

CYRANO

BY
EDMOND ROSTAND

TRANSLATED BY
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ADAPTED BY
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

On Playing our *Cyrano*

We created this nine-actor adaptation of Rostand's immortal play for several reasons.

First, we both love the story and character of *Cyrano*, and were eager to spend some quality time splashing around in this wonderful world ourselves. Second, we wanted to make it possible for every theatre to produce it without needing a prohibitive twenty or thirty actors. (It is worth noting that the most memorable and amazing scenes are actually wonderfully intimate ...) Third, we were not huge fans of the other major translations and felt the time was ripe for a new one.

But, most importantly, we wanted to create a sharp, lean new version of this brilliant play that kept the poetry but lost the pretention; that embraced the spectacular humanity of the central narrative without getting mired in the period accoutrements; and that used a kind of stark and transparent theatricality that could allow us to hear the story with fresh ears and allow its full richness to shine through.

We are well aware that what we finally crafted in this version requires a careful balancing act. *Cyrano* is a passionate poet, and Roxane's heart and soul are stirred by eloquence and by elegance of gesture, idea and deed. We have done our best to respect and refresh the true poetry of Rostand's original while giving it a more contemporary resonance and energy. (In fact, *everyone* in the play must love language — their capacity to express themselves well — and revel in stories and songs and verbal wordplay ...)

And yet at the same time what we are most interested in is the complex, contradictory, all-too-human and earthbound nature of all the major characters. None of them are entirely noble or beyond reproach. All have proclivities, weaknesses, insecurity, obsessions and desires that get in the way of them being their best selves. Marrying this complex humanity with grand gestures, playful humor, and genuine poetry can be tricky.

We have done our best to provide the tools to make this balance possible. The key, we feel, as is so often the case, is in the actors and the acting. With only nine actors, having a powerful and flexible ensemble is absolutely essential. In a perfect world, it might be nice if any one of the actors could actually play Cyrano. The other roles, after all, reflect him in various ways; there is longing, love, poetry and passion in all of them. The greater the richness of detail and specificity in every performance, the better.

The play is designed for a kind of austere and transparent theatricality. The audience knows it is witnessing a story being told by an ensemble of actors, led by the actor playing Le Bret. We think the more fully this is embraced, the better. The original production did not have the company changing clothes in full view or watching the action as an ensemble, but such a choice would certainly not be out of keeping with our imaging of this world. It can be done in fully detailed 17th-century garb or in barebones costumes, but however it is set, lit, and costumed, the audience should be very aware that they are at a theatrical event, and stark simplicity and elegance seem like a good start.

The acting, overall, should be aggressive, passionate, full of life, love, and amazement. Cyrano lives every minute of every day to its fullest, with absolute integrity and full-blooded commitment. Being in his presence should make us want to strive harder, breathe deeper, dream bigger, dare more boldly, and live more fully. This is a pretty good cue to take for the entire production. Everything that leads towards passion and fullness should be your friend, and everything that leads away from it your enemy.

If you look for the love and wonder in everything, you should not go far wrong.

—MH & AP

CYRANO was originally produced by the Folger Theatre (Janet Alexander Griffin, Artistic Producer; Beth Emelson, Assistant Artistic Producer; Giuseppe DeBartolo, General Manager) in Washington, D.C., opening on April 26, 2011. It was directed by Aaron Posner; the scenic design was by Daniel Conway; the costume design was by Devon Painter; the lighting design was by Thom Weaver; the sound design and original music were by Veronika Vorel; the fight direction was by Dale Anthony Girard; the dramaturg was Michele Osherow; Amanda Michaels was the production stage manager. The cast was as follows:

CYRANOEric Hissom
ROXANE et al Brenda Withers
CHRISTIAN et al..... Bobby Moreno
LE BRET et al.....Steve Hendrickson
DE GUICHE et al Craig Wallace
RAGUENEAU et al Richard Ruiz
DE VALVERT et al..... Dan Crane
LIGNIERE et al.....Chris Genebach
DESIREE et al Todd Scofield

