



Le Mercien

The Voice of the Merciers of North America



Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341

Harmonie Chaudière made up of third- to fifth-year high school students from the following high schools: Saint-Martin-de-Beauce, Saint-Georges and Beauceville in 1978.

Music, a Passion

“I managed to get music classes set up every year for all levels. After five years, there were two of us teaching music; we had three classrooms and we performed in the auditorium on a regular basis. During lunch hour, we performed in small groups in various places in the school and even outside, weather permitting. For three or four years, our concert band played in the chancel during Christmas mass in Saint-Martin church, while I played the organ, accompanying the choir of students from the 4th and 5th year of high school.”

It was the golden age of music. Jacques Mercier n° 341

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Louis Mercier	52	Actuary	St-Bruno-de-Montarville, QC	2000
Pierre Mercier	73	Engineering	St-Bruno-de-Montarville, QC	2000
Suzanne Mercier	74	Commerce	Montréal, QC	2000
Christine Mercier	75	Teaching	Québec, QC	2000
Charles Mercier	76	Engineering	Québec, QC	2000
Alain Mercier *	77	Communication	Québec, QC	2000
Lucienne Mercier-Croteau *	988	Teaching	Bonnyville, AB	2001
Ralph Mercier *	1151	Administration	Québec (Charlesbourg), QC	2012

(*) deceased

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MEMBERSHIP FEES 2021-2022

Annual fees are due before May 31st of each year

Annually :	\$35/year /65/2 years
Annually + spouse(s) :	\$40/year /75/2 years
Governor	1 000 \$

Those amounts are in U.S. currency for U.S. residents and in euros for European residents.

This newsletter is named after the Kingdom of Mercia which existed from the 7th to the 10th centuries. It was one of the seven original Kingdoms constituting England. The inhabitants of that territory must have been called Mercien. We are proud to perpetuate that name today.

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L'Association des Mercier de l'Amérique du Nord is a member of the Fédération Histoire Québec

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to all!

The winter of 2022 gave us “more of the same” as last year, at least as far as gatherings are concerned. In this issue, we have written about the unveiling of a monument honouring Honoré Mercier by the municipality of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. As you all know, had we been spared the pandemic, that is the city where we would have held our annual gathering in 2020 or 2021. We follow with an article about the work of sculptress Martine-Carole Gagnon. We also have an item on the passing of filmmaker Jean-Marc Vallée, the new owner of the Mercier house the Association visited in 2016.

Further on, in an article entitled, La musique une passion (Music, a Passion), your President recounts the beautiful memories from his career in



music. It is a tribute to the now retired baby-boomers!

In closing, we are looking for a way to gather briefly in 2022 for our general meeting. How will that take place? Will it be in person or via videoconference, or as a combination of both? We are still studying the matter!

An answer will come soon!

Thank you for reading this and for following us!

*Jacques Mercier,
no.341, President*

Let's continue to protect ourselves! Québec 



Cough into your sleeve **Wash your hands** **Keep your distance** **Cover your face** **Limit your travel**

UNVEILING OF A MONUMENT IN HONOUR OF HONORÉ MERCIER

*Text submitted by Mr. Mathieu Mercier
Press Release, City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, November 17, 2021.*



From left to right: Mélanie Dufresne, Councillor for District 1, Lina Loisel, a Member of the Selection Committee, Paul-Émile Lacroix, also a Member of the Selection Committee and Andrée Bouchard, Mayor of the City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

(Photo taken at Parc Honoré-Mercier, at the intersection of 9th Avenue and 4th Street).

The City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu unveiled a monument honouring Honoré Mercier, Wednesday afternoon, at Parc Honoré-Mercier, at the intersection of 9th Avenue and 4th Street.

The event took place in the presence of Mayor Andrée Bouchard, Councillor for District 1, Mélanie Dufresne, other elected city officials and members of the committee created to evaluate the proposals and select the sculptor/sculptress.

“The tribute we are paying to this great politician is giving us an opportunity to remind ourselves of the huge contributions made by our own people and to set in stone our history. Honoré Mercier keeps reminding us that evolution means that we must continually question our ways of doing things. This monument is the result of the collective work and the financial support of our generous partners. I wish to thank them all for their contributions”, stressed Mélanie Dufresne, Councillor for District 1.

