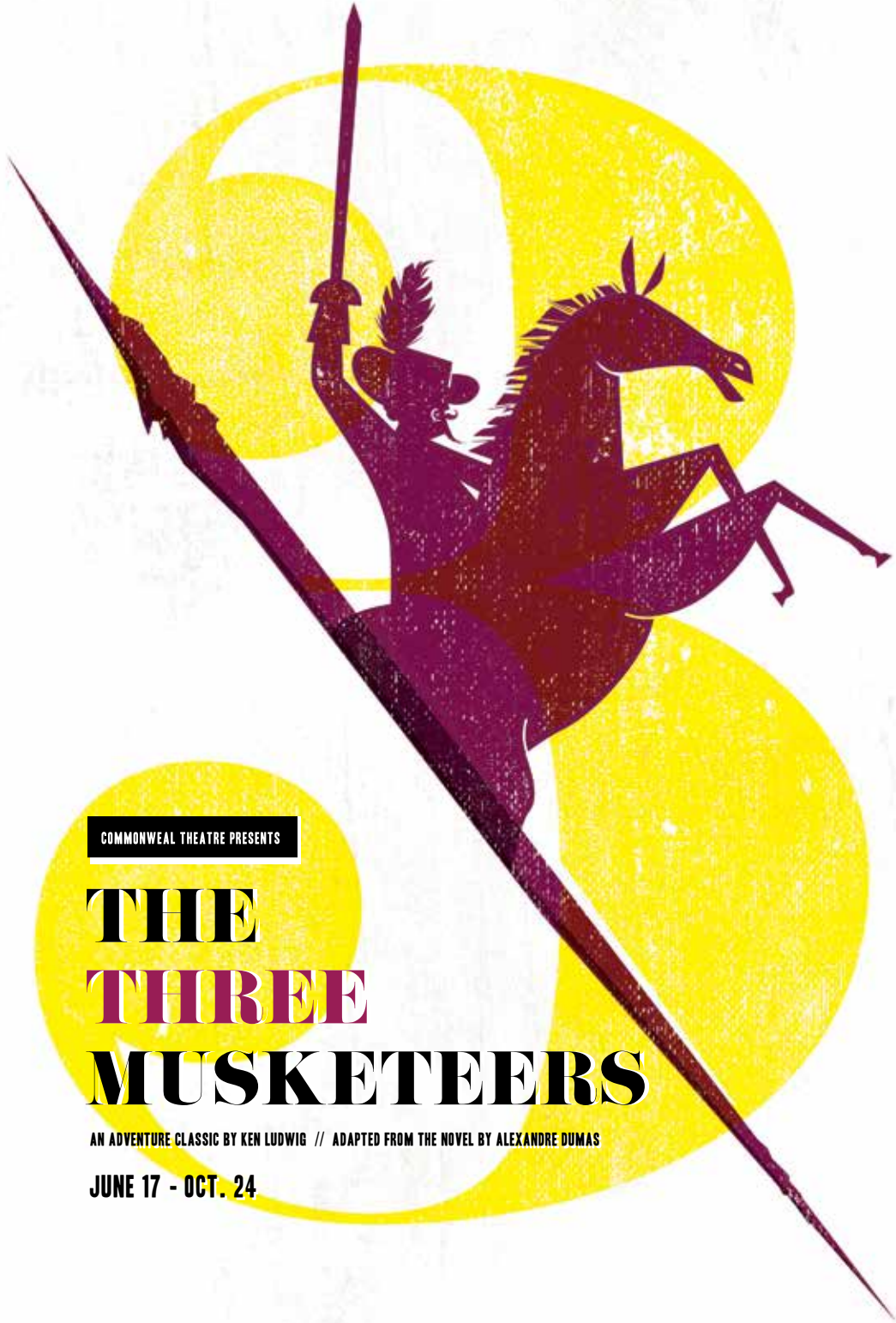


A Deeper Look



COMMONWEAL THEATRE PRESENTS

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

AN ADVENTURE CLASSIC BY KEN LUDWIG // ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

