

SCHOOL NOTES

Subject: **SOUVENIRS OF PARIS**
cabaret and workshop programs
(multidisciplinary arts-in-education)

By: **Claudia Hommel**

Date: **School year 2010 and beyond**



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A cozy cabaret. At the tables, French is being spoken. By the piano, *la chanteuse* is drawing her young audience into the latest hit by Edith Piaf or maybe a tune by one of the Americans who come by like Cole Porter or Duke Ellington. Is this really 20th-century Paris? No, it's a classroom, USA, in the next century, and the performer in front of us is Paris-born Claudia Hommel.

SOUVENIRS OF PARIS

cabaret & workshop programs

for junior and senior high school and college audiences:

Paris in the Jazz Age, 1900-1940

With Bob at the piano and Claudia Hommel sometimes on top of it, they pay homage to the cakewalk, ragtime, the Charleston, Josephine Baker, Ada "Bricktop" Smith, Mistinguett, Maurice Chevalier, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Darius Milhaud, and the "crazy years" between World Wars.

Souvenirs de Paris, 1950

The most widely-performed of Claudia's cabaret theatre programs, *Souvenirs of Paris, 1950* introduces Marcelle, a Parisian cabaret owner who recounts through song and spoken word the events of her life in France before and after World War II. The musical revue features songs made famous by Edith Piaf, Juliette Gréco and Yves Montand and songs celebrating the Paree of American composers Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Vernon Duke.

for K through 6th graders, age-specific variations of:

That's What Makes Paris, Paree

Drawn from Claudia's own upbringing as the child of American parents in Paris, there are songs to dance to, to laugh with, to take you on a spin around the world (from Franace to French Indies and French Canada).

- **Field trips to a cabaret performance**, at a theatre or a French restaurant
- **In-school assembly performances**
- **For all grades, post-performance rap sessions** with the artists
- **For junior, senior high and college: workshops** that explore history and geography, the French language, poetry and music of the period
- **Master classes** for performing arts students

Flexibly designed, the cabaret performance runs from 40 to 90 minutes, is available for groups of 30 to 600 students in a day, and is offered at an affordable cost (see pages 8 and 9 on *Fees and Funding*). Teachers have the opportunity to select specific songs (see page 10 for the basic *Song Lists*). The show works at *all levels* of foreign language comprehension, from no French to advanced levels.

Best of all, Claudia's cabaret programs invite students and their teachers to cross borders of country, time, culture, and subject matter.

FIELD TRIPS to “Paris”

There’s nothing more stimulating than a day trip to “Paris”. Make a Parisian day with a visit to your nearby French establishment or museum exhibit, then to a restaurant or theatre featuring Claudia Hommel. In Chicago, we can recommend restaurants and performance venues. See page 8 for more details. We also recommend Winged Victory tours to school groups wanting a two- or three-day grand tour of Chicago, Sister City of Paris (www.visitcanada.com).

SETTING THE STAGE for school assemblies

Performances in school allow for a greater number of students to participate and provide more time to engage in workshops and master classes. If you prefer an in-school experience, why not transform your school into “Paris”!

It’s best to have the show in as intimate a setting as possible. A group of 50 can go to the “cabaret club” that is *on* the auditorium stage—with curtain drawn, add two or three small tables, a piano, décor, *et voilà!* A group of 100 can use the school library or social room; a group of 200 can take over the gym or cafeteria. With a scattering of cloth-covered tables topped with candles and bud vases, students can create their own cabaret room. Other setups have included a large hallway, the band room, and the orchestra pit area of a large auditorium.

Donations of foods from parents, staff, and local bakeries make for a festive and genuine cabaret experience. Menus can be as simple as cheese and baguettes or as complex as quiches, salads, fruit plates, crêpes, and pastries.

Whether going on a field trip or to the cabaret at school, don’t forget to **dress for the event!** What would *you* wear for a cabaret evening?

Technical Requirements:

- A piano in good working order. An electronic spinet simulating full piano action can be used if necessary.
- Lighting: where possible, low ambient light and a follow-spot.
- A speaker-amplifier suitable for music. The musicians supply one wireless microphone unit and one standard vocal mike with cables. If necessary, the performers will bring or arrange for a rental sound system.

Audience Size

The small audience of 30 is appropriate to cabaret and is often reserved for the French Club or advanced students. For many schools, 200 attendees is optimal. This still allows everyone to have some contact with the performer as she mingles with the crowd. Larger than that and the audience loses the intimacy of a cabaret performance, so we much prefer repeating our show than doing it once for a large assembly.

