

Women at Work: Female Founders & Feminist Perspectives in Québec's English-language Theatre Scene

Dana Prather, BAsc Psychology and English: Drama & Theatre
Supervised by Prof. Erin Hurley



Study Purpose

To document, analyze, and disseminate the history of English-language drama & theatre in Québec from 1930 – 2015.

Methods

Literature Review

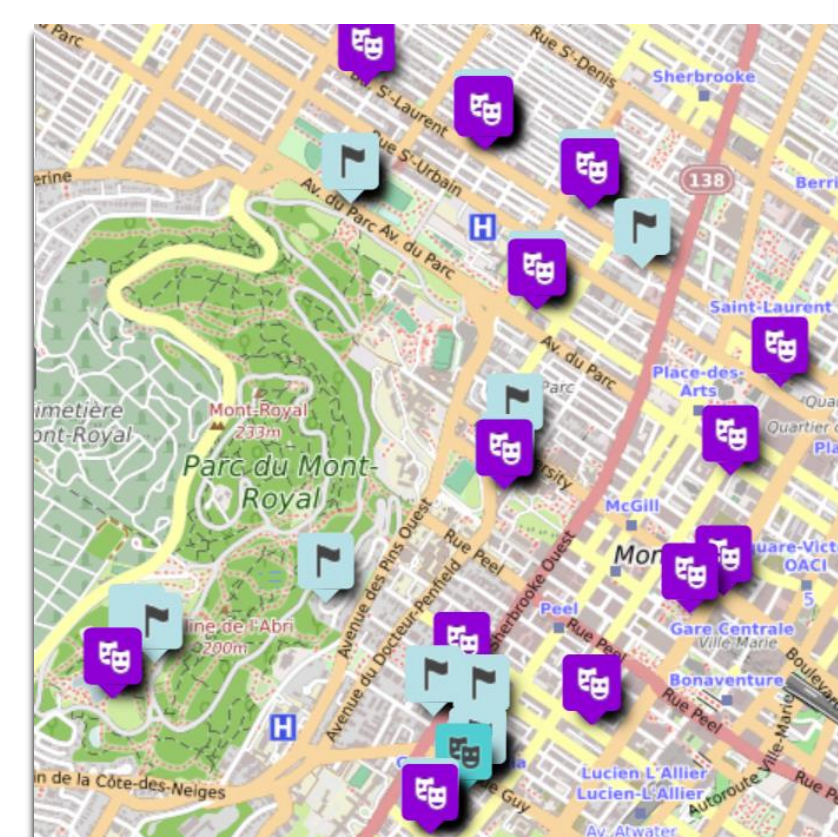
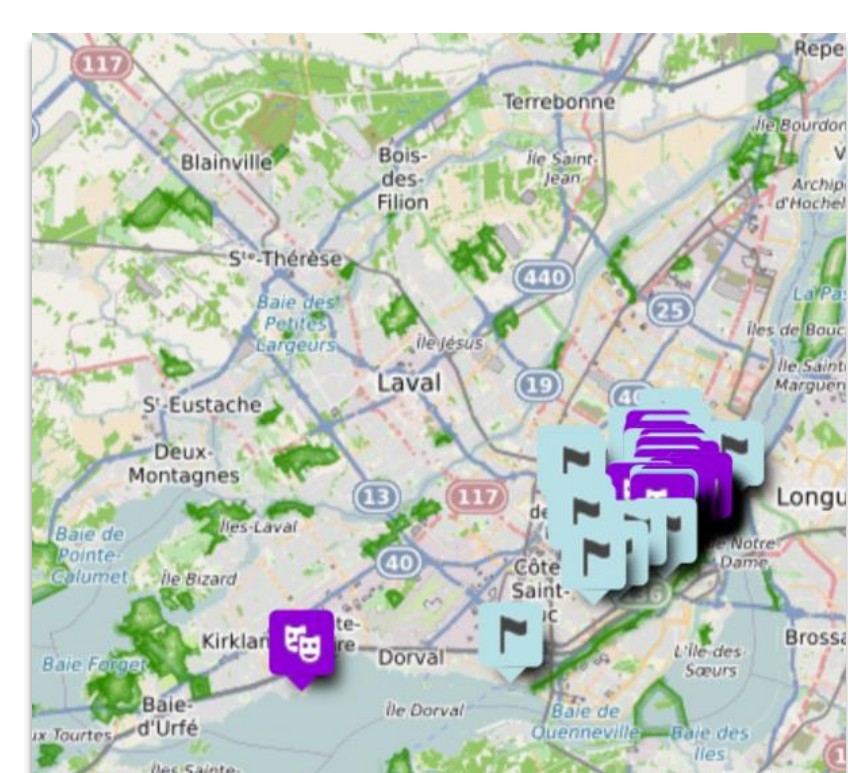
- ❖ Conducted a **review of the existing literature on minority language theatre** in Canada (e.g., French-language theatre in English-speaking Canada and vice versa)