JUNE 17 - OCT. 24

Enhancement Notes for Commonwealth Theatre's production of *The Three Musketeers*.
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COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY

presents

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

by Ken Ludwig

Adapted from the novel by Alexandre Dumas

Director	Alan Berks
Production Stage Manager	Bailey Otto
Assistant Stage Manager & Choreographer	Lewis Youngren
Costume Designer	Annie Cady
Lighting Designer	Jason Underferth
Set Designer	Kit Mayer
Sound Designer	Lynn Musgrave
Props Designer	Elizabeth Dunn
Props Assistant	Austin Stiers
Fight Choreographer	Aaron Preusse

CAST

Porthos	Scott Dixon
Athos	Hal Cropp
Aramis	Jeremy van Meter
D'Artagnan	Brandt Roberts
Sabine, his sister	Callie Boydston
King Louis XIII of France	Eric Lee
Queen Anne	Sarah Hawkins Moan
Cardinal Richelieu	David Hennessey
Rochefort, his henchman	Wade Alden
"Milady," Madame de Winter	Adrienne Sweeney
Constance, a Lady in Waiting	Megan K. Pence
Treville, <i>et al.</i>	Gary Danciu

Setting

Gascony, Paris and environs, France, 1625.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

— Spoiler Alert! —

The opening scene of our production of *The Three Musketeers* finds a young woman reading a graphic novel version of the story. As she reads, she becomes so engrossed in the romance and the action that it springs to life around her.

ACT ONE

The scene transforms itself to 1625 in Gascony, France. Young d'Artagnan is getting a final lesson in fencing and life from his father. He is about to set off for Paris in search of adventure and a hoped-for career with the King's Musketeers. Just before a tearful farewell, d'Artagnan learns that he must escort his sister, Sabine (the young woman from the opening scene), whom her father wants to attend a convent school in Paris. Sabine is the quintessential tomboy. She insists on disguising herself as a young man for the dangerous journey—calling herself Planchet and posing as d'Artagnan's servant. To add insult to injury, d'Artagnan's father also insists his son take the old and decrepit family horse, Buttercup.



A wood engraving by Jules Huyot, from an illustration by Maurice Leloir (1893).

Meanwhile, in Paris, we meet the King's famous Musketeers, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, as they undertake a midnight caper to steal the evil Cardinal Richelieu's nightcap from his house. Surrounded and outnumbered by the Cardinal's guards, they somehow escape, though Athos is hurt.

D'Artagnan and Sabine (as Planchet) stop at an inn on the outskirts of Paris. There d'Artagnan encounters Rochefort, chief henchman of Cardinal Richelieu. Full of Gascon pride, d'Artagnan challenges Rochefort over his insult of Buttercup. Rochefort knocks him out, but not before d'Artagnan has a brief and tantalizing glimpse of "Milady", the dangerous and seductive Countess de Winter, who prevents Rochefort killing the young man.

Back in Paris, the three Musketeers meet with their captain, Tréville, who upbraids them for fleeing the Cardinal's guards the previous night. As the three heroes leave, d'Artagnan arrives to meet with Tréville and ask to join the Musketeers. But Milady had previously stolen his father's letter of introduction, and he accidentally almost blows Sabine's cover by introducing her as his sister. Skeptical of this young man, but in deference to the memory of d'Artagnan's father who was his schoolmate, Tréville only offers d'Artagnan a commission in the King's regiment. Disappointed and wandering the streets, d'Artagnan encounters Athos, Porthos and Aramis, blundering into each of them in turn and unintentionally offends each one. They challenge him to duels that very night and he accepts.

Lamenting his poor fortune, d'Artagnan is surprised by a young woman running for her life from two men chasing her. She is Constance Bonacieux, Lady in Waiting to Queen Anne. The Cardinal's henchmen are trying to intercept a letter she carries—it's a love letter between the Queen and the Duke of Buckingham, and Richelieu wants to use it against the Queen to gain power. D'Artagnan fights off the henchmen and rescues Constance and they fall instantly in love. She agrees to meet him that night.

At the royal court, Richelieu encounters King Louis and Queen Anne. The King doesn't care for him and leaves. Richelieu threatens the Queen with his knowledge of her affair with Buckingham, but also tries to entice her with the possibilities of the power they could share if they joined forces against the King. He also tells her Constance is dead, but just then Constance appears (with the love letter) and Richelieu knows his plot has been foiled. Rochefort arrives to tell Richelieu he has failed to kill Constance because d'Artagnan intervened. Richelieu orders him to bring d'Artagnan to him.