PRE- and POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

(see also “*Workshops with Claudia Hommel*”).

The more students are involved in preparations for the show the better. Everyone can get into the act: **The Publicity Crew, The Set-up Crew, The Journalists, Performers on Stage.**

THE PUBLICITY CREW

- Design posters and flyers for distribution to the school population. Some of the posters can be used during the show to dress the playing area.
- For a large concert, design admission tickets and take reservations.
- Write up a press release to send to the school paper and local media outlets.

THE SET-UP CREW (for in-school performances)

- Create the cabaret ambiance with bright tablecloths (plastic red-and-white checkered cloths are available by the roll), souvenir and war-time posters, table settings (Eiffel Towers, bud vases, votive candles—or battery operated imitations if open flames are not allowed), French flags, ribbons, non-alcoholic bubbling “wine”, French bread, pastries.
- Working from Claudia’s cue sheets and notes, design an appropriate lighting scheme, set the curtains and stage; set up, test and run the sound system and, in the Chicago area, set up Claudia’s Parisian lamppost. (If there is a stage crew class, Claudia can meet with the class before the show.)
- For the long show, a female student can be Claudia’s “dresser” during the entr’acte and set up a small “changing room”.
- A student emcee may introduce the show and players (*en français, aussi*).
- Students can serve as ushers (and waitstaff, if refreshments are to be served).
- Permission is given to video teams and photographers under conditions set by the performers ahead of time.

THE JOURNALISTS —editorial assignments:

The **music and theatre critics** can sample recordings and films to learn about the type of music and theatre they’re going to review. For example, recordings of Edith Piaf, Juliette Gréco, Yves Montand, Josephine Baker, Maurice Chevalier, or others singing French songs from the 1920s to the 1950s. Films like *April in Paris*; *Blue Angel*; *Can-Can*; *Paris Blues*; *Victor, Victoria*; *Édith et Marcel*; *Zou Zou* and *Cabaret* give a taste for different kinds of cabaret scenes.

The **features writers** should review Claudia’s promotional materials. They will be interviewing her à la *People* magazine or *Rolling Stone*. Check out “celebrity interviews”. The goal is to be personal without invading the diva’s privacy.

The **news reporters** will be covering the performance as a newsworthy event or human interest story, writing for a school or community newspaper. News analysis is important: provide background about the artists and the audience, provide a context for the content of the show. What responses did people have to the event? Was the money well spent? Was the show a scandal? What impact might this have for the future? Is interest in French or in cabaret a growing trend?

On Stage

Yes, given enough time to trade scores and scripts before the show, Claudia loves to have student musicians and performers join her on stage. Saxophone, trumpet, drums, guitar, emcee, singer, pianist, dancers, etc.

WORKSHOPS with Claudia Hommel

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE – a one- or multi-day program

The artist-in-residency is our strongest offering because it brings to students the opportunity to link ideas across disciplines. Each *Souvenirs of Paris* program makes myriad connections between social studies, language arts, visual and performing arts. Our multi-disciplinary approach reinforces the work of teachers using thematic units (a unit on World War II or a unit on Paris, for example) and adds another “hands on” dimension for students as they investigate a piece of history, language or geography. The civilian side of war, the impact of African-American musicians bringing jazz to Paris, the very different perceptions held by Americans and French about war, race and sexual relations, the use of music to heighten our appreciation of the poetry of Jacques Prévert, the use of song to help us learn language, the history of modern France, examining the artistic process itself – all these themes can be brought up front and personal as Claudia explores them with your students

A whole-day visit to your school can incorporate any combination of performances, workshops, post-show discussions, master classes, informal lunches and French Club visits. Claudia can perform up to three short shows in one day, filling in the rest of the day with workshops and master classes. Activities can begin the first hour and go to the last hour of the school day, according to the school’s schedule and priorities.

Within the greater Chicago area, we can organize a multiple-visit residency over the course of several weeks. When touring beyond the Chicago area, the artist-in-residency can be extended for several days in a row.

THE POSTCARD PROJECT

The class discusses war from a civilian perspective. What would you do to prevent a war? What would you do if the Nazis occupied your town—resist, collaborate, hide, run away, try to ignore them and live a “normal” life? Then, write a postcard to a friend recounting a specific event you experienced during the war. If able to write part or all of your postcard in French, vocabulary questions are written on the board.

EXPLICATION DE TEXTE

Especially effective as a workshop before the show is a dissection of one or two of the songs in a classic “explication de texte” or textual analysis *à la française*.

