# THREE MUSKETEERS: 1941

## A GUIDE FOR CRT PATRONS

By Lindsay Cummings

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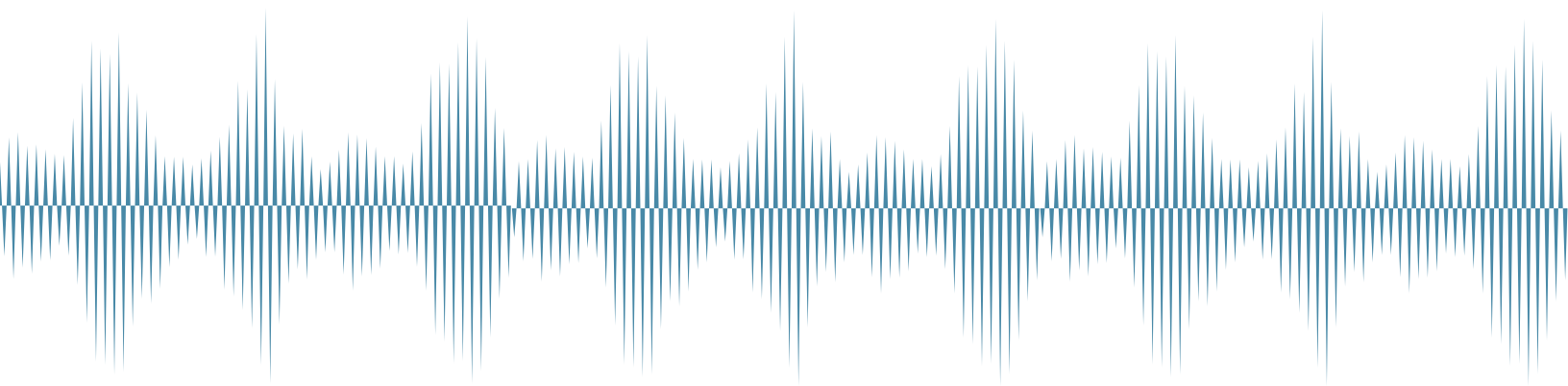


# PLOT OVERVIEW: THE THREE MUSKETEERS: 1941

THREE MUSKETEERS: 1941

written by
MEGAN MONAGHAN RIVAS
inspired by the Alexandre Dumas novel

The play follows the activities of a small group of women working to oppose the Nazi occupation of Paris during World War II. They all use code names to maintain the secrecy of their identities. These code names all come from the book that inspired the play, Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*. The leader of this resistance group goes by the name Treville. She taught high school before the war, and several of the other women were her students. At the start of the play, they are joined by a new member, D'Artagnan, who has come from the countryside and wants to join the cause. The group's main objective is to get a British spy out of Occupied France and into the Free Zone. In this task, they must outwit Richelieu and Rochefort, French police who have agreed to work with the Nazi forces, and Milady, a spy who infiltrates the women's group. As the women attempt to get the British spy to safety, they also learn of a large roundup of Parisian Jews, who are about to be sent by train to concentration camps outside of France. They devise a new and risky plot to sabotage the rail lines.

**Content Warning:** *This play includes references to the persecution of Jewish people and their deportation to concentration campus. It also includes stage violence and theatrical replicas of guns.*

# INSPIRATION:
# ALEXANDER DUMAS' THE THREE MUSKETEERS

Published in 1844-1845, *The Three Musketeers* is French writer Alexander Dumas' most popular novel. Filled with adventure, intrigue, and romance, it has been adapted into more than 60 films and several play versions. It continues to be read and enjoyed today. While it is loosely based on historical figures, it is a work of fiction. In the book, a young, ambitious man named d'Artagnon goes to Paris in the hopes of joining the King's famed musketeers—a name given to soldiers who carry musket rifles. Treveille, the head of the musketeers, appoints d'Artagnon as a member of the king's guard, telling him he must first prove his worth. Later, d'Artagonin inadvertently insults three members of the musketeers, Athos, Parthos, and Aramis, who each challenge d'Artagnon to a duel. When they show up, they are impressed by d'Artagnon's bravery, as he has appeared despite knowing he may be killed. They all end up fighting together against Cardinal Richelieu's men, who appear to arrest them for dueling. D'Artagnon and the musketeers become friends, and the rest of the novel follows their many adventures and escapades. They get caught up in a complicated plot to protect the queen. Cardinal Richelieu is attempting to prove that she is unfaithful to the king. He enlists a spy, Milady, to help him, while the musketeers attempt to protect the queen. From there, the novel takes many twists and turns, and the musketeers personal and romantic lives become mixed up in wartime politics and espionage, as England and France are at war for most of the novel. All ends well, but not without tragic losses along the way.

