

At His Majesty's Pleasure

a feature film - written by Gaby Santinelli

based on - Le Roi S'amuse - by Victor Hugo



When The King of France defiles his fester's teenage daughter without knowing her true identity, a fatal curse shatters the lives of both the fester and his beloved child.

Plot Summary I

It's the year 1517, and morally-ambiguous, rookie KING FRANÇOIS I is in a pickle. He must not only quickly produce a male heir with his pious wife, QUEEN CLAUDE. But he must also, as per Royal French tradition, appoint a Royal Mistress, and one that his picky mother LOUISE approves of. While 'Kings will be Kings', and he is easily swayed by 'anything in a heavy brocade frock', none of the well-groomed aristocratic women on offer really do it for François, if he's being perfectly honest.

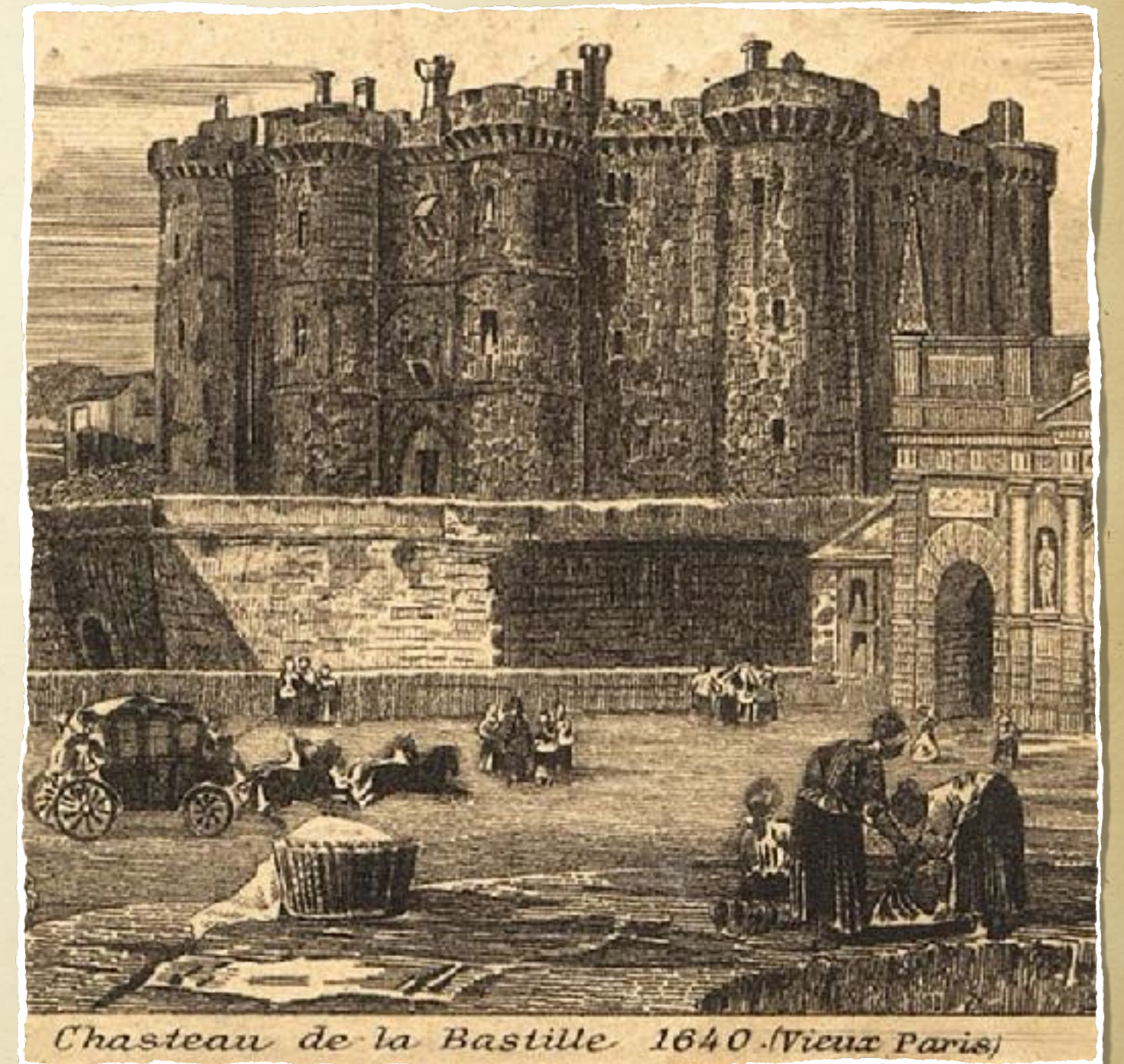
To escape his stifling court, not to mention the rampant debauchery, François dresses down as a struggling student to attend Mass amongst the Parisian Bourgeoisie. There, he sees a young maiden, BLANCHE: she's so angelic, so unlike the worldly women of court, he cannot help but be drawn to her wholesomeness. However, she is guarded by a stern minder so...he sends his young Squire to gather intelligence on Blanche's coordinates, Renaissance style: on a galloping steed!



Plot Summary II

Back at court, the infamous court jester TRIBOULET blatantly encourages François to kidnap the naïve maiden he's smitten with to execute his Lordly Right. One mistaken identity leads to another and, by the time The King is able to be with Blanche, she shocks him by declining the offer to become Royal Mistress. Despite all the perks, she fell in love with a student, not a king. But the biggest blow of all is that Blanche is secretly Triboulet's convent-reared daughter; The Jester is apoplectic at his own cruelly ironic misstep and attempts to have the King assassinated to pay for defiling daughter Blanche.

But melodrama will melodrama, and through more mistaken identities, it is Blanche, not the King, who falls victim to the hit-man's knife. As Triboulet is carted off to Bastille Prison, the King gallops off to welcome his newborn son. When he learns of Blanche's demise, his heart is beyond broken...but whether he's learned his lesson is another story entirely...



