

# TARRAGON THEATRE

33<sup>rd</sup> SEASON 2003-2004

“Is there a better evening of theatre to be had anywhere?”

**David MacFarlane, *Globe & Mail*, 2003**

“An unrivalled purveyor of Canadian Drama”

**Vit Wagner, *Toronto Star*, 1999**

“Tarragon [has] the key position at the centre of Canada’s theatrical stew.”

**Mira Friedlander, *Globe & Mail*, 1997**

## About Tarragon Theatre

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Tarragon is primarily a playwright’s theatre. Its mandate is to develop, encourage and produce new work; to attract or train new artists and technicians to interpret new work; and to inform and develop an audience for new work. The goal of the OutReach programs is to develop quality theatre education initiatives for students, educators, community members, and theatre patrons. The mandate of OutReach is “to use all its resources, programs, and facilities to promote, wherever possible, inclusion. Particularly through our OutReach initiatives we aim to support and foster relationships with community members, educators and students as together we develop the theatre practitioners and audiences of today and tomorrow”.

In 2003, our neighborhood association unanimously voted to adopt the official name Tarragon Village Community Association, making this the first neighborhood in Toronto to take its name from that of a theatre. Tarragon Village encompasses Dartnell Avenue to Bathurst Street and Bridgman Avenue to Davenport Road. An inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony took place on May 31, 2003.

## Tarragon Achievements

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- ?? Over 175 Canadian premieres by such celebrated and award-winning playwrights as David French, James Reaney, George F. Walker, Judith Thompson, John Murrell, Joan MacLeod, Wendy Lill, Morris Panych, Jason Sherman, Guillermo Verdecchia, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daniel Brooks Richard Greenblatt, Ted Dykstra, Ken Garnhum, Michael Healey, Jonathan Wilson, Morwyn Brebner, Mavis Gallant, Kristen Thomson and a host of others.
- ?? Tarragon is the foremost producer, in English Canada, of translated plays from Québec, most notably the work of Carole Fréchette and Michel Tremblay.
- ?? Plays developed and produced at Tarragon have on many occasions, toured nationally and internationally; they have also been widely published, broadcast and filmed.
- ?? Tarragon has received more than 200 Dora Award nominations, many nominations (and winners) for the Chalmers Canadian Play Award and many nominations for the Governor General’s Award for Drama (winners include Judith Thompson, Joan MacLeod, Guillermo Verdecchia, John Krizanc, Jason Sherman

and Morris Panych, all for Tarragon plays). Tarragon has received the Lieutenant Governor's Award 4 times in the past 6 years.

- ?? Since the 1995/96 season, Tarragon subscriptions have risen 136% to a record 4,095 subscribers in the 2002-2003 season. Tarragon is deficit-free.
- ?? The Urjo Karede Playwrights Endowment Fund, named to honour Urjo's commitment to Canadian theatre, stands at just over \$1 million. Income from the fund is used to assist playwrights while they are writing their plays.

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### **Tarragon Programs**

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- ?? 7 or 8 major productions in two theatres each season. In the 2002-2003 season, there were seven productions (300 performances) with a total attendance of 46,950.
- ?? Playwrights Unit (since 1982). As many as 7 playwrights, with works-in-progress, work individually and collectively with the artistic director and the associate artistic director over the course of a year. These plays are given a public reading during Play Reading Week, held in mid-December.
- ?? 4 playwrights-in-residence.
- ?? Tarragon Theatre/George Brown College New Play Development Project – a Tarragon playwright will write a play to be workshopped by second year acting students at George Brown College in order to give the students a sense of the development process and their role as actors within it.
- ?? Spring Arts Fair (since 1985): an extraordinary free celebration of the performing arts, presented in spaces throughout the interior and exterior of Tarragon Theatre.
- ?? OutReach programs aimed at youth including Spring Training Project, Young Playwrights Unit, *Under 20 for Under 20's* playwriting contest, high school and post-secondary co-op placements; OutReach programs aimed at educators including Teacher Nights and educator workshops.
- ?? Apprentice programs in arts administration and stage management.

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### **Tarragon Special Services**

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- ?? Over 500 scripts professionally read and assessed annually without charge.
- ?? Student and senior matinees; wheelchair accessibility throughout facility.
- ?? Teachers provided with a complimentary study guide.
- ?? Costume and prop rentals for professional and community companies.
- ?? Pay-What-You-Can performances every Sunday afternoon.
- ?? Tickets donated to community and social service groups for fundraising events.

# TARRAGON THEATRE

## study guide

Remnants by Jason Sherman



**Starring: Dmitry Chepovetsky, Victor Ertmanis,  
Jerry Franken, Kyle Horton, Jason Jazrawy, Alon  
Nashman, Alex Poch-Goldin**

**Directed by Richard Rose**

**Assistant Director: Lee Wilson**

**Set and lighting designed by Graeme Thomson**

**Costume Design by Charlotte Dean**

**Stage Manager: Kathryn Westoll**

***September 23 to October 26, 2003***

About the **Remnants** study guide:

This study guide has been created so that your theatre experience at Tarragon is a fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will help create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions.

The **Remnants** study guide was coordinated by Laura Bonfigli and compiled by:

**Laura Bonfigli** (BA Honours, M.A.) has been with the Tarragon Theatre since 1996 when she began as a co-op student. She works in Development at the Toronto Fringe and is currently Tarragon's OutReach Associate.

**Stephen Colella** (M.Phil in Dramaturgy) has worked as an unsolicited script reader for Factory Theatre and as script manager for Jason Sherman's *Remnants*.

**Christine Estima** is currently in her fourth year at York University, double majoring in Theatre and Creative Writing. She has been with the Tarragon Theatre since April 2003 as an Arts & Education intern, and worked as the outdoor venue coordinator for the 2003 Spring Arts Fair.

**Joanna Falck** (BA Honours, M.A.) is in the final year of her PhD at the Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama. She is the new Literary Coordinator for the Tarragon Theatre.

**Kristen Van Alphen** (BA Honours) is an experienced professional stage manager, who in 1999 made a career change to education program administration and theatre outreach. She is currently Tarragon's OutReach Director.

