

THE CHEVALIER

By Bill Barclay

Music by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges

THE CHEVALIER

Copyright © 2024 by Bill Barclay

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **THE CHEVALIER** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **THE CHEVALIER** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to www.nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **THE CHEVALIER** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

THE CHEVALIER

THE CHEVALIER

*Based on a commission by The Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2019
Finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, 2020 & 2021
Presented by The Powerhouse Theatre, 2023*

Action takes place in France between Paris and Versailles.

Act I takes place over the last six months of 1778.

Act II begins 11 years later, from the start of the French Revolution in 1789 until 1795.

NB: This play is constructed from true events. Bologne and Mozart were housemates the year *Les Police des Noirs* were sending free Black Parisians back to slavery; Bologne taught Marie Antoinette music lessons; and Bologne and Laclos wrote an opera together while both loving Joséphine. This play is the longer version of the international concert-theatre tour of the same name.

THE MUSIC & THE ORCHESTRA

Music is by Joseph Bologne with additional music by Mozart, Piccinni, Glück, Beethoven - all edited and arranged by Bill Barclay.

Though the production may be staged with recorded music, *The Chevalier* is designed for an integrated, costumed, and partially memorized orchestra of 16 musicians of color. During Act I they are scattered across the stage as an omnipresent Greek chorus. During Act II they are stationary, above the action, and can read their music off screens with footswitches.

Forces: 7 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, 1 bass, 2 oboes, 2 horns, and 1 piano & timpani player.
Acceptable reduced ensemble: string quintet plus violin soloist, piano doubles percussion.

The lead violinist represents the Chevalier de Saint-Georges in the orchestra, dressed the same as the actor. He/She plays in all moments when the Chevalier is meant to play in the scene. Similarly, the pianist is Marie Antoinette's avatar. Onstage playing is mimed while the corresponding musicians play the music in full light.

The two oboists and two horn players play less often, and so join the ensemble for group scenes and movement/fight sequences to amplify the world of the play.

THE CHEVALIER

SINGLE CAST PLAYERS (4M 3W)

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges	<i>30's, Afro-French violinist & fencer, athletic, gracious and mannered</i>
Marie Antoinette , Queen of France	<i>20, Austrian immigrant, charming and shrewd, amateur musician</i>
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	<i>20, Austrian immigrant, the enfant terrible from Peter Shaffer's titular play</i>
Captain Pierre Choderlos de Laclos (la-KLO)	<i>30's, French, shape-shifting revolutionary, author of Les Liaisons Dangereuses</i>
Joséphine , Marquise de Montalembert	<i>20's, the French novelist & amateur singer</i>
Alexandre Dumas	<i>20's, Afro-French, father of the famous author (The Three Musketeers)</i>
Nanon Bologne	<i>60's, a freed Senegalese slave, Joseph Bologne's mother</i>

ENSEMBLE (4M 2W)

Robespierre, Barnave, Brissot, Mirabeau	<i>The four famous French Revolutionaries</i>
Marquis Marc-René de Montalembert	<i>Joséphine's much older libidinous husband</i>
Dugazon, Gaveaux	<i>Stars of the Paris Opera (soprano, tenor)</i>
Juliette	<i>The Chevalier's sharp-witted maid</i>
Heléne	<i>The Marquis' housekeeper</i>
Baron Grimm	<i>A concerned Parisian</i>
Dragoons	<i>Soldiers who become the 4 Revolutionaries</i>
The Black Police (<i>Les Police des Noirs</i>)	<i>Pro-royal militia registering Blacks in Paris</i>

Notes on Casting

Historically, the only Black characters are Joseph and Nanon Bologne, and Alexandre Dumas. Nanon was Senegalese. Dumas and Joseph Bologne had French fathers. Dugazon (soprano) and Gaveaux (tenor) sing as the finest opera singers of their day. The company alternatively portrays the Dragoons, members of the Black Police (Les Police des Noirs), the Revolutionaries, and other Guards. Three must be professional actor combatants. Gender can be fluid. The violence required in this production is period rapier with pistols.

THE CHEVALIER

THE CHEVALIER

ACT I

PROLOGUE: “PARIS, 1778”

All musicians and actors enter to applause. They bow.

MUSIC 1 – **Symphony No. 2 in D major: I. Allegro Presto (1:00)**

The stage erupts in the bustle of Enlightenment Paris. The Chevalier, moving quickly and smartly dressed, is widely greeted in French. He notably avoids authorities we come to learn are the Black Police.¹ Also in the mix is Mozart, sick and fatigued, and becoming rather more ill over time. Laclos is seen following Joséphine and spying her every move. A rapidly deteriorating Mozart is finally caught by Baron Grimm, a bystander who recognises the famous composer.

SCENE I. Paris.

The dining room of Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges in the Chaussee-d’Antin. Bologne has just sat down for supper served by Juliette. On the final musical beat, Baron Grimm crashes in carrying WA Mozart. All are startled.

JULIETTE. *Que diable!?* Joseph!² (Mozart is moaning loudly and there is general pandemonium.)

BARON GRIMM. *Mon Dieu!* I’m sorry to cuss, mademoiselle.

CHEVALIER. You can be sorry about the door.

GRIMM. *Saint-Georges* please, he is urgently ill!

¹ *Les Police des Noirs*, literally The Black Police, are as historically accurate as every other major event in the play. Not known widely to history, they were avidly purging Blacks the year Mozart was in Paris, 1778.

² *Italicised text indicates either French text, or an English word that should be pronounced in a French accent. Bold text is reserved for emphasis.*

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. Who is-? (*Noticing it is young Mozart*) Good God, quickly! Clear this table, now!

JULIETTE. (*scurrying nervously*) *Un moment, monsieur!*

GRIMM. He says his mother is dead- I thought you could procure the King's doctor.

CHEVALIER. (*aggressively*) How did you know I lived here?!

GRIMM. How did I what?

CHEVALIER. Who else knows? Are you with the Black Police?! Speak!

GRIMM. *Monsieur*, I live next door. (*Mozart moans more loudly.*)

JULIETTE. *C'est Chevalier* to you, *monsieur*.

CHEVALIER. Up you go, (*lifts*) come on - here, lie down. I'd no idea he was in France - well are you just going to stand there??

GRIMM. Tell me he will live!

CHEVALIER. Thank you very much, Baron, may I remunerate your troubles?

GRIMM. It's quite alright. *Liberté, Chevalier.* (*he makes a salute in solidarity, and leaves*).

MOZART. (*bursting into life, coughing*) Not dead! Perhaps she's not dead / Do you know if-

CHEVALIER. Come now, relax, let us get you-

MOZART. Oh lord I'm going to be sick again.

JULIETTE. *Juste allongez-vous, monsieur.*

MOZART. Let us play a game. (*deeply uncomfortable*) Let's play, **who** - will I throw up on first!

CHEVALIER. You're going to be just fine.

Mozart vomits all over the Chevalier.

Mademoiselle if you **please!**

MOZART. Oh yyeah. Just had to get a load off my chest, ha!

CHEVALIER. Look at me. You are alive and well, Herr Mozart. (*Juliette stops, stunned, and stares*)

MOZART. (*Beat*) Where - am I alive, and how - am I well.

JULIETTE. (*taking Chevalier's coat off*) *You are in Paris, Monsieur Mozart.*

MOZART. There are violins on the walls.

CHEVALIER. Yes.

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. And my mother is dead. Great. *(beat)* Who are you?

JULIETTE. *Mais this is Joseph Bologne, le Chevalier de Saint-Georges.*

MOZART. You are *Saint-Georges!*? The Mulatto Mozart?!

CHEVALIER. I'm not sure we should be comparing me to-

MOZART. *(bolting up and staggering about)* HahAh another garden variety virtuoso, ha thinks he can play anything, well zing me Dapper Dan, gimme somming! duets? let's see you play! *(Pianist plays first two measures of K.545 very fast)* C'mon, let's see you oh god- *(collapses, comically passing out on the piano. (Pianist mimics on the keys)*

CHEVALIER. *(stopping Juliette who is going to Mozart)* Juliette, *chercher ma mère, tout suite, s'il vous plaît, et ses affaires.. (Juliette exits the house. Then picking up him)* Come now. We have many names in France. Mulatto, yes, also Quadroon, Octaroon... it's very organized. After all, you're an immigrant just like me. Now sit up.

MOZART. The Black Police. What is that, who are they? I could hear you, asking him.

CHEVALIER. *(handing him a jug of water)* Here. The King has created a new force, *les Police de Noirs*. They are registering Blacks to bring them back to slavery on the islands. We fight for slavery's abolishment, Wolfgang, that is why my address must stay strictly private, do you understand? Steady there, stop- enough! *(Takes the jug).*

MOZART. I thought you were a composer.

CHEVALIER. And I thought you were listening. Now clean up your sick, the smell is rank.

MOZART. So just to recap: the King is a fool, your people are rude, and it smells like farts?

CHEVALIER. *(beat)* Welcome to Paris, my dear Mozart.

The door opens and Nanon enters, followed by Juliette.

MOZART. Who is-?

CHEVALIER. Her name is *Nanon*. Herr Mozart you have not come to Paris at a good time. The streets are unsafe, particularly for us. *(Mozart goes to speak)* No, we are free but our views make us - unpopular, do you understand. I cannot mind you all day and you mustn't leave until we speak more. You no longer have a mother, so until you're feeling better, you shall have mine.

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. Well no but I-

NANON. Be seated.

MOZART. (*sitting*) Right away.

CHEVALIER. *Bienvenue a Paris - Amadeus. (Mozart and Nanon look at each other. Lights fade)*

MUSIC 2 - "New Liaisons": Symphony No. 1 in G, Op. 11: Allegretto (underscores the below)

SCENE II - A Trick on the streets of Paris

The set-up is outside Saint-Georges' house. Captain Laclos is conferring with three dragoons. As Joséphine and Heléne walk onstage, the trick is on: Laclos gives them a nod and they split up.

