

THE MICHAEL FRIEDMAN COLLECTION

**Civilians.**

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

# PARIS COMMUNE



WRITTEN BY STEVE COSSON AND MICHAEL FRIEDMAN

# PARIS COMMUNE

Written by **Steve Cosson and Michael Friedman**

Songs translated and adapted by **Michael Friedman**

1. **Le Temps des Cerises** – Kate Buddeke

2. **La Canaille** - Kate Buddeke

3. **I Love the Military** - Charlotte Dobbs

4. **Song of May** - Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Rebecca Hart, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright, The Paris Commune Original Cast Recording Ensemble

5. **Yodeling Ducks** – Aysan Celik, Daniel Jenkins

6. **God of the Bigots** – Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Rebecca Hart, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright, The Paris Commune Original Cast Recording Ensemble

7. **The Internationale** – Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Rebecca Hart, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright, The Paris Commune Original Cast Recording Ensemble

8. **Ah! Je Veux Vivre** – Charlotte Dobbs, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright

9. **Mon Homme** – Aysan Celik

10. **The Captain** – Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Rebecca Hart, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright, The Paris Commune Original Cast Recording Ensemble

11. **The Bloody Week** — Kate Buddeke

12. **Le Temps des Cerises (reprise)** — Kate Buddeke, Jonathan Raviv, Aysan Celik, Rebecca Hart, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright, The Paris Commune Original Cast Recording Ensemble





Nina Hellman, Jeanine Serralles, Sam Breslin Wright, Aysan Celik, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati

## SYNOPSIS

*Paris Commune* tells the story of the first European socialist revolution, an attempt to completely re-order society – government, co-operative ownership of business, education, the rights of women, even the hours of the baker. A meta-theatrical, musical play, *Paris Commune* draws on historical texts and original songs from the time to bring to life this explosive moment in French history. The actors both inhabit the roles of multiple characters and also step outside of the action as storytellers and as commentators, most notably to interrogate one of the central conflicts of this particular revolution. The majority of the Communards advocated for an anti-authoritarian, collectivist, non-hierarchical vision for their new society. At the same time, others argued that wresting control of society from the established ruling class requires forceful, organized power. In fact, during the 72 days of the Commune, the President and the National Army of France regrouped in Versailles, and ultimately took Paris back by force in one of the most

violent, repressive and bloody episodes of France's history.

At the start of the show, two actors set the scene. It's 1871. They describe the Tuileries Palace in Paris (a palace, we're told, now "erased") now hosting a celebratory concert during a revolution. We're told of the famous singer La Bordas and the actor who will play her sings, "Les Temps de Cerises," by Communard Jean-Baptiste Clément, a song that later becomes an anthem of the Commune. Then, we are transported to the concert itself—joining working-class Parisians, pejoratively referred to as *la canaille* ("rabble" or "scum,")—who've occupied the palace and made it theirs. La Bordas performs her signature song "La Canaille," a revolutionary anthem with lyrics that prefigure the rebellious music of punk rock. Outside the borders of Paris, we're told, the army of the deposed French government is skirmishing with the Commune's soldiers, firing shells that could be heard from within the walls of the Tuileries during this concert.

The actors take us back in time to 1870, leading us “up to the uprising”. They introduce us to two members of *la canaille*: a Baker and his wife, a Seamstress. They live hard lives in the working-class neighborhood of Montmartre, where the Seamstress works in a dressmaker’s shop during the day and as an occasional prostitute at night to make ends meet. Elsewhere in Montmartre, we meet Louise Michel, a schoolteacher and anarchist who became a leader and icon of the Paris Commune.

In September of 1870, the Emperor of France (Napoleon III) is defeated in the Franco-Prussian War. The Prussians surround Paris, cutting off all food and supplies for several cold, bitter months. The army of the provisional French government refuses to act or defend the city, galvanizing the Parisians to take matters into their own hands. The Paris Guard (different from the army, more like a local militia) and the city’s inhabitants, egged on by Louise Michel and including the Baker and Seamstress, bring all of the city’s cannon up the hill to Montmartre. During a standoff between the French Army and the people of Montmartre, the French soldiers dramatically defect and join the rebel Parisians. The revolt spreads through Paris, and the government flees the city for Versailles, leaving it in the control of the Communards. French President, Adolphe Thiers, threatens to retake Paris by force. He’s accompanied on stage by a Soprano who sings “I Love the Military”.

The cast then performs a timeline of revolutions in France, accompanied by a danced history of the can-can. The Commune labors to find the balance between authority and liberty; to legitimate its new government, it holds elections. La Bordas returns to lead the “Song of May” and the Council of the Commune is elected. Elisabeth Dmitrieff, a young Russian revolutionary sent to Paris by the Marxist International Workingman’s Association, exhorts the Communards to organize and get serious, but she’s interrupted by “Yodeling Ducks,” a popular song from before the Commune adapted here to suit the present moment. Groups hold public meetings across Paris in their new system of direct democracy, setting forth new egalitarian and socialist principles for its citizens. Le Père Duchêne, the bawdy voice of the pamphleteer, appears throughout. The rowdy public meetings culminate in the song “God of the Bigots”. Radically restructuring society is, of course, a difficult

matter. We hear the Council of the Commune’s debate over a proposal to prohibit night work for bakers (who typically labor through the night to deliver fresh bread in the morning). The cast can-cans a history of labor.