There are several songs that lend themselves to this process: *Barbara*, *L’Accordéoniste*, *Non—je ne regrette rien*, *Les Feuilles Mortes*, *J’ai Deux Amours*, and even *The Charleston*; all have aspects worth examining in detail, whether specific historical content, context of the song’s creation, stories of its interpreters, analysis of its poetic form, grammar, musical construction, character and story lines.

SONG CIRCLES and CRITICS CIRCLES

Song circles are small discussion groups that meet before or after the performance to examine the songs and program from different perspectives. The process can be as simple as having students choose to be “historians”, “music critics”, “theatre critics”, “news journalists”, “*People* magazine interviewers” and “restaurant critics.” The workshop begins with each critics’ circle meeting for a few minutes to prepare comments and questions of the show.

A more extensive workshop has the students dig deeper into individual songs—one group per song. In these song circles, each student has a *different* role. Having critically examined the song and lyrics ahead of time (from prior recordings and watching the show), each student comes to the group to perform a specific job:

Literary Luminary, *Creative Connector*, *Discussion Director*, *Artful Artist* (illustrator), *Word Wizard*, *Grammarians*, *Poets & Lyricists*, *Music Critic*, *Succinct Summarizer*, *Casting Director*, *Map Maker* and *Historian*. (Job descriptions are provided in the *Study Guide*). Circle members share highlights of their song with the class as a whole.

MASTER CLASSES—“SongShops”

Here is an opportunity for theatre and music students to strengthen their interpretative abilities in song. We allot 15–20 minutes for each singer. A 90-minute session allows us to work with up to six performers. Each student prepares and performs a solo piece (small ensembles and instrumentalists can also participate). For professional and pre-professional students, classes can be 3 to 5 hours long.

Using the essence of cabaret to share a heartfelt story, songs to be studied can be in any language and of any genre (opera, folk, art song, rock, jazz, musical theatre, rap) as long as they tell a story. We ask each student to find their own truth about a song: what changes from beginning to end, has an emotional discovery, or recreates a scene or character.

Students may be accompanied by other students on piano, guitar, accordion. In fact, we encourage it. The auditors play an important role as well. Every performer needs an audience. And watching closely is an important way to learn what works and what doesn’t. (Details are provided in *Guidelines for a Master Class with Claudia Hommel*.)

THE CABARET PROJECT

The highest compliment to give an artist is to want to do what he or she does. Put on your own show! A group or a whole class can get into the act, by singing, reciting poetry, writing, directing, being emcee, being in the band and being in the audience.

Cabaret is an art form that, at its best, uses song to get straight to the heart, whether with biting sarcasm, romantic charm or realistic recounting of life's many stories.

For the single workshop, Claudia and her pianist share with the class the elements of "putting your act together". Extended residencies allow Claudia and the students to work together over the course of several weeks to create their own cabaret show.

SEMINARS for high school and college students

Curricular themes suggested by the cabaret program include:

- France, 1900–1950 (from the Belle Époque to post-World War II)
- French culture, especially music and poetry from the Left Bank period of 1947–1953 including post-war relations, the existentialists, the French "beatniks"
- The role of visitors, exiles and expatriates, including the history of African-Americans living in 20th century Paris
- The mythology and image-making of Paris and the women of Paris

COMMUNITY, CAMPUS & CONFERENCE PERFORMANCES

An evening or weekend performance offers families and the **general public** of the school community some of what's going on during the school day. Many local and state arts councils provide fee support to schools when hosting programs open to the general public. The community performance can also serve as a fund-raiser for the school by charging an admission and corporate sponsorships.

Cabaret concerts, seminars and teacher training workshops are available for **college and university audiences** and for **music and foreign language teachers'** conferences. Workshops such as *Cabaret in the Classroom: Getting everyone into the act* and *Transcending the Language Barrier: Songs that Translate, Songs that Don't* have been presented to national and regional meetings of American Association of Teachers of French and American Foreign Language Teacher. Music and theatre instructors benefit from participating in the *Songshop* master classes.

We strongly encourage coordinated bookings within a region. Your local **college activities coordinators** or **arts council** can help you, and we are pleased to send them our proposal of concert offerings.

Visit Claudia's website at www.cabaret-paree.com for a full listing of programs that go beyond the Paris theme.

