For over 125 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers – some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President
Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area
Dear Teachers,

Canadian playwright and director, Hélène Ducharme, traveled extensively in West Africa as she researched the play, Baobab. She is known in Canada for telling engaging and approachable stories for people of many different backgrounds and origins. She brings that sensibility to Baobab, along with her inventive use of puppetry.

As they begin the story, the village Griots of the play address the audience directly and invite them to join in the chants and songs. Not everything will be translated, but students will enjoy the musical nature of the West African Bambara language, and the Griots will share the meanings when students are asked to give a group response.

We know you will enjoy this rich performance of a child’s journey to help others and find his right path.

TPAC Education

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TPAC Education
In West Africa, where a drought has been persisting for a very long time, stands a large and ancient baobab. The musicians and the Griots bring their instruments and baskets of props and puppets to help tell its story. They introduce themselves with songs about the baobab and about the importance and power of names.

The Griots then begin the tale that starts all the events yet to come in *Baobab*. It explains why the baobab looks upside down. As they tell it, the images of the story appear in shadow puppetry upon the baobab tree.

~~The Sun was so jealous of the love between the Baobab and the Earth and their children that he refused to go to bed. He kept shining in anger, drying up all the water and everything in the land, until he lost his own dried-up heart. The Baobab and the Earth sent their children away to save them from the Sun. The Baobab began to cry in grief, and then plunged its head into the ground to keep the tears from the Sun. It was said in the village that if anyone could find the lost heart of the sun, that person would find the source of the water in the baobab and release its tears.~~

(For the full tale from the play, see page 9 of this guidebook.)

The next part of the story is acted out by the Griots with several kinds of puppetry. One day, a large white egg comes from the baobab tree, and several animals (a spider, a crane, a caiman, a snake, and a tortoise—all transformed from instruments into puppets by the musicians) come to investigate. The egg hatches in the middle of the village, and out comes a human baby. The animals and villagers decide the child belongs to all of them, and they name him Amando which means “He Who Unites.”

Amando grows into a boy, and one day he hears the baobab talking to him. The village Griot in the story calls the marabout bird to find out why the baobab is calling him. The marabout tells the Griot that Amando is the one who can finally find the heart of the Sun if he can complete three tasks. The tasks are challenging and often confusing. He must have confidence and be smart enough to find a special bone, and to trick two very dodgy characters, the hump-backed witch and the monkey guardian of the baobab. Amando has some help from friends during his quest, but in the end he must rely on himself to achieve his goals.

Amando finds the heart of the Sun and then must complete one last task. He must discover a way to unite the Sun, the Earth, the Baobab, and the Water. Amando’s bravery leads him to the answer. He is able to bring the rain to all the land, and in the process is himself transformed.
Théâtre Motus

The name comes from the Latin motus, to move. Founded by Hélène Ducharme and Sylvain Massé, in 2001, Théâtre Motus creates shows that combine puppeteering, acting techniques, coloured shadow theatre, and music in order to give life to original creations intended for young audiences. Théâtre Motus combines the talents of a new generation of creative artists with artists who have already made their mark in Quebec’s theatre community. Right from the beginning of a project, the artists surround themselves with a team of creative partners who enrich and strengthen their artistic research. The idea is for them to remain open to the various artistic approaches by their peers, integrating the knowledge and striving to move theatre practice forward. Théâtre Motus tours throughout their native Canada, France, Spain, the United States, Mexico, Mali, and Greece.

The Playwright

As resident playwright for Théâtre Motus, Hélène Ducharme has written and directed Tiger by the Tale; Elisapee and the Northern Lights; Luna, In My Father’s Eyes; Terrible Two; Inuussia, the seal woman; and Bubbles, Winter legends for micro-puppets. With these productions, she explores her passion for puppetry, acting, and shadow theatre.