Archival Research

- ❖ Conducted original archival research at Montreal's feminist theatre company **Imago Theatre**
- ❖ Developed a history of the company's productions from digitized archives

Oral History Interviews

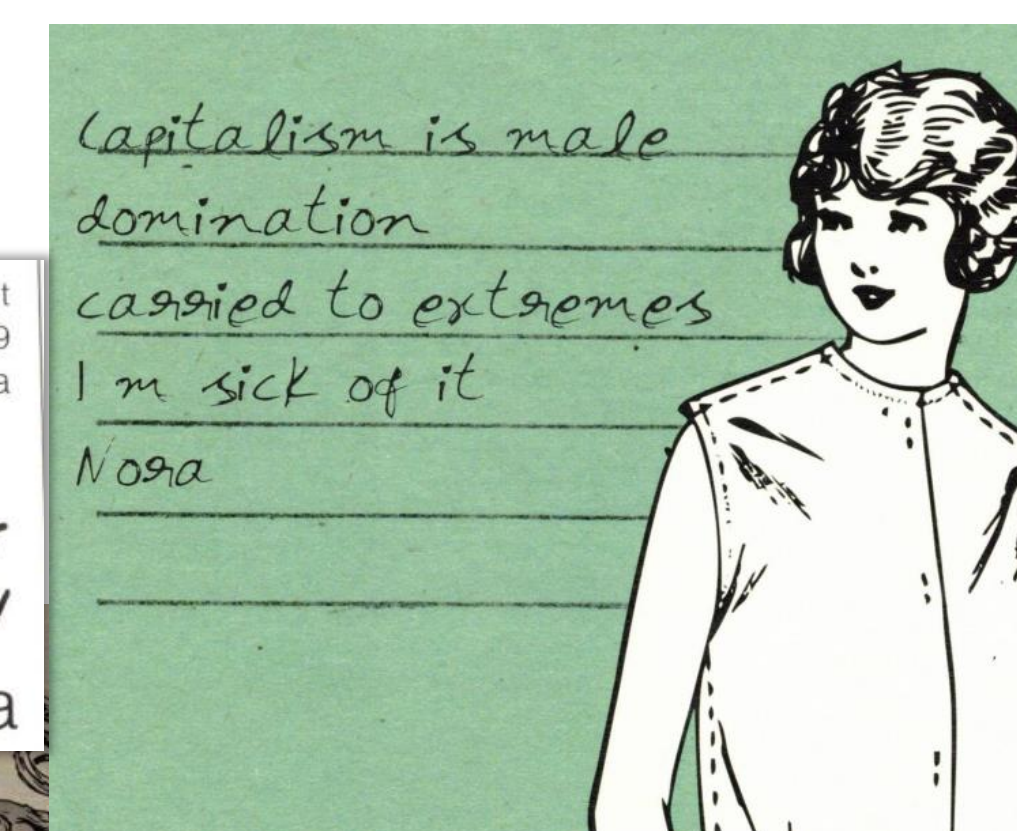
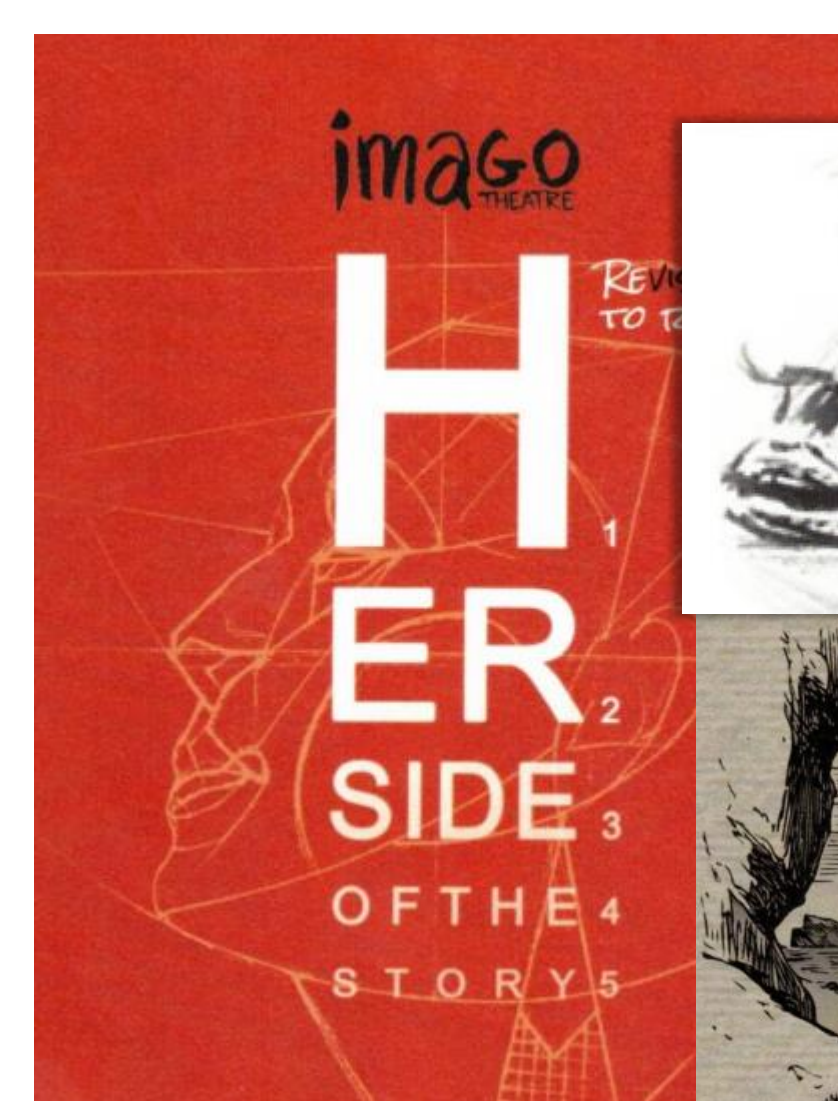
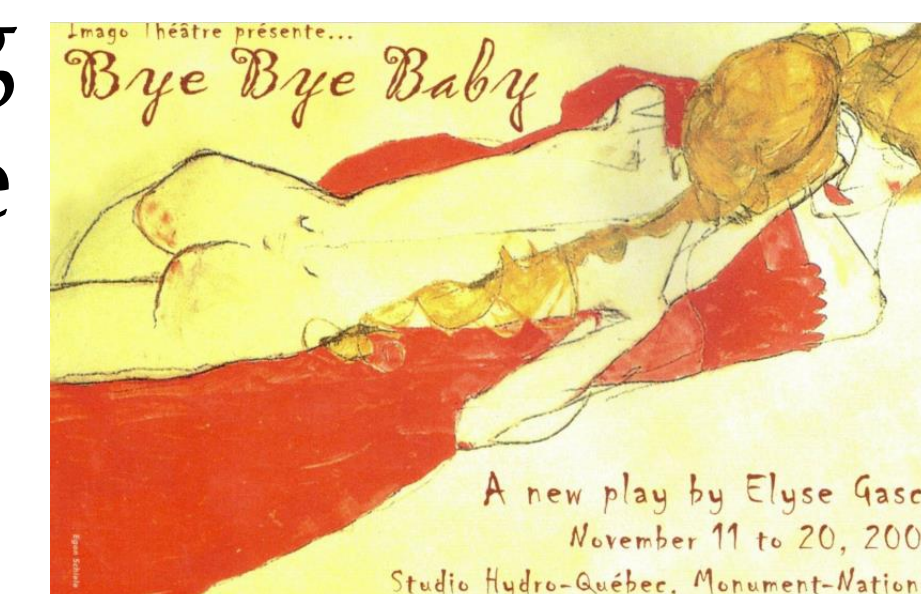
- ❖ Assisted Prof. Hurley in conducting interviews with key historical figures
- ❖ Transcribed, reviewed, and annotated interview transcripts
- ❖ Identified sections for publication on the project's **Storymapping website** where first-person stories from members of the English-language theatre sphere are pinned to a virtual map of Québec



