



# First Métis Man of Odesa

## Enrichment Guide

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree and Dakota people, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

## The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

**Arrive Early:** Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

**Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices:** Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

**Talking During the Performance:** Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

**Food/Drinks:** Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

**Dress:** There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

**Leaving During the Performance:** If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

**Being Asked to Leave:** The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

**Talkbacks:** A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

**Enjoy the show:** Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

## Playwright Biographies

**Matthew McKenzie** is a citizen of the Métis Nation of Alberta and proud father of Ivan (Eevan, Vanya, Vanichka). Artistic Director of Punctuate! Theatre, Matthew is also the founder and an Artistic Associate with Pyretic Productions, a founding member of the Pemmican Collective, as well as Canadian Liaison of the Liberian Dance Troupe. He is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada. He has won numerous awards for his work that focuses an indigenous lens on Canadian issues. *Bears*, *After the Fire* and *The Particulars* are three of his award-winning works.

**Mariya Khomutova** started her theatre studies in Odesa at the age of 12. She graduated from the Kyiv National Theatre University in 2012 and worked in two repertoire theatres in Kyiv. Some of the favourite roles she has played are Agafya Tikhonovna (“The Marriage” by N.Gogol), Grushenka (“The Karamasov Brothers” by F. Dostoyevsky), Dunyasha (“Cherry Orchard” by A. Chekhov), Irodiada (“Salome” by O.Wilde). In 2020, Mariya was the recipient of a Golden Duke Award from the Odesa Film Festival for Best Actress in *Two of Us* (dir. Vladislav Vitriv). She currently resides in Canada with her husband Matthew MacKenzie and their family. *First Métis Man of Odessa* is her first collaboration as a playwright.

## Director’s Notes from Lianna Makuch

This is a love story. And like any grand, sweeping love story, our lovers are faced with grand, sweeping obstacles that challenge their fate. They are faced with modern challenges like Facebook messaging over great distances throughout a pandemic. And like the many great love stories that came before them, Matt and Masha’s story is also set against the backdrop of war.

I have been witness to Matt and Masha’s love story from the beginning. It is only fitting that these two theatrical romantics would fatefully meet through the theatre. It was at a workshop of my play *Barvinok* in Kyiv that Matt and Masha first met, and a second workshop that brought Matt back to Ukraine prior to the pandemic. At the time, I had no idea that being a third wheel would grant me a unique perspective as their future director. I also had no idea exactly how quickly and significantly our worlds would change in so many ways.

When Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, it was impossible to turn away. For so many people part of the Ukrainian diaspora, the war was and continues to be omnipresent. Mundane, routine tasks are weighted. News about it is inescapable. The cognitive dissonance of scrolling through Instagram dog memes followed by images of horrific Russian war crimes has been a reality for the last year. To be part of the Ukrainian diaspora is to contend with your head and heart breaking for your loved ones in Ukraine, and striving to not fully dissociate from your safe, physical reality in North America.

This is also a love story about Ukraine. I want audiences to fall in love with all that Ukraine

is, undefined by Russia's atrocities. Just as Matt and Masha's love blossomed on the cobblestone streets of Kyiv, or the ultra-romantic promenades outside the iconic Odesa Opera House, there is so much about Ukraine to fall in love with. Like any grand, sweeping love story, this one shows us that not even the greatest obstacles, like the most evil forces of war, can taint true love. Matt and Masha's son, Ivan, is a reminder of this unbreakable spirit. Ivan is a beautiful union of two cultures whose love has created a symbol of the kind of future we are fighting for. Слава Україні. Все буде Україна.

## Content Overview

**This section may contain spoilers.**

*First Métis Man of Odesa* deals with general existential contemplation and dread and references true historical events, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the Revolution of Dignity, the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Mild sensuality. Discussion of violence, war-related injuries, and trauma. The production also features loud music, sudden surprising sounds and set changes, haze, dramatic lighting shifts, and dramatic reactions.