DRAGOON. (*drawing*) Why, *bonjour, les petites mesdames.*

JOSÉPHINE. What? Who are you?

DRAGOON. If you could just please come *ici, madame*, we have a present for you.

JOSÉPHINE. *Non*, stop that!

DRAGOON. Or maybe three!

JOSÉPHINE. Help! (*she screams*) Help *Heléne!* (*Laclos bursts into the frame, beating them all back impressively with his rapier.*)

LACLOS. (*melodramatically*) Get out! Thieves! Stand and fight! Ha! (*he kneels to pick up Joséphine's purse, lingering so their eyes can meet for the first time in the engagement pose*) I believe *madame* has dropped her purse.

JOSÉPHINE. My very stars! What a chivalrous little scene, oh how can I thank you, stand up please, **please!**

LACLOS. Captain Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *madame*, and your loyal servant.

JOSÉPHINE. Captain Laclos, the novelist?! *Mais* surely not!

HELÉNE. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses!* (*gasps, chiefly recalling his work's overt sexuality*)

LACLOS. Please, *mes petits papillons....*

THE CHEVALIER

JOSÉPHINE. *Oui, oui, c'est vous! Mon dieu, Heléne, he's the best writer in Paris!*

LACLOS. *Would it would allow me to retire, ma chérie.*

JOSÉPHINE. *Ah, desolé, the soldier's life - always shuttled here and there, it must be monstrous. My husband the Marquis is a military man, engineer actually - you two must meet! Where are you staying?*

LACLOS. *I'm just now on leave, madame, and actually I haven't yet found suitable lodging.*

JOSÉPHINE. *Well then you must stay with us! Come now, it's the least we can do. Come, follow us, to Popincourt!*

MUSIC 3 - Mozart Composing

SCENE III. The Chevalier's dining room, same as before.

The piano plays haltingly at different speeds as the scene shifts. Lights up on Mozart reading one of his pages. He is anxious and quickly gives up for another manuscript, while the pianist immediately stops, and the next piece begins. This one is a violin sonata. After one phrase he goes to write the next, but he is blank. Frustrated, he flips the page. This one is "Twinkle twinkle little star," but in French. It recalls his mother. The soprano sings it and he drifts off into space. He tears a new page.

New piece: this one for full orchestra. At the pause he goes to finish it, but the orchestra merely coughs. It is a terrible and rare case of writer's block. He throws the pages away, disgusted. He suddenly notices and glares at the Chevalier's manuscript book - leather bound, sitting on the piano. He looks around and decides to open it. Instantly we see the concertmaster step forward, dressed as the Chevalier, who begins the passionate adagio from op. 3. It is ravishingly beautiful.

Nanon enters and Mozart closes the book and puts it down. The music stops immediately.

NANON. *Time to sleep now, Wolfgang, you've been working too long.*

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. Is there more to eat?

NANON. Is there some to pay?

MOZART. Your son is finding me a job.

NANON. Is it his job to find you one?

MOZART. Oh is this a game? Because I love g- *(he reaches into the nearby fruit bowl which Nanon removes)* Wait. Stay, please. Why is he called *Chevalier*?

NANON. He was knighted by the King, *monsieur*.

MOZART. Yeah but the French would knight anyone.

NANON. *Bonne nuit, Wolfgang.*

MOZART. Please, *Nanon*. I've not had company in days. I heard he won some duel, that's all I know.

NANON. With the greatest fencing master in France! All of France took bets, the King too. Picard was great, yes but he had a weakness - hate. He condescended free Blacks.

MOZART. How *de rigueur*.

NANON. When you denigrate others you denigrate yourself. The French way is not to mock but to defend. Have you ever had to fight, young Wolfgang? To defend your mother's honour? No. Then imagine, it! *(The music begins. Mozart becomes absolutely lost in thought, imagining the duel. After a few seconds, feeling the immense rush of musical inspiration, he begins pouring out music.)*

MUSIC 4 - THE DUEL : MOZART, Symphony No. 31 in D, "Paris" III: Scherzo (1:00)

The stage transforms to a fencing salon where Bologne and Picard, the bigoted fencing master, warm up for their publicized duel. People are betting amidst intense excitement. The Director of the tournament clears the area. Mozart is visible composing rabidly throughout. All underscored:

DIRECTOR. Tout est prêt? En garde! *(The music resumes and the match begins. Joseph wins the first point. Indicating Bologne: Un! Much cheering, the music resumes. Then the second bout begins. Picard hits him. Deux! Cheering again, brief musical cadence, then: Trois! This is the*

THE CHEVALIER

longest bout. They duel and Picard appears to have him cornered. Bologne dodges, finds his footing, beats him back to his corner, gets him off balance, and scores the easiest point of all.) Bologne! (The crowd cries with applause and whisks Bologne away. Mozart comes back into view, spent from composing, and lost in thought at Bologne's skill and achievements. Bologne leaves the imagined duel and walks into his house.)

CHEVALIER. *Bon soir.* Well, have we changed the world today? You're looking better and better. And I have good news! (*sees his open manuscript. Mozart starts*). You needn't be ashamed to look, *Chevalier Blanc*, my music is for your reference.

MOZART. You know you're really something else.

CHEVALIER. Ha! Said the bishop to the priest. What are you on about?

MOZART. That duel you fought when you were knighted. How do you stay calm when people want to destroy you?

CHEVALIER. (*looks at him a beat*) Practice. How are you feeling, *Chevalier Blanc*?

MOZART. Why do you call me that?

CHEVALIER. *Le Chevalier Blanc.* It is a compliment.

MOZART. **You** are *le Chevalier*.

CHEVALIER. They call me the *Mulatto Mozart*... I'm merely returning the favour.

MOZART. You're taking the piss.

CHEVALIER. It means The White Knight! It rings, it rhymes, very chivalrous. Now, show me what you're writing.

MOZART. I've started a new symphony. I like it. My 31st, I'm calling it: "Paris."

CHEVALIER. You don't say.

MOZART. You said you had good news? A commission? (*Bologne starts to speak*) What is it, tell me!

CHEVALIER. It's not an opera, per se.

MOZART. It's not?

CHEVALIER. More of a ballet.

MOZART. A ballet?

CHEVALIER. Well, a pantomime.

MOZART. What the hell is a pantomime?

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. Of a charming little story actually, called: *Les Petite Riens*.

MOZART. *Les Petits Riens...* The Little Nothings?! You said you'd find me an opera!

CHEVALIER. I did not.

MOZART. Now I have to deal with mute freaking French farts mincing around miming a story about shitty little nothings?!

CHEVALIER. It's not as bad as it sounds.

MOZART. Whatever the hell that means.

CHEVALIER. Don't be crude.

MOZART. Can you even hear yourself talking?

CHEVALIER. You will do it and you will do it magnificently or you will embarrass me!

MOZART. Is everything alright?

CHEVALIER. Yes. Not really. The city feels unsettled and I suppose, so do I.

MOZART. You didn't come home last night. Did you get lucky?

CHEVALIER. Black and lucky aren't the best of friends, *Chevalier Blanc*.

MOZART. Such a Don Juan. (*Bologne scoffs*) But with a beautiful heart.

CHEVALIER. Those days are somewhat behind me, I'm afraid.

MOZART. Don Juans never retire. (*an idea*) I need to write something down. (*A knocking on the door. Juliette enters and knows the drill. She answers from inside.*)

JULIETTE. *Salut! Chi est la?*

VOICE of SWISS GUARD. *Entourage des Versailles, mademoiselle, for le Chevalier de Saint-Georges.*

MOZART. (*shouting whispers*) Versailles?! I thought no one knows where you live?

CHEVALIER. The King bloody well does!

MOZART. Does he usually give you a lift?

JULIETTE. Cht! I'm afraid you have the wrong *maison, monsieur*.

SWISS GUARD. *Au contraire.* The Queen, *Marie Antoinette*, has especially requested a private music lesson from *le Chevalier de Saint-Georges*. (*A stunned pause while they gape at each other.*)

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. Don't forget your fiddle.

MUSIC 5 - Violin Concerto in G major, Op. 9, No. 8 *The Full Ensemble stage the transition to Versailles. Though Bologne is protected by Swiss Guards, we see the Black Police observing him.*

SCENE IV. Versailles

The private salon of the Queen, Marie Antoinette. Marie Antoinette's two female ladies bow formally, and leave regally. The music stops.

CHEVALIER. *Son Altesse Sérénissime-*

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Let us not be so very formal, please.

CHEVALIER. My apologies.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. No apologies, either.

CHEVALIER. I was delighted to see you at our concert last week.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Yes you don't – (*mimics dismissively*) conduct indiscriminately with your bow like all the others.

CHEVALIER. I prefer to play, madame. Besides, it is –

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Dumb? Some wine, *Chevalier*, help yourself.

CHEVALIER. (*reaching for the carafe*) *Merci bien*, and, and some for you I'm sure?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I don't drink.

CHEVALIER. You called for a music lesson?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Tell me, your violin concerto, opus 5, number 2--

CHEVALIER. *Oui-*

MARIE ANTOINETTE. has, a four bar passage apparently lifted from Bach's Partita in E major, are you aware?

CHEVALIER. It is - *un homage, madame.*

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Well: the French have a word for everything.

CHEVALIER. Shall we begin?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. *Mais oui, bien sur, on y va tout de suite.*

CHEVALIER. Which pieces / would you like- (*She has already played A's for tuning. All musical playing is mimed.*)

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. The A major, your second sonata.

CHEVALIER. (*looking around*) Yes, I believe I know it.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. It's on your stand.

CHEVALIER. Right / so it is.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. The very top, question: Two measure introduction, then a four measure phrase, but then **three**, then three again. Yes it is symmetrical but it's terribly odd - why?

