

# MADAME DEFARGE

A MUSICAL WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY  
**WENDY KESSELMAN**

INSPIRED BY DICKENS' *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

MADAME DEFARGE  
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*In memory of my mother and father  
and always for Brazie*

MADAME DEFARGE was originally produced by the Gloucester Stage Company (Robert Walsh, Artistic Director; Jeff Zinn, Managing Director) in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on May 11, 2018. It was directed by Ellie Heyman, the scenic design was by James Fluhr, the costume design was by Chelsea Perl, the lighting design was by Mary Ellen Stebbins, the musical arrangements were by Christopher Berg, the music director was Mindy Cimini, and the production stage manager was Marsha Smith. The cast was as follows:

THERESE DEFARGE ..... Jennifer Ellis  
SYDNEY CARTON ..... Jason Michael Evans  
DOCTOR MANETTE ..... Rob Karma Robinson  
LUCIE MANETTE ..... Sabrina Koss  
CHARLES DARNAY ..... Matthew Amira  
ERNEST DEFARGE/ATTORNEY GENERAL ..... Benjamin Evett  
MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS/BARSAD ..... John Hillner  
MISS PROSS/BORDER GUARD ..... Wendy Waring  
MR. LORRY/STRYVER/  
GABELLE/SKELETAL MAN ..... John Shuman  
LITTLE LUCIE/STREET URCHIN/YOUNG GIRL ..... Marissa Simeqi

## **With Very Special Thanks**

Brian Briody, Eugenie Buchan, Naomi Czekaj-Robbins, Bradley Dean, Robin Dibner, Myra Dorrell, Rebecca Dreyfus, Jennifer Dundas, Moses Goldberg, Elizabeth Grobel, Isabelle Hilinski, Scott Hilinski, Billy Hopkins, Marshall Hughes, James F. Ingalls, Heidi Kettenring, George P. Lane, James Lapine, Susan and Prudence Linder, Margo Lion, Inverna Lockpez, Elaine McIlroy, Trini Alvarado McNeill, Gertrud Michelson, Rosalind Pace, Austin Pendleton, Nina Schuessler, Maureen Shea, John Steber, Haleh Roshan Stilwell, Michael Unger, Robert Walsh, Scott Wheeler, Mary and Jack Willis, Dan Wolf, Jean-Pierre and Miriam Worms.

# SONGS

## ACT ONE

“Knitting”	Therese Defarge
“The Best of Times”	Sydney Carton
“Shoes”	Doctor Manette
“Weep”	Lucie Manette
“Recalled to Life”	Therese
“Miss Manette”	Charles Darnay, Barsad, Carton
“Knit One Purl Two”	Therese
“Look Around You”/“ <i>Lettre de Cachet</i> ”	Monsieur le Marquis
“Hundreds of People”	Miss Pross
“Longing”	Therese and Ernest Defarge
“Father, Dear Father”	Lucie
“Knit One Purl Two”/“The Best of Times” (Reprise)	People of <i>Saint-Antoine</i> , Defarge, Therese

## ACT TWO

“Footsteps”	Therese, Carton, Darnay
“Goldenhair”	Lucie, Little Lucie
“Tick Tock”	Street Urchin
“While the Candles Burn”	Little Lucie, Lucie, Darnay
“Quieting the Frogs”	Therese
“Wind and Fire”/ “Longing” (Reprise)	Therese, Defarge
“It Must Not Last”	Darnay
“Footsteps”/“Hundreds of People”/ “Knit One Purl Two”	Carton, Miss Pross, Therese
“While the Candles Burn”/ “Recalled to Life”	Little Lucie, Therese, Defarge

## **CHARACTERS**

THERESE DEFARGE

SYDNEY CARTON

DOCTOR MANETTE

LUCIE MANETTE

ERNEST DEFARGE

CHARLES DARNAY

LITTLE LUCIE/STREET URCHIN/YOUNG SEAMSTRESS

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS/BARSAD (SOLOMON)

MISS PROSS/BORDER GUARD

MR. LORRY/STRYVER/SKELETAL MAN (TRIBUNAL PRESIDENT)

## **SETTING**

The play takes place in France and England before and during the French Revolution of 1789.

*The play may be performed without an intermission.*

# MADAME DEFARGE

## ACT ONE

*An empty stage. Silence.*

*Abruptly, a large ball of red wool rolls in, crosses almost the entire length of the stage, stops.*

*The music of “Knitting” begins as Therese appears, spots the ball of red wool, rushes toward it.*

*She is barefoot—vibrant, beautiful, her long hair in a single braid; a frayed blue work apron with two large pockets barely covers her tattered rags.*

*Just as she bends to pick up the ball of wool, it escapes and travels halfway back. She runs after it. But the ball has a mind of its own and eludes her grasp.*

*Back and forth they go until, out of breath, the red ball at last in her hands, Therese sits on the edge of the stage, pulls a pair of knitting needles from her pocket. Half in a dream, remembering her lost childhood, she gazes out, starts to knit.*

THERESE.

