

PLAYING HOOKY
AN INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE WITH



BON DEBARRAS

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

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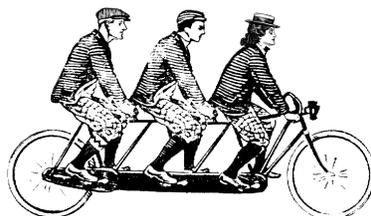
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PLAYING HOOKY

AN INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE WITH *BON DÉBARRAS*

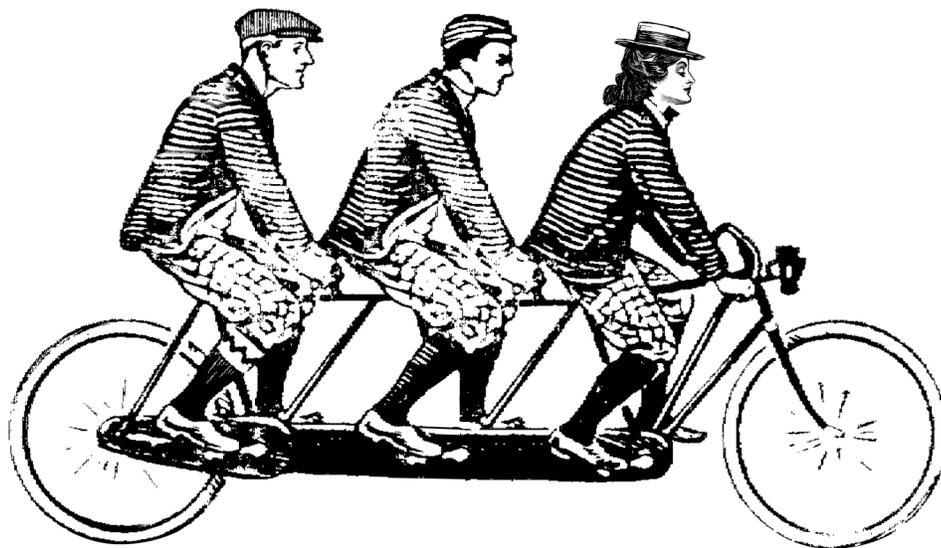


Let *Bon Débarras* take you on a whirlwind musical journey through Québec, Acadia and Louisiana and the diverse communities from which they've drawn their inspiration. Feet stomping, hand clapping, leg slapping and full on singing are to be expected from the trio and the audience alike. Their show, *Playing Hooky*, has been performed in schools and in children's festivals throughout Canada and France. Full of songs, tales, lilting and called dances, their performance will dazzle you and give you a spring in your step.



BON DÉBARRAS : **MUSIC THAT MAKES US FEEL GOOD!**

Born from the vision of Montreal artists Dominic Desrochers, Jean-François Dumas and Marie-Pierre Lecault, *Bon Débarras* unites the worlds of music, dance and poetry. The group brings together a fusion of Quebecois folk music, traditional step dancing and other global influences, for a show full of fun and creative energy. On guitar, banjo, violin and harmonica, *Bon Débarras* creates an atmosphere that cuts across boundaries and transcends the ages.



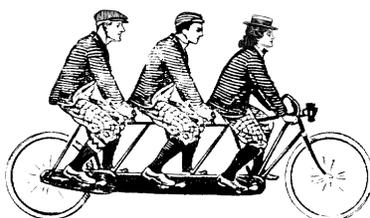
But what is *Bon Débarras*? For the band members, the name has two meanings. First, *Bon Débarras* can be directly translated as “good riddance”, which is about getting rid of sorrow, anger and negative energy by playing music. But in French, a “débaras” is a place such as an attic, a basement or a closet where we keep old stuff that we don’t want to get rid of, just in case we might need to use it again someday. *Bon Débarras’* attic is full of songs, music and traditional influences that help the musicians find their inspiration.

WANDERING FOLK MUSIC FROM AMERICA: A BIT OF HISTORY

Bon Débarras' primary inspiration is Québec folk music. **Folklore** (from folk, meaning “people,” and lore meaning “knowledge”) refers to the collective creation by a people that is orally transmitted from generation to generation (tales, stories, songs) or by example (music, dance, rites, beliefs, savoir-faire). Folklore defines who we are and allows us to trace our origins.

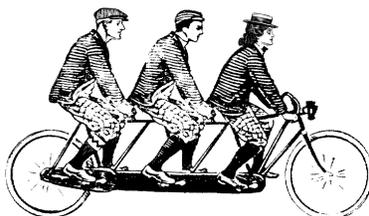
Native Americans living at the time of the arrival of the first French settlers, had been playing music for thousands of years. The early explorers were amazed at the diversity of Amerindian music, dance and culture. Despite its rich heritage, native American culture had only a minimal influence on the early settlers' musical trends.