# CHARACTER LIST

All the characters in *Three Musketeers: 1941* are known by code names taken from Alexander Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*. Playwright Megan Monaghan Rivas explains that, in giving the characters these code names, she drew on the qualities and personalities of the characters in the novel.

The chart below lists the characters in the play, their characteristics, and their corresponding character in the original novel.

| **Three Musketeers: 1941 Character** | **Counterpart in Dumas' novel** |
|---|---|
| **D'Artagnan –** 19. Grew up on a farm; thus, knows how to do a lot of disparate things. Doesn't yet know how to apply them in this sudden circumstance. Incredibly quick learner, but also impulsive and easily aroused to anger. From Gascony, in the "Free Zone." | A young man from the country who travels to the city with dreams of becoming a musketeer |
| **Treville** – 40s. Born and raised in Paris. A high school classics teacher, now the head of an isolated Resistance cell. | The leader of the musketeers. |
| **Athos** – mid 20s. Was a law student, but got derailed before she completed her degree. Of Jewish heritage. Serious, reserved, and terrifyingly dedicated to the cause. | One of the three musketeers of the novel's title. |
| **Porthos** – early 20s. From the countryside, came to the city on her own. A terrific memory, and endlessly creative. | One of the three musketeers of the novel's title. |
| **Aramis** – early 20s. A Communist. A nurse. Could run a hospital with one hand tied behind her back. Readily sees systems, patterns, and strategies. Focused on the future. | One of the three musketeers of the novel's title. |
| **Planchet** – a teenager. A courier. Unusually mature, smart and brave. Never lets on when she's afraid. | A loyal, intelligent man; D'Artagnon's servent |
| **Richelieu** – 30s or 40s. A French police inspector now collaborating with the occupying Germans (followed Petain right into their arms, but he's much smarter than Petain). Brilliant, persuasive, utterly corrupt. | Cardinal Richelieu, a religious leader who schemes against the king of France and the musketeers. |
| **Milady** – Ageless. a British agent who has been turned by the Nazis. Dangerously glamorous. Accomplished traitor and murderer. | A spy, hired by Cardinal Richelieu. In the novel, she is also Athos' wife. |
| **Rochefort** -20s. A French police lieutenant. Richelieu's protégé | Associate to Cardinal Richelieu |

# THE GERMAN OCCUPATION OF FRANCE

In May 1940, approximately nine months after the outbreak of World War II, Germany invaded and quickly defeated France. In the armistice (agreement to stop fighting) that followed, France was divided into a German-governed zone in the North, including Paris, and a French-governed zone in the south. The southern zone was known as Vichy, or the “Free Zone.” While technically not governed by the Germans, at least until November of 1942, the Vichy government still collaborated with them in many ways.


Under Nazi control, all clocks in northern France were all set to German time. There was a curfew. Access to supplies was limited. People waited on long lines for bread, dairy, meat, fuel, and other supplies. The Germans attempted to censor films, books, and magazines that they deemed damaging to their rule, including anything promoting anti-German politics or ideas, or anything by Jewish artists. The Germans had trouble, however, censoring radio, and programs like Radio London, which spoke against the Nazis and carried coded messages, often got through.

In Paris, where the play takes place, streets were often barricaded with metal barriers and sandbags. Swastikas and signs declaring “Germany is everywhere victorious” appeared throughout the city. The only vehicles allowed in the city were German military vehicles and some public busses, so most people took to riding bicycles to get around. Hotels were converted into barracks for the German military.

To exert control, the Germans would execute “hostages” whenever they met with resistance or violence. Anyone taken prisoner by the Germans was considered a hostage. Prisoners could also be sentenced to forced labor. The French police, working under German orders, frequently arrested people for acts of sabotage or resistance, or for being suspected Communists, as Communists across Europe opposed the Nazi regime.

