

# Concept for Musical/Play - Canadaise

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*This is a sketch for a potential stage production. It seeks to explore both the Canadian identity and showcase classical music. Winning entry of a high school prose competition.*

François “Frank” Fontana is a seventeen year old boy of Polish descent (third generation) who attends a high school in the “uncultured” province of Ontario, Canada. He is contemptuous of other Canadians for their assimilated lifestyles, and strictly follows the social customs that his parents and his grandparents have presented to him as “Polish”. A budding pianist, Frank is very fond of music in the “Polish” style and is constantly trying to learn and perfect the famous Polonaises. His extreme nationalism has estranged him from most of his peers, though Georgia Sable, an adopted and “white-washed” girl of Asian descent is willing to listen to his pro-Polish musings and admires his passionate piano playing.

Frank decides he has had enough of the shitty country called Canada and buys a plane ticket to Poland after selling all of his belongings. Georgia is distressed that she never got to say goodbye and she laments to her friends. However, in the middle of her sorrow, an unexpected guest enters. It is a penniless Frank, who upon arriving in Poland realizes that his motherland had changed in the three generations his family has been gone and is broken-hearted that his country has been tainted. He decides that he has had enough of Polish music, and sets out to reconcile with his fellow Canadians by writing a truly Canadian piece of music: the Canadaise.

Frank is so confident in his ability to discover the perfect Canadaise that he gets special permission from his school to give a special performance on graduation night. Georgia tells Frank that he is crazy for thinking he can invent a whole genre in a matter of months; they argue and end their conversation on a sour note.

Frank has to sneak into university practice rooms to practice, as he had sold his piano to buy his plane ticket for Poland. In the university rooms, as he toils to discover the perfect embodiment of Canadian music, many students walk by and say their views on music and life. Frank is impressed at these people, but mistakes them for foreigners. In a fit of rage, he cries that he would be so much farther if “outsiders” didn’t keep distracting him from his work.

When he finds out that all of these people consider themselves Canadian, he is surprised and moved. He realizes he is not the only person who is trying to be part of the Canadian identity.

Georgia has troubles identifying with her friends, because she realizes that she doesn't feel Asian despite being ethnically Asian. When her friends find out that she is very behind in her math and physics courses, they rebuke her for not taking school seriously and living up to the Asian ideal. Angrily, she plays a vigorous and dissonant piece on the piano then tells them to try emulating that with their school smarts. Her friends, stunned by the sudden uncharacteristic outburst, leave Georgia, who cries alone about how much she wants to be the typical Asian girl and curses her biological parents for not wanting to raise her.

Frank calls Georgia, and apologizes for their unresolved argument and tells her his discovery about the Canadian identity: that the identity of Canada was that every identity could live in harmony. This uplifts Georgia, who learns to accept her life as an adoptee. At the end of the call, she confesses to Frank and asks if he would go to the prom with her. He accepts, but tells her that he can only ever love her as a friend. This is enough for Georgia, who just wanted to know that Frank values their bond.

At the prom, Georgia tries to push Frank to dance, but he seems to have something on his mind. Georgia ends up having to sit alone after Frank suddenly goes to do something. She reconciles with her friends at prom, and as they share a group hug Georgia hears a familiar tune play. Frank comes back and said he suggested "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" since it was the only popular piece he knew. They dance while talking about how much closer they have gotten over the years. He mentions that he finally knows what to do about the Canadaise, but refuses to give any more details and says to instead wait for graduation day. After Frank takes Georgia home after prom, Georgia hugs Frank, who doesn't reciprocate at first but eventually does to calm Georgia who is evidently worried and uncertain about the future. She asks for a kiss, and he reluctantly says yes. However, at the last moment he says he can't do it because he doesn't feel the same way about her yet. She tells him to just lie for the evening, and so Frank tells her he loves her before they share a kiss. As he walks away from Georgia's house to his car, Georgia's friends, who were watching the while time, ask him what he thinks of Georgia. He runs away instead of going into his car, but yells that he will inevitably fall in love with her.

On graduation night, Georgia is more nervous about Frank's performance than about her own valedictorian address. When the time comes for Frank to play, he walks up to the piano, plays random dissonant notes, and announces that he did not manage to write a Canadaise because he found out that there is no defined Canadian musical form. The student body, which already have a bad impression of Frank, is offended and becomes worked up. They start shouting insults at Frank to go back to where he came from.

Georgia intervenes by starting her address (which she titled “Born in Beijing”), which mentioned the search for identity she had to go through and how Frank’s words about the Canadian identity inspired her to embrace herself for who she is. When she concludes, she receives a standing ovation. Amid the clapping, Frank sits down on the piano and plays a Polonaise. When he finishes, no one claps because they are so stunned by his playing. He tells everyone that he now knows that the only way to truly fit the Canadian identity is to stay true to yourself and that although he no longer feels truly Polish, he will still always love his heritage.

At an end-of-year party, Frank anxiously waits for Georgia with a ring, as he plans to propose before he goes to music school and Georgia goes to Stanford to study liberal arts. Instead, Georgia’s friends arrive hurriedly with a note from Georgia saying she already left for Stanford early because she wanted it to hurt less when she left by not seeing Frank for a “last time”. Frank resolves to learn to accept his true self and eventually discover the perfect Canadaise so that when Georgia returns he can confidently ask her for her hand in marriage.

In an ending scene, Georgia unpacks her baggage in her new dorm room and discovers that the table which was supposed to be in her room was accidentally replaced with a piano. She is about to go to ask for the issue to be resolved, but instead sits down to play the middle section of *Fantaisie-Improptu*, the source material of “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows”. She doesn’t finish because she can’t stop crying.