

theatre:
CALGARY

Stafford Arima, Artistic Director

PLAY GUIDE

WRITTEN BY

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MADE IN
ITALY



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome educators!

Theatre Calgary's 2025-2026 Play Guides are intended to support your students' experience at Theatre Calgary this season. We encourage you to use some or all of these materials to provide context for your students before, during, and after their visit to Theatre Calgary. While not mandatory for students to enjoy the production, opportunities to connect art to personal life can deepen understanding and appreciation.

With that in mind, each guide provides you and your students with a range of contextual material. You will find background information on the play and playwright; social, linguistic, and historical context; expectations for the theatre; activities for you to lead in the classroom; and reflection questions to guide discussions. You'll find activities that connect to current events, are interdisciplinary, can be tied into your curriculum, and can be facilitated for various lengths of time.

Pages marked with a ★ can be photocopied and distributed to students.

We hope that you and your students enjoy your experience at Theatre Calgary this year!

ABOUT THE PLAY

SUMMARY.

The play begins in 1980 in Salvatore Mantini's dining room. Salvatore is the patriarch of the Mantini family, and he addresses the audience about his immigration to Canada. He introduces the idea that a table is "the heart of the home...", the most important piece of furniture you can buy because it's where all the family shares a meal.

The next scene takes us to Jasper in 1975, where Salvatore's son, Francesco, is singing an Italian song. He then tells the story of the worst day of his life—the day he realized that being Italian made him different from everyone else.

We return to the Mantini's dining room, where Salvatore explains that a meal tells a story with a beginning, middle and end. Over a glass of wine, he talks about being born on a pig farm in Abruzzo.

The play returns to 1975 Jasper where a seventeen-year-old Francesco is arguing with his father. Francesco is getting in trouble for fighting at school. Salvatore reprimands Francesco for taking advantage of the life he has created by immigrating to Canada. Salvatore prays to the patron saint of Abruzzo, San Gabriel, who then appears.

After the saint vanishes, the scene shifts to Francesco showing his side of the fight. A fellow student, named Mark, started the fight by calling him racist and homophobic names, then beating Francesco up.

The play returns to the Mantini's dining room where Salvatore continues drinking his wine as he speaks of his grief for his wife who died in Italy before his emigration and his challenging relationship with his son.

The next scene takes us back to 1975 at the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Jasper. The service begins with Francesco performing an Italian song for the congregation, but as he sings, he vents his hatred for his hometown with the audience. He vows to leave as soon as he's able.



Photos of Farren Timoteo in *Made in Italy*. Credits: (top) Trudie Lee, (bottom) Moonrider Productions.

The scene returns to Salvatore in the dining room, now serving antipasti and telling the audience what antipasti means—“before the meal.” Francesco steps in to tell us that we are watching a Mantini family dinner and introduces us to the members of his family. Salvatore’s older brother, Filippo, his wife Margherita, and Benedetta Sansonetti, the miserable, older widow Francesco’s family has adopted, are enjoying an elaborate meal prepared by Salvatore.

STORY WHOOSH

is an interactive storytelling technique that enables any kind of plot to come alive, even without participants having prior knowledge.

- The teacher facilitates the shared storytelling by bringing individuals and groups in and out of the action.
- As soon as characters, objects, places, or events in the story (i.e., servants, bad thoughts, ships, etc.) are mentioned, the first students step into the circle and make a shape or pose that represents what has been narrated.
- At any time the teacher can say “Whoosh!,” and students quickly return to their ‘places’ in a circle.
- Continue the story around the group, so that different students get to play various characters and everyone gets a chance to try several roles, regardless of gender.

The play then shifts to a 1976 visit to Italy with Francesco and Salvatore. The entire village comes out to greet them on their return to Abruzzo, and, when Francesco sees that his father has stepped away to look at an old well, Salvatore tells him about the first time he ever saw his wife.

Francesco then goes with his cousin, a tailor named Peppino, who will teach him the proper way to dress. Peppino teases him about his lack of experience with women, and Peppino ends up taking Francesco to a brothel, where he meets Anna.

