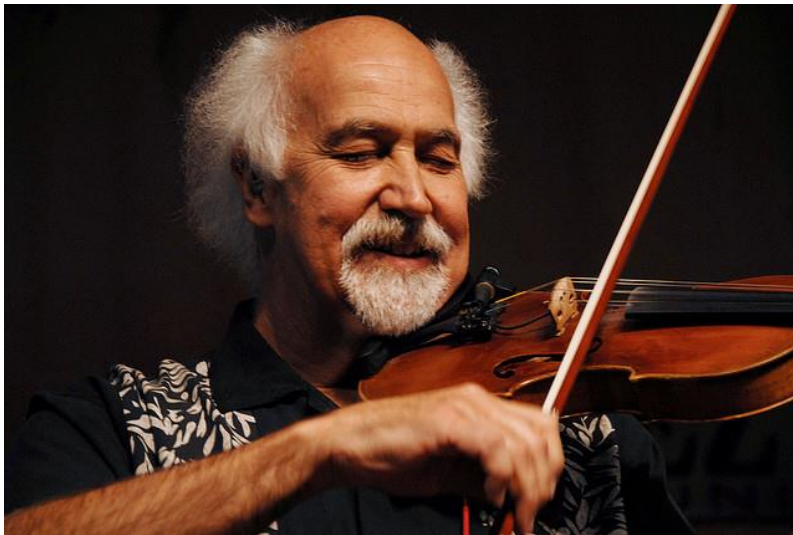


Michael Doucet Virtual Residency

When I wanted to find heroes, I went into my neighborhood. They may not wear Superman costumes, but they are real heroes.

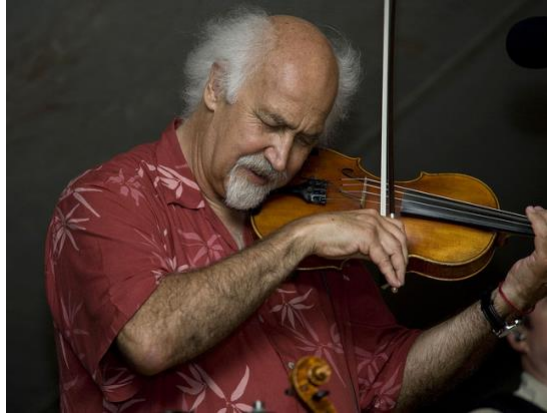
–Michael Doucet



Found dancing and singing “You Ain’t Nothing But a Hound Dog” in the middle of the highway when he was a toddler, Michael Doucet did not become a famous rock star but a renowned Cajun fiddler. He has performed in every state and all around the globe, at the Super Bowl, three presidential inaugurations, and Carnegie Hall—and along the way picked up two Grammys. Founder of the Cajun music group *BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet*, he is an ambassador to the world for this distinctive American art form. He brings his experience and knowledge to this virtual residency to share Cajun history, culture, and music, demonstrating how traditions not only endure but also change.

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Meet the Artist Michael Doucet



Michael Doucet (pronounced “doo say”) comes from southwest Louisiana, which has 300 years of French heritage. He grew up speaking French as well as English and hearing the unique sounds of Cajun music, called “French music” when he was a boy. Today he loves to “time travel” between his ancestors and future generations through music.

Michael is a self-taught musician who grew up surrounded by music. His aunts sang and his uncles played various instruments. One uncle in particular, Tee Will, tutored him. “It was a wonderful era to

grow up in,” Michael says, “because there was music all around and everybody was excited about music.” At six he got his first instrument, a banjo, although he had wanted a guitar.

Michael still plays several instruments, but he is best known for his extraordinary fiddle playing.

What music surrounds you as you are growing up?

How does it compare with the music of your parents' and teachers' childhoods?

Michael found his first fiddle under a bed at his uncle’s house and had to glue it together to play it. The first time he put it under his chin and started to play, he felt a new freedom. “It was amazing...like being on a runway, being a plane or a jet, or a bird flying, just being so free,” Michael says. “It was totally natural to me.” He got his first music job two weeks later and has been playing and enjoying the fiddle ever since.

As a student at Louisiana State University, he began to research Cajun music. After graduating, his interest took him to France. As he listened to traditional French songs, he recognized many connections between his part of Louisiana and Cajuns’ original homeland. “When I went to France, I realized we were playing some of the same songs. I couldn’t believe how deep the ties were.” He couldn’t wait to go back to Louisiana to explore the musical connections and learn more about the music he grew up hearing. He obtained grants, one from the National Endowment for the Arts, to document the elder masters of this special music by recording and playing music with them.

One of the earliest things Michael discovered was that he had to relearn how to play fiddle. The first master he worked with was Dennis McGee, whose fiddling style differed from Michael’s. He was born in 1893, and his songs went back to Napoleon Bonaparte’s time. This old style was more intricate than today’s Cajun music.

More musicians began to open their homes to Michael, including Canry Fontenot, Dewey Balfa, and Varise Conner. Michael says, “I would sit next to Varise and he’d play, and time would stop. It would go along with the melody and the rhythm and that was the moment and it transcended everything. Everything was perfect in that moment.”

Michael didn’t simply interview these tradition bearers. He went fishing with them, ate and played music with them, and even performed in a concert with Canry Fontenot at Carnegie Hall. “I wanted to set up a network of the masters of our music,” Michael says. “The only people that knew about these guys were the few people living in their community. So that’s what I did for the Library of Congress. I transcribed their songs and the transcriptions are still there. It was wonderful.”

What are the music traditions of your community?
Where do people sing?
Where do they hear live music?
Where do they dance?
Make a list and choose a local musical tradition or musician to investigate.

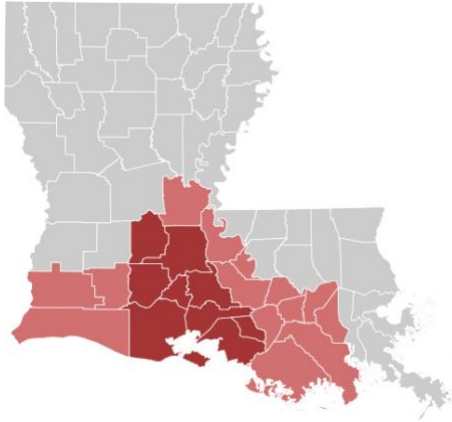
BeauSoleil (pronounced “bo so lay”), which means “beautiful sun,” came about in the 1970s when Michael brought together a group of musician friends. The name refers to a place in Louisiana called BeauSoleil where the Doucet family held big reunions. A relative lived there. To Michael, she seemed a hundred years old. She told stories in French about BeauSoleil and the children had to recite them back to her before they could go outside to play. They enjoyed the experience and, as Michael puts it, “It was really obvious that she loved the place and the stories, and so the name BeauSoleil became a very strong, positive passion for me.”

Today the band is renowned for both its preservation of French music and its modern variations. “We get to time travel,” says Michael.

“It’s playing something from the past, playing something for the future, pushing it on, and it’s amazing. We’re not a part of the audience, we’re one with the audience. I still don’t have a set list, even when we go on TV.”

With BeauSoleil’s music, particularly Michael’s fiddling, the listener travels from the 17th century to the 21st century and back several times during a performance, and everyone enjoys dancing and moving to the beat. Perhaps it’s because, as Michael says, “Everybody is at liberty to try new things since that is where you are in the moment. And that’s the only thing that really exists, this moment.”

Michael Doucet's Regional Background



Michael Doucet lives in Lafayette, Louisiana, near his small hometown of Scott. Less than 40 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, this southwest area of Louisiana has prairies with low gentle hills and *chenieres* (small oak groves), marshlands, and bayous. It is in the heart of a region known as Acadiana. This name designates the area where a large group of people known as Acadians moved when they were exiled from Canada. Michael considers himself an Acadian (or Cajun) by descent and cultural heritage.

