

Feature Article

Using Authentic Music Videos In The Foreign Language Classroom

By Nancy Gadbois, High School of Science and Technology, Springfield

Authentic musical videos, which are truly cultural in nature, add an exciting dimension to the daily agenda in the foreign language classroom.

For teachers of French, there's a Massachusetts native whose French legacy has been incorporated into a 27 minute video with accompanying *exercices pédagogiques*. The video is now available through the AATF web site (www.frenchteachers.org) where you can also find further information on this language program, "*Tant Qu'elle Chante, Elle Vit: apprendre le français grâce à l'héritage de Carole Fredericks.*"



Carole Fredericks

Since Carole was a Massachusetts native, her sister Connie and I are excited to be able to share our presentation with MaFLA members at the conference in Sturbridge, October, on Friday, October 31 and Saturday, November 1.

In the November 2002 AATF National Bulletin, my classroom activity featured an introduction to Carole Fredericks, an African American singer who left the USA in the late 1970's, to travel to France to continue her singing career.

A sister of the great bluesman, Taj Mahal, Carole quickly became a popular back up singer and protégée of Jean Jacques Goldman, despite her limited knowledge of French. From that moment, her musical

career was assured, and several of her CDs, Fredericks Goldman Jones, Springfield, and Couleurs et Parfums rose to the top of the hit parade in France, Europe and Africa. She died of a massive heart attack following a benefit concert in Dakar, Senegal, in 2001.

She was NOT known, however, in her city of birth, Springfield, MA, or in her own country. Her family has struggled with the loss of Carole, and due to a combination of events, has received special permission from the music industry in France to offer this language program only to teachers of French.

I never met Carole Fredericks directly. In 1996, I was escorting a group of students in Paris, and discovered her music by chance. "Un, Deux, Trois", where Carole mentions her Springfield, MA roots, was at the top of the musical charts, and because my students wore jackets with 'Springfield, MA' on them, we were asked continually if we were indeed from that city. Thanks to the hotel clerk, we were immediately directed to FNAC, where I was able to purchase the Fredericks Goldman Jones cassette and have used her music since that time to enrich my curriculum.

When I read of Carole's death in the local newspaper, I decided to attend the memorial service in Springfield, in August 2001. I met Carole's family and mentioned to Connie Fredericks-Malone that I used her sister's music in my classroom, and that the students enjoyed her songs.

Thus began a journey, a collaborative effort between the family and a teacher of French in Springfield, MA, to bring Carole the honor and recognition that she deserves.

Martinique, 2003 was the first conference where Connie and I presented the language program to teachers. We were excited, thrilled to share the joy of Carole's musical legacy, and delighted that the room was full. The response of the attendees was overwhelming.

Connie, from the Rochester, NY area, is a grant director for the New York State Arts Council. Her interaction with AATF members prompted the following comments:



**Nancy Gadbois with
Connie Fredericks**

"The session was an overwhelming, humbling, and joyous experience for me." She adds, "In retrospect, it's still difficult for me to describe the profound appreciation I felt for all the teachers who attended."

She mentioned that the session validated her belief that her sister's contributions to music in France will help American students here learn French. She reiterated her 'merci' to the AATF, particularly to Jayne Abrate, for encouraging this venture.

Carole is buried in Montmartre Cemetery, at the suggestion of the French government. I visited her gravesite in June 2003, and noted her prestigious 'company' in this landmark of the 18th arrondissement. The free map of this cemetery features Carole's tomb among "les sépultures les plus demandées." It is distributed to visitors, is currently being reprinted, and will be available in September. (www.paris-france.org)

On June 2, 2003, following a memorial service in Paris, there was a private party, where the family, friends, and musicians who had worked with Carole celebrated her life and talent. It was, however, the exact week of the 'bac', and those exams prevented one young man, the web master of one of the two most popular web sites dedicated to Carole, from attending this event. He wrote his regrets in a letter to Connie and her husband Jim, and agreed to share that letter with teachers and students of French.

I have added questions at the end of this letter for your students to enjoy.

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Paris, le 2 juin 2003

Chers Connie et James:

Je suis vraiment désolé de ne pouvoir être avec vous ce soir. Mes examens de mon baccalauréat ont lieu cette semaine de plus je connais des problèmes de grève de transport. Croyez-moi je regrette profondément de ne pouvoir être là.

Néanmoins, j'aurais voulu vous dire combien Carole a compté (et compte toujours) pour moi: d'abord, elle a marqué mes goûts musicaux. Elle m'a fait découvrir le blues et le gospel. Tout d'abord j'entendais sa voix dans les chansons des autres quand elle faisait des chœurs. Puis le trio avec Jean Jacques et Michael bien sûr, comme tout le monde. Et puis ses albums solos où l'on pouvait trouver pleins d'émotions dans cette sublime voix.

Mais c'est sur scène que je l'adorais, qu'elle se donnait totalement. Chaque concert était unique et si intense. Il y a plein de morceaux qu'il reste gravé dans ma mémoire. C'est tellement dommage qu'elle nous ait quittés si tôt, elle me manque et l'entendre me manque. Elle avait une voix particulière dans le paysage musicale français. Comme le dit si bien Goldman, "C'est sans elle que nous faudra apprendre la scène."

On n'est pas près de l'oublier, tout comme son parfum qu'elle portait et que j'aimais tant parce qu'il sentait bon la joie de vivre.

J'espère de tout mon cœur qu'elle se repose sereinement en paix.

Jean-Michel

Questions:

1. Pourquoi Jean-Michel a-t-il écrit cette lettre?
2. Pourquoi ne pouvait-il pas donner rendez-vous avec Connie et Jim?
3. Qu'est-ce qu'il doit personnellement à Carole Fredericks?
4. Quel aspect de la vie professionnelle de Carole est-ce qu'il adorait le plus?
5. Pourquoi mentionne-t-il 'le parfum'?
6. Identifiez Jean-Michel. Regardez le livre d'or de: www.shine.fr.st/

This exercise is interpretive in nature, based on an authentic document. An interpersonal mode activity can be realized if the teacher asks students to share in pairs or groups, statements or opinions based on this letter.

If a student researches another person buried alongside Carole in Montmartre Cemetery, and presents the findings to the class, the presentational mode is included. The format may consist of multimedia work, poster work, oral and/or written commentary as well.

Music lends itself to many teacher and student directed activities. The popularity of music, and music videos, in particular, is a recipe for success in the classroom.