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*Dramatic Publishing*

# LES TROIS DUMAS

by  
CHARLES SMITH

This excerpt contains suggestive language.



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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ISBN 1-58342-168-8

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*“Commissioned and originally produced by the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Indianapolis, Indiana, Janet Allen, artistic director and Brian Payne, managing director.”*

LES TROIS DUMAS was commissioned and originally produced by the Indiana Repertory Theatre (Janet Allen, artistic director; Brian Payne, managing director) in Indianapolis, Indiana, in April of 1998. It was directed by Tazewell Thompson; the set design was by Donald Eastman; the costume design was by Merrily Murray-Walsh; the lighting design was by Robert Wierzel; the sound and music was composed by Fabian Obispo; the fight choreographer was Nick Sandys; the dramaturg was Janet Allen. The cast was as follows:

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Alexandre Dumas <i>filis</i> . . . . .         | RYAN ARTZBERGER      |
| General Thomas Alexandre Dumas/Alexis . . .    | LEON ADDISION BROWN  |
| Napoleon . . . . .                             | JAY K. DUVAL         |
| Alexandre Dumas <i>père</i> . . . . .          | KEITH RANDOLPH SMITH |
| Ida Ferrier . . . . .                          | KIM WIMMER           |
| George Sand . . . . .                          | PILAR WITHERSPOON    |
| Felix Harel . . . . .                          | WYNN HARMON          |
| Victor Hugo/Governor . . . . .                 | PETER AYLWARD        |
| Marie Louise Dumas/Mademoiselle Mars . . . . . | KELLEY HAZEN         |

LES TROIS DUMAS was subsequently produced by the People's Light & Theatre Company (Abigail Adams, artistic director; Grace Grillet, managing director) in Malvern, Pennsylvania, in September of 2001. It was directed by Tazewell Thompson; the set design was by Donald Eastman; the costume design was by Merrily Murray-Walsh; the lighting design was by Robert Wierzel; the sound and music was composed by Fabian Obispo; the fight choreographer was John V. Bellomo; the stage manager was Charles T. Brastow. The cast was as follows:

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Alexandre Dumas <i>filis</i> . . . . .         | PAUL KUHN            |
| General Thomas Alexandre Dumas/Alexis . . .    | LEON ADDISION BROWN  |
| Napoleon . . . . .                             | MICHAEL CRUZ         |
| Alexandre Dumas <i>père</i> . . . . .          | BRIAN ANTHONY WILSON |
| Ida Ferrier . . . . .                          | ELIZABETH WEBSTER    |
| George Sand . . . . .                          | CEAL PHELAN          |
| Felix Harel . . . . .                          | STEPHEN NOVELLI      |
| Victor Hugo/Governor . . . . .                 | PETER DELAURIER      |
| Marie Louise Dumas/Mademoiselle Mars . . . . . | MARCIA SAUNDERS      |

# LES TROIS DUMAS

A Play in Three Acts  
For 6 Men (2 African-American), 3 Women

## CHARACTERS

**ALEXANDRE DUMAS PERE:** Late 30s to mid-40s, a light-skinned Negro of French-African descent, *père* is a large lusty man with an insatiable appetite for life. The author of hundreds of plays and novels, he is also the host to countless parties during which he eats too much, drinks too much, and has shameless sex orgies with as many young starlets as he can. The only thing that disturbs this man and his conscience is the disdain heaped upon him by his son who despises *père* and his bacchanalian existence.

**ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS:** Early 20s, the son of Alexandre Dumas *père*, *fils* is a very serious student of morality who finds pleasure only in his own suffering. Even though his father has brought him into his home and has heaped upon him all of the riches enjoyed by the French aristocracy, *fils* is very vocal about being ashamed of his father and ashamed of his father's lifestyle. He's also ashamed of himself, a bastard borne of a woman his father never married. The final insult to *fils*, who outwardly appears to be Caucasian, is the possibility of African blood running in his veins. The thought of this possibility has pushed him to the edge of madness.

GENERAL THOMAS ALEXANDRE DUMAS: Early to late 20s, the father of Alexandre Dumas *père*, a dark-skinned, French-African general in Napoleon Bonaparte's army. He is a wise, articulate and level-headed strategist who understands that a war is not always won by the one who kills the most men, but by the one who wins the most battles. He appears in this play as a spirit who has returned to help Dumas *fils* work through his madness. The same actor who plays the general must also play Alexis.

ALEXIS: Early to late 20s, the no-nonsense manservant of Alexandre Dumas *père*. He is dedicated only to *père* and he does what he is told.

