographers and to see them in action, just as they were finishing the creation of their choreographic phrase to be performed by the dance troupe's four professional dancers.

Young performer Hanako Hoshimi-Caines guided these students through the creative process. Dance workshops, an introduction to the dancer's profession and to the work of the choreographer, workshops for writing individually and in teams, sketching plans for dance sequences, group discussion and an appreciation of putting together the phrases created by the students were the main steps in this choreographic process.

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Students share their experiences

Lorraine, Akikur, Raouf and Taïna shared their discoveries as well as what they enjoyed and found difficult about the experience. Raouf summed up his experience as follows: “At first, we didn’t know what contemporary dance was, but when Hanako explained the concept of exaggeration and repetition, little movements that are exaggerated until they become crazy and turn into a dance, we understood better. It’s a bit like writing a composition: you start with an introduction, to make people understand the reason for the piece, and you go from there.”

According to Lorraine, finding ideas and getting started was not that hard. “The ideas just came to me. My imagination helped.” Akikur admitted that it wasn’t always easy working in a team, sharing and creating a phrase together.

Then, the students went to Usine C, in Montréal, to see a professional show entitled *Journal intime*. Lorraine and Taïna said they enjoyed the movements, but also just being in a theatre, with lighting and all the aspects of the stage. “We liked having people dance right in front of us like that, it really hits you.”

Putting their ideas of love into words led these students to come up with ideas that were at times poetic, at times realistic and at times playful, giving us a glimpse into their soul. The experience helped them to broaden their views and delve a bit deeper into understanding themselves, others and an artform that is not all that well-known.





You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [Arts in Action](#) » Jocelyn Bérubé: Inveterate Storyteller



In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: It's Second Nature](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

Arts in Action

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Jocelyn Bérubé: Inveterate Storyteller

Sébastien Boulanger

In keeping with a tradition begun a few years ago at École secondaire de la Seigneurie in Beauport, students in a Secondary III French class had a chance last January to meet artist Jocelyn Bérubé as part of a workshop initiating them into the art of storytelling. An accomplished storyteller, inventive musician, fiddler, wood sculptor, actor and pioneer artist of the *Culture in the Schools* program, Bérubé has been carrying his legends around the world and to schools at home and abroad for more than 30 years.

A veritable celebration of words and music, this meeting with the students was intended in the style of an old-fashioned evening gathering, before the invention of television. Recounting short legends and a few personal stories in deliciously vivid and colourful language, the artist touched on various mythological, social and historical themes. The students thus discovered that behind many everyday objects and musical instruments hide stories waiting to be discovered or invented.

Making use of original objects of his own creation (a medieval wheel-fiddle, a wind machine, drums imitating the sound of the ocean, a lightning machine), Bérubé first related the tale of the Beaumont maiden. Daughter of Lord Beaumont, the young girl was captured by pirates during a sea voyage to New France, where she was hoping to join her fiancé. But the pirate ship was struck by lightning and sank beneath the waves. And thus were born the legend of a ghost ship sailing the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the legend of the origins of

Subscriptions



the hole in Percé Rock. The artist also invited several students onto the stage to help him create the sounds of the boat, wind, sea and storm, using instruments that he had created.

Using an old restored violin (recovery and heritage), Bérubé performed a humorous dialogue between a man (low notes) and a woman (high notes), and then introduced participants to his own world by talking about the disappearance of Saint-Nil, his native village in Gaspésie, which was closed by government authorities in the 1970s (heritage, history and dignity).

Bérubé then presented the students with familiar objects such as a hockey stick and a baseball bat, transformed into electric violins (ecology and recycling). These functional instruments thus became a pretext for reinventing traditional legends such as *Les marionnettes*, which tells the story of those who, once upon a time, made the northern lights dance to the sound of their violins (climate change and global warming).

Throughout this festive encounter, stories and legends were used to make students aware of the historical and cultural heritage of Québec, while communicating messages relevant to society today.





You are : [Home](#) » [Culture in the School. A Class Act](#) » [Arts and Culture in Québec Schools](#) » [Arts in Action](#) » [Geordie's Reputation for Professional English Theatre That Students Appreciate](#)



Arts and Culture in Québec Schools

In This Issue

[By Way of Introduction](#)

[Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools 2007: *It's Second Nature*](#)

[Special Arts Education Projects](#)

[New Section: Arts Education](#)

[Training Session on the Cultural Dimension](#)

[Culture: A Shared Concern](#)

[Congrès 4 arts 2006: The Workshops](#)

[Profiles in Arts and Culture
Juan Sebastian Larobina: A Latin Artist Who Makes His Home in Gaspésie](#)

Arts in Action

[Credits](#)

[Archive](#)

[Français](#)



Geordie's Reputation for Professional English Theatre That Students Appreciate

Tracey Arial

Geordie Productions' upcoming season and planned expansion to its Web site should enhance its reputation for presenting popular, thought-provoking English-language plays for young audiences. This new season marks the company's 26th year of producing professional theatre for young people.

Bringing theatre to a gym near you

The nonprofit charitable organization presents more than 300 shows to as many as 80 000 students and teachers in their own school gyms between September and May. Tours of the province typically include such isolated towns and villages as Blanc-Sablon, Rouyn-Noranda, Kuujuarapik and Waskaganish, as well as several communities closer to Montréal and Québec.

As one of only two professional English-language theatre options in Québec, Geordie certainly has a lot of ground to cover. But there's more to it than that. A reputation for excellence, both in terms of production values and curriculum support, has enabled Geordie to expand beyond provincial borders in recent years so that tours now include stops in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces.

In the coming year, Geordie will stage, for its secondary school and CEGEP audiences, *All*

Subscriptions



the World, a story about living in a world where literature and theatre are outlawed. Elementary school students will be able to see *A Promise Is a Promise*, a play based on Robert Munsch's famous book, which was inspired by a northern myth.

Main stage productions

Some schools like to provide students with an opportunity to appreciate full production values, including sets and lights, by having them attend plays on Geordie's main stage in downtown Montréal. Most of the students who attend main stage performances come from areas within the Montréal region, but some travel from farther away.

Students relate to performers

Based on letters and comments received from young people, it is clear that lively discussions continue in the schools long after the actors have taken their final bows. These discussions may be about live theatre itself or about how topics presented within the plays connect to current events within their families, schools and communities.

To encourage educators to use these discussions to promote cross-curricular learning, research and opportunities for self-expression, Geordie provides teachers' guides for all their performances on their Web site (www.geordie.ca). Next year, the company plans to add special sections for students and teachers so that these post-performance discussions can continue on-line with members of other communities who have seen the plays. The logistics are still being worked out, but Geordie staff would appreciate suggestions from anyone within the education sector.