The scene shifts to Salvatore, who is still cooking.

In the fall of 1976, Francesco enters in a new look and is immediately bullied, once again, by Mark. We are reintroduced to San Gabriel, who is joined by an imagined version of Anna, having a moral debate over how Francesco should react. Francesco decides to get stronger by working out in order to fight back. The act ends with Francesco pummeling Mark.

The second act opens in 1978 Jasper with a radio announcing a “Search for Talent” competition in Edmonton. Francesco introduces us to the local disco club, The Athabasca. He is far more confident now, having gained respect since his fight with Mark and playing in a band with his cousin, Angelo. After a set at The Athabasca, Angelo convinces them to compete in the “Search for Talent” competition. Unfortunately, Francesco gets drunk before the competition and sabotages the performance.

The next time we see Salvatore, he is having dinner alone on a Friday night, and he reveals Francesco doesn’t come home anymore. Nothing is the same.

We return to Francesco after the competition, and he and Angelo are at a bar filled with “Gorbies,” out-of-towners who travel to Jasper to ski. When a Gorby calls Francesco a racial slur, he gets into a fight with the man and is arrested. Salvatore arrives at the jail, and they argue, and he leaves without bailing him out.

In the dining room, Salvatore recommends a salad to cleanse the palette.

The next scene takes place two years later where Francesco, now calling himself Frank Martin, convinces Angelo to re-audition for “Search for Talent”. The band ends up being invited to perform on the show, but Angelo’s dad has a heart attack a few weeks before they are scheduled to perform. Francesco refuses to go back to Jasper, so Angelo leaves and Francesco stays.

We see Salvatore explaining why dessert is so important.

Back in Edmonton, Francesco tries to reach Angelo, but answers and berates him for his selfish behaviour.

The scene changes to “Search for Talent.” We see the whole Mantini family watching on television at home. Francesco has an internal debate with Anna and San Gabriel over how he behaved and whether he should apologize to his father. When it’s his turn to perform, Francesco starts singing in English but switches to Italian halfway through—a sign that he has accepted, and can rejoice in, his culture.

The final scene brings us back to Salvatore in the Mancini’s dining room. The meal is finished and is displayed for the audience to see. The play ends with the doorbell ringing just as Salvatore is about to eat.

Salvatore’s Friday Night Menu



Aperitif
Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (Red wine)



Antipasti
Olives, meats, & cheeses



Primi Piatti
Pasta Fagioli (Soup)



Secondo Piatti
Baccalà (Salted Cod)



Insalata
Palate cleanser



Dolci
Parrozzo (Almond Cake)



Caffè
Espresso

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT & ACTOR

Made in Italy is a one-person show (also known as a solo performance or a one-man or one-woman show). That means you will only see one actor on stage playing all of the parts below. **Farren Timoteo** is an Edmonton-based actor, singer, writer, director, and the grandson of Italian immigrants. This play is based on the experiences of his family.



in Abruzzo

RAGAZZO

a young Italian boy
in Abruzzo

MADAME

the owner of a
brothel in Abruzzo

ANNA

A woman at the
brothel in Abruzzo

in Canada

MARK HENDREZIAK

Francesco's peer at
Jasper High

FATHER BEDNER

a priest at the
Catholic church

BENEDETTA SANSONETTI

a fellow immigrant

JUDGE

a judge for CTV's
"Search for Talent"

GORBY

an out-of-towner
vacationing in Jasper

HISTORICAL + SOCIAL CONTEXT.



3 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SOLO PERFORMANCE

- 1 Solo performance is a form of live storytelling.
- 2 Solo performers often collaborate with directors and theatre designers to bring their script to life.
- 3 Solo performance scripts can fall into multiple categories: biographical, auto-biographical, or multiple characters.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Here are some one-person scripts you can check out to see how it's done!