Chateau de la Bastille - 1640 (Vieux Paris)

Louvre Castle, Paris

Christmas - 1517

France is on a knife's edge:

*One Thousand Years
of Dark Ages*

vs

The Rising Renaissance



22 Novembre 1832

22 Novembre 1882

Programme de la 1^{re} Représentation

<i>François I^{er}.</i>	MM. Perrier.
<i>Triboulet.</i>	Ligier.
<i>M. de Saint-Vallier.</i>	Joanny.
<i>Saltabadil.</i>	Beauvallet.
<i>Clément Marot</i>	Samson.
<i>M. de Pienne.</i>	Geffroy.
<i>M. de Gordes.</i>	Marius.
<i>M. de Brion.</i>	Albert.
<i>M. de Montchenu.</i>	Monlaur.
<i>M. de Montmorency.</i>	Arsène.
<i>M. de Cossé.</i>	Duparrat.
<i>M. de Latour-Landry.</i>	Bouchet.
<i>M. de Vic.</i>	Mirecour.
<i>Un gentilhomme de la reine.</i>	Régnier.
<i>Un valet du roi.</i>	Faure.
<i>Un médecin.</i>	Dumilatre.
<i>Blanche.</i>	M ^{mes} Anaïs.
<i>Maguelonne.</i>	Dupont.
<i>M^{no} de Cossé.</i>	Moralès.
<i>Dame Bérarde.</i>	Tousez.
<i>M. de Pardaillan.</i>	Eulalie Dupuis.
<i>Une femme du peuple.</i>	Martin.

Programme de la 2^e Représentation

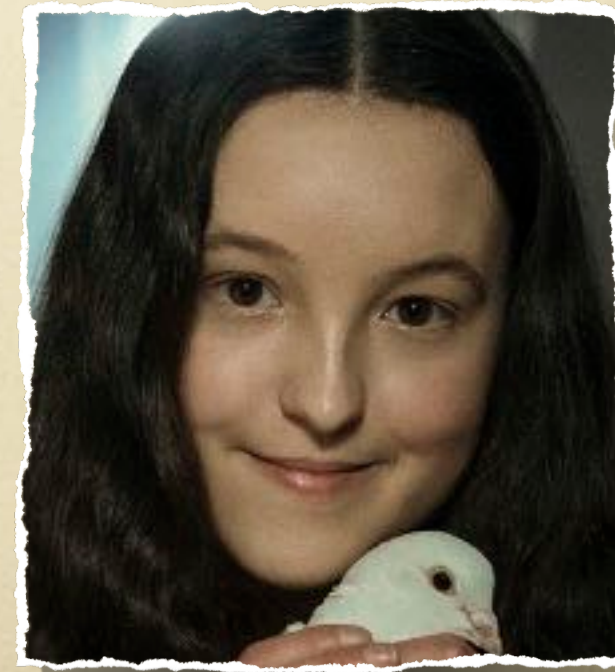
<i>Triboulet.</i>	MM. Got.
<i>François I^{er}</i>	Mounet-Sully.
<i>Saltabadil.</i>	Febvre.
<i>M. de Saint-Vallier.</i>	Maubant.
<i>Clément Marot.</i>	De Féraudy.
<i>M. de Pienne.</i>	Prudhon.
<i>M. de Gordes.</i>	Garnier.
<i>M. de Brion.</i>	Paul Reney.
<i>M. de Montchenu.</i>	Joliet.
<i>M. de Montmorency.</i>	Villain.
<i>M. de Cossé.</i>	Carraud.
<i>M. de Latour-Landry.</i>	Boucher
<i>M. de Vic.</i>	Davrigny.
<i>M. de Pardaillan.</i>	Henry Samary
<i>Un gentilhomme de la reine.</i>	Richard.
<i>Un valet du roi.</i>	Masquilier.
<i>Un médecin.</i>	Leloir.
<i>Un charretier.</i>	Roger.
<i>Blanche.</i>	M ^{mes} Bartet.
<i>Maguelonne.</i>	Jeanne Samary.
<i>Dame Bérarde</i>	Jouassain.
<i>M^{no} de Cossé.</i>	Frémaux.
<i>Une femme du peuple.</i>	Thénard.

Dramatis Personae

Cast Suggestions I

KING FRANÇOIS I, 23 - a passionate, morally-ambiguous King

QUEEN CLAUDE, 18 - wife of François I



Cast Suggestions II

TRIBOULET, 38 - Court Jester; our tragic hero

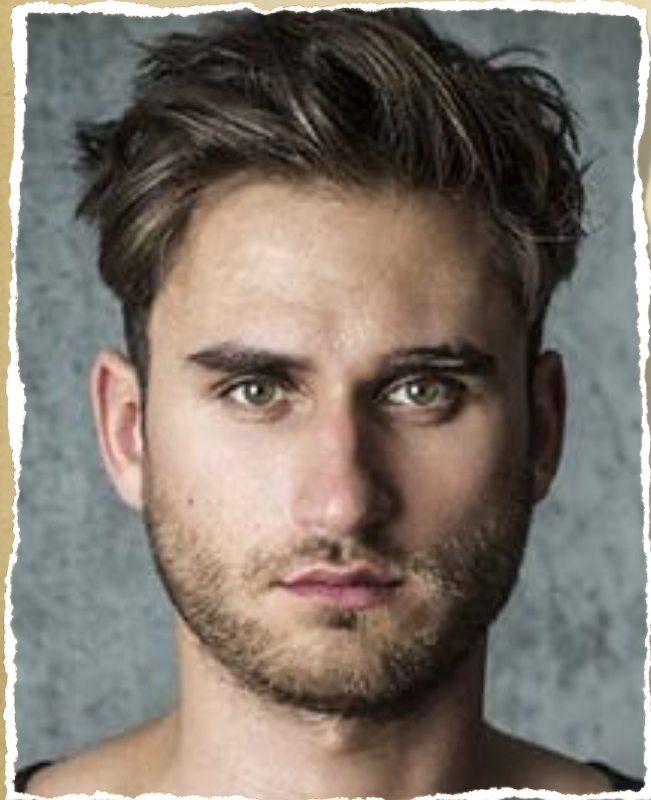
BLANCHE, 15 - a devout, bourgeois maiden