## Plot Summary

A Métis playwright travels to Ukraine to interview veterans of the Maidon revolution. He meets a Ukrainian actress. He returns to Canada. They conduct a long-distance relationship that sees him return to Odesa. When back in Canada, COVID-19 restrictions close the borders. She realizes that she is pregnant. He finds a way to be reunited with her in Odesa so they can marry. They travel with much difficulty to have their child born in Canada. Russia then invades Ukraine. Through much danger, her mother travels out of the perils of Ukraine to live with them in Canada. The wife struggles with new parent stresses and mixed cultural expectations. The final straw for her is survivor's guilt for being safe in Canada. Her husband, a playwright, encourages her to write her story and they turn it into this play. The similarities and differences of both cultures culminate in their child and creation, the First Métis Man of Odesa.

**Related Resource Links:** Explore interviews with Matthew, Mariya, and Lianna and various preview articles for the show on [Punctuate! Theatre's website](#) to get more insight into their processes and the production.

## Context and Related Resources

### Being Métis

Matthew McKenzie is a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. We asked Manitoba theatre artist Charlene Van Buekenhout what being Métis means to her. While her experiences and history are not necessarily the same as Matthew's, she shares with him that it is an important part of her identity, and explains some of the history in our province.

### I am Red River Métis

*By Charlene Van Buekenhout*

Taanshi Kiyawaaw!

How are you everyone!

Charlene D'ishnakaashon, my name is Charlene and I'm Belgian on my father's side, and Métis on my mother's. I was born and raised on Treaty 2 territory in Dauphin, Manitoba, home of Canada's National Ukrainian Festival. Ni-wikiinaan Winnipeg Treaty 1 avik mon mari pi not fiyinaan. Now I live in Treaty 1, Winnipeg, with my husband and our daughter. This is where my parents are from. Some of the language you are seeing in this introduction is Southern Michif. It is one of the unique Michif languages developed by the Michif people, and one of the many languages spoken by the Michif (Métis in French) people throughout the homelands.

Métis / Michif people were created on this land when European fur traders came to Turtle Island and "met up" (had babies) with First Nations people. My sister always says "the Métis people are lovers." We are born of the union between two people from different cultures, who came together and found a way to communicate and create a connection...and this "connection" ended up creating a whole new people!

Two of my ancestors were a Scottish fur trader and an Ojibwe woman who lived in the early 1800s. Luckily we have the Scotsman's diary, and in it he talks about love getting "the better of his reason" while living with the Anishinaabek. We hope that the love between the two was mutual because the Scotsman and the Anishinaabekwe had children: one was a daughter, Helen Ann Cameron. This child of mixed heritage grew up and found someone just like her, with a father from across the ocean, and a mother from the land we live on. They married, and they lived with both cultures providing guidance. They found others. They grew communities because of their shared ties to this new identity. They had children, and then so on, and so forth (until me, and my daughter!).

These families came together and shaped their own culture and way of living separate from those of their European and First Nations parents. These people became the Michif people, Otipemisiwak, "the people who rule themselves". The Michif people took what they needed from both cultures, and created a new one. Their ability to live "in between" the worlds of the Europeans and the First Nations further developed and defined their unique identity, and within this, culture emerged. Have you ever seen Highland dancing from Scotland? I was a

Highland dancer in my youth, and when I started Métis Jigging, I noticed that the fancy steps in jigging were so like Highland dance, but with even more bouncing! Métis jigging is like a simile for the Michif people: a coming together of First Nations Powwow dancing, and Highland dance (among other stepdances) which births a new dance, with its own music and steps and rules. You can still see the initial influences, but it has developed beyond them into a dance iconically its own, iconically Métis.

Similarly, during the fur trade, these new people were able to use skills inherited from both European and First Nation cultures and develop them further, making the Michif highly sought-after interpreters, translators, suppliers, guides, couriers, diplomats and more. I see us Michifs using our strengths as bridges, creating connections.

And hey, we invented the Red River Cart! A vehicle to connect Métis to one another, especially to follow the Buffalo Hunts. The organization of these hunts has defined the Métis people (see PDF on The Buffalo Hunt in resources) and these rules and laws in regard to how to organize a hunt came in handy when having to quickly organize for any number of reasons, one of which we will see shortly.

