



# *The Book of Poissy*

*by Christine de Pizan*

**Text translated and performed by Suzanne Savoy**

**Music performed by Mark Rimple**

**Directed by Bill Burford**

*The performance runs 75 minutes without intermission.*

*You are welcome to stay after the show for a brief Q&A and discussion.*



**SUZANNE SAVOY\***

*(Actor, Translator)* An educator, designer, and performer who's worked in NYC for thirty years, Ms. Savoy is a graduate of National Theatre School of Canada and studied at Royal National Theatre of Great Britain. Suzanne has played recurring roles on *House of Cards*, *The Knick*, *Better Call Saul*, and others. She has performed at the Alley Theatre in Houston and The Shakespeare Project in NYC. Upcoming, she stars in the award-winning indy film *All of It*, which screens as part of the Rehoboth Beach International Film Festival in November. More about her extensive film, TV, radio and stage work at [www.jechristine.com](http://www.jechristine.com) and at [IMDb.com](http://IMDb.com).

\*Member Actors Equity Association (AEA)



**MARK RIMPLE** *(Musician)*

Hailed "among the first rank of US Lutenists" (*Lute Society of America*), Mark Rimple has appeared and/or recorded with Trefoil, The Folger Consort, The Newberry Consort, Severall Friends, Piffaro, the Renaissance Band, The King's Noyse, Mélomanie, Tempesta di Mare, Network for New Music, Cygnus Ensemble, and Seven Times Salt. His compositions often incorporate early instruments and techniques, and include works for archlute, countertenor, viola da gamba and harpsichord. His scholarly writing includes the impact of musical theories found in Boethius. Dr. Rimple is Professor in the Department of Music Theory, History and Composition at the Wells School of Music and leads the Collegium Musicum.

**BILL BURFORD\*** *(Director)* is a stage producer/director with experience on all three US coasts. He served as General Manager for Bay Street Theater, producing shows with leading West End and Broadway artists. He led playwriting workshops for Bay Street, the Guild Hall of East Hampton, and Stony Brook University's graduate Creative Writing program in Manhattan and Southampton. Long-time collaborators, Bill directed Suzanne in *Je Christine*, which has toured since 2017. He produced and directed Peter Weiss' *Night with Guests* for the NY International Fringe Festival and directed Eric Micha Holme's study of John Hinckley, Jr., *Falls for Jodie*. Bill freelances out of New England and runs the Directors Lab in Belfast, Maine. \*Member SDC



*The Book of Poissy* was written in 1400 CE in the tradition of late medieval love-judgment poems. The patron who commissioned the work would be asked to choose the winner of an argument raised by two lovers, in this case two courtiers competing over who is unluckier in love. *Poissy* takes this form further than the works of previous authors by questioning larger issues and foreshadowing Christine's advocacy for women in her later works such as *The City of Ladies*.

Christine lived in Paris during an age of civil war, famine, climate change, the Hundred Years' War, and the Papal Schism. At the age of 25, widowed and with family to support, Christine took up her pen as the first professional female author in France. She eventually became an advisor to the royal family and a voice for her people, writing on a wide range of subjects. She was all but forgotten until 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars such as Earl Jeffrey Richards and Charity Cannon Willard returned her works to prominence.

During the opening ceremonies of the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, one of the gold statues that rose from the Seine to honor great French women was that of Christine de Pizan.

Many of the photos you see during the show were taken by Suzanne at the site of the Royal Priory at Poissy, which fell into ruins after the French Revolution. Not much is left of the beautiful buildings, but statues of persons mentioned in the story and some of the objects which Christine saw and described – now housed at the Louvre and Cluny museums – are shown. Some medieval illustrations are from manuscripts that Christine published. Shown above is the frontispiece illumination from *The Book of Poissy* included in Christine's exquisite compilation known as *The Book of the Queen*, now housed in the British Museum. She is pictured here in her customary blue gown and tall wired headdress.

### ***Special Thanks***

*Kandace Brill Lombart for sharing her valuable archival research and extensive materials, including her photograph of the rose garden at the Royal Priory of Poissy, her expertise on Dominican religious life, French hydration systems, and medieval culinary daily life from her upcoming publication. Mme. Agnes Guignard for access to the Royal Priory grounds at Poissy and for historical anecdotes. Samantha Pious for extensive line editing. Gaven Dianda for his work on the musical scoring. Earl Jeffrey Richards for research materials on 14<sup>th</sup>- & 15<sup>th</sup>-Century French literature, and for translation guidance; a grand time and many laughs were shared while deciphering Christine!*

### ***Special Appreciation***

*The staff and volunteers at Lewes Public Library, including Rebecca Lowe, David White, Jill DiPaolo, Matt Marvin, and Garrett Dernoga.*