



by
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GLOBE THEATRE 2006/2007
STUDY GUIDE



...whatever else life in Saskatchewan may be, it is not uncivilized. It is basic and often elemental, but it is this proximity to the elements and their influence that gives the province and its people their distinctiveness.

- George N. Hood, Against the Flow: Rafferty-Alameda and the Politics of the Environment.

THE STUDY GUIDE

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I. CHARACTERS

Baxter Taylor – a Saskatchewan farmer

Roland Taylor – a Saskatchewan farmer

Gloria Sunset – a Vancouverite

Leo Bertrand – a Torontonian

II. THE PLAY

Time – Late August 2006

Place – a rural Saskatchewan town just off the Yellowhead Highway

Dogbarked premiered at Dancing Sky Theatre, in Meacham, SK in 2002 and has since been performed at Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre (2004), Prince George's Theatre North West (2005) and Manitoba's Prairie Theatre Exchange (2005).

It explores the rural prairie experience and the preconceived notions that both rural and urban residents have of one another.

For Director Val Pearson, *Dogbarked* evokes memories of her childhood in rural Saskatchewan, "where the world moved much more slowly and life had a much more straightforward quality".

Baxter and Roland are two brothers living in town that is now a few miles off of the main highway, compliments of the rerouting of the highway in 1967, a centennial project. This rerouting has left a town consisting of a dilapidated garage and their family farm. As they enjoy a beer, or two, they brainstorm for names for their town. Finally, after much deliberation, they settle on the name, Dogbarked, as in "somewhere a dog barked".

Once they have settled on the name, and christened a town sign, they start to devise a plan to attract tourists to Saskatchewan's newest town. What about a giant dog, but what kind of dog? They dream up roadside attractions including a restaurant and pub and a casino.

Just as they sit back to continue broadening their plans, they hear the approach of a car. Leo, a high strung, neurotic commercial producer and his production assistant, Gloria,

are looking for Leo's dog, who has jumped out of their SUV. Leo and Gloria go off again to search for Cypress, the dog, and end up stuck in the prairie gumbo.

While Baxter and Leo go off to rescue the SUV, Roland reveals the brothers' plan for their new town, and Gloria tells Roland of her trip across country with Leo to scout locations for a beer commercial. Unfortunately, when Baxter and Leo return with the SUV, Baxter learns that Leo is responsible for creating the commercial he absolutely hates!

The prejudices that the brothers, especially Baxter, have for urbanites, and the stereotypical views that Leo and Gloria have for country folk, create tensions that slowly begin to dissolve as the characters come together over beer and food. They begin to find a comfort level with each other. Ideas start flowing for beer ads using the setting of Dogbarked.

Unexpected relationships form between the characters, and in the end, boundaries that seemed important at their initial meeting, begin to be crossed.

"Barking up the right tree"

"They were howling at Dancing Sky Theatre, and it wasn't even a full moon. The reason: James O'Shea's new play Dogbarked. The attention to detail is tremendous. .you'll leave wagging your tail."

- The Star Phoenix

III. BACKGROUND

The Rural Prairie Experience –

The endless skyline above vast and endless kilometers of grain fields, provide a spectacular landscape, but also contribute to the sense of isolation that rural residents can experience.

Saskatchewan's rural and small towns have reported a declining population in each census since 1981. According to author George N. Hood, extreme weather and the geographic isolation of rural areas "have helped to create a province with a sparse and declining population and a sense of political disenfranchisement". This has an affect on the way rural people view the rest of the world.

If you take a trip through some rural areas in Saskatchewan, you may come across vestiges of rural life in the past century in the fields – piles of rocks stacked up when the land was being cleared, broken down wooden buildings or rusted out automobiles and farm equipment. In small towns, one can find closed up stores and abandoned gas stations. Most roads off of the main highways are unpaved.

The seasons are the true measure of time on the prairies. Where urban areas measure time in seconds, minutes, days, the pace of life in a rural community is set by nature, where spring is seeding time and fall is harvest time. In *Dogbarked*, this is evident in Baxter and Roland's yard and the incremental changes made to the buildings and yard.

The Poem -

Leo, the Toronto ad executive, recites the following as they brainstorm ideas for a beer commercial:

**Hark hark the dogs do bark
The beggars are coming to town
Some in rags and some in jags
And one in a velvet gown.**

This nursery rhyme dates back to 13th century England. It is believed that this poem refers to the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1540) perpetrated by King Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell, his chief administrator, when England broke away from the Catholic religion. They wanted to increase the wealth of England by seizing, and then selling off, the monastic lands. Monks ended up begging in the streets, which led to the lyrics of this poem.

Or, it may have originated in the same time period, but as a reference to the wandering minstrels or troubadours who went from city to town singing their songs. These songs often contained secret messages within their lyrics, which helped to pass along the disgruntled feelings of the lower classes across the countryside.