Although the initial months of the Occupation were devoted to maintaining control, the German government quickly revoked French citizenship from thousands of French Jews and removed them from jobs in the civil service. Not long after, they began arresting Jews and seizing their businesses and property. In 1942, Jewish people were required to wear the yellow star marking their identity, and segregation rules began to be imposed. In the summer of 1942, Jewish people in France began to be rounded up and sent to concentration camps by the thousands.

Although resistance the German Occupation was not initially very strong, it grew over time. It included attempts to assassinate members of the German military, small explosives placed around cities like Paris, and sabotage of railway lines. The Paris region contained thousands of miles of railway, including subways, and could not be adequately guarded by the occupying forces, making it a target. Outside of Paris, maquis—small groups of resistance fighters living in the countryside—conducted guerilla warfare and espionage. Over time, all of these acts came to be known as La Résistance, the Resistance.

In addition to armed resistance, the French engaged in espionage against the Germans, wrote and published anti-German newsletters, and helped smuggle Jews and others out of occupied France.

The German occupation of France ended in 1944. Paris, specifically, was liberated on August. 25, 1944.

The play takes place in 1941, roughly a year into the Nazi occupation. While events in the play are fictionalized, they are inspired by real events, with the date of some things (such as the performance of *Antigone* by Jean Anhouil) moved for dramatic purposes.

# WOMEN AND THE RESISTANCE

Many women participated in the French Resistance. Although the total number of women involved is not known due to the lack of records, it is clear that these women came from all ages and backgrounds. They participated in a wide range of activities, including writing and distributing anti-German leaflets, hiding and feeding Jewish people and members of the resistance, spying, creating false identity papers and ration cards, escorted refugees to freedom, and recruiting new people to the cause. Some women were leaders of resistance units, and their stories are well known. Some have published memoirs. Others did not talk much about their activities during the war until much later. Still others did not survive the war to tell their stories.

The list of notable women that follows is just a sample of the many women involved, demonstrating the different kinds of work women did on behalf of France, the Allies, and Jewish people.

# NOTABLE WOMEN OF THE RESISTANCE

**Alice Arteil** – One of the only women known to have commanded her own guerilla unit, she was part of the maquis, armed resistance groups in the countryside.

**Lucie Aubrac** – a history teacher and supporter of communism, she and her husband formed a resistance group that published an underground newspaper and committed sabotage against the Germans. When her husband was arrested, she managed to break him and 15 other prisoners free.

**Josephine Baker** – A famous black American singer living in Paris, Baker became a highly valued spy for France, Britain, and the U.S. She is reported to have carried messages written on invisible ink on her sheet music.

**Claire Chevrillon** – Code name Christian Clouet, she was a Jewish woman who encoded and decoded messages between the Free French in London and their allies in Paris.

**Marie-Madeleine Fourcade** – Led Alliance, one of the largest resistance networks, with agents across France. Alliance supplied the British and American with important intelligence. Fourcade was captured by the Nazis twice and escaped both times.

# NOTABLE WOMEN OF THE RESISTANCE

**Agnès de la Barre de Nanueuil** – Only 17 when the war began, de Nanueuil helped the Resistance by carrying secret messages in the handlebars of her bicycle and placing landing lights for parachuters.

**Andrée Peel** – Known as “Agent Rose,” Peel and other members of her resistance group rescued downed Allied pilots and worked to get them safely back to Britain.

S**imone Segouin** – Famously photographed at the liberation of Paris holding a gun, Segouin helped blow up bridges, derail trains, and carry messages. She was only 19 when the war ended.

**Denise Siekierski** – aka “Colibri,” Siekierski joined a Jewish youth group in Vichy France, providing aid to Jewish refugees. Once the Germans took over the region Siekierski joined a more clandestine network, creating false paperwork, escorting Jews out of France, and using her ability to pass as a non-Jew to repeatedly trick Nazi authorities.

**Rose Valland** – An art historian working at the Jeu de Paume Museum in Paris during the Occupation, Valland spoke German but kept it a secret from the Nazis. She kept detailed records of where the Germans sent the many works of art they had stolen from private collectors, mostly Jews. Because of her work, many items were able to be returned after the war.