- *21 Black Futures: The Anthology* by Obsidian Theatre (2021)
- *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers* by Makambe K. Simamba (2019)
- *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright (2003)
- *Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith (1992)

ITALIAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA IN THE 1960S

When Italians were removed from the “enemy alien” list following World War II, Canada saw a large wave of Italian immigration. Between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s, approximately 20,000-30,000 Italians immigrated to Canada each year. The majority of the Italian immigrants travelled to Canada by ocean liner, landing at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Italian immigrants also endured discrimination. Common prejudices held that Italians were prone to violence and that they introduced fascism and organized crime in Canada. They were also accused of taking jobs away from Canadians and living in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions since they often lived in multiple-family homes.

From the [Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21](#)



Illustration by Grace Kim for TripSavvy

Salvatore and Francesco Manzini emigrated from Abruzzo, Italy. Abruzzo is a coastal region of Italy (circle above) nature reserves and mountainous landscapes. The Manzini family returns to their village of Tossicia (where the arrow is pointing on the map above) which is home to a castle, a palace, and several churches.

As you hear in *Made in Italy*, food plays a central role in the Manzini family. In the map above you can see that each region of Italy specialized in certain foods.

Dishes that are unique to Abruzzo include:

- Spaghetti alla chitarra: *thin, square spaghetti pasta*
- Scrippelle Mbusse: *crepes in broth*
- Timballo: *a lasagna-like dish with layers of crepes, fried artichokes, and cheese*
- Pallotte Cacio e Ové: *fried cheese balls soaked in tomato sauce*
- Porchetta: *juicy slow roasted pork*
- Arrosticini: *street food, grilled mutton (sheep) skewers*

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE



An open mind.

Let the performance surprise you! Stay open to what can happen. Look for moments of theatrical magic (how did they change that costume so quickly?) and unexpected dialogue.

Assigned seats.

Every seat in the theatre offers a unique perspective on the action. Appreciate what you can see from your seat that someone else might not.

Live actors.

The performers on stage can see you, hear you, and feel your energy. And actors love student audiences! Laugh when something is funny! Gasp when you're surprised! Applaud when you're impressed! The actors thrive on audience reactions.

A break from reality.

Theatre-makers ask the audience to "suspend their disbelief." If someone on stage says the red ribbon is blood, then it is! If an actor takes flight, then imagine you can't see the strings. This is what the actors ask of the audience. Embrace the magic of theatre.

Questions.

Listen carefully to the story being told. If you have a question, keep your voice to a whisper so it doesn't disturb others. (See the call out on Q + As to help you form great questions for the team behind the show.) Let yourself be challenged by the content. What new ideas or perspectives are you hearing?

Disconnection.

Put your phone away and immerse yourself in the technology of the theatre. The sounds and lights from your device are distracting to the actors, fellow audience members, and you! Plus, the law says that photos and videos aren't allowed, anyway.

PREPARING Q'S FOR A Q + A

While you watch the show, consider how the creative team (see pg. 10) brings the story to life on stage for you.

Consider questions about the process:

- How did the lighting / set / costume / sound designer...
- What made the director choose to...
- How did the playwright decide to...

Ask questions about the story:

- Why did [character] make the decision to...
- Can you explain how...
- Why didn't _____ happen?

Learn more about each job:

- Why did you decide to become a...
- What do I need to do to become a...
- What has been your favorite...



THEATRE TEAM TALKBACK

Theatre is a 'team sport,' and it's not the actors alone who bring a production to life. After your show, you'll have a chance to ask questions of the creative team. Here are some of the folks you might expect to speak with:

The Playwright writes the script, sometimes from an original idea, and sometimes adapted from a book or story—decides what the characters say and, often, gives the designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The Director creates the vision for the production, how it will look on stage, and works closely with the actors, costume, set, and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The Actors use their bodies and voices to bring the playwright's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The Designers imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes, and sound that will compliment and tell the playwright's story in a way that matches the director's vision.

The Stage Manager assists the director during rehearsals by taking detailed notes and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. They run the show during each performance by making sure the actors' entrances and exits and the lights and sound all run smoothly.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IF YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES...

What's in Your Bag?