A SALUTE TO THE MEMORY OF HONORÉ MERCIER



Crédit photo : Jarold Dumouchel - Urbexplaground.com

*Honoré Mercier Monument
Martine-Carole Gagnon, Sculptress
(Photo taken at Parc Honoré-Mercier).*

As part of its program for managing and integrating "Monument Art" in its parks, green and public spaces, the City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu selected sculptress Martine-Carole Gagnon to create a monument in memory of Honoré Mercier.

A lawyer, a journalist and a politician, Honoré Mercier was the ninth Premier of Quebec from 1887 to 1891. He was born in Saint-Athanas-d'Iberville, an area that is now part of the municipality of Sainte-Anne-de-Sabrevois.

Jacques Tremblay, a citizen with a marked interest in the arts, history, and heritage, suggested a public acknowledgement of the contributions made by this person, who was quite significant to the region. The city supported the initiative, which resulted in the addition of this monument to his memory in the heart of Saint-Jean.

"I am happy to help spread knowledge about the man who, as premier, contributed in a direct way to the preservation and growth of the French-Canadian nation and to the protection of the powers of Quebec vis-à-vis Ottawa. History teaches us that without men/women of his calibre, our language and our culture would have disappeared a long time ago. Kudos to Honoré Mercier, a man from our region, and let us be proud of his contributions", said Jacques Tremblay.

A RIGOROUS SELECTION PROCESS

The city launched a call for proposals from three professional artists in 2020, and in return received sketches of the future monument. A committee was created to assess the proposals. The committee included two elected members of the previous City Council, François Auger and Mélanie Dufresne, one member of the *Service de la culture, du développement social et du loisir*, one member of the Communications Service, Mr. Jacques Tremblay as Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Paul-Émile Lacroix, a citizen and Lina Loisel, a local artist.

At the end of the process, sculptress Martine-Carole Gagnon was chosen. She has created numerous monument works over the years, including *Le Baladin*, in Lac-Mégantic.

This sculptress is fascinated by monuments and statues representing, in three dimensions, characters in history. The sculpture of Honoré Mercier is mounted atop a concrete block, and it reaches a height of ten feet.

This work was made possible thanks to the financial contributions of the City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Jacques Tremblay, and the member of the National Assembly for the riding of Iberville, Claire Samson.

Source:

Press Release, City of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, November 17, 2021.



Crédit photo : Jarold Dumouchel - Urbexplaground.com

**Honoré Mercier Monument
Martine-Carole Gagnon, Sculptress.**

MARTINE-C. GAGNON - HER ARTISTIC PROCESS

Sculptress Martine-C. Gagnon was selected to create the monument to Honoré Mercier in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. She has also to her credit several important works in Quebec, including Le Baladin, located in Lac-Mégantic.

Martine-C. Gagnon was born in Montreal in 1954. From childhood, she has been fascinated by corporeal attitudes and facial expressions. She is attracted to monuments and statues representing historical figures in three dimensions.

Over more than 45 years she has created, using various materials, works that let her delve into the human and animal anatomy. She has by now mastered the standards, and she has decided to explore proportions and shapes while maintaining a balance between them. She is never totally satisfied, as she keeps revisiting her techniques, and adapting them to her work.

Her works represent characters made with various materials. Through their looks and postures, they reveal to us their moods or states of mind.

Sources: Internet Sites - <https://www.martinecarolegagnonsculpteure.com>
<https://www.artmajeur.com/martine-carolegagnon>

JEAN-MARC VALLÉE, WORLD RENOWNED FILMMAKER, DIES IN A MERCIER ANCESTRAL HOUSE

The day after Christmas 2021, a friend of the world-renowned filmmaker found him apparently dead in his newly acquired secondary residence located in Berthier-sur-Mer. He had bought it, as well as an adjoining piece of land, a mere six days earlier, for the sum of 1.5 million dollars.

At the age of 58, the director of multiple successful movies, such as C.R.A.Z.Y., The Young Victoria, Café de Flore, Demolition, and others, was undoubtedly charmed by the Mercier ancestral house and by its location on the shores of the Saint-Lawrence River.

