

The Man in the Iron Mask

A Musical By Austin Cappetta
Music & Book By Austin Cappetta
Lyrics By Austin Cappetta

Based on the Novel by Alexandre Dumas

ACT ONE

#1. Overture

FULL CAST

FUIT QUONDAM CIVIS QUI REX FACTUS EST.

(Translation: There was once a normal man who became a king.)

TYRANNUM FRATREM SUBSTITUIT.

(Translation: He replaced his tyrant brother.)

LADIES

LATEBAT MUNDO;

(Translation: He was hidden from the world;)

TANDEM REPERTUS.

(Translation: Then finally found.)

TORMENTA, ERAT,

OCCULTATITO

(Translation: Tormented, he was, by a mask.)

GENTLEMEN

A SCLOPETARIIS E CARCERE

SERVATUS EST.

(Translation: He was saved from prison by Musketeers.)

BENE REXIT,

(Translation: He ruled well,)

TIETO

(Translation: Just so you know.)

FULL CAST

AH AH AH AH

AH AH AH AH

AH AH AH AH

AH AH AH AH

AH-AH-AH EE-AH-EY

EE-EE-EY EE-AH-EY-AH

Scene 1

As the Overture ends, the CURTAIN rises on the BASTILLE. The year is 1659. In a lone prison cell, PHILIPPE also known as THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK lies upon a hay cot on the dingy stone floor. A massive IRON MASK is strapped to his face. Footsteps are heard. Philippe raises his head curiously. BAISEMAUX, the goaler, opens the door with little in the way of subtlety.

PHILIPPE

Has the hour arrived for my scraps of food already, BaisemauX?

BAISEMAUX

Only if ye like eating priests!

He laughs, amused at his joke.

Through the door enters ARAMIS, one of the former Musketeers of legend, now a humble priest.

PHILIPPE

(He says with a grim acceptance.)

Ah, nay, it is the hour of confession.

Philippe stands.

Has the king finally decided to put an end to my suffering?

BAISEMAUX

No, I brought 'im 'ere. An old friend of mine, this one is.

To Aramis under his breath:

I called you out of pity, father. At this point a swift death would be a mercy. I've never seen so many floggings done unto a man other than the good Lord 'imself. Whatever he done to incur the King's wrath must 'ave been somethin' truly unforgivable. Be careful with 'im, father.

ARAMIS

Thank you, Baisemau. I appreciate your kind words of caution and the piety it took for you to summon me. However, I assure you, though the years may have changed me, there are still few in France who could overcome me.

Aramis pulls a small knife out of his sleeve. Baisemau nods, accepting the fact that Aramis needs not fear this man.

Now, leave us.

Baisemau leaves and closes the door.

The goaler tells me you have found yourself enticing the king's ire.

PHILIPPE

He tells you true.

ARAMIS

I am of course, most intrigued to know why. But the question that seems to be cavorting on my tongue draws me to that abomination upon your face.

PHILIPPE

Ah... this.

(Beat) (He says sardonically):

An accolade for my greatest achievement.

ARAMIS

At least you've managed to keep your wits while wearing that. Were it I in your place, I do not know that I would have the strength to do the same.

PHILIPPE

We all wear masks, father. Mine is just more tangible than the rest.

(Beat)

If I am to confess my sins to you, father, I'd like to know what yours is.

ARAMIS

Mine?

PHILIPPE

The mask you wear. I desire to know that my soul is in the hands of someone pious and true, not like the rest of your flock.

ARAMIS

I swear to you, my son, that I am devoted to the Almighty. But, if you must know, there is, however, some part of me that still seeks to account for my own ambitions before the needs of others. But through God, I have learned to temper those desires, and that has made my faith stronger.

PHILIPPE

A man who knows his faults and admits them is a man worth trusting.

(Beat)

If I may ask, these... ambitions you speak of... what are they?

ARAMIS

Though it may sound foolhardy, I once believed my sins could buy me power and a title to go with it. Now, I pray that my penitence may one day make me Pope.

PHILIPPE

Philippe chuckles, but with respect for his sincerity.

The Pope? You certainly are the ambitious type. Though, I admire your sincerity, father. Tell me, what name do you go by?