CHEVALIER. Perhaps I'd like to keep you guessing.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Let's play. And!

MUSIC 6a – Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Keyboard in A major: I. Allegro moderato m. 1-12

(*Stops - quick pause.*)

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Quite unconventional. And now what, I play the theme again on my own. And where are you?

CHEVALIER. I'm about to come in.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Why are you not leading?

CHEVALIER. I don't wish to lead all the time.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. (*laughs*) It's a violin sonata.

CHEVALIER. It is a sonata for violin and piano. And you're quite good / your highness.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. / It's a solo piece with accompaniment.

CHEVALIER. It is a conversation.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You're supposed to have the tune.

CHEVALIER. I want the voices to be equal.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You don't like dominance.

CHEVALIER. I don't like power! (*steady*) Not, over others.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. That seems a shame.

CHEVALIER. (*flustered*) Not in music my lady.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. How about in Versailles?

CHEVALIER. I want people to **play** these pieces, your highness. I want-

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Please, call me Antoine. (*disarming him*) You were saying.

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. I want the voices to enjoy each other. (*oops*) The violin mustn't be the soloist every time it speaks.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. We, are the soloists, then.

CHEVALIER. *Mais oui.* We are also the spectators. Shall, we.

MUSIC 6b – CONT'D: they play again, from measure 13, pausing just before m28.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Very militaristic of you, all those double dotted rhythms.

CHEVALIER. Perhaps.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Like you're sending us into war.

CHEVALIER. Someone has to do it. (*he is getting the hang of this*) And what happens next?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Looks like we play the theme together at last.

CHEVALIER. Then?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Then you jump around frightfully for a bit like a bird doing its mating dance.

CHEVALIER. Not - quite what I'd imagined.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. But those leaps, they're so disjointed, they're practically / outrageous.

CHEVALIER. / They're meant to set you off.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I can't thrill all by myself?

CHEVALIER. Oh I have different pieces for that.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. (*speechless, then suddenly, in tempo*) And go!

MUSIC 6c - CONT'D: they play from m28 to m59, trading phrases generously, and stop.

CHEVALIER. Equal.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Indeed, this - equality, among the voices. I've heard it in your quartets, it allows the parts to... breathe together. But is also a statement-

CHEVALIER. Will that be all today?

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Is it not political - not to mention anti-Royal - to seed democracy in the chattering parlors of discontent?

CHEVALIER. (*carefully*) Let it not surprise nor alarm you, my Queen, that I use my art to advance my cause.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. But slavery is outlawed in France.

CHEVALIER. (*as diplomatically as possible*) Not in the colonial islands, as Majesty knows. (*beat*) You're much better than I thought you'd be.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. (*false modesty*) I'm just sight-reading actually. It isn't-

CHEVALIER. You can read like that? They're not yet published, these are hand-written, much harder to read.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. It's not hard, (*she registers her mistake*), so no, I mean- I do practice, of course.

CHEVALIER. (*beat*) Let's try the second movement.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Oh, no! (*recovery:*) Indeed, I would greatly prefer to go to a different piece, / I haven't-

CHEVALIER. (*trying to help her*) / It is... what is it.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Your second movement is too – coy.

(*correcting herself*) Intimate. (*oops*) The violin is so **restrained**, it's -

CHEVALIER. I want the voices to be -

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Equal, you've said, sir.

CHEVALIER. My, / apologies-

MARIE ANTOINETTE. / **Surely** you're not naïve like this, *Chevalier*.

CHEVALIER. *Pardon, madame?*

MARIE ANTOINETTE. They're like gossamer, these phrases! Dispensable sort of nursery rhymes. Much too sensitive - more of a lullaby than a suitable slow movement, isn't it?

CHEVALIER. Shall we try it?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. How did you learn to play like that?

CHEVALIER. You keep changing the subject.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I am not, you're this famous swordsman, all manly virtue everywhere then suddenly you debut as the fastest fiddler in Paris! This second movement - for children it might seem - is not that man. Besides, it simply defies belief that you would be - beavering away on your violin for so long with natural athletic prowess burning a hole in your

THE CHEVALIER

heart. (*Bologne reacts*) No one heard you practice, no one knew you played.

CHEVALIER. No one asked.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. *Chevalier...*

CHEVALIER. (*in his wooing vein*) They are actually not that different, the foil and the bow. The world sees the arm but the skill is the wrist. The whole world is in there. It is the same - fluidity.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Do the new bows help?

CHEVALIER. The new bows help, of course. They bounce beautifully, like, a ballerina doing *un grand jeté*.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Oh. Up and down?

CHEVALIER. (*beat*) You have successfully changed the subject.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. So this andantino, you actually want it adagio, like a cold syrup - and it is to be **played**, or shared really, rather than heard?

CHEVALIER. Precisely. Your tempo? (*She takes a breath and sort of sings something too pedestrian and fast.*) Far too fast.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Come now, it is absolutely **maudlin** if you don't -

CHEVALIER. Just two people having a normal / conversation.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. / It becomes an utter *cliché*.

CHEVALIER. It's no *cliché*, if you mean what you say. (*Taken, she looks at him, and nods. They start at the beginning. Lights shift as they play.*)

MUSIC 7 – II. Andantino, from the top (:30)

THE CHEVALIER

SCENE V. Popincourt - A hall in the mansion of the Marquis de Montalembert.

Lights up on the Marquis, an old, fat, blubbering, coughing, yet energetic aristocrat, decades older than his wife Joséphine, who stands to one side with Captain Laclos. Heléne, the maid, stands next to the Marquis who is showing off the model of his military wall, while drinking with help from Heléne.

MARQUIS. *(Blubbering)* Eh voila, Captain, as you can see *dans la petite maquette*, I have designed a truly innovative wall that no amount of force can successfully penetrate.

LACLOS. *(to Joséphine)* We wouldn't want any of that would we?

MARQUIS. By those filthy Austrians we do not! Marie Antoinette will be the last German to impregnate our sacred nation - **if** she ever spreads it and gets him in there.

JOSÉPHINE. *Ugh, mon dieu...*

LACLOS. Is it true they have not yet- consummated their marriage, your excellency?

MARQUIS. *(burps)* So says speculation! Juicy eh? Something to line one of your hot novels, to be sure.

LACLOS. You have read my work?

MARQUIS. Ha, *tout le monde!* Dangerous Liaisons is an instant classic my boy! Dark, misanthropic and extremely sexy, Captain, you should be ashamed of yourself *(cackles lustfully, coughs)*.

LACLOS. It is not an autobiography sire.

MARQUIS. But why ever not?! Allow us to presume you have enjoyed these sexual exploits, 'tis the life of a soldier eh? *(laughs yet manages to pinch Heléne's rear, who squeaks)*

JOSÉPHINE. Captain Laclos has been shipped from town to town for nearly 30 years - as he is currently on leave I thought he could remain here to walk me through Paris, since it has become so unsafe.

LACLOS. I seek to gain my fortune as a writer, excellency, so I can leave my service behind.

THE CHEVALIER

MARQUIS. Yes, yes yes, my wife Joséphine told me as much, but what of your military savvy, Captain?

LACLOS. Artillery, *monsieur*. Ballistics. My weapons are known for their indefatigable speed. Indeed, my projectiles can fire up to once **every three minutes**. (*Heléne snorts. The Marquis chuckles. Joséphine rolls her eyes.*)

MARQUIS. So what do you make of my military battlements, *monsieur*? I have surely hit it, have I not?

LACLOS. You honor me with your supreme engineering genius, sire.

MARQUIS. Yes, yes I knew it.

LACLOS. If I may, to reach the greatest number of targets, your cannon should reposition to the parapets here, with my short range ballistics on the *tenailles* here. Your cannon eliminates the enemy's long-range weaponry while my muskets trap their infantry on the *glacis* where there is no chance of escape.

MARQUIS. Genius, genius! (*to Heléne*) More Rhenish, please, sweet Heléne, and a tankard for the Captain. We must have more of this revelation! (*here he is attacked by a furious coughing fit*).

JOSÉPHINE. You must excuse my husband for he is not well. Perhaps you should go lay down, Marc-René?

MARQUIS. Indeed. What a gentle creature you are. (*He coughs in her face*) I must rest before I see his Majesty.

LACLOS. (*alerted*) You have an audience with the King? When?

JOSÉPHINE. If he is well enough.

MARQUIS. Whenever I damn well wish! He will fund my wall for the protection of France!

LACLOS. Excellency. (*he drops to one knee*). I implore you, as meager recompense for saving your wife: men of low birth are not allowed past the rank of Captain. (*a look at Joséphine*) I have filed again for promotion - I could live in Paris, writing - advising you! Will you ask his Majesty to consider my case?

MARQUIS. We value you, Laclos, you can be sure of that. Joséphine will entertain you. Sing for him my dove. Heléne, please now, my bed. And a baguette.

THE CHEVALIER

HELÉNE. *Allons-y, papa, dépêchez-vous - merci à tout, à bientôt* ³(*Exits with the Marquis, improvised French regards from everyone 'Bisous! Bon soir Heléne, monsieur, etc.'*).

LACLOS. How on earth do you do it?

JOSÉPHINE. Oh please, he is so generous - he is building me my very own private opera, here at Popincourt.

LACLOS. The wealth and power of the nobility knows no bounds.

JOSÉPHINE. Spoken like a true revolutionary! I hope you are more philosopher than infidel, Captain.

LACLOS. I believe in wealth for all. Versailles flows with money and waste while the people live in filth! Is it an act of treason to say we wish to reform the Crown so that all may suffer less? I mean no disrespect, pet. I am merely a pilgrim on the path to true equality for all.

JOSÉPHINE. As am I! Though I'm sure we must look like hoarders to you. Excessive wealth for some creates instability for all - this I can see well. But I can no longer mortify my flesh for it. The Marquis plucked me from complete obscurity and besides, please know how little choice I had in the match.