Throughout the creative process, her respect for children has led her to work closely with them. Her training as a teacher helped her create educational activities and initiate workshop projects related to the performances. She has written numerous plays for teenagers and adults and co-scripted a National Film Board of Canada animation film with Co Hoedeman. Hélène brought this play to life with the help of collaborators Hamadoun Kassogué (Mali) and Ismaïla Manga (Senegal).

Awards for Baobab

- The Prix de la Critique 2010 (awarded by the Quebec Association of critics) in the Young Audience category.
- The 2009- 2010 Public’s Award at L’Arrière Scène, a regional presenter dedicated to young audiences, and was then also nominated in three categories.
- The Prix Éducation-Culture award for the Baobab initial exploration project at the first Gala de la culture de Longueuil in 2007.
- The Prix Éducation-Culture award for the Choeur de baobabs mural project with children in cooperation with Théâtre de la Ville in 2009.

In this particular play, I think it was important to go outside the idea of the hero with individual glory, because he’s doing it for the village. Although he’s the hero, he not always that sure, not that strong, trying to be smart, but committing errors. When you are born in Africa, you have a role, you have a responsibility. Nobody will tell him, he has to discover it.

Hélène Ducharme with thanks to Robert Mailloux of La Presse
Africa has a rich history of communication and performance that includes music, dance, and masks. *Baobab* brings all these elements together along with puppetry and theatre. In addition, the play highlights the great oral storytelling tradition of the African Griot.

**The Griot**

In *Baobab*, the character of the Village Griot tells the story. He refers to all the actors and musicians as Griots who help him. In Africa, Griots are the ‘praise singers’, the historians, genealogists, musicians, drummers, poets, and sometimes, the comedian of the village. Griots pass down the deeds and stories of their culture from generation to generation, preserving the oral traditions of song and storytelling. A Griot must make a living; it is a paid profession. If you pay a Griot well he, or she, will speak well of you and your ancestors. Pay a Griot poorly, and they may use their vocal expertise to gossip, deriding you and your family.

*The Language*

*Baobab* was inspired by Hélène Ducharme’s travels through Mali. During the play, you will hear the characters speak and sing in the language of Bambara. Help students keep their ears open for these phrases:

**Zirin:** Listen.

**Naamu:** We are listening.

**Aw ni sogoma:** Good morning!

**For Students:**

Imagine that you must know not just who your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents are and what they did, but you must learn about all the parents, grandparents, great-grandparents of everyone in your class. You cannot write any notes, and you have to be able to stand up and tell stories about all of these families! That is the job of a Griot!
The kora is an African string instrument, a luteharp. The first kora was the personal instrument of a female genie that lived in the Gambian caves. According to the legend, it was discovered by a great war chief, who gave it to one of his Griot companions. It was then handed down from father to son and to Tilimaghan Diabaté, who brought it to Mali. The kora is made from a half calabash that is covered with a skin. The bridge is fitted with strings (formerly 7, now 21) that run through rings of cowhide strips. With the improvements to the kora, the rings are increasingly being replaced by hardwood keys or guitar keys. The strings that used to be made of twisted skin are now nylon.

The balophone

The balophone, bala, or balani is originally an East African percussion instrument. It is xylophone-like and tuned to either a pentatonic (5 note) or heptatonic (7 note) scale. In the Malinké language, one of the languages spoken in Mali and Senegal, “balafon” comes from the terms bala (instrument) and fon (sound). The first balophone is believed to have been invented in the Mandingue Empire, between Guinea and Mali. This balophone still exists today and is called Sosso bala. A ceremony takes place every year with this balophone. Traditionally, the balophone was played standing as one would walk through the village to pass on the word. Today, it is often played sitting, and its form has evolved.

The djembe

The African djembe is the best known percussion instrument in the performance. Made of a goblet-shaped piece of wood covered with goat or antelope skin and fitted with a tension system (rope, metal rings), the djembe is an instrument that is played with bare hands and whose resonance spectrum generates a very large and rich tone. The djembe comes for the Mandingue Empire that used to cover parts of Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast.