Around 1869, some not so great things started to happen. At this point it is impossible to talk about Michif people without involving politics. Our identity is so shaped by what happens here. In 1867 Canada became a thing, but Manitoba wasn't part of it. Manitoba wasn't a thing, but the Red River Settlement was. "Canada" (John A. MacDonald and friends) wanted to "buy" up the land and squeeze everyone (Métis, First Nations) out. So, Louis Riel (and posse) quickly formed a National Committee, forcing "Canada" to negotiate with them (you know, so they could retain their rights, homes, etc). This was the beginning of the Red River Resistance, which was a movement opposing the sneaky, illegal, and offensive land theft of a visiting government which did not own the land. This is why we don't call it a rebellion anymore. The people were not rebelling against an existing government: no such government existed. They were resisting (trying to prevent) the unlawful installment of a government which did not have their best interests in mind.

Well, in 1870 more stuff happened. Manitoba entered into Confederation ("Manitoba Day," May 12th) and Louis Riel fled to the U.S to hide out (after the execution of Thomas Scott). He became an American citizen (and this is important come 1885), and Manitoba became a Province of Canada, founded on the Métis "list of rights." Approximately 1200 Canadian soldiers called the RREF (Red River Expeditionary Force) – precursors of the RCMP, headed by Garnet Wolseley – were sent to "pacify the region" (the region being the Red River Settlement). They began murdering, raping, and assaulting Métis men, women, and children. Acts of arson and other brutalities were committed, forcing some Métis people to head west. This "Reign of Terror" lasted about 3 years.

The “list of rights” that Louis Riel and the provisional government negotiated for the Red River Settlement, the Métis, and First Nations people, was “loop-holed”, or blatantly disregarded, and almost none of it was honoured. The Métis were edged off their land by settlers, who just started living there because they were given these lands by Canada. This was unacceptable (and so illegal), and so the Métis wanted Louis Riel to come back and petition on their behalf (because, like, what gives, John A?!). In 1884, four Métis men went to Montana to get him, including my ancestor Michel Dumas! Canada replied “We will meet this petition with bullets”. So Louis and friends formed a Provisional Government. Other notable Métis in this government were Gabriel Dumont as General, and my ancestor Charles Nolin as Commissioner.

Bullets came. The battle of Batoche, the Battle of Duck Lake...things went up and then down quickly, and Louis Riel was executed for High Treason – illegally executed, for many reasons. For one, he was a naturalized American Citizen at the time. For another, the law used to justify the execution was a British medieval law from the 1300s which no one used anymore.

1885. There’s no Louis Riel and things got really bad for the Métis (yes, if possible, worse). Nobody wanted us: not European enough and not First Nations enough, for the government or the Crown. We got NO land ANYWHERE. So began, from 1885-1960, the Road Allowance period of our history. What’s a Road Allowance? It’s the ditch. It’s the land between the road and someone else’s land. That little bit. Unused Crown land.

The Métis, the Michif people, rebuilt their communities: they unified and came together. Eventually, around the mid-1930s, the government stepped in and forced them off of any place they settled. Setting their homes on fire. Killing their animals. Destroying their livelihood.

It was dangerous to be Métis. During the Road Allowance period, if you could become invisible, this was preferable to being Métis. If you could look and pass as French, you did. For survival. My Grandmother was born in 1925. This would have been a great time to hide your identity, hide who you are and make the transition to being French Canadian. I believe my Great-Grandmother did this for her family. So my Grandmother’s children (my mom) grew up thinking they were French, their Métis identity lost to them.

My mom told me once that my daughter needed a ‘Katyn’. I asked her what that was, and she looked at me funny and said “you should know, you went through French immersion: it’s French for ‘doll!’”. As a former French immersion student I at least could tell her that that definitely wasn’t the French word for ‘doll’. I was learning Southern Michif at the time, and was able to find out that ‘Katyn’ is a Heritage Michif, Southern Michif or Michif Cree word for ‘doll’.

My mom also tells me she remembers, when she was a kid, they’d sometimes push all the furniture to the wall, and people would come over with fiddles, guitars, accordions and there

would be a party! When she hears that Métis fiddle she says “Oh that’s the fiddle sound I like, that’s what I grew up with”. It sounds to me like culture can reach out from where it’s been hidden. It can reach beyond the hurt, the trauma: it can reach through generations, and light our way forward. That is its power.