A Deeper Look: *The Three Musketeers*

That night, d'Artagnan goes to the place appointed for his duels with the Musketeers. Athos awaits him and the other two Musketeers arrive shortly. Sabine arrives unexpectedly, still posing as his servant Planchet. D'Artagnan and Athos begin their duel but they are interrupted by Rochefort and his men who try to arrest them all for illegal dueling. Athos tells d'Artagnan to flee as the three face Rochefort's men, but d'Artagnan soon returns and the four of them, with a little help from Sabine, beat Rochefort and his men. The three Musketeers then accept d'Artagnan as a friend, and Sabine's true identity is revealed.

They all go to a tavern to celebrate their victory where Sabine begins to fall in love with Aramis, and Athos tells the sad story of a man he once knew who had married a woman only later to discover she had been branded with the fleur de lis as a convict for theft, so he hanged her. We guess the story is Athos's own, but he insists it is another's. Sabine passes out from too much wine and Athos agrees to take her safely home so d'Artagnan can meet Constance.

En route, d'Artagnan is tricked by Milady disguised as a beggar. He is captured and taken by Rochefort's men to Cardinal Richelieu who wants to find out who hired him to save Constance and also to learn where the three Musketeers live. D'Artagnan denies him and is beaten by Rochefort, who then shackles him in the dungeon and leaves. Milady, once again in disguise, enters the dungeon and tricks d'Artagnan into revealing information she wants. He tells her that Sabine knows where to find the three Musketeers, who could aid his escape. Richelieu and Rochefort return. The Cardinal has d'Artagnan removed from the room, then congratulates Milady on her clever ploy. She agrees to go to Sabine and he orders Rochefort to take d'Artagnan away and kill him.

Posing as beggars on the street, the three Musketeers lie in wait for Rochefort and his men as they transport d'Artagnan. They defeat the guards and rescue d'Artagnan. Then they all race to the convent to save Sabine from Milady.

At the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the Mother Superior is showing Sabine around her new home and school. Milady arrives and, posing under an alias, reveals to Sabine that her brother has been captured by the Cardinal and that his life is in danger. She tricks Sabine into telling her where to find the three Musketeers, then tries to kill her. D'Artagnan and the Musketeers arrive and Milady escapes. Sabine survives, and they all pledge "War on the Cardinal!"

ACT TWO

King Louis, having heard about his Queen's affair with the Duke of Buckingham, is very jealous. The Cardinal cleverly fans his jealousy and goads him into proving her disloyalty. As it happens, the Queen has given Buckingham the Valmont necklace—Louis's wedding gift to her. The Cardinal manipulates Louis into planning a grand ball, mere days hence, and insisting that she wear the necklace to it; if she fails to do so, they will have their proof. They think she couldn't possibly retrieve it from England in time. They start planning, but Constance has overheard everything and rushes to tell the Queen. The Queen realizes she must recover the necklace from Buckingham before the ball. D'Artagnan offers to make the journey if the three Musketeers will accompany him. The Queen agrees.

Meanwhile, the Cardinal and Milady plot to make doubly sure the plan will work, since he knows it would not be impossible for someone to retrieve the necklace in time for the ball. He sends Milady to England to extract two diamonds from the necklace and return with them to France, thus spoiling any attempt to return it undamaged. The Cardinal plots several deadly obstacles for d'Artagnan and the Musketeers in their quest to retrieve the necklace, but they all fail.

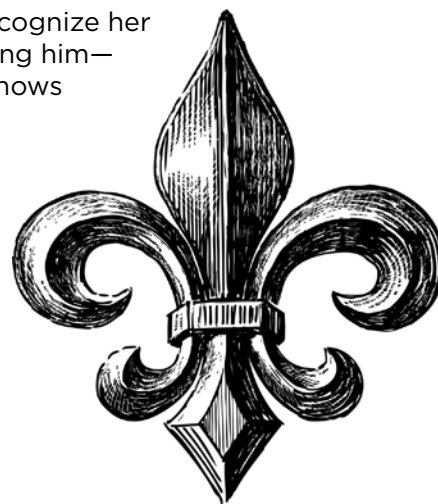
D'Artagnan reaches Buckingham to retrieve the necklace, but they discover that two diamonds are missing—Milady has beaten him to the punch! The Duke orders two new diamonds to be cut like the missing stones and set into the necklace. The work will delay d'Artagnan's return, but it must be done to save the Queen's honor.