Cast Suggestions III

OTSANDO, 35 - Romani; pub-owner & hired assassin

MAGDALENA, 30 - Otsando's 'sister' & tavern dancer



Ensemble I

The KING'S FAMILY

KING FRANÇOIS I, 23 - not born to be King = steep learning curve

QUEEN CLAUDE, 18 - long-suffering, ever-pregnant wife of François I

Princess **CHARLOTTE**, 18 months - François & Claude's one surviving daughter

Princess **RENÉE**, 7 - Queen Claude's precocious little sister

LOUISE of Savoy, 41 - domineering mother of François I

The KING's GUEST

Leonardo **DA VINCI**, 65 - sells Mona Lisa to François; lives out his final days at Château d'Amboise

OUTSIDE the CASTLE

BLANCHE, 15 - a devout, bourgeois maiden

DAME BÉRARDE, 45 - Blanche's street-wise minder; not averse to a good bribe

OTSANDO, 35 - Romani; pub-owner & hired assassin

MAGDALENA, 30 - Otsando's 'sister' & tavern dancer

Ensemble II

The COURT of FRANÇOIS I

TRIBOULET, 38 - notoriously cheeky Court Jester; our tragic hero

THOMAS Boleyn, 40 - Ambassador to Henry VIII; father of:

MARY Boleyn, 17 - naïve Lady-in-waiting; The King's current casual plaything

ANNE Boleyn, 16 - The Queen's Maid of Honor; has a good head on her shoulders

SAINT-VALLIER, 42 - overly-protective father of:

DIANE de Poitiers, 17 - a renowned beauty & shrewd Lady-in-waiting, married to:

Louis de **BRÉZÉ**, 56, Diane's adoring, tolerant older husband

BRION, 25 - childhood friend of François; a hotheaded, horny bachelor

MONTMORENCY, 24 - Captain of the Bastille; another horny bachelor

MAROT, 21, royal poet to Queen Claude, a Sodomite...also a bachelor

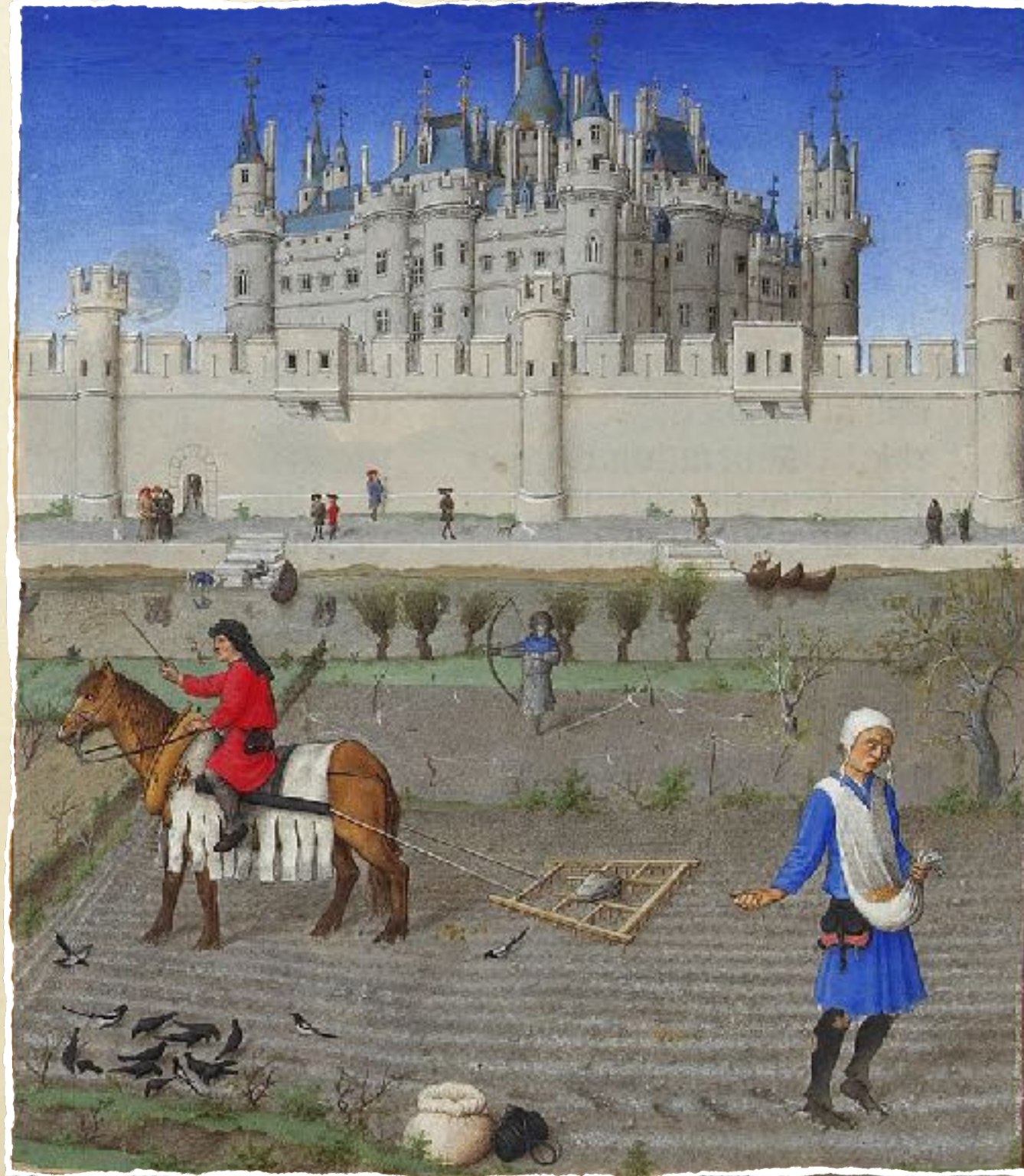
COSSÉ, 13 - The King's upwardly mobile Squire, obviously a bachelor