Source : Journal de Québec de l'édition du 28 décembre 2021



Photo d'archive

We are reproducing here part of the history of the Mercier house, as told by Mr. André Gaulin at the Annual Gathering of the Merciers in 2016. Readers who are interested in reading the entire text can refer to Le Mercien, volume 32, number 3, published in the fall of 2016, or can find it on the Mercier Internet site at www.famillesmercier.org.

A MERCIER HOUSE ON CHEMIN DES GREVES.

This ancestral house, almost two hundred years old, was no doubt the second one for the Merciers, who lived there from 1852 to 1951. The house is located on the land granted around 1706 by the Seigneur Alexandre Berthier to Paschal Mercier, who had married Madeleine Boucher in 1705 at Saint-Joachim. That piece of land was part of the Waters Edge Line (*rang du Bord-de-l'Eau*), where the house was built, and it was clearly identified on Gédéon de Catalogne's map. The map gives the exact location of the plot of land and identifies its owner in 1709, in New France territory. That was the second Mercier house in that area.

The previous house, much smaller, was somewhat further away from the river. The first house was moved one kilometre to the south, probably after 1850, on to *rue Principale*, and today, another Mercier family lives in it, that of Maurice, a farmer. On the east side of that gabled house, a flat-roofed building was added. By the way, your Association of the Merciers of North America (AMAN) posted a plaque on it.



Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341 (2021)



Rear façade of the house on Chemin des Grèves overlooking the Saint-Lawrence River, Île d'Orléans and the Côte de Beaupré. (Gathering 2016).

As for the second Mercier house on *Chemin des Grèves*, it had been occupied by Merciers until 1951, when farmer Adalbert Mercier sold it to Gérard Tanguay, also a farmer. And so, the Mercier house served as a farmhouse until 1975, when Gérard Tanguay, who had farmed there for more than twenty years, sold it to Professor Harold Bhérer (and his wife Catherine), and he in turn sold it to Professor André Gaulin in 1985. These last two owners restored the house and gave it essentially the look we can see today. The large central chimney had been removed before their time. André Gaulin reluctantly sold that house in 2012, because age “had crept up on him like a black panther”, to borrow a simile used by poet Alain Grandbois.

The Former “Farmers’ Hall”

The second Mercier House is in fact the former Farmers’ Hall (Salle des habitants), which was transformed and renovated. It used to be located near the old church by the water and not too far from *Chemin du Havre*, that one can access from Paschal-Mercier Road. One of Paschal Mercier’s descendants had bought it from the Parish Council in 1852, when permission was granted for the sale and the move. Mr. Mercier, Adalbert’s grandfather, made it into a home. The Farmers’ Hall was moved and installed on a stone foundation on the Merciers’ land, closer to the river than the previous house was.

For a long time, the Mercier house and the former presbytery were the only houses left along the *Chemin du Roy*, at least on the west side of the *Trou de Courville*. In fact, more than the presbytery, the Mercier house looks like a venerable old survivor! We tend to forget that for more than one hundred and fifty years, a vibrant life buzzed around the church, to the west, and the manor to the east. That is as long as the time since the present municipality followed the new church. Apart from the two residences, one religious and the other secular, on the edge of the river, on both sides of the *Trou de Courville*, there were farmhouses, a barn/stable, a cooper’s shop, a dairy, a cold storage place and two windmills. And there were also the Mercier farm buildings. After the wharf was built in 1853, there was quite a vibrant commercial and social life buzzing in this little hamlet.

Today, the *Chemin des Grèves* is a haven of peace where the silence has an exceptional quality. The always moving vista of the sea, infinitely wedded to the large fertile fields to the south, makes way for an impressive luminosity. The river is wide open, forever changing, already becoming the sea, and affording a view stretching from Quebec City in the west, all the way to the islands off Montmagny, in the east. The houses face Mont Saint-Anne, Île d’Orléans and the islands off Montmagny. Source: André Gaulin 2016.

