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Adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens



A Tale of Two Cities

Drama by Dwayne Hartford

A Tale of Two Cities

Drama. By Dwayne Hartford. Adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens. *Cast: 7 m., 3 w., May be expanded to 25 actors.* Set during the terror of the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities* follows the influence of historical and political upheaval on a small group of individuals: Charles Darnay, a French aristocrat who rejects his family and its tradition of terrorizing the lower classes; Dr. Manette, a physician whose 18-year imprisonment in the bastille left him bereft of his senses and a symbolic hero for the masses; Lucie, the daughter of Manette, who unknowingly marries the descendant of her father's oppressors; Sydney Carton, Darnay's drunken lawyer who finds meaning in life through an unrequited love for Lucie; and Madame Defarge, a mob leader whose sheer rage at the oppression of the lower classes is woven into her knitting and who schemes for vengeance. Bookended by Darnay's two trials (the first, a false accusation of spying against the British; the second, a mob trial based on the deeds of Darnay's ancestors), this adaptation of the Dickens classic explores the relationship between an individual and the historical and political forces that govern his or her times. The themes of *A Tale of Two Cities* are as current for today's young adults as they were two centuries ago: How does one prioritize loyalty to country, to friends, to a moral code? Is violence in the name of vengeance ever justified? Is imprisonment of an individual permissible in light of larger social and historical injustices? What are the costs to society of a citizenry divided between rich and poor? Can a single act of honor and love counteract a world filled with hatred and vengeance? And, in the face of war and terror perpetrated in the name of a broader cause, what is the definition of a life well lived? *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: TH7.*

Cover photo: Childsplay, Tempe, Ariz., featuring Debra K. Stevens as Madame Defarge. Photo: Heather Hill. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

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A TALE OF TWO CITIES

By
DWAYNE HARTFORD

Adapted from the novel
by
CHARLES DICKENS



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(A TALE OF TWO CITIES)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-601-2

For my sister, Dawn Elisabeth DePesa.
Our stories went in different directions,
But we shared the first few chapters,
And, as in most stories,
Important things happened in the beginning.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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A Tale of Two Cities was originally commissioned by Childsplay in Tempe, Arizona, David P. Saar, artistic director, Steve Martin, managing director. The play was developed in Childsplay's Whiteman New Plays Program. It received additional workshop development at NYU's New Plays for Young Audiences Program at the Provincetown Playhouse.

The play had its premiere on March 22, 2008, at the Tempe Center for the Arts in Tempe, Arizona. The director was David P. Saar, the dramaturge was Graham Whitehead, scenic design by Carey Wong, costume design by Connie Furr Soloman, lighting design by Rick Paulsen, sound design by Brian Jerome Peterson. The stage manager was Alex Corder. The cast was as follows:

Mr. Lorry, Judge, Valet	ANDRÉS ALCALÁ
Defarge	CHRISTOPHER MASCARELLI
Dr. Manett	GRAHAM WHITEHEAD
Charles Darnay, Noble 2	JOSEPH KREMER
Sydney Carton	D. SCOTT WITHERS
Marquis, Noble 1, Stryver, Governor	JON GENTRY
Gaspard, Brother, Attorney General, President, Gabelle, Guard.	TIMOTHY SHAWVER
Mme. Defarge, Woman, Young Woman	DEBRA K. STEVENS
Lucie Manette	AMANDA SCHAAR
Miss Pross, Jenny Barsad, Poor Wretch	KATE HAAS

The roles of Miss Pross, Jenny Barsad and the Poor Wretch were originally played by Katie McFadzen throughout the development process.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