ARAMIS

Aramis.

PHILIPPE

Aramis? A rather unique name.

ARAMIS

Aramis doesn't make a habit of admitting to criminals that he used to carry out justice in the name of the king. Thus, he moves the conversation along.

It isn't it. And what do you call yourself, my son?

PHILIPPE

Philippe. Of that fact, I can at least be certain.

#2. *I Wear the Mask*

ARAMIS

It sounds as though you have lived a tenuous life, Philippe. Let us proceed with the sacrament of confession... if you are ready to begin.

PHILIPPE

Very well.

Philippe kneels.

Forgive me, father, for I have sinned. It has been six moons since my last confession... and I fear this one may well be my last.

ARAMIS

I am sorry. Tell me how you arrived at such a conclusion.

PHILIPPE

THE RISING SUN EACH MORN ACCOSTS ME WITH MALAISE,
I LAMENT AND LOATHE THE FACT THAT I STILL BREATHE.
THIS MASK PROVOKES JUST ROTTING HAIR AND TOOTH DECAYS,
IT WAINS MY VIRTUE TO FESS HOW I SEETHE.

THE GOALERS GRANT ME SCORN, AS SUCH, THEY CASTIGATE,
I CONFESS I CURSE THOSE BASTARDS EV'RY NIGHT.
I QUESTION WHY THE KING AND GOD FORESTALL MY FATE,
TO PASS THE DAYS THERE'S ONE CHANT I RECITE...

I WEAR THE MASK, IT DOES NOT WE-EAR ME.
I WEAR THE MASK, YEARNING TO BE SET FREE.
I REFUSE TO BE CHANGED BY THIS HORRID WOE.
I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG, EVEN THEN STILL I KNOW...
I WEAR THE MASK, IT DOES NOT WE-EAR ME-E-E.
YES, ALL THAT I ASK, IS THAT GOD HEAR MY PLEA.

I ONCE ATTEMPTED TO REMOVE THESE IRON JAWS,
AND I'VE EVEN TRIED TO STARVE MYSELF IN SIN.
THOUGH, I WITHDREW THOSE ACTS OF HAPLESSNESS BECAUSE,
THE REMEDY TO ANGUISH LIES WITHIN.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT MYSELF SECURE,
THOUGH NOW THAT I'M LESS PURE,
I'VE BECOME LESS THAN SURE.

YES, I WEAR THE MASK, IT DOES NOT WE-EAR ME.
 I WEAR THE MASK, AS IT'S FATED TO BE.
 FORGOTTEN AND CHIDED, MY FUTURE IS WRIT.
 I CAN'T CHANGE THE LOT, BUT I CAN CHANGE AMBIT.

YES, I WEAR THE MASK, THE DETESTABLE THI-I-ING,
 A GIFT FITTING FOR, THE BROTHER OF THE KING.

ARAMIS

By God!

Aramis kneels and makes the sign of the Cross.

I apologize that my bewilderment is getting the better of me. But, might I ask you tell me more? About how you came to be... here, in the Bastille?

PHILIPPE

Very well, father. It seems only fitting that someone knows my tale. But I only know what was told to me... before I ended up here.

(Beat)

It began, or so I am told... on the day I was born.

#2a. Into Scene Two

Scene 2.

The prison cell fades away to the ROYAL PALACE OF FONTAINEBLEAU. A tinted SCRIM or LIGHTING indicates that this scene is a FLASHBACK.

COURTIERS rush to the throne room of LOUIS XIII to rejoice in the news that the Queen, ANNE OF AUSTRIA, has given birth to twin boys. The Palace is as opulent as can be.

#3. The Realm Rejoices!

COURTIERS

REJOICE! REJOICE! SHOUT CHEERS FOR THE KING!
 ON THIS MOMENTOUS DAY A MOST IMPORTANT EVENT BRINGS
 GREAT JOY WORTH REFERRING.

NOBLE LADY

HAVE YOU INDEED HEARD THE HEARSAY?

NOBLE MAN

QUEEN ANNE HAS GIVEN BIRTH ON THIS DAY!

NOBLE LADY 2

TO NOT ONE BUT TWO SONS, I'VE BEEN TOLD.

