

Introduction to Global Music

The [Center for European Studies](#) (CES) and other Area Studies Centers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are collaborating with the student-run radio station [WXYC](#) in the production of the [Global Music Show](#).

This monthly hour-long program features music from a particular area of the world combined with commentary by guest scholars, who discuss the music played in the context of the culture and history of the region that produced it.

To support cultural learning, CES has created student listening guides, pre- and post-listening discussion questions, and resource links for each of their Global Music programs. The programs run about one hour, and so listening and discussion would work well for block schedule classes. If your class runs the traditional hour length, you can have the class listen over two periods, and then discuss. Alternatively, you can assign the listening for homework, and hold the discussion during class time.

Music can teach us much about a culture that never appears in a textbook. Use these programs and teaching resources to connect your students with European cultures in a dynamic, new way. Encourage students to continue their exploration of Europe through music.

The (Re)Invention of the *Chanson française*

Mercédès Baillargeon

Pre-Listening Questions

Ask students to think about these questions before you listen to the program. Write their answers on the board.

1. What kinds of music do you usually associate with France? What instruments do you usually expect to hear? What are the French songs we're familiar with usually about?
2. In this program, you're going to hear songs from a tradition called *chanson française*. This variety of French popular song emphasizes the poetry of the French language. Make a prediction. What will the music sound like? Why do you think the music has this name?

Name _____

Read these questions before you start listening to “The (Re)Invention of the *Chanson française*.”
As you listen, write down your answers.

The (Re)Invention of the *Chanson française*

Mercédès Baillargeon

Listening Guide

1. The show opens with a brief description of the *chanson française* musical genre. What does this genre emphasize?
2. When did this tradition begin? When did it become enormously popular?
3. The tradition of the *chanson française* developed out of an earlier movement apart from music. What was the art form that inspired the *chanson française*?
4. You’ll be hearing several *chansonneurs* who are the mainstay of the tradition (Tourné, Piaf, Brel, Aznavour). Listen to the songs, noting the qualities of the singers’ voices, the musical arrangement, and the emotional tone. What common qualities can you find? What sets each *chansonneur* apart?
5. Which singer is called “La Môme”?
6. Several American popular artists have sung Jacques Brel’s *chansons*. Name some of those mentioned.
7. What time and place in Paris does “La Bohème” celebrate?

8. How did French musical culture change in the 1960s? How does “Poupée de cire, poupée de son” and “Bonnie and Clyde” express this change?
9. Johnny Hallyday (“Ma gueule”) took a name connected with American culture, and expressed that culture both musically and in his stage appearance. What influences do you hear in his music? How did he appear in performance?
10. What kind of pop musical influence do you hear in “Désenchantée”?
11. Do you think “J’ai demandé à la lune” is closer in style to modern or to earlier *chanson française*? Explain your thinking.
12. How does the music of Zebda (“Tomber la chemise”) create new possibilities for *chanson française*?

Post-Listening Discussion

After the class has listened to “The (Re)Invention of the *Chanson française*,” use these questions as springboards for discussion.

1. Look back on your predictions of what you would hear in the program. Was your prediction correct? Did anything surprise you about the music you heard?
2. The *Chanson française* is known and enjoyed beyond France. What is the challenge for singers/songwriters who want to translate these songs into their own languages?
3. Many popular singers experiment with different musical forms. Which singers do you think should try *chanson française*? Which songs would you recommend to each?

Activities:

1. Choose three musical pieces from the program for a CD compilation. Give the CD a title and write a short description of the *chanson française* tradition for the album notes.
2. Create your own original poster to advertise “An Evening of *Chanson française*.”
3. Create a report explaining the history of *chanson française*. Include links to traditional and contemporary music.
4. Continue learning about *chanson française* and French culture by exploring these sites:

Edith Piaf performing “Je Ne Regrette Rien”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0RlxpS_zik

Charles Aznavour “La Bohème” in French:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A314PVRsQIM>

Mylène Farmer, “Désenchantée” video (Violent, but note the “Gavroche” figure and the final scene recalling Delacroix’s “La liberté guidant le peuple”)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-rDUL5z0Rs>

The inspiration for “Bonnie and Clyde,” from Bonnie Parker’s poem:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5061/>

Thanks to Mercédès Baillargeon for these additional examples of classic and contemporary *chanson française*:

Serge Reggiani, “Le dormeur du val”

Tino Rossi, “Ô Corse, île d’amour”

Charles Trenet, “Boum”

Serge Reggiani, “Il suffirait de presque rien”

Léo Ferré, “Le pont Mirabeau”

Juliette Gréco, “Si tu t’imagines”

Henri Salvador, “Maladie d’amour”

Dalida, “Bambino”

Jacques Dutronc, “Mini, mini, mini”

Claude François, “Cette année-là”

Hervé Vilard, “Capri, c’est fini”

Serge Gainsbourg, “Je t’aime, moi non plus,” “Melody Nelson,” “Ballade de Melody Nelson”

Bernard Lavilliers, “Idées noires”

Téléphone, “Ça (c’est vraiment toi)”

Alain Souchon, “L’amour en fuite”

Francis Cabrel, “Je l’aime à mourir”

Mylène Farmer, “Libertine”

Louise Attaque, « Tu dis rien »

M., “Je dis aime”

Arthur H., “Adieu Tristesse”

Grand corps malade, “J’ai pas les mots”

MC Solaar, “La vie est belle”

Pierre Lapointe, “Place des Abesses”

Les Cowboys fringants, “Les étoiles filantes”

Coeur de pirate, “Adieu”