CHARACTERS

- MR. JARVIS LORRY an English banker in his late 70s
- ERNEST DEFARGE a poor wine merchant in Paris.
An ardent revolutionary. 30s
- THERESE DEFARGE his wife. An even more ardent
revolutionary. 30s
- DR. ALEXANDRÉ MANETTE an older French doctor
recovering from years held prisoner in the Bastille
- LUCIE MANETTE Dr. Manette's 20ish daughter. Smart,
loving, strong
- MISS PROSS Lucie's middle-aged former guardian.
A proud Briton, she is deeply devoted to Lucie
- CHARLES DARNAY a French aristocrat living in exile in
London. 20s/30s
- SYDNEY CARTON a talented, cynical English
lawyer. Looks like Darnay. 20s/30s
- MARQUIS DE EVRÉMONDE middle-aged, cruel French
aristocrat. Uncle to Darnay
- STRYVER pompous, English lawyer. Carton's boss.
Succeeds only through Carton's skill and intelligence
- GASPARD poor Parisian revolutionary
- GABELLE abused overseer of the Evrémonde estate
- NOBLE 1 the Marquis when he was younger

NOBLE 2. Darnay's late father. The Marquis' brother

WOMAN a seriously ill young woman held captive by
the Nobles

BROTHER the Woman's brother. Dying of a sword wound

POOR WRETCH as the name suggests

GOVERNOR of the Bastille prison

YOUNG WOMAN . . an innocent French seamstress condemned
to die

JENNY BARSAD poor Londoner. A witness to Darnay's
alleged treason

JUDGE London's Old Bailey

ATTORNEY GENERAL London's Old Bailey

PRESIDENT the French revolutionary tribunal

GUARD works at the prison at La Force

VALET works for the Marquis

French and English Voices, Crowds, Customers, etc.

The action takes place in and around Paris, France, and in London, England, during the second half of the 18th century.

The stage. An open space surrounded by multiple levels of balconies or catwalks, suggesting spectator galleries or balconies overlooking a street. The balconies are used primarily for cast members to watch the action in the open space. The flow of scenes requires easily movable pieces that suggest place. Lighting and sound play a major role in defining place. The set feels old, past its prime, worn from use.

ACT ONE

(PROLOGUE. In the blackout a clicking is heard—the sound of knitting needles at work. this sound grows as more and more sets of needles are added. the sound crescendos then stops with the sound of the guillotine. A WOMAN's voice is heard.)

WOMAN. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Husband! Brother! Hush!

(Lights up on a bedroom. A WOMAN lies in bed. she is bound by the wrists and ankles. CARTON and those not in this scene watch the action.)

WOMAN. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Husband! Brother! Hush!

(This continues under the following dialogue until noted. TWO NOBLEMEN and a young DR. MANETTE enter. MANETTE immediately goes to the WOMAN.)

MANETTE. There, there, mademoiselle. I am a doctor. Can you tell me if you are in pain?

WOMAN. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Husband! Brother! Hush!

(MANETTE lays his hands on her. This does seem to calm her somewhat.)

MANETTE. How long has this lasted?

NOBLE 1. Since last night.

WOMAN. ...Husband! Brother! Hush!

MANETTE. Is she a relative?

NOBLE 2. Of ours? Ha! Absolutely not.

WOMAN. ...six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve...

NOBLE 1. Can't you do something to stop that ungodly noise?

MANETTE. I will give her something to calm her. *(He lifts the WOMAN's head to administer the medicine.)*

WOMAN. One, two, three, four, five, six...

MANETTE. Here. Drink this. It will help you. *(She drinks some.)*

WOMAN. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven...eight... nine...husband...brother... *(She sleeps.)*

MANETTE. She will sleep for a while. How did she come to be like this?

NOBLE 2. I don't like the tone of your voice, Doctor.

MANETTE. Pardon me, monsieur. I am only trying to understand with what I am dealing.

NOBLE 2. You are dealing with two gentlemen of a class that a physician does not question.

NOBLE 1. What my brother is saying is what has happened here is none of your business, Doctor. Your job is to fix it. There is another patient. Follow me.

(The sound of the knitting as NOBLE 2 takes a light and leads MANETTE to another room. On the floor lies the

BROTHER, dying from a chest wound. MANETTE goes to him and examines the wound.)

MANETTE (*to the NOBLES*). He has been stabbed.

NOBLE 1. The crazed dog had a sword. He forced my brother to draw upon him. The fault is his own.

BROTHER. My sister—have you seen her? Her cries have stopped!

MANETTE. I have seen her. I gave her some medicine to help her sleep.