Locations

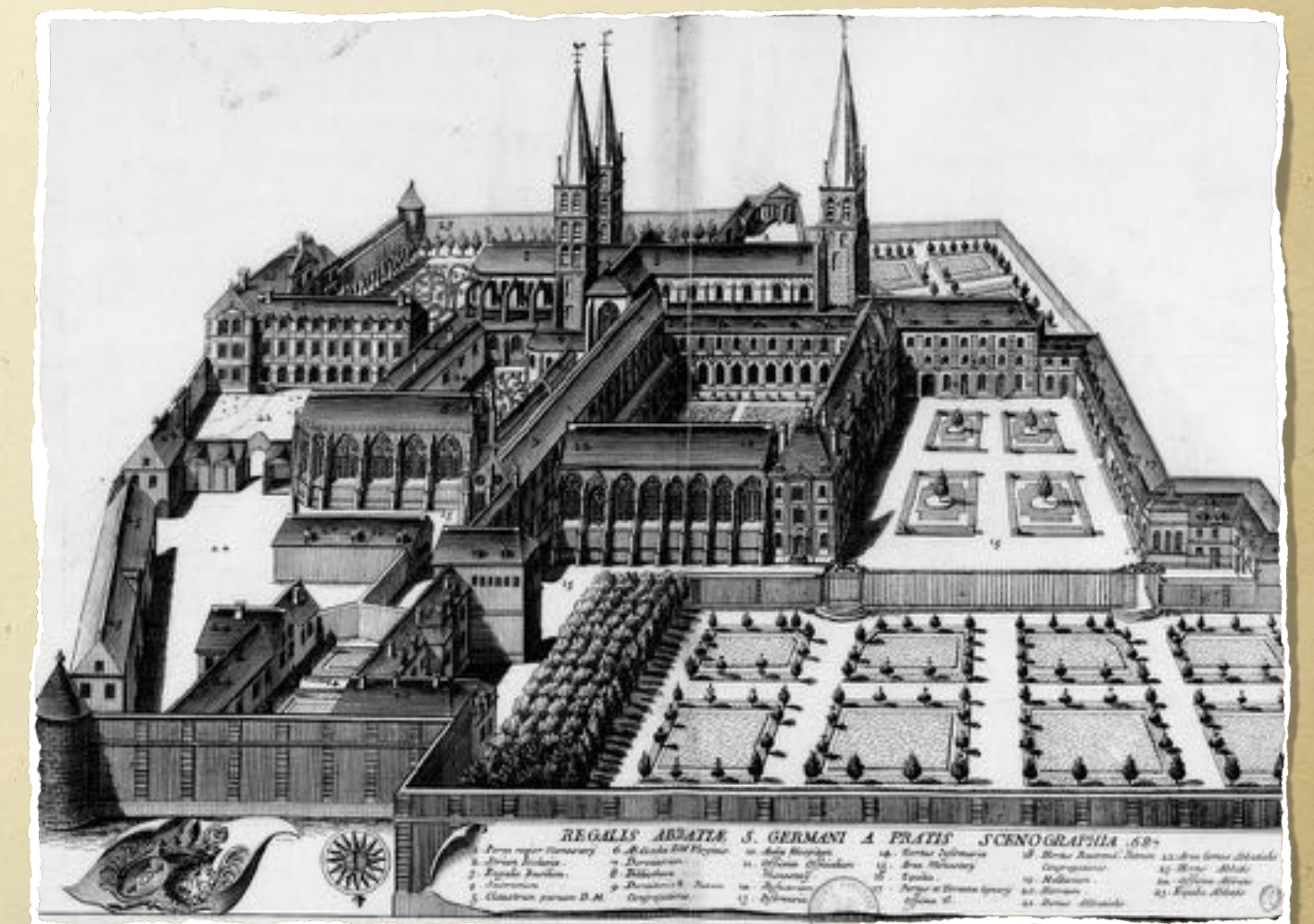
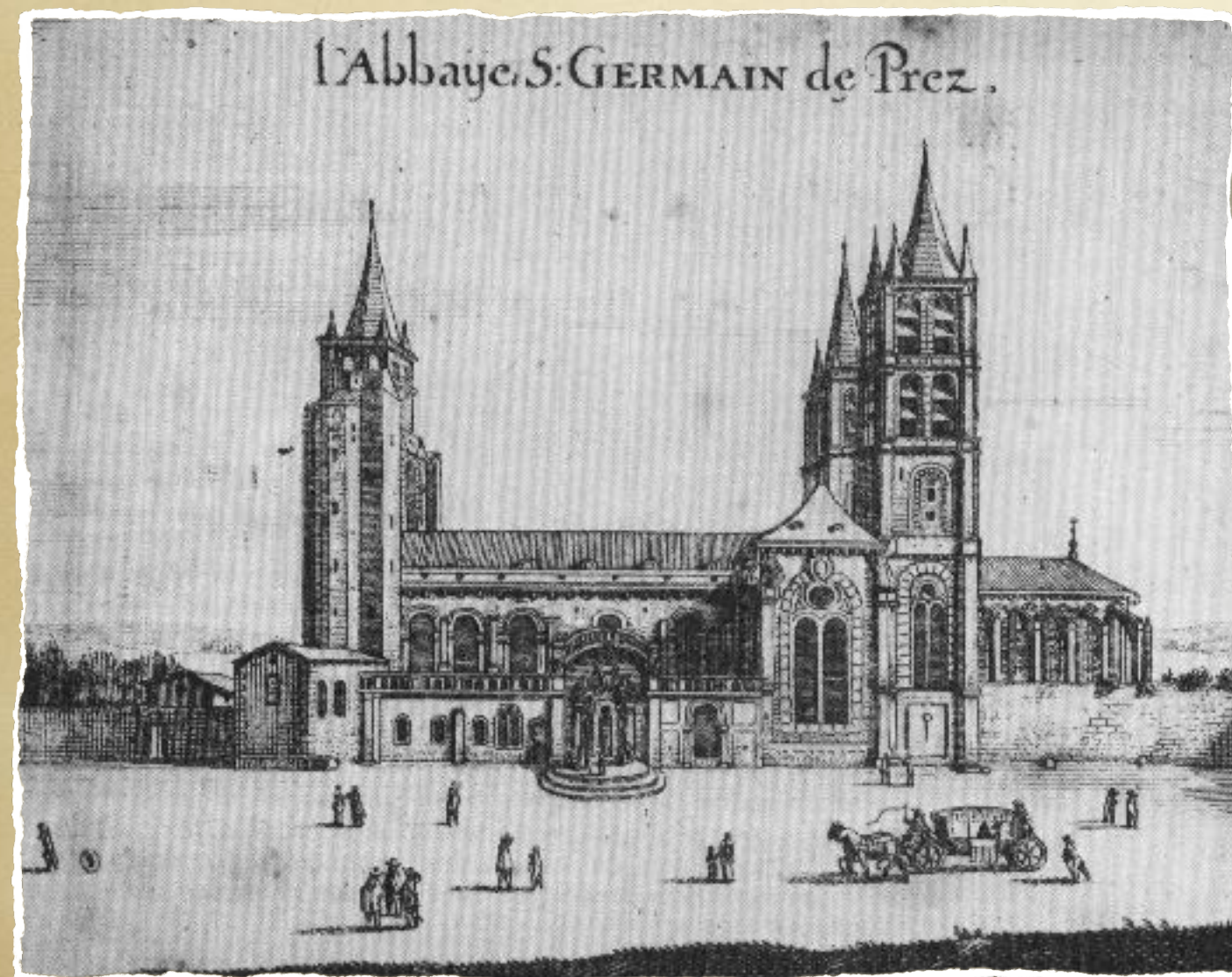
Medieval Louvre Castle - Paris