A Brief History of



- ❖ **1987** – Andres Hausmann founds Imago alongside Ray Tomalty and Kelly Patterson
- ❖ **2000** – Clare Schapiro becomes Artistic Director (AD); Imago's programming shifts to stories that centre women's lived experiences
- ❖ **2004** – First production of *Bye Bye Baby* by Elyse Gasco, which follows a young woman's quest to uncover the truth about her birth mother
- ❖ **2013** – Micheline Chevrier becomes AD & Exec Director; Imago officially becomes a feminist theatre company
- ❖ **2017** – Her Side of the Story: Revision to Resist Festival features four plays with women who reclaim their place in known narratives



Artwork created by Katey Wattam for the Her Side of the Story: Festival's zine

Norma Springford

A primary player in the history of Québec's English-language theatre, Norma was a celebrated producer, director, educator, and arts administrator

Fast Facts

- ❖ Leader of the Mountain Playhouse, a summer repertory theatre on Mont Royal, from 1952-'62
- ❖ Directed Christopher Plummer and William Shatner at McGill's Players' Theatre in the 1950s
- ❖ Worked as head of Concordia's Theatre Arts Dept. and received an Honorary Doctorate from the university



"Certainly, Norma Springford was a one-woman business" – George Kinloch, Mountain Playhouse collaborator and lifelong friend of Springford

Key Finding

Many of the emergent theatre companies in the period of interest were helmed by women and/or highlighted a feminist perspective.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Prof. Erin Hurley for her guidance and mentorship throughout the project and to Mr. Harry Samuel for his generous financial support