Flexible Fees

The fee structure for Souvenirs of Paris is flexible

- Fees are based on the number of performances, the size of the audience, the use of admission fees, and the possibility of coordinated tours through a region. The fees below are exclusive of travel costs from Chicago.
- To encourage relatively small groups, there is a sliding scale based on how many students attend the program. Cost per student ranges from \$4 to \$12.
- **Regional coordinated tours:** the average three-day tour costs \$3500–\$4500.
- **Stand-alone evening concert fees** for voice and piano, voice and accordion, or two voices and piano range from \$600 to \$1800. Ask us about larger combos & ensembles (adding bass, drums, sax, etc.).

FIELD TRIPS:

- For a **group of 30–90 at a restaurant**— from \$350–750. The price of the meal is separate and arranged directly with the restaurant manager. Some French restaurants will offer a prix-fixe menus and schools are tax exempt.
- For a group of **60–200 at a theatrical venue** — from \$400–1000 plus special arrangements with the theatre (we love the Mayne Stage in Rogers Park)

IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCES:

- The fullest use of the artists is an **all-day Residency** with evening concert for \$1500-1800 (or, for school day alone, \$1000–\$1200). The artists are at your service from first hour to last and can provide any combination of performances, workshops, master classes and informal discussions involving upwards of 600 students throughout the day.
- A stand-alone **assembly performance** for 30–200 students: \$400-\$800. Two performances for 200 students each is \$1200.
- Hour-long seminars and **workshops** (comprising no more than 30 students each) can be held before *and* after the show at a fee of \$150 per session.
- If not part of an artist-in-residence day, a 90-minute to 2-hour **master class** is \$300. If students are paying individually for the master class, the cost is \$20-25 per singing student and \$5-10 per auditor, for a total of about \$300. Two or more master classes in a day range begin at \$500.

If your school or students are financially disadvantaged, please feel free to re-discuss these fees. The next page describes fee-support programs available to schools and non-profit organizations in the "heartland" states.

Suggestions for Funding

In addition to school-based funds (from administration, your own department, the parents' organization, internal fund-raising activities —the crêpe sale, the sale of bonbons), here are other sources you can tap:

- **public ticket sales** for an evening show. This may be the single easiest way to support the school visits. At \$10 per ticket, one house of 200 people would pay the bill entirely for a day in the school, the evening concert, and still leave some seed money to begin again the next year.
- **grants** from the state Arts Council, Humanities Council and the school districts' arts-in-education funds. In Illinois, non-profit presenters (including schools) qualify for 35% support for public programs, under the Illinois Arts Tour Roster program of the Illinois Arts Council. The Quick Start program also funds artist-in-residency projects up to 50%. Application forms and more information are available from <http://arts.illinois.gov/>. Our office can share examples of successful grant applications.
- the American Association for Teachers of French "**Small Projects Grants**"
- the local post of the **Veterans of Foreign Wars**. Because of the World War II theme in the show, veterans organizations are encouraged to support the program (especially if you can invite WWII veterans to join the audience).
- "French-flavored" **businesses** in the area, for example a French bakery or restaurant, a travel agency, a European bookstore, a music store, will often lend support in exchange for some recognition in the program.
- corporate **in-kind donations** from hotels (in Wisconsin, Comfort Suites offered lovely rooms), discount flights and car rentals.
- **home stays** (Claudia especially enjoys getting to know school families up close)
- chapters of the **Alliance Française** (some are more fiscally active than others). www.afusa.org
- **collaboration** with neighboring colleges and universities, especially through their adult education and outreach departments

SAMPLE SONG LISTS

PARIS IN THE JAZZ AGE (1900-1940)

Irving Berlin and compatriots: Alexander's Ragtime Band; International Rag; Harlem on my Mind

Ragtime in the Music Hall: Erik Satie's La Diva de l'Empire; Williams and Walker's I Wants to Be a Actor Lady

Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake: I'm Just Wild about Harry, Shuffle Along; I'm Just Simply Full of Jazz; How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?

Josephine Baker and Bricktop: Aux Iles Hawaii; J'ai deux amours (Two Loves Have I), Insufficient Sweetie, Black Bottom, Charleston

Cole Porter: Miss Otis Regrets; Let's Do It; Let's Misbehave; I'm in Love again

Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguett: Mon homme (My Man); Louise; In the Park in Paree; Valentine; Y'a d'la joie

Avant-garde composers Poulenc, Weill & Milhaud: Les chemins de l'amour, Mon histoire, Hôtel, Je ne t'aime pas

Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington: Wild Man Blues; St. Louis Blues, Solitude