# VOCABULARY AND REFERENCES

**Three Musketeers: 1941** includes some terms you might not be familiar with, including locations in Paris and references to historical figures.

**Arrondissment** An administrative district. Paris is divided into 20 districts or arrondissments.

**Champs-Élysées** A famous boulevard in Paris

**Communist** A supporter of communist ideas. Communism is political ideology that seeks a classless society, where everything is collectively owned by the people. The Nazi's viewed communists as a major threat to their authoritarian style of politics, and their desire to privilege race and nationality over class issues. Nazis therefore persecuted communists. Russia, a communist state, fought against the Nazis in World War II.

**Creon, Antigone, and Monsieur Anouilh** One of the characters talks about going to see the play *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh. This play premiered on Feb. 6, 1944, In German-occupied Paris. It is an adaptation of the Greek play *Antigone* by Sophocles. In the play, Antigone buries the body of her brother, Polynices, despite an edict set by her uncle, Creon, who declared he should remain unburied because he made war on the city. Anouilh updated the language and the setting, creating an allegory for the tension between the French resistance and the occupying forces. The play was allowed to be performed because both sides believed that Antigone's struggle represented their side of the conflict. Nevertheless, members of the French Resistance saw Antigone as a hero standing up to an oppressive government.

**General De Gaulle,** a French general who did not accept the truce with the Germans that led to the occupations of part of the country. Instead, he escaped to England where he formed a government in exile and became the leader of the Free French.

**Free Zone** The part of France that remained under French control during the early years of World War II

**Führer** Literally, German for “leader.” This title was adopted by Adolph Hitler to define his absolute authority.

**Internationale** The song of the international workers’ movement, associated with anarchists, communists, and socialists

**Maquis** A French word, literally meaning “underbrush.” This is the name taken by bands of French resistance fighters who took to the hills to defy German occupation. The name refers to the fact they fought from the cover of bushes and brush.

**Marie Antionette** Queen of France in the late 1700s, wife of Louis XVI. Wildly unpopular, she was considered frivolous. She was beheaded in the French Revolution.

**Pétain** Refers to Philippe Pétain, who was Vice Premier of France when it was attacked by Germany in 1940. He soon requested an armistice (end to the fighting) and was appointed Chief of State to the parts of France not controlled by Germany. Although the region was officially neutral, Pétain collaborated with the Nazis in many ways, including introducing anti-Semitic laws. After the war, Pétain was convicted of collaborations with the Nazis.

**Phillippe Henriot** Politician and propagandist in the Vischy government (the part of France not directly controlled by the Germans). His radio programs were designed to demoralize those opposing the Germans. See also Radio London and Radio Paris.

**Radio London** The BBC (British Broadcasting Company) in London broadcast into France, sending anti-German propaganda, crucial information from outside of the German-occupied area, calls from De Gaulle for the French to keep resisting, and even coded messages. Radio played an important role in World War II, with both sides using it for propaganda as well as entertainment.

**Radio Paris** Run by the Nazi government, the station played music and German propaganda. Radio played an important role in World War II, with both sides using it for propaganda as well as entertainment.

**Winston Churchill** Prime Minister of England during World War II. England was aligned with the Allies.

# LA MARSEILLAISE


*La Marseillaise* was written in 1792 by a French army officer named Rouget de Lisle. Originally titled “Chant de Guerre pour l’Armée” (War Song for the Army), it became the first national anthem of France in 1795. When the Germans took northern France, they banned it, although it continued to be sung and played as an act of resistance. The song also continued to be sung and celebrated in southern France, where the government encouraged it as a sign of French nationalism.

The full song has seven verses and a refrain, typically sung between each verse. The first verse, which is sung in the play, is translated here.