When I think about my Métis identity, who I am as a Métis person, and what this means to me, I think about my role in Métis history. My role as a conduit for culture and language, my role in returning a sense of pride in being Michif to my family. I grew up fairly privileged, with land to live on, easy food and water: the only trauma I experienced were the hair perms I continually put myself and my hairdresser through. I think about how becoming invisible allowed for the privilege I enjoy. I accept that this privilege, and survival, brings feelings of guilt and shame. So I think about my role as a Michif. I know it is important for me to be active in remembering our history. I place these stories within my family, to make the invisible visible, to let my ancestors know that they will not be forgotten and that I am here to make sure they are not erased. That my Métis self, my daughter, our unique culture, language, and our identity are visible. And that identity is the spark that ignites the pride that glows within us and lights our path forward.

That they, the past and the present Métis, will be seen.

I found the following quote from the Manitoba Métis Federation’s website. It doesn’t say when or where Louis Riel said this, but it is something I can imagine him saying as our people were struggling. It is a plea to not forget, to accept the good with the bad, to hold the people who went through troubled times in our hearts in hope that the youth, our future Métis will know who they are: The people who own themselves, the free people, the Métis.

"We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on." - Louis Riel

Ekoshi.

**Related Resource Links:** Rosie Darling gives [a simple video introduction to The Métis People](#) (4:22); explore the [Michif language](#); see a [timeline of Métis history](#) and learn about the [Red River Buffalo Hunt](#) in documents from the Gabriel Dumont Institute; be inspired by [Louis Riel’s words](#) and delve deeper into his life through [Riel’s biography](#) as well as learn why his trial was unjust in an [excerpt from \*The Trial of Louis Riel\*](#); dive into a [report on the Red Sky Métis Independent Nation](#) for detailed history.

The Winnipeg Free Press published a 3-part series on the Red River Resistance in 2020. Available with a free membership. [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#)

## **Conflict and Current Crisis in Ukraine**

This history is complicated, and this very brief primer only serves as a small contextual introduction. Further resources, from simple to detailed, are provided below.

The land which is now Ukraine has been controlled by many groups over centuries. In the 1700s, most of this land became part of the Russian Empire and remained so even when the 1917 Russian Revolution ended the Empire. From 1917-1922, the concept of a Ukrainian state was introduced in the Ukrainian War of Independence. By 1922 though, Ukraine was absorbed into the newly formed Soviet Union, which was controlled by rulers in Russia. Under Joseph Stalin's dictatorship, Ukraine faced the [Holodomor](#) (death by hunger) and resulting in many deaths. Russian citizens were sent into the area to help rebuild the decimated population. Certain areas of land were also "gifted" to Ukraine by Russia when both were part of the USSR. These events contributed to strong Russian ties in the eastern parts of the country and closer ties to European powers in the west.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine became independent. However, regions in eastern Ukraine remained controlled by separatist groups who wanted to break away from Ukraine. The preference in other parts of the country for the western world was exemplified by the 2004 Orange Revolution, a series of peaceful protests and political events in the wake of an election seen as massively corrupt. Evidence showed that the election was rigged to favour Viktor Yanukovich, and a follow-up election showed a clear victory for Viktor Yushchenko who sought a closer relationship with the EU. Yushchenko served as president until another election in 2010 at which point, Yanukovich did win. He negotiated an associated agreement with the EU which would have complicated trade agreements with Russia, but when he continually postponed signing, this was seen as backing out in favour of Russian support. A series of protests which this time did result in bloodshed and deadly clashes with state forces led to Yanukovich being ousted from office (which Russia condemned as a coup) and Ukraine returning to its 2004 constitution. These are referred to as the Maidan Revolution (Revolution of Dignity or Ukrainian Revolution). This deepened the rift between Eastern and Western Ukraine, spurred conflict between Russia and Western political organizations, and influenced the annexation of Crimea in 2014 – which some see as a trigger to the current crisis.

Crimea is a site of age-old conflict as it is a strategic defense port and the area has offshore oil reserves. Its population was dominated by ethnically Russian people. In 2014, Russian president Vladimir Putin sent troops ("little green men") to Crimea who took control, annexing it. Also in 2014, separatists in the Donbas region declared independence from Ukraine, backed by Russian troops and weapons. There was a looming threat of invasion to Ukraine without definitive action. Citing the potential expansion of NATO towards Eastern countries as a threat, Russia began to place troops on the border with Ukraine in December

2021. On February 24, 2022, Putin announced a “special military operation” in Ukraine, coupled with airstrikes and bombings in major cities.