MUSIC, A PASSION

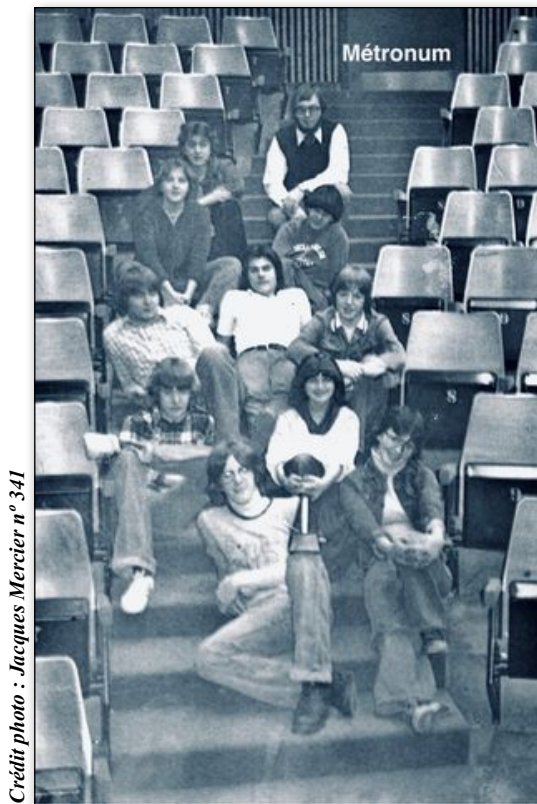
By Jacques Mercier #341, President

To those of you who think "all of you baby boomers were lucky, it was easy for you to find a job", I first say yes, but to get work that allows you to exceed your expectations for yourself, in which you fully invest yourself, while being well paid for something that makes you happy, and then not seeing the time pass, that is quite another matter! I was born in Black Lake, in the land of "White Gold" as it was nicknamed at the time! As a student, I was lucky enough to work for three consecutive summers in asbestos mines. In 1969, I worked as a sweeper in a mill, in 1970 I was shipping bags of asbestos to various countries around the world and in 1971, I worked as a mechanic's helper in the open-pit mine BC 1, in Black Lake. As a matter of fact, I finished my summer work career with a broken left forearm, one year before I finished my Bachelor of music degree in piano. I was very lucky indeed! My experience working at the mines contributed to getting me to appreciate my future career as a teacher. Most of the workers there, like our fathers were, had more than 30 years experience. They had not had the chance to study and get a degree, and a lot of them never really loved their work. You were lucky if you got to study long enough to have access to other kinds of jobs than those in the mines. Don't get me wrong! I am proud of my work origins and to have done those mandatory internships so as to earn enough money during my college years. Many of my former classmates at the time had a car, a salary, and a good lifestyle. As for me, I was building for the future along with my future wife, as we shared "French fries with gravy and peas, and a coke" that we made last till the end of the evening. Those were the good old days! That was in 1971. Four years later, there was a strike in the mines, and my father Gérard, not yet 50, went to work for six months at "Mount Wright" in the northern part of the province. Those are the lessons that life taught us.

After this long preamble, I can answer that yes, I was lucky to have parents who pushed me so I could get to know something different. Historically, 1972 was a record year in Quebec for weddings and most of the newlyweds left their city or village to go settle somewhere else. Except for people from the Beauce area, who remained the diehards of their region. A lot of people from the Asbestos area, men as well as women, went to live in the Beauce area in those days. It was the time of the creation of regional school boards. I had sent an application to about twenty of them, having made up my mind to show up at the first one that would respond to my application. I might have been able to find a job in the Thetford area, since the Merciers were well known in the field of music in the Asbestos region. My grandfather Louis was the organist in his parish church for more than 50 years, as well as Music Director of the local marching band, but I felt the time had come for me to go further afield.

The first offer I received, came from the *Commission régionale de la Chaudière*. My wife had studied at the *Institut familial de Saint-Georges* a few years before, and we were very happy to go live in that region, which was not, in fact, that far away from where we had originated.