MARIE LOUISE DUMAS: Early to late 20s, she was the daughter of an innkeeper who, when she met the general Dumas, was swept off her feet with the possibility of being the wife of a Napoleonic general. After the birth of Dumas *père*, the renouncement of the general by Napoleon, and the rapid decline of the general's health, she faced life as a 20-year-old widow, living in poverty with a half-black child. This life has ground Marie into a very bitter woman. The same actor should also play Mademoiselle Mars.

MADemoiselle MARS: A young starlet who becomes the target of Dumas *père*'s affections.

GENERAL NAPOLEON BONAPARTE: Late 20s to early 30s. This is a young Napoleon at the beginning of his Italian campaign. Although visions of becoming Em-

peror Napoleon are beginning to form in his head, his biggest worry is keeping his generals in line.

IDA FERRIER: Late teens to early 20s, a very pretty, mouth-watering, bodice-busting, wanna-be starlet. Most men and even some women desire her and she knows it. She's smart, elusive and has learned how to use what she has to get what she wants.

MADAME GEORGE SAND: Early 40s, she is a bisexual cross-dresser who has an appetite for money, business, pretty boys and girls. She has a very dry sense of humor, does not particularly like Dumas *père* but does enjoy a good challenge. She is the producer of most of Dumas *père*'s plays.

MONSIEUR FELIX HAREL: 30s to 40s, a toad who worships the ground on which Dumas *père* walks. He is also the director of most of Dumas *père*'s plays. The same actor also plays the governor.

GOVERNOR: 30s to 40s. He is the governor of a small provincial town in southeastern France.

VICTOR HUGO: Late 40s to early 50s, a very good friend to Dumas *père* and the author of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Misérables*, Hugo is a milquetoast who is concerned about his public persona.

The play takes place in the Château de Monte Cristo 1848 and in various reaches of the mind of Alexandre Dumas  *fils*.



# ACT ONE

## The Dream

*The Château de Monte Cristo 1848. We can see the writer's clutter of books and papers scattered about, in addition to a huge hearth which can be either seen or suggested. An overall suggestion should be that of ornate opulence.*

*At rise, it is evening. Half-empty glasses, bottles and trays of leftover food are scattered about. It looks like the aftermath of a party.*

*ALEXANDRE DUMAS PERE enters followed by IDA FERRIER.*

DUMAS. I fell back on guard, I attacked him *en quarte*, and without making a pass with my sword in order to feel my way with my opponent, I thrust out freely *en tierce*. He gave a leap backwards, stumbled over a vine-root and fell head over heels.

FERRIER. No!

DUMAS. Yes! His attendants cried out, "You have killed him!" "I think not," I replied. "I hardly touched him." However, the point of my sword had pierced his shoulder and the sensation it had given him was so startling that, even though he was very lightly wounded, the shock had overturned him.

FERRIER. You are indeed a master of the sword.

DUMAS. And expert with the pistol, lance and broadsword, don't forget.

FERRIER. I won't forget. What happened to your opponent?

DUMAS. It turned out that the poor lad had never even handled a weapon before. When he made this confession, and in consideration of the life-threatening wound I had given him, it was decided that the duel should stop there. I put my sword, which had belonged to my father, in its sheath. I donned my shirt, waistcoat and coat, descended the ramparts of the Montmartre, hopped into my Tilbury, dashed across the town and arrived at the castle just in time for my dinner date with the duc d'Orléans.

FERRIER. Bravo, Monsieur Dumas. Bravo.

DUMAS. Thank you, Mademoiselle. Now, how would you like to learn the fine art of dueling?

FERRIER. Me?

DUMAS. I could teach you.

FERRIER. No...

DUMAS. You would learn from the best.

FERRIER. I am a woman, Monsieur.

DUMAS. That fact has not escaped me.

FERRIER. Dueling is not within a woman's domain.

DUMAS. Why? Why should women be excluded from the art of dueling? Because of tradition? To that I say, to the devil with tradition. We shall create our own tradition. I shall teach you how to handle a delicately balanced rapier. I shall teach you how to parry. I will teach you *riposte*. I shall teach you how to thrust.

FERRIER. You are scandalous.

DUMAS. Don't you want to learn how to thrust?

FERRIER. Who says I don't already know how to thrust?

DUMAS. And you call me scandalous.

FERRIER. You said you were going to introduce me to Madame Sand.

DUMAS. And introduce you, I will, Mademoiselle. First thing in the morning.