Acadians originally came from France to Canada, in the early 1600s, even before the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock. The French colony in North America was called Acadia and included the Maritime Provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. After many years of war between France and England, the British gained control and forced the Acadians to leave between 1755 and 1763, taking away their land and property. Eventually, many Acadians settled in southwest Louisiana, which was under Spanish control and then French control until the United States government's Louisiana Purchase of 1803. When they arrived in Louisiana, the Acadians joined Native Americans, German settlers, and Creoles (Black French-speaking people) already living there.



The region still boasts many French influences, from house styles to food, language, names, and celebrations such as Mardi Gras. Famous throughout the world, Cajun cuisine includes many local food resources such as crawfish, shrimp, and oysters along with trout, catfish, red fish, and pompano. Game birds like doves, quail, and duck along with favorites such as alligator and frog legs are common in traditional recipes, along with locally grown vegetables like bell peppers, mirlitons (a mild squash), and okra. Because the climate is hot and humid with plenty of rainfall, rice grows well and is an important part of the diet.



Throughout South Louisiana, gumbo, a soup full of local ingredients, is a favorite meal. It reflects the cultural diversity of the region. Gumbo represents contributions from different cultures of the region. The Africans gave gumbo its name after a common ingredient, okra (*nkombo* in the Bantu language). Several ingredients—onions, celery, and bell peppers—are a gift of early Spanish settlers. Sausage is from the German people of Louisiana. The soup itself is based on *bouillabaisse*, a French soup that contains two or more kinds of seafood. Gumbo is

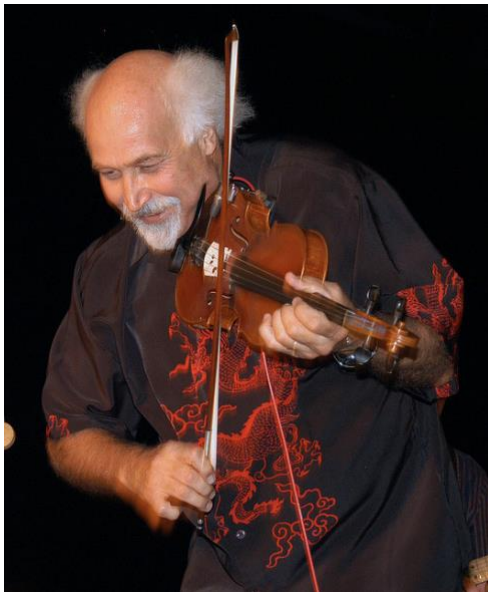
sometimes thickened with filé, which comes from the sassafras root often used by Native Americans in this region.

Today's music from Acadiana also reflects the diversity of the area. There are four major types of music born in this part of the state: Cajun or French, Creole or Zydeco, swamp blues, and swamp pop.

Michael Doucet writes and plays Cajun music, which provides a musical mixture of southwest Louisiana cultures. It began long ago with ballads that French settlers brought to the New World and adapted to bring in new experiences and the cultures around them, including Scottish and Irish settlers in Canada. In Louisiana, they added the rhythm and beat of the Africans living there and the drumming and stepped singing style of the Native Americans. The Spanish culture contributed guitars, and the Germans added the accordion.

Lyrics are often sung in French, and the composer or band can choose many types of melodies and rhythms. The words of the songs are, as Michael puts it, "Just from life, the things that we've gone through, the things that we feel that other people go through. To me there's a wheel of music and it keeps turning. Every once in a while there is a missing cog, so you can put something in there to balance the wheel, whether it's about happiness, or love, or losing or gaining things or situational things. It's about life."

Michael Doucet Music Sample



After his interview with Eileen Engel in the KRVS Radio Acadie studio, Michael Doucet played several songs on his fiddle just for Local Learning listeners as he continued to chat with Eileen. Some he learned from the Cajun and Creole masters he documented and studied with, and others he himself wrote. Here is the playlist. [<https://www.locallearningnetwork.org/education-resources/national-heritage-fellows/heritage-fellows-residencies/michael-doucet/michael-doucet-music-sample/>]

Allons a Lafayette (Let's Go to Lafayette)

This is an old tune and was the first Cajun song ever recorded. Joe Falcon and his wife Cléoma traveled to New Orleans to record it in 1928. Michael plays a modern, swingy version.

Jolie Blonde (Pretty Blond)

Nicknamed "the Cajun national anthem," this is a favorite waltz of many Cajun musicians and dancers.

Two Reels

Michael admired Dennis McGee’s mastery of old reels, which are very fast tunes. Here he plays a reel that he learned from Dennis and a second that he wrote for Dennis, “Me and Dennis McGee.”

La Jog a Plombeau (Jug on a Saddle Horn)

The master Creole fiddler Canray Fontenot taught Michael this song, which he describes as a blues.

L’Ouragon (The Hurricane)

Michael wrote this song for a festival honoring the 1893 destruction of the Louisiana coastal town Cheniere Caminada in a hurricane. He says that it’s a kind of gris-gris, a good luck song to keep hurricanes away.

Research the lyrics of these songs online and find out what stories they tell.

Merci beaucoup, Michael!

To hear more, buy some recordings. Musicians love it when you buy their music! Find a Michael Doucet avec BeauSoleil discography in [Resources](#).

Interview with Michael Doucet

Listen

Interview with Michael Doucet

by Eileen Engel

February 10, 2010, KRVS 87.5-FM Radio Acadie Studio, Lafayette, Louisiana

[<https://www.locallearningnetwork.org/education-resources/national-heritage-fellows/heritage-fellows-residencies/michael-doucet/interview-with-michael-doucet/>]

Interview with Michael Doucet

by Eileen Engel

February 10, 2010, KRVS 87.5-FM Radio Acadie Studio, Lafayette, Louisiana

Eileen Engel grew up in New Orleans with a soundscape of many kinds of Louisiana music, including Cajun. She worked as a science museum educator in San Francisco for a number of years. Back home in Louisiana now, she works as a teacher trainer and curriculum writer. She interviewed Michael Doucet for this Local Learning virtual residency and developed the Classroom Connections.

Here we present Eileen's transcription of parts of the interview. Transcribing means to write word for word what someone says. This requires listening multiple times to a recording, writing or typing as you listen, and double checking, and proofreading

Practice transcribing by listening to some portion of the full interview. You will need to listen several times to capture the conversation word for word.

Questions for Michael Doucet (Click the question to view the answer)

1. Michael, can you tell me about where you grew up?
2. What was it like?
3. What kind of music did you hear?
4. So it was a way of life?
5. When did you decide that you wanted to play an instrument?
6. So even at an early age, you were interested in playing instruments?
7. Your parents didn't have to make you practice?
8. Sort of a gumbo of music?
9. What's the difference between a fiddle and a violin?
10. So the first time you played the fiddle you totally enjoyed it?
11. When did you get really interested in Cajun music?
12. What happened when you went to college?
13. So living in France really deepened your connection with your musical heritage?
14. So you were actually going out and documenting the music just at the right time while many of the traditional musicians were still around. So could you talk about some of the people you worked with?
15. You said Dennis McGee opened his heart to you, so besides fiddle playing, what else did you learn?
16. How does that work with the translation? How difficult is it to make the words give the same emotion in two different languages?
17. So in the new songs that you write today, some are in French and some are in English?
18. What's the status now? I know that there are French immersion schools and the music has gone around the world. What do you think the status is?
19. Something or somebody comes up. You were lucky to be in the area and willing to work with other people to keep the culture going. It's not easy to do that.
20. And it keeps growing. When people come in, they bring something of their own. Isn't that what gumbo is?
21. You were talking about teaching and you taught early on, do you like to teach or do you do it to pass the music on or both? Do you still do it?
22. Talk a little bit about BeauSoleil.
23. You look like you are having fun when you're onstage.
24. So tell a little bit about the other band members and the instruments they play.