*King François I begins plans to convert the Medieval Fortress into a Renaissance Palace -
but its dark corridors still promote mistaken identities & its tunnels provide quick escape routes*



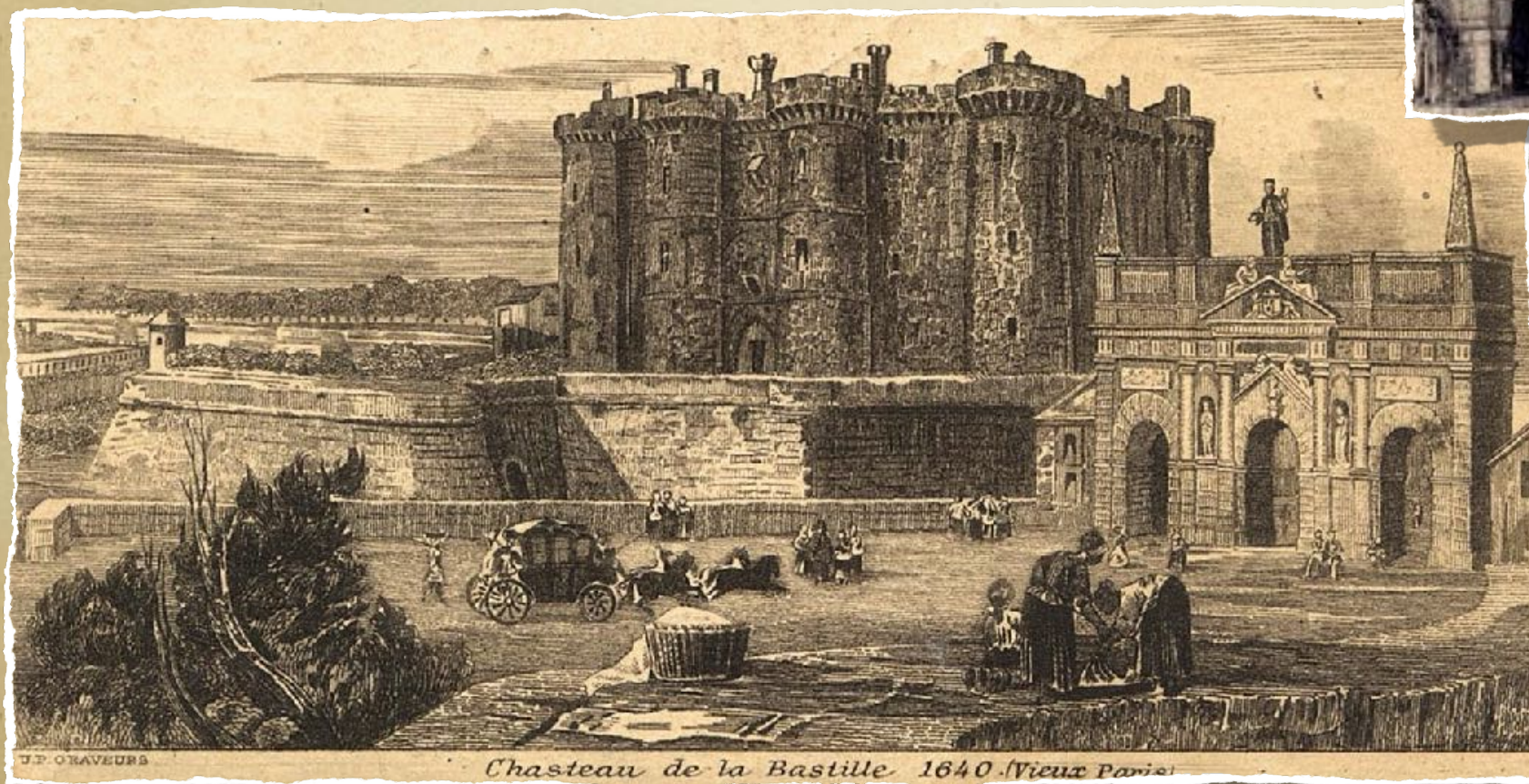
l'Abbaye Saint Germain des Prés - Paris

King François I masquerades as a poor student to mingle with Paris' church-going bourgeoisie- and encounters an angelic teenage beauty, Blanche, with whom he becomes infatuated