FERRIER. The morning?

DUMAS. I owe her a play, and the play won't be ready till the morning. But I promise you, Mademoiselle, tomorrow, you and I will arise with the cockcrow, we will gorge ourselves with fresh fruit. We will get dressed, pay a visit to Madame Sand, I will deliver the play, and then I will give you an introduction.

FERRIER. You're assuming that I will, indeed, be here in the morning, Monsieur.

DUMAS. You can't leave now.

FERRIER. I came here to discuss my introduction over dinner, only.

DUMAS. But it's now very late and we haven't even begun your tutorial.

FERRIER. What tutorial?

DUMAS. Your dueling lesson, Mademoiselle. Your lessons in how to thrust.

FERRIER. Are you trying to seduce me?

DUMAS. *Moi?*

FERRIER. You scandalous man you.

DUMAS. You luscious little morsel you.

FERRIER. Stay away from me.

DUMAS. Lesson number one. Thrust.

FERRIER. Help!

DUMAS. Thrust thrust thrust!

(*FERRIER screams playfully and exits just as ALEXIS enters.*)

ALEXIS. Monsieur ...

DUMAS. Not now, Alexis. I don't care what it is, it can wait. (*DUMAS moves to exit.*)

ALEXIS. He's home.

DUMAS. Who's home?

ALEXIS. Alexandre.

DUMAS. He's not supposed to be back for another fortnight.

ALEXIS. I know, Monsieur. But the carriage, it just pulled up, he's dismounted and they're unloading his bags.

DUMAS. Find the Mademoiselle and take her home.

ALEXIS. *Oui*, Monsieur.

DUMAS. And get rid of the empty wine bottles. Tell Mademoiselle that something came up, some unexpected misfortune. Tell her that I'll explain everything in the morning.

ALEXIS. *Oui*, Monsieur.

DUMAS. And tell her I want to see her back here the first thing in the morning. That I must see her before we go see Madame Sand.

ALEXIS. *Oui*, Monsieur.

(*ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS enters.*)

DUMAS. Alexandre, *mon cher*, welcome home, *mon ami*.  
When did you get back?

FILS. Just now.

DUMAS. Just now? What a surprise. Isn't this a surprise, Alexis?

ALEXIS. *Oui*, Monsieur. A surprise.

DUMAS. What are you doing here? Is everything all right?

FILS. Everything's fine, Papa. What did I see out in the middle of the courtyard when I came in?

DUMAS. I give up. What did you see?

FILS. Looks like someone's in the process of assembling some sort of bronze sculpture.

DUMAS. That's exactly what it is. Good observation. Now tell me what happened. You weren't scheduled to be back for another fortnight.

FILS. Marseilles was boring, Papa. I decided to cut the trip short and come home early.

DUMAS. You see this, Alexis? He travels to one of the most intoxicating places in the world but he prefers to be here, at home with his Papa instead. What do you think of that?

ALEXIS. It's very touching, Monsieur. Now if you would excuse me, I have work to do. (*ALEXIS exits.*)

FILS. Why is it so cold in here?

DUMAS. It's not cold.

FILS. What kind of sculpture did you commission?

DUMAS. A monument.

FILS. What kind of a monument?

DUMAS. Actually, it was supposed to be a surprise, Alexandre. But since you're here, I guess I might as well tell you. It's a monument to your grandfather. I had hoped to have it finished before you came home. I wanted you to get the full impact of its glory. I'm afraid it's not very impressive in its present state.

FILS. To say the least.

DUMAS. I kept asking myself, how could I honor him, what would the proper tribute be? Then it hit me. A

stroke of inspiration so brilliant that even I was impressed by the genius of the idea. The bronze sculpture that's being assembled in our courtyard will be a life-sized statue of your grandfather on horseback, exact to the most minute detail. But here's where the genius comes in. Once it's complete, I, myself, will take your grandfather's sword, this sword, the same sword he used in his march across Europe, and place it in the hand of the sculpture bronzed in his likeness. And there it will remain, raised in proud defiance, for the entire world to see. How's that for mixing art with life and life with art?

FILS. Please tell me that this is a joke.

DUMAS. *Au contraire, mon cher*, this will be the ne plus ultra comment on my father's life. France refuses to honor him, so I shall.

FILS. France refuses to honor him because he was traitor, Papa.

DUMAS. That's not true, Alexandre.

FILS. The man deserted his unit. He was captured by the enemy. He was imprisoned, was he not?

DUMAS. He was imprisoned.

FILS. He was guilty of treason.

