



***What is the story of Camille the Musical?*** A romantic musical drama, *Camille the Musical* is the centuries old story of famous Parisian courtesan Camille Marguerite Gautier. Inspired by the novel by Alexandre Dumas fils, first published in 1848, the story has been the source material for many versions ranging from the play adaptation that made Sandra Bernhard an acting icon, to the Verdi opera *La Traviata*, to the movie version with Greta Garbo, to the movie musical *Moulin Rouge* directed by Baz Luhrman.

***How is Camille the Musical different from previous adaptations?***

The original novel and play were inspired by the real-life French courtesan, Marie Duplessis, but no version has ever explored her perspective. This exciting new adaptation focuses on Camille's full journey incorporating the events of her past into the beloved story we all know and love. Marie's actual life was so compelling, it was impossible not to tell the story from her point of view. In doing so, we dig deep into the underbelly of society's darker side. Born into extreme poverty, Marie survived an abusive father, was sold as a child sex slave, escaped to Paris, worked as a grisette, was discovered by a wealthy Duke, and transformed into the celebrated courtesan and muse for emperors, artists, and composers. She is an incredible testament to the power of ingenuity, survival, intellect, and perseverance. She navigated the patriarchy, sexism, jealousy, puritanical social pressures, and ultimately her fiercest challenge, consumption. Her story reminds us how insidious and toxic misogyny is; how it impacts every aspect of society; how important it is to live each moment as if it's your last; how important it is to hug your loved one's close because they may be gone tomorrow.

Another difference is the added characters of Armand's sister Nichette and her beloved fiancé, Gustav. It is important for today's audience to understand why Camille would just walk away from Armand. To do this we wanted to show Camille not just as a sex worker, but as the deeply compassionate human being that Marie was. Too often we are quick to dehumanize people who don't conform to our societal norms. We see this in some versions where she is portrayed as flippant, fickle, frivolous. We go to great lengths to show the depth of her compassion whether it is the deeply romantic love she shares with Armand, the touching relationship with her nurse Julie, or the beautiful power of the feminine sisterly bond with Nichette. When Armand's father asks Camille to leave Armand to save Nichette's reputation, she doesn't hesitate. She knows all too well what that means for Nichette's future. Like today, it shows how lies, gossip, and disinformation can ruin an innocent person's life. Camille is dying yet willingly walks away from her last chance for true love. She knows she must do so in secret because Armand is still deeply rooted in the influence of his male privilege and would never understand her motivation. Camille's sacrifice becomes one of the most powerful and moving moments in the show.

Another interesting difference is the Baron de Varville. Our Varville is a conglomeration of many of the men in Marie's life, but most importantly, he is a man who has lived a life of extreme wealth and privilege: a man who sits firmly entrenched at the top edge of the patriarchy, a man who gets whatever he wants and has never been told "no", a man who is deeply rooted in the established societal norms. He wants Camille because she is the covetous jewel who is close to the king and in winning her, he elevates his position. Initially it is just a business transaction to him, but the more he

gets to know her, the more he is bewitched by her intellect, her beauty, and her fierce independence. She becomes an obsession for him. When she escapes to the countryside with Armand, Varville gets revenge by spreading malicious lies that Camille is grooming Nichette to be a courtesan and instructing her to steal Gustav's money. He gambles that Camille will not sacrifice Nichette to the wolves, and he is right. Camille returns to Paris bankrupt and has no other choice but to offer herself to Varville. Camille knows she is going to die soon and contents herself to live out her remaining days under his domineering thumb. She could not foresee that Armand would not give up so easily and would soon throw a wrench in her plans.

*Camille the Musical* is a story of love and redemption, of sacrifice and triumph, of immense joy and devastating heartbreak.

Ages: Adult themes, dialogue, choreography, and situations akin to Les Miz.