25. Those are the instruments that are usually in a Cajun band?
26. You've gotten so many awards and recognitions. In fact BeauSoleil has been called the best Cajun band in the solar system. How does it feel to have people recognize all that work that you guys have done?
27. One of the things that was striking to me when I read about you is that at an early age you had a sense of place. Most people develop that over a long period of time, but you knew your sense of place at an early age.
28. It must feel good to know that now people all over the world want you to come and play.
29. But you do have to travel a lot. How do you like doing all that traveling?
30. It sounds to me like you get as much out of it as the audience gets from your music.
31. You have played in front of small groups and really large groups, like the New Orleans Jazz Fest crowd. What's the most people you've ever played in front of?
32. What's it like to play for a crowd like that?
33. Where do you get the inspiration for your music?
34. A student wanted me to ask you if you can make a lot of money playing Cajun music?
35. What's your favorite recording of yourself? And someone else?
36. Do you get to play for dances anymore?
37. Why did you record a children's CD?
38. Are your kids into music?

Answers:

Q1: Michael, can you tell me about where you grew up?

I was born in Lafayette Parish and grew up on a farm in a rural part of Lafayette Parish between Lafayette and Scott, Louisiana.

Q2: What was it like?

It was idyllic. My grandparents on my dad's side died when he was 12, but they had left their property to their nine children. They all lived on the property on one side of US Highway 90 and everybody was raising cattle or farming or doing something around there. From the time I was five I would ride my horse for about two miles and still be on the property.

Q3: What kind of music did you hear?

The first music I remember is Rock 'n Roll, Elvis Presley, believe it or not. I was only five or six when I started. I could remember all the words and started singing Elvis songs and whatever popular songs I heard on the radio or heard other people sing. In fact, when I was three they caught me dancing in the middle of the Highway 90.

Everybody around the house but my parents played music. I had an uncle who played fiddle and bass, a cousin who played piano, another cousin who played trombone, another cousin who played electric guitar, and a friend down the road who played accordion. We'd always have these

big family gatherings with a cacophony of music. All of my dad's sisters sang French ballads and I remember that very well. We didn't get a television until I was seven or eight so that was our entertainment. I don't remember when I started speaking English. I think I just grew up with speaking both French and English, but when I went to school you could only speak English there. It was a wonderful era to grow up in because there was music all around and everybody was excited about music. We also used to go and hear music and things.

Q4: So it was a way of life?

Yes, it totally was. I don't think I knew a neighbor that didn't play music.

Q5: When did you decide that you wanted to play an instrument?

Well, that was early, when I was about 6. I wanted a guitar but I got a banjo. There was a talent show in Scott and I did "You Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog" on the banjo. My cousin Little Ricky played drums and he won the contest. He was really good. I loved the drums after that. He went to Shreveport and that's when Desilu found him and he became Little Ricky Ricardo on the I Love Lucy show. I guess they didn't want Little Ricky to play the banjo. So I finally got a guitar after that and ended up playing the trumpet and drums, and anything that came around.

Q6: So even at an early age, you were interested in playing instruments?

Yes, totally, I just loved music and there were always songs around to play.

Q7: Your parents didn't have to make you practice?

No, quite the opposite, they had to try to stop me from practicing. We didn't have a piano in the house so I would go to a cousin's house and I learned to play piano there by ear. Music was totally part of my life. There was always something going on. My parents liked classical music, jazz, especially New Orleans jazz, Cajun music, and popular music.

Q8: Sort of a gumbo of music?

Or *potpourri*.

Q9: What's the difference between a fiddle and a violin?

Well, you buy a fiddle but you sell a violin. They're exactly the same. They're an instrument that was invented in the 1600s by Andrea Amanti and perfected by Stradivarius. Remarkably, the same style and the some of the instruments are played today. Some of the violins are over three hundred years old and they still play unbelievably. The violin always enticed me. When I first put one under my chin at my uncle's house, it was amazing, like being on a runaway, being a plane or a jet, or a bird flying. Just being so free, with no frets.

Q10: So the first time you played the fiddle you totally enjoyed it?

Oh, yes, I knew I had to play it. It was totally natural. And I didn't have one until I was 21. My uncle had one, but you couldn't take it from his house because all my cousins and I wanted to play it. When I was about 20 I went to my uncle's house and he told me who had it. So I went to their house and found it in pieces under a bed. I glued it back together and played it in a job two weeks later.

Q11: When did you get really interested in Cajun music?

I liked it growing up. We didn't call it Cajun music when I grew up, we called it French music and my aunts were adamant about me learning the French ballads they sang. My dad liked the fun two-step songs.

In the 50s and especially the 60s there were always people staying at the house from France and Canada, and we would talk. My mother was very much a historian of the French stories, and my grandmother would tell me about our family's Acadian and French history. I wondered how she knew all those stories and then I found out that she and my grandfather were in France in World War I. She was a nurse and my grandfather was a military policeman. I guess they saw the culture there and how ours was different. I also had a step-grandmother, Carolyn Boudreaux, who actually went to France with Eleanor Roosevelt after World War I to show women how to can. So we were tapped into both sides; the musical side of let's have fun and play songs and then the significance of how special our heritage was and how we had to realize this on so many different levels. I was really lucky to have these influences.

Q12: What happened when you went to college?

I went to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and I took a course in Folk Music and the teacher was George Foss. So on the first day he said we were going to study Child ballads, traditional American folksongs, blues, and Native American songs. That was it. So I raised my hand and said, "What about French music?" and Dr. Foss said, "Oh, that's just translated English songs." I knew better than that, so that prompted me to go to the Louisiana Archives and check it out and I discovered the thesis written by Irene Whitfield in 1939 entitled *Cajun and Creole Folksongs*. Lo and behold, my great aunt taught school with her and she told me that she actually lived close by. So I went to visit her and we just clicked. She played violin and she gave me my first Amédé Ardoin 78 record. Her cousin was Lauren Post, who wrote one of the first books on Cajun music called *Cajun Sketches*. We became such good friends. We played the old songs and she told me so much about the music, and that turned it around for me. Not only was it fun music to play, but it now had this amazing history behind it that nobody really knew about. When I went to France, I realized we were playing some of the same songs, I couldn't believe how deep the ties were. But at the time, I didn't do anything about it. I just thought, "I'm going to do this the rest of my life, not as a profession, but just be aware of all the linkages."

Q13: So living in France really deepened your connection with your musical heritage?

Yes, I could speak to peers in French and we had some of the same accents and the same songs, and I realized I could talk to people about the same things back in the United States. So I thought I have to go back and really learn this music. When I came back I got a couple of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Library of Congress, and Southern Arts Federation to go out and document this amazing Cajun music.

Q14: So you were actually going out and documenting the music just at the right time while many of the traditional musicians were still around. So could you talk about some of the people you worked with?

It was wonderful. The first time I met Dennis McGee, he told me that he was the greatest Cajun fiddler ever. I really liked him a lot. I had to almost completely relearn my fiddle style to play like he did. I played fiddle like Doc Guidry. It was a slick, swingy style. You could play that style with almost anybody. When I went over to Dennis's house I realized that his songs were much older and much more intricate than what I had been playing. His songs went back to Napoleon's time and his style was unique. He and his brother-in-law had recorded in 1929, so his songs were still available but difficult to play because 78 records weren't popular at that time. So Dennis opened his heart to me and I spent of time with him and that was amazing. Dennis also played the blues, and I was interested in the blues, too. He talked about Amédé Ardoin, who was a black accordion player who had been recorded.