LACLOS. You were born low like me.

JOSÉPHINE. And you must likewise find a patron, Captain, to live as an artist if that is your desire.

LACLOS. And what of **your** true desire?

JOSÉPHINE. I desire to sing! I am no great talent, but I wish to host Paris's musicians, make music, feed them, provide a safe space from the gossip and the dust-up *du jour*. You can help me find them! As you can see I am happiest in the company of true *artistes*, Laclos.

LACLOS. Now don't you see what's happened? Life has conspired to make your very dreams come true.

JOSÉPHINE. Has it, Captain, how?

LACLOS. It has thrust me in your path to be your guardian.

JOSÉPHINE. I'm sure I can't imagine what you mean.

LACLOS. I must confess myself. From the instant I saw you, *Joséphine de Montalembert*, the strangest transformation has overcome me. My heart

³ Come on, father, let's go - thanks everyone, see you later.

THE CHEVALIER

has marked each second of the time, / like the calling of my immortal soul, hearing you, seeing you, and only you-

JOSÉPHINE. / Oh god. *Monsieur*, Captain, please, do NOT use such language, we hardly know each other.

LACLOS. Irrelevant! What sense is there in denying it, surely you must feel it too, *madame*-

JOSÉPHINE. I feel grateful for you, Laclos, I wish to return the favor of your gallantry, but you are quite on the precipice of eroding those graces, *monsieur*. Please, rectify yourself - start again, please.

LACLOS. (*beat*) I love you. / I'm not afraid of it, not afraid to say it, don't care who else knows!

JOSÉPHINE. / No, no, plea- you do not! *Mon dieu*, it's like a character from one of your novels! / now stop it!-

LACLOS. (*starting to follow her around the room*) / Can you just imagine, three months, six, the old man dies and you inherit his power. You deserve to feel desire,/ you deserve to be wanted, devotional love, to make your body his temple, have you ever even allowed yourself those thoughts, Joséphine, divine being, you-

JOSÉPHINE. / *Non, non- monsieur*. Please- I- stop it, Captain. **I am the Madame of this house!!!** (*Laclos, shocked by her sudden strength, sits.*) Sorry. (*sits, alarmed at both of them*) *Mon Dieu.* (*He starts*) *Silence!* You may stay for one week to find your feet but then you will leave. In the meanwhile you shall escort me for my protection - at a safe distance. And when you have done so respectfully, only **then** will I decide whether to share this depressing incident with the French Guard. Do you understand? (*Music starts. Laclos stands, bows, and as he rises, meets her eyes. Lights shift.*)

MUSIC 8 – CONT'D: II. Andantino, m. 189 (Minore allegro, 1:00)

SCENE VI. Versailles, same as before.

Marie Antoinette and the Chevalier are in the same position as before.

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. Perfectly done, you're getting much better at the duel, Antoine, I'm very impressed.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Herr Mozart is in Paris.

CHEVALIER. Yes, I-

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Where is he staying, do you know? Now, this newest piece of his.

MUSIC 9 – Mozart, Piano Sonata in A minor, K. 310: II. Andante cantabile con espressione - dark middle section. (5:36-6:10 on this recording)

CHEVALIER. (*Waiting to let the music establish, then recognising it*) He has only just composed that!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. **This** is the Austrian reveler, Herr Mozart? The *enfant terrible* 'wont to set a table on a roar?'

CHEVALIER. His mother is dead. (*She stops playing*)

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Are you helping him?

CHEVALIER. *Le Chevalier Blanc* needs no help.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You're helping him. Why?

CHEVALIER. He is discovering his feelings.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Shall I hold my breath?

CHEVALIER. He needs to heal. He has important work to do and you know it. You are acquainted, I gather.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. He asked me to marry him when we were eight. Do you have time to take on this new project?

CHEVALIER. He's too young for the kind of post he seeks and Paris is impossible.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. He wants to run the Opera of course.

CHEVALIER. He should get it! He has already written 30 symphonies.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Yes, but how many of them do you really like? (*Bologne blubbers a bit unsure how to respond*) I have it! Organist here in Versailles! Sorted, we need one.

CHEVALIER. He might not like that.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Well that's too bad isn't it. (*beat*) How do you really feel about Mozart being here?

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. The more the merrier.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Sure. Paris may never warm to an Austrian again after me. Besides he is young, and the French like a man with a certain, experience wouldn't you agree?

CHEVALIER. I couldn't possibly divine what you mean.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. The true songbirds will flock to Vienna. I envy him.

CHEVALIER. You miss Austria.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. We are all outsiders, aren't we, *Chevalier* - looking for a safe place to heal. Until I produce an heir, Versailles is not that place for me. And now again I've been far too candid with you, *monsieur*.

CHEVALIER. I beg your -

MARIE ANTOINETTE. No sorry.

CHEVALIER. No sorry.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You have given me so much counsel in these lessons I could never repay you. I want to know something true. What is it you truly desire, *Saint-Georges*?

CHEVALIER. (*diplomatically*) As your highness knows well, there are always things outside of one's reach.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You cannot marry! Of course, how dreadful. Would I could snap my fingers and change it all. But as sure as Venus lives in Paris, you may love, *Chevalier*.

CHEVALIER. It is not that. I care only for my work, *madame*, although it would be awfully nice if before supper the new Americans would abolish slavery, I suppose.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Ahh, you think far too much of them.

CHEVALIER. Don't we all?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You conduct the finest orchestra in all of Europe and play your own concertos as fast as you can write them. What more? **You** want the Opera!

CHEVALIER. No, I would not be so bold / I could never-

MARIE ANTOINETTE. / But that's it, of course it is! Management is up for auction again, we will put together a team of financiers and back your leadership as director!

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. While they are literally counting Blacks in France to ship us out? My Queen, it is not safe.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Those red-coated thugs. You can handle them. And we will show them you are not afraid.

CHEVALIER. Quite impossible, not to mention dangerous.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. The Paris Opera is the firmament of art itself and you must be its evening star!

CHEVALIER. Say the Black Police don't deport me for even trying, competition will be far too stiff!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. But there is no one else! It is plain as day. Lead them! Be your passion! pursue the very heights of it, oh it is marvelous! I will put you forward myself.

CHEVALIER. I - would never let you down, your Majesty.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Joseph. (*she touches her chest*). I am trusting until that trust is betrayed. You do not earn it, but you can lose it. Do you understand?

CHEVALIER. Impeccably.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Next week, same time. (*Laclos crosses the stage as the scene dissolves, walking a dark Paris street, through a secret door, and into the belly of the early revolution, filled with Dragoons.*)

MUSIC 10 - Violin Concerto Op. 5, No. 2 in A major, transitions into scene underscore.

SCENE VII. The secret press of the Resistance

LACLOS. *Monsieurs, bonne nuit. (improvised greetings all around)*

DRAGOON. Some proofing for you, Captain.

LACLOS. Let me see it.

DRAGOON. (*handing him a political cartoon*) It's Marie Antoinette, sir.

LACLOS. (*turning it rightside up*) *L'Autrichienne* - an Austrian screwing an ostrich? Clever! Add lesbians.

DRAGOON. How many copies.

LACLOS. 50,000, let's see how it does.

DRAGOON. We have letters from President Washington.

THE CHEVALIER

LACLOS. And?

DRAGOON. They will back our campaign sir. We have the Americans.

LACLOS. *(after an expectant pause)* Drinks all around. *(They all cheer)*

Our moment is coming. A constitution, gentlemen! We don't need to destroy the Crown or its loyalists, just weaken them.

DRAGOON. And what from the Marquis de Montalembert? Can he be turned to our side?

LACLOS. I have infiltrated the Marquis' at Popincourt, but they are Royalists through and through.

DRAGOON. Hang them!

LACLOS. Humiliate them first. *(hands a poem to a dragoon)*. Print this anonymously, just opposite the Queen's depravity. A filthy ode dedicated to his young Marquise. If she isn't mortified - she's a stone.

SCENE VIII. The Chevalier's house, as before.

Mozart is writing. The Chevalier enters.

CHEVALIER. You can't have been out today.

MOZART. Not true, I bought some cheese.

CHEVALIER. Not quite what I'm smelling. How's the ballet going?

MOZART. It's done.

CHEVALIER. So soon?

MOZART. It's good but I need more.

CHEVALIER. And would you guess but I just might have it.

MOZART. A post? Kapellmeister?

CHEVALIER. Organist at Versailles!!!

MOZART. Ugh. Versailles is not Paris.

CHEVALIER. Six months a year playing for the royal family, and six to do what you wish!

MOZART. Pay?

CHEVALIER. 2,000 *livres*.

MOZART. Not enough.

CHEVALIER. It is more than generous.

MOZART. You have no family to support.

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. How dare you!

MOZART. Father, sisters, cost of getting them all here. Father wants a job too.

CHEVALIER. There are hundreds of musicians who would kill for this post!

MOZART. Then they can share it betwixt them and la-diddly-freaking-dee. (*Imitates a Bach organ prelude loudly, nasally and grotesquely.*)

CHEVALIER. (*interrupting*) You can teach the royal children, you can travel!

MOZART. I've played that organ, it's rubbish.

CHEVALIER. You were only eight!

MOZART. Oh, and I suppose you were there!

CHEVALIER. I heard you a mere two years later.

MOZART. (*pause*) What, at the Princess de Conti's tea party? But there is a famous painting of that day and there certainly aren't any black people in it.

CHEVALIER. You don't say.

MOZART. (*beat*) Father will think I should take it. I **must** be music director.

CHEVALIER. With what experience? Salzburg?

MOZART. They know their music.

CHEVALIER. German music.

MOZART. It will have its day!

CHEVALIER. Have you **ever met** a French person?!

MOZART. It is the universal language of souls!