At the grand ball, d'Artagnan's delayed return has left the Queen very nervous. Secretly, Milady, having returned from England, gives the Cardinal the two diamonds she stole from the necklace. Louis calls out the Queen for not wearing the necklace, but d'Artagnan arrives in the nick of time and delivers it to her surreptitiously. More close calls ensue but the Cardinal is left with egg on his face as his plot to discredit the Queen fails.

A Deeper Look: *The Three Musketeers*

Outside the ball, d'Artagnan encounters Milady. He doesn't recognize her at first, but when he does they fight and she escapes, wounding him—but not before he sees the fleur de lis brand on her arm. He knows she was the woman from Athos's story at the tavern!

While the three Musketeers are fighting at the siege of La Rochelle, the Cardinal and Milady plan an assassination plot against King Louis. He also tells Milady where Constance is being safeguarded so that she can have her revenge on the girl. As Richelieu exits, Athos appears. He has overheard their plot and reveals himself to Milady as her husband from long ago, the one who had hanged her as a convict. They fight and she wounds him with his own pistol before escaping. His comrades arrive and he warns them of the assassination plot and that Constance, too, is in danger from Milady. They rush into action.



Later, at the convent where Constance is in hiding, Milady arrives and convinces the Abbess that she needs temporary shelter. They talk of the recent attempted assassination attempt on the King and how it was prevented. In confidence, the Abbess reveals to Milady that Constance is hiding at the convent, and agrees to introduce Milady to her. Constance, unaware of Milady's identity, reveals to her that she and d'Artagnan are betrothed and that he is coming to the convent soon to rejoin her. As d'Artagnan, the Musketeers, and Sabine approach the convent, Milady convinces Constance that it's actually the Cardinal and his men. Constance panics and Milady convinces her to drink something to calm her nerves, but Milady has poisoned the wine. The heroes arrive and are unable to save Constance, but Milady's escape is thwarted this time, and Sabine proves her own heroism and skill in a final fight with the evil woman. D'Artagnan, knowing that Cardinal Richelieu was behind the plot to kill Constance, vows revenge and dashes out to find him, against the protests of his friends.

At the royal gardens, d'Artagnan rushes in, finds the Cardinal with the King, and tries to choke the Cardinal to death. D'Artagnan's friends arrive just in time to stop him, but the Cardinal demands justice and the King realizes he must comply. D'Artagnan will be hanged for his offense. Athos then gives d'Artagnan the *carte blanche* that the Cardinal had given to Milady for her assassination attempt, and d'Artagnan is spared. Cardinal Richelieu exits, defeated for good. D'Artagnan, having proven himself, is now asked to join the Musketeers, and Tréville dubs him with the title.

End of the play.

COMMON GROUND—WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

We invite you to consider the topics below and discuss—either before the play, at intermission, or after the show. Join cast members at Encore afterwards, so we can all put our heads together—artist and audience alike. Continue your chat on your drive home, at work next week, or over coffee with friends. We'd love to hear your thoughts—share them on our Facebook page or email us at: marketing@commonwealththeatre.org.

Let's start the conversation:

- ♣ Are there any ideals for which you would lay down your life?
- ♣ What brought you together with your closest friends?
- ♣ Why do you think *The Three Musketeers* has been so popular for so long?