The invasion and war in Ukraine continues to this day, with more than 6.2 million refugees recorded globally. Canada has issued over 800 000 emergency visas, with roughly 166 000 Ukrainians arriving in the country so far. As of May 2023, about 15% of those arrived in Manitoba. Canada has now introduced a new permanent resident pathway for Ukrainians.

**Related Resource Links:** NPR offers an article covering the [1990s to the invasion](#); view a [useful primer video](#) on the history of the region (31:00) or read a [background article](#) on the subject from the United Nations International School. CNN has published an [interactive timeline of the first year](#) of Russia’s war on Ukraine, with warnings for graphic imagery; the Institute for the Study of War has [up-to-date reports](#). PBS News Hour has an [8-minute video](#) summing up Ukraine’s history and journey to independence. [Time for Kids](#) and [Britannica Kids](#) offer easy-to-read resources to introduce the topic. The [NYC Department of Education suggests these resources](#) for teaching about the conflict as does [Illinois Civics Hub](#), and the Choices Program has a [suggested lesson plan](#).

### **Odesa**

Odesa is a major seaport in southwestern Ukraine. It rapidly expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with trade attracting diverse people who formed multicultural communities and making Odesa a cosmopolitan city featuring theatres, bridges, monuments, religious buildings, schools, and dwellings from private palaces to tenement houses designed by architects and engineers of many nationalities. It is important as a base of the fishing fleet, operational base of the Ukrainian Navy, and reflection of the co-existence of many cultures. Prior to the Russian invasion it was a principal export port for Russian grain through the Black Sea and a hub of commercial and tourism activity. Due to its advantageous geographic location, conflict with Russia has been part of the history of Odesa since 1792. In 1991, during a Ukrainian independence referendum, the Odesa Oblast voted for independence. In August of this year, [the beaches of Odesa reopened](#) and cautious citizens relaxed and escaped from the realities of war for a short while.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic in Ukraine and Canada**

The pandemic greatly affected Matthew and Masha’s long-distance relationship. Here is a brief overview of what was happening in each of their countries. By March 23, 2020, 174 countries, territories, and areas around the world had coronavirus-related travel restrictions in place.

Ukraine announced its first confirmed SARS-CoV-2 case on March 3, 2020, and continued to confirm cases throughout the month. On March 25, the government introduced a 30-day emergency regime, locking down libraries, museums, salons, restaurants, and public transport. Borders were closed for all travelers from March June 15. Face masks were required in public places. Restrictions eased through the spring and summer, but cases began to surge in August and the country's borders were closed on August 28. At the end of September, foreigners were again allowed to enter Ukraine if they were from a country classified as "green" and had to provide proof of health insurance in case of needing treatment for COVID-19. Visitors from other countries had to quarantine and/or provide negative PCR tests. This requirement continued through 2021. Lockdowns and variously strong restrictions took place for various periods in 2021. Ukraine's state of emergency from the pandemic was extended until March 31, 2022.

On March 25, 2020, Canada required travellers to isolate for 14 days, and restrictions were also implemented for travels between provinces, though these restrictions differed. Non-essential travel across the Canadian-US border was prohibited. A total of 80 Emergency Orders were made under the Quarantine Act to reduce the risk of COVID being imported into the country. On June 29 2020, entry into Canada from any country other than the US was prohibited. In the spring of 2021, travelers had to quarantine in hotels at their own expense upon arriving in Canada as well as mandatory PCR testing. Throughout the coming months, travelers had to provide proof of vaccination or negative tests as the government took a "layered approach to border management." All COVID-19 entry restrictions were lifted in October of 2022.

## Glossary and Mentions

**Babushka** – A headscarf tied around the chin. Also a grandmother.

**Bob Marley Squad** – volunteer Ukrainian veterans that defended in the Maidan revolution and then drifted back to civilian life.

**Borscht** – Beet-based soup.

**Chickadee** – A small bird that is found only in North America. They sing a happy song and are symbolic of good omens and bravery.