CHEVALIER. And you are not the right messenger here! Not **yet**, Herr Mozart.

MOZART. But Paris is so ignorantly behind! You have **no idea**. French works have no harmonic development! You cannot modulate, you stay in the same key the entire flogging time, like the ghosts of Lully and Rameau vomiting endless powdered ballets for sodden dancers with the clap, to a deadbeat audience of drooling, old, fat, *croque monsieurs*! it's absolutely dreadful!

CHEVALIER. We have long abandoned the continuo.

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. Oh really, wow, a timely farewell to a squeaky chest of rotting freaking viols.

CHEVALIER. We have made the new bow.

MOZART. (*pausing*) What new bow?

CHEVALIER. You think you know everything, it really is magnificent. (*Hands his bow to Mozart.*)

MOZART. Didn't see one of these in Mannheim. Does it take practice?

CHEVALIER. The sound is full all the way to the tip. Even you may need some time on it first.

MOZART. Show me. (*Hands it back.*)

CHEVALIER. As you wish. (*He mimes 20 seconds of pure virtuosity*)

MUSIC 11 – a short flashy violin solo from Violin Concerto No. 9 in G, Op. 8, Rondeau

MOZART. You can play the violin from now on.

CHEVALIER. Come now.

MOZART. I shall never play again.

CHEVALIER. I have it! String quartets! Paris has only just discovered them; they're marvelous, a true composer's medium.

MOZART. Have you heard Haydn's?

CHEVALIER. No.

MOZART. You will. I heard one of yours last week.

CHEVALIER. And?

MOZART. Your first violin never goes higher than third position.

CHEVALIER. Mozart I want them to be **played**.

MOZART. You do move the tune about quite a lot among the voices, it's very generous.

CHEVALIER. The violin is only first among equals - the four parts should be as balanced as the ear can allow.

MOZART. Still no development section though.

CHEVALIER. Perhaps you'd like to play one with me!

MOZART. I have it: I will hold a public concert of new work, and reintroduce myself - as an adult!

CHEVALIER. With what money?

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. Box office.

CHEVALIER. Won't cover it, not yet.

MOZART. Just program me in your orchestra! I'll even write you something with no development so they'll think I'm a proper *Parisien*.

(Singing maniacally) – G G G, E F G A B C!!!

CHEVALIER. Mozart.

MOZART. *(Sings loudly, mockingly, precociously, brilliantly:)* C, G G C / G E C G, / G G G!!

CHEVALIER. / Mozart- / Amadeus- / **Will you shut up!** At the earliest it would be four months from now-

MOZART. Well I will write an Italian opera then.

CHEVALIER. With what commission? *(Mozart kicks over the stool, suddenly manically depressed).* Mozart...

MOZART. I've had letters from father.

CHEVALIER. Ha, I knew there was something. Come, let me see. *(Mozart gives him the letters.)*

MOZART. He is cross, he's being gross and desperately unfair.

CHEVALIER. "I am sure that my dear departed wife neglected herself and on that account was neglected by others. *(Looks at Mozart)* The doctor was called in far too late, for she was already in danger."

He knows all this from Salzburg?

MOZART. He blames me for her death when I took every possible precaution, AND-

CHEVALIER. "If your mother had merely returned home from Mannheim, / *she would not have died.*"

MOZART. / She would not have died?!! It was all his idea! He is so petrified of my being alone, of my falling in love with some French floozy that he forced me to take her here!

CHEVALIER. It's not your fault.

MOZART. It's not your mother!

CHEVALIER. Mozart, my mother is my conscience, and if I ever lost her, I would lose my north star.

MOZART. *(on the brink)* Yes.

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. Place her in your music. Let her live there, let her speak to you, there. It may surprise you, how music can comfort you, heal you even, when you just allow yourself to let it all the way in, yes?

(suddenly realising) Mozart how does your father know of your address here?

MOZART. What? Oh I just gave him yours.

CHEVALIER. Gave who mine?

MOZART. Oh don't worry, some guys came round and asked. They were asking for me! They even said they would post my letters! What, I have fans! Enough of the doldrums let's play a game. No, let's play a duet. An ode to our mothers!

CHEVALIER. And you told them I lived here?

MOZART. What? No! Did I?

CHEVALIER. You need to leave.

MOZART. What? You can't kick me out. Wait why?

CHEVALIER. Because you're no longer safe here.

MOZART. Why are you so paranoid?

CHEVALIER. Shoot! I'm late.

MOZART. For what?

CHEVALIER. Juliette!! Only the most important audition of my life! *(she appears)* My dear I'm sorry we must do this again. Take your good self and Mozart straight to my mother's. All your things. Do it now. *(Gets his sword and violin)*. No merit without difficulty, eh Mozart? Embrace it, and go - now!

MUSIC 12a - Duetto: "Cara, sappiate, oh Dio!" from Le Finte Gemelle (The Fake Twins) by Niccolò Piccinni, 1771 (top :30 tenor solo, then from 6:00 to the end)

SCENE IX. Rehearsal at the Paris Opera

Lights up on soprano Mlle. Dugazon (playing Isabella), and tenor Pierre Gaveaux (Belfiore). The characters are in love but the singers hate each other. This is only revealed towards the very end of this duet which has otherwise gone exceptionally well. This scene plays like Moliere.

THE CHEVALIER

BELFIORE. (GAVEAUX) *Cara, cara sappiate, oh Dio, oh Dio!*

ISABELLA. (DUGAZON)

Mi dice quell'occhietto

Che presto presto presto

Diate la mano a me.

BELFIORE. (GAVEAUX)

Quel labbro di cinabro

Bellissima, vaghissima, vaghissima

Dice lo stesso a me.

ISABELLA. *Dunque perché tardate?*

BELFIORE. *Dunque a che cosa fate?*

CHEVALIER. Stop, please, you are singing the words but you are not thinking them, and therefore we are feeling nothing. Please, focus on the story. Once again, 'Dunque perché.' Yes? (*resumes* - **MUSIC 12b**)

ISABELLA. *Dunque perché tardate?*

BELFIORE. *Dunque a che cosa fate?*

BOTH.

Stavo a guardar due stelle

Vague preziose, e belle

Che fanno delirar.

(On the final pulse of the music, Dugazon punches Pierre square in the jaw. Everyone rushes to the stage as a melee ensues to break up the fight. Ad libs, etc.)

GAVEAUX. I've been assaulted!

DUGAZON. How dare you, slime! Filth! Don't! Touch me with those filthy hands!

GAVEAUX. Filthy?! **Filthy...**

DUGAZON. Beast! (*socks him in the gut, all vocally react*) With your black pit of cavernous lust!!! (*Everyone looks at Pierre, then back at Dugazon during the below, etc.*)

GAVEAUX. If I stand accused for a crime, come now, let everyone hear it!

DUGAZON. We have known each other, *monsieur*. *Tout le monde* knows

THE CHEVALIER

this.

GAVEAUX. *Oui, oui, mon petit hippopotame.*⁴

DUGAZON. *Oui, oui?! Last night you left my boudoir to fuck La Guimard! (Everyone looks at La Guimard, then suddenly at Pierre. Slight vocalisations, etc.)*

GAVEAUX. I wouldn't say... fuck.

DUGAZON. *AHHH!!!! (Racing toward him and somehow manages to attach her hands to his face.)*

PIERRE. / Please! My angel!

EVERYONE. *(exiting) / Monsieur! Calmez-vous, Si'l vous plait, madame! etc. (A beat as Bologne is left alone. Like a flash he draws and turns to Captain Laclos, in military dress, barely visible, who has been watching from a dark corner. Just then, Joséphine effusively begins to applaud from high in the house balcony. It is confusing.)*

JOSÉPHINE. Wonderful, Saint-Georges, bravo, Captain please ask him to stay, *un instant, les gars!*

CHEVALIER. Come out from there.

LACLOS. Save the *panache*, Saint-Georges, I know what you can do.

CHEVALIER. You don't belong here.

LACLOS. I've got the look haven't I?

CHEVALIER. Singers don't skulk in corners. Who are you?

LACLOS. A lowly Captain, *Chevalier*, for equal rights for all.

CHEVALIER. Yes equal rights for all.

LACLOS. Yet you... work for the Crown?

CHEVALIER. Yes and long live the King.

LACLOS. You know that war is coming.

CHEVALIER. Good to know.

LACLOS. Is it? We are one more famine away from a revolution, *monsieur.*

CHEVALIER. I'll write a song about it.

LACLOS. This theatre will die!

CHEVALIER. War is always coming and theatre is always dying! I think they both quite like it actually, somehow, don't you? What do you **want**,

⁴ My little hippopotamus.

THE CHEVALIER

soldier?

LACLOS. A constitution! Rights for all men and women. We are organizing a coalition. For *liberté, Chevalier!*

CHEVALIER. We all seek this, of course we do.

LACLOS. Then how can a monarchy satisfy you?

CHEVALIER. Stop. I know what is spoken in your political clubs and just what makes you think I disagree? But I don't lurk in corners, predict downfalls nor hatch insurrections.

LACLOS. None of us wants a civil war.

CHEVALIER. You look positively gagging for it.

LACLOS. Tell me, just how many men would you kill for your freedom, *monsieur?*

CHEVALIER. Excuse me?

LACLOS. *Chevalier* we have no food! People have not the freedom to eat! And a financial crash is coming.

CHEVALIER. Wh-how's that?

LACLOS. We have exorbitant national debt, and the nobility pay no tax. How long can this last?

CHEVALIER. It has for hundreds of years.

LACLOS. This time is different. The monarchy will lose the people's hearts just as in America.

CHEVALIER. And you will be right there to slit their throats. And you will lose complete control. (*Laclos tries to speak*) I do not know who wounded you, Captain whoever you are, but on your road to treason might I remind you, as I am Knight of the King, that there are avenues yet to pursue that can rid our colonies of slavery, without thrusting all of France onto the bloody rack of civil war. You seek advancement? perhaps I can help you.