IV. THE PLAYWRIGHT

Saskatchewan born James O'Shea, has been interested in theatre since he was a child in school. He acted in high school and went on to graduate from the University of Saskatchewan with a BA in Philosophy and Drama. He earned his Masters from Trinity College in Dublin.

O'Shea taught himself to juggle and travelled internationally with the vaudeville act "Flying Debris". He developed a lifelong interest in Shakespeare while working as an actor for many years with Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan.

He has appeared at Globe Theatre in *The Tempest*. This season, O'Shea is the Artist in Residence with Dancing Sky Theatre, where *Dogbarked* premiered. As well as writing and developing his second play, *The Red Truck*, he wrote *Thbump*, a look at what goes on inside the mind of a soldier on peacekeeping duty, which was part of Solo Collectives' monologue series this past fall.

V. GLOBE THEATRE'S PRODUCTION

i. Design Notes

Brian Chmielewski feels the play, and thus the set, are about the pathways in Roland and Baxter's lives. They follow the same simple routes and never deviate from these paths. Brian's brilliant set designs and adaptation to theatre-in-the-round allow the audience to be transported to an isolated Saskatchewan farmyard. He has attempted to make it as authentic Saskatchewan as possible, including director Val Pearson's favourite feature, a yardlight. The yard is like one you would find anywhere in rural Saskatchewan and while Leo thinks that "this place is the middle of nowhere", Gloria sees it as "everywhere....it's one of a kind". The structures reinforce the feeling that not much happens here, but that the change that does occur happens in slow increments of time. The stage is filled with debris that Globe Theatre's Head of Props, Maureen Bachmann, and Carpenter, Mason Roth, had a great fun collecting.

The costumes help to create the persona of each of the four characters. Leo's too-trendy dressing reflects a tendency to overcompensate. Gloria, although somewhat severely dressed, adds flair to her business look. The character of Roland is content in his overalls and hat. Baxter, in a button-down shirt, jeans, boots and John Deere belt buckle, is proud to be a farmer.

ii. Cast and Company

Director – Val Pearson - Val first met James O'Shea here at the Globe where they played brother and sister in *The Tempest*. They also share the same birthday (many years apart). At any rate, there is a connection and *Dogbarked* is a project Val was excited to embark on. Previously at Globe Theatre, Val directed *Glass Menagerie* and has appeared in *Twelfth Night*, *A Perfect Ganesh*, *Elizabeth Rex* and last season's *Over the River and Through the Woods*.

Set & Costume Designer – Brian Chmielewski - Brian is very excited to be designing for the Globe theatre's production of *Dogbarked*. Brian hails from Calgary and this is his first design with the Globe. Recent credits include *Anomaly* (Lunchbox Theatre), *Cheek to Cheek* (Lunchbox Theatre), and *Cats* (Viva Musica, Kelowna). Brian is also currently in the preliminary design phase of the *Grimm Brothers* for the Calgary Opera. (Nothing like double booking oneself!!) One of the concepts of this production was to try and be as authentic "Saskatchewan" as possible, but he could not work in "pulling for beer at the LB" and no one wears bunnyhugs. Sorry. He tried, but just could not make it work.

Lighting Designer – Dannyll Challis - Dannyll grew up in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, moved to Red Deer, attended Red Deer College, studied Technical Theatre, and got married. Dannyll has worked across Western Canada as a technician, Lighting Designer, Technical Director and Production Manager. Dannyll is currently the Technical Director at Globe Theatre where he has been employed for 9 years. Some of his previous lighting designs include *George Dandin*, *My Way* and *Sylvia*. As always the support of his wife Susan, and kids Justyn(13), Rayne(11) allow him to continue his theatrical endeavors.

Roland – Jayden Pfeifer – is happy to be on stage working with friends both old and new. He has appeared in several Globe productions, including *George Dandin*, *Cinderella*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Twelfth Night*. Jayden is a core member of General Fools Improvisational Theatre, and a Regional Director with the Canadian Improv Games. When not performing, he serves as Coordinator for the Globe Theatre School. Jayden lives in Regina with his wife Selene and cat Stubby.

Baxter – Curt McKinstry - Curt is excited to be making his debut at Globe Theatre in such a fantastic show as *Dogbarked*, and to be a part of such a creative team. Curt is a Calgary based actor, where he is kept busy being husband to Calgary actress Suzanna McKinstry and chasing his 4-year old daughter Madeline. Curt's recent stage credits include: *Columbo: Prescription Murder* (Vertigo Theatre); *St. Joan*, *Macbeth*, *Sherlock Holmes*, and *A Christmas Carol* (Theatre Calgary); *Crimes of the Heart* (Manitoba Theatre Centre/Theatre Calgary); *John Doe/Jack Rabbit* (Ground Zero/Firebelly Theatre); *The Hobbit*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Atlantic Theatre Festival). Film credits include: *Perfect*, *The Suburbanators*, and *The Cheerful Tearful*. Curt is thrilled to be a part of such a vital arts community here in Regina, and would like to thank everyone involved in making this experience such an enjoyable one.

