The articles in this study guide are not meant to mirror or interpret any productions at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. They are meant, instead, to be an educational jumping-off point to understanding and enjoying the plays (in any production at any theatre) a bit more thoroughly. Therefore the stories of the plays and the interpretative articles (and even characters, at times) may differ dramatically from what is ultimately produced on the Festival’s stages.

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Cover photo: Don Burroughs (top) and Carol Johnson in *The Three Musketeers*, 1996.
# The Three Musketeers

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Synopsis: The Three Musketeers

D'Artagnan arrives in Paris and, seeking to join the king's musketeers, goes to see their captain, Tréville. In his haste he offends three of the best musketeers—Porthos, Athos, and Aramis—and challenges each to a duel that afternoon. All three musketeers arrive at the appointed location at the same time to duel with D'Artagnan. However, they are interrupted by Cardinal Richelieu's guards. The musketeers plus D'Artagnan happily engage the guards and beat them soundly, and D'Artagnan is accepted as a friend and a good fighting companion.

D'Artagnan settles into his new life, hoping to soon become a musketeer, and rents an apartment above the shop of Monsieur Bonacieux. However, he finds himself in the middle of the foulest plot in France.

Cardinal Richelieu and the evil Milady de Winter are trying to discredit Queen Anne in the eyes of King Louis XIII and the country, thus ultimately giving Richelieu more power over the king. The queen is trying to repel the amorous advances of the English duke of Buckingham. And Constance, Bonacieux's wife, has become the trusted messenger between the queen and Buckingham, as well as a victim of Richelieu who sees her as an avenue to expose the queen. D'Artagnan becomes involved when he meets Milady and is smitten by her charms and when Constance asks him for help and he is smitten again.

About this time, Athos, to distract D'Artagnan from thoughts of Milady and Constance, tells him about a man who married a woman whom he later learned was a convicted thief. He believes the evil woman is now dead. The man is, of course, Athos, but he doesn't tell D'Artagnan that.

Next, Richelieu, through Milady and his henchman Rochefort, trick Buckingham into coming to Paris. Buckingham goes to the queen's chambers, but she refuses his love. He asks for a remembrance, and the queen gives him twelve diamond studs; then, with Constance and D'Artagnan's help, he leaves England safely. Even though Richelieu doesn't trap Buckingham this time, his spies inform him of these happenings.

Still plotting to trap Queen Anne, Richelieu suggests King Louis give a ball ten days hence at which the queen can wear the diamond studs the king has given her, and he sends Milady to London to steal the jewels from Buckingham. Learning of the ball, the queen writes to Buckingham to return the jewels to her, and she asks D'Artagnan to take the letter to England. D'Artagnan enlists the help of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis; and the four race off to England.

The four friends soon are separated, but D'Artagnan eventually arrives in London; however, when Buckingham gives D'Artagnan the diamond studs, they discover two are missing. Buckingham realizes that Milady, who arrived earlier, has managed to steal them, but he commands a jeweler to make duplicates, and arranges to hand over the complete set to D'Artagnan at the dock in the morning.

The next morning, Milady arrives at the dock first and tries to get the jewels, but Buckingham will not give her the studs, so Milady stabs him. D'Artagnan arrives, preventing her from stealing the jewels, but not in time to prevent Buckingham's death.

Milady hurries back to Paris ahead of D'Artagnan and tells Richelieu of her partial success: she believes that, even if D'Artagnan brings the jewels, two will be missing. The king arrives at the ball and notes the absence of the queen's diamond studs. He demands she get them, saying he will come back when she is properly dressed. With time running out, D'Artagnan finally arrives and gives the queen the jewels—the original ten, plus the two new ones. The king returns, and the queen is happily wearing all twelve diamonds.

In the meantime, the queen has sent Constance to a convent where she can be safe from the cardinal. She tells this to D'Artagnan, but Milady overhears and hurries off to seek revenge.
D’Artagnan gathers up his three friends, and the race is on again. Milady, disguised, arrives at the convent before the musketeers and secretly pours poison into a glass of wine and urges Constance to drink. The four friends arrive as Milady rushes out, and Constance dies in D’Artagnan’s arms.

Finally, the four catch up with Milady. They accuse her of her various crimes and pass sentence of death—and Athos recognizes her as his long-ago wife whom he thought was dead. However, Milady cheats them of revenge by stabbing herself. The musketeers kneel and ask for God’s forgiveness on all of them.
Characters: The Three Musketeers

Louis XIII, king of France: Husband to Queen Anne, Louis is a jealous husband. Spurred on by Cardinal Richelieu, he suspects his queen of carrying on amorous, rather than political, intrigues.