I was really interested in where the blues came in to Cajun music. You couldn't play the blues in dance halls. So I befriended a great man named Canry Fontenot and studied with him. I went to his house and we became good friends and we played all over the world, from Carnegie Hall to France. Then there was Bebe Carriere who was another Creole fiddle player and he taught me a whole bunch of funky modes.

Next I heard about this guy named Varise Conner. He hadn't ever recorded and nobody knew if he was still alive. So we took a drive to his house and when we got there his wife said he wasn't around. He was in the woods cutting lumber. I thought he was cutting some firewood. We walked and walked and walked and came upon two guys carrying a forty-foot cypress tree. We helped him and found out it was Varise. He was really surprised that someone was interested in him. He said he used to play the fiddle but was reticent about playing for us. After a really good dinner, I told him I had a tape recorder and he agreed. He went and got a fiddle that was ten inches long as a joke. Then he takes out his other fiddle and he starts playing the most gorgeous music I've ever heard. It was so pure and amazing and the songs just knocked me out. What a coup! We ran out of tape but he still kept playing. He played all night and stopped when the sun came up. That was another amazing experience. I wanted to set up a network of the masters of our music. The only people that knew about these guys were the few people living in their community. So that's what I did for the Library of Congress. I transcribed their songs and the transcriptions are still there.

Q15: You said Dennis McGee opened his heart to you, so besides fiddle playing, what else did you learn?

We were friends, and it wasn't just about the music. People would come over and tape him and then leave, but sometimes I would just go over there and visit with them for hours, sometimes not even have him play fiddle. Sometimes we would go fishing or I'd take him and his wife Gladys shopping or bring them coffee. It was more about learning about his life. Dennis had had a hard life. He had been an orphan and had many jobs, many wives, but somehow his music just cut through everything and everybody's heart. This is the real deal! He showed me how to do that and he gave me a lot of wise advice

Q16: How does that work with the translation? How difficult is it to make the words give the same emotion in two different languages?

I think it is almost impossible. There are many connotations in French and English is kind of vanilla and French is like Technicolor. That's why I prefer to continue to sing the old songs in French. That's the way the rhythm is, the way the song moves. If you have a palette of colors, that's what you use.

Q17: So in the new songs that you write today, some are in French and some are in English?

But it's still hard to translate. When I was growing up everybody spoke French including the people at church and the bank, but a lot of people were not very proud of the language or heritage because it made them feel like second-class citizens. Little did they know how great it was to speak two languages. Now it's not the same, but it's a whole different time. We have to adapt. The music doesn't have to adapt, it has to grow and evolve. And you want to communicate, that's the main point. The reason for our music is like the reason for the medieval troubadours, to tell a story, a universal story to get to the heart of the story or to make people say this is what is going on. It's for communication, however you want to communicate. There really is no one style of Cajun music or French music or Southwest Louisiana music, because it was mixed so much.

We were so proud in the early 60s to have popular hits by fellow Cajuns like Bobby Charles Guidry's "Walking to New Orleans" and "See You Later, Alligator." We were proud of him. We were proud of anybody, talent was talent, whether it was blues, classical, rock, or Cajun. Everybody was proud because it was one of us. That's the amazing thing about how small our Cajun culture was. If one person did something you were proud of them, because they are like your extended family, you felt a part of it. But that has changed. It's beyond extended family now. It's become individual. For me, it's now traditional music. But traditional music doesn't just fall from the sky. There has to be someone who creates this. So I was very interested in the creative process. I wanted to learn how people went about creating this music, no matter how hard their lives were.

This includes women. There are a lot of fine women musicians in our culture. In the 30s and 40s Cajun music was played in bars and people didn't think women should be singing in bars, so they were kind of separated from the male musicians. But they continued to sing at home and to their children. They continued the tradition. That was the time of all this. When television came on the scene, English became more prominent. What I saw after that was more Americanization,

more fast food, and more putdowns of our culture by us. They used to call it old people culture. The oil boom changed things too. Suddenly there were people making a lot of money where before we were all kind of the same. We all lived close to the earth. Some people who used to drive carriages with horses and had dirt floors found oil on their land and all of a sudden they had more money than they could count. That changed a lot of things. Some of us just wanted to combat that change in the early 70s by getting together and looking at the French language and music and the language and poetry and making a case for it.

Q18: What's the status now? I know that there are French immersion schools and the music has gone around the world. What do you think the status is?

Well, it's more prolific now. It's on a different level now. You don't have just the individuals now. When I did my research I found that you could go from parish to parish and they might play the same melody but the words would be different. Everything was more individualistic. Now it's more a fusion. It's definitely grown and is more commercial than it used to be. The way I look at it is that the 50s and 60s were the last of the pure generations and after that you get involved with other people coming down and discovering the music. In the 80s we took the music out and played in every state in the union over three times in 33 countries. In the 90s, the food really got known everywhere, in the 2000s now you can't go to a dance without a lot of people being from someplace else. I was disappointed in the late 70s when a lot of our heroes like Nathan Abshire died. They were a really strong influence, and I didn't see how we could recover. But we did. It just takes its own road and we do what we can.

Q19: Something or somebody comes up. You were lucky to be in the area and willing to work with other people to keep the culture going. It's not easy to do that.

You can't do it, just one person. Dewey Balfa and I used to go to the schools in the 1970s and we brought it all the way up to the University. It was USL then. I created the first course in French Music in Louisiana. We called it *Opera to Zydeco*. It was a wonderful thing. Now there is more and more of it, and I'm happy with it. It's not what I grew up with but I love all the talent. It seems like everything new generation is born with stuff you had to work hard to get. It's a great revolution and I feel happy about the future.

Q20: And it keeps growing. When people come in, they bring something of their own. Isn't that what gumbo is?

But that doesn't say it's good gumbo.

Q21: You were talking about teaching and you taught early on, do you like to teach or do you do it to pass the music on or both? Do you still do it?

No, I don't still teach. I gave it up. I find it very hard to teach a big class. I like to teach one on one because I can zero in on what they want, what they need, and what they'd like to do. That's easy. I'm free and open to doing that. I've done it for free. That's why I did a CD so people could learn how to do it. Maybe I'll evolve to that again. But there is so much more than just the music. I think that's what people need to know. There is so much more that people need to know.

There's more than just the music and the cooking. Those are the obvious things. There are tastes and smells and hearing and senses but it's also how you live and it all has to be understood. How do you get creativity, where does creativity come from, how do you get inspiration? You can be a craftsman but it has to be the real stuff like the old masters I worked with. You have to live life, whatever the life is now. It's different than it was, you have to adapt to that. I hope that it creates and regenerates.

Q22: Talk a little bit about BeauSoleil.

BeauSoleil is a group of friends who went out to Josh's Bayou and just played music at Holly Beach. Here we were in the 1970s with our long hair and we walked in and asked them in French if we could play. If you had long hair in those days they thought you were an alien. But they let us play and we played the old songs and they loved it! And then Nathan [Abshire] came in and we played with him that night and it was like playing in a spaceship that night. So that was the way we started out, with acoustic music, no microphones, and nobody expected us to be good. Then we went to play in France and everybody expected us to have a name. We didn't have a name. It was beautiful day in the spring and I thought about a big family reunion we used to have at a place called BeauSoleil. One of my relatives lived there. Her name was Tasi Age and she must have been about a hundred years old. She would tell us a story about BeauSoleil in French and we'd have to recite it back to her before she would let us go out to play. So the name BeauSoleil became a very strong passion for me.