KNIT ONE, PURL TWO,  
FIRST THE RED, THEN THE BLUE  
SLIP A STITCH OF WHITE STRAIGHT THROUGH—  
THAT’S WHAT I WAS TAUGHT TO DO.

SITTING BY MY SISTER’S SIDE,  
HOW SHE LAUGHED! HOW I CRIED!  
WHILE SHE WATCHED ME STITCH WITH PRIDE  
SUCH A LOVING, PATIENT GUIDE.

SOON IT WAS MY DAILY CHORE  
KNITTING, KNITTING—WHAT A BORE!



I'D MUCH RATHER RISE AT FOUR,  
MILK A HUNDRED COWS AND MORE!

SHEAR SHEEP, BALE HAY,  
FIND THE LAMBS THAT GO ASTRAY,  
SCRUB THE CHATEAU STEPS EACH DAY,  
THROW THIS KNITTING FAR AWAY!

BUT I HAD A SECRET DREAM  
OF A BOY I'D NEVER SEEN...  
HE'D MAKE ME LAUGH, HE'D MAKE ME SING,  
HE'D NEVER LET ME KNIT A THING!  
AND I'D BECOME A DIFFERENT GIRL  
AND THROW MY ARMS AROUND THE WORLD!

*The light dims on her and comes up on Sydney Carton, clutching a flask as he sings.*

CARTON.

THERE WAS A KING WITH A LARGE JAW  
AND A QUEEN WITH A PALE FACE  
ON THE THRONE OF ENGLAND.

THERE WAS A KING WITH A LARGE JAW  
AND A QUEEN WITH A FAIR FACE  
ON THE THRONE OF FRANCE!

C'ETAIT LE MEILLEUR DE TEMPS,  
C'ETAIT LE PIRE DE TEMPS,  
IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES,  
IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES,  
L'AGE DE CROYANCE ET DE L'INCROYANCE,  
THE AGE OF WISDOM, THE AGE OF FOOLISHNESS,  
IT WAS THE SEASON OF LIGHT AND OF DARKNESS.

C'ETAIT LE MEILLEUR DE TEMPS,  
C'ETAIT LE PIRE DE TEMPS,  
IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES,  
IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES...

IT WAS THE SPRING OF HOPE,  
IT WAS THE WINTER OF DESPAIR,  
WE HAD EVERYTHING BEFORE US,  
WE HAD NOTHING BEFORE US.  
WE WERE ALL GOING DIRECT TO HEAVEN,  
WE WERE ALL GOING DIRECT THE OTHER WAY.  
IT WAS THE BEST... IT WAS THE WORST...  
WE HAD EVERYTHING... WE HAD NOTHING...  
WE WERE ALL GOING DIRECT TO...  
WE WERE ALL GOING...  
DIRECT THE OTHER WAY.

*He staggers off as light comes up on a young woman with long golden curls. Lucie Manette, her guardian Miss Pross behind her, faces an anxious Mr. Lorry in his office at Tellson's Bank in London.*

MR. LORRY. I sent for you to tell you a story. A story that happened long ago. But...it is very difficult to begin.

LUCIE. (*Touching his arm.*) Begin. You must begin, Mr.—

MR. LORRY. Lorry, my dear. A story of one of our customers at Tellson's Bank in Paris. A French gentleman, a scientific gentleman, a man renowned in Paris— A doctor, Miss Manette. A doctor from Beauvais.

*Lucie seizes his wrist.*

Precisely. Like your father. Except your father has long been presumed dead. But if...if your father had not died—

*A gasp from Miss Pross.*

If someone had written a letter, a dreaded secret *lettre de cachet*, condemning him to prison without a trial— Condemning him for life...to the *Bastille*!

LUCIE. *La Bastille!*

MISS PROSS. (*Staggering back.*) Calm, my Ladybird. Calm, my love.

MR. LORRY. If his young wife, desperate to find him before her child was born—

LUCIE. That child was a daughter—a little girl of three you carried on a boat to England. (*Kissing his hand.*) I knew you the moment I walked into this room.

MISS PROSS. I've been her guardian since her toes touched British soil!

MR. LORRY. Your mother died broken-hearted, believing your father—

LUCIE. Do you mean... Are you telling me...he's—

MR. LORRY. Found! Greatly changed. A wreck, perhaps. But alive. Living! Recalled to life.

LUCIE. (*Barely breathing.*) Where?

