



## *Atelier Babel – Allison Poumier*

Rob. And I'm here with Allison Poumier who is an American settled in Brittany. How long have you lived in Brittany, Allison?

Allison. I have lived in Brittany for about two years. I've lived in France for almost seven years total.

Rob. And why have you chosen to come and live in Brittany?

Allison. Oh, because this was the first place I came to when I came to France and I fell in love with it right away.

Rob. Is it very different to your home?

Allison. Ah, well, my home is Oklahoma and... it's similar. I think Brittany has a lot more, um, hills, rolling hills, but Oklahoma also is, is very beautiful, very green. Kind of like this so yeah.

Rob. You're very well integrated here. I understand you have a, a French husband for one thing.

Allison. I do, I do.

Rob. You also work for yourself over here - what kind of work do you do?

Allison. I'm a teacher. I teach French and English. I started an Association recently called Atelier Babel that has the goal of, uh, integrating, uh, French and, uh, English people and trying to teach people to communicate and assimilate into the, the society here.

Rob. And whereabouts do you operate?

Allison. Well, we are based in Plésidy but we have recently opened up classes in Guingamp and, uh, we would like to make it even bigger someday but that depends on how many people come so we need more people, we can make it grow.

Rob. So what kind of things do you do to help people integrate?

Allison. So first of all we have classes tha... and that's just to study the language and get the grammar down, I think especially for English people who come here, they have a lot of trouble with French verbs and, yeah, verb tenses are really.... really difficult. We also try to help people integrate outside of classes by organising some fun themed parties, sometimes we have like, recently we had a music night and everyone brought their favourite music and they explained in their foreign language what they liked about the song. So it's, it's a good chance to use your, your language and to mingle with people from different, uh from different languages

Rob. And there's enough people around to do this kind of thing?

Allison. Yeah, well, little by little people are, are hearing about it and starting to, to join us so.... It depends, sometimes we have a lot of people in classes, sometimes the, the numbers go down a little bit during some of the holiday seasons, so, yeah, little by little people are, are joining us.

Rob. So if listeners are interested in joining your association what, what do they do - how do they find out about it?

Allison. Well, they can either Email us directly so the email is atelierbabel22@gmail.com or they can call us directly at 06 32 34 71 80

Rob. You tell it the French way don't you- two numbers at a time?

Allison. I do. I can't do it any other way any more.

Rob. Where did you learn your French?

Allison. So I learnt French in High School in Oklahoma and it was of course basic French. We didn't speak a lot. We listened some but we mostly read and studied grammar just like everyone else, um, and it was when I came to France seven years ago that I was suddenly thrust into French speaking and I had to - I was kind of drowning at first but eventually I, I, I picked it up. And my husbands a writer so he helped me a lot with, uh, with speaking French naturally and vocabulary especially.

Rob. And so does your husband take part in the teaching?

Allison. He doesn't teach. He would like to eventually teach writing courses but that would, that would have to, we would have to get a lot more people involved, especially, uh, French people who would like to, who would like to write but not for writing English. I'm not sure if he could, if he could do that. Maybe he could, who knows?

Rob. Now, you teach French to English people.

Allison. Yes.

Rob. You teach English to French people.

Allison. Yes, I do.

Rob. And I understand you have some pupils who are pretty far away?

Allison. That's right, that's right. So I also teach, but that's not part of the Association, that's, that's my own personal teaching. I teach online sometimes to people who live in Japan and we, we have classes through Skype. So yeah, yeah I did that for a while.

Rob. And you're teaching them English or French?

Allison. Both.

Rob. And you're not just a teacher ?

Allison. That's right. I'm well, I'm a singer as well- a jazz singer. Currently I've, I've taken sort of a break but I, when I lived in the South - I lived in the South of France for a while and, uh I sang with a jazz group.

Rob. And I see that in this room here there's a huge piano so is that yours or your husband's?

Allison. It's my husband's and I play on it a little bit. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not a pianist. Singing is my, my main instrument.

Rob. And what kind of style do you have?

Allison. Very kind of soft jazz. We recorded a CD with a lot of covers of our favourite songs but arranged.

Rob. And that's right here, you've done that here in Brittany?

Allison. I did that in the South, in the South. So that was several years ago. But eventually I'll, I'll start singing again.

Rob. So what plans have you got for the future?

Allison. I would really like to grow - to help, uh, the Association grow and to, to make it into really a community of people not just based here in Plésidy or Guingamp but maybe even include St Brieuc in that. I would like to make it something that helps people assimilate and share their culture with each other.

Rob. Ok, well, Allison Poumier, I wish you the very best of luck with your, with your plans.

Allison. Oh, thank you

Rob. And maybe we'll here some music someday soon.

Allison. Oh maybe so. I'll give you a CD after, after the interview.

Rob. Ah, there are perks to this job...