**Mary B. Wood** (BA Honours, B.Ed.) first came to Tarragon in 2000 as a Tarragon Theatre/ OISE intern. She teaches dramatic arts full time and continues to work with Tarragon Theatre as our OutReach Consultant developing lesson plans grounded in Ministry Curriculum.

Special thanks and acknowledgements to Henry Bertrand, Alex Gilbert, Catherine Matzig, Avery Swartz and Kirk Thomson.

The **Remnants** study guide is divided into several sections.

1. **About the Tarragon Theatre**
2. **About the Play**
3. **Additional Resources**
4. **Design Elements**
5. **Lesson Plans**

We encourage you to make use of this study guide as effectively as possible and as such we want to highlight the fact that some elements of the guide are most useful prior to viewing the production and some are most useful post viewing. For example, while the structure, character breakdown and themes set up a context for viewing, the design elements are best understood after viewing. There are also lesson plans included for pre and post show activities.

**Feel free to contact us should you have any questions or comments at  
416.536.5018 x242.**

OutReach Programs are generously supported by:



## Remnants

*“I tell you, there is no such thing as coincidence. There is only destiny...”*

### About the Playwright

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Playwright **JASON SHERMAN** has been associated with Tarragon since 1994, with the premiere of *Three in the Back, Two in the Head* (co-produced with Necessary Angel and the National Arts Centre, directed by Richard Rose). He was born in Montreal in 1962 but has lived in Toronto since 1969. He graduated from the Creative Writing program at York University where he worked with Canadian literary greats Mavor Moore and bp Nichol. On his playwriting process, he says, “You get an idea, you get a feeling, you see a story in the paper, you hear a story, you experience something that you want to write about and you see where it goes. It’s a process of discovery and elimination and getting to know the characters. Draft after draft, you finally arrive where it feels like the story of your characters has been told as clearly and concisely as possible.”

An intensely political writer, all of Sherman’s plays invite the audience to reevaluate their existing views on Canadian society and culture. About being a Jewish political writer, Sherman states, “It’s what I am. That may sound pat. If I wanted to write plays that are going to speak to play audiences then I have to write plays that speak to me first, put myself and my own assumptions about who I am and how the world works on stage. Hopefully, out of the specific will come a universal response – a recognition”.

Sherman is the recipient of numerous awards including the Governor General’s Award for Drama and the Chalmers Canadian Play Award. He is currently writing plays for the National Arts Centre and the Stratford Festival as well as adapting his play *Three in the Back, Two in the Head* for the screen.

### About the Play

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An epic tale, **Remnants** is a bold retelling of the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers set in Poland and Canada in the years before and during World War II. Sent to the new world against his will, Joseph Taylor rises to become an important advisor to Prime Minister Mackenzie King. When a boatload of European Jews lands on the Canadian shore, Joseph is sent to turn them back – only to discover that his brothers are among the refugees. Family intrigue, chance occurrences, power, fate, and forgiveness are woven together in a play that spans two continents and three decades.

### Setting

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The play takes place between 1925-1946 and time moves chronologically. Act I takes place from 1925-1932 and Act II takes place from 1935-1946. In the 3 years between the 2 acts, Joseph attends University and by the start of Act II, his English, his deportment and his costume are vastly improved.

The story travels from Luzniki, Poland to Halifax, Toronto, and Ottawa. Specific locations include the Dubczanski home, Pier 21, Pottinger & Sons, the Relief Camps, Kingsmere and the Prime Minister’s Office.

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## Structure

In Sherman's play, the biblical story of Joseph is merged with the non-fiction piece *None is Too Many* in a dramatic examination of Canadian social history. The narrative travels through real life and the dream world using Joseph as the axis. Often the shift between reality and dream is indicated only subtly with sound cues, character names, and/or changes in lighting.

Theatrical conventions adopted for the construction of this piece include:

1. Joseph's 11 brothers are played by 4 actors who represent both specific characters (i.e. Reuben, Judah, Simon) as well as archetypes (i.e. thinkers, schemers, and fighters).
2. More than one language is spoken within the play. To suggest that the characters are speaking in their mother tongue, they speak in perfect English. To suggest that they are speaking English, the characters' speech falters and a thick accent is used.

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## Characters

<b>Jacob</b>	The family's patriarch. A tailor and a widow. Favours Joseph above all other sons.
<b>Joseph</b>	Favourite son of Jacob. Firstborn son of a wife that Jacob truly loved. Has the ability to interpret dreams. Sent to school instead of studying his father's trade.
<b>Reuben</b>	First born son of Jacob. Works in tailor shop. Most rational of the brothers.
<b>Judah</b>	Son of Jacob. Works in tailor shop. Violently jealous of Joseph.
<b>Simon</b>	Son of Jacob. Works in tailor shop. Disrespected by his father and prone to fighting.
<b>Benjamin</b>	Youngest son of Jacob. Mute. Mother died giving birth to him. Full brother of Joseph and his only friend.
<b>Pischuk</b>	Polish servant. Takes care of the Dubczanski household. A Christian.
<b>Max Becker</b>	A communist. Assists Joseph in immigrating to Canada and works with him at Pottinger's.
<b>Mr. Pottinger</b>	A successful merchant who has hidden his Jewish identity.
<b>Mackenzie King</b>	Prime Minister of Canada. A Christian. Hires Joseph as his adviser. Believes in dream interpretation. Actual historical figure (see <b>Remnants</b> vocabulary).

<b>Measures, Lay &amp; Brown</b>	Former employees of Mackenzie King. They meet Joseph in relief camps. Joseph correctly interprets their dreams
<b>Frederick Blair</b>	Head of Canadian Immigration. Christian. Anti-Semite. Actual historical figure.

### Relevant Themes

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#### Religion

Religion is a dominant universal theme that can be traced in many current forms of entertainment. In **Remnants**, Joseph's religion both holds him back and sustains him. His Jewish heritage is what gives him the faith to keep going but at the same time he hides it in order to maintain his position in Canada. The following passage highlights this dichotomy:

Max: You've developed very Catholic tastes.

Joseph: Presbyterian actually. The Prime Minister is a devout Christian.

Max: And therefore so are you?