THE CHARACTERS

Porthos	One of the group of three friends, Porthos is given to drinking, gambling, bragging, and dining but is always ready to join in any caper, even if he doesn't fully understand what's going on.
Athos	Another of the group of three musketeers all of whom are quick to fight, quick to love, and quick to fight for the honor of France and its ladies, Athos is the leader of the group, both in intelligence and swordsmanship, though he has a secret past.
Aramis	Another of the three musketeers, Aramis enjoys theological discussions, but is instantly ready to defend his honor or anyone else's from insult or injury.
D'Artagnan	A young man from Gascony who has come to Paris to seek his fortune, D'Artagnan's dearest wish is to join King Louis XIII's musketeers, as his father before him did. He has a keen sword and even keener mind, except where matters of love are concerned.
Sabine ("Planchet")	As D'Artagnan's servant, Planchet's job is to keep the larder filled, and his master out of trouble. He manages the former relatively well, but D'Artagnan never heeds his warnings about trouble.
Louis XIII, King of France	Louis is a jealous husband. Spurred on by Cardinal Richelieu, he suspects his Queen of carrying on amorous, rather than political, intrigues.
Anne, Queen of France	Wife of Louis XIII. One of the greatest princesses in Europe, Anne is from the Hapsburg dynasty of Austria, with a brother who is king of Spain. She values honor above all else and is constantly at odds with Richelieu for the safety of France. Only her soft heart gets her in trouble.
Cardinal Richelieu	The cardinal is devoted to saving France from her enemies and will sacrifice anyone who gets in his way. To him, the end justifies any and all means. His guards are rivals of the king's musketeers and are forever trying to usurp their authority.
Rochefort	"The man with a scar on his face," Rochefort is the cardinal's chief henchman. He sets up traps for unsuspecting citizens and assists Milady with all her schemes.
"Milady," the Countess de Winter	A woman with a shadowy past, Milady is an English widow and an agent of the Cardinal. She is the Mata Hari of the seventeenth century, accustomed to getting her way with any man she meets, able to win any woman's confidence, and is a fierce fighter.
Constance Bonacieux	Although she is of modest birth, Constance is goddaughter of the Queen's steward. Because of this connection she has obtained a position as Lady in Waiting to the Queen. She has also become the Queen's confidante.
Captain de Tréville	As commander of the King's Musketeers, Captain Tréville has a hard time keeping them in order. He would obviously prefer to be a soldier than an administrator, having a fighting spirit equal to any of his men.
The Duke of Buckingham	Former English ambassador to the court of France, he has fallen hopelessly in love with Queen Anne. He dreams of one day leading an army to France and conquering not only the country but Anne's heart. He would give anything, even his life, to save her honor.

THE AUTHOR OF *THE THREE MUSKETEERS*



Dumas in 1855.

Alexandre Dumas, French novelist and dramatist, was born on July 24, 1802, in Villers-Cotterêts, near Soissons. His father, the son of a marquis and a Haitian slave,

was a Napoleonic general who died in 1806, leaving his family little but the memory of his bravery. After a sketchy education, Dumas became a notary's clerk in Villers-Cotterêts. He went to Paris in 1823, and because of his elegant handwriting secured a position with the Duc d'Orléans (later King Louis Philippe). In time, Dumas rounded out his education by omnivorous reading, especially of plays, which had interested him since adolescence.

His signature.

Romantic by nature and in appearance and bursting with vitality, Dumas led a life as ebullient as that of his swashbuckling heroes. He had an affair with a dressmaker who bore an illegitimate son in 1824. Dumas's first produced play, *The Chase and Love*, was written one year later.

Although Dumas and Victor Hugo share credit for introducing Romanticism to the French stage, it was, strictly speaking, Dumas—self-educated, unknown, and untried—who, at the age of twenty-six, struck the first blow at the classical tradition with his third produced play, *Henry III and His Court*, a spectacular drama involving assassination and other violence. Performed at the Comédie-Française in 1829, it was the first romantic prose drama to be staged in Paris and was immediately successful. His other most famous plays include *Antony* (1831), a contemporary drama of passion, jealousy, and death; and *The Tower of Nesle* (1832), a romantic thriller reconstructing medieval crimes on a grand scale.

Dumas wrote fifteen plays before 1843, then began his prodigious career as a novelist with *The Three Musketeers* in 1844, followed by many successful adventure novels. *The Three Musketeers* has been translated extensively and adapted for the stage in almost every age and country. But it was Dumas who first rewrote his novel as drama; in fact, he produced three plays from the novel: *The Musketeers*, from the last third of the novel; then *The Young Musketeers*, consisting of most of what we see on stage today; finally, *The Three Musketeers*.

About the same time, he built Monte-Cristo, his fantastic chateau on the outskirts of Paris. Nearby, he established the Théâtre Historique, where a historical play, usually one of his own, was presented each evening. Soon, however, having spent his funds too lavishly, he went to Brussels to escape his creditors and began work on his memoirs. In 1858 he went to Russia, and in 1860 he went to Italy and remained in Naples as keeper of the museums for four years. During this period his prodigious output included historical volumes and novels.

