

**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO**  
EDUCATION

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY EDMOND ROSTAND  
ADAPTED BY ANDREW UPTON  
ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY MARION POTTS



# ONE GUE

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Compiled by Hannah Brown.  
The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Hannah Brown is the Education Projects Officers for the Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Hannah on [hbrown@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:hbrown@sydneytheatre.com.au)

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# ABOUT *ON CUE* AND STC

## ABOUT ON CUE

In 2014, STC Ed is developing a new suite of resources located on our website to enrich and strengthen teaching and learning surrounding the plays in the STC season. Each show will be accompanied by an On Cue e-publication which will feature all the essential information for teachers and students, such as curriculum links, information about the playwright, synopsis, character analysis, thematic analysis and suggested learning experiences. For more in-depth digital resources surrounding the ELEMENTS OF DRAMA, DRAMATIC FORMS, STYLES, CONVENTIONS and TECHNIQUES, visit the STC Ed page on our website.

Such resources include:

- videos
- design sketchbooks
- podcasts
- worksheets / posters
- games / quizzes / surveys

## ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

In 1980, STC's first Artistic Director Richard Wherrett defined STC's mission as to provide "first class theatrical entertainment for the people of Sydney – theatre that is grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun."

Almost 35 years later, under the leadership of Artistic Director Andrew Upton, that ethos still rings true. STC offers a diverse program of distinctive theatre of vision and scale at its harbourside home venue, The Wharf; Sydney Theatre at Walsh Bay; and Sydney Opera House, as its resident theatre company.

STC has a proud heritage as a creative hub and incubator for Australian theatre and theatre makers, developing and producing eclectic Australian works, interpretations of classic repertoire and great international writing. STC strives to create theatre experiences that reflect Sydney's distinctive personality and engage audiences.

Strongly committed to engagement in the community, STC's Education and Communities programs aim to inspire theatre appreciation and participation not only in theatres but also in schools, community halls; wherever people get together. STC offers an innovative School Drama™ program; partners with groups in metropolitan Sydney, regional centres and rural areas; and reaches

beyond NSW with touring productions throughout Australia. Through these partnerships and initiatives, STC plays a part in ensuring a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers.

The theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists have been launched and fostered at STC, including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne, Benedict Andrews and Cate Blanchett.

STC often collaborates with international artists and companies and, in recent years, the company's international profile has grown significantly with productions touring extensively to great acclaim.

STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

[www.sydneytheatre.com.au](http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au)

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

FOR *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* AND THE EDUCATION RESOURCES

## SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 8 to 12

## SUBJECTS

Drama

## DRAMA STAGE 4

Outcome 4.1.1  
Outcome 4.3.1  
Outcome 4.3.2

## DRAMA STAGE 5

Outcome 5.3.1  
Outcome 5.3.2  
Outcome 5.1.1  
Outcome 5.3.1  
Outcome 5.3.2

## DRAMA STAGE (HSC PRELIMINARY)

Outcome P2.2  
Outcome P2.6  
Outcome P3.2  
Outcome P3.3

## DRAMA STAGE 6 (HSC)

Outcome H2.1  
Outcome H2.2  
Outcome H2.5  
Outcome H3.1  
Outcome H3.3  
Outcome H3.5

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY EDMOND ROSTAND

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ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY MARION POTTS

MONTFLEURY/CADET  
ALAN DUKES

CUIGY/CADET  
GABRIEL GILBERT-DEY

BRISSAILLE/CADET  
GEORGE KEMP

VALVERT/CADET  
DALE MARCH

DE GUICHE  
JOSH MCCONVILLE

POET/CADET  
KENNETH MORALEDA

ROXANE  
ERYN JEAN NORVILL

LE BRET  
YALIN OZUCELIK

MUSKETEER/CADET  
MICHAEL PIGOTT

CYRANO  
RICHARD ROXBURGH

CHRISTIAN  
CHRIS RYAN

LIGNIÈRE/NUN  
BRUCE SPENCE

LISE/SISTER MARTHE  
EMILY TOMLINS

COOK/CADET  
AARON TSINDOS

RAGUENEAU  
DAVID WHITNEY

DUENNA/SISTER CLAIRE  
JULIA ZEMIRO

DIRECTOR  
ANDREW UPTON

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
KIP WILLIAMS

DESIGNER  
ALICE BABIDGE

ASSOCIATE DESIGNER  
RENEE MULDER

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
DAMIEN COOPER

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER  
PAUL CHARLIER

FIGHT DIRECTOR  
NIGEL POULTON

VOICE & TEXT COACH  
CHARMIAN GRADWELL

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
SIMON KHAMARA

DEPUTY PRODUCTION MANAGER  
KATE CHAPMAN

STAGE MANAGER  
GEORGIA GILBERT

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER  
SARAH SMITH

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
TODD EICHORN

WIG, MAKE-UP & WARDROBE  
SUPERVISOR  
LAUREN A. PROIETTI

DRESSER  
KATIE HANKIN

HEAD MECHANIST  
STEVE MASON

HEAD FLY OPERATOR  
KANE MOTT

DEPUTY HEAD FLY OPERATOR  
CHRIS FLEMING

HEAD ELECTRICIAN  
ANDREW TOMPKINS

LIGHTING BOARD OPERATOR  
HARRY CLEGG

HEAD SOUND  
KEVIN WHITE

FOH SOUND OPERATOR  
HAYLEY FORWARD

RADIO MIC TECHNICIAN  
OLIVIA BENSON

REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHER  
GRANT SPARKES-  
CARROLL

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER  
BRETT BOARDMAN

2 HOURS 50 MINUTES, INCLUDING INTERVAL. THIS PRODUCTION PREMIERED AT SYDNEY THEATRE ON 15 NOVEMBER 2014.

PRODUCTION PATRONS

JOHN AND FRANCES  
INGHAM

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**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
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# ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Edmond Rostand was born in 1868 in Marseille and wrote plays and poetry for 30 years before his death in 1918.