BROTHER. The Marquis' brother wanted her. He said it was his noble right. But my sister refused, so the Marquis whipped her husband until he fell. He died in my sister's arms, counting the bells as the clock rang twelve. Then, his brother dragged my sister away. I saw the whole thing. I took my other sister someplace where they'll never find her, and then I came back here last night. I made him fight me. Lift me up.

(The DOCTOR helps the BROTHER to sit up and face the NOBLES.)

BROTHER. Marquis, you and your brother will pay for these crimes. With this cross of blood (*touches his wound then making a cross in the air*) I call upon you, your brother, and your entire family to the last of your race, to pay for what you have done.

(He dies. The sound of knitting. MANETTE looks at the NOBLES. Lights fade on the scene while remaining on CARTON and those on the balconies.)

CARTON. A Tale of Two Cities. Two worlds.

LORRY. The rich and the poor.

LUCIE. The oppressors and the oppressed.

DEFARGE. Winners and losers.

CARTON. Revenge and damnation.

MISS PROSS. Forgiveness and salvation.

LORRY. The past.

DARNAY. The present.

DEFARGE. A declaration.

MISS PROSS. A confession.

(MISS PROSS and LUCIE exit. MME. DEFARGE appears on a balcony.)

DEFARGE. A test.

MME. DEFARGE. A trial.

CARTON. A trial.

(SCENE 1. The year 1778. A street outside a wineshop in a poor neighborhood in Paris, and an attic room over the shop.)

CARTON. A Tale of Two Cities. Many years have passed since the events you just witnessed. Years of comfort and excess for some. Years of misery and want for many. In Paris, a barrel of wine dropped on a cobblestoned street never goes unnoticed.

(A wine cask drops and breaks on the ground. A crowd quickly gathers to devour the wine from off of the cobblestones. LORRY enters with LUCIE. They observe the group.)

CARTON. There is a storm in the distance. But it, like me, is not quite here yet. *(He moves to the side to observe the scene.)*

LORRY. I'm sorry to expose you to this, Lucie, but the shop is around here somewhere. The streets of Paris are quite different than those of London.

LUCIE. We have our poor in London as well, Mr. Lorry.

LORRY. I've never seen people drinking from the gutters and lapping the pavement in England.

(A person in the crowd gnaws on a shard of the wine barrel. The crowd disperses. Those not in the scene return to the balconies.)

LUCIE. Or eating wood. Why would someone do that?

(DEFARGE enters from the wineshop, hearing LUCIE's questions.)

DEFARGE. When a person is starving, he will eat anything.

LUCIE. A piece of wood?

DEFARGE. A wine-soaked barrel, a dog, a cat, grass, leaves, even dirt.

LUCIE. I didn't know it was so bad here.

DEFARGE. Only for us poor nothings. The king and his nobles don't eat off the cobblestones. You are not from Paris?

LORRY. No, from London, monsieur. Is this the neighborhood of Saint Antoine?

DEFARGE. It is.

LORRY. Then perhaps this is the wineshop of Ernest Defarge?

DEFARGE. Why do you ask?

LORRY. We have business with Monsieur Defarge.

DEFARGE. Then your business is with me.

LORRY. Ah, Monsieur Defarge. I am Jarvis Lorry from Tellson's Bank in London.

DEFARGE. Then this must be... *(To LUCIE.)* Mademoiselle. *(He kneels to her.)* I served your father—before. He was a good man. He didn't deserve this.

(MME. DEFARGE enters knitting, seeing DEFARGE kneeling.)

MME. DEFARGE. You'll stain your knees, husband.

DEFARGE *(rising)*. This is my wife. *(To her.)* They have come for him.

LORRY. Jarvis Lorry, Madame Defarge. And this is Mademoiselle Lucie Manette.

(MME. DEFARGE does not respond, only knits as she looks at LUCIE.)

DEFARGE. He is upstairs. Follow me.

(DEFARGE climbs stairs to an upper level. LORRY and LUCIE follow. MME. DEFARGE returns to the wineshop, knitting. She returns to the balcony.)

CARTON. It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.

MISS PROSS. It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness.

DARNAY. It was the epoch of belief. It was the epoch of incredulity.