After his return to France and continuing to leave beyond his means, his debts continued to mount. In his last years, Dumas was at the mercy of creditors and a series of affairs with tyrannical actresses. He died of a stroke in Puys, near Dieppe, on December 5, 1870. He had written 301 volumes in all.

PRODUCTION DESIGNERS

Theatre is an inherently collaborative art form. In a production of the scale and technical complexity of *The Three Musketeers*, effective collaboration is vital to the success of the production. There are many moving parts in a large-cast play comprising many scenes in numerous locations. Each designer's contribution plays an indispensable part in telling the story. Following are statements from our principal designers on their work in this production.

Alan Berks—DIRECTOR

I would have said yes to any play that Hal offered me to direct because I love the area, I love coming down here, I love Hal and Adrienne. But it's *The Three Musketeers* and who doesn't want to see a great production of *The Three Musketeers*? It's full of sword-fighting and excitement and romance and sexy costumes and sexy people. It's a story that has lasted as long as it has because it's *fun*.

There is also an idea within the story that one is defined by how much they live up to a certain set of noble ideals; especially a loyalty to friendship and nobility and fighting for something larger than oneself. So, it's fun to do *The Three Musketeers*. It also has lasted this long because of what it means to us—we want to be one of the Musketeers. And that's how the play begins, with someone saying, "I want to be a Musketeer." To get to direct *The Three Musketeers*, create that spirit and invite the audience and the community in with us and the Musketeers is super-duper exciting!

Kit Mayer—SCENIC DESIGNER

I do a lot of visual research after I've read the script, and at one of the first meetings that we had, Alan said to think of this as a graphic novel version of the play. This was the overarching theme that he wanted to get across to the visual designers. The images that I came across were quite simple. They were very colorful and had a sense of flow and action to them and those kinds of things can really help to get me started on something.

Then I went into researching more realistic images of colonnades and raised areas where people can hide and sneak in and out. I became curious about shadowy places where people might be able to oversee the action on stage and then quickly run off through those places.



I'm never trying to recreate an image that I come across but the image is the inspiration for, and the sensibility of, the final product. There are several bar or pub scenes in the play and what caught my eye in my research was a post-and-beam style of building that has influenced me. I also came across images of banners and the heraldry associated with the story and those will be incorporated. So then I did a first sketch (at left), incorporating many of the ideas inspired by those images. That initial sketch is no great shakes but you get the idea of the columns, colonnades, raised areas, archways of different heights on the sides, etc.

My next step was a floor plan to create an idea of the layout of the entire thing. We discussed and worked on this for about a week, with Alan giving his ideas and suggestions on the look and feel and ways to make the set "actor friendly." Then I made a model of the set (below) to get a true miniature idea of the flow of the space. Finally, we also talked about the use of the

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theatre space itself and using every possible entrance and exit to match the epic nature of the story in terms of location.

Annie Cady—COSTUME DESIGNER

After I read the script for the first time, I immediately wanted to know what the actual time period of 1625 looked like in terms of clothing. Once I knew that we were going to deviate from that a little bit, I too did a lot of visual research. I collect all of my images on Pinterest and pin things all over the place and that allowed Alan the chance to see those images online rather than us having to be in the same room. And then I create collages for, in this case, each actor.



I've been asked to design at the Commonwealth many times with my first experience being *The 39 Steps*. If you recall that show, there were four or five actors and they each played a million characters. And then a couple of years ago I designed *Around the World in 80 Days* and there were four or five actors and they each played a million different characters. With this play, there are 12 actors and they still play a million characters! So I have a comfort level with quick-changing actors.



One of Annie Cady's costume renderings.

But in general what I started with was a collage of what the actual musketeers and characters of that time period wore and built from there. All of the images that I used are artist/designer representations from play and movie versions of the story but they all influence each other. And then I got more specific and began designing specifically to each of the musketeers' personalities because even though they are one unit, they each have a distinct personality which could influence the design.

The next step is to render images of the character/actor in the costume design to get a true idea of the colors and crisp lines that we want to have pop on stage in front of the darker set pieces (examples at left and next page). The overall result is to combine periods so that the design is not period-strict but rather "period with a contemporary flair."