**Epistolary** – Written in a series of letters.

**Forschmack** – Salt herring.

**Heroyam slava** – “glory to the heroes” (Ukrainian)

**Internationally Displaced** – Internally displaced people (IDPs) have not crossed a border to find safety. Unlike refugees, they are on the run at home. IDPs stay within their own country and remain under the protection of its government, even if that government is the reason for their displacement. They often move to areas where it is difficult to deliver humanitarian assistance and as a result, these people are among the most vulnerable in the world.

**Klezmer** – An instrumental musical genre, derived from and built on eastern European music in the Jewish tradition. The play mentions a klezmer dirge, a mournful song. [Hear one here.](#)

**Liminal** – A sensory threshold; barely perceptible or capable of eliciting a response.

**Turtle Island** – An Indigenous name for North America, derived from legend.

**Red sparrow** – Also known as the House Finch, a small songbird with a pleasant song. Sparrows symbolize new beginnings and true love. A book and film titled Red Sparrow are a spy thriller containing an international love affair – perhaps on purpose by the playwrights, perhaps a coincidence!

**Rachmoninov** – A Russian composer, pianist and conductor who was arguably a genius. He immigrated to the US after the Russian Revolution.

**Tapochki** – House slippers, a Russian/Eastern European essential for the tradition of removing your shoes at the door.

## Discussion and Writing Prompts

### Pre-Show

- What do you expect from this production, based on the marketing materials?
- What does “theatre” mean to you?
- What do you know about the war in Ukraine?
- What do you know about the international situation during the COVID-19 pandemic?

### Post-Show:

- How did the design team show many different locations and times? How did the actors incorporate other characters? What were the most effective design and directing choices to you?
- In creating this show, Mariya had trouble at first thinking of this type portrayal of “life onstage” as “theatre” because she was used to theatre depicting a heightened world. How did you experience this type of performance? How does it connect with your definition of theatre?
- Masha is able to put aside the turmoil in her country until it directly relates to her. Have you ever pushed aside events? Why do people do so? What are some other similar experiences people might have? What important issues have Canadians ignored?
- How does Matthew use humour?
- How are Matt and Masha’s cultural identities important in how they relate to each other and the world? Does your cultural identity impact these relationships in your life?

## Suggested Classroom Activities

These activities are specifically designed for this show. On our website are [additional general activities suitable for any MTC production](#).

**Timeline:** Make a timeline of Ukrainian history with a focus on 2000 to the present day.

**Story from Life:** An early draft of this play was over 100 pages long and contained “everything that had ever happened” to Matthew and Mariya. To create a compelling story, they had to narrow down their journey to the most important points.

Imagine one of these Ukrainian refugees asked you for help in turning their story into a similar play. Which events stand out that you would emphasize? What would you ask for more information about? Which quotes would you want to highlight? What characters would you include?

[Story 1](#) [Story 2](#) [Story 3](#) [Story 4](#) [Story 5](#)

**Use a map** to track Matthew’s flight to return to Ukraine for his marriage.

**Compare and contrast** the differences between Matt and Masha’s families. How do these add to the strength and challenges of their marriage?

Look at the wider Métis and Ukrainian cultures and explore the similarities, differences, and connections between them as well.

Students could explore two cultures in their own family lineage and how these come together into their current situation.

**Follow the flight** of the red sparrow and the chickadee and the couple writes poetry to each other during the pandemic.

Create a visual response.

Write your own set of poems between two imagined people who are far from each other – students could do so individually or in pairs.

**Create autobiographical theatre:** Oak Teacher Hub has published a lesson guiding students in creating autobiographical monologues, putting their own stories onstage in the same way Matthew and Mariya have. This video lesson was designed for remote learning but you could play the video in your classroom or adapt it to your needs.

<https://teachers.thenational.academy/lessons/my-story-making-autobiographical-drama-c9hpcr>

## Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC’s production of *The Sound of Music* and discussing it, or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into the Manitoba curricula in Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts, and English Language Arts. The specific learning outcomes listed are generally for Senior Years but as this show is appropriate for younger students, the K-8 curricula apply as well in these areas.

### English Language Arts

General Learning Outcome 1: Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Express ideas 1.1.1

Consider others’ ideas 1.1.2

Experiment with language and forms 1.1.3

Develop understanding 1.2.1

Explain opinions 1.2.2

Combine ideas 1.2.3

General Learning Outcome 2: Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts.