With thanks for the instrument information on this page to the Baobab Study Guide from Théâtre Motus.
The African baobab has a special role in African life. It is a sacred tree for many cultures and also serves as a traditional meeting place. Cutting it is looked upon very badly and even considered a sacrilege some by people. Protected by its shade, young and old meet to discuss various topics related to the life of the village, to hold ceremonies, and even to bury the dead.

Eight different species of baobabs can be found in Madagascar, mainland Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, India, and Australia. Three of the species on Madagascar are endangered.

Baobabs store water inside the swollen trunk (up to 120,000 litres / 32,000 US gallons) to endure the harsh drought conditions particular to each region. For some species of the tree, the diameter of the trunk can fluctuate with rainfall. The barrel-like trunk may reach a diameter of 30 ft. (9 M.) and a height of 60 ft. (18 M.).

A strong fibre from the bark can be used to make rope and cloth.

The trunks are often hollowed out to serve as water reserves or temporary shelters. A giant, hollow baobab south of Derby, Western Australia is reputed to have been used in the 1890’s as a lockup for Aboriginal prisoners on their way to Derby for sentencing. "The Boab Prison Tree" in Derby is now a tourist attraction. (pictured above)

The Baobab is also known as the monkey bread tree. The large, gourd like, woody fruit contains a tasty pulp; monkeys, baboons, elephants, and even humans are fond of the slightly acidic taste. The fruit is also very rich in vitamin B1 and C. The vitamin C content of one fruit is the equivalent of four oranges, and it has twice as much calcium as milk. The pulp of the fruits is boiled together with water and sugar to make a milky, tart juice called bouye. When roasted, the seeds can even replace coffee.

The citric and tartaric acids found in the pulp provide the base for cream of tartar, often used as a baking ingredient.

The special flowers of the Baobab grow at night. Bats pollinate them by crashing into the flowers while chasing insects. Bush babies and lemurs also spread the pollen in some varieties.

Baobab nicknames:
- bottle tree
- upside down tree
- dead rat tree (for its hanging fruit, left)
- monkey bread tree
- cream of tartar tree
- gourd-gourd tree
- sour gourd tree
- gouty stem tree

The egg is from my imagination. I kind of like the idea of a Baobab having eggs. Because people are putting so many things inside the trunks of baobabs.

Hélène Ducharme
Many different folk tales have evolved to explain the peculiar look of the baobab tree. Here are just a few!

When God planted the baobab tree it kept walking off. So, God pulled it up and planted it upside down to keep it in place.

**OR...**

When the baobab was first planted in the Congo Basin, it complained of excessive dampness. The tree god pulled it up and replanted it on the ‘Mountains of the Moon’, where it continued to complain. Greatly angered by the continued moaning, the tree god again uprooted the tree and flung it far and wide; it landed upside down in the drier parts of the world.

**OR...**

A vain, fat and wrinkled baobab beside a pool was angered by the reflections of the more colorful neighboring trees. It continuously complained to God who, angered by the criticism of His creation, seized the baobab and planted it upside down.

**OR...**

An elephant frightened the baobab’s mother and, as a result, the tree acquired its grotesque shape and grows upside down.

**OR...**

When God gave trees to the first man, He also gave one to each animal, except to the hyena, the personification of evil. The hyena complained that God behaved badly because he was treated differently from the others. Eventually, in order to pacify the hyena, God gave him the last plant, a baobab. The hyena, out of spite, promptly planted it upside down.

**OR...**

Some say the hyena was so stupid that when he was given the tree, or the seeds, he planted them upside down. On seeing the beauty of all the other trees he realized his error and has been laughing about it ever since.

With thanks to *Baobabs Pachycauls of Africa, Madagascar, and Australia* by Gerald E. Wickens & Pat Lowe.
Suitable for 3rd and 4th graders
Students will analyze the story of the Sun, Earth, and the Baobab.
Students will contrast folklore with science.
Students will personify elements of nature.
Students will create an original folk story.