This was my process for all 12 (and then some!) characters in an effort to build a costume design that reflects period style but also allows character personality to bleed through, from servants right up to the King and Queen. Finally, there is a masquerade ball near the end of the play and with that I am of the mind that if I don't think about it...maybe it won't happen. You'll just have to wait to see it!

Jason Underferth—LIGHTING DESIGNER

It's so good to back designing for the Commonwealth again. I think the last show that I designed was *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. This is a tricky one because there are 21 total scenes within the play and lighting will play a vital role in placing each of them. With the set being one unit, the lighting will help create the feel of many different locations that transition from a court-

A Deeper Look: *The Three Musketeers*



yard to a garden, a tavern to a ballroom. I also start with renderings of the set design but to that I add textures and colors to build the world of the scene. That sense of texture runs from the general to the specific. For instance, adding leaves or grassy areas for a sense of the garden, or cobblestones for street scenes in general, and then highlighting specific areas to focus on one or two characters to create those shadowy areas that Kit mentioned. I'll be using background light to delineate time of day so I'll be pushing color as much as I can.

Lynn Musgrave—SOUND DESIGNER

These lighting designers just kill me! They think that it's the lights that determine and help us realize where we are when, in fact, it's the sound design that does that!

There is a synchronicity that took place with my design after Alan and I spoke about the graphic novel nature of the production. After we spoke, a piece of music popped into my head that I used a really long time ago and I loved it so much that I was waiting for a chance to use it again. It fits so well within this concept. It's a modern composer with modern instruments from a very obscure movie about [17th century French playwright] Moliere.

With a play like this, that has so many scenes, I don't want to have music between every pair, rather I want to create an artistic theme using one score. Bits and pieces of that same score will enter in so that everything fits together. There's lighter music and darker music, there's suspense and romance but it's all within a theme and the "sound" tells us where we are!

There are also characters in the play that we only hear from rather than see. The best example of that is d'Artagnan's horse, Buttercup, who does some editorializing during the play and is great fun to design. Finally, I have a fitting piece of music to create all of the "sneaking around" that takes place in the play and I know that this and all the other sounds will truly transport you to the many places the Musketeers visit.

Elizabeth Dunn—PROPS DESIGNER

To begin, I have to say that I am not doing all of this work on my own, which I appreciate! Our production intern, Austin Stiers, and ensemble member Ben Gorman will be assisting me with finding and building the props for the show. The main thing for me in designing all handheld

A Deeper Look: *The Three Musketeers*



The "Valmont necklace." Elizabeth built this from separate pieces of costume jewelry. Note the two lower settings that are missing gems—a vital plot point!



Sometimes it's the little things. This small plastic chess pawn is one of several pieces that are handled as props. The rest of the chess set is glued in place so that it can be flipped open on a hinged door in a set piece.



King Louis' anachronistic bee smoker, fabricated from an oil can and various spare parts.

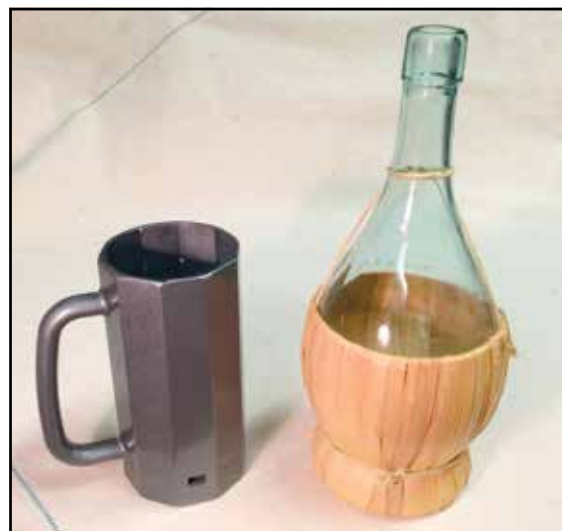
items is how we flavor the world with period and modern things to create a graphic novel style.

It became apparent to me that we do not want to paint too broad or stylized a picture of the world but, as Annie said, that some flair is visible. We have a modern-day feel but we're still in the 17th century.