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.

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 agent. He sets up traps for unsuspecting citizens and assists Milady with all her schemes.

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.

Athos: One 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.

Porthos: Another 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.

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.

Bonacieux: The husband of Constance, Bonacieux operates a grocery store just below D’Artagnan’s apartment. He is easily swayed by people in positions of authority.

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.

Anne, queen of France: 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.

Milady 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 and able to win any woman’s confidence.

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 personal seamstress to the queen. She has also become the queen’s confidante.
The Playwright: Alexandre Dumas

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.

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, and an illegitimate son was born in 1824; and Dumas’s first produced play, The Chase and Love, was written one year later.

Although Dumas and Victor Hugo share the 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, performed at the Comédie-Française in 1829. It was the first romantic prose drama to be staged in Paris and was immediately successful.

During the 1830 Revolution, Dumas became a captain in the National Guard and a public idol, but his political activities made it expedient for him to flee France temporarily. In 1840 he married his mistress, Ida Ferrier, an actress, from whom he soon separated after having spent her entire dowry.

Dumas wrote fifteen plays before 1843, the year he began his prodigious career as a novelist, which began in 1844 with The Three Musketeers and went on through 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, first The Musketeers, from the last one third of the novel; then The Young Musketeers, consisting of most of what we see on stage today; and, 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 Mémoires. Upon his return to Paris he founded a daily paper called Le Mousquetaire, but it lasted only until 1857. The following year, he went to Russia, and in 1860 he went to Italy, where he joined Garibaldi’s forces. He remained in Naples as keeper of the museums for four years.

During this period his prodigious output included innumerable 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.

His most famous plays are Henry III and His Court (1829), a spectacular prose drama involving assassination and other violence; 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.
Romance, Humor, and History
By Ace G. Pilkington

Though he wrote in almost every genre, Alexandre Dumas achieved his first great success (and immediate fame) in 1827 with the production of his historical drama Henri III et sa Cour by the Théâtre-Français. The play combined those twin pillars of Dumas's success—history and romanticism. In fact, the new literary vintage that Dumas had decanted (in the shade of those pillars if anyone is worried about mixed metaphors) was so heady “that during the next days young romantics, excited by the endless ovation, danced around the bust of Racine, singing: 'Racine has fallen’” (Claude Schopp, Alexandre Dumas: Genius of Life, trans. A. J. Koch [New York: Franklin Watts, 1988], 108). France (or at least much of the young and vigorous part of it) was ready to embrace history and romanticism and rejoice in the fall of classicism and classicists. The exuberance was so great that busts of Racine and Voltaire were thrown out of windows (Schopp, 108) with something of the same sense of liberation that attended a later generation’s toppling of statues of Lenin and Stalin.

When Dumas shifted his main energy (and that of his collaborators) from drama to novels, “From very early on he had planned to annex the whole of history to his romantic domain” (André Maurois, The Titans, trans. Gerard Hopkins [New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957], 182). Working primarily with Auguste Maquet, Dumas produced The Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte Cristo, and six other romans-feuilletons (or serialized novels) in just over two years (Schopp, 326 27). He worked simultaneously on a variety of multi-volume retellings of the history of France—and occasionally of other countries—one of Dumas’s most interesting works is The Black Tulip, set in Holland in 1672.

The musketeer saga alone includes The Three Musketeers, Twenty Years After, The Vicomte de Bragelonne or Ten Years Later (usually printed as two volumes), Louise de la Vallière, The Man in the Iron Mask, and The Son of Porthos or the Death of Aramis. That last novel, according to George McDonald Fraser (screenwriter for the 1973 films The Three Musketeers and The Four Musketeers and a historical novelist himself), “set a style in titles which Hollywood fastened on joyfully” (The Hollywood History of the World [New York: William Morrow, 1988], 103).

Perhaps one reason for Dumas’s enormous and enduring success is the kind of romanticism he practiced. While he was capable of summoning up the whole grisly Gothic pantheon, as he does in Castle Eppstein, his imagination most often exaggerates and transforms the real world instead of deforming or abandoning it. Also, he frequently mixes his romanticism with humor.

In The Three Musketeers, for instance, Dumas begins with the suggestion that the Sturm und Drang of adventure should not be taken with absolute seriousness. He describes D’Artagnan as “Don Quixote at eighteen . . . Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue colour of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure” (Alexandre Dumas, The Three Musketeers [Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1978], 1). In his first duel, the fiery, intelligent hero of this quintessential romantic novel has his father’s sword broken by peasants wielding farm implements, and the villain Rochefort contemptuously (but mercifully) suggests, “Put him on his orange horse again and let him begone” (Dumas, 5).

