

# **"The Teacher as Impresario: The Field Trip Experience"**

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## **Introduction:**

I am a French teacher in a large suburban public high school. Arlington Heights is a suburb northwest of Chicago, Illinois. I teach French 1 through Advanced Placement French. Over the past thirty-one years, I have organized countless field trips to a wide variety of cultural events. I have worked with Claudia Hommel twice, both times combining her cabaret program (Souvenirs de Paris, 1950) with a field trip to a French restaurant in Chicago.

## **The Field Trip Experience:**

In planning any field trip cost is always an important consideration. When combining a restaurant meal with another cultural event, the cost can quickly escalate - especially if a bus is needed to reach the location. As an attachment to this handout I've included a Checklist #1 as a guide for planning your own field trip. At Hersey our French Club has been very active in earning money through candy sales (Eiffel Bonbons, Advent Calendars, etc.). We are able to use this money to pay for the bus transportation which lowers the cost each student must pay.

## **Choosing the Restaurant:**

Choosing an appropriate restaurant is critical to the success of the field trip. On Checklist #2 (attached) I review several things to consider in selecting a good restaurant. Once you have chosen a suitable restaurant, work with the owners in advance to establish proper timing of the event. What works best is to have the restaurant serve the main course before Claudia begins her cabaret performance. Then, during Claudia's intermission, the servers can clear the tables and serve the desserts before the second half of the program.

## **Advance Preparation for the Field Trip:**

The first time I brought my students to attend Claudia's cabaret program, they were not properly prepared for the event. Claudia's CD had been released only days before and the notes that I had to work with did not compare to the excellent study guide which she has since developed. Consequently, the students didn't really get involved in the performance. Also, there were more than 60 students and the seating arrangements in this first restaurant were not conducive to a cabaret performance.

This past April, I brought 40 students to "La Crêperie" in Chicago. Before the field trip, I used Claudia's improved study guide which she has compiled from much feedback over several years from participating teachers. I played her CD and handed out the words to some (not all) of the songs on the CD. This advance preparation was definitely worth the class time. The students were much more involved in the performance and felt like active participants. Claudia even had them all singing along with her.

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, in order to have a successful field trip experience, it is essential that you coordinate carefully with the restaurant and adequately prepare your students in advance. In my opinion, a field trip to a French restaurant is an excellent way to expose students to the unique cabaret experience.

## **Thoughts for the future:**

After the April field trip, my classes had an excellent discussion about Claudia Hommel's cabaret performance. They expressed many positive comments. However, the next time that I work with Claudia, I would like to host a performance at John Hersey High School. Perhaps I would invite middle school French students from our feeder schools or invite high school students from the other five high schools in our district. I would have Claudia spend the day at our school and after her performance conduct a workshop with the advanced students. During the workshop the students would have the opportunity to delve more deeply into the history of this time period and to analyze the songs.

## **#1 Checklist of Cost Considerations**

1. Can students afford combined cost of meal, transportation & program?
2. Can these costs be subsidized by school, French Club or other?
3. What transportation is available?
  - a. parent volunteers
  - b. school vans
  - c. public transportation
  - d. bus rental
4. Meals
  - a. Is there a group discount available?
  - b. Are some menu choices more expensive?
  - c. Is time of day (or day of week) critical to pricing?
5. Program
  - a. Is there a group discount available?
  - b. Are some performances less expensive?

## **#2 Checklist of Questions for Restaurant Selection**

1. Is the set up of the room conducive to a cabaret performance?
2. Is a piano available for the performance?
3. What kind of lighting & amplification is available?
4. Request copies of the menus with prices clearly indicated.
5. Are group discounts available?
6. Does a discount limit the selection of foods?
7. Is a vegetarian meal available?
8. Are beverage refills free?
9. Is dessert extra?
10. Is the tip included in the price?
11. Does the restaurant require you to submit your school's tax-exemption number before the day of the field trip?