The Rostand family came from the Provençal village of Orgon, on the road from Avignon to Marseille. His great-grandfather, Alexis-Joseph Rostand, was 20 years old when the French Revolution and its concomitant warfare swept the country at the end of the 18th century. He fought with some distinction in the Eastern Pyrénées during these years, before establishing himself as a key member of Marseille's post-Revolutionary bourgeoisie. A merchant and politician, he held a number of public offices, including time as Marseille's mayor.

Alongside his public duties, Alexis-Joseph was a writer and musician, the first performer of Beethoven's string quartets in Marseille. And the Rostand family tree carried on this tradition, they are largely noteworthy for their consistent combination of the mercantile and the artistic – they are bankers and pianists, writers and merchants.

Edmond's father, Eugène, had been a promising poet when he was young, a Latinist and translator of Catullus. But he turned his back on poetry to take up economics and became the head of the regional savings bank in Marseille. He wanted his son, who he called Eddy, to be a lawyer but Edmond displayed a keen interest in theatre and poetry. While at Collège Stanislas in Paris, Rostand studied history, philosophy and French literature. He completed a law degree but, unlike his father, never lost focus on his creative pursuits. He

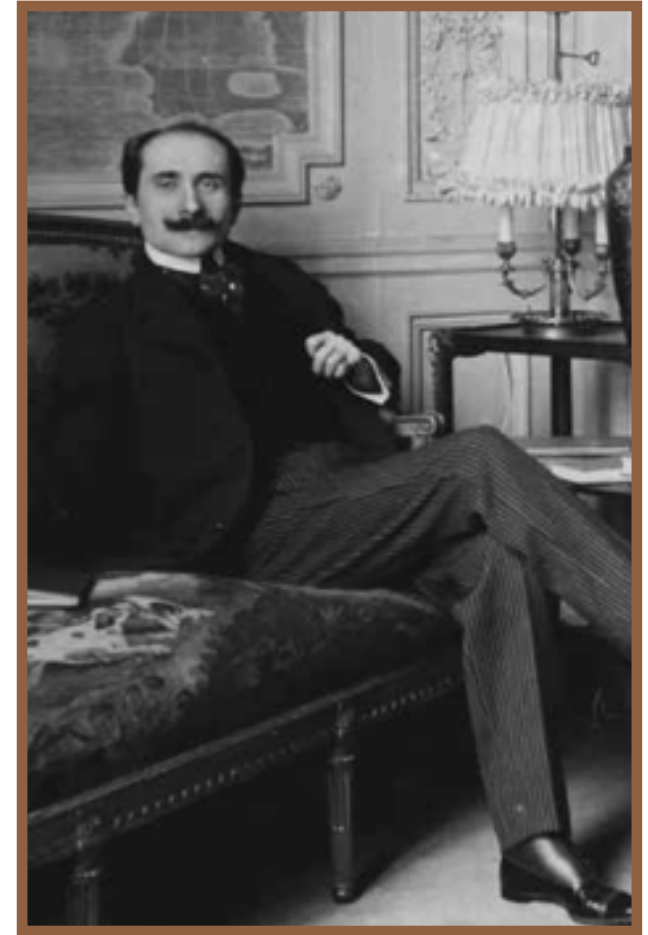
spent most of his time on poems and short stories, which he published in a literary review called *Mireille*.

Rostand's first play was *Le Gant Rouge* (*The Red Glove*), produced in 1888. In 1890, he married poet Rosemonde Gérard and published a volume of poetry called *Les Musardises* (*The Idlers*). In 1894, he produced his first truly successful play, *Les Romanesques* (*The Romantics*).

Rostand produced his greatest work, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in 1897. The play won immediate critical acclaim with its first production at Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin in Paris. The success was repeated by *L'Aiglon* (*The Eaglet*), a tragedy based on the life of Napoléon's son. Sarah Bernhardt played the title role during its first run in 1900. Bernhardt also acted in *La Princesse Lointaine* (*The Faraway Princess*) and *La Samaritaine*. Rostand, in fact, was one of Sarah Bernhardt's many lovers.

In 1901, Rostand was elected to the Académie Française. In 1914, he was refused entrance into the French army due to poor health. Due to his failing health, Rostand retired to the Basque country in Southern France. He spent the remainder of his life writing plays and poetry. He died aged 50, a victim of the 1918 flu epidemic.

Sydney Theatre Company (2014). *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Program. Sydney Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company.



Edmond Rostand pictured at home in 1900, a few years after *Cyrano de Bergerac* premiered in Paris. Photo: Dornac

# FROM THE DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

## FROM THE DIRECTOR ANDREW UPTON

*Cyrano de Bergerac* could easily be called a sentimental favourite here on The Wharf. And that's before you even talk about the plot.

My first work for STC was writing the 1999 adaptation of *Cyrano* which Marion Potts directed in Wharf 1. It was only my second adaptation – Marion and I had previously teamed up on Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* – but I loved it and it's been a great delight to revisit this great story. STC has major form with *Cyrano* too. This is our third production (and fourth season if you count remounts).

Apart from the quality of the play itself, one of the main reasons to bring it back is the quality of our leading man. Or should I say qualities. Richard's wit, his erudition, his depth, his classical nous and – as he showed in *Waiting for Godot* last year – his capacity for clowning. They're all on show here.

He is joined by Eryn Jean Norvill, our Juliet of 2013, who adds her name to a remarkable lineage of STC Roxanes – Helen Morse, Robyn Nevin and Justine Clarke. Chris Ryan, fresh from his performance in *Children of the Sun*, brings his charm and touching pathos to Christian. Together with the rest of the ensemble, they fill in the storybook shapes of Rostand's characters with their own wonderfully nuanced colours. Finally, Alice and Renée's set and costumes, Damien's lighting and Paul's music create a wonderful canvas; distilling confusing complexity into what is essential in telling this timeless story.

Sydney Theatre Company (2014). *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Program. Sydney Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (cont.)

## FROM ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR KIP WILLIAMS

Fifteen years have passed since Sydney Theatre Company last staged Andrew's adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. During this time, Andrew's script has lain dormant, un-tinkered with and unedited. But the world, STC, and even Andrew have changed in the past decade and a half. A month into rehearsals and the script we have now is a dramatically evolved beast.

In 1999, the Marion Potts-helmed production was staged in the intimacy of Wharf 1 with a cast of 13. Now, we find ourselves in the much larger Sydney Theatre with three extra actors. This change of scale has led us to rescore the rhythms of crowd scenes, while specific moments of humour, once designed for a smaller space, have been re-worked in order to communicate across a larger distance.

True to Edmond Rostand's original, Andrew's earlier version tended to resolve each event or conflict before moving on to the next. This neatly episodic style has been largely unpicked over the past month, and we now often find a character entering to progress the narrative whilst we are still at the height of the previous event's climax. The result is a suspension of resolution that propels us further forward into the story. We also identified a pattern of characters declaiming their state of mind. We have asked ourselves, "What can be communicated without being stated?"

In the same vein, we have sought to streamline the plot – pruning subplots, whilst allowing narrative information to unfold at a quicker rate. Consequently, the *Cyrano* we have

fashioned over the past month has a quicker rhythm and drive.

And, finally, we have reconfigured the structure of the fifth act to allow Cyrano and Roxane to be alone on stage for the final moment of the play. As Andrew often says, every adaptation is production-specific, and the shape of this production is one that commences in a very public and performative fashion, slowly journeying towards the personal and the intimate.

Sydney Theatre Company (2014). *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Program. Sydney Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company.





# ABOUT THE PLAY

## THE NOSE THAT LAUNCHED A THOUSAND QUIPS

In wordplay and swordplay, Cyrano de Bergerac has no peer.

He is a man's man who can speak as eloquently of battle as he can of love - even though the latter has eluded him. Cursed with an enormous nose, he has resigned himself to experience love vicariously. And so, despite his feelings for Roxane, the beautiful heiress, he agrees to court her on behalf of his handsome friend Christian, who learns by heart Cyrano's urgent, amorous poetry.

Richard Roxburgh returns to STC to play with customary panache the title role, adding his interpretation to a stellar roll call from across the years including José Ferrer, Gerard Depardieu and Steve Martin. He is joined by Eryn Jean Norvill (*Romeo and Juliet*) and Chris Ryan (*Gross und Klein*).

*Cyrano de Bergerac* is a significant work in the life of STC. This will be our third new production, joining Richard Wherrett's record-setting 1980 season that starred John Bell and Marion Potts' riproaring version from 1999 starring Jeremy Sims.



FOR QUICK FACTS ON THE SHOW CHECK OUT OUR PRE-SHOW IN-THE-KNOW FACT SHEET!



Photo: Grant Sparks-Carroll. ©

# SYNOPSIS

This production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is an adaptation by Marion Potts and Andrew Upton, with revisions being made by Andrew Upton for this 2014 production. The play has been streamlined with minor characters removed and the script cut to create a clear and concise plot. Many of the original jokes by Rostand have also been modernized for contemporary audiences.

## ACT ONE

### At a theatre in Paris

Christian de Neuville, arrives at the theatre in the hope of being introduced to the woman he has fallen in love with from afar— Roxane. Christian does not know who Roxane is and has enlisted the help of the drunken Ligniere, who has promised to introduce Christian to someone who may know Roxane. The baker Ragueneau arrives and the renowned Gascon Cadet Cyrano de Bergerac is discussed. Cyrano is described as being intelligent, noble and as having the biggest nose anyone has ever seen. Moreover, there is nothing that enrages Cyrano more than people who insult his appearance.

When the audience arrives, Christian points out Roxane who Ligniere identifies as Cyrano's cousin. It is revealed that the very powerful Count de Guiche is in love with Roxane and, because he is already married, he intends to marry her off to Valvert so he can keep her close by. A thief tries to rob Christian and in exchange for his release he tells him that de Guiche has arranged for 100 men to ambush Ligniere on his way home that night as revenge for a damning song he has written about him.

The play begins and the famous actor Montfleury appears through a trap door on the stage. However, Cyrano has banned Montfleury from performing as he believes his

performances lack authenticity and principles. Cyrano appears and orders Montfleury to leave the stage. Montfleury protests saying that banishing him from the stage would be an insult to the Goddess of Theatre. However, Cyrano replies "I think the goddess you slander so heinously would never consider you part of her cast.[...] If she knew you at all, insignificant stain, she'd be only too happy to see you in pain." (pg. 10) Cyrano's dislike for Montfleury stems from the fact that he does not portray admirable or sincere characters and his speeches are void of passion and emotion. Valvert engages in a duel with Cyrano. Cyrano recites a poem as he fights and eventually fatally wounds Valvert.

Afterwards, Cyrano admits to Le Bret, the leader of the Cadets, that he is in love with Roxane but fears she would not love him because of his nose. Duenna, Roxane's chaperone appears and requests that Cyrano meet Roxane the following day as she has something very important to speak to him about. Cyrano is excited by the prospect of Roxane possibly reciprocating his feelings. Ligniere arrives and requests the help of Cyrano as he has heard about de Guiche's plan to attack him. Cyrano departs, vowing to fight off the 100 men himself.

# SYNOPSIS (cont.)

## ACT TWO

### At Ragueneau's bakery

Cyrano arrives at Ragueneau's bakery to meet Roxane. Ragueneau is a keen poet and his band of poets arrive at the bakery and tell of an amazing battle where 100 men were fought off by a single man. Cyrano writes a letter to Roxane instead of staying to meet her as he is too nervous. However, Roxane arrives and tells Cyrano that she is in love with Christian who, on that day has enrolled in the same Cadets as Cyrano. At first Cyrano thinks Roxane is speaking about him, but when Roxane mentions that the man she loves is handsome, Cyrano realizes it cannot be him after all. Roxane asks Cyrano to take care of Christian and have him write a letter to her. Cyrano does this, however Christian reveals that not only can he not write well, he often finds himself with nothing to say around women. Cyrano decides to work in partnership with Christian. Cyrano will write the letters to Roxane and Christian will be the handsome face.

## ACT THREE

### A square in the Marais district of Paris

Cyrano and Christian are at Roxane's house with Roxane, who thanks to Cyrano's letters, has fallen in love with Christian. De Guiche arrives to tell Roxane that he has been sent to war. Roxane is immediately worried about Christian fighting on the front line and convinces de Guiche not to send the Cadets. De Guiche agrees and tells Roxane that he will return to her later to see her alone. Christian organizes a romantic rendezvous with Roxane at her house, however his stage fright around women causes him to be unable to speak in front of her. Cyrano helps Christian by hiding under Roxane's balcony and prompting him with romantic poetry. But halfway through, Christian cannot hear Cyrano, and so Cyrano takes over, speaking directly to Roxane while hiding under the cover of the night. This is the first time that Cyrano truly tells Roxane how he feels, despite pretending to be Christian. Christian climbs the balcony and passionately kisses Roxane. Kisses that rightfully belong to Cyrano.



Eryn Jean Norvill and Richard Roxburgh in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014. Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# SYNOPSIS (cont.)

## ACT FOUR

### The front line

The Gascon Cadets are fighting on the front line. Unable to receive any supplies, they are starving to death. Cyrano has been writing to Roxane on Christian's behalf twice a day and slipping through enemy lines to send them in the mail. A dangerous battle is ahead for the Cadets, however unexpectedly Roxane and Ragueneau arrive with delicious food. Roxane, having received so many heartfelt letters, is desperate to see Christian. Roxane confesses to Christian that she is now more in love with his soul than his good looks. In this moment, Christian realizes that the person Roxane loves is in fact Cyrano and not him. Christian leaves Cyrano and Roxane alone, wanting Cyrano to tell Roxane the truth. However, Christian is killed in battle before the truth is revealed. Cyrano resolves to never tell Roxane the truth out of respect for Christian's memory and Roxane's feelings.



TAKE A LOOK AT OUR "RECIPE FOR ROMANCE" POSTER ALSO FEATURED AS PART OF OUR *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* EDUCATION RESOURCES!

## ACT FIVE

### 15 years later, a convent

After Christian's death, Roxane assumed life as a nun. Living in a convent, Cyrano visits Roxane every Saturday. De Guiche and Le Bret are also visiting Roxane and discuss Cyrano's growing number of enemies after his recent writing defaming many prominent people which could make him a target for an attack. De Guiche and Le Bret leave and Cyrano arrives. Cyrano has indeed been attacked by someone throwing a block of wood on his head, however he keeps his fatal injuries a secret from Roxane. Knowing he is dying, he requests to read the final letter from Christian out loud. As he reads the loving words, Roxane recognizes Cyrano's voice from the night on the balcony and proclaims her love for Cyrano. Cyrano is desperate to uphold Christian's memory and not make a mockery of Roxane's mourning and refuses to accept her confession of love. Roxane realizes the teardrops on the page must be Cyrano's from when he wrote the letter, but Cyrano replies that the blood on the letter is Christian's. The tears and the blood symbolically represent Cyrano and Christian together creating the perfect lover.

Le Bret and Ragueneau enter having searched for Cyrano and his injuries are revealed. Cyrano reflects on the fact that he has always been the person behind the scenes, helping others without recognition. "A prompter. In the wings. [...] All my life, hidden in the wings while someone else clibs and claims the kiss." (pg. 107) Cyrano, believing that his old enemies are coming towards him, draws his sword and attempts to fight off the visions from the past. He dies in Roxane's arms declaring, "I keep with me, one thing..." [...] "My panache." (pg. 110)

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS

## CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Cyrano de Bergerac is a courageous and noble Gascon Cadet who has an unfortunately large, ugly nose. He is a poet, musician, playwright and formidable swordsman. However, Cyrano's most admirable quality is his uncompromised principles. "My morals gleam and shimmer. My conscience is always fresh from untroubled sleep. My honour tailored, my scruples, demur. When I am out and about it is I who shine, not my shoes." (pg.17) These principles are both Cyrano's strength and his weakness. In the end, they prove to be his fatal flaw as a character as in the end they prevent him from expressing his love for Roxane.

In his pursuit to be honourable and uphold strong moral values he willingly sacrifices his own desires and risks his own life to help others. This is seen when he accompanies Ligniere on his walk home and single-handedly fights off 100 men who planned to ambush Ligniere. Cyrano also tries to ensure those around him uphold strong principles for the good of society. This is why he banishes Montfleury from the stage, as he believes he is not only a bad actor, but his characters are hollow and a depressing view of the world is left with the audience. "In every role he is base, incapable. His heroes are reduced to the smug and the lazy." (pg. 13) Le Bret believes that Cyrano's principles are holding him back from advancement in society, however Cyrano refutes this claim, saying he does not desire admiration nor self-advancement and upholding principles is much more worthy.

Cyrano's poetic ability also proves to be an asset. He uses words and poetry as a weapon to outsmart those that dare to mock his nose. He also recites poetry during swashbuckling fights in a display of talent and bravery.

Cyrano's reservations about his looks are fundamental to the human condition. He believes that he is ugly and despite his desire to love and be loved, will never be loved in return. Cyrano's insecurities about his looks and his principles prevent him from getting what he wants most – love. Cyrano loves Roxane and when Roxane reveals her love for Christian and not him, he attributes this to his unattractiveness. When Roxane describes what she sees in Christian, she describes everything that Cyrano is, except handsome. "I know he is witty and generous, I know he is fiery and noble. He is young and brave and so handsome...." – (pg. 34) Unable to openly profess his love for Roxane, Cyrano agrees to write love letters to Roxane on Christian's behalf. Cyrano agrees to help Christian as he wants Roxane to be happy because he loves her and also as a way for him to express his own love for her. Cyrano's conviction about his ugliness motivates his moral purity. When Christian dies, Cyrano does not confess his love for Roxane. He also believes that by doing this he would tarnish Christian's memory and make Roxane seem foolish. Even as Cyrano lies dying and Roxane has discovered the truth, Cyrano continues to refuse Roxane's love, for no other reason but to maintain his principles and "panache."



Richard Roxburgh in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014.  
Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS (cont.)

## BARON CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE

At the beginning of the play Christian arrives from out of town and joins the same legion of Cadets as Cyrano de Bergerac. Christian is extremely good looking; however his good looks are unfortunately not accompanied by an interesting personality or high degree of intelligence. Christian, having previously observed Roxane from a far, requests to be introduced to Roxane. Roxane has also fallen for Christian and asks Cyrano for his help in bringing them together.

Christian legitimately loves Roxane; however his lack of eloquence prevents him from telling her and courting her with romantic gestures such as love letters or the whisperings of “sweet nothings”. When in front of Roxane Christian becomes lost for words and gets “stage fright.”Cyrano is therefore enlisted to write love letters to Roxane and be the tender voice of Christian. In a major turning point of the play, Roxane confesses to Christian that at first she loved him for his looks, but now she loved him for his soul. Christian then realizes that his soul is actually Cyrano and begs him to tell Roxane the truth. Almost immediately, Christian is killed in battle and the truth remains a secret until the final moments of the play.

## ROXANE

Roxane is brave and passionate in her love for Christian. After receiving letters twice a day from the front line she arrives with a cart full of food and pastries for the cadets. It is during her visit that Christian is fatally wounded, which results in Roxane turning to life as a nun, in quiet mourning for the man she (thinks) she loves.

Roxane is a gentle, beautiful and sincere woman. Cyrano, Christian and de Guiche are all in love. At first, Roxane falls in love with Christian for his good looks, however after Cyrano writes her love letters under the guise of Christian, she realizes she loves his soul more than his looks. It is this confession that brings greater depth to the world of the play as the power of true love over attraction is displayed.

## COUNT DE GUICHE

Count de Guiche detests Cyrano and is cruel, immoral and craves power and authority. Despite being many years older than Roxane and married, de Guiche wants the elegant beauty all to himself. At first de Guiche plans to marry Roxane to Valvert as a way of having access to her. When Valvert is killed by Cyrano in a duel, as revenge, de Guiche plans to send Cyrano and Christian’s battalion to war in the hope Cyrano will be killed. At the end of the play, de Guiche reflects on his depraved behavior and the principles of Cyrano saying “I have everything and he has nothing, but I take my hat off to him. I wouldn’t pity him, I’d shake his hand.” (pg. 100)



Eryn Jean Norvill and Julia Zemiro in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014. Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS (cont.)

## LE BRET

Le Bret is Cyrano's friend and fellow guardsman in the Cadets. Le Bret often expresses concern about the personal and professional price Cyrano will pay for putting his high footing principles above all else. At the end of the play, Le Bret and Ragueneau fear for Cyrano's life and after searching, find him dying in the arms of Roxane.

## RAGUENEAU

Ragueneau is the local pastry chef and friend of Cyrano. Ragueneau has a love of poetry and suitably believes that poetry is food for the soul. Ragueneau accompanies Roxane to the front line to see Christian and deliver the hungry troops food.

## LIGNIERE

Ligniere is a drunken, yet well-meaning friend of Christian's. After Cyrano saves him from being ambushed by 100 men set upon by de Guiche, he follows Cyrano around in a bid to repay him.

## MONTFLEURY

Montfleury is a rather large actor who Cyrano despises. Cyrano bans Montfleury from the stage for a month, because he believes that Montfleury's character portrayals are inaccurate and his stories leave audience's with a negative view about the world. Despite his ban, Montfleury takes the stage. Cyrano, angry at his disobedience, interrupts his performance and orders him off the stage.

## DUENNA

Duenna is Roxane's chaperone. She requests that Cyrano meet Roxane and it is in this moment that Roxane confesses her love for Christian, instigating the main tension in the play.

## VALVERT

Valvert is a nobleman who, for his own convenience, would like Roxane to marry. Valvert is killed by Cyrano in Act One, when he tries to display his bravery and swordsmanship against Cyrano in the theatre.



Alan Dukes, Gabriel Gilbert-Dey, George Kemp, Kenneth Moraleda, Yalin Ozucelik, Richard Roxburgh and Michael Pigott in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014. Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# THEMES AND IDEAS

## INNER AND OUTER BEAUTY

The plot of the play and the character's perceptions of themselves are centred on the concept of inner and outer beauty. Inner beauty pertains to a person's soul, their values, and beliefs and how they treat others. While outer beauty refers to someone's appearance. Cyrano's inner beauty is reflected in his principles and service to others; however he believes he has no outer beauty because of his large nose. Inner beauty is also represented in Cyrano's seamless ability to craft breathtaking love letters and poetry. Christian's good looks mean he has outer beauty yet his lack of self expression means he cannot communicate his inner beauty.

Cyrano and Christian work together to win the heart of Roxane, their inner and outer beauty combine to create the perfect lover. This is seen in the line "I complete you and you complete me. ... You will be my good looks, I will be your passion." (pg. 48) In the end, inner beauty prevails. When Roxane tells Christian that she loves him for his soul it is revealed that the spiritual is nobler than the physical, particularly when it comes to love. In the end this is ironic as it is Cyrano's inner beauty that causes him to die in the arms of Roxane, without ever revealing his true feelings.

## DECEPTION

Cyrano agrees to deceive Roxane in order to help Christian. Normally, Cyrano's high moral grounding would prevent him from participating in the deception of another person. Cyrano agrees to deceive Roxane by writing love letters in Christian's name, as it will ultimately result in the happiness of the couple. He also has his own interests in mind as the deception will allow him to declare his true love for Roxane.

The deception of Christian's eloquence weaves a complex web for Cyrano that is bound by the limits of his morals. After Christian's death Cyrano is unable to tell Roxane that he loves her as he needs to respect the memory of Christian. He also knows that the truth would embarrass Roxane as she has fallen in love with someone who technically does not exist. The truth would also make a mockery of her mourning and her decision to become a nun. These principles are also compounded with the idea that Cyrano believes he is incapable of being loved because of his nose.

## PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

A person's principles are personal rules that influence their actions and everyday behavior. A person's values are similar to principles in that they are ideas, opinions or beliefs that someone considers important. Cyrano is renowned for maintaining his tenacious principles even if they come at his own expense. In the first act, Cyrano gives his weekly wage to the theatre after he banished Montfleury from the stage and the play was cancelled. Cyrano's strength of character when maintaining his principles is symbolized when he speaks about friendship. He does not value friendship and likens it to Labradors frolicking together. Instead, he prefers to be the wolf. "But for dogs, I prefer wolves. True to their nature and hated for it." (pg. 43).

Cyrano's principles create Dramatic Tension and cause the major turning points of the plot. It is Cyrano's principles together with his love for Roxane that lead him to help Christian and then upon his death, prevent him from revealing his feelings for Roxane. Cyrano's principles make his death tragic and transcendent.



# THEMES AND IDEAS (cont.)

## POWER OF LANGUAGE

Cyrano's masterful use of language is used as a weapon against enemies and for breathtaking displays of romance. In Act One, Cyrano composes a poem while fighting Valvert in a gallant display of his swordsmanship and his amazing poetic ability. By composing the poem, Cyrano not only displays himself as a better fighter, but also as a cleverer person able to outsmart his opponent on several levels.

Cyrano uses language to fight off comments about his appearance and make light of his nose. By acknowledging his own ugliness, he maintains his status and his dignity. "It's huge! You blithering flat-faced fool. My pride and joy. My unparalleled tool. Surely you've heard that the size of a nose is a direct indicator of...so much. Wit and poise, affability, integrity, courage and strength..." (pg. 15).

Cyrano's love letters to Roxane are the language of Cyrano's soul which make her love inner beauty. Often in life, when we express our deepest feelings and desires it is our soul speaking. Moreover, it is sometimes believed that words from others can feed our soul when they address what we want and need in life. Cyrano's words to Roxane are an expression of truth and identity that he believes he cannot show. When Roxane reads the letters, it feeds her soul and makes her fall in love. Roxane realizes this and says to Christian "But like a young bird I was taught to fly. To reach for more. Those words!", "Ah well, you soul took me over. It is for that, that I love you now." (pg. 90).

## THEATRICALITY

Both the script of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and the set, reference the medium of theatre. The play begins in the theatre where Montfluery is scheduled to perform. The set in Act One is an ornate proscenium arch stage which sits inside the proscenium arch of the Sydney Theatre. This gives the sense that life is much like a play, where people play roles. This idea echoes the famous quote from *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts..." (Act II, Scene VII) In Acts Two and Three the proscenium arch is transformed into a bakery and then Roxane's balcony. The continued use of the proscenium carries the theme of life being a play throughout *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In Act Four the proscenium arch is dismantled and left on stage to depict the rubble of war, symbolizing how life can be destroyed, which happens to Christian when he is fatally wounded.

The characters in *Cyrano de Bergerac* are aware of the roles that they play in life and how this is reflective of their actions and their personality. When Christian grows tired of deceiving Roxane he says "No, I'm telling you. I am done with borrowing my letters, my conversation. I am sick of playing this role, struck with stage fright all the time..." (pg. 56).

At the end of the play as Cyrano is dying, he talks about always being the person behind the scenes whose hard work

and talent go unrecognized while others reach success. "The story of my life: A prompter. In the wings. Whispering in the dark. All my life, hidden in the wings while someone else climbs and claims the kiss. The kiss I won." (pg. 107).



Julia Zemiro, Richard Roxburgh and Emily Tomlins in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014. Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

## ROLE AND CHARACTER

Role and Character are two different elements. Role is one-dimensional and involves representing a point of view and identifying with a particular set of values and beliefs. Character is the complex personality and background of a character. A Character's complexity is portrayed through interaction and relationship with others and through voice and movement choices.

While the characters in the play are not overtly portrayed as Commedia dell'arte stock characters, traits of Commedia stock characters are identifiable in the roles of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. For example, de Guiche has similar traits to Pantalone as he is a man with a large amount of money who preys on younger women.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- Compare the Role and Character of Cyrano and Christian.
- How would you describe the Role of Roxane? What voice and movement choices are made by Eryn Jean Norvill in portraying Roxane's character?
- How are the Cadets portrayed? How has this been communicated through voice and movement?

## TENSION

Tension is the force that drives all drama and moves the Dramatic Action forward. Tension strengthens Audience Engagement as it motivates the audience to continue watching while influencing them to continue to question the ideas in the play. The Dramatic Action of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is driven by the Tension of Task for Cyrano to help Christian in romancing Roxane.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- When Christian dies, how does the Tension of Task change for Cyrano?
- Why does the Tension of Task give rise to Tension of Relationships in the play?
- Tension of Surprise occurs when the unexpected happens in a play. In what moment does Tension of Surprise occur in *Cyrano de Bergerac*?
- In the final moments of the play, what Tension is operating? What type of Atmosphere does this Tension create?



FOR GREATER INSIGHT INTO STC PRODUCTION'S OF *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*, CHECK OUT OUR WORKSHEET ABOUT MARKETING POSTERS!

## SYMBOL

Symbols provide clues to the Dramatic Meaning for the audience. Symbols are featured in *Cyrano de Bergerac* through objects, language and design. At the end of the play, Cyrano asks Roxane to read the final letter he wrote for Christian that is smattered with blood and tears. As she reads, Roxane realizes that the tear drops are Cyrano's from when he originally wrote the letter. Cyrano refutes this by saying that the blood is Christian's. The blood and tears are symbolic of the culmination of Christian and Cyrano in creating the 'perfect lover' and together deceiving Roxane.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- De Guiche asks Cyrano whether he has read Don Quixote and asks him to re-read the chapter on windmills. How does the character of Don Quixote symbolize Cyrano?
- What does Cyrano's nose symbolise?
- In the interpretations of Cyrano for both stage and screen, there have been many variations of what the nose looks like. Find some pictures of other Cyrano noses. Describe the nose of Richard Roxburgh's Cyrano. What does the nose worn by Cyrano in STC's production say about his character?
- Think about the set design. How is the proscenium arch stage set symbolic of the world of the play?

# The Elements of Drama (cont.)

## MOOD/ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is the feeling or mood that is created by, and emerges through, Dramatic Action. Mood and Atmosphere are closely linked to Tension. As the tension builds so too does the Atmosphere. The creation of an effective Atmosphere fosters Audience Engagement. Acts One through to Three have a jovial Atmosphere created through Cyrano's clever use of poetry and comedic devices such as puns and slapstick and the chorus of Cadets. The more serious questions of the play surrounding inner and outer beauty and values and principles lie underneath the surface of this Atmosphere. At the end of Act Three the Mood shifts as Christian steals a kiss from Roxane, owing to Cyrano's poetry and Cyrano and Christian are sent to war.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

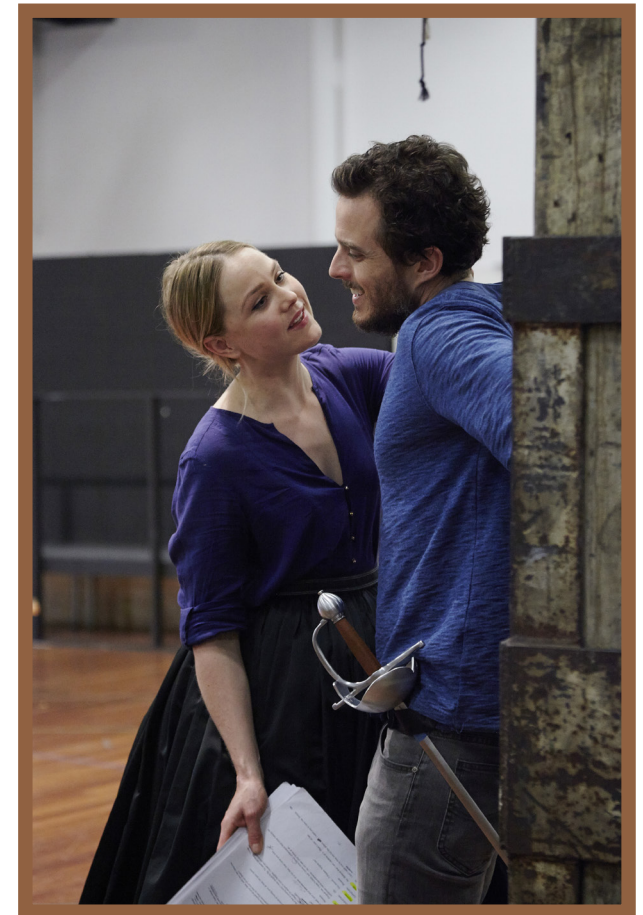
- How is the change in Atmosphere created in Act Four on the front line?
- What Atmosphere is created when Cyrano fights Valvert? How is this created?
- How are you made to feel in the final moments of the play when Cyrano continues to deny he wrote the love letters? What causes this feeling for you as an audience member?
- What Atmosphere is created in Act Four at the convent? How is this created?

## DRAMATIC MEANING

Dramatic Meaning is created through the Elements of Drama that are interrelated and interdependent. Dramatic Meaning is what is communicated between the performers, the world of the play and the audience. Dramatic Meaning is always open to interpretation and there is never one set meaning in a production.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- Consider the themes of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Devise a Dramatic Meaning from each of these themes.
- What directorial and design choices have been made in portraying a Dramatic Meaning about life and theatricality in the play?
- Should Cyrano have told Roxane when Christian died that he wrote the letters? Why?
- Should Cyrano have told Roxane in the final moment of the play that he wrote the letters? Why?



Eryn Jean Norvill and Chris Ryan in rehearsal for STC's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 2014. Image: Grant Sparkes-Carroll. ©

# STYLE

The clever use of language and swashbuckling stage fights, combined with a heartbreaking love story makes *Cyrano de Bergerac* both a Comedy and a Tragedy.

## TRAGEDY

A Tragedy is defined by the structure of the play. A Tragedy follows the structure of Exposition, Rising Action, Climax and Denouement. The Exposition introduces the audience to vital information about the world of the play. The Rising Action introduces the conflict or the problem in the play. The Climax of the play is the event that changes the protagonist's fate, while the Falling Action sees a conflict occur between the two main characters which results in the protagonist winning or losing. The Denouement of the play occurs when the problem is resolved or the prevailing tension comes to an end.

Towards the end of Act Three there is a noticeable change in Atmosphere as Christian lovingly kisses Roxane thanks to Cyrano's masterful poetry. The beginning of Act Four also sees a noticeable change in Atmosphere as the action takes place on the battlefield. Christian's death and Roxane's subsequent entrance into a convent is a major tragic turning point in the plot, as she has lost the man she thinks she loves. However, Tragedy is a strong undercurrent throughout the play as a whole through Cyrano's belief that he cannot be loved due to his appearance and his agreement to help Christian at the expense of his own desires. The Tragedy in *Cyrano de Bergerac* also comes from Cyrano's principles preventing him from confessing his love for Roxane after Christian's death in order to honour his memory and protect Roxane's feelings.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- Events in society are often described as 'tragic.' What makes an event tragic? Write a definition for the term 'tragic.'
- Thinking about the structure of a tragedy, outline where each of the points of a Tragedy occur in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.
- Why can the final moments of the play be considered 'tragic' ?



CHECK OUT OUR SKETCHBOOK FOR *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* COSTUME DESIGNS!

# Style (cont.)

## COMEDY

The style of Comedy in *Cyrano de Bergerac* is created through language and physical action. Cyrano's witty rhyming creates language comedy and his use of rhyme in unconventional situations such as a sword fight, argument or when re-telling a story creates comedy through the juxtaposition of place and language. The play also features the clever use of puns and alliteration in lines that are delivered so smoothly and matter of fact that they could be easily missed. For example, Cyrano says to Ragueneau the baker "Dear friend, the Poet of Pastry himself! Ragueneau, apologies, but you look puffed." (pg.2) Comedy is also created through physical action, in particular slapstick and farcical sword fights, entries and exits. The play features characters appearing from trapdoors and defying gravity through being winched up into the air.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- Identify lines in the play where puns and other poetic devices are used.
- Other than the creation of Comedy, what does the farcical nature of the physical action bring to the world of the play and the audience's understanding of different characters?

## SET AND COSTUMES

The set and costumes of *Cyrano de Bergerac* create Place and Time for the audience. In Acts One to Three a proscenium arch stage is used to create the theatre, Ragueneau's bakery and then the balcony of Roxane's home. In Act Four the set appears as the pieces to the proscenium arch have been dismantled to create a battlefield. In Act Five the set is an empty space. The costumes are period costumes, similar to the original style in the time of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Overall, the opulent set and costumes contribute to making the story a classic tale with a heightened sense of romanticism.

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- The proscenium arch set inside the larger proscenium arch stage of the Sydney Theatre leaves the sides and back of the stage exposed for the audience. Why do you think this choice was made?
- Act Five is an empty stage space. Why do you think this choice was made?
- With reference to time and atmosphere, what is the purpose of the falling autumn leaves in Act Five?

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## OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*

- Pre-Show In-the-Know handout for fast facts and what to look for in the performance.
- Classroom poster and handout
- Worksheet - The different *Cyrano de Bergerac* marketing campaigns
- Designer Sketchbook - A digital sketchbook featuring photos and sketches of the set and costume design