French and British colonization in the 17th and 18th centuries left their mark on Quebec folk music, the result being a blend of Irish jigs mixed with French call and response songs. This specific aspect of Québec culture was typically passed down orally from generation to generation.





Music was used to accompany festive **dances** such as step dancing, the quadrille, reel and line dancing, which developed during the popular festivals and celebrations from the early days of colonization. The quadrille, the Bastringue and contradances find their origins in French culture, while square sets, step dancing and waltz-clog originate from Anglo-Saxon culture.

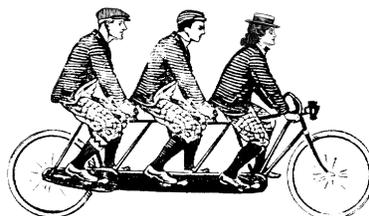


BON DÉBARRAS AND QUEBEC FOLK MUSIC



Bon Débarras employs many unique elements of traditional Quebec folk music :

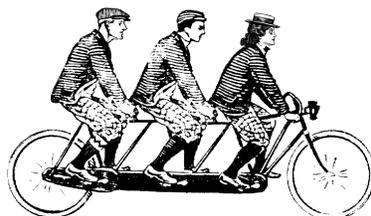
- ◇ **Turlute** or **mouth reel** is a twist of sounds such as "tamtidelam tam tidelidelam". It's characterized by a fast, lively tempo, with a joyful melody, often making the mouth reel turn into an impossible tongue twister. The mouth reel might have originally been a vocal imitation of the violin or the flute.



- ◇ **Foot-tapping** is a common percussion technique used in traditional Quebec folk music. The sound is created by tapping the foot on the ground or on a wooden board.



- ◇ **Step dancing** developed in the eastern provinces of Canada (Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Step dancing in Quebec evolved from a blend of Irish and Scottish step dancing, English clogging and cultural influences already existing in America.



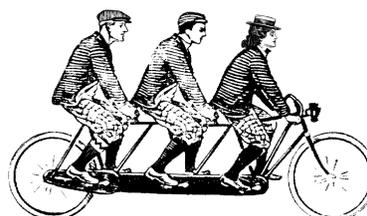
BON DÉBARRAS AND FRENCH-AMERICA

The members of *Bon Débarras* are passionate about music, dance and poetry. While remaining true to their Quebecois roots, the trio acknowledges also inspiration from the living traditions of French-speaking cultures across North America.



ACADIA

Acadia was originally a French colony founded in 1604 and conquered by Great Britain in 1713. Today, the word Acadia refers to those areas of North America historically associated with the lands, descendants and cultures of the former French territories in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island, as well as in Maine. Those regions today are all English speaking, except for New Brunswick, which is an officially bilingual province.





QUEBEC

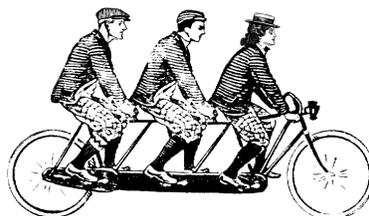
Quebec has a population of eight million people composed of many ethno-linguistic and socio-cultural groups. The majority of its population is composed of francophone Quebecers, a significant minority of Anglo-Quebecers and eleven Aboriginal nations. The official language is French.



LOUISIANA



Before the American purchase of the territory in 1803, the current state of **Louisiana** had been both a French colony, and for a brief period, a Spanish one. In addition, in the 18th century, colonists imported many African slaves to work as labourers. In the post-Civil War environment, Anglo-Americans increased the pressure for anglicization of the state, and in 1921, English was made its only official language. Today, 7% of the population of Louisiana still speaks French or a mix of French and Cajun or French and Creole .

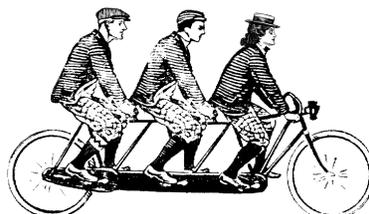




CANADA

Francophone regions of **Canada** are those areas with large concentrations of French-speaking residents. In this sense, Quebec, parts of New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and smaller communities elsewhere fall under this category.

Francophones in Canada refer to themselves as *Québécois* in Quebec, *Acadiens* in the Maritime provinces, *Fransaskois* in Saskatchewan, *Franco-Manitobains* in Manitoba, *Franco-Ontariens* in Ontario, *Franco-Albertains* in Alberta, *Franco-Colombiens* in British Columbia and *Franco-Terreneuviens* in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2011, these communities represented 30,1% of the population of Canada. Six million French-speaking Canadians live in Quebec and one million of them are spread across the rest of the country.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

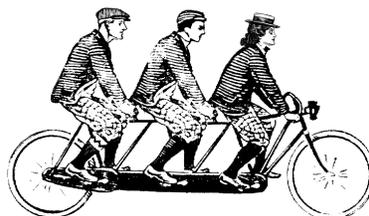
The band's versatility is displayed by the diversity of instruments they play, their unique playing style and their musical influences, all of which contribute to enrich the group's sound. At times, one has the feeling that there are more than three musicians on stage!