DUMAS. But he never deserted.

FILS. How do you know, Papa? How do you know he didn't desert?

DUMAS. He told me so.

FILS. He told you so.

DUMAS. Before he died.

FILS. And you believed him?

DUMAS. With all of my heart. If you could have been there, if you could have met him, if you looked into his eyes and heard his voice...

FILS. But that's not going to happen, now is it, Papa? I can't look into his eyes, I can't hear his voice, and unless General Thomas Alexandre Dumas is able to somehow show up here and explain to me himself exactly what happened, all I can go by is what all of France believes and all of France believes that he was a traitor. Now I know that you want to believe that he was some sort of brave humanitarian soldier. And you know what? I would like to believe it as well. I would love to believe that I am descendant of bravery and valor. That the blood in my veins is the blood of nobility, but it's just not true. And it doesn't matter how many lies we tell ourselves or how many monuments you build, it will never be true, so stop deluding yourself, Papa. Your father was a traitor. He brought shame and dishonor to our family and that's nothing we should build a monument to. I want you to contact the sculptor responsible for that hideous pile of scrap metal in our courtyard and have him remove it immediately. And that sword? I'm sick of hearing about that sword. That sword ought to be melted down and turned into something useful like a belt buckle or a snuff box. Give it to me.

DUMAS. How could you say that?

FILS. Give me the sword.

DUMAS. No. (*FILS grabs the sword, DUMAS pulls it away. FILS' hand is cut in the process.*) My God, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, son.

FILS. It's all right.

DUMAS. Let me see.

FILS. It's okay. Just a small cut.

DUMAS. I'll call a doctor.

FILS. I don't need a doctor, Papa.

DUMAS. Just in case.

FILS. No.

DUMAS. Suppose it gets infected?

FILS. Papa!

DUMAS. I'm sorry. It's just that, if anything ever happened to you... I'm sorry, Alexandre. I wanted the monument to be a surprise. It means a lot to me and I had hoped that you would like it. Perhaps after it's finished, you won't find it as repulsive. Either way, I will not get rid of it. I'm glad you're home. I'm sorry about your hand. It was all my fault. I should have been more careful.

*(DUMAS exits. FILS winces in pain. The cut is worse than he originally let on. He wraps his hand, he shivers. He moves to the fireplace and tosses a log inside. GENERAL enters.)*

GENERAL. What are you trying to do? Start a fire?

FILS. May I help you, Monsieur?

GENERAL. Starting a fire with that wood will not warm you.

FILS. Who are you?

GENERAL. Looks like a very nasty cut you have there.

FILS. You a doctor?

GENERAL. I know about contamination, diseases of the blood.

FILS. I told my father I didn't need a doctor.

GENERAL. I know about viral infections which can spread across an entire country causing mass delirium.

FILS. How did you get here?

GENERAL. I was already here, Alexandre.

FILS. A Negro doctor.



GENERAL. Would that surprise you?

FILS. Nothing my father does surprises me, Monsieur. You see, it is my father's perverted sense of humor, to send a Negro doctor to see me. I'm sure he finds something cosmically funny about that. However, my suggestion to you, Monsieur, is to find yourself a Negro to attend, because I do not need your services.

GENERAL. Typical.

FILS. What's typical?

GENERAL. The symptoms you're displaying. Typical of infection.

FILS. I don't have an infection, Monsieur. How could I have an infection? The wound, as you can see, is fresh.

GENERAL. That's also typical, for the infected party to deny the existence of any infection. Tell me something, Alexandre, have you ever seen a guillotine?

FILS. A what?

GENERAL. Guillotine. A machine consisting of two upright wooden posts, mounted on a wooden platform.

FILS. I know what a guillotine is, Monsieur.

GENERAL. But have you ever seen one?

FILS. I am familiar with the device.

GENERAL. A very sharp and heavy blade is held at the top of the machine by a rope. Upon release of the rope, the blade drops forcefully down slicing through the neck of a prone victim strapped to the base of the machine.

FILS. I am also familiar with how it works.

GENERAL. Good. Because it is very important for you to understand the design and nature of this machine in order for you to understand the design and nature of your infection.

FILS. I have no infection, Monsieur.

GENERAL. The guillotine was originally designed to cut off the heads of the common criminal. But you see, this always has been and will remain to be the problem. Trying to figure out exactly who is a common criminal and who is not.

*(NAPOLEON BONAPARTE enters. FILS watches.)*

NAPOLEON. What is it, Dumas?

GENERAL. I hope I am not interrupting the general's supper.