Joseph: My life is at stake. I promised God to do what was necessary.

*Religion and sacrifice are intensely related – discuss the notion of sacrifice and its positive repercussions.*

*What is the relevance of the play's title (note: it does refer directly to the biblical text)?*

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#### Dreams

Intimately connected to the biblical antecedent (see Playwright's Influences) is Sherman's incorporation of dreams. As a narrative and character tool, Sherman uses the dreams to show that Joseph has been blessed with the gift of prophesy. This gift allows him to advance through the plot until he finally arrives in a position where he must choose to redeem or condemn his brothers.

If his last speech is to be believed, Joseph not only acts as a method of salvation for his brothers but also intends to "mend the world as we ourselves have been mended." If Joseph were to be successful in doing this, then he will also have overthrown the curse forced upon him by Jacob, choosing not to perpetuate his father's hate but to raise his child in the spirit of love and forgiveness. Perhaps this is the prevailing message of Sherman's play. Perhaps?

*Despite Jacob's curse at the end of the play, Joseph maintains that he will not seek out revenge against his brothers and that his forgiveness is real. Do you believe him?*

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#### Immigration

Immigration and/or migration are almost always the result of war, famine, political oppression, or economic hardship. Most Canadians migrated from some other country for one of these reasons, or to join family already living in Canada. Joseph is a prime

example of an immigrant who has to alter his existing notions about life, faith and family in order to create a place for himself in his new world. Some discussion questions could be:

*How many students in your class are first generation Canadian? Second generation? Newly Canadian? And how has that affected their response to this play?*

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## **Identity**

Having and sacrificing one's identity is an overriding theme in this play. Joseph has 3 primary aspects of his life from which he draws his identity: his family, name and religion. One by one these are shed as he struggles on his life journey. He loses the connection with his family first when his brothers throw him out; his name is taken from him at the immigration desk; and he eventually suppresses his true religion in order to remain safe and to advance in the world. Other characters also talk of hiding their identity: Max Becker and Mr. Pottinger are two examples.

*What elements make up someone's identity? Is there a price to be paid for hiding who you really are?*

*At the first instance of Joseph mentioning his "gift", Jacob tells him never to speak of these things. How does this affect his identity?*

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## **Fate/Destiny**

The entire life journey of Joseph is a testament to fate, and his dreams serve to foreshadow how his fate will unfold. Although Joseph moves from hardship to hardship, each situation allows him to meet someone or travel somewhere that further advances his journey. When he is in a position to save his brothers, they bow down before him, thus fulfilling Joseph's dream that begins the play. Near the end of the play Joseph realizes that his brothers actually saved themselves, without knowing it, by sending Joseph away. It was this act that began the chain of events, which allows Joseph to fulfill his destiny: to rise to power and work to admit his family to Canada.

*Discuss the adage "everything happens for a reason" – even seemingly terrible and/or unrelated events can be seen to have a purpose in retrospect – personal examples?*

*Is fate completely pre-determined? If so, than would Joseph have ended up in the same situation even if his life events were different? Does being a fatalist mean that making choices are not necessary?*

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## **Forgiveness and Loyalty**

These two themes are linked throughout the entire play. Two examples follow:

Judah is a character who cannot forgive Joseph for being well liked by their father; he is also not loyal to his brother-bond, exemplified by sending Joseph away. It is only at the

end of the play that Judah shows brotherly loyalty by offering to go to jail in place of his brother Benjamin. This show of loyalty is what spurs Joseph on to forgive his brothers.

Mackenzie King is not fond of Jews and consequently Joseph hides his identity for a major portion of their relationship. When Joseph is finally honest with King, King admits Joseph's family into Canada.

*Is Joseph loyal to his faith and identity when he is honest with King (despite the fact that it is inferred that King already knows the truth) or is his loyalty still towards King to whom he has been lying for years and feels now deserves the truth?*

*What are some other examples of loyalty and forgiveness in the script? How does Jacob's curse play into, or against, these themes?*

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## Politics

Communism is defined as a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian, party holds power. The goal of communism is to make progress toward a higher social order in which the people equally share all goods.

The "threat" of communism looms over the narrative and affects each of the characters in a very personal way. Often the suspicion of communism was enough to adversely affect the characters and their living situations.

*Discuss the effect of communism and divergent politics on Joseph's relationship with his brothers, with Max and Mr. Pottinger, and with Mackenzie King? Do these relationships differ? How?*

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## Canadian Content

*An interesting class discussion may revolve around what makes a play Canadian.*

In this case, the play is being produced at Tarragon, which is primarily a playwright's theatre, devoted to the production of Canadian plays and the development of Canadian playwrights. The narrative within **Remnants** is partially located within Canada, the majority of the company and production team are Canadian and there are direct references to Canadian culture within the text:

3rd Brownshirt: Take care of yourself kid. You ever need us, we got a clubhouse down Queen and Roncy. You'll know which it is.

Reference to Tim Buck: Buck was the leader of the Communist Party of Canada from 1929 until his incarceration, with 7 other members of the party, in 1932. Buck is said to have incited riots in the Kingston Penitentiary causing one guard to shoot into his cell in a failed attempt to kill him. More information can be found online at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lt/49/01manley.html> or by reading **Eight Men Speak**, the Progressive Arts Club's dramatization of the Kingston Penitentiary Riots.

## Playwright's Influences

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**Remnants** is a hybrid of two major sources of information. The first is the biblical story of Joseph that can be found at Genesis: 37-45. The second is a book called *None is Too Many* by Irving Abella and Harold Troper. Details about both of the primary antecedents can be found below.

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### Biblical Antecedent

The following is a brief summary of the story of Joseph:

Jacob has 12 sons. Joseph, his favourite, is the son of a wife he adored, Rachel, who displaced the mother of his previous children. Joseph's brothers are jealous of the attention lavished on him by Jacob and they are resentful of the supervisory role Jacob places upon him. After Jacob presents Joseph with a beautiful coat of many colours, the brother's hatred only grows.

Joseph is gifted with prophetic dreams, which he shares with his brothers. In the first dream he recounts how he and his brothers are binding sheaves of wheat and while Joseph's sheaf stands tall, the brothers' sheaves bow down to it. In the other dream, the "sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me" (Gen.37: 9). The brothers are thoroughly insulted.

Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers who are working on the farms. The eleven see Joseph coming and begin plotting how they might get rid of him. Although they initially plan to kill him, Reuben convinces them not to murder their brother. Instead, they sell Joseph to a passing Ishmaelite caravan for twenty pieces of silver. The brothers tear apart Joseph's coat, dip it in the blood of a slaughtered goat and explain to Jacob that they found the coat but not Joseph. Meanwhile, the Ishmaelites travel to Egypt and sell Joseph to the house of Potiphar who quickly makes him head of his household. Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph. He, being an honourable man, does not succumb to her advances. She is insulted and takes revenge by publicly accusing him of trying to sleep with her. Joseph is thrown in prison where he becomes a supervisor of other prisoners.

While Joseph is in the prison, the pharaoh's butler and baker offend the king and are consequently put in jail. Joseph correctly interprets their dreams that predict the baker is to be hanged and the butler is to get his job back.

Pharaoh has a confusing dream and no one in his court can interpret it. The baker suggests he meet with Joseph and he interprets the dream as a vision of the future where there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph becomes second in command to Pharaoh, whereupon he administrates and averts the famine crisis.

When the famine comes, Joseph's brothers come to buy corn. They do not recognize Joseph and he makes them go back to Israel to get their brother Benjamin (Joseph's

closest brother, also born of Rachel). Once they are reunited, Joseph reveals his identity and there is a tearful reunion that ends with the sons' return to Israel to get Jacob.

*An interesting post-show discussion could revolve around how Sherman altered major events to have relevance for a contemporary audience.*

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### Political Antecedent

The book *None is Too Many* also influences Sherman's **Remnants**. It outlines Canada's immigration policies and the startling response Canada had to an increasingly horrific refugee crisis leading up to WWII. The title refers to the response given by a high level Canadian government official when asked how many Jews should be accepted, at the time of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. This became an apt description of the policies of the Canadian government, which closed its doors to Jewish refugees who were fleeing the Holocaust.

According to Abella and Troper, Canada let in a mere 5000 Jewish refugees over the 12 years of the Nazi regime. By comparison, the USA let in 200,000, Palestine let in 125,000, Britain let in 70,000 and China let in 25,000.

In addition to this book, many of the contemporary details in **Remnants** were drawn from the following sources: *There Once Was A World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok* by Yaffa Eliach; *The Great Depression, 1929-1939* by Pierre Berton; *The Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1893-1950* which is available online at <http://king.archives.ca/EN/default.asp>.

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### Additional Resources

1. Historical Situation in Poland and Canada
2. **Remnants** Vocabulary
3. Additional works by Jason Sherman

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### Historical Background

#### Poland

Until 1918, the Polish kingdom was under the rule of Czar Alexander I of Russia. During WWI, the existing Polish leaders gained the support of France and other Allies and regained its independence with Jozef Pilsudski as head of state. After a peace treaty was signed between Russia and Poland, Pilsudski became President of a republic that was mainly populated by the Polish, Ukrainians and Belorussians; he acted as a dictator in a fairly unstable political climate. His death in 1935 added to the instability of the climate that only worsened with the outbreak of WWII. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, forcing Britain and France (Polish allies) to declare war. The campaign was short and unsuccessful. Much of the Jewish population was forced first into the ghettos and later into concentration camps.

## Canada

Between 1900 and 1921, 138,000 Jews immigrated to Canada. Many of them were fleeing persecution in their homelands (i.e. the Pogroms – see **Remnants** vocabulary). In 1919, amendments were made to the Immigration Act allowing Canada to prohibit any race, nationality or class of immigrant because of their unsuitability or because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”. In 1931, the communist party was made illegal under the criminal code of Canada – even naturalized citizens faced revoked citizenships and deportation.

In 1938, a call was made to the government of Canada to admit Jewish refugees. FC Blair, a noted anti-Semite, stated “efforts have been made by groups and individuals to get refugees into Canada but we have fought all along to protect ourselves against such stateless persons...when they become public charges, we have to keep them for the balance of their lives.” Responding to the refugee crisis, the government publicly restated its general policy: refugees who met the categories for admissible immigrants (according to the current legislation) could come to Canada.

In 1941, the population of Canada was 11,506,655. 17.5% were immigrants and of that, 7% were Polish (roughly 141,000). There were 170,241 Jews.

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## Remnants Vocabulary

### Terms of Jewish Culture and Religion

<b><i>Bar Mitzvah</i></b>	The ceremony that initiates and recognizes a Jewish boy as a man.
<b><i>B'rach'a</i></b>	Blessing.
<b><i>Challah</i></b>	A loaf of yeast-leavened egg bread, usually braided, traditionally eaten by Jews on the Sabbath, holidays and other ceremonial occasions.
<b><i>Kaddish</i></b>	A prayer recited in the daily synagogue services and by mourners after the death of a close relative.
<b><i>Mitzvah</i></b>	A worthy deed.
<b><i>Shabbes</i></b>	The Sabbath. In Jewish culture, on Shabbes work is forbidden and prayer is required.
<b><i>S'hma</i></b>	The central Jewish prayer affirming the oneness of God.
<b><i>Shtetl</i></b>	A small Jewish town or village formerly found throughout Eastern Europe.
<b><i>Shul</i></b>	A synagogue.
<b><i>Tallis or Tzitzit</i></b>	A fringed shawl worn by Jewish men during morning prayers.

<b>Talmud</b>	The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings that constitute the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism.
<b>Torah</b>	The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures.
<b>Yeshivah</b>	An institute of learning where students study sacred texts, primarily the Talmud.
<b>Yids</b>	Slang for Ashkenazic Jews.
<b>Yom Kippur</b>	A holy day observed on the tenth day of Tishri and marked by fasting and prayer for the atonement of sins. On secular calendars it occurs in September or October.