When we were in France in the 1970s (and had hair) toward the end of the trip a man came up to us. He told us how much he liked our music and asked us if we had a record. Of course we didn't, so we made our first record. So BeauSoleil was always the spirit of the Cajun music or Cajun spiritual music. That was a great year! We had a documentary about us, we made a record, played at a national folk festival and the next January we played in Jimmy Carter's Inauguration. Things sort of died out in the late 1970s and then when the food became popular all over the country and Prejean's and Mulatte's asked us to play for their restaurants for families things really began again. We did movies and commercials and played on weekends. BeauSoleil continued to grow but we were all still working regular jobs. It got to be too much. So we decided, in 1986, to take a chance and give BeauSoleil six months to make it as full-time musicians. Nobody in our part of Louisiana had tried to live here and survive on the money they made playing music. Other people moved to Nashville or New York or California to become professionals. But we wanted to play music and eat boudin, (Cajun sausage) and we wanted to do it all in Louisiana. We've been very fortunate. The whole time I've always honored my mentors, Dewey Balfa, Varise Connor, Dennis McGee, Will Balfa, Henry Fontenot, and all the others. I've always try to be true to who I was, that kid growing up, and there is always an element of what I think the music should be, with the element of creativity. We've had about 30 albums out, two Grammys with about 15 nominations. But that's not why we play. We play for people. I think we play true American music that is a mixture of Acadians and Native Americans and we're real North American music. This is the roots. When our first records came out they were in the Blues section, then they labeled us World music. But this is the true creative music for our land. It could only be created in Louisiana because it's not the same as what is in Nova Scotia. It's truly a unique blend of the people and places of southwest Louisiana, which makes it pretty indefinable. So we brought this out. The guys in BeauSoleil have fun working together, even

after 34 years. We keep it together because we do the right thing. It sounds easy but we really enjoy it. Every night is improvisation. We don't just play the same thing concert after concert. You have to start off with something that is going to be congruent but then you can go where you want to go. Everybody is at liberty to try new things because that is where you are in the moment. And that's the only thing that really exists, this moment. That's the basic lesson that I learned from these great musicians, like Varise Connor. I would sit next to Varise and he'd play and time would stop. It would go along with the melody and the rhythm and that was the moment and it transcended everything. Everything was perfect in that moment. That's what we do. When you feel that, your heart feels that, your head feels that, it all senses that something is happening. Something very special. This is live, this is not recorded. It's playing something from the past, playing something for the future, pushing it on and it's amazing. You're one to one with a person. We're not a part of the audience, we're one with the audience. I try to draw them in. I still don't have a set list, even when we go on tv. You think of what people need. You feel it from the audience. Even though some of our songs are in French, you can still feel them get the music. One time we had a gentleman come up to us and said, "I didn't understand what you said at all, but I got it. I don't understand how but I understood what you were doing." That's what we try to do, and we've done it. And it's worked and it's fun.

Q23: You look like you are having fun when you're onstage.

You can go somewhere else with music. We get to time travel. Just let yourself be.

Q24: So tell a little bit about the other band members and the instruments they play.

My brother plays guitar. He's a great guitar player. He has his own style and he's been working on it for years. There's Jimmy Rose the accordion player. He comes from the Breaux family, Amade Breaux, Clemon Breaux, and that family. So it's a lineage for him. Mitchell Reed is a great fiddle player. He and I played fiddle for years before he was in BeauSoleil. We always got together and played fiddle music. We never rehearsed, just played together and we could innately play together. He took some of the things I brought out and studied with the great fiddle players like Dennis McGee and others. He's a great fiddle and bass player and a great teacher. Tommy Alessi and I have played together since 1965. So we're the same age. His mother is a Mouton. His father is Italian and when they moved down here, they had the first pizza parlor. We used to just go and watch them throw pizzas around because no Cajuns had ever seen that. Tommy and I have been good friends for a long time. Of course, Billy Weir on percussion. Percussion in a Cajun group is really a triangle, but we use a lot of other influences like Caribbean or Creole where you use different kinds of drums for different kinds of songs. So that's BeauSoleil. And we have an excellent sound person Bill Bennett whom I've known since my LSU days. He also plays bass with us sometimes, so it's just one big family.

Q25: Those are the instruments that are usually in a Cajun band?

Yes, but because we blend other music in David and I even play steel guitar sometimes.

Q26: You've gotten so many awards and recognitions. in fact BeauSoleil has been called the best Cajun band in the solar system. How does feel to have people recognize all that work that you guys have done?

The inaugurations were fun. We got a golden peanut from Jimmy Carter and bomber jackets with the presidential seal from President Clinton. They also put white chocolate saxophones on our beds. It's nice to be appreciated, but the influence Cajun music now has, and the way it's recognized around the world is what's important to me. The road I took was not a road and I didn't know where it was going to take me. But I had this passion to not let this thing go. You knew the quality of it and the intrinsic value of it, it's overwhelming spiritually, physically, emotionally, whatever. It's greater than us, and with something greater than you leading you on, you can't go wrong. I think that is what I really appreciate. The new generation playing our music and being influenced by it. I'm a student of William Blake and he always dealt with this idea of the solar system as being us and our lives. A long time ago I wrote this treatise about different musicians being different planets and pulling us in. And sun too. You look at the Acadian culture, the people coming to Louisiana after being deported. They were very tenacious. They knew what they had to do and they did it. And they instilled it into us. Hopefully it's still there. Not for awards or things, but for a sense of self. You're close to the earth here. You know what friendship is, what sorrow is, and you know what happiness is. And I think that is what's conveyed in the music.

Q27: One of the things that was striking to me when I read about you is that an early age you had a sense of place. Most people develop that over a long period of time, but you knew your sense of place at an early age.

I didn't know where I was going to be. I was a clean, flat palette and I didn't have anybody handing me anything or telling me what to do, so I just went by my feelings and the spirit. It's hard out there. Especially when we first got started. We played at a festival in Remus, Michigan, in 1982 and the people had never even heard of Cajun music. But we just went ahead and did it and we're going back this year to the same festival.

Q28: It must feel good to know that now people all over the world want you to come and play.

I hope so. We do not have life insurance on your group because we don't want to make it a business. We want to make a living. The music business has changed so much. It's all computerized now but lots of young people want to listen to vinyl. The quality is so good. It's great that it's coming back. But the best music is live music. It's better than Memorex.

Q29: But you do have to travel a lot. How do you like doing all that traveling?

Well, traveling can get really old. Now we do it about once a month. In 2001 before 9/11 we did a tour with a bus and lots of friends and stuff. It was called the 2001 Space Odyssey Tour. It was wonderful, but I got really tired of traveling. And then nobody was traveling or doing much after 9/11. It's still difficult, but if you bring real music to people it's so rewarding that it massages all the pain you go through. We don't drive too much from here.

Q30: It sounds to me like you get as much out of it as the audience gets from your music.

Definitely, totally. It's always great to talk to the audience afterward, too. You always find interesting people. Sometimes while you're playing they yell "Jolie Blanc" and then they come up to you after and tell you where in Louisiana they're from. Or ask, "Do you know so-and-so from Lafayette?" In most places there are six degrees of separation but in Louisiana there are three degrees of separation. And we get to see the country and it's a beautiful country. Every state has their own thing going. From Idaho to Connecticut. But there is only one Louisiana. I've talked to a lot of people who are still dispersed around the country after the hurricanes and they say that they miss the people. Of course when you're here you complain about the people but at least you have something to complain about.

Q31: You have played in front of small groups and really large groups, like the New Orleans Jazz Fest crowd. What's the most people you've ever played in front of?