NAPOLEON. My supper swims in a pool of blood at the foot of Mount Cenis for I have just received word that General Bagdelaune and his men have been repelled for the third time. Now tell me. What good news do you bring?

GENERAL. I had hoped to speak to the general about the provinces.

NAPOLEON. I just received news that my troops have suffered their third defeat and you want to speak to me about the provinces?

GENERAL. I've received reports, General. Reports of citizens aged seventy and eighty years old who were executed.

NAPOLEON. I'm sure there was good reason.

GENERAL. And women, young women, some needed by their children, some with child, were executed.

NAPOLEON. I am sure they were found guilty of some crime punishable by death.

GENERAL. They were suspected of wanting to emigrate.

NAPOLEON. There.

GENERAL. They were suspected of having desire.

NAPOLEON. Which is treason.

GENERAL. Suspicion of desire is not tantamount to treason. Even if it were, there was only suspicion of desire, no proof of desire, and even if desire did exist, no action was taken upon that desire.

NAPOLEON. You're making useless distinctions, Dumas.

GENERAL. Are we now in the business of executing citizens because they are suspected of having desire? I am a soldier, Napoleon. I practice the art of fighting other soldiers, not the art of murdering pregnant women and worn-out old men who dare to dream.

NAPOLEON. You consider this to be murder?

GENERAL. A military officer who carries out a sentence of death against any person incapable of bearing arms is, in my opinion, a murderer.

NAPOLEON. This opinion of yours could be interpreted as treasonous.

GENERAL. Only by those who lack the vision to see into the will of my heart because my heart beats only for the good of France.

NAPOLEON. They laugh at you, Dumas. Your own soldiers. They call you Monsieur de l'Humanité.

GENERAL. You must be a humanitarian to be a good soldier.

NAPOLEON. To be a good priest, maybe, but not a good soldier.

GENERAL. It's the soldier's humanity that distinguishes him from an animal.

NAPOLEON. Then why do the Austrians call you the Black Devil?

GENERAL. They call me the Black Devil in a vain attempt to explain away my victory over their pigeon-hearted troops.

NAPOLEON. That's a name of which you should be proud. Black Devil.

GENERAL. It's a name I find offensive for it suggests I have no conscience.

NAPOLEON. You don't need a conscience to be courageous.

GENERAL. Courage without conscience is nothing more than a wild, rampaging beast. I am not a beast, Napoleon.

NAPOLEON. No, you're not. I hear you have a child. Is this true?

GENERAL. A daughter.

NAPOLEON. I would like to meet your daughter one day. I would like to see what manner of child a man like you is capable of producing.

GENERAL. About the citizens...

NAPOLEON. Yes. You're right. Soldiers of France should have no hand in the execution of the citizens of France. Draw up a directive. I will sign it.

GENERAL. Thank you.

NAPOLEON. Not necessary. You're like my conscience, Dumas. Ever present and always right.

GENERAL. I hope that was a compliment.

NAPOLEON. Of course it was. I want you to be godfather to my son.

GENERAL. Your son?

NAPOLEON. Josephine is bound to produce an heir sooner or later. You and she are cousins and I admire your convictions. When Josephine finally produces a boy, I want

you and your wife to be my son's godparents. And if you ever produce a boy, Josephine and I will be your son's godparents. Agreed?

GENERAL. If I produce a boy? A son...

*(DUMAS enters. He lets loose a long and plaintive howl like a dog baying at the moon. MADEMOISELLE FERRIER appears, screams playfully, and exits. DUMAS follows, barking like a dog, in hot pursuit.)*

*As GENERAL and NAPOLEON exit, MADAME SAND enters followed by FELIX HAREL and ALEXIS.)*

SAND. There, I heard it again.

ALEXIS. Madame, I can assure you...

SAND. Harel heard it.

ALEXIS. There is no one here.

SAND. Didn't you, Harel?

HAREL. I heard something.

SAND. We both heard voices coming from this room.

ALEXIS. What you heard most likely were the peacocks.

SAND. Peacocks?

ALEXIS. Peacocks, Madame. The cry of a peacock is often mistaken for the voice of a woman.

SAND. Dumas keeps peacocks?

ALEXIS. Six peacocks to be exact. Six peacocks, two guinea fowl, eight parrots, fourteen macaws, five dogs, three monkeys, two sea gulls, a zebra and one buzzard.

HAREL. A buzzard?

ALEXIS. Mangy buzzard which bears the name of a prominent Parisian theater critic. Now, Madame, if you please...