Bastille Fortress & Prison - Paris

Two overly-protective fathers, Saint Vallier & Jester Triboulet, are both imprisoned - as traitors

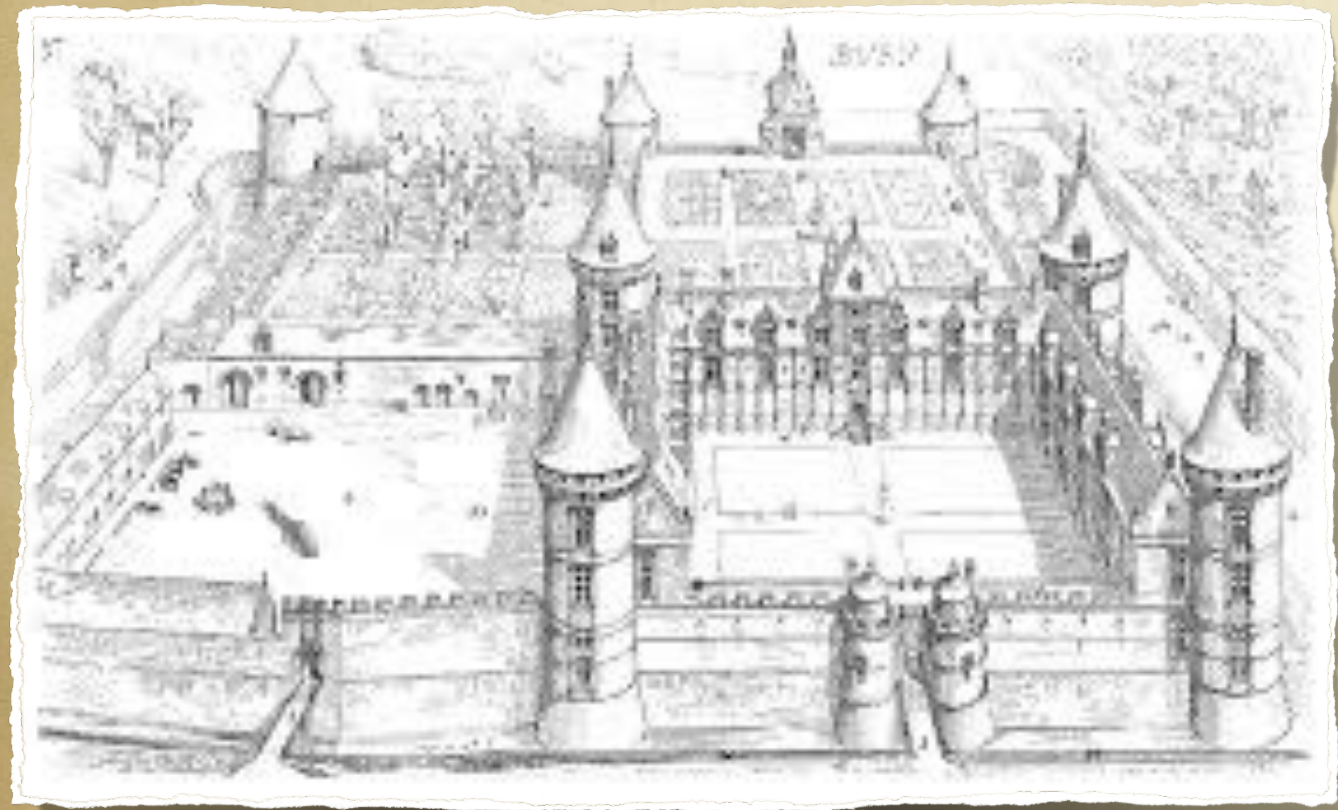


Chateau de la Bastille. 1640. (Vieux Paris)



Château d'Amboise

A quiet haven for Queen Claude's confinement ... & Leonardo da Vinci's retirement (he died here!)





what's the big idea?

COMPARABLES

gritty - irreverent - raw - revealing
featuring a strong ensemble cast



Two Enduring Titans of 19th Century Storytelling

Victor Hugo & Giuseppe Verdi

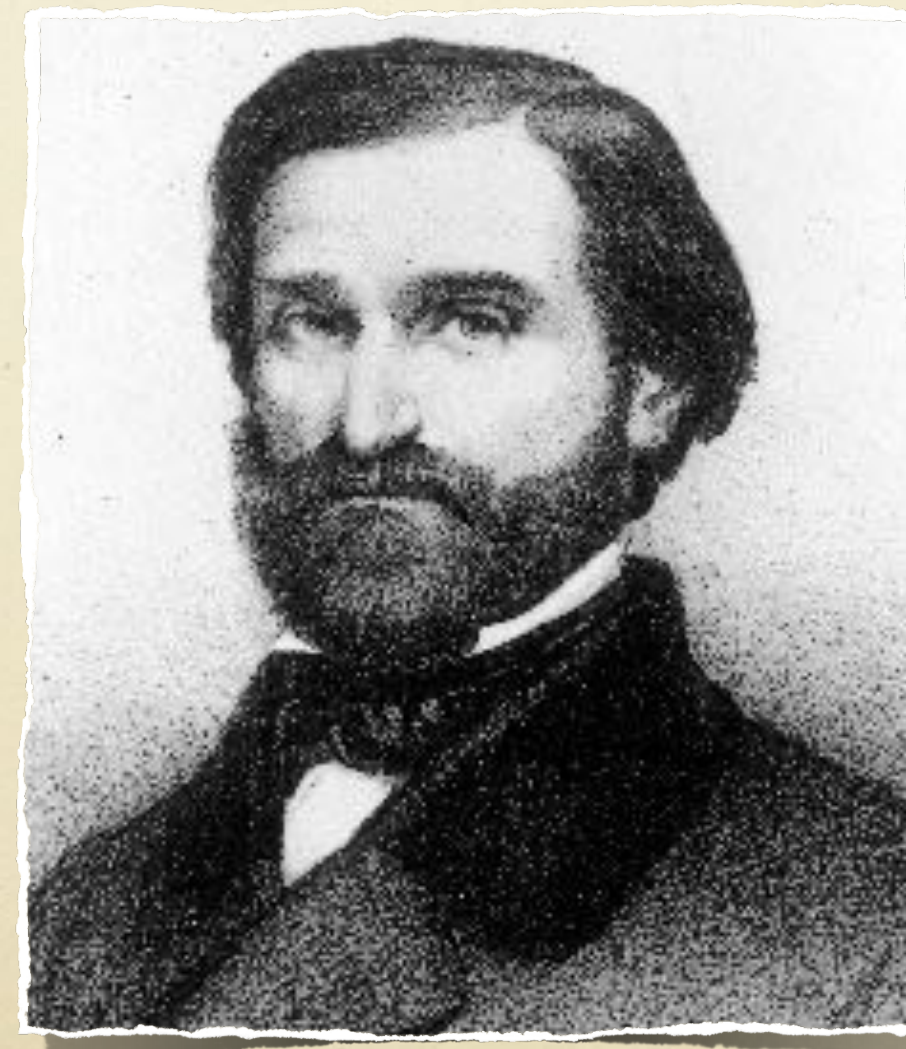
1832 SOUVENIR 1882
de la
REPRÉSENTATION SOLENNELLE
LE ROI S'AMUSE
Comédie-Française — 22 Novembre 1882