The **banjo** is a stringed musical instrument from North America with a thin membrane stretched over a frame or cavity as a resonator, called the head. The membrane, or head, is typically made of plastic, although animal skin is still exceptionally used, and the frame is typically circular. Early forms of the instrument were fashioned by Africans slaves in America during the 17th century. The instrument became very popular in the 19th century and along with the fiddle, is considered one of the mainstays of American old-time music.

The **cajón** (drawer in Spanish) is a musical instrument that was invented during the 18th century in Peru. It was originally used by slaves, who only had access to rustic materials, as a simple box for picking fruit or for fishing. Modern cajón is usually played by slapping the front or rear with the hands, fingers, and other paraphernalia such as brushes, mallets, or sticks.

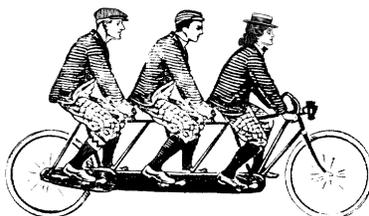
The **harmonica** is a free reed wind instrument played by using the mouth (lips and tongue) to direct air in and out of one or more holes along a mouthpiece. Behind the holes are chambers containing at least one reed. A harmonica reed is a flat elongated spring typically made of brass, stainless steel, or bronze, which is secured at one end over a slot that serves as an airway. When the free end is made to vibrate by the player's breath, it alternately blocks and unblocks the airway to produce sound.



The **steel-string acoustic guitar** is a modern form of guitar that descends from the classical guitar, but is strung with steel strings for a brighter, louder sound. It's often referred to simply as an acoustic guitar, though the nylon-strung classical guitar is also sometimes called by the same name.

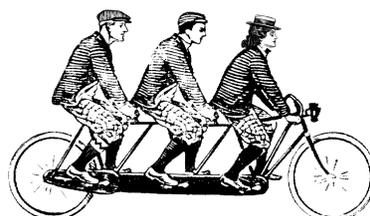
Body percussion may be performed on its own or as an accompaniment to a song. The folk traditions of many countries include the use of body percussion. Examples of these include Gumboot from South Africa and palmas (hand claps) found in Spanish Flamenco music.

The **Jew's harp** is a musical instrument using a blade driven by a finger as a vibrating element, and the mouth of the musician as a resonant cavity. In Quebec, the presence of the Jew's harp has been documented since the 17th century. The first instruments were imported from France and England. In the American colonies, the Jew's harp was often used as a gift in negotiations with the native inhabitants.



One of the most prevalent musical instruments in Canada from the earliest days of settlement was the **violin**. Small and portable, this versatile instrument found a home in the musical life of all social strata, from the formal balls of colonial administrators and military officers, to the dances and songs of fur traders, farmers and fishermen. Immigrants from France, Scotland, Ireland, Britain and Germany brought their own repertoires and playing styles to Canada. The violin became the instrument of choice for dance music in both the English and French communities of the 17th and 18th centuries, and it continued to be used in this context in rural settings until the 1960s.

Violin players performing folk music are often called fiddlers. In Canada, fiddling has a long and rich history, each generation having learned to reproduce by ear the music played by other fiddlers, making it one of the country's most remarkable and deepest traditions.



ACTIVITIES FOR AFTER THE SHOW

1 - DRAW A SONG

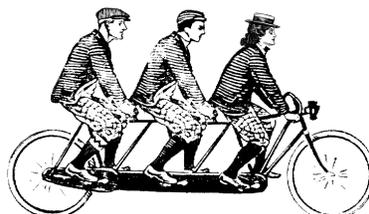
Listen to one or more *Bon Débarras'* songs and then ask the participants the following:

- Can you associate the music you heard with one or more colors?
- If the song has lyrics, what do the words mean? What is the song about?
- If it's an instrumental piece, what does the music make you think of?

Allow the participants to combine their answers and be inspired by the music to draw something.