LORRY. Does he know that we have come for him?

DEFARGE. It would mean nothing to him.

LORRY. How so?

LUCIE. Is he ill?

DEFARGE. You will see for yourselves.

(DEFARGE, LORRY and LUCIE reach a door at the top of the stairs. DEFARGE removes a key from his vest.)

LORRY. What is this? You keep the door locked? He is a prisoner here as well?

DEFARGE. It is for him! He has lived so long locked up in the Bastille that an unlocked door would confuse him—frighten him. He might hurt himself.

LUCIE. Is he mad?

DEFARGE. Mad? He lived in a cell not seeing another human being for nineteen years.

LUCIE. The poor man.

DEFARGE. Welcome to France, where the nobles dance on the heads of the poor.

(DEFARGE purposely makes a lot of noise before opening the door. The door opens. In the attic room, DR. MANETTE sits at a cobbler's bench, working on a shoe. He does not notice the others. He is a broken man. His affect is one that is removed, his total focus is on his task.)

GASPARD. It was the season of light. It was the spring of hope.

DEFARGE (*entering the room, to MANETTE*). Good day!

MANETTE (*after a pause, quietly*). Good day.

DEFARGE. You are still hard at work, I see.

MANETTE. Yes, I am working.

DEFARGE. You have a visitor today.

(MANETTE notices LORRY and goes back to work.)

DEFARGE. He wants to see what you are working on. Show him.

(Reluctantly, MANETTE offers LORRY the shoe. LORRY takes it.)

MANETTE. It is a lady's shoe.

DEFARGE. And the maker's name?

MANETTE. You asked for my name?

DEFARGE. I did.

MANETTE. One Hundred and Five, North Tower.

DEFARGE. That is your name?

MANETTE. One Hundred and Five, North Tower.

MARQUIS. It was the season of darkness. It was the winter of despair.

LORRY. Have you always been a shoemaker by trade?

MANETTE. No. No. I learned it here.

LORRY. Do you recognize me, monsieur?

(MANETTE does not look or respond.)

DEFARGE. You were asked a question.

LORRY. Look at me, monsieur. Do you recognize me? Do you remember your old friend, the banker?

(Slowly MANETTE looks at LORRY.)

MISS PROSS. We had everything before us.

MANETTE *(drops his gaze)*. If I may have my shoe back... I must finish my work.

CARTON. We had nothing before us.

(LORRY hands him the shoe. MANETTE goes back to work. DEFARGE and LORRY step to the side. Silently LUCIE approaches the bench, unnoticed by the other two.)

DEFARGE. Did you see anything? Did he recognize you?

LORRY. For a moment, yes, I believe he did.

DEFARGE. Get him out of Paris. It is still not safe for him here.

LORRY. But is he stable enough to travel?

DEFARGE *(noticing LUCIE)*. Mademoiselle...

(LUCIE stops him with a gesture. After a moment, MANETTE notices her. He slowly looks up at her.)

MANETTE. What is this? Who are you?

(MANETTE returns to his work. LUCIE sits next to him. He tries to move but she gently lays her hand on his shoulder. He looks at her.)

MANETTE. How can it be? She looks the same! When was it?

(LUCIE kisses her hand then places it on his lips. She then lays her head on his shoulder.)

MANETTE. She laid her head on my shoulder the night they came for me. She did not want me to go. How is this? Was it you?

(LORRY and DEFARGE again start to approach.)

LUCIE. Gentlemen, please! I beg you, do not speak nor come near.

MANETTE. That is not her voice! No! You are too young!

(LUCIE gently shushes MANETTE. He calms.)

MANETTE. It cannot be. No. She was and he was—so long ago. What is your name?

LUCIE. In good time, monsieur, I will tell you. But not here. Not in this place. Yet, if my face or my voice reminds you of what was so cruelly taken from you, weep for it. Weep for the years of your youth. Weep for the daughter that never knew you. Weep for the wife that died in despair. Weep, monsieur. Weep. And if I tell you that your agony is over, that the daughter has found the father, and has come to take him to England for rest and peace, weep for that, as well. At last, after so many years wasting in the grave, weep for the man who is finally recalled to life.