VICTOR HUGO
22 Novembre 1832 22 Novembre 1882

Programme de la 1 ^{re} Représentation		Programme de la 2 ^e Représentation	
François I ^{er} .	MM. Perrier.	Triboulet.	MM. Got.
Triboulet.	Ligier.	François I ^{er} .	Mounet-Sully.
M. de Saint-Vallier.	Joussy.	Saltabail.	Fevre.
Saltabail.	Beauvallet.	M. de Saint-Vallier.	Mauhan.
Clément Marot.	Samson.	Clément Marot.	De Feraudy.
M. de Pienne.	Geffroy.	M. de Pienne.	Prudhon.
M. de Gordes.	Marius.	M. de Gordes.	Garnier.
M. de Brion.	Albert.	M. de Brion.	Paul Reney.
M. de Montcheu.	Monlaur.	M. de Montcheu.	Joliet.
M. de Montmorency.	Arnaïs.	M. de Montmorency.	Villain.
M. de Cossé.	Duparrat.	M. de Cossé.	Carraud.
M. de Latour-Landry.	Bouchet.	M. de Latour-Landry.	Boucher.
M. de Vic.	Mirecour.	M. de Vic.	Davrigny.
Un gentilhomme de la reine.	Régnier.	M. de Pardailhan.	Henry Samary.
Un valet du roi.	Faure.	Un gentilhomme de la reine.	Richard.
Un médecin.	Damiatro.	Un valet du roi.	Masquillier.
Blanche.	Mmes Anais.	Un médecin.	Leloir.
Maguelonne.	Dupont.	Un charretier.	Roger.
M ^{me} de Cossé.	Moralès.	Blanche.	Mmes Bartet.
Dame Bérarde.	Tousez.	Maguelonne.	Jeanne Samary.
M. de Pardailhan.	Eulalie Dupuis.	Dame Bérarde.	Joussain.
Une femme du peuple.	Martin.	M ^{me} de Cossé.	Fréaux.
		Une femme du peuple.	Thénard.

Offert par l'Éditeur du Livre d'Or de Victor Hugo



G. VERDI
RICORDANO
OPERA COMPLETA
PER
CANTO
E
PIANOFORTE
CANTO SCALCO
Edizioni Ricordi



The Timeline

- **1832** - Victor Hugo writes a stage play *Le Roi S'amuse*, which is banned by French censors
- **1851** - Verdi composes *Rigoletto* based on *Le Roi S'amuse*. The story is relocated to Italy, with a fictional Duke standing in for French King François I. The opera is a smash in Venice!
- **2015** - Catching the passionate father-daughter duet from *Rigoletto* on the radio, emerging screenwriter Gaby Santinelli reflects on the complex relationship with her own overly-protective, jester-like father ... and is compelled to do a deep dive into Hugo's original play
- Gaby discovers that myriad beloved historical figures were major players at François I's court. However, these Renaissance Celebrities didn't make it into Hugo's *Le Roi S'amuse*
- Drawing on her education at Northwestern University's renowned Performance Studies program, Gaby incorporates the real life *dramatis personae* into Hugo's tragicomic melodrama, et voilà: *At His Majesty's Pleasure* - a bold new adaptation for our modern era

Thematic Overview

In 1832, Victor Hugo premiered his politically-charged play, *Le Roi S'amuse* (literally, *The King Amuses Himself*). Hugo distanced his play from 19th century politics by time-traveling the setting back 300 years, to the Court of King François I. But the play was still banned, not to be seen again until 1882! Thanks to Giuseppe Verdi's enduring operatic revamp, *Rigoletto* (1851), we did not lose Hugo's original plot entirely.

Observing both the play & the opera now, we extract pervasive themes of gender roles in society, specifically: the rampant, unchecked predatory behavior of power players, and the overly-protective fathers of vulnerable daughters. It is here that we may explore just how much (or how little) things have really changed for men and, let's face it, for women.

But rather than hit a 21st century crowd on it head directly, we too will distance, by 500+ years! We offer a modern viewer further relatability by interweaving beloved, real life figures, whom we know were integral cogs in François' debauched Court: namely, ANNE & MARY Boleyn, DIANE de Poitiers, Leonardo da Vinci and ... The Mona Lisa herself!

Distilling what resonates for us today creates a thought-provoking, heart-racing ride.