COURTIERS

THIS IS TRULY A DAY TO BEHOLD!

NEVER AGAIN WILL OUR GOOD KING AWAKE IN FRIGHT,
HIS DYNASTY IS TWICE SECURED WITH FUTURE BRIGHT.
NEVER HAS A KING BEEN SO BLESSED,
TO HAVE HIS LINE SO UNCONTESTED.
HOW COULD THIS JOYOUS DAY BE BESTED
WITH PLIGHT?

KNOWING WHAT WE KNOW OF GOD'S GRACE,
THE FUTURE OF OUR LAND, WE EMBRACE!
HOW COULD WE HAVE ANOTHER PLAIN CHOICE
THAN TO REAFFIRM WITH BUT ONE VOICE?
FOR THE KING, WE IN THE REALM REJOICE!

KING LOUIS XIII sits upon his throne in his magnanimous throne room. CARDINAL MAZARIN stands at the bottom of the dais.

CARDINAL MAZARIN

I beg your pardon, your Majesty. If I may be permitted to speak. I have some... thoughts on this matter.

KING LOUIS XIII

Of course, Mazarin. Your counsel has always proven wise and just.

CARDINAL MAZARIN

MOST IMPORTANT TO A KING
IS THE MATTER OF HIS SUCCESSION
SIRING A PROPER HEIR ENSURES
THE STABILITY OF THE ACCESSION
BUT IF TWO CLAIM THE THRONE,
IT CAN BE SAT BY ONE ALONE
WITH NO EXCEPTIONS BY THE LAW
AND THAT IS WHY THIS DAY IS
INVIABLY AND INVARIABLY FLAWED.

KING LOUIS XIII

I see, and so you claim that by having twin sons, the realm may well be split when it comes to rallying behind my chosen heir one day.

CARDINAL MAZARIN

Precisely, your Majesty.

KING LOUIS XIII

What do you suggest to alleviate this... issue laid before my feet?

CARDINAL MAZARIN

I SUGGEST A PLAN IN WHICH WE
TEAR THE BABES ASUNDER
SNUFF OUT CIVIL WAR
AND AVOID A TERRIBLE BLUNDER
ONE TWIN MUST BE REMOVED,
THAT IS WHAT THIS DAY DEMANDS.
AND, WITH THIS ACTION SAVE YOUR LAND
SO, SIRE WHAT THINKS YOU
OF THIS INGENIOUS PLOT THAT I HAVE WISELY PLANNED?

KING LOUIS XIII

I spit upon the ground you walk! I cannot murder one of my own sons!

CARDINAL MAZARIN

Murder? Heavens no, your Majesty! You misunderstand me. What I suggest is far more lenient on one's conscience.

(Beat)

One boy of your choosing will remain here... as your son and heir. As for the other... there is a manse in my possession. We will send him there along with two of your trusted servants who would raise him as their own. He would never know the truth of his birth. Of course the boy would be well fed, and well-guarded, and in the event that your chosen heir dies, you will have another waiting to assume the responsibility of the crown.

KING LOUIS XIII

And what would we tell my wife? What would we tell the world?

CARDINAL MAZARIN

That one babe died of natural causes.

(Beat)

When the funeral is nigh, we will use the body of another bearing a similar appearance to your own.

KING LOUIS XIII

You realize that this would mean lying to my dear sweet wife for all her years.

(Beat)

Do you truly think this is the right course?

CARDINAL MAZARIN

History has seen realms torn asunder by brothers since the dawn of time. I shudder to think what the kingdom would do with an identical pair.

(Beat)

But, forgive me, your Majesty. You ask of me a question that I cannot answer. I cannot say if this is the proper path. Only you can decide... if you can lay the sin upon yourself.

King Louis XIII takes a few moments to contemplate Mazarin's words. He finally rises from his throne and approaches Mazarin eye to eye.

KING LOUIS XIII

Let it be done then... for the good of the realm.

CARDINAL MAZARIN

Allow me to call my page boy... Fouquet!

A TEENAGE FOUQUET rushes into the throne room, nearly tripping over himself. He bows to the king first and Mazarin second.

TEENAGE FOUQUET

Your Majesty.