Well, we played for the Grammys and at the Super Bowl and I guess that's millions of people. But in one place, the biggest crowd we ever played for was in Oakland, CA. We played in front of over 80,000 people at a Grateful Dead concert. We played with them and we opened for them. And then we went on tours with Mary Chapin Carpenter and did a lot of large gigs. Then we did New Orleans Jazz Fest on the road and the Newport Jazz Festival. Those are all big crowds.

Q32: What's it like to play for a crowd like that?

It's pretty amazing but you can still center on their feelings. Since we don't have a set list, we just get the feel of the group and figure it out from that. We have things we want to bring out, you want to show the diversity of what you can play. You just have to remember it all.

Q33: Where do you get the inspiration for your music?

Just from life, the things that I've gone through, the things that I feel that other people go through. To me there's a wheel of music and it keeps turning. Every once in awhile there is a missing cog, so you can put something in there to balance the wheel. Whether it's about death, or whether it's about happiness, or love, or losing or gaining things or situational things. That's how it comes. And for me, it can be at any time. I'm always thinking in music. I'm not a craftsman. I don't have any kind of desk or recorders at my house. I don't think, "I'm going to write a song." I just think about Dennis and I go into that mode and let it go and something will come out. I have written some songs that I thought I had to write. I had some melodies that I knew I had to write. We were on a plane early, early one morning coming back from Winnipeg, Canada. We had played the night before and got up at five to get on the plane. The sun was coming up and for some reason the songs just all came to me. I heard the songs in my head and just wrote them all down. That's the first time that's happened to me, writing three or four songs at a time. The light goes on if you're open to it.

Q34: A student wanted me to ask you if you can make a lot of money playing Cajun music?

Nope, get a job. People say what is it like to be a traveling musician? Well, if you want to know what it's like to be a traveling musician, you get a van and drive around a parking lot for about three hours, you get out, unload, do the sound check, load the van up, get back in and drive around the parking lot for three hours. Seriously, if you're lucky you will. The point is not making the money, it's making the music and what that brings to you, because 90 percent of it is just being at the right place at the right time. You can't turn down stuff. You have to do the stuff you feel, like any artistic. You're doing it for you, but you're also doing it for the relationship with someone else on a broader scale. The broader the scale the more notoriety you might get. BeauSoleil doesn't have a plan. Music is inspirational and improvisational. You go with it like it is. Right now music is down and people aren't going out to hear live music seven nights a week. But you still do it. You adapt and do something else.

Q35: What's your favorite recording of yourself? And someone else?

There are so many great BeauSoleil recordings. We were riding in a car in the Florida Keys a couple of weeks ago and I heard "*L'Amour ou la Folie*." I thought, "Wow, that record could stand up on its own right now." I never listen to my stuff, but personally I am very proud of a solo album I did for the Smithsonian titled *From Now On because* it's just me and a tape recorder and some good friends. It was an easy record to do because I just went and played what I play at home when nobody is listening.

I like to listen to many different genres of music. From classical music, Bach to Corelli to jazz, I love jazz, especially jazz fiddle players and Charlie Parker. The only English singer that I listened to in the 1970s, 80s and 90s was Richard Thompson. He was one of my favorites. Meeting and playing with JJ Cale in popular music was the height. I just like to listen to music from all over. I used to have a radio program that played World music. When I lived in France people gave me albums with music from all over the world and I got into listening to music from all around the world then. David Amram is a great composer we met early and he played with Charlie Parker and others, but traveled to Afghanistan and different parts of Africa. He really brings the music down, and influenced me a lot. You just have to open our mind and listen to the music and let your mind go and all these things come out.

Q36: Do you get to play for dances anymore?

Yes, they're among our favorite places to play. The best place is a dance concert where you have people listening and people dancing. We play much better when people dance. Moving is good for everybody.

Q37: Why did you record a children's CD?

There was a gap and I wanted to teach everything from the ABCs to the numbers, everything is on there. I was fun. It's how my kids learned how to speak French. Why not share it? A producer came down and asked us to do it. We had more than enough songs and we had fun doing it. I hope people still use it at school. (*Le Hoogie Boogie*, Rounder Records, 1992)

Q38: Are your kids into music?

Yes and no. They all love music. My son's a violin maker but he has to make a living. He plays Cajun music. My other son is into jazz and plays bass but he's in college right now, so he's studying. They grew up with music in the house. To them, it's like, "If Dad can do this, I can do it too." I don't need a legacy like that. I don't want a legacy. When I'm gone, I'm gone and someone else will be there, so if they want to come back to it, it's there for them.

Classroom Connections

Language Arts

Listening, Writing Skills

Music surrounds us and is an important part of our everyday lives. We hear it in our cars, on TV, on the radio, in movies, on our MP3 players and in the song of a bird or the babble of a baby.

- Listen to the sounds around you and write your answers to the following questions: What sounds do you hear? Where did the sounds come from? Which words best describe the sounds you heard?
- Next, answer some questions about the music in your life. What different kinds of music are important to you? Where do you hear music? Are instruments a part of the music you like? If so, which ones? The first music that Michael Doucet remembers hearing is Elvis Presley songs. What was the first music you remember hearing? What do you remember about the music? Do you listen to special music during celebrations or holidays? Describe the music.
- Listen to Michael Doucet play Cajun music on his fiddle in his [Audio Sample](#). There are six songs for you to hear. As you listen, write down several words that you think describe each piece.
- Now, listen again and see if you can tell which melody is a reel (a lively traditional dance melody), a traditional dance tune, a song about a hurricane, and a slower, sadder sounding song. Compare your answers with your classmates.

Writing, Interviewing, Heroes

A hero is a person who in the face of danger or hardship displays courage and self-sacrifice for the good of others. A hero can also be kind, sincere, honest. Michael Doucet says, "When I wanted to find heroes, I went into my neighborhood. They may not wear Superman costumes, but they are real heroes."

- Why do you think Michael considered the Cajun musicians he interviewed heroes?
- What words describe a hero? How does a hero differ from a media star?
- Who are the heroes in your neighborhood or community? Choose one to interview. Use the [Local Learning Interview Basics](#) to prepare.
- Write down your observations after the interview. List at least five things that you learned from the interview and put a star by the ones that you think are the most

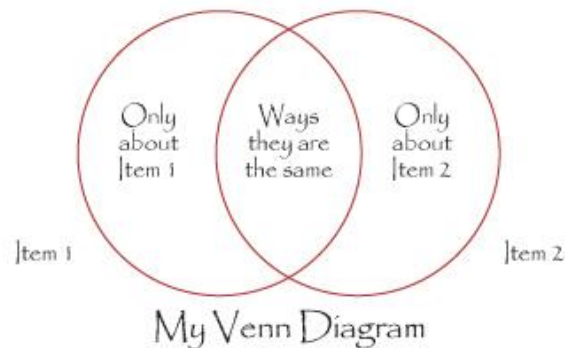
important. What surprised you? What part of the interview interested you the most? Are there any new questions that you have? If so, where can you find the answers?

- Write a poem or song lyrics about one of your heroes. You may compose or borrow a tune that suits your lyrics. Share your work in a class presentation and with your interviewee.

Collecting Data, Drawing Conclusions

Venn diagrams are outstanding organizational tools. They show the relationship between two different items, how they compare and contrast. They can be used for almost any subject. For example, you can see the similarities and differences between the alligator and the crocodile by using a Venn diagram. Or, you can compare two regions of the country to see what they have in common and how they vary.

Draw two circles that overlap so that there is an area in the middle. See sample below.



Adapted with permission from www.louisianavoices.org

Use a Venn diagram to compare research on Cajun music and zydeco, music of southwest Louisiana Creoles and African Americans. Zydeco features elements of African, Caribbean, and French music as well as blues and jazz. Zydeco groups feature musicians on vocals, guitar, accordion, drums, and a washboard called a frottoir, which is worn around the neck and scraped with metal spoons. Lyrics are often in French. Here are web sites to help you.