Leo – Andrew Scanlon – Andrew is delighted to be returning to Regina for his second season at Globe Theatre. Last winter, he appeared as Nick in *Over the River and Through the Woods*. Favourite credits elsewhere include: Dennis Foon's *War* (Magnus Theatre), *Moliere or League of Hypocrites* (Talk is Free Theatre), *Cotton Patch Gospel* (Georgian Theatre Festival), *Forever Plaid* (Showboat Festival) and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Shakespeare by the Sea, Halifax, Nova Scotia). This past summer, Andrew's first work as a playwright, *Come Fly With Me*, was produced at the Showboat Festival.

Gloria – Amy Matysio – A BFA graduate from the University of Regina, Amy continues to call Regina home. Thrilled to be back at the Globe, having last appeared in *Just So*, *George Dandin*, *Cinderella*, *Honk!*, *The Shape of Things*, and *On the Line*. Favourite credits also include *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, (Shakespeare on the SK), and *Pageant* (Hot House Theatre). Appearances in Film and TV include *Just Friends*, *The Englishman's Boy*, *Corner Gas*, and the upcoming series *Redemption*, *SK*. She is an ensemble member with the General Fools, and a main stage player with the Vancouver Theatre Sports League.

Stage Manager – Lisa Russell – Lisa is thrilled to be back for another season at Globe Theatre. She is pleased to be working with old friends and to be making some new ones. Previous credits at the Globe include *Just So*, *George Dandin*, *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *Trying*, *Blithe Spirit*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *Secret Garden*, *Honk!*, *A Guide to Mourning* and *Grace*.

Assistant Stage Manager – Kim Bujaczek – Kim spent a crazy summer on the Fringe circuit as Stage Manager for *Caberlesque!* (BSide Productions). Some other favourite credits include *George Dandin*, *Cinderella*, *The Governor of the Dew*, *The Secret Garden* (Globe Theatre), *Horse High*, *Bull Strong*, *Pit Tight* (Dancing Sky Theatre), *Pageant* (Hot House Theatre). She will be returning to Globe in March as Stage Manager for *Marg Szkaluba (Pissy's Wife)*. Kim is a graduate of the University of Regina's Stage Management and Technical Theatre Program.

VI. TICKET INFORMATION

The Student Matinee for *Dogbarked* will be held on February 7, 2007. The performance begins at 1:30pm. Tickets are \$12 plus GST per person. The Student Matinee is sponsored by Imperial Oil Foundation.

Talkback Tuesday for *Dogbarked* will be held on Tuesday, February 6, 2007 at 7:30pm. Following the show, there will be an opportunity for patrons to meet the actors and artists, and to discuss the show. Talkback Tuesday is sponsored by Enbridge Pipelines Inc.

Contact Karen Jurzyniec at karen@globetheatrelive.com or 924-2822 for more information regarding the student matinees or Talkback Tuesday.

VII. SOURCES

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Dogbarked Study Guide – Prairie Theatre Exchange, 2005.

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VIII. ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION

1. Baxter and Roland never seem to deviate from their tried and true methods, or pathways in their lives. What deviations from their regular paths did each make during the course of the play? What about the characters of Leo and Gloria?
2. During Act II, Roland brings out his perpetual motion machine, a machine originally designed by his father. How does this machine relate to life in *Dogbarked*?
3. James O'Shea refers to his characters in *Dogbarked* as situational or real characters, rather than the "quirky" characters like those in such shows as *Corner Gas*. Choose one character from each show, write a character sketch on each and compare them. Do you agree with the playwright's viewpoint?
4. In groups, come up with your own name for Baxter and Roland's town. Create your own plan to promote your newly named town to the outside world. What would you do to set up the town? How would you encourage tourists to visit your town, especially since it is off of the main highway?
5. *Dogbarked* explores the uncertain way we relate to strangers, and in particular, those from different areas of Canada. This can be described as xenophobia. Define xenophobia. Discuss where and why it exists. What effect does it have on our society as a whole? In answering this question, consider not only how we view fellow Canadians from various regions in Canada, but also fellow Canadians from different cultural backgrounds.
6. When Leo asks Roland "what's it like living in a cultural wasteland like Saskatchewan?", Roland replies "I think it has spared me from the worst consequences of the collapse of post-modernism". Define post-modernism and discuss whether you agree or disagree with Roland's statement. Do you feel that Saskatchewan is a cultural wasteland? Why or why not?
7. Throughout *Dogbarked*, James O'Shea makes many unique Saskatchewan and Canadian references. How many can you remember?
8. Set Designer Brian Chmielewski describes life in *Dogbarked* as moving in slow increments of time. What methods did he use in his set design to convey this feeling? Consider the physical set, as well as how the characters move through the yard.
9. Have you ever heard the line "somewhere a dog barked"? Research the internet to find as many uses of the phrase that you can. How many do you remember from the play?

Globe Theatre's Student Matinees
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