## EN FRANÇAIS

*Allons enfants de la patrie,*
*Le jour de gloire est arrivé !*
*Contre nous de la tyrannie*
*L'étendard sanglant est levé ! (bis)*
*Entendez-vous dans les campagnes,*
*Mugir ces féroces soldats ?*
*Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras*
*Égorger nos fils, nos compagnes!*

## IN ENGLISH

*Let's go children of the fatherland,*
*The day of glory has arrived!*
*Against us tyranny's*
*Bloody flag is raised! (repeat)*
*In the countryside, do you hear*
*The roaring of these fierce soldiers?*
*They come right to our arms*
*To slit the throats of our sons, our friends!*

# HIGHLIGHT: PLAYWRIGHT MEGAN MONAGHAN RIVAS

Megan Monaghan Rivas joined the University of Connecticut as Artistic Director of Connecticut Repertory Theatre and Department Head of Dramatic Arts in 2021 after serving as Interim Head of the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University, where she served on the faculty starting in 2013. In prior years she served as literary manager of South Coast Repertory Theatre, and as literary director of the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta and Frontera@Hyde Park Theatre in Austin, TX. She oversaw the artistic programming for playwrights at the Lark Play Development Center in New York City and The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She has freelanced with the New Harmony Project, the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, the Geffen Playhouse, Quantum Theatre, Aurora Theatre, the Salt Lake Acting Company, TheatreSquared, Actors Express Theatre, and Horizon Theatre. She is the author of an original gender-bending adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' *Three Musketeers*, and a separate original play riffing on Dumas' characters set among women workers in the French Resistance, entitled *Three Musketeers: 1941*. Megan has been honored with the Elliott Hayes Prize in Dramaturgy.

### How did you first get involved in theatre, and what drew you to it?

My parents met each other when they were both cast in a college production of *Hamlet*. During their early married years they continued engaging in theatre, primarily as actors but also as a lighting designer (my father) and a director (my mother, or both of them co-directing). So from my earliest years, I witnessed theatre as a thing a regular person could do, and not just see.

I was drawn to the powerful framework theatre provides for our biggest, most unruly emotions, and to the way each theatre project creates a unique community among all the people who work on it. Those two elements continue to fuel me, all these years later.

### What do you like about playwriting?

I like the challenges it offers. A playwright has to provide all the information an audience will need to enter the world of the play, think carefully through how the experience will go in real time, and bravely face the ways that a play will reveal what the writer thinks, feels, and cares about. Beyond the puzzle-solving satisfaction of it, I love and appreciate the opportunity to tell stories that matter to me and that I hope will be nourishing for those who encounter them.

### When did you first read Dumas' The Three Musketeers? What impression did it make on you?

I first read *Three Musketeers* when the school I worked for at the time agreed to let me write them a stage adaptation. That's not the one Connecticut Repertory is producing - this was an earlier play of mine that is more faithful to the original novel and its time period.

Once I did read it, I was struck by what a plot machine it was! The novel is mainly a picaresque, which is a genre that focuses on a rogue central character finding their way through a disrupted or corrupt society and has numerous adventures along the way. Adventures = lots of plot. This is not the kind of story where characters sit quietly thinking deeply. These characters are in constant motion!

Then working on this adaptation, I had chosen a setting where fighting in public had drastic consequences. So the fights had to go underground or behind closed doors, for the most part. However, the stakes needed to be just as high, the risks just as real, and the characters' courage just as apparent.