So, in 1972, recently married in July, we went to live in Saint-Georges in a furnished one-bedroom apartment. In the spring, my father had offered me our old 1965 Chevrolet Belair. I showed up at Bélanger High School in Saint-Martin, some fifteen kilometres away, to meet my newly appointed principal. He showed me around my new rooms, or should I say room, for there was only one classroom, located directly below the auditorium, behind the students' lockers and close to the cafeteria. It was a nice windowless room with a ceiling sloping down in sections following the incline of the auditorium, and with the walls covered with white acoustic tiles, and a concrete floor and some thirty student desks with a flap. On each side of the room, there were "small confessionals" or cubicles, to allow for the practicing of nonexistent instruments. I learned much later that those cubicles had been for the teaching of English by using tape recorders. My office was adjacent to the classroom, and also windowless, but with a piano inside, a large filing cabinet, a tape recorder and 4 or 5 classical music recordings. There were no music stands or instruments. I was offered that dreaded instrument, the recorder, which I promptly turned down. I was told I would get my schedule the next day, when all the teachers would arrive, and that my schedule would consist of 12 periods of mandatory music for the first-year students, to which I would have to add 12 other activities - but which ones should I be choosing?



Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341



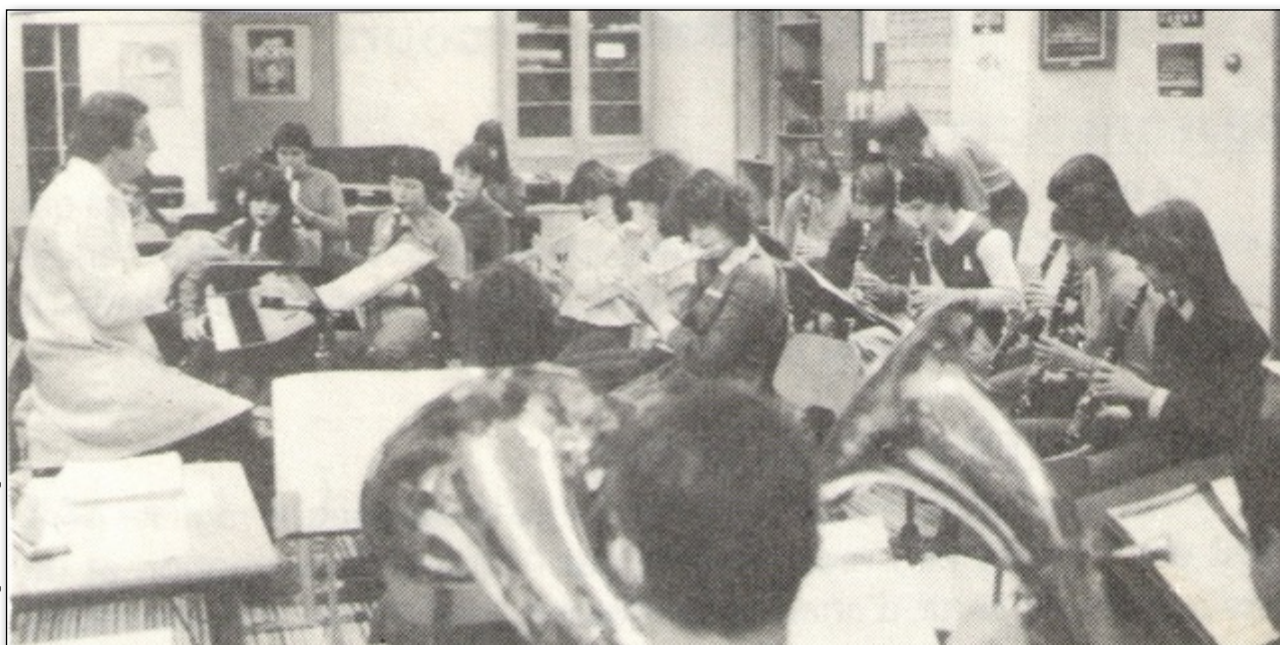
Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341

Groupe Métronum 1976
Bélanger High School in Saint-Martin-de-Beauce, QC.