We now return to the concert at the Tuileries, the Seamstress and Baker remind us where we are, and Elisabeth Dmitrieff rallies the group by singing “The Internationale,” (lyrics by another Communard songwriter, *Eugène Pottier*) In the middle of the night after the concert, the Versailles troops invade Paris. The Soprano returns to sing “Ah! Je Veux Vivre”, marking the beginning of the Bloody Week. In the ensuing battle, the Baker is killed. Elisabeth Dmitrieff escapes back to Russia rather than risk her life in Paris. The Dressmaker watches soldiers from Versailles brutally murder her neighbors, and in the aftermath, the Seamstress sings “Mon Homme”. The bloodshed continues as the French Army executes Parisians on the street with “The Captain”, also written by Jean-Baptiste Clément. After eight days of fighting, the Commune is defeated (“The Bloody Week”).

In the final scene of the show, the cast re-assembles onstage with another timeline detailing the legacy of the Paris Commune and its songs, from the Russian Revolution to May 1968 to Tiananmen Square (“Les Temps des Cerises (reprise)”), pointing to the ongoing history of class conflict and enduring questions of authoritarianism vs. liberation.



Aysan Celik, Jeanine Serralles, Daniel Jenkins, Kate Buddeke, Brian Sgambati, Nina Hellman, Sam Breslin Wright.





*Nina Hellman, Jeanine Serralles, Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik*



*Daniel Jenkins, Aysan Celik*



*Jeanine Serralles, Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Brian Sgambati, Sam Breslin Wright*

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

World Premiere by The Civilians, 2012 presented at the BAM Next Wave Festival and ArtsEmerson.

Directed by Steve Cosson with choreography by Tracy Bersley and music direction by Jonathan Mastro.

Cast: Kate Buddeke, Aysan Celik, Charlotte Dobbs, Nina Hellman, Daniel Jenkins, Jeanine Serralles, Brian Sgambati, and Sam Breslin Wright.

Design and Production: Alexander Dodge (Set), Sarah Beers (Costume), Thomas Dunn (Lighting), Ken Travis (Sound), Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew (Projections), Terri K. Kohler (Production Stage Manager) and Jocelyn Clarke (Dramaturg).

The Public Theater in association with The Civilians, 2008.

La Jolla Playhouse, Page to Stage workshop production, 2004.

Development supported by MacDowell, New York Theatre Workshop, and The Public Theater.

An early version of *Paris Commune* is included in *The Civilians: An Anthology of Six Plays* published by Playscripts, Inc.

## CREDITS

Orchestrations by Wiley DeWeese

Music Director: Dan Lipton

Ensemble: Randy Blair, Ally Bonino, Sarah Beth

Pfeifer, and Jonathan Raviv

Piano/Conductor: Dan Lipton

Drums: Jeff Fernandes

Bass: Lauren Hendrix

Trumpet: Jon-Erik Kellso

Violin: Justin Smith

Accordion: Joshua Camp

Album Producers: Steve Cosson & Kurt Deutsch

Album Co-Producers: Ian Kagey, Wiley DeWeese, Dan Lipton, & Amy C. Ashton

Album Executive Producers: Sh-K-Boom Records and The Civilians

Mixed by Ian Kagey

Mastered by Frank Di Minno and Oscar Zambrano at Zampol Productions

Recorded at the Dimenna Center

Recording Date: October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Recorded by Ian Kagey

Pro Tools Engineer: Ian Kagey

Music Supervisor: Wiley DeWeese

All photos by Richard Termine

Cover Artwork by Josh Neufeld ([www.JoshComix.com](http://www.JoshComix.com))

Original songs:

“Le Temps des Cerises,” music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément;

“La Canaille,” lyrics by Alexis Bouvier, music by Joseph Darcier;

“Ah, Comme J’aime les Militaires!”, lyrics by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, music by Jacques Offenbach;

“Chanson de Mai”, music and lyrics by Jules Jouy;

“Les Canards Tyroliens,” lyrics by Cognard Frères, music by Thérèse;

“Leur Bon Dieu,” lyrics by Eugène Pottier, music by Emile Bouillon;

“L’Internationale,” lyrics by Eugène Pottier, music by Pierre Degeyter;

“Ah! Je veux vivre,” lyrics by J. Barbier and M. Carré, music by Charles Gounod;

“Mon Homme,” music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément;

“Le Capitain,” music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément;

“La Semaine Sanglate,” music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément.





Charlotte Dobbs, Nina Hellman, Kate Buddeke, Daniel Jenkins, Aysan Celik, Sam Breslin Wright, Jeanine Serralles, Brian Sgambati

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