Some of the specific challenges for us is that in one of the scenes, King Louis is in a bee-keeper outfit using a 17th century bee smoker. The issue is that the bee smoker that we are all familiar with was not invented until 1875, so some creative license will be required. The fun aspect to Kit's set design is that many of the props will be hidden on the set for easy access and we will discover those places as we continue to work through the production process.

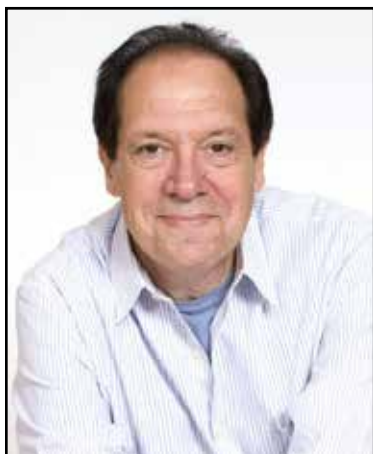


One of five location signs, made in the graphic novel style. Computer graphic image printed to paper, then affixed to stained plywood using decoupage.



There's a lot of drinking in *The Three Musketeers*. The tankards are painted plastic, to avoid shattering glass.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT



Ken Ludwig.

By Connie Yeager

Playwright Ken Ludwig was crazy for the iconic characters of *The Three Musketeers* long before he adapted the world-renowned Alexandre Dumas novel for a 2006 debut at Bristol, England's Old Vic. The theatre was originally interested in producing Ludwig's adaptation of *Treasure Island*, but because there was a production of another *Treasure Island* adaptation scheduled nearby, the artistic director asked Ludwig to recommend another favorite childhood story. "I suggested *The Three Musketeers*, he said it was a great title and I said, 'Why not?' I thought it would be fun to do.

"The thing about *The Three Musketeers* that is daunting is that it's a hugely long novel, about 750 pages of fine print. What's also interesting is that Dumas is not actually a great writer," Ludwig explained. "It's very telematic, like watching a whole season of *24*.

At any cost he gets the characters into a scrape, and then does another adventure/set piece scene. The story becomes terribly convoluted. The trick to adapting it is to find the story line that runs right through the middle of the 750 pages. Dumas' real genius, to me, was to invent these larger-than-life characters that we never forget."

While *Musketeers* is a time-honored tale, there was still the challenge of making it resonate for today's audiences, Ludwig said. "I think partly you can't discount that because we're in an age of movies—we're not the same as a 1950s audience, an 1870s audience. We know this story inside-out. "I wanted to do two things—first, to shake the audience up a little bit, as in 'What's this?' And second, I wanted to humanize d'Artagnan so that he's not just a young, handsome, cardboard guy. I thought the way to humanize him was to give him a family," he explained. "All great adventure stories, they're all about boys. That's not who we are anymore—girls have adventures too."

By creating the character of Sabine, the kid sister of d'Artagnan, "I wanted to make a bold stroke here. Most people love it," he added, asserting that even though they're familiar with the story, "99 percent of the people wouldn't know that Sabine wasn't one of the original characters. I wanted to give it more of a challenge, more of an edge. I felt that I wasn't just trying to translate what Dumas wrote; as a playwright, you're writing fiction, not biography. What you want to do is get the essence of what it is; if you stick to the story strictly it won't make as good a play.

"It particularly became fun when I created Sabine—an 'Aha!' moment. Some people are purists, but most people say, 'What fun! What a great addition!'" It's also not totally coincidental that Ludwig has a daughter. "When I wrote it she was about Sabine's age, very spunky and doesn't like to listen to authority too much."

And while many people would probably classify *The Three Musketeers* as a high-drama adventure tale rather than as a comedy, "there is a lot of comedy in the original story," Ludwig confirmed. "Adventure stories are essentially comedies, structurally and in tone." But there's a big "yet," he continued: "You can't play them as comedies, you can't write them as comedies, you have to let the comedy come out of the situations. To make this work, you have to play for the high stakes, the life and death of the situation—you play those stakes and let the comedy come out of the tension. I tried to bring situations to it that enhanced the swashbuckling tone. Swashbuckling is essentially a comic tone. You want people to be on the edge of their seats. Who's going to get run through? Who's going to get their heart broken? Then comes the comedy. You've got to take the story seriously."