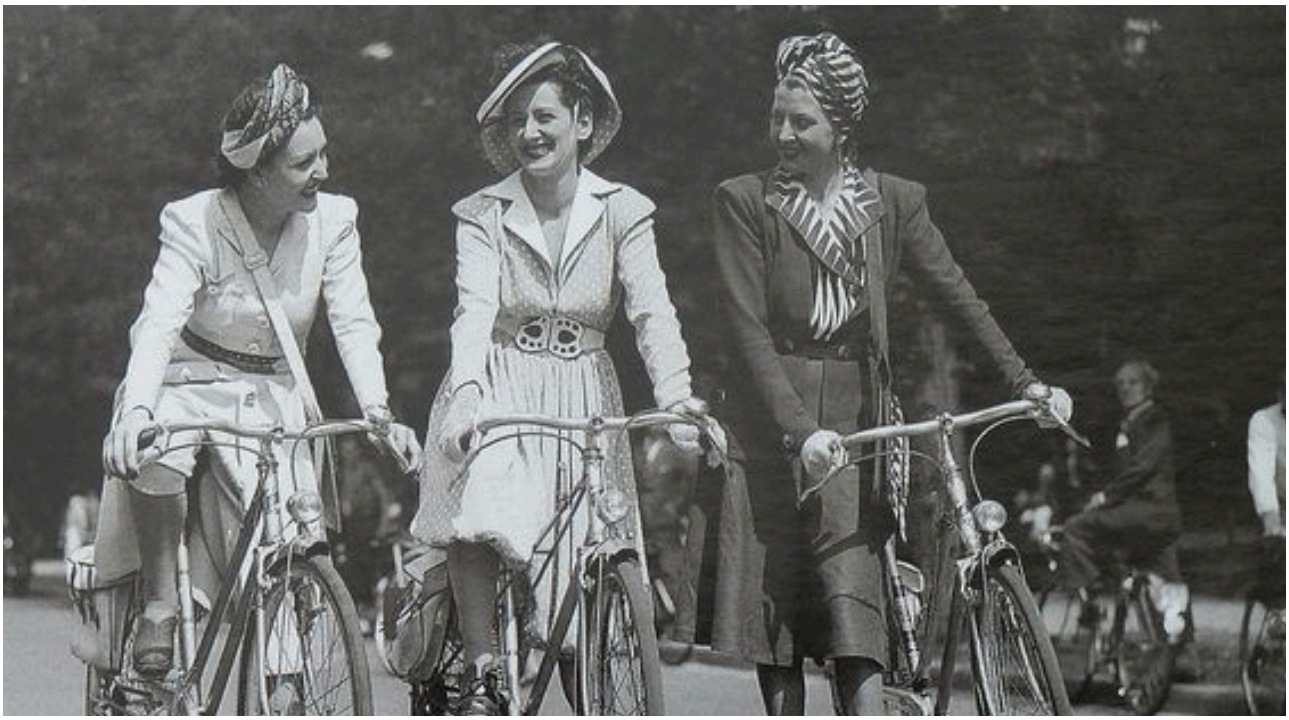
### What inspired you to write this adaptation?

A friend and colleague who had directed a play I'd previously written, came to me with what felt like a dare - to write a version of *Three Musketeers* in which all of the Musketeers were women. That dare became a commission, which is a business arrangement between a writer and a theatre company. The company gets the opportunity to be the first to produce the play that the writer creates, and the writer gets the security of knowing their play has a first home.

In this play's case that home was Project Y Theatre, which produces a more or less annual festival of Women in Theatre. That festival highlights work by women as directors, writers, performers, designers, managers, and technicians. Male-identifying people aren't excluded, but the festival prioritizes having at least 50% of each production's company be female-identifying. Three Musketeers: 1941 was the cornerstone of their 2019 Women in Theatre Festival.

### What were some of your goals in writing it?

I wanted to illuminate some of the extraordinary courage and creativity of women and girls during the French Resistance, to embody the essential characteristics of the original characters from the Dumas novel in the characters in my play, to plant some fun "Easter eggs" for people who know the Dumas story well, and to call upon the audience to reach out to other people during a time when forces were striving to drive us apart.




### What led you to WWII as a setting?

While I was trying to find a place to begin that all-women Musketeers challenge, a friend loaned me their great-aunt's journal of her time as an American nurse serving in France during WWII. Her reflections on the time and the people she met started my imagination going. I didn't want to make our d'Artagnan an outsider to the extreme degree that being someone from another land and another language would mean, but reading that journal gave me the first handhold for this story.

### What advice would you give someone who wanted to write their own adaptation or version of a story they love?

See if you can state clearly, for yourself, what you love about it. For me, the story of the Musketeers is resonant because it's about a group of close friends with different talents, all fighting together for the same morally good cause. I'm one of five siblings, and I feel that dynamic very strong with them as well as with my close friends. Once you get clear about what you love, what this story would not be itself without, you're in a good position to let your imagination work on telling that truth even if you venture pretty far away from the original material, as I did with *Three Musketeers: 1941.*

# THANK YOU

## WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THE SHOW!

Connecticut Repertory Theatre is committed to producing work that encourages audiences to think about the world around them, embrace the power of storytelling, and enjoy the experience of attending a play or musical performance. Theater strengthens the imagination and inspires people of all ages.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