Prior knowledge 2.1.1

Experience various texts 2.2.1

Connect self, texts, and culture 2.2.2

Appreciate the artistry of texts 2.2.3

Forms and genres 2.3.1

Experiment with language 2.3.4

Create Original Texts 2.3.5

General Learning Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information.

Make sense of information 3.2.5

General Learning Outcome 4: Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

Generate ideas 4.1.1

Choose forms 4.1.2

Organize ideas 4.1.3

Appraise own and others' work 4.2.1

General Learning Outcome 5: Celebrate and build community.

Cooperate with others 5.1.1

Work in groups 5.1.2

Share and compare responses 5.2.1

Relate texts to culture 5.2.2

Appreciate diversity 5.2.3

### **Visual Arts**

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating visual art.

- VA-M2: The learner develops competencies for using visual art media, tools, techniques, and processes in a variety of contexts.

### **Drama/Theatre**

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

- DR-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.
- DR-C2: The learner develops understanding about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform drama/theatre learning and to develop agency and identity.

- DR-R1: The learner generates initial reactions to drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R2: The learner critically observes and describes drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R4: The learner applies new understandings about drama/ theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

### **Social Studies and History**

Grade 9 Cluster 1: - 9.1.3: Living Together in Canada; 9.1.4: Pluralism and Integration; 9.3.1:

Living in the Global Village; 9.3.2: Canada's Global Responsibilities; 9.4.2: Engaging in the Citizenship Debate; 9.4.4: Taking Our Place in the Global Village

Grade 11 – topic 3: Becoming a Sovereign Nation; Enduring Understandings First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples and Canada and the World

### **Grade 12 Global Issues**

#### **Grade 12 Current Topics in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies**

LE 1.2: From Time Immemorial; LE 2.4: O-Tee-Paym-Soo-Wuk (the Métis): The People Who Own Themselves

## Explore More *First Métis Man of Odesa*: Recommended Library Reading List

### Explore More Recent Ukrainian History

*An Orange Revolution*, Askold Krushnelynyckyd

In December 2004, thousands of Ukrainians gathered to defy the results of a transparently rigged presidential election. This account follows some of the people who forced a change: judges who defied death threats, a murdered journalist, amateur musicians who composed an anthem, and soldiers who backed the opposition. It also traces the story of the author's family, who paid a high price for speaking out. 947.7086 KRU 2006

*The Rooster House*, Victoria Belim

In 2014, Belim's hometown of Kyiv was gripped by protests and violent suppression. She returned to Ukraine to unravel a family mystery spanning several generations and to understand how communist revolution, civil war, famine, world war, totalitarianism and fraught independence changed the course of their lives. 947.7084 BELIM 2023

### Explore More Cross-Cultural Stories

*A Grandmother Begins the Story*, Michelle Porter

Five generations of Métis women argue, dance, struggle, laugh, love, and tell the stories that will sing their family, and perhaps the land itself, into healing. An extraordinary novel told by a chorus of vividly realized characters, including descendants of the bison that once freely roamed the land. FICTION PORTER

*A Map Is Only One Story*, ed. Nicole Chung & Mensah Demary

In this anthology of essays, twenty writers share their personal stories of migration, family, the search for home and belonging, and what it means to exist between languages and cultures. 304.8 MAP 2020

*Things Are Good Now*, Djamila Ibrahim

A short story collection that explores the scars of violence and the weight of love and guilt on the soul as women, men, and children who've crossed continents in search of a better life struggle with the chaos of displacement and the religious and cultural clashes they face in their new homelands. FICTION IBRAHIM

### Explore More Metafiction

*Never Swim Alone & This Is a Play*, Daniel MacIvor

A hilarious metadrama, *This Is a Play* follows three actors who, while performing, reveal their own thoughts and motivations as they struggle through crazy stage directions and an unoriginal musical score. 819.254 MACI

*The Novelist*, Jordan Castro

Over the course of a single morning, a young man fails to write an autobiographical novel about his heroin addiction and recovery, finding himself drawn into the infinite spaces of Twitter, quotidian rituals, and his own mind. This is a literary manifesto of optimism about deciding to live, even if the project of living includes a great deal of suffering. FICTION CASTRO



There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your library card.

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### Odesa

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<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1703/>

### COVID

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Glossary definitions from Oxford Languages except for the below.

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