*You can listen to *Bon Débarras'* music on Bandcamp:

<https://bondebarras.bandcamp.com/>

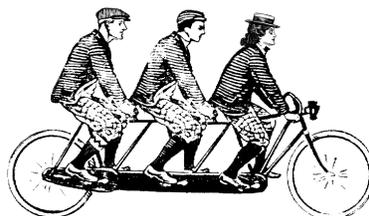


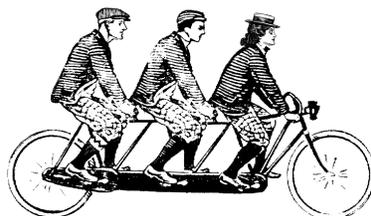
2 - MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

- ◆ Associate the images on the following page with the names of the musical instruments listed below:
 - ⇒ Guitar
 - ⇒ Violin
 - ⇒ Banjo
 - ⇒ Foot-tapping
 - ⇒ Harmonica
 - ⇒ Cajòn
 - ⇒ Body percussion

- ◆ Listen to the songs used in Activity 1 (above) and try to identify the instruments as you are listening to the songs.

- ◆ Using scissors, cardboard, glue, crayons and/or recycled materials (metal cans, styrofoam, etc.), build your own musical instrument inspired by the ones you saw during the show.





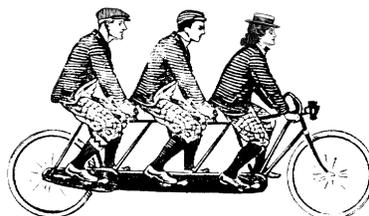
3 - COMPOSE A SONG

Here are the main characteristics of a traditional song:

- ◆ It's composed of different verses alternating with a chorus that repeats every time.
- ◆ It tells a story: choose a topic where the plot continues from one verse to the other.
- ◆ It's usually joyful and rhythmic.

To go further, you can also compose:

- ◆ A call and response song : a structure in which a soloist or a group performs a part of a song, followed by a response from a second soloist or group.
- ◆ An enumerative song : some songs have the form of a single repeated phrase to which an element is added to the phrase with each repetition. "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is a good example of an enumerative song. This Christmas carol recounts a series of increasingly grand gifts given on each of the twelve days of Christmas.



The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
A Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the second day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
2 Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

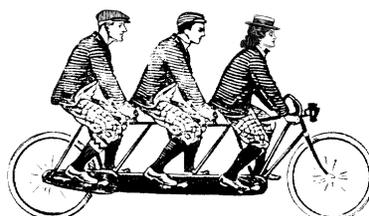
On the third day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
3 French Hens
2 Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree



On the fourth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
4 Calling Birds
3 French Hens
2 Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

On the fifth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me:
5 Golden Rings
4 Calling Birds
3 French Hens
2 Turtle Doves
and a Partridge in a Pear Tree

And so on...



4 - SEND US A POSTCARD

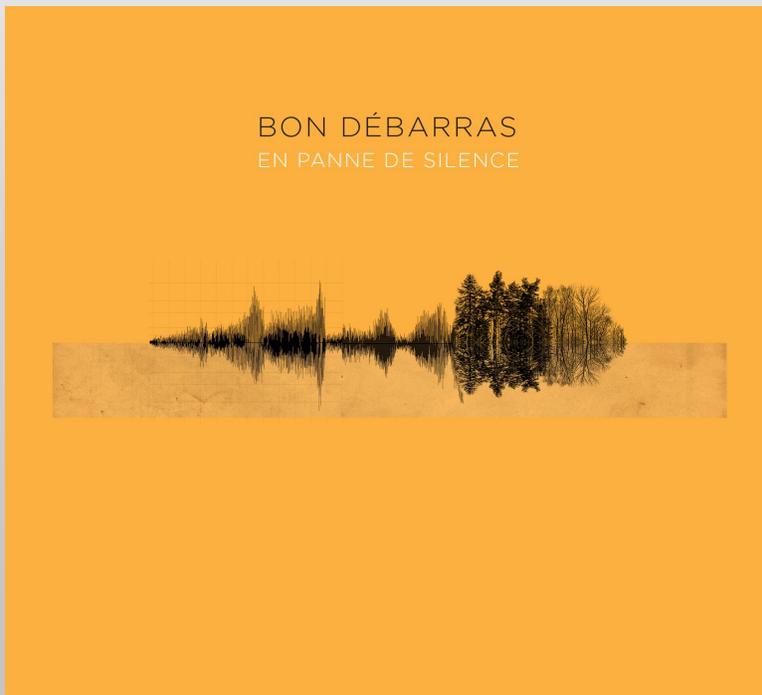
- ◆ On a blank postcard, draw something that inspired you from the show and write us a little note. We're always happy to hear from you!
- ◆ Put a stamp on your postcard and send it to the following address:

Bon Débarras
4590, rue Parthenais
Montréal, (Québec) H2H 2G7
Canada

You can also send us an email:

info@bondebarras.ca

Discography



En panne de silence (2017)



Errance (2013)



Bon Débarras (2009)