### Concepts and events of the 1920's and 1930's

<b>Bolshies</b>	Short for Bolshevik, an English slang for Communists.
<b>Bundist</b>	A European Jewish socialist movement founded in Russia in 1897.
<b>Great Depression</b>	A period of dismal economic conditions worldwide lasting from 1929 to 1939.
<b>Kristallnacht</b>	Translated from German it means "The Night of Broken Glass". On November 9-10, 1938, the first major attack on Jews in Germany and Austria was launched. The name comes from the numerous windows broken of Jewish houses and shops.
<b>Labor Unions</b>	An organized group of workers who use their collective bargaining power to improve conditions and wages.
<b>Pogrom</b>	An organized, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of a minority group, especially one conducted against Jews.
<b>Reds</b>	English slang for Communists.
<b>Relief Camps</b>	Canadian program instituted by Bennett to keep the unemployed off the street during the Great Depression. Conditions were notoriously bad in the relief camps, which lead to protests and riots.
<b>Zloty</b>	The basic unit of money in Poland

### Important People and Places

<b>Bennett, Richard</b>	Prime Minister of Canada, 1930-1935.
<b>Blair, Fredrick</b>	Director of Canadian Immigration during the 1930's, Blair was a noted anti-Semite who did everything in his power to keep the Jewish people out of Canada.
<b>Gdansk</b>	A major port in northern Poland also known as Danzig.

<b>King, Mackenzie</b>	Prime Minister of Canada, 1921-1930 & 1935-1948. Although ambitious, intelligent and determined, he lacked a captivating political image. He remained a bachelor for his life and after his death became better known for his belief in the supernatural than for his political prowess.
<b>Kingsmere</b>	First estate of Mackenzie King.
<b>Pilsudski, Jozef</b>	Polish military leader who protected the Jews. After his death in 1935, pogroms began again in Poland.
<b>Vilnius</b>	Currently the capital of Lithuania, this city was an enclave of Jewish learning during the time of the play. The Germans eradicated the Jewish population during World War II.
<b>Warsaw</b>	Capital of Poland.

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**Other Literary Works by Jason Sherman include:**

***An Acre of Time*** - Based on the book by Phil Jenkins, the play combines actual events and locales in Ottawa history combined with a taut and deeply moving story of a woman's search for love and forgiveness.

***Patience*** - Called the most important play of the 1998 Toronto season, *Patience* gives us the world of Reuben who 'has it all' till one day his universe tumbles with almost biblical abruptness. How does Reuben put it all back together again in our spiritually brutal age?

***It's All True*** - This time, the award winning playwright turns his imagination to the fabled story of Marc Blitzstein's and Orson Welles' production of *The Cradle Will Rock* and the controversy which surrounded it in 1937 New York when the US government padlocked their theatre.

***Reading Hebron*** - A Toronto Jew investigates the Hebron massacre – in which a Jewish settler murdered 29 Muslims at prayer – as a way of questioning his own responsibility for the oppression of Palestinians.

***The League of Nathans*** - Three guys, all named Nathan form a league for life, then split up in their late teens. Seven years later they reunite in Spain... "An articulate and sensitive examination of the multi-facetted nature of loyalty."

***The Retreat*** - A bracing comedy about deal making and soul searching. "...tackles large, important issues and, on, occasion even risks giving offence."

***Three in the Back, Two in the Head*** - Winner of the 1995 Governor General's Literary Award for Drama. "A beguiling debate on state morality versus personal morality and the themes of loyalty and betrayal".

All of the above plays are available at *TheatreBOOKS*, which can be found on the web at [www.theatrebooks.ca](http://www.theatrebooks.ca) or by visiting 11 St. Thomas Street, Toronto.

## Elements of Design

The following section is intended to increase the awareness of production elements utilized in theatre. It combines general information about areas of design (including information from Tarragon production staff, design websites, and the textbook: *Theatrical Design and Production* by J. Michael Gillette) with specific examples of how design elements have been employed in the production you are attending. A brief glossary is also included to assist with technical terms used in this section of the guide.

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### Design Overview

A script can be performed numerous times without ever being interpreted the same way. Although a text stays the same from production to production, the way the piece is conceptualized changes.

The designers (set, costumes, lighting, sound, etc.) and director thoroughly discuss the play to ensure all parties share a similar vision of the play, and explore how this vision will be represented through design. Design elements should create an environment for the play that supports the production concept: the creative interpretation of the script.

There are some artistic and practical considerations that apply to all areas of design. These include:

- ?? mood and spirit of the production
- ?? historical period of the production
- ?? locale of each scene
- ?? season of the year and time of day for each scene
- ?? time, labour and material budgets
- ?? health and safety
- ?? needs of other designers

*How do these elements affect the choices for each area of design?*

Designers in each discipline also submit their ideas to the production department for costing. This is the introduction of the designers to the production manager and technical director. When the costing is complete the director, design team and production team review the feasibility of each design element and make any adjustments necessary.

For **Remnants**, the production concept imparts a cinematic or photographic quality similar to that found in archives from the period of the play: 1920's – 1940's.

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### Set Design

The set designer's job is to create a physical world, which helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual representation of the production concept. Before rehearsals begin, the set designer meets multiple times with the director. From these meetings design drawings and a maquette (a scale model of what will be onstage) are developed. The model and drawings are used by the actors, stage managers and production staff to better understand the design goals; to imagine and

replicate the space the production will be set in; and to build and decorate the set pieces.

Specific practical elements considered by the set designer are:

- ?? the socio-economic level of the characters
- ?? number and position of entrances and exits needed
- ?? number and position of entrances and exits already in the space
- ?? the seating formation of the theatre – is it malleable?
- ?? the type of stage that comes with the theatre (i.e. proscenium, thrust, arena, catwalk etc.)
- ?? is this a flyhouse?
- ?? the duration of the run
- ?? will the set tour after the first production

In addition to the scenery, the set designer is frequently responsible for designing the stage properties.