LACLOS. And what is it you truly want, *Chevalier?*

CHEVALIER. After you leave? To sit outside in the sun and play my violin.

LACLOS. Oh, all by yourself?

CHEVALIER. And you're inferring what, exactly?

LACLOS. Your race needs you.

CHEVALIER. Which one?

THE CHEVALIER

LACLOS. Both! (*In comes Joséphine from backstage.*)

JOSÉPHINE. I'm here, I'm so sorry, *Saint-Georges!* *Mon dieu*, the honour is all mine.

LACLOS. *Et voilà la Marquise.*

JOSÉPHINE. Just the smell of the seats, what an empowering place the stage is, *monsieur le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, enchanté, bien sûr de faire votre connaissance!*⁵

CHEVALIER. *Ravi de faire votre connaissance, madame, tres enchanté*⁶, and would you mind introducing your companion to me?

JOSÉPHINE. You've not yet met? My word, it is a privilege to introduce the best writer in all of Paris, Captain Pierre Laclos, *monsieur* - the author of *Dangerous Liaisons*.

LACLOS. *Madame...*

JOSÉPHINE. What a pair you two make, sons of both Apollo **and** Mars. He is a soldier-*artiste* just like you, *Saint-Georges*, hard at work for my husband, the Marquis. For the defence of France, *monsieur*.

CHEVALIER. Your fame might have run before you, Captain, I'm surprised you buried the lede.

LACLOS. I hate leading with my CV, don't you?

JOSÉPHINE. (*ignoring that*) I am designing a new opera house at Popincourt and I seek your advice, *Saint-Georges*.

CHEVALIER. With that and with anything you can conceive, my lady I am at your perennial service.

JOSÉPHINE. Charm is endearing but unnecessary. Now: I hear you are up for the top job here?

LACLOS. He is?

JOSÉPHINE. It is all very impressive, *Chevalier*, but where is **your** opera?

CHEVALIER. *Pardon, madame?*

JOSÉPHINE. Why haven't you yet written three, nay many more! Pampering these singers while we need your **voice**, *Chevalier*, the one that's in your violin. Write it for the stage, tell us how to feel, *Saint-Georges*, please. The world has become so unsettled...we all need to know.

⁵ It is a pleasure, of course, to have your acquaintance.

⁶ Pleased to make **your** acquaintance, madam, very pleased.

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. In these difficult times, *madame* I may struggle to know as well. Does *madame* sing?

LACLOS. She is *une amatrice*.

CHEVALIER. No one shall be judge of that. Come, let's have a song.

JOSÉPHINE. *Non non non*, I couldn't possibly.

LACLOS. *Monsieur... (Saint-Georges here beckons to the orchestra who have already 'exited' the previous scene, though have assumed a constant presence as an attentive chorus onstage. They tune.)*

CHEVALIER. Ahh... *(to Joséphine)* now, Glück or Piccinni?

JOSÉPHINE. Oh, *Chevalier*, no I just couldn't.

CHEVALIER. No indeed, something simpler, how about one of my favorites, *Réveillez-vous?* Please-- *j'insiste. (to the orchestra)* D major, friends.

MUSIC 13 - Réveillez-vous⁷

(He conducts the orchestra and it is ravishing. The song is simple and Joséphine's singing is plain, but her earnestness is magnetic. The effect must powerfully contrast with the singing at the top of this scene: head versus heart. The Chevalier becomes entranced with her.)

JOSÉPHINE.

*Réveillez-vous, belle endormie,
Réveillez-vous, car il est jour.
Mettez la tête à la fenêtre,
Vous entendrez parler de nous.*

*(Awake, you sleeping beauty,
Awake, for the day has dawned,
Lean your head out of the window
You will hear folk speak of us.*

*La belle a mis le pied à terre,
Tout doucement s'en est allée,
D'une main elle ouvre la porte:
Entrez galant, si vous m'aimez.*

*The beautiful girl has risen,
She moved very quietly
With her hand opened the door:
Enter, gentleman, if you love me.)*

⁷ This is an old medieval song. There isn't a good version online that expresses its potential and how it functions as emotion here. [Here is that medieval version.](#)

THE CHEVALIER

(Partway through the song, Joséphine and Bologne lock eyes. There is an unmistakable connection of souls. Laclos sees it all, shocked, and increasingly seethes in disgust. The music and lights transition to Laclos' brooding interior mind. We follow him alone, walking a dark Paris street and into the secret press room of the Resistance.)

SCENE X. Paris, the secret press, same as before.

LACLOS. *Monsieurs, bonne nuit. (improvised greetings all around) We have a new target. (They all assemble)*

MUSIC 14 - The plays' first underscore texture. (TEMP TRACK)

Having placed himself up the Queen's pocket, and confirming myself that he cannot be trusted, we will remove the *Chevalier of Saint-Georges*.
(stunned pause)

DRAGOON. You want us to fight the best swordsman in Europe?

LACLOS. Leave that to the Black Police, our work requires *finesse*. The Queen has taken on *Saint-Georges* as her new boy toy, elevating the foreigner to run the bloody Paris Opera!

DRAGOON. That's bad right.

LACLOS. He will be the prancing puppet of Versailles with no heart for the people! *(Takes out letters)* So we intervene. You are going to the opera tomorrow. Have this petition signed by three prominent singers who *Saint-Georges* **won't** sleep with. *(a dragoon takes the petition)* There must be animosity among them - find it. Get it back to me.

DRAGOON. A Royal petition - but, it's from 'Anonymous?'

LACLOS. Not once they've signed it, will it. Let it work. The Police can attack him if they please. *Alons-y!* *(Music builds and there is a furious ensemble transition into the next scene.)*

SCENE XI. Versailles, as before

Marie Antoinette waiting. The Chevalier bursts in.

CHEVALIER. What on earth is happening?!

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Please sit down.

CHEVALIER. Did someone put them up to it?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I don't know. Will you calm down?

CHEVALIER. Ask them, they are all confidantes of yours!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Breathe! Joseph I have **loved** these afternoons, don't let us ruin this.

CHEVALIER. And what is **this**? Quaint music lessons or the end of my career?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You have handled yourself with impeccable dignity and you will continue to do so. (*gets petition*)

CHEVALIER. Is it the King? He doesn't think does he that we –

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Now stop it! **Please.** No he most certainly does not.

CHEVALIER. Is that the petition?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. *Malheureusement, oui.*⁸ (*She hands him the letter*)

CHEVALIER. 'Our honours and our delicate consciences could never allow us to submit to the orders of a mulatto director of opera.'

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I'm sure it was an atrocious idea, I seem to be absolutely full of them.

CHEVALIER. I let myself imagine it.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You are still beloved through all of Europe!

CHEVALIER. It is the only forum where music is **for all!** Rich and poor seated together. It doesn't make sense, why can't you speak to them? To *Sophie*?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. It's complicated. The day I brought Glück to France, *Sophie* risked her reputation for me by hosting a reading of his opera in her salon.

CHEVALIER. Yes I was there.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. And I cannot regress upon that loyalty.

CHEVALIER. Fine.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Then there is *Rosalie*.

CHEVALIER. Another 'loyal' friend of yours.

⁸ 'Unfortunately, yes.'

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. She is the mistress of my ambassador.

CHEVALIER. Count Mercy? But he's from Austria!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I cannot risk asking favors of him.

CHEVALIER. More than you've risked already?!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Power is not what you think it is, Joseph.

CHEVALIER. You are the Queen of France!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. He has **personally** leaked to the press each of my monthly cycles since I came to Paris! Which you may surmise is nearly every single one that I have ever had. Can you possibly, even for a moment imagine that being a Queen does not mean holding all the sodding cards!

CHEVALIER. I am, so sorry. Please, forgive me.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. It's quite alright. Politics is not my strong suit.

CHEVALIER. You remember the letter to the editor describing Rosalie's singing in Glück's Paris debut?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. 'Her voice was the most beautiful asthma I have ever heard.' (*The tension breaks*) And then there is *La Guimard*, keeper of more of my secrets than even you, *Saint-Georges*.

CHEVALIER. It just doesn't add up.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. They have all sung for you.

CHEVALIER. *Bien sur.*⁹

MARIE ANTOINETTE. And you have slept with none of them?
Honesty now.

CHEVALIER. Of course not!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. But you have been uncompromising.

CHEVALIER. I am a conductor, Antoine.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. (*realizing*) This has nothing to do with your race! They want control.

CHEVALIER. I'm sorry?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. They need a pushover on the podium and you are much too powerful, isn't it obvious!

CHEVALIER. Not quite. I have embarrassed you.

⁹ 'Of course'

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Nonsense. And yet - I can't be seen to take your side in this, Joseph. We are too close now. I must leave it to the King.

CHEVALIER. No. I will rescind my name. It is the only honorable course. Am I in danger? (*she has an idea*)

What. What is it?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Write your own opera. Of course! Show them. Put your passion into your pen. Give Paris a hit, take all the receipts, I will marshal the whole court for it, the event of the decade! Reinvent yourself again.

CHEVALIER. What, how, with what story?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I've just read Ernestine, the novella? (*giggling*) Oh it is PERFECT. You musn't tell anyone *Chevalier*, but it's here tucked inside my prayer book, those sermons are endless, it's been a lifeline, here just - it has everything, it's romantic, it's witty, it's chivalrous, it is **you**, Joseph.

CHEVALIER. But who shall write the libretto?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Well, surely you'll need the best writer in Paris.

MUSIC 15 – Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 11: II. Andante
(underscores the below)

SCENE XII. At the theatre.

Lights shift to the audience of a theatre, where Laclos is watching a play.

CHEVALIER. Monsieur.

LACLOS. Sh! I'm watching.

CHEVALIER. You're a hard man to track down.

LACLOS. Good.

