

## CITY OF SAN JOSE'S Arts Express Program Presents:

### City Lights Theater Company

#### *The Three Musketeers*

#### Teacher Guide

Grades 9-12

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### About the Arts Organization

City Lights Theater Company (a non-profit organization) produces a season of 6 plays per year in the Company's intimate 108-seat venue, and is committed to presenting exhilarating, thought-provoking plays that speak strongly to our audiences. The Company actively develops and produces new plays through our New Play Readers Series, some of which become a part of a regular season. City Lights also encourages the growth of smaller "nomad" theatre companies through their Spotlight Series, in which a diverse group of performing artists are hosted in our theatre and provided with publicity and box office services for their productions. The Company also offers a Youth and Education Program which offers ticket discount, free Study Guides and other opportunities. In addition, City Lights is widely regarded as a nurturing space in which many up-and-coming actors, directors, designers and technicians are given an opportunity to develop their theatre skills alongside seasoned professionals.

### About the Program

In this newly adapted version of *The Three Musketeers*, Kit Wilder (the Associate Artistic Director for City Lights Theater Company) the actor who plays d'Artagnan is a random stagehand. The play is based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas written in 1840. It is the story of D'Artagnan who is a young adventurer going to Paris, France looking to be a Musketeer like his father during the first half of the seventeenth century.

The Three Musketeers is a swashbuckling tale of intrigue, friendship, love, and justice. It takes place in 17th Century France and as the play begins, the actors discover that their leading player is nowhere to be found. Only when a hapless stagehand is armed, costumed, and provided with a script can the show go on. And "go on" it does – with the company of seasoned actors guiding the novice page-by-page through the role of D'Artagnan, stepping in and out of character and changing scenes as quickly as the pages turn. This adaptation is a swift and satisfying blend of high drama, low comedy, dark secrets, and heart-rending romance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the City Lights Theater Company website <http://www.cltc.org/opportunities.htm>

## Learning Objectives

Students will--

- Learn some history of France during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century
- Understand how art is a vehicle to comment on history
- Recognize how personal relationships and history are related

## Historical and Cultural Context

Summary of Play:

*The Three Musketeers* mixes seventeenth-century French history with period romance and tells the tale of young D'Artagnan and his musketeer comrades, Porthos, Athos and Aramis. Together they fight to foil the schemes of the brilliant, dangerous Cardinal Richelieu, who pretends to support the king while plotting to advance his own power.

Main Characters:

*D'Artagnan: young adventurer from Gascony*

*Athos, Porthos, and Aramis: the three musketeers*

*Planchet: servant*

*Cardinal Richelieu*

*Louis XIII: King of France and Anne of Austria, his wife, Queen of France*

*Constance Bonacieux: The Queen's lady-in-waiting and Bonaciux her husband, and landlord*

*Duke of Buckingham: Prime Minister of England*

*De Treville: Captain of the Musketeers*

*Milady de Winter: vengeful schemer*

History of France during 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the period when the play takes place: Under the absolute monarchy of King Louis XIII, Cardinal Richelieu was chief minister to the crown. He fought the opposition of the upper nobility and the political, not religious, privileges of military aid (Huguenots).

Alexandre Dumas, père, (1802-1870) was one of the most famous French writers of the 19th century. Dumas is best known for historical adventure novels like *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, both written within the space of two years, 1844-45, and which belong to the foundation works of popular culture. He was among the first, along with Honoré de Balzac and Eugène Sue, who fully used the possibilities of roman feuilleton, the serial novel. Dumas is credited with revitalizing the historical novel in France, although his abilities as a writer were under dispute from the beginning. Dumas' works are fast-paced adventure tales that blend history and fiction, but on the other hand, they are entangled, melodramatic, and actually not faithful to the historical facts.

## Vocabulary—

Calvinism: the theological system of Calvin and his followers marked by strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of humankind, and the doctrine of predestination

Musketeer: a soldier armed with a musket

Ruffian: a brutal person or bully

Swashbuckling Novel: a novel which blends elements of intrigue, adventure, and romance

### **Preparation for the Program**

1. Review the history and vocabulary of the play.
2. Students can read the original story by Alexandre Dumas, or view a film/television adaptation of the Three Musketeers and then discuss similarities and differences with the play.
3. Review all of the main characters and write list of questions for each one that could be answered during the play. After the play see if the questions were answered.
4. After the play, talk/write about the role of romance in the story. What parallels did the story have to historical facts? How the stagehand and D'Artagnan's struggles similar?
5. After the play, have students write and perform a play that reflects the students' views of current history.

### **Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

These standards are taken from the theatre standards

#### *Historical and Cultural Context*

- 3.3 (Grade 5) Interpret how theatre and storytelling forms (past and present) of various cultural groups may reflect their beliefs and traditions.
- 3.1 (Grade 6) Create scripts that reflect particular historical periods or cultures
- 3.2 (High School) Describe the ways in which playwrights reflect and influence their culture

#### *Aesthetic Valuing*

- 4.2 (Grade 6) Identify examples of how theater, TV and film can influence or be influence by politics and culture
- 4.2 (Grade 7) Explain how cultural influences affect the content/meaning of works of theater

### **Resources**

- The Three Musketeers: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Musketeers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Musketeers)
  - <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/The-Three-Musketeers.id-137.html>
- Alexandre Dumas: <http://www.online-literature.com/dumas/>
- 17<sup>th</sup> Century French History:  
[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/france\\_seventeenth\\_century.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/france_seventeenth_century.htm)  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215768/France>