It will be interesting to take notice of the following:

- ?? Where on the stage certain scenes take place
- ?? How the mood and spirit of the production is relayed through the design
- ?? How many different locales are represented on the stage
- ?? What areas are used as exits and entrances
- ?? What information the set gives about the characters

The **Remnants** set, designed by Graeme Thomson, is a black box with theatrical gauze hung at the front of the stage to form the fourth wall. The set design serves many purposes:

- ?? it allows for the suspension of disbelief rather than attempting to recreate each locale in the play
- ?? it allows the other production elements – wardrobe, props, lighting and sound – to play a very strong role in supporting and informing the story
- ?? it encloses the action, literally, as a photo or movie frame would
- ?? the theatrical gauze, in this case a bobinette, creates a sense of distance so the audience is observing the action as they would look through photos or see a movie clip
- ?? it allows for the new script to develop throughout rehearsal by remaining basic

*Does the set serve the play well? How does the bobinette make the audience feel?*

The props play an enormous role in the design. The suitcases are the central element and are transformed to represent everything from a stone pathway to a row of sewing machines. They are present in every scene and mirror the experience of an immigrant carrying all his or her worldly possessions by storing the wardrobe and prop elements used by the actors.

*What other environments within the play are represented through the re-positioning of the suitcases?*

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## Sound design

Sound design has grown incredibly in the past few years. This is partly due to increased expectations created by film and television, the advancement of sound technology, and the prevalence of high quality personal sound equipment. Sound is now increasingly being used in the theatre to focus the audience's attention and reinforce (or counteract) the dominant emotional theme of the material being presented.

Sound design consists of music, effects and reinforcement (such as microphones).

The sound designer obtains a lot of information directly from the script i.e. "a phone rings", "it begins to rain", or "a sad song is heard through the window". S/he must think about the transitions between scenes and what sound elements will shift the audience from the mood of one scene to the next. Sound design also extends to the elements the audience hears when they first enter the theatre, during the intermission, and even the curtain call and post-show music.

Some practical elements the sound designer considers are:

- ?? speaker and microphone placement
- ?? live or recorded sound, or both
- ?? volume of each piece
- ?? length of scene changes
- ?? equipment available
- ?? existing ambient noise in the theatre

As well as establishing and reinforcing mood and atmosphere, sound elements also provide information to the audience:

- ?? When you enter a theatre take a minute to listen to the pre-show music or soundscape – does it offer any clues about the nature of the show?
- ?? What sound cues did you hear that helped establish time and place?
- ?? Were any special effects used? Were they useful in moving the story forward? Why or why not?

The sound designer for this production is Todd Charlton. The music in **Remnants** is used to give clues about mood and locale. The music heard in pre-show is comprised of mournful Yiddish violins foreshadowing the tone of the first act and placing us in a "European-Jewish frame of mind". It identifies the location, the time and the atmosphere of the beginning of the story.

This is countered by the up-tempo, jazzy sound played at intermission. It is a group named *The Spitfire Band* playing standards of the late 1930's and early 40's. The musical mood signifies both Canada as a place to discover the good life and the new power Joseph will enjoy in Act II. The musical piece that leads into the second act is a popular tune from 1938 that immediately sets the timeframe for the audience (Act II, scene 1 takes place in 1938). The play ends with a return to the music heard at the beginning of the play – it reinforces that Joseph has come full circle and been returned

to his father and his homeland. Its sadness also underscores the end of Jacob's life and the grief of his sons and Pischuk.

The sound effects heard throughout the play are fantastic triggers about the location of each scene. We hear galloping horses, trains and train whistles, sewing machines and gunshots to name a few.

*What other sound effects tell the audience where the action is taking place in this production?*

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## Lighting Design

Effective stage lighting not only lets the spectators see the action of the play but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere to heighten the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play.

The lighting designer wants to give information such as time and place, mood, and where the focus of a scene is. Lighting design is often not noticeable because it has been created in such a way as to enhance the mood of the play as unobtrusively as possible. However, many directors will employ unnatural lighting or hyper-realized lighting to add another layer to the production.

Lighting includes the use of coloured gels to create different effects; intensity to determine how dark or bright a scene is; direction to establish the angle at which the light hits the stage; and movement to decide the duration and components of cues.

Lighting and sound often work together to create an effect (i.e. a fade to black that is timed to a piece of music).

Lighting also works closely with set pieces when 'practicals' are used. These are light sources that are manipulated by the actors (i.e. a desk lamp). In this case the set designer will determine the look of the lamp and the lighting designer will decide how it functions.

Some practical considerations for a lighting designer are:

- ?? the number of locations in a set
- ?? the number of lighting instruments available
- ?? the type of performance (i.e. drama, dance, opera, etc.)
- ?? whether the lighting board is manual or computerized
- ?? alternate light sources (i.e. video or slide projection)
- ?? set materials requiring special lighting (i.e. a scrim or cyclorama)

Some lighting elements to notice are:

- ?? when and how lighting indicates a change in time or location
- ?? lighting changing the focus from one character to another
- ?? how lighting interacts with sound elements
- ?? how lighting is employed to reinforce a mood
- ?? how colour is used in the lighting instruments

Because the lighting in **Remnants** is attempting to recreate the look of photos and movie reels from 1920's – 1940's designer Graeme Thomson does not use any coloured gels. In fact, in this production the designer has employed a technique that diminishes the intensity of the lighting instruments to further achieve the desired effect. The bobinette is a very useful tool for lighting as it can be lit from the front or back. In this design, front lighting the scrim is used to reinforce the framing effect of the set and to draw focus. In order to help establish location the designer has used a variety of gobos to create different looks (i.e. a dappled effect for scenes set in the forest). An example of lighting and sound working in concert is the train effect, which incorporates intermittent lights with the sound of the moving locomotive. Lighting is also a main factor in separating the dream world from reality.

*What lighting elements are used to enhance the dream sequences in this production? What do they add to the scenes? How does front lighting the bobinette add to a scene?*

*Notice that the set and lighting designer are the same person. How might this help or hinder the design process?*

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## **Costume Design**

Costume design includes all clothing, underclothing, hairdressing, makeup, and accessories such as hats, scarves, fans, umbrellas and jewelry, worn or carried by each character in a production.

A costume design suggests specific personal information about each character.

Through discussion with the director, the costume designer will decide whether or not to make the costumes "period accurate". The designer researches clothes of a period in many ways including: looking through store catalogues of the era (i.e. Sears or Eatons); going to a reference library, art gallery and/or museum; perusing picture archives; or even looking at old family photographs. Similarly, if the costumes are contemporary, designers look to current fashion magazines, TV and film, and stores for research.