To Mazarin:

Yes, your Eminence?

CARDINAL MAZARIN

I require you to bring me the two progenies of the king.

(Beat)

Don't just stand there gawking like an owl! I gave you a command, now go!

Teenage Fouquet leaves.

KING LOUIS XIII

Your page boy seems the nervous type, doesn't he Mazarin?

CARDINAL MAZARIN

He is loathsome to be true. Though he is likely the most brilliant lad I have ever met. He has a rare gift for arithmetic that could surpass that of even Descartes. I expect one day he could make a fine financial advisor to your Majesty.

A few moments pass and Teenage Fouquet returns with the two babies in wheeled strollers.

KING LOUIS XIII

Which one is which?

TEENAGE FOUQUET

The boy on your left, your Majesty, is Louis. And the one on your right is Philippe. Philippe is the elder, born six minutes prior to Louis.

KING LOUIS XIII

He may be the elder, but he is also the weaker.

The king laughs.

Look at him... he is as sickly as a rat. I don't even know that the boy will survive his second year, Mazarin.

He picks up baby Louis.

But this boy... this one is strong. He has the makings of a king!

CARDINAL MAZARIN

And this is the child you wish to keep?

TEENAGE FOUQUET

Keep?

Mazarin elbows him.

CARDINAL MAZARIN

(Whispering)

Silence, Fouquet! And not a word of this to anyone, understand?

#3a. Louis XIII's Court Underscore**KING LOUIS XIII**

Yes... I have made my decision. My son, the next king, will be Louis the Fourteenth! I will pour my soul into making him the best man there ever could be!

FIVE YEARS PASS and a CASKET appears on stage. Philippe and Aramis enter, watching the events unfold. YOUNG KING LOUIS XIV approaches the casket of the former king. He holds his mother's hand. QUEEN ANNE is sobbing, but maintaining her composure. Courtiers mourn the king and Mazarin stands on the dais delivering a sermon (only moving his lips, not actually speaking).

PHILIPPE

But the old king, the father I never knew, died when my brother and I were just five. Mazarin and Queen Anne stepped in as Louis' regents. Though they taught him well, being king from such a young age tends to manifest certain... complexes.

The scene of the casket melts away. Young King Louis XIV is shown pointing his finger across the stage. TWO GUARDS drag a sobbing PEASANT WOMAN across the stage.

YOUNG KING LOUIS XIV

To the noose with her!

PEASANT WOMAN

Please, your Majesty! It was but a loaf of bread, I'll never steal from your stores again!

MORE TIME PASSES (10-12 years from the last jump.) The scene fades once again.

KING LOUIS XIV steps out for the first time, he is joined by four other male

COURTIERS. Several other male and female courtiers watch from the sidelines as the king performs the end of a BALLET. The courtiers hesitantly clap, save for one man;

DUKE HENRI DE NEMOURS.

PHILIPPE

And as the king grew, he became more and more of a wretch!

KING LOUIS XIV

Ah, I am so glad you found my latest ballet enjoyable.

(Beat)

Save for you, Nemours. Did you not find my art pleasing to the eyes and ears?

DUKE HENRI DE NEMOURS

A thousand pardons, your Majesty. My wife is ailing at home, my thoughts were with her.

KING LOUIS XIV

I see, perhaps we can find some way to... awaken your senses.

(Beat)

Join me later for a sparring match.

DUKE HENRI DE NEMOURS

Your Majesty honors me!

King Louis XIV exits, followed by the other dancers.

DUKE LOUIS OF VENDÔME

His ballets truly are terrible aren't they?

(Beat)

You may be new here, Nemours, but surely you must know that the king is gifted with a blade. He will either humiliate you or kill you this afternoon.

This part of the scene fades. More TIME PASSES. Now the story has reached six months before Philippe's confession. A BED appears on stage. Cardinal Mazarin lies inside the sheets in his night clothes. TWO PHYSICIANS examine him and tend to him. They bow and leave the room. FOUQUET, now Chief Minister of Finance stands in the background silently. Queen-Mother Anne holds Mazarin's hand as a dear friend. Louis XIV is uncaring of the events transpiring.

PHILIPPE

Six moons ago was the day the truth was finally revealed.