Even some of the musketeers’ most heroic and exuberant feats shade quite deliberately and perceptibly into the ridiculous. When, for instance, the musketeers have defeated the cardinal’s guards in the vicinity of M. de la Trémouille’s hotel, the musketeers have every intention of burning the place down in order to punish Trémouille’s servants for fighting on the wrong side. D’Artagnan and company dissuade their friends from this incendiary policy, not because torching buildings in the middle of Paris is bad business but because they are almost late for an audience with the king and “would very much have regretted that such a feat should be performed without them” (Dumas, 42).

It was one of Dumas’s greatest strengths as a writer that he could find all his characters in himself.
and himself in all his characters. He came by his sense of adventure and romanticism naturally from his father, who was one of Napoleon’s generals. He “inherited from his father a taste for those combats, seemingly incredible, but nevertheless true, in which a man single-handed . . . disarmed a hundred” (Maurois, The Titans, 178). He called his autobiography The Road to Monte Cristo and saw himself, at least in part, as that preternaturally accomplished, inexhaustibly wealthy figure. “In Dumas’s eyes, Dantès is a plausible hero quite simply because Dantès is Alexandre Dumas himself. Or, more exactly, Dantès is Dumas such as Dumas would have wished to be” (André Maurois, “Introduction,” The Count of Monte Cristo [Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1941], vii).

Of course, in Dumas’s case, the money tended to run out. “Because he wished to build Monte Cristo’s castle at Saint Germain . . . Dumas started along the road to ruin” (Maurois, “Introduction,” The Count of Monte Cristo, vii). A long list of similar extravagances left him penniless at the end of his life, a charge against which he humorously defended himself on his deathbed. Seeing two gold “louis” on a nearby table, he said, “Everybody has said that I was prodigal. . . . Do you see how you were all mistaken? When I first landed in Paris I had two ‘louis’ in my pocket. Look . . . I still have them!” (Schopp, 488).

Dumas, of course, was not only Dantès, he was also D’Artagnan, a young man who came from the provinces to Paris, seeking help from his father’s old friends. He tells the story in his memoirs of how, wearing old-fashioned “nankeen breeches,” he attempted to impress two girls by leaping across a fourteen-foot ditch. In true D’Artagnan fashion, he made the leap but split his breeches and was forced to run home so that his mother could sew them up (Alexandre Dumas, The Road to Monte Cristo, ed. Jules Eckert Goodman [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956], 31 32).

Dumas, like D’Artagnan, fought duels. One was postponed for a day because “his adversary had caught a cold . . . while skating on the canal” (Schopp, 65); another was canceled altogether because his opponent had lost two fingers in a duel which had precedence over the one with Dumas (Schopp, 109). When his first play was accepted by the Théâtre Français, Dumas dashed through Paris with all the fire of a young Gascon and “fell flat in the middle of a gutter, creating a gridlock of carriages and horses” (Schopp, 97). His manuscript vanished in the accident, but with a memory which Dantès might have envied, he had the whole thing in his head. While Dumas’s mistresses rivalled those of Aramis, his attitude to money chimed nicely with that of Porthos. He once said, “I have never refused money to anybody . . . except my creditors” (Maurois, The Titans, 160).

Dumas’s romanticism, then, is the real thing, not a mask put on for a literary occasion, but a part of his life that spills over into his pages. It can be a whirlwind or a gust of laughter or (as it so often is) both together. Paradoxically, there is a realism to this romanticism that validates its exaggerations and makes us believe them to be true. In the same way, Dumas makes history his own, creating a world out of himself so that “in the final analysis history is for Dumas . . . a means of projecting his novel out of real time completely, and this is precisely what gives his fiction its perennial and endearing freshness” (F. W. J. Hemmings, Alexandre Dumas: The King of Romance [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1979], 123).