The designer also works from indications within the play's script and looks for hints into the characters' personality. They then make artistic choices for the colour of the costumes, their shape, and the fabrics to be used.

Finally, the designer works with the costume team and the actors in fittings to make certain that the costumes are comfortable and as easy as possible to manipulate.

Some practical considerations in costume design include:

- ?? the background and personality of the characters
- ?? the limitations created by the set or staging (i.e. a raked stage makes spiked shoes impractical)
- ?? the actors can move about on the stage as required (i.e. run up a set of stairs or engage in stage combat)
- ?? the costumes remain effective under stage lighting
- ?? costumes that need to be changed quickly are built accordingly
- ?? costumes can last for an entire run and be laundered

To work within the production concept for **Remnants**, costume designer Charlotte Dean adopted a monochromatic palette for the wardrobe pieces. Every character except Mackenzie King wears clothing in shades of black, grey, white, tan and brown. The costume of Joseph also allows the audience to trace his journey and rise to power. While Joseph is openly Jewish he wears the traditional tzitzit. However, when he first considers hiding his identity he tucks in the tassels; in the next scene Joseph removes the tzitzit and hides it in a bag for the remainder of the play. The wardrobe pieces in this production also need to be strategically built: the first coat that Joseph receives is built to allow both arms to be ripped off during each performance; the costumes are reinforced with padding to protect the actors during fight sequences.

*How does Joseph's attire change as he grows older and becomes more affluent?*

*Why does Mackenzie King wear red?*

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### **Stage Management**

One aspect of technical production that is too often overlooked is the area of stage management. The stage management team provides support, organization, information and leadership to all areas of a production including administration, technical production, front of house and the company of actors.

With regards to design, the stage manager plays a key role by providing a variety of information including: scene timings; costume requirement; and properties additions. The stage manager also 'calls the show' which means they coordinate when each design element will be used and tell the technical team, on a cue-by-cue basis when to "go". As a show naturally progresses throughout a run, the stage manager must be the human element that determines when cues should happen in order to relate to the action on stage. They also work with the actors to remain aware of the choices that were made when the cues were set.

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### **Stage Combat**

Stage combat is the dramatic representation of violence and the goals are to achieve optimum believability as well as optimum safety. In order to accomplish this, all design elements that will affect the choreography must be taken into account and reviewed before each performance. A fight rehearsal must take place on the set, in costume, under scene lighting and with accompanying sound cues (if these technical elements influence the action) before each performance in order to replicate the performance situation and revive the actor's muscle memory. A fight director, in this case Joel Harris, is employed to choreograph the movements and provide feedback to the actors, director, designers, and production staff. The cast of **Remnants** engages in one half hour fight rehearsal on stage before every performance.

## Glossary of Useful Technical Terms

<b>Acoustics</b>	The sound transmission characteristics of a room, space or material
<b>Cue</b>	A directive for action (i.e. a change in the lighting, sound, or an actor's entrance)
<b>Cyclorama</b>	A large piece of scenic material used to surround the stage on to which colour can be projected
<b>Gel</b>	Generic name for the film used in lighting instruments to change colour. It can also be used as a verb (i.e. to 'gel' the lights)
<b>Gobo</b>	A thin metal template inserted into a lighting instrument in order to cut a pattern into the light that is projected onstage
<b>Flyhouse</b>	A theatre space with the ability to "fly" set pieces and/or backdrops from a fly gallery located high above the stage using ropes and cables
<b>Maquette</b>	A scale model 3-D representation of the set design
<b>Plot</b>	A scale drawing showing the placement of various elements (i.e. lighting instruments) relative to the stage configuration and theatre
<b>Prompt book</b>	A copy of the script with each actor's blocking, all the technical cues, and details/lists of all technical elements involved in the production
<b>Raked stage</b>	A stage that is higher at the back than at the front
<b>Scrim</b>	A scenic panel made from translucent gauze-like material

### Stage Configurations

<b>Arena Stage</b>	A stage configuration where the audience completely surrounds the playing space
<b>Catwalk Stage</b>	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 2 sides – also known as an Alley stage
<b>Proscenium</b>	A stage configuration where the audience watches the action through a rectangular opening that resembles a picture frame (proscenium arch)
<b>Thrust Stage</b>	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 3 sides

## Pre Show Lesson Plan 1

### Script Analysis

#### Expectations:

CR1.01: create the inner and outer life of a character, using a variety of strategies (e.g., improvisation, research, textual analysis);

TH2.02: describe how movement and non-verbal communication can be used to portray character, to define relationships among characters, and to communicate dramatic tension; **Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum**

#### Materials:

Minimal Script from **Remnants** (see attached script);

#### Main Activity:

- ?? Divide the students into groups of two and ask students to decide who is character "A" and who is character "B".
- ?? Once students have chosen a character, distribute the minimal script from **Remnants** and allow students some time to grow comfortable with the script.
- ?? When students are comfortable with the script, facilitate several of the following coaching techniques:
  - ☞ A speaks very calmly while B is very agitated
  - ☞ A is yelling while B speaks in a whisper
  - ☞ Perform it with A believing that B is his/her long lost sibling
  - ☞ Perform it with B believing that A is a dangerous person out to hurt her/him
  - ☞ Perform it with A believing that B is a dangerous person and B believing A is his/her long lost sibling
- ☞ Ask the students to perform the minimal script and continue performing into an extended improvisation. Those students who feel comfortable can present their interpretations to the class.

#### Closure:

Questions for the class to consider after having performed their scenes:

- 1) Did performing the text in different ways give you insights into the character?
- 2) What were they?
- 3) How were people's interpretations of the script different?
- 4) Does this change your perceptions of the character?

#### Journal:

Looking at the **Remnants** minimal script:

- 1) What gender are the characters? Two males? Two females? A male and a female?
- 2) Why do you think that?
- 3) What evidence in the script supports your assumptions?
- 4) What is the nature of the characters' relationship?
- 5) What will be an actor's challenges in performing this scene to an audience?

### **Extension Possibilities:**

- ?? After seeing **Remnants**, students can compare and contrast their own scene analysis with the performance they attend.
- ?? Were any acting choices the same as their own interpretation? Did it give them a special insight into that scene?