[Louisiana Voices Musicians](#)

[Louisiana Voices Treasured Traditions of South Louisiana](#)

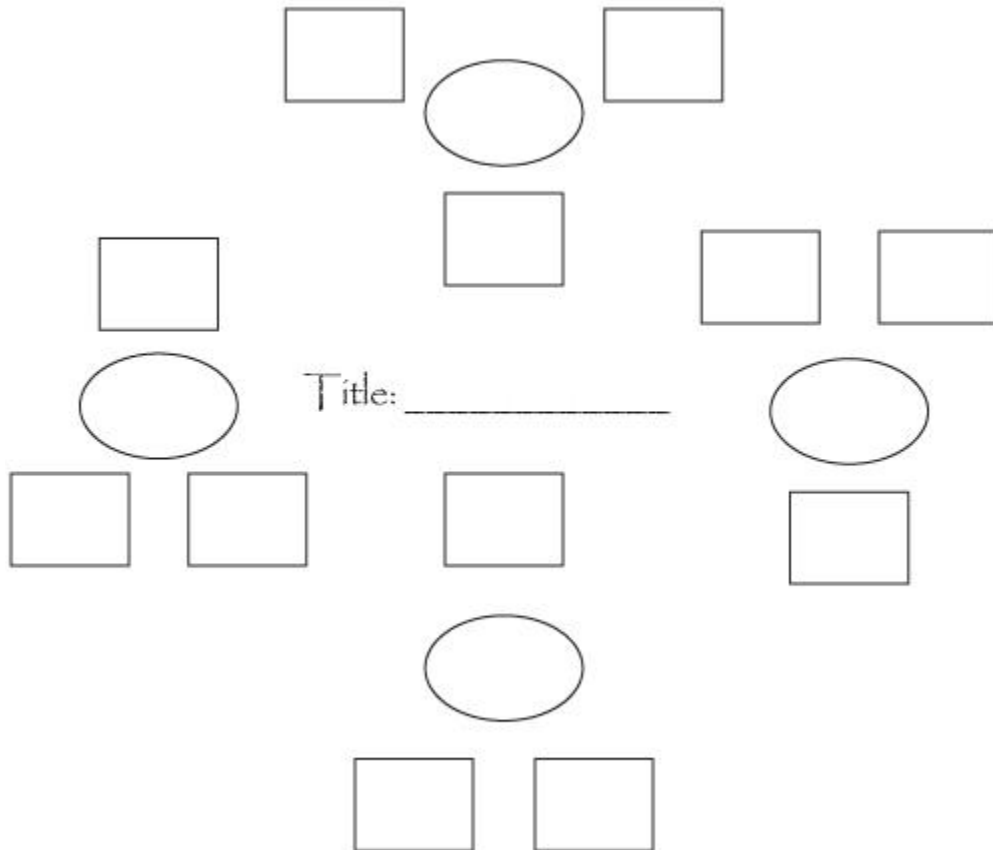
[About.com](#)

[A Brief History of Cajun, Creole, and Zydeco Music](#)

Concept Mapping, Music, Language

A concept map is an innovative way to visualize information about a topic. Concept maps can help you understand the relationships between all the parts of a subject. They also allow you to see detailed aspects of a topic.

- Jolie Blonde (Pretty Blond) is a very popular song in southwest Louisiana, often called “the Cajun national anthem.” In 1928 it became the first Cajun song ever recorded. It is the second song that Michael Doucet plays for Local Learning listeners in his **Music Sample**. Listen to it a couple of times to answer the questions below. Find the lyrics in English and in French in the next activity.
- On the Title line in the center of the figure below, put the words *Jolie Blonde*. Consider some possible subheadings that might help interpret the song. One might be instruments (What instruments are being used?), another lyrics (What words are often used in the song, what language?), another tempo (Describe the tempo, fast, slow, changes?), another melody (Is the music simple, complicated, singable? Does it have a topic?), and possibly rhythm (Feel how the music beats, is it in two’s or three’s? Is there an accent or strong beat on the beginning or end of the beat?)
- Choose the four subheadings that you want to investigate and write a different subheading in each oval. Then fill in the rectangles with the things you learn about each subheading. Draw lines from the ovals to the appropriate rectangles.



Writing, Design, Media

What if Michael Doucet were coming to perform in your town? Think about all that you have learned in this residency and design publicity materials to announce the performance. Choose one of these methods:

- Newspaper article
- Poster, which could incorporate the landscape of southwest Louisiana
- Radio or TV ad, which could include music
- Web page

Poetry

Like songs, poems were once oral. In this activity we will create a *cinquain*. *Cinquains* (pronounced sin-kane) are very popular poems that are five lines long and can have a syllable pattern of 2, 4, 6, 8, 2 or can follow the pattern show below:

- Line 1: One word that gives the subject of the poem.
- Line 2: Two words that describe line 1, usually adjectives.
- Line 3: Three words that are action words describing line 1, can end in ing.
- Line 4: Feeling that relates to line 1, can be a sentence.
- Line 5: One word that means the same as line 1.

Here is a sample *cinquain*.

Poetry
Creative, fun
Imagining, thinking, dreaming
Able to paint a picture
Word-music

Write a *cinquain* about the music of southwest Louisiana and then write one about the music that is important in your life.

Language Arts and Social Studies

Folklife Studies, Interviewing, Music

Music is often passed on from one generation to another. Read Michael Doucet's answer to the question, "So could you talk about some of the people you worked with?" in his [Local Learning interview](#). When Michael wanted to learn about his musical heritage he interviewed the elders who knew the background and context of their music. Interview someone about the music in their lives. (Try to talk with someone who is over 50.) Use the [Local Learning Interview Basics](#) to prepare. Consider the following questions:

- What is the first music you remember from your childhood?
- Did your parents or grandparents sing to you? If so, what did they sing?
- What songs did you sing when you were in school?
- What were the special songs you sang or played for holidays?

- What songs do you remember from your teenage years?
- What language were the songs sung in?
- Where and how did you listen to music?
- Try to learn at least one song from the interview.
- Make sure you ask some questions of your own that cannot be answered with just “yes” or “no.”
- Write down your own observations after the interview. List at least five things that you learned from the interview and put a star by the ones you think are the most important. What surprised you? What part of the interview interested you the most? Are there any new questions that you have? If so, where can you find the answers?
- Make a presentation about your interview, for example, a poster, podcast, PowerPoint slide, collage, mobile, scrapbook, or illustrated timeline.

Social Studies

History, Culture, Sequencing

Timelines help you envision information graphically. A Cajun music timeline will help you put historical events and cultural expressions into order and context.

- First develop a list of all the years and events that something important happened in Cajun music. Use your research and information from the web sites below to help you make your list.

Louisiana Voices Musicians

Louisiana Voices Treasured Traditions of South Louisiana

Wikipedia

About.com

A Brief History of Cajun, Creole, and Zydeco Music

- Rearrange the list by date. Put the earliest date as the first on your list. Continue your list in order of date.
- Now put your timeline together. You may use paper, poster board, or software. The following web sites can help you but cannot be saved. Make sure you print out the information. You may illustrate your timeline with photos, drawings, and other images.

Read, Write, Think

Teachology

Folklife Studies, Culture

Jambalaya is a traditional southwest Louisiana dish made with three sets of ingredients: rice, meats, and vegetables. In Louisiana the meats can be local sausages like *andouille* and chicken. Seafood is also popular in jambalaya. Shrimp, oysters, and crawfish are sometimes put in the dish. Vegetables might include onion, celery, and bell pepper. Rice cooked in broth is always in jambalaya, but the meats and vegetables change depending on what is locally available. Think about the area where you live. If you were to make jambalaya with ingredients from your region, what would it contain?