Changing times: Madame la Marquise; Last Time I saw Paris; Je suis swing



SOUVENIRS DE PARIS, 1950

That's what makes Paris Paree

Aux Champs-Élysées

Le gamin de Paris

Grands boulevards

La vie en rose

Barbara

Paris Blues

Milord

Poor people of Paris

Cabdriver's Nightmare

Les berceaux

Aux îles Hawaïi

L'accordéoniste

Autumn leaves

You don't know Paree

Non, je ne regrette rien

C'est si bon

Sammy Cahn & Vern. Duke

Mike Deighan, Mike Wilsh, Pierre Delanoe

Mick Michey1 & André Mares

Jacques Plante & N. Glanzberg

Edith Piaf & Mack David

Jacques Prévert & Joseph Kosma

Duke Ellington

Georges Moustaki & M. Monnot

Jack Lawrence & M. Monnot

Jacques Prévert & Joseph. Kosma

Gabriel Fauré & Sully -Prudhomme

Pascal Bastia & Jean Bastia

Michel Emer

Jacques Prévert & Jos. Kosma

Cole Porter

Michel Vaucaire & Chas. Dumont

Henri Betti & André Hornez

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Study Guides

For each show, there is a *Study Guide* or *Research Notes* containing the playlist, French lyrics, translation, the historical context of each song, questions for students to explore, a brief history of the period, and further references. The guide to *Souvenirs of Paris* includes vocabulary list and suggested pre- and post-performance activities. Claudia Hommel's recordings of *Paris/Paree* and *Paris in the Jazz Age* are also recommended teaching tools. Visit www.cabaret-paree.com for teacher-prepared notes and other links.

SOUVENIRS de PARIS, 1950

A Study Guide for Students and Teachers of French

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SAMPLE

What do student and teacher "critics" have to say?

French is a totally elective subject at our school, so a program such as this is truly an inspiration and a motivation for students to continue studying the language. I am very grateful to you and Bob Moreen and to the Michener Museum for providing this experience for my students. *Pat Seabright, French Teacher, Neshaminy Middle School*

The Cabaret was a fantastic experience. This is definitely something that should be done each year, because there is no better way to learn a language than to learn the songs and become part of it. *Hauppauge High School student Stephen Damadeo*

* * * * * The show was great, a five-star recommendation to any school group learning French! The students, all 'débutantes' in French, were familiar with the songs thanks to an extensive study guide that Claudia had put together. After the performance, Claudia made the rounds, talking to all of them. *Gretchen Hane, Tilden High School, Chicago*

"I was so impressed when you came to our school and gave us lessons in how to develop character when singing. Thank you so much!!!" *Zach Clause, The performance helped me to understand the jazz age in Paris and how the World Wars tied in. The actual layout of the performance, like how the songs went into the explanation and then another song kept it interesting. Timothy Dietz, Bucks County 8th grade, Pennsylvania*

A stellar performance! ... thank you for taking me to Paris along with you...I found your show to be most amazing and interesting, and I think that other high schools would enjoy your show just as much as I did. *James Sherwood, Robinson High School, Robinson, Illinois*

More reviews are posted at www.cabaret-paree.com.

ABOUT CLAUDIA HOMMEL

Singer/actor Claudia Hommel specializes in combining art songs, American standards and French *chansons* to create character and drama. Her performances and master classes take her from New York City to California, Brussels to Kansas, New Orleans to Paris.

Born in Paris, France, Claudia was raised in Detroit. She graduated from Antioch College in history, specializing in comparative social history of the 19th and 20th centuries. She acquired a Masters in Library Science, founded and directed the museum archives department of the Detroit Institute of Arts before going on to New York City to pursue a career in theatre and studies with cabaret legend Martha Schlamme. She now lives in Chicago where she is a founding member of the Chicago Cabaret Professionals.

Since 1995, Claudia Hommel has been bringing her French and history-infused cabaret performances, master classes and workshops to public and private schools in cities, suburbs and rural areas around the country. She is a member of the American Association of Teachers of French, Music Educators National Conference, Actors Equity Association, Screen Actors Guild, and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Claudia Hommel's album, *Paris/Paree* features accordionist Chuck Kopp, pianist Bob Moreen, a jazz quartet and string quartet. Her second album, *Paris in the Jazz Age*, was inspired by the Smithsonian traveling exhibit *The Jazz Age in Paris*, and features pianist/singer Bob Moreen and pianist Patrick Holland. Her third album, *Romance Language: French songs for lovers*, features legendary jazz violinist Johnny Frigo. And her fourth *The Jazz Fauré Project* sets the 19th century songs of Gabriel Fauré to jazz for 2 voices and jazz quartet.