### **Minimal Script for Remnants**

**A:** Who paid your passage?

**B:** Our father.

**A:** It's a lot of money.

**B:** Our father is very wealthy man.

**A:** What do you mean by that?

**B:** Only to say, he has money.

**A:** You think I don't know who you are?

## Pre Show Lesson Plan 2

### Expectations:

TH2.04 – demonstrate the use of movement, gesture, and non-verbal communication to express ideas in a drama (e.g., mime).

THV.01 – demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring dramatic works etc. see unit 1 page 9

TH1.01– demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief” both as performer and as audience; **Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum**

### Warm-up:

- ?? Lead group physical warm up, stretching body etc. and guided imagery relaxation.
- ?? Lead brainstorming as to what is a tableau. What makes a good tableau?
- ?? Write the characteristics on the board.

### Main Activities:

1. Tell the students that they will first create one large tableau (focus and staging skills). The students have finally made it to Broadway and now they are asked to make an impression in this the final part of the audition. Put students in a line and have their backs facing the audience. The teacher picks one student at a time to position themselves on stage in a position that will give them the most focus. They stay frozen as one student at a time then fills the space, each trying to steal focus until all the students are in tableau.

*Class discussion: What drama skills are being used in this exercise? What do the different levels do? Which one stands out?*

2. Divide the class into 2 large groups. Each group works quietly to create 2 tableaux “during the birthday party” and “after the birthday party”. They must form that transition silently and keep with the flow, watching their movements.

*Class discussion: Why is tableau an effective way to start a scene? What was your favourite why?*

3. **Remnants** tableaux project  
Divide the students into groups of 4. Students create 5 tableaux to recreate the 5 stages of an immigration experience. Discuss in class what this may entail (saying good bye to relatives, adapting to life in Canada). Each group should strive for each person having a specific role within the tableau. Students also work on scene transition flow. Teachers are encouraged to play music to heighten focus during the activity. Students perform each 5 part tableaux in front of their peers. Students discuss which tableaux spoke to them and why.

Students are encouraged to remember these images when they see **Remnants** and to see if any are recreated in the play.

## Post Show Lesson Plan 1

### Objectives:

Discussion of **Remnants** show at Tarragon Theatre.

TH3.06– explain how the contributions of various production workers (e.g., director, designer, stage manager, technical operator) can affect formal expression in a dramatic presentation

CR1.03 demonstrate an understanding of how role is communicated through language, gesture, costume, props and symbol;

CR1.06– demonstrate an understanding of their own and others' respective functions in collaborative work on a drama;

CR2.02 demonstrate an understanding of the function of design, lighting and sound in the communication of a drama;

ANV.02– use the vocabulary of dramatic arts to discuss, critique and review drama presentations in the school and the community;

### Activity:

- ?? Distribute pieces of paper to each student.
- ?? Ask students to write down a question(s) that they have for any member of the **Remnants** production team (writer, director, actor, designer).
- ?? Try to encourage diversity as to whom the questions are directed.
- ?? Collect questions.
  
- ?? Divide the class into two groups, "A" and "B".
- ?? Take group "A" and distribute the following roles on pieces of paper to students (actor, set designer, costume designer, director, lighting designer, sound designer, playwright etc.)
- ?? Ask the group "A" students to discuss quietly and prepare for their role as a member of the **Remnants** production team in one part of the Drama room.
  
- ?? Distribute the already collected questions for members of production to the Group "B" students.
- ?? Group "B" are told that they are media at a press conference.
- ?? The "media" must ask the "artists" their already drawn up questions (additional questions are encouraged and everyone on the artist panel must answer).
  
- ?? After each question has been asked reverse roles and distribute remaining questions.

In this activity students develop role-playing, reflective thinking, focusing and application of knowledge skills. Students discover that through their work, experience in Drama class and viewing the production, they inherently know some of the answers to the artistic choices being asked.

### Reflection/Journal:

*What did you already know about theatre that was reinforced by today's activity?*

## Post-Show Lesson Plan 2

### Whole Group Role Play based on **Remnants**:

#### Expectations:

TH1.01– demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief” both as performer and as audience;

TH2.01– demonstrate an understanding of the control of volume, tone, pace and intention in an expressive speech;

TH3.02– explain how dramatic forms may effectively communicate more than one perspective;

CRV.01– use various ways to sustain a role within a drama;

CR1.02– demonstrate an understanding of the element of risk in playing a role (e.g., adapting to challenges to personal and social beliefs); **Ontario Dramatic Arts**

#### **Curriculum**

#### Warm-up:

- ?? Review with students the important elements of creating a whole group role play:
  - a. maintaining focus
  - b. maintaining the physicality of your character throughout the role play
  - c. sustaining the vocal quality of your character during the role play
  - d. ability to take on, and commit to, your characters’ attitudes and beliefs

#### Activity:

- ?? The class sits in chairs forming a circle.
- ?? The teacher tells the students that they will be taking part in a whole group role play based on the characters from **Remnants**.
- ?? Teacher says that he/she will leave the room and when he/she returns it will be in role
- ?? The teacher enters in the role of “**facilitator**”.
- ?? It is present day Canada and the Canadian federal government has decided to lead focus groups to hear the experience of Canadians during the Second World War.
- ?? In this group are gathered all the characters from **Remnants** and others (as imagined, or referred to during the play), to take part in this focus group.
- ?? The objective of this focus group is to document the events as people experienced them and also make recommendations for future government policy based on their experience.
- ?? Encourage the students that varying opinions help create conflict and will enliven the role play
- ?? Students then begin the role-play.
- ?? The teacher can intervene with probing questions to further the debate.
- ?? It is important to make sure that each student participates and if some central characters (like Jacob or King) do not appear in the role-play (after  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the class has participated) the teacher can interject with phrases like, “*I understand that Jacob is here. Jacob we’d love to hear from you when you are ready.*”

#### Reflection/Journal:

Students can explore greater character depth by answering the following:

*What surprised you about your character? List two things and give examples.*

*What was your favourite part of the role-play? Be specific. Give examples.*