- Would you use regular rice or is some other starch (brown rice, potatoes, pasta) common in your area?
- What meats would you use?
- Is seafood available in your area? If so, which types would you use?
- What vegetables are readily grown in your locale? What would go well in your dish?
- What would you name your version of jambalaya?

Visual Art

Culture, Design

Mardi Gras is a special celebration that occurs each year just before Roman Catholics begin Lent in different places around the world. In some places it is called Carnival. Louisiana celebrates different kinds of Mardi Gras including the *Courir de Mardi Gras* or Mardi Gras Run of southwest Louisiana. On Mardi Gras Day in several small towns in the area, maskers dressed in costumes ride from house to house on horseback. When they arrive, they dance, perform tricks, play music, and generally have fun with the people from the house. In return they ask for food or coins. Besides food and drink, they request ingredients for a community gumbo. When they receive their “gifts,” they move to the next house and begin again. Over the course of the day they accept many different items for their gumbo, including sausage, chicken, oil, rice, and flour. At the end of the day, they put all their ingredients together to make a very large pot of gumbo for everyone.

For more details on this rich tradition, read [Cajun Women and the Country Mardi Gras Tradition](#).

On Folkstreams view excerpts of the documentary *Dance for a Chicken* to experience the southwest Louisiana [Courir de Mardi Gras](#).

Rural Mardi Gras masks are often made of screen and hide faces so well even friends and family may not recognize maskers. Make a mask of your own using house window screen, feathers, yarn, wigs, glue, and other craft supplies you can easily find. Play Cajun music while you work for inspiration.

Vocabulary

Acadian
 accordion
 ballad
 bayou
 BeauSoleil
 Cajun
cheniere
 crawfish
 Creole
 cuisine
 elder
 fiddle

filé
guitar
gumbo
hero
jambalaya
lyrics
Mardi Gras
Maritime Provinces
mask
master
melody
mirleton
prairie
preservation
reel
rhythm
roux
sassafras
transcribe
zydeco

Resources

Books

Ancelet, Barry Jean, Jay Edwards, and Glen Pitre. *Cajun Country*. University Press of Mississippi, 1991. This comprehensive book explores all aspects of Cajun life.

_____. *Cajun and Creole Music Makers: Musiciens cadiens et creoles*. University Press of Mississippi, 1999. Michael Doucet graces the cover of this examination of the generation of musicians responsible for the survival of Cajun and Creole music as well as younger musicians.

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. [*Vanishing Before Our Eyes: Louisiana Cheniere Woods and the Birds that Depend on Them, 2006*](#). This beautiful e-book illustrates the close relationship of millions of birds to the groves known as chenieres in southwest Louisiana.

Bradshaw, Jim, photos by P.C. Piazza. *Our Acadiana: A Pictorial History of South Louisiana*. Thompson South Louisiana Publishing, 1999. Beautiful photographs enhance stories of the region.

Gould, Philip. *Cajun Music and Zydeco*. Louisiana State University Press, 1992. More than a hundred color photographs document performers, dance halls, and fans, includes a CD.

Koster, Rick. *Louisiana Music*. Da Capo Press, 2002. This reference on Louisiana music is easy to read and features an interesting section on the music of southwest Louisiana.

Lindahl, Carl, Maida Owens, and C. Renée Harvison, eds. *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana*. University Press of Mississippi, 1997. This fine collection of stories includes an excellent overview of the state's folklife.

Books for Students

Collins, Sheila Hebert. *Jolie Blonde and the Three Heberts*. Pelican Publishing Company, 1999.

Doucet, Sharon Arms. *Fiddle Fever*. Clarion, 2000.

_____. *Lapin Plays Possum*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

_____. *Why Lapin's Ears Are Long and Other Tales from the Louisiana Bayou*. Orchard Books, 1997.

Reneaux, J.J. *Cajun Folktales*. August House, 1992.

Saucier, Corinne, L. *Folk Tales from French Louisiana*. Louisiana State University Press, 1962.

Web Sites

Acadian Memorial web site includes lessons that connect students to the lives of the Acadians who fled to Louisiana and their own families through oral histories.

Acadiana Center for the Arts in Lafayette, LA, has a strong arts education department offering rich programs and artist residencies. The center features galleries and a new performance space.

American Routes is a public radio program produced in New Orleans. The host, folklorist Nick Spitzer, interviews musicians and plays music exploring the traditional roots of American popular music. Michael Doucet has appeared several times. **Click here** to listen to his interviews.

ArtsEdge is the Kennedy Center's arts education web site. Resources include a podcast featuring [Michael Doucet](#) describing the history and context of Cajun music.

Folkstreams is an online preserve of folklore documentaries including several about southwest Louisiana.

- Cajun Country
- Cajun Visits: Visites Cajuns
- Dance for a Chicken: The Cajun Mardi Gras
- Dry Wood
- Zydeco: Creole Music and Culture in Rural Louisiana

KRVS-FM Radio Acadie in Lafayette, LA, broadcasts music of southwest Louisiana around the clock. Tune in to 88.7-FM online.

Louisiana Voices is an extensive online education guide produced by the Louisiana Folklife Program of the Division of the Arts. It provides all the background necessary to prepare students for documenting many local traditions, not only in Louisiana but around the world. Be sure to check out Unit **VI Louisiana's Musical Landscape**. In addition to many lessons, rubrics, and worksheets, find articles, music, and photos. The following articles describe Cajun music.

Cajun Music as Poetry

Cajun Music: Alive and Well in Louisiana

Twisting at the Fais Do-Do: Swamp Pop in South Louisiana

Michael Doucet avec BeauSoleil Find out where the band is playing on their agency's web site.

Smithsonian Folkways produced the Michael Doucet CD *From Now On*. In his Local Learning interview, Michael says he is very proud of this album. "It's just me and a tape recorder and some good friends. It was an easy record to do because I just went and played what I play at home when nobody is listening." **Click here** to read the 28-page booklet about the Michael that accompanies the CD.

Discography

- 1977 *The Spirit of Cajun Music* (Swallow)
- 1984 *Michael Doucet with BeauSoleil* (Arhoolie)
- 1984 *Parlez-Nous a Boire* (Arhoolie)
- 1986 *Allons a Lafayette* (Arhoolie) with Canray Fontenot
- 1986 *Belizaire the Cajun* [Original Soundtrack] (Arhoolie)
- 1987 *Bayou Boogie* (Rounder)
- 1988 *Hot Chili Mama* (Arhoolie)
- 1989 *Bayou Cadillac* (Rounder)
- 1989 *Zydeco Gris Gris* (Swallow)
- 1989 *Live from the Left Coast* (Rounder)
- 1991 *Cajun Conja* (Rhino)
- 1991 *Déjà Vu* (Swallow)
- 1992 *Le Hoogie Boogie: Louisiana French Music for Children* (Rounder)
- 1993 *La Danse de La Vie* (Forward)
- 1994 *Cajun and Creole Music* (Music of the World)
- 1994 *L' Echo* (Rhino/Forward)
- 1997 *L' Amour Ou la Folie* (Rhino)
- 1997 *Arc de Triomphe Two-Step* (Hemisphere)
- 2001 *Looking Back Tomorrow: Beausoleil Live!* (Rhino)
- 2004 *Gitane Cajun* (Vanguard)

- 2006 Live in Louisiana (Way Down in Louisiana)
- 2008 Live at the 2008 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival BeauSoleil and Michael Doucet

(MunckMix)

- 2008 From Now On (Smithsonian Folkways)
- 2009 Alligator Purse (Yep Roc)