That year in 1972, 25 of us out of a total of 40 teachers, were new teachers in various fields. With a new administration, that meant a lot of new people. In my great naïveté and innocence, I jumped headlong into the unknown. I was wondering what kind of music to teach and what it would be like to teach 13- and 14-year-olds in the first and second years of high school, as well as those in their last year, who could be as old as 18, while I was only aged 22 myself. The first shock came on the first day, when I walked into the cafeteria at lunchtime, and I found out that the teaching staff shared a separate closed area adjacent to the cafeteria, again with no windows! I walked to the row for the staff and the supervisor, an adult, asked me to go to another row and even after I told him I was a teacher, he would not change his mind. I had then to go back to my office, where I put on a white smock, the type worn by chemists. I showed up again in the teachers' row to sit below the angry stare of the supervisor! The principal had come in just before me and told the supervisor who I was. The first person I met in the cafeteria as a new teacher was our friend Gilmond Mercier, a history teacher. It was really a fateful encounter, but I realized that much later. The 25 new teachers brought a whiff of youth and a bit of rebellion to this new high school and that scared several of the older teachers. The union movement was flourishing in Quebec, during Premier Bourassa's second term! Leaders such Laberge, Charbonneau and Jean-Luc Pépin were stepping up to the barricades and brought a smile on our Michel Chartrand's face.

But let's get back to the music. The music program described roughly in the famous Parent Report from the 1960s contained general guidelines only.

Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341



Music is accessible in schools.

Photo taken in 1984 at École Notre-Dame-de-la-Trinité de Saint-Georges. Class of harmony, 2nd year of high school with Jean-Pierre Champagne (standing at the back of the class), teaching students in music.

The Parent Report:

Schools should shape one's character, but they betray their mission if they do not open minds. [...] Not only must we develop and fill the mind, but also call on the imagination and creative sparks. These capabilities are too often stifled by teaching methods that value knowledge acquired by study, research, etc. over expression. In the new approach, the development of sensitivity must no longer remain marginal in intellectual training: arts culture contributes to reinforce and expand the creative urges of intelligence (t. 2, vol. 1, p. 13-14).



Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341

Harmonie Chaudière, made up of 4th and 5th year students in Concert at the Saint-Martin-de-Beauce High School, in 1978.

After meeting my students for the first time, I understood that if I wanted to get them interested, I had to start from where they were at, i.e. what kind of music did they listen to, whatever their tastes were. So, after a meeting with the English teacher, with whom I had to share my classroom, I decided to "decorate" the room to make it more accessible and inviting, by covering the walls with all the posters the students could get me. So centre pages of gossip newspapers such as "Écho Vedettes", *Journal de Québec*, *Perspective* and others, posters of René and Nathalie Simard, and Anne Renée, Ginette Reno, Patof, Nicole Martin and even country music singers, all made the music room into a real student meeting room that was quite unlike any other classroom in the school.

My principal was very understanding about my way of doing things, but the custodians did not see things in the same light. To them, I was a bizarre guy in a room that resembled me. I started classes by making my students listen to works such as Pachelbel's Canon, with its power to put one's imagination to work. The students were asked to put down in writing what such music inspired in them. Later, being a "devoted fan" of the Beatles and having received my first paycheck, I recorded on a 33rpm record all of the Beatles singles - about ten of them at the time. Meanwhile, the principal had obtained for me a huge wooden box on wheels containing a turntable with a speaker, etc. It was a monster that I could play at a rather high volume. We would then analyze the Beatles songs, the lyrics, the refrains and couplets, as well as the various instruments involved. So as to get them interested in more diverse and bizarre sounds, I stripped the piano of anything that could be removed and with felt-tipped

“mallets”, we would hit strings to produce, combined with the use of the pedals, some quite unique sounds. I asked the students, in groups of four, to use those sounds, to write a story and invent some music to accompany the text. A mini production or a presentation of their work could then be made. It was not always easy to sell the idea of working in teams, but it was different from what was done elsewhere, and it worked in the end.