CHEVALIER. Captain Laclos, if I could just have a moment of your time?

LACLOS. I'm, listening, shut up.

CHEVALIER. Captain, this is important.

LACLOS. Says who?

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. *Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, monsieur*, composer, fencer, and knight of the King's private guard.

LACLOS. They all say that.

CHEVALIER. I am writing an opera and I want you to be my librettist.

LACLOS. WHAT?!

EVERYONE. SH!

LACLOS. (*thinking fast on his feet*) I write novels.

CHEVALIER. You have written a novel, a single piece of exquisite craftsmanship, but you and I both know you need another hit, **Valmont**.

LACLOS. I am NOT Valmont. *Pourquoi est-ce si impossible a comprendre?* Dangerous Liaisons is *not* sodding autobiography and I'll slit your bastard throat right here if you say it again! (*The music stops. The orchestra glares at Laclos.*) *Merde.* Let's get out of here.

CHEVALIER. What did you just call me?

LACLOS. I am French it is a term of endearment.

CHEVALIER. Stop! Laclos! Look we're both swordsmen, you and I.

LACLOS. The Musketeers drink over there.

CHEVALIER. The protagonist is a captain like you, and not a libertine! It's sexy but not a bodice ripper.

LACLOS. (*stalling while he comes up with a plan*) What is it.

CHEVALIER. Ernestine, the Riccobini novel.

LACLOS. This is trash.

CHEVALIER. Then make it better!

LACLOS. How much?

CHEVALIER. What do you mean, how much?

LACLOS. I'm expensive.

CHEVALIER. We will split the receipts 50/50.

LACLOS. You can get a performance?

CHEVALIER. I can.

LACLOS. Why me.

CHEVALIER. You came to test me and my allegiances, dangling treason no less.

LACLOS. Well you didn't pass.

CHEVALIER. I've come to say that I will give you a chance if you will give me one.

THE CHEVALIER

LACLOS. What, I write your opera and you-

CHEVALIER. -will try and get to know you better.

LACLOS. Ha. Are you aware that you're being watched, *monsieur*?

CHEVALIER. I'm sorry?

LACLOS. The Black Police. You islanders are being numbered, the slave trade is booming, war is coming.

CHEVALIER. And what might that be to you, *monsieur*?

LACLOS. I'm sorry, but - which side are you on? Because I'm having a hard time figuring that out.

CHEVALIER. The only side of rights for all.

LACLOS. Then why are we arguing?

CHEVALIER. Because your revolution will kill thousands of people, and you have no plan!

LACLOS. (*beat*) Then help us! Stand with the people and fight!

CHEVALIER. Compose my opera.

LACLOS. Hah, two brawlers like us singing high C's while the world burns, why on earth?

CHEVALIER. Perhaps I don't need friends, but fewer enemies.

LACLOS. Don't give me that. **She** will become an enemy, you will see. You are on Her Majesty's payroll?

CHEVALIER. She pays me a small stipend, yes.

LACLOS. Oh is that what you're calling it?

CHEVALIER. How dare you!

LACLOS. Your temper is too easily triggered, *Saint-Georges*. I am merely testing the gears for later. You are *un Chevalier*, I get it. But your noble class will die - Joseph Boloney. And then where will you be?

CHEVALIER. I am no monarchist.

LACLOS. (*beat*) I would practice saying that if I were you.

MUSIC 16 – Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 11: III. Presto

THE CHEVALIER

SCENE XIII. At Popincourt.

Joséphine alone, holding a pamphlet, stands with Laclos' bags. Laclos enters.

LACLOS. I see someone has packed my things.

JOSÉPHINE. My husband has informed me that your promotion was not accepted. I am sorry.

LACLOS. Please, did he-

JOSÉPHINE. He did. He was so effusive in fact that the King now thinks you're a genius, and what is more, has granted my husband's wish for you personally to build his wall on the Island of Aix.

LACLOS. -to leave Paris?!

JOSÉPHINE. Immediately. If we can't get you a title at least we can give you a job.

LACLOS. But I'm on leave.

JOSÉPHINE. Not anymore. You'll earn money, and of course you no longer need to look for a place to stay. I know this seems sudden, and for that I apologize. (*crossing to him slowly*) It was truly a pleasure getting to know you, Captain, and I mean that, sincerely.

LACLOS. *Madame, I-*

JOSÉPHINE. (*feigning softness*) This, poem I found on the street, is so erotic it made me blush - why did you dedicate it to me?

LACLOS. How did you know I wrote it?

JOSÉPHINE. I didn't. (*a thunderous pause*) Well, now here we are. And what a common fool you think I am. (*takes out the pamphlet*) 194 stanzas of feverish romance, praising me to Mount Olympus, a woman you hardly know and never will! Using my Christian name, no less- in some pamphlet slandering the crown with the revolutionary writings of Thomas Paine advocating tyranny! / You ARE that faithless coward, stirring the pot of hate in this world, and with what right do you assert I ever ONCE besmirched my reputation-

LACLOS. / *Madame, please, it wasn't meant to be me, I- please, no, it's not that, I / I am in purgatory!* I cannot rise - but cannot fall! I am trapped in a caste! Joséphine de Montalembert: forgive me.

THE CHEVALIER

JOSÉPHINE. (*choosing her words*) I acknowledge your oppression. But you must leave. And though I wish your pain to be relieved, you would do very well to never cross my face again.

MUSIC 17 - the ending of Beaumarchais' The Barber of Seville, with applause.

SCENE XIV. On the streets of Paris, outside the theatre

Audience members are leaving after a performance. The Chevalier, brandishing a cane, and Mozart walk together. Joséphine de Montalembert spots them.

JOSÉPHINE. *Salut, Chevalier.* Is that you? *Hallo!*

CHEVALIER. *Ah, mais oui madame,* such a delight to encounter you here.

JOSÉPHINE. And Mozart, what an extraordinary pleasure, you've come from the theatre, what did you see?

CHEVALIER. *The Beaumarchais, madame.*

JOSÉPHINE. The Barber of Seville! Oh I cannot **wait** to see that, the scandal is absolutely tittering. Herr Mozart, what did you think?

CHEVALIER. Hup! My friend and I have a five minute rule of silence, otherwise I'll never get to enjoy anything ever again. (*They look at Mozart for a second who is clearly struggling to hold it all in*). However, for health and safety, perhaps Mozart you should walk the Marquise home.

MOZART. Really?!

JOSÉPHINE. (*laughing*) Come, Mozart, tell me everything

MOZART. An accost to the senses, classic French drivel, but the story is transcendent and it would make the most sensational opera... (*Gunshot! barely missing Mozart*)

MUSIC 18 - THE FIGHT (TEMP TRACK)

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. *(to Mozart and Joséphine) Go! Now! (He draws. Joséphine screams. Four from the Black Police approach and it is an ambush.)*

CHEVALIER. What seems to be the problem, gentlemen.

OFFICER, POLICE DES NOIRS. This could all be solved by showing us your identification card, *monsieur*.

CHEVALIER. And yet you know who I am perfectly well.

OTHER OFFICERS. Failure to call, failure to sign / Time to come in for questions, *Saint-Georges* / Or perhaps a short stay in *la Bastille*? I hear it's lovely this time of year. *(Mozart, trying to be brave. attacks one of the four men, who dispatches him with a few swift blows while Bologne is kept from intervening. Joséphine goes to Mozart.)*

CHEVALIER. Please! Your quarrel is with me. If you knew how my people bleed for France, you would- *(One of the Black Police spits at him.)* I see. Well that just means you go first. *(Music HITS (TEMP TRACK). Bologne attacks and dispatches them all. He comes to stand stage centre and invites a duel. Each has a run at him, and he fences impeccably with his cane to master them all. When at last they start to come at him together, he takes his pistol from behind his back and fires it into the air. He had one all along. Blackout.)*

SCENE XV. The Chevalier's house, later that night.

Mozart, Nanon, Bologne, and Joséphine sit together.

MOZART. It's not right!

JOSÉPHINE. Sh, Mozart, your head.

NANON. Some men just aren't made right.

MOZART. How many times has this happened?

NANON. Joseph he wants to know how many times.

JOSÉPHINE. Mozart, this is not a good time to be in Paris.

CHEVALIER. *(walking in with tea)* Mother how do you feel? And you *madame*, you were very brave, both of you.

MOZART. Do you know who they were at least?

CHEVALIER. That's not really relevant, is it.

THE CHEVALIER

NANON. But you weren't carrying a blade! Joseph we have spoken about this.

CHEVALIER. If they can catch me on the street without my foil, then they will attack me there, rather than find us at home, like last time, or do you not remember. *Je'n suis pas stupide*, mother.

JOSÉPHINE. What do they want?

NANON. A world without fear. In essence the same world as we. But they are afraid of free men.

JOSÉPHINE. How will you defeat them?

NANON. These won't last long. But there always seems to be someone else. Until when, Joseph? When?

CHEVALIER. What are you trying to say?

NANON. Son I don't want to hide anymore.

CHEVALIER. Then what am I supposed to do?

NANON. Choose a side in this coming war!

CHEVALIER. Mother-

NANON. Choose!! Who can keep us free! No side is perfect! But you play both sides and you drop down dead. (*Joséphine is suddenly struck with a thought*).

CHEVALIER. When music is just not enough, hey Mozart?... now I fear you all must go.

JOSÉPHINE. You're both coming with me actually.

CHEVALIER. *Madame?*

JOSÉPHINE. You may call me Joséphine, please.

CHEVALIER. Absolutely not.

JOSÉPHINE. It's not a negotiation. You both will accept my help and that is the end of it, forgive me.

CHEVALIER. *Madame...*

JOSÉPHINE. Joséphine. You cannot stay here and you will be safe with me at Popincourt. We have many free rooms now, you can compose your opera there, no one will know.