Concept & Coverage

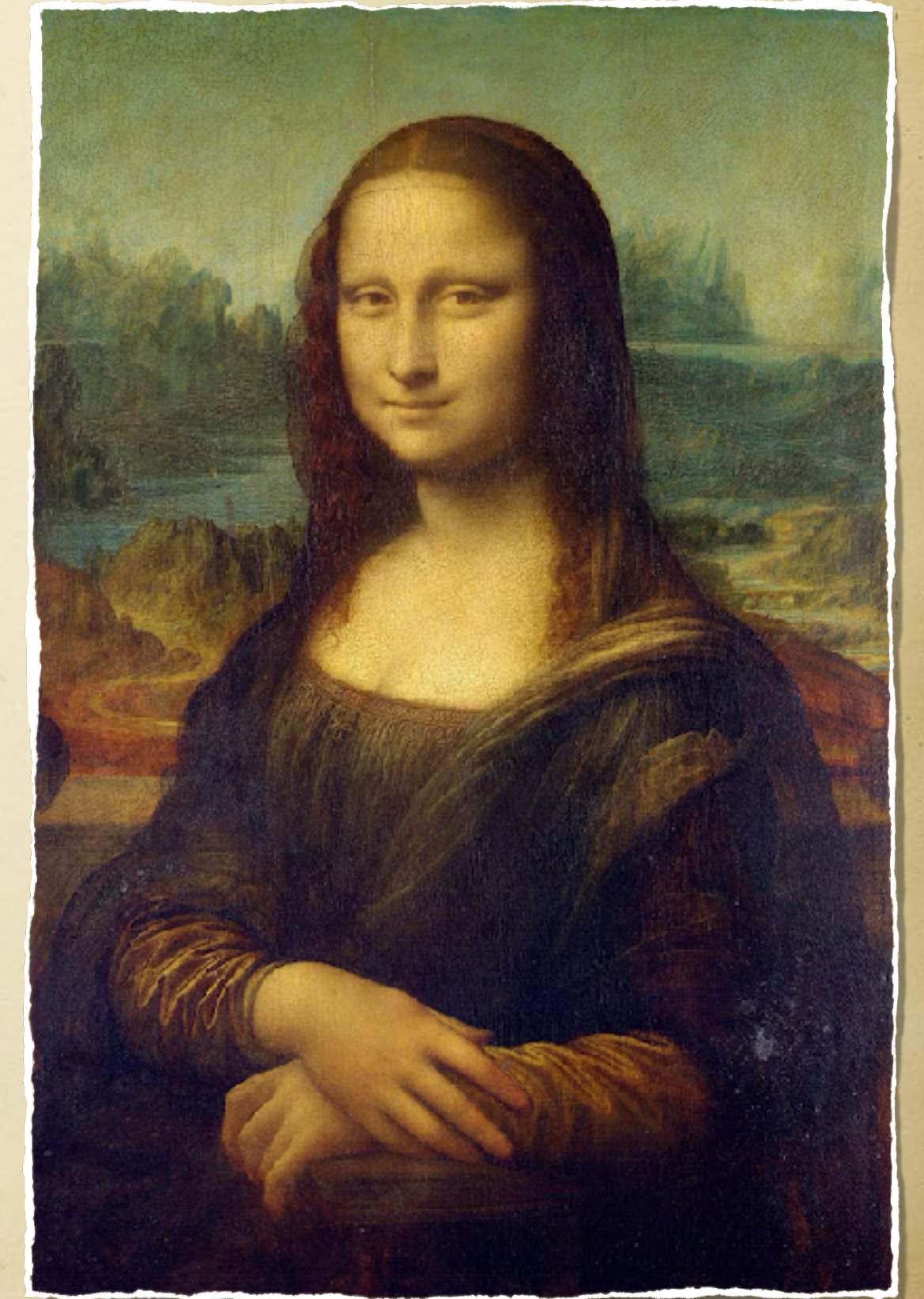
At His Majesty's Pleasure is a wonderful tale of palace intrigue, regaling us with the world of a King, his Jester & Mistresses, presented in a modern, fresh way.

The historical value of combining the actual events with Victor Hugo's play lends even greater depth and significance. The script does a stellar job connecting us back to our current world, and the themes should resonate with a modern audience, lending an overall cohesiveness and relatability.

A well-researched, intelligent, playful tone is established immediately.

Historical value is added with Leonardo Da Vinci gifting *The Mona Lisa* to The King, in what becomes an ongoing motif: François' roving eye and a penchant for infidelity are established early as a core aspect of the story. Yet despite harnessing *The Mona Lisa's* enduring image, we still have to ask: has anything really changed between men and women in 500 years?

Perhaps power-hungry predators have changed hands, from Kings and Dukes to Presidents, Prime Ministers and Corporate CEOs, but the game has not.





The Creative Team

Gaby Santinelli - screenwriter

- Gaby trained as a classical actress & operatic soprano in Chicago & New York before relocating to London to pursue a stage, screen & studio career. She also became a **dual US-UK citizen**.
- Gaby performed at the National Theatre & West End in *Jerry Springer The Opera* (Best Supporting Performance **Olivier Award**; cast album), and in **The Phantom of the Opera** as **Carlotta** (250 perfs).
- Gaby toured with Robert Wilson's avant garde masterpiece, *The Black Rider* (Barbican; Sydney, San Fran, L.A.), and featured in Gilbert & Sullivan operettas with D'Oyly Carte at The Savoy / West End.
- Roles: Blondchen (*Abduction from the Seraglio*, Covent Garden), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Papagena & 1st Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), Masha (*Three Sisters* Mamet version), Gertrude (*An Ideal Husband*), Jenny (*Company*) ... and Gilda's aria *Caro Nome*, from her favorite Verdi opera, *Rigoletto*!
- Screenwriting came after a big move to LA. Gaby's growing collection of features & TV pilots are just waiting to be produced! Her forté is creating distinct characters within ensemble-driven social satires.
- Gaby joined University of Southern California's School of Dramatic Arts Performance Faculty in 2017



*« As a well-spent day brings happy sleep,
so a life well-spent brings happy death »*

- Leonardo da Vinci

*For more information
please contact*

Gaby Santinelli

- email: info@gabysantinelli.com
- [website](#)
- [IMDb pro](#)