BACKGROUND
For centuries, people have been creating stories to explain the world around us. Even once a scientific explanation is discovered, the tales are still told. When these stories are passed on from generation to generation, they become folklore. These folk tales, myths, and legends endure because their personification of the natural elements expresses so much about human nature.

At the beginning of *Baobab*, the Griot tells a tale about the events that happen before the play takes place. In the spirit of the real stories about the baobab (see previous page 7), playwright Hélène Ducharme created her own piece of folklore to suit the play. Her "folktale" explains why the climate is arid, why the Baobab stores so much water, and why the baobab looks like it is upside down.

Can you and your students come up with fantastic reasons for things that you see in nature? Can you create new folklore in your classroom?

**Step One:** Read as a class the Griot's Tale of the love between the Earth and the Baobab (page 9), and the jealousy of the Sun. Discuss the characters of the story, and how they behave. How are they like people? What conditions of nature does the action of the story explain?

**Step Two:** Brainstorm as a class different things that occur in nature to explain through folklore. A few examples include: Why is the sky blue? Why is air invisible? Why is it cold in the winter? Why is it warm in the summer? Why do birds fly south in the winter? Why do moles live underground?

**Step Three:** Divide students into groups of four. Each group should pick one question from the brainstorming that they would like to explain with their own new folklore, just like *Baobab*’s playwright did.

**Step Four:** Ask the groups to imagine at least three main characters for their folklore story. Anything from nature can be turned into a character and take on the qualities and emotions of humans for the story. Have the groups describe their characters. How will the non-human characters act like people?

**Step Five:** What happens when these new characters all come together? How is the group's "WHY" question answered by what the characters do?

**Step Six:** Ask groups to research the real scientific answer to their question.

**Step Seven:** Ask groups to present their question and its scientific reason. With the introduction "But the real tale is ..." they can then present their original folklore stories to the class.
It happened a long time ago. Long, long, long, long ago, when the stars were still babies, and the trees and the animals talked to men. Well then, when this tale took place, the Earth, the Sun, and the whole world, lived in harmony.

But one fine day, a magnificent Baobab tree touched, with its roots, the heart of the earth. At once, the Baobab and the Earth fell in love, and had four beautiful children. They loved them more than anything. The children climbed around in the Baobab, ate of its fruits, and drank from the little pools of water that formed in the hollows of its bark.

But, seeing their happiness, the Sun grew jealous. "I want children too! Give me your children!"

The Earth and the Baobab did not want to give their children to the Sun.

So the Sun fell into a terrible rage and refused to go to bed. It shone, and shone, and shone until it made the lakes and rivers fly away. It shone and shone until the Earth shriveled up and started cracking all over. It shone and shone, until the animals ran far, far away. It shone and shone, until even its own heart dried up, fell away, and was lost.

Afraid that their children would die of hunger and thirst, the Baobab and the Earth resigned themselves to letting them go far away, in search of lands where the Sun could not burn them. When they saw their children leave, the Baobab and the Earth began to cry, and cry, and cry. They did not want their tears to be stolen by the sun, so the Baobab plunged its head into the ground and hid their tears in the depths of the Earth. And that is how their tears became our one and only source of water.

from *Baobab* by Hélène Ducharme
Suitable for 1st-4th grades
Students will find words that correspond with letters of their name.
Students will create a name poem that represents themselves.

In *Baobab*, the hero Amando’s name means “He Who Unites”. He was named by the villagers, because he belongs to the whole community. In the play, Amando is given four tasks that he must complete, in order to “unite” the people of his village. At one point, Amando fails miserably at one of the tasks and becomes discouraged. One of the characters in the play asks Amando, “Have you forgotten who you are?”. He is referring to the meaning of Amando’s name and the power that he carries because of it.

Some names have traditional meanings, but we also can choose to create our own meanings and power for our names.

**STEP ONE:** Students will write their, first, or last, or middle name on a piece of paper vertically. Here’s an example:

```
C
H
A
R
L
E
S
```

**STEP TWO:** Students will write a word that starts with each letter of their name, that they feel describes them in some way. Ask them to pay particular attention to the word for the first letter, as it will be the word most likely to be remembered by others. They should finish this step of the activity by coming up with words that fit all of the letters.