NANON. *Merci. Merci encore, et grâce à Dieu, madame. (she kneels and takes her hands)*

MOZART. But what about me?

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. This is not your battle, *Chevalier Blanc*. It is much too dangerous for musicians here. (*a look at Joséphine*) You'll be safer in Vienna.

MOZART. I don't have any friends in Vienna. What am I supposed to do without-?

CHEVALIER. Get the hell on with yourself, that's what.

NANON. You'll have food.

JOSÉPHINE. And money for the journey. And a world of excitement to come.

CHEVALIER. We have given you all you need, which wasn't much. But just to be sure, why not let's play a game.

MOZART. Game?

CHEVALIER. More of a riddle actually. A short one - just for you, my friend. One I learned from my mother.

MOZART. I'm ready.

CHEVALIER. Herr Mozart: Where is fancy bred? In the heart, or in the head?

MOZART. Wow. Where is fancy bread? Fancy bread, like a croissant? or-

CHEVALIER. N-no.

MOZART. Ahh!

NANON. Yes.

MOZART. Hm. Is this a trick question? (*Silence*) Both! (*Silence. Finally Mozart realizes, sits, looks at the Chevalier and touches his chest. Correct.*) I'll come back.

CHEVALIER. Shush. Finally, if our ladies' patience can sustain it: Mozart, might we play something together?

MOZART. Your piano's out of tune.

CHEVALIER. No - two violins.

MOZART. You know I'm not good at feeling not good at things.

CHEVALIER. I've written something inspired by you actually.

MOZART. Oh go on.

CHEVALIER. I have never found my equal with a foil. But with a bow, I have you, Mozart. And so in honor of our bond, and our mothers, a concerto for two soloists, not one.

THE CHEVALIER

MOZART. But who leads?

CHEVALIER & MOZART. ...No one does.

CHEVALIER. Here, it would... be an honor to hear this cadenza, for the first time, with you.

MOZART. *Mais bien sur. On y va, Chevalier.*

MUSIC 19a - **Symphony Concertante in G major, Op. 13: II. Rondeau (cadenza)**

(They mime a short duet cadenza together. As before, the players from the orchestra are lit.)

MOZART. Not half bad. What do you call it?

CHEVALIER. A symphony concertante. You should try it.

MUSIC 19b - **CONT'D: Symphony Concertante in G major, Op. 13: II. Rondeau**

SCENE XVI.

Le Petit Trianon, at Versailles. Marie Antoinette alone. Enter Bologne.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Oh Joseph, I know about the attack.

CHEVALIER. I do too.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You fought off four armed men with a **stick**?

CHEVALIER. Please.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Do you know what they want?

CHEVALIER. The status quo! For us to go "home." To turn back the clock. And I have to make a choice. The world knows I stand for abolishment, and yet also, paradoxically, for the monarchy. And that - is why this must be our last lesson, I fear.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. I can protect you.

CHEVALIER. You can hardly protect yourself! As for us, they will cart us off by the dozens and you will be able to say nothing. But me, must I stay silent? Can I, even?

MARIE ANTIONETTE. Oh, God!

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. Why couldn't the King do it, Antoine? End slavery. You think it is miles away, but the violence is here! The Americans left it right on the table, surely France, your France, could grow a bloody spine.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Joseph? He and I both tried to abolish slavery in our first years, but the money the islands bring to the crown is too great. This will not satisfy you, nor should it. I pushed and I pushed -

CHEVALIER. Not hard enough!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. -and I think I pushed him away.

CHEVALIER. And I suppose one couldn't cut back just a little bit?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. How dare you! The costs we incur in Versailles do not amount to a fraction-

CHEVALIER. You so sure about that?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Joseph!

CHEVALIER. It hardly makes a difference.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Do you know he still has never made love to me?

CHEVALIER. What?!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Can you believe it?

CHEVALIER. But, that means you're not really Qu--

MARIE ANTOINETTE. You think that I have control? That I can do as I choose, snap my Austrian fingers and make it so? Do I, as a Queen, daughter of the Empress of the Holy Roman Empire, the last of fifteen children sprinkled like puppets in every royal family on this continent, do you think for a moment that I have anything like free will? You may conspire with your new Republican friends to 'liberate' us.

CHEVALIER. The last thing in the world I want is a civil war!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. They all say that. You may think you are doing them well, and it may be that you are.

Violence only enslaves in different ways.

CHEVALIER. You wish me to stand in the middle and do nothing until I get mauled and killed.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. "Man is born free, and yet everywhere he is in chains..."

CHEVALIER. Yes, I've read it.

THE CHEVALIER

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Don't let them force you to pick a side. Your music tells us this!

CHEVALIER. What good is music in a bloody revolution!

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau wishes he were a composer.

CHEVALIER. His music is awful.

MARIE ANTOINETTE. He doesn't write it himself. They all wish that they were **you**, don't you see? We are mirages of free will, each of us. And so they will devour us, because they cannot **be** us. But they do not have to devour you.

CHEVALIER. How - do I reject a power - that I don't feel I even have?

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Create. Express. Be the freedom within, not without. It is all we have in the face of terror.

If you can't do that, *mon Chevalier*: Everything is chains.

MUSIC 20 - Adagio in F minor, piano solo

SCENE XVII. A Paris street at night.

Laclos is walking alone with a shoulder bag and sword.

CHEVALIER. And where might you be going? (*steps into the moonlight with his hand on his hilt*)

LACLOS. How nice to be a *Chevalier* and come and go when you please. I am banished to the Isle of Aix.

CHEVALIER. That can be changed.

LACLOS. What is it to you, *monsieur*, we poor cannot choose.

CHEVALIER. You should have been promoted, and for that I am sorry, on behalf of France. Things are heating up in Paris and your club - is right in the middle of it. You're angry. Believe when I tell you I understand that France is unfair. You seek recognition, I see this - but I offered you fame, and you rebuffed me.

LACLOS. You are the son of a slave, yet your white father took out a hundred thousand *livres* from the bank of France, walked straight into

THE CHEVALIER

Versailles and purchased you a noble crest like it was a croissant! Now you walk around lecturing me about earning my way up?!

CHEVALIER. Then tell me what you want.

LACLOS. There is one thing important to me, one! To expose their filth, their extravagance, their selfishness and hatred of the people - that is all! So long as you step over the multitudes of France to dance with the powdered puffs of Versailles, then you are worse than a threat, you are repulsive, and I will cut you down right here. *(draws)*

CHEVALIER. I'd much prefer to collaborate instead.

LACLOS. Oh pick a fucking friend.

CHEVALIER. *(rapier raised)* Drop that. *(Laclos attacks him, and after a few blows is easily disarmed.)*

CHEVALIER. Yield! You are targeting the nobility. Stop. Who are your targets? *(Laclos goes for his sword but Bologne cuts his hand and in a flash has his rapier back in his face)* Tell me what your little club is doing, or I will stick this straight up your nose.

LACLOS. We want rights for damn's sake! A constitution! With the Crown, we don't want to kill them! Led by the people, and their King! So we print pamphlets and make noise.

CHEVALIER. To get us to do what? What?! *(aggresses)*

LACLOS. To wake up to the shitty way things are.

CHEVALIER. So that they will fight in your revolution.

LACLOS. So that they will fight for a constitution!

CHEVALIER. Why must they fight at all?

LACLOS. Because we have no food! Because the King does not care! Because they dance on our graves!

CHEVALIER. You will unleash chaos and you will lose complete control!

LACLOS. We control the streets already, and we can turn them up or we can turn them off.

CHEVALIER. Tell me now, how many dead will be acceptable to you - 1,000, 10,000, / 100,000, one million?

LACLOS. / *Chevalier*, stop. Some will die, get over it. My friends are already dying. Aren't yours?

THE CHEVALIER

CHEVALIER. (*beat*) You'll need an international coalition and a much better plan.

LACLOS. Then help us! We are farther along than you think. You could be our foreign diplomat.

CHEVALIER. I have conditions.

LACLOS. So do I.

CHEVALIER. The end of slavery in the new Republic - written, in a new declaration of rights - or I set down my blade. In return you shall have my industry and my loyalty. Do I have your word?

LACLOS. You have my word. And my honor. And you? No more pattycake with the Queen.

CHEVALIER. You have my word. And I will have no role whatsoever in the demise of the crown.

LACLOS. Fine.

CHEVALIER. And give me my opera.

LACLOS. *Non, monsieur.*

CHEVALIER. It's a package deal.

LACLOS. Do you know how much damn work we have to do?!

CHEVALIER. (*threatening him*) My opera!

LACLOS. Fine! Yes, stop it, yes. Shit.

CHEVALIER. Now introduce me to your friends.

LACLOS. They will be delighted not to have to kill you.

CHEVALIER. I will extend your leave by two months but that is all.

LACLOS. To write a whole opera?

CHEVALIER. If we start now, yes.

LACLOS. Golly. But where will I live?

CHEVALIER. Actually, you can take up at mine, it is currently empty.
(*sheathes, gets his bag*)

LACLOS. Right. Right, good, thank you. Now where will you be?

CHEVALIER. At the Marquis' in Popincourt, *monsieur.* (*Laclos - realizing he has been swapped for Bologne - freezes with jealous rage.*)
Can you keep that strictly *entre nous*?

MUSIC 21 - The Opera (edited)

THE CHEVALIER

**SCENE XVIII. The premiere of Laclos' and Saint-Georges' Opera,
Ernestine.**

Gaveaux, dressed like Laclos, and Dugazon as Ernestine enter singing a ravishing duet from his opera. We see Saint-Georges, conducting with gusto. From one box, Laclos appears, then Joséphine. Laclos sees Joséphine beaming at Bologne. Then enter Marie Antoinette, with a fan, seeing Laclos, Joséphine, and staring at Bologne. The singers and orchestra drive to the mighty conclusion. It is magnificent. Blackout.

END OF ACT I

**THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM**