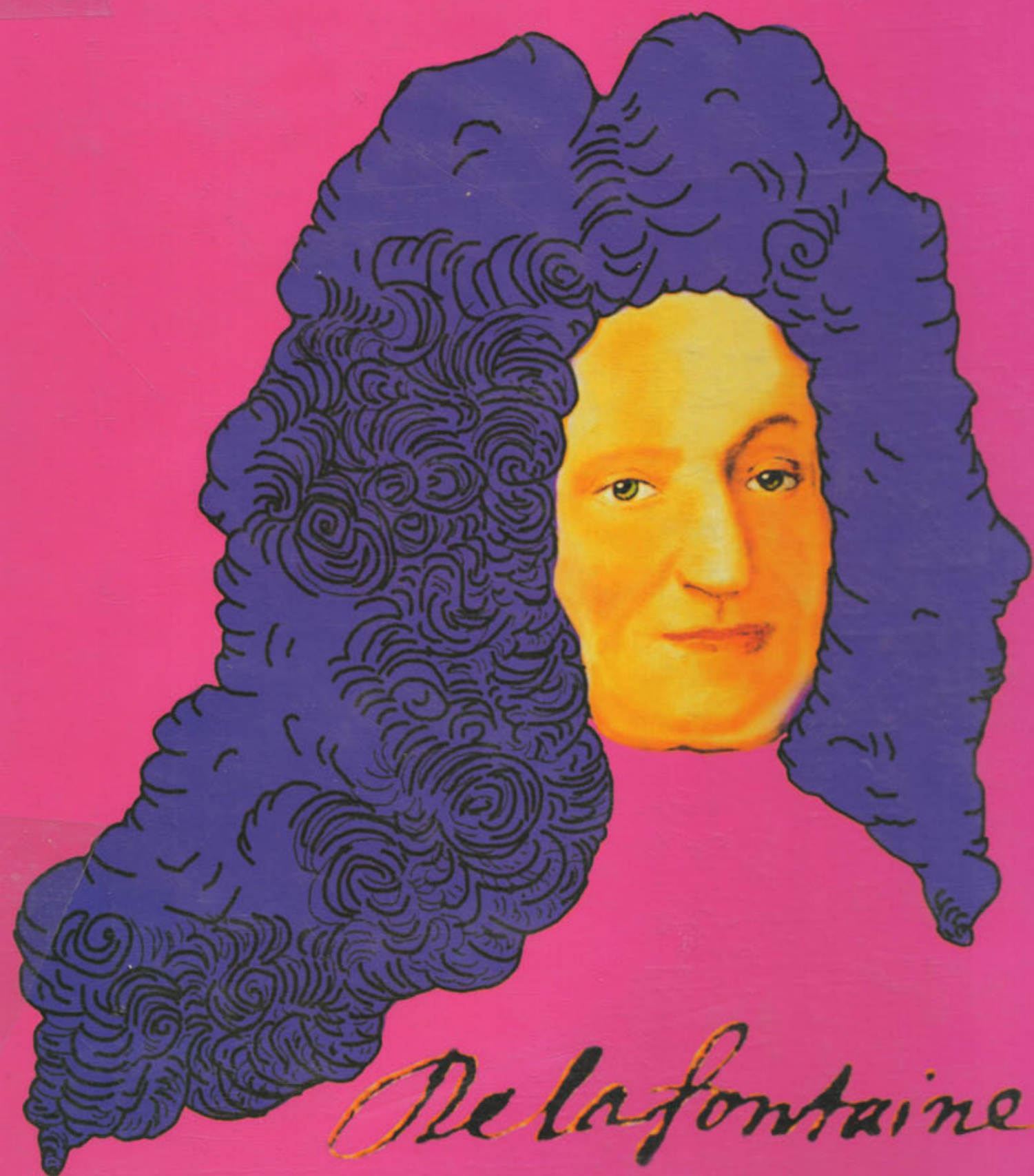


# Fables of La Fontaine

ILLUSTRATED



*De la Fontaine*

# The Hare and the Tortoise

BOOK VI, FABLE 10

*Le Lièvre et la Tortue*

*Vincent Buffile, France*

It's not the speed that counts  
But knowing when to start.  
A Hare and a brave Tortoise  
Provide the story for us.  
"I'll bet," said our slow friend,  
"That you won't reach the finish line  
Before I do."—"Before you?  
You've got to have a screw  
Loose," said the lightweight beast.  
"My Dear, I'd better lend  
You a dash of hellebore."  
"A dash or not, I want to bet."  
No sooner said than done.  
Beside the goal the stakes  
Were placed; how much? It makes  
No difference, nor even who kept score.  
Our Hare had but four hops to win.  
I mean the ones he makes  
When, on the point of being caught, he shakes  
The Dogs, and sends them for a spin.  
Having, I say, an ample time  
To eat and sleep and listen to the wind,  
He lets the Tortoise hobble off,  
No quicker than a Senator with a cough.  
She's out the gate, she does her best,  
*Festina lente*, for the rest.  
The Hare, despising easy victory,  
Makes little of the wager,  
Considers it his duty  
To leave late. Now he nibbles grass,  
And now he rests; in fact,  
He clutters up his act  
With everything except the race.  
But finally, when he spied  
The other edging to the finish line,  
He shot off with a burst  
Of speed; his efforts were in vain:  
The Tortoise came in first.  
"So there," she cried, "I've done you in!  
What good's your speed? And how's  
That for easy victory! Just imagine  
If *you*, my friend, had had to carry a house!"