There were no free half-days in the teachers’ schedules at the time, and since I lived just far enough to make it impossible to go home to Saint-Georges and back, during free periods, we used that time to socialize between colleagues. That gave me an opportunity to get to know members of the staff who could play an instrument, be it the guitar, the trumpet, etc. During lunch time, I practiced with them and some of the older students, who had a guitar or a drum set at home, joined in. The lunchtime music attracted growing numbers of listeners at the back of the room full of student lockers. Thanks to some help from school staff, we went on to organize a gala that included all kinds of numbers. With one or two other teachers and some of the older students, we assembled an orchestra to accompany the students performing in the gala. Our musical numbers were limited to selections such as “The sound of Silence” by Simon and Garfunkel, plus one Beatles piece. One of the most popular numbers was a parody of the television program called “Le ranch à Wellie”, where the other musicians and I would dress up in true “country” outfits.

In the meantime, rummaging through the nooks and crannies of the school, I discovered musical instruments such as trumpets, clarinets, and transverse flutes, as well as other old instruments left behind by a former local band. Thanks to my legendary tenacity, I was able to take advantage of the fact that the Principal at the time, had a preference for wind instruments. In Saint-Georges, I used to accompany at the piano the singing group “l’Écho Beauceron” under the direction of Edmour Bélanger, the only music teacher to have a harmony orchestra in his school. Thanks to his contacts, he helped me get budgets for spreading the development of music throughout our school board. In my second year, I started with harmony instruments and that is when the classroom was soundproofed, a carpet was installed, etc. My friends, the custodians, railed at having to vacuum the place once a week, which meant also having to move around the wooden music stands made by the school’s carpentry shop. I managed to get music classes set up for every year for all levels.

After five years, there were two of us teaching music; we had three classrooms and we performed in the auditorium on a regular basis. During lunch hour, we performed in small groups in various places in the school and even outside, weather permitting. For three or four years, our concert band played in the chancel during Christmas mass in Saint-Martin church, while I played the organ, accompanying the choir of students from the 4th and 5th year of high school. It was the golden age of music. In 1980, I was teaching in Saint-Georges, to first- and second-year high schoolers at Notre-Dame de la

Trinité school (recently renamed l'École des Deux-Rives). There also, music was well set up as it was throughout the Beauce region, and I was lucky enough to have been well supported, being surrounded by musicians who did not complain about long hours.

I should add that during the period from 1972 to 1980, I wrote the theme song "La Chaudière de Jaro", for the Quebec Winter Games in 1974. I also worked as an actor, from 1976 to 1980, taking part in the creation of a musical at *Théâtre de l'Estèque*, and in 1979, I made a 45-rpm record, "la Gigue à Tiganne", for the Quebec Summer Games. In 1984 and 1985, I took part in the creation of the musical comedies at Trinité, *Rock-N-Rouleau* and *Traileur* (inspired by the 1775 coming to Beauce of Benedict Arnold) and finally in 1987, I wrote the theme-song for the Merciers, at the request of Ernest Mercier, founding president of *l'Association des Mercier d'Amérique du Nord*.

By 1989, music teaching had spread everywhere, and I chose to go into school administration, more specifically as Assistant Principal for a period of five years, looking after more than 1300 students in the 1st and 2nd years of high school, and then at the Saint-Georges high school, still as an Assistant Principal, first for the 4th year high schoolers and then ending my career, in 2005, responsible for the 4th and 5th year students. My career in the school system can be summed up as follows: 17 years as a music teacher and 16 years as "field" principal, as I like to describe the position quite close to the action!

In closing, last September, I had the opportunity to reconnect with some of my first music students, because several of them were inspired by yours truly. They invited me to a recording studio in Montreal to do a song by the Beatles "Here Comes the Sun".

They invited me to a recording studio in Montreal for a song by the Beatles "Here Comes the Sun". With us, there was a professional from the Tempo Studio, Claude Champagne from Saint-Honoré, who had been, with his brother Jean-Pierre, among the first students to play wood instruments at Saint-Martin. It was a magic moment, with me, the old 71-year-old "prof" playing with his students in their sixties. Yes indeed, I was lucky to find a job, to be able to keep it, and especially to have inspired some young ordinary people and given them enough confidence to discover and express themselves.



Crédit photo : Jacques Mercier n° 341

Jacques Mercier with Martin Vigneault at drums and André Grenier, guitar (25 sept. 2021).



Association des Mercier de l'Amérique du Nord

560, rue Desbiens, Sainte-Madeleine (Québec) J0H 1S0

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