It is also one of many things which makes Dumas’s work so hard to transport successfully into another medium. Fortunately for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, five years after he created the novel, Dumas, himself (with, as usual, help from Maquet), wrote the play which Christine and Daniel Frezza have translated and adapted for the Festival. It has all the romantic dash of the original. As Jesse F. Knight, one of the editors of the scholarly journal The Romantist wrote to me concerning the new Festival translation, “I can’t recall reading a play that moved so swiftly.” And he went on to say, “Another thing I like about it is that the adaptation accepts Romanticism, the novel, and the play on their terms” (e-mail to the author, 15 March 1996). To accept Dumas on his own terms is a great feat, and to translate that acceptance to an audience is, perhaps, an even greater gift.
Les Trois Mousquetaires
By Christine Frezza


What is perhaps not so familiar is Dumas's own adaptation of his novel for the French stage; he managed to produce three plays from this one work, starting with an adaptation of the last third of the novel, titled simply Les Mousquetaires, which was performed less than a year after the novel was published in serial form in the Parisian newspaper Le Siècle. Claude Schopp describes the usual life of a novel: "When the first serial appeared on March 14, 1844, Les Trois Mousquetaires were heroes promised a normal destiny: publication in serial, then in book . . . and copies by Belgian bookstores." (Alexandre Dumas: Genius of a Life, [New York: Franklin Watts, 1988], 326).

Five years after the production of Les Mousquetaires, Dumas was requested to create a play for the Théâtre Historique, the equivalent of moving from off-Broadway to the Great White Way of Broadway. Fernande Bassan comments that Dumas's path to this major theatre was smoothed by royalty: "The Duke of Montpensier, fifth son of Louis-Philippe, was grieved at having to see a Dumas play staged in a second-rate house, and arranged for him to have [his work] performed at a [real] theatre" (Le cycle des Trois Mousquetaires—du roman au théâtre, [Studia Neophilologica 57: 1985], 244). For this occasion, Dumas adapted the first third of his novel into La Jeunesse des Mousquetaires, which opened February 17, 1849, and played for eighty-nine triumphant performances before touring the provinces. Since then, this particular play has been revived more than ten times in France.

It is La Jeunesse des Mousquetaires (literally, The Young Musketeers) that contains most of the familiar elements of Dumas's novel. Where Dumas's own theatrical adaptation shines is through his crackling dialogue and rich delineation of character. Richelieu is a driven man—a prince of the church who performs evil for a greater good. He is portrayed as arch-machinator rather than villain, guided by a genuine desire to save France from her enemies, since King Louis XIII seems more easily moved to personal, rather than political alarm. Louis's queen, Anne, sister to the king of Spain, although true to her wedding vows and refusing the duke of Buckingham's romantic addresses, is much involved with the politics of her adopted country and offers a real threat to the peace of the realm.

Porthos, Aramis, and Athos each have a distinct raison d'être: Porthos is guided by worldly passions—for women, food, drink, and fighting; Aramis is the most serious of the three, intent on studying theology, though as good a soldier as a cleric; the older Athos is the most quick-witted and forceful—he has a secret in his past which will return to haunt him. After D'Artagnan joins the musketeers in their first sword fight against Richelieu's guards, they readily hail him, not only as companion but as leader, in intelligence as well as valor, despite his youth. D'Artagnan is further supported by his valet Planchet, the epitome of the cunning servant, truly a cousin to Figaro. The other comic figures—Tévée, commander of the musketeers, and Bonacieux, D'Artagnan's landlord and bumbling husband to the lovely Constance—leaven the abrupt shocks of dramatic action with moments of great humor.

The two prominent villains in this piece are Cardinal Richelieu's chief agents: Rochefort, the man with a scar on his face, who frustrates and is frustrated by D'Artagnan time after time, each thwarting the plans of the other; and the remarkable villainess, Milady de Winter, once divorced, twice widowed.
(by her own hand), who can become all things to all people. To see her instant changes from bereft widow to innocent flirt, from brutalized victim to an almost casual and certainly remorseless murderer is to attempt to follow a chameleon; she deceives everyone she comes in contact with, except for the cardinal; even he is forced to grant her favors to keep her in his employ.

Although The Young Musketeers as originally performed is a play in five acts and fourteen locations, (indeed, the first performance of the play is rumored to have taken more than four hours, the last thirty minutes being filled with tumultuous ovations from the audience) the rapidity of the action, the piling of incident upon incident, the constant sense of dangers imminent, faced, and defeated creates in the audience a feeling of time suspended. “An irresistible force enlivens all his dramatic work . . . ; [a coil] of intrigue, knotted together by a skilled hand, drags the audience into a whirlpool of adventures, holding them there, gasping for breath, until the resolution” (Manuel des études littéraires françaises xixe siècle [Paris: Hachette, 1966], 181).

The point has been made that The Three Musketeers, with its rapid shifts of mood and location, is the theatricalization of the novel in its serial form—episodic and cliff-hanging, rather than a continuous novel. Dumas’s dramatization has the power to grip a twentieth-century audience as tightly as his own, 150 years ago. We can agree with Victor Hugo’s admiration for The Three Musketeers: “gripping drama, warm passion, true dialogue, sparkling style” (Schopp, 327).