MR. LORRY. Paris. Poverty. An attic in the district of *Saint-Antoine*. A former servant, Ernest Defarge, and his wife Therese take care of him there.

LUCIE. I have been free. I have been happy. His ghost has never haunted me. But now...

*Trembling, Miss Pross holds her smelling salts out to Lucie.*

It will be his ghost—not him—I see!

*Miss Pross faints dead away.*

(*Reviving her with the smelling salts.*) Oh Pross, dear Pross, I want him to haunt me—every day, every night till at last we meet!

*Darkness. Paris. A low hammering sound as Doctor Manette sings brokenly.*

DOCTOR MANETTE. (*Offstage.*)

SHOES, SHOES,  
BEAUTIFUL SHOES,  
SHOES FOR A LADY...  
WALKING SHOES.

*Light reveals Defarge and Mr. Lorry leading Lucie to a low black door.*

DEFARGE. (*Kissing her hand.*) Child of my old master. Be prepared.

*Therese appears, a skillfully knitted sky-blue shawl around her shoulders. She takes out a heavy key.*

LUCIE. Locked up, Madame Defarge? You keep him locked up?

THERESE. It's what he's used to—eighteen years under lock and key.

*She turns the key in the lock.*

*The door opens into a dark attic. Light comes up on a finely made, delicate lady's shoe. Then on a pair of ancient decrepit hands, picking up the shoe tenderly, working on it.*

Ahh, still hard at work. I'm going to let in a little more light. Can you bear it?

*A ray of light reveals Doctor Manette's ravaged face and body.*

*Stooped forward on a low bench, his long hair and beard entirely white, the unfinished shoe in his lap, he lifts a gaunt hand to shield his haggard eyes.*

*Lucie covers her face.*

DEFARGE. You have a visitor. Someone who knows a well-made shoe when he sees one.

THERESE. Tell Monsieur what kind of shoe you're making. (*As Mr. Lorry steps forward.*) Tell him. Don't be afraid.

DOCTOR MANETTE.

A WALKING SHOE, A WALKING SHOE,  
ALL NEW, ALL NEW, A WALKING SHOE...  
ONLY A LADY TRULY FAIR,  
ONLY A LADY WITH GOLDEN HAIR...  
SHE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN WEAR  
A WALKING SHOE, A WALKING SHOE,  
A BEAUTIFUL LADY'S WALKING SHOE.

DEFARGE. And the maker's name?

DOCTOR MANETTE. (*Staggering to his feet; in a ragged voice, almost a bark.*)

ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE, NORTH TOWER!  
NORTH TOWER, ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE!  
ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE, NORTH...

(*Suddenly lost.*) ...Tower...North...Tower...

(*Falling back on the bench; plaintive.*)

SHOES, SHOES...

MR. LORRY. (*Taking the shoe from him.*) So you're a shoemaker then?

THERESE. He taught himself. Begged for years in the *Bastille* to do... something! Keep his mind off—

*Doctor Manette lays the knuckles of his right hand in the hollow of his left, the knuckles of his left hand in the hollow of his right, holds out a trembling hand.*

MR. LORRY. (*Giving him back the shoe.*) Doctor Manette, don't you remember me? (*As Defarge comes closer.*) Him? Look at him. Look at me. No servant, no banker, no long-ago lost time? Think, Doctor Manette. Remember.

*Doctor Manette starts to work on the shoe as Therese, Defarge and Mr. Lorry back away and Lucie quietly steps forward.*

DOCTOR MANETTE. Who...who's this? The jailer's daughter?

LUCIE. No. Not the jailer's daughter. No.

# MADAME DEFARGE

book, music, and lyrics by Wendy Kesselman

inspired by Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*

6 men, 4 women

In this grand retelling of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens' most infamous female steps into the spotlight. For centuries Madame Defarge has been read as a villainous creature waiting for her opportunity to exact revenge on an aristocratic family, regardless of which good people may become collateral. Wendy Kesselman has dared to ask: Who really is Therese Defarge, the woman whose fury catalyzed the best of times—and the worst of times?

*"...deeply moving... It was the best of everything theatrical I've seen this year. ...This dramatic musical is so powerful and hard-hitting, it will remain with you long after you've left the theater."* —**TheaterMirror.net**

*"[MADAME DEFARGE] takes no prisoners—sweeping the audience into the intense plot from the first moment. ...This is a fascinating and complex musical. Don't come expecting a lighthearted musical romp. Do come expecting a remarkable evening in the theater."*

—**Wicked Local (Massachusetts)**

*"[MADAME DEFARGE] packs a solid emotional punch while presenting themes of authoritarianism and state power that resonate today."*

—**GoodMorningGloucester.org**

**Also by Wendy Kesselman**

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