A finished name poem might look like this.

```
C -ool
H -ip
A -ctor
R -hythmic
L -oving
E -ater
S -on
```

**STEP THREE:** Have students display their name poem, using paint, markers, construction, paper, etc. for all of the world to see!

**REFLECTION:** Discuss how students can embody the words they have chosen for the letters of their names. What do they want others to see in them? How can their actions demonstrate these words?
Suitable for 1st-4th grades
Students will discover details of their own birth story.
Students will relate their story to a classmate.
Students will become a classroom Griot.

In the West African tradition, Griots are the people who are the
keepers of family and community histories in their societies. In
*Baobab*, every character in every story has circumstances that
define him or her, but the beginning of any character when part
of folklore or mythology becomes particularly important.

It’s time to turn the students of your classroom into Griots!!

**Step One:** Ask students to ask their parents or guardians to share with them a memorable
detail about the time of their birth. It can be something funny that happened or unusual or
just a special thought the parent remembers, for example this editor was born during a
hurricane. Let parents know that these stories will be shared with the class. If a child is
adopted, parents can tell about the day they first saw the child or took him or her home.
In *Baoabab*, Amado is actually adopted, by the village.

**Step Two:** Each student should bring back to class the answers to
WHEN? WHERE? and WHAT HAPPENED? about their birth (you may
choose to use the word "beginning" as it fits with folklore.) Their
answers can be in sentence form, but don’t have to be, as long as
their story begins with, “My name is ________.” Once each student
has their "W" questions answered, they should say them out loud in
any order they choose.

**Step Three:** Break students into partners and have them share their
own personal stories, made up of their "W" answers, with their partner. Once the story is
shared, the students are responsible for remembering their partner’s story.

**Step Four:** Now, as the keeper of their partner’s story, it is time for students to become
Griots. Each student shares their partner’s story, out loud. This can be done in small groups,
or in front of the entire class.

**Reflection:** Ask students to describe the difference between telling their own story and
telling someone else’s story.

**For the Youngest Students:** For this exploration,
the teacher will act as the Griot. Students will still learn their story
from their parents. During small group times, teachers will find out
two "W"s" of their students’ stories (Where? and What happened?)
If you can enlist any teacher’s aides, or parent helpers, or even the
principal for this activity, all the better. Explain what the Griots’ job
is, and then tell the brief "stories" of the all the students in the class.
The impact of all those stories together will be impressive.
Suitable for 1st-4th grades
Students will transform classroom objects into puppets.
Students will practice puppet performance.

In *Baobab*, the performers transform their instruments into animal puppets with a few simple additions and imagination. Students can do the same thing with classroom objects.

**STEP ONE:** Draw very simple circle "eyes" and cut them out. Start with eyes about an inch in diameter (different sizes can be drawn later if needed.) With tape on the back, they can be placed on almost any object.

**STEP TWO:** As a class, ask students to choose two objects in your classroom small enough to be manipulated with one hand. Ask them to decide where the eyes belong on each object to turn it into a puppet. Tape the eyes to the object.

**STEP THREE:** Ask them to suggest a name and personality for the object (for example, a stapler).

**STEP FOUR:** Based on the information above, bring the puppet "to life." Have it say hello, and then let students ask it questions, interview style.

**For older students:**
Place them in groups to do this same work, and assign them to ask the puppet two additional questions "What is a hero?" and "How can the hero-puppet "save" the classroom?"

**Puppetry performance Tips**
- Move the object up and down when it "talks," especially if it doesn't have parts that move like a mouth.
- Use a funny voice related to the personality the students have chosen.
- As the puppeteer, always watch the puppet as it "talks." Treat it as if it was a real person talking.

The tortoise, the caiman (made from the ballaphone,) the snake, and the crane (made from the kora) discuss the baby Amando, just hatched from an egg.
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