CYRANO was subsequently produced by Arden Theatre Company (Terrence J. Nolen, Producing Artistic Producer; Amy L. Murphy, Managing Director) in Philadelphia, PA, opening on March 8, 2012. It was directed by Aaron Posner; the scenic design was by Daniel Conway; the costume design was by Devon Painter; the lighting design was by Thom Weaver; the sound design was by James Sugg; the fight direction was by Dale Anthony Girard; the associate director was Matt Pfeiffer; and the production stage managers were Stephanie Cook and Kelly O'Rourke. The cast was as follows:

CYRANO	Eric Hissom
ROXANE et al	Jessica Cummings
CHRISTIAN et al.....	Luigi Sottile
LE BRET et al.....	Keith Randolph Smith
DE GUICHE et al	Benjamin Lloyd
RAGUENEAU et al	David Bardeen
DE VALVERT et al.....	Justin Jain
LIGNIERE et al.....	Doug Hara
DESIREE et al	Scott Greer

CHARACTERS

The play is designed to be performed by eight men and one woman, though this cast can be expanded by reducing or eliminating actor doubling.

CYRANO, late 30s to late 40s. Energetic, impulsive, emotional, a wizard with words as well as swords — a warrior-poet.

ROXANE, late 20s to mid-30s. Smart, romantic, beautiful, elegant. An impetuous heart and a deep soul. (Doubles as Masked Actress.)

CHRISTIAN, late 20s. Handsome, proud, bold with men but shy with women. Aware of his expressive shortcomings. (Doubles as Masked Actor, Angry Subscriber, and Fighter.)

LE BRET, 40s to late 50s. Captain of the Gascony Guard and Cyrano's best friend. Moderate, sympathetic, articulate, but not flashy. Our guide to the play.

DE GUICHE, 40s to early 50s. Aristocratic, enamored of Roxane. An intriguer who is literally married to power. Alternately resents and admires Cyrano. (Doubles as Gambler and Fighter.)

RAGUENEAU, late 30s to early 40s. Big-hearted pastry chef and lover of poetry, to the point of obsession. (Doubles as Man, Philippe and Fighter.)

DE VALVERT, early 30s. Aristocratic, stylish, vain, an expert swordsman. (Doubles as Etienne, Fighter, and possibly Sister Marthe.)

LIGNIERE, 30s. A drunken poet, or poetic drunk. Occasionally removes the bottle long enough to stick his foot in his mouth. (Doubles as Citizen, Jean-Pierre, and possibly Sister Marthe.)

DESIREE, 40s. Roxane's old nurse and current chaperone. Watchful over Roxane's honor. (Doubles as Montfleury, Bellerose, Marcel, and Fighter.)

PLACE and TIME

Paris (and Arras), 1640; Paris, 1655.

NOTE

A (*Beat.*) is shorter than a (*Pause.*). (*Long pause.*) is longer. (*Silence.*) is longest.

When one character begins speaking before another has finished, the beginning of the overlap is indicated by a slash [/]. (Thus, an actor with a slash in his or her line should continue speaking without interruption, as it is merely a cue for the next speaker.) A dash [—] indicates where one speaker is cut off by the next; an ellipsis [...] indicates where a speaker trails off, or searches for a word, and not an interruption.

CYRANO

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Lights rise on Le Bret, who regards a worn hat, once proud, from which extends a large white plume. After a moment, he looks up and addresses the audience, though he will often look at the hat while speaking, as if trying to conjure the man himself.

LE BRET. Philosopher, dramatist,
Versifier, duelist,
Voyager to the moon and back;
In repartee, master of give-and-take,
And lover — though for another's sake;
Soldier, musician,
Verbal magician,
Foe of the fraudulent,
And, at the end,
Pauper, pilgrim ... and friend.

(He lowers the hat.)

But no mere list can contain a man
Who himself contained a multitude.

Therefore, though our forces be few,

(He raises his empty hand, and six actors enter the space and join him.)

Allow us to bring this man to life —

RAGUENEAU. From bakery

ETIENNE. To battlefield,

DE GUICHE. Courtyard

LIGNIERE. To convent —

LE BRET. Each of us taking on the mantle

Of Soldier,

CHRISTIAN. Suitor,

DE VALVERT. Nobleman,

DESIREE. Nurse,

RAGUENEAU. Baker,

LIGNIERE. Boozer,

DE GUICHE. Person of influence,

LE BRET. As the life itself requires.

CHRISTIAN/DESIREE. Let one man stand in for ten —

RAGUENEAU/LIGNIERE/DE VALVERT/DE GUICHE. Twenty —

ALL. A hundred!

So we, too, may be a multitude.

LE BRET. We begin — as we always begin — in the theatre ...

(He lifts his arms and house lights rise. The other actors disperse, grabbing sundry costume pieces and props as necessary. Perhaps their chatter is bolstered by the hubbub of an expectant audience.)

Where the high-born share their air with the humble,

Artisans with aristocrats.

See now the candles being lit,

Hear the musicians tuning up,

Smell the musky blend of oranges,

Melting wax, Burgundy wines,

And *bodies*, now packed cheek-by-jowl.

Behind the scenes, the prodigious actor

Montfleury prepares to perform

An immortal role in a classic play

By a timeless playwright —

None of which are remembered today ...

(De Valvert and De Guiche appear from opposite sides of the stage.)

While the elegant nobles gather onstage,

Beribboned, buckled and bowed [*pronounced "bode"*].

DE VALVERT. Comte de Guiche ... *(He bows.)*

DE GUICHE. Vicomte de Valvert ...

DE VALVERT. You look exquisite.

DE GUICHE. And you even more so.

DE VALVERT. I'll concede to you, sir, on that point ...

LE BRET. There's Bellerose, the theatre manager ...

BELLEROSE. *(Appearing with Ragueneau.)*

No free tickets! Never! For nobody!

LE BRET. ... Chasing down Ragueneau,
RAGUENEAU. I know that!
(*He digs into his generous apron.*)
LE BRET. Purveyor of pastries and patron of poets.
RAGUENEAU. (*Producing a handful.*)
I'll be happy to pay you in tarts!
BELLEROSE. No tarts either! Just legal tender.
RAGUENEAU. Éclairs, then. Come on — I know your sweet tooth ...
BELLEROSE. Monsieur Ragueneau ...
RAGUENEAU. Five éclairs
And three tarts — that's my final offer!
BELLEROSE. (*Exasperated.*)
All right; but don't sit onstage this time ...
(*Ragueneau hands them over.*)
LE BRET. Over there's the drunk, Ligniere ...
LIGNIERE. (*Appearing with Christian.*)
God, I'm thirsty — aren't you thirsty?
LE BRET. Not quite sober but not yet soaked ...
CHRISTIAN. (*Scanning the crowd.*)
Just tell me her name and you can leave.
LE BRET. And by his side, Christian de Neuville —
Newest recruit to my Gascony Guard.
LIGNIERE. Two minutes — then I'm hitting the bars.
LE BRET. That's all the names I need to assign, save one:
RAGUENEAU. Captain Le Bret!
LE BRET. Namely, mine.
(*He heads for Ragueneau, who heads for him.*)
CHRISTIAN. She always sits up there — in that box —
So fresh, so ... *natural*, like a ...
LIGNIERE. Flower?
CHRISTIAN. Yes! No — well, more like a ...
LIGNIERE. (*Suggestively.*)
Wildflower.
CHRISTIAN. No, more ... *cultivated* ...
LIGNIERE. Orchid?
CHRISTIAN. (*Frustrated with himself.*)
Ugh!
RAGUENEAU. Has Cyrano turned up?
LE BRET. Not yet, why?
RAGUENEAU. Montfleury's acting this evening.

LE BRET. So?

RAGUENEAU. Cyrano forbade him to take the stage

For a month, on pain of death.

LE BRET. Oh, God ...

RAGUENEAU. (*Looking about.*)

I sure hope he hasn't changed his mind ...

CHRISTIAN. What's wrong?

LIGNIERE. (*Looking around.*)

I shouldn't even be here ...

CHRISTIAN. Why?

LIGNIERE. I can't be seen by De Guiche.

CHRISTIAN. Who?

LIGNIERE. His Haughtiness, Conte de Guiche —

A lecherous lord with a large libido.

(*Removing a folded sheet of paper.*)

I wrote a little satirical poem

That seems to have ruffled his noble feathers.

(*Roxane enters, above.*)

CHRISTIAN. There — that's her!

LIGNIERE. *Ohhhhhh* ...

CHRISTIAN. Who is she? Tell me, before I pass out!

LIGNIERE. Her name is Magdeleine Robin, but she's

Called Roxane.

CHRISTIAN. "Roxane ..." Tell me more ...

LIGNIERE. She's orphaned — lives with her old nurse ...

CHRISTIAN. Go on ...

LIGNIERE. Not yet married ...

CHRISTIAN. (*Hope rising.*)

Good ...

LIGNIERE. An aesthete ...

CHRISTIAN. "Aesthete"?

LIGNIERE. Lover of art and beauty ...

CHRISTIAN. I like beauty!

LIGNIERE. *Literature* ...

CHRISTIAN. (*Hope falling.*)

Books?

LIGNIERE. All things rare and refined.

CHRISTIAN. Oh, no ...

LIGNIERE. Speaks Italian, Spanish,

Dutch, some English ...

CHRISTIAN. I don't have a chance!

LIGNIERE. Cousin to Cyrano de Bergerac ...

RAGUENEAU. (*Looking out.*)

Where is Cyrano?

CHRISTIAN. Who?

DE VALVERT. (*To Le Bret and Ragueneau.*)

Excuse me ...

LIGNIERE. *Who?!*

DE VALVERT. Who is this Cyrano you speak of?

LIGNIERE/LE BRET. (*To Christian and De Valvert, respectively.*)

You don't know Cyrano de Bergerac?

DE VALVERT. (*As Christian shakes his head.*)

Should I?

RAGUENEAU. Ah! He's the most remarkable person ...

LIGNIERE. You'll meet him tomorrow.

LE BRET. He's one of my men.

LIGNIERE. A man full of quirks and contradictions:

RAGUENEAU. Sensitive ...

LIGNIERE. Coarse ...

LE BRET. Pugnacious ...

LIGNIERE. Kind ...

LE BRET. Extravagant and austere at once.

RAGUENEAU and LIGNIERE. He's larger than life ...

LE BRET. Much larger than life.

LIGNIERE. So much larger, he's practically fictional!

LE BRET. But noble as well ...

LIGNIERE. Loyal ...

RAGUENEAU. Proud.

LIGNIERE. Very proud.

LE BRET. A little too proud, perhaps.

RAGUENEAU. And accompanied, everywhere he goes,

By a rather prominent friend: / his nose!

LIGNIERE. His nose defies description!

RAGUENEAU. Defies comparison!

LE BRET. The most defiant nose in France!

RAGUENEAU. When you first see it, / you'll swear it's a fake.

LIGNIERE. You'll swear it's a fake.

"Ah, I see," you say, "in a moment
He'll take it off."

CYRANO

by Edmond Rostand

translated by Michael Hollinger

adapted by Michael Hollinger and Aaron Posner

8M, 1W (doubling)

The most legendary nose in literature gets a makeover with this lively American adaptation of the 1897 French classic. Will Roxane fall for Christian's dashing looks or Cyrano's daring poetry? Find out in this timeless tale — full of wordplay and swordplay — that's been an inspiration to writers and lovers for centuries.

"... a sterling, illuminating new translation by Michael Hollinger ... His mostly rhymeless version bubbles with dialogue that honors the play's period and dishes as easily as, say, the ladies on The View. ... a joy to watch — funny, touching, pathetic, kinetic. A story well told."

—**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

"... well-crafted, rhythmically beautiful, humorous, emotionally resonant and convincing ... Hollinger removes the original's many allusions to French society and norms and lets the audience enjoy modern equivalents, reflected mostly through language. He drops the blank verse (which dominates most prior translations), except strategically, to emphasize a point, sometimes underlining it with rhyme. ... Hollinger gives his actors plenty to work with."

—**BroadStreetReview.com**

"... the eponymous hero is as magnetic and touchy as ever ... an entertaining script."

—**The Washingtonian**

"This version of Cyrano de Bergerac is interesting and entertaining ... a thoughtful piece of work which makes many bold choices. ... This is by far the funniest CYRANO you will ever see."

—**DCTheatreScene.com**

"... a good, practical adaptation for modern audiences ... a show that can make you feel again as deeply and unashamedly as you did when you were 17 serves a great purpose. And CYRANO, with all of its heartbreaking panache, achieves that in aces. Three cheers and a flourish of a feathered hat to that."

—**Oregon ArtsWatch**

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