Immigration, a feature theme of *Made in Italy*, and the world's conversation today, opens up windows into the lives of others. Whether you are planning your emigration to a new home for years or as a refuge to escape an unsafe situation—if you are able to choose and bring anything with you—what you choose can say a great deal about who you are and what is important to you.

Focus Question. How do you prioritize the most important components of your life?

Objective. Students will be able to articulate items that have meaning for them and engage in discussions about immigration and the value of 'things.'

Procedure.

- 1 Start by reviewing this Medium feature, [*WHAT'S IN MY BAG? What refugees bring when they run for their lives*](#), published by the International Rescue Committee. (Alternatively, simply show the images with the list of items included in the bags.)
- 2 In pairs, discuss how these newcomers might have chosen these items. What do these items say about the people who carry them?
- 3 Prompt students to independently work on creating a list of the items they would carry with them. They can write or draw the items.
- 4 Have students share with a partner what they chose and why.
- 5 Share a few of the bags, anonymously or not, introducing the prompt, "What do we know about someone who has chosen to bring these items on their journey to a new home?"

IF YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES...

Menú della Vita (Menu of Life)

Food, and the order in which it is served, is a central theme in *Made in Italy*. This activity will ask students to reflect on foods (cultural or otherwise) that shape their days and lives.

Focus Question. How does food tell the story of our own lives?

Objective. Students will be able to tell a story of a meaningful dish (or dishes) that reflect something about their identity.

Procedure.

- 1 Guide students through an Imagination Journey—using the prompts below—of a memorable meal or food item they've had. Prompt them to consider all five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, sound) as they recall what makes this particular experience with food memorable to them.
 - Ask students to find a comfortable position where they can concentrate on your voice, rather than one another.
 - Have them recall a memorable meal or food item they've had in their lifetime.
 - What was the food?
 - How did you eat it? Forks? Spoons? Fingers?
 - What ingredients went into making it?
 - What flavours were there?
 - How did it smell?
 - What colors were on your plate?
 - What temperature was it?
 - What textures could you taste?
 - What makes this a memorable food experience for you?
 - Where were you?
 - Who was with you?
 - How did you feel?
 - How did it shape who you are today?
- 2 Have students design the menu for this meal using some of [these models](#).
- 3 Share and discuss: *How does this menu tell the story of who you are? What can we learn about you from this menu?*

IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR...

Solo Reader's Theatre

In this Reader's Theatre activity, students will have the opportunity to experience what it's like to take on a multi-character solo performance (see pg. 8), as seen in *Made in Italy*, where Farren Timoteo embodies more than 15 different characters.

Focus Question. How do we use our voice and body to portray multiple characters?

Objective. Students will be able to create four distinct characters using elements of voice and body.

Procedure.

- 1 Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 to read [this excerpt from *Numbers Have Feelings* by Jack J. Berry](#). Have them rotate through the four roles (and stage directions, if needed) so that everyone has a chance to read each part aloud.
 - 2 In these groups, or as a whole class, chart personality characteristics for each of the four characters in this script excerpt: Zero, One, Pi, and E. Discuss: *How are they different from one another? How would you portray these character differences?*
 - 3 In pairs, have students practice this scene, playing all of the characters. With their partner, students should decide:
 - Physical traits that connect to each character's personality
 - The vocal quality for each of the distinct characters
- Use [these slides](#) for vocabulary to support these discussions.
- 4 Allow students time to rehearse their respective versions of the scene as a solo performer, sharing with their partner.
 - 5 Have a few students share. Discuss: *How did these performers capture four distinct characters? How do their interpretations differ from your own?*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

A theatrical experience is not complete without reflection. What is the audience talking about when they leave the theatre? Here are some questions to pose to your students following their experience with *Made in Italy* at Theatre Calgary.

- 1 How does the one-person show format aid the storytelling? What would be different if all of the characters were played by different actors?
- 2 How does this newcomer story compare to others you've heard?
- 3 What would you do in Francesco's position of being bullied for being different?
- 4 How does music play a significant role in this play?
- 5 Who do you think is at the door at the end of the play? How does Farren Timoteo set that up in the dialogue?

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