

Northern Broadsides



Education Resource Pack



Adapted by Deborah McAndrew
From the original play *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand

Directed by Conrad Nelson

Designer - Lis Evans
Lighting Designer - Daniella Beattie
Musical Director - Rebekah Hughes

Presented in partnership with The New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-u-Lyme

About this pack

We hope that teachers and students will enjoy our production and use this learning resource pack.

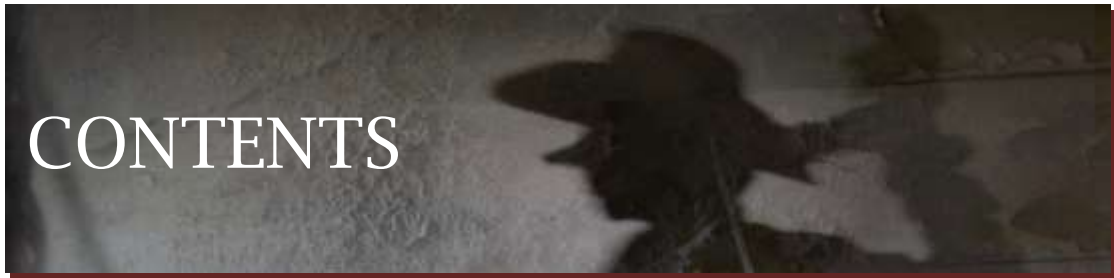
It may be used in advance of seeing the performance – to prepare and inform students about the play; and afterwards – to respond to the play and explore in more depth. Teachers may select, from the broad range of material, which is most suitable for their students.

The first section of this document is a detailed companion to our production: plot synopsis, who's who in the play, and interviews with cast and creatives. It reveals the ways in which our company met with the many challenges of bringing *CYRANO* to the stage.

The second section examines the background to the play. The original work by Edmond Rostand, and the real life Cyrano and his world; and the poetic content and context of the play.

At the end of the second section are exercises and suggestions for study in the subjects of History, English and Drama.

CYRANO by Deborah McAndrew, is published by Methuen and available to purchase from <http://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk>



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INTRODUCTION

The play

CYRANO is a new English language adaptation of a French classic play by Edmond Rostand entitled *Cyrano de Bergerac*.



It tells the story of the brilliant poet, musician and swordsman, Cyrano de Bergerac, who is deeply in love with his beautiful cousin Roxane. However, he'll never tell her how he feels because he fears rejection due to the unnatural and monstrous size of his nose.

The play was written in 1897 and is a fictional imagining of the life of a real man who lived during the 1600s.

The play was first performed on 28 December 1897 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in Paris, and the role of Cyrano himself was played by the renowned French actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin

It was an instant hit and has remained popular ever since, translated into many languages - with several adaptations in English and a number of film versions.

Deborah McAndrew's new adaptation for Northern Broadsides remains faithful to the original story and structure, but reworks the text for a modern audience and to suit the narrative and musical style of Northern Broadsides Theatre Company.

SECTION ONE

CHARACTERS

Featuring designer Lis Evans' costume drawings.

Cyrano

Cyrano Savinien Hercule de Bergerac. A soldier in the Cadets. He is a young man of many talents and a bit of a show off, but beneath the swagger he's desperately insecure about the size of his nose - which, to be fair, is MASSIVE.



Roxane

Madeleine Robin, known as Roxane. A brilliant and beautiful young woman, who needs all her wits about her to keep unwelcome suitors at a distance. She's tired of being leered at, but there's a very handsome new boy in town...

Christian

Baron Christian de Neuville. The new boy in town.



De Guiche

Powerfully married to Cardinal Richelieu's niece, the *Count de Guiche* should be content with his lot, but he's obsessed with lovely Roxane. He has a nefarious plan to marry her to a spineless stooge who won't mind sharing his wife with another man.



Viscount Valmont A spineless stooge.

Ligniere

A drunken poet and hopeless romantic. At the start of the story Ligniere is touting a very rude song about the Count de Guiche's nefarious plan around the taverns of Paris.



Le Bret
Cyrano's friend and confidant.



Ragueneau
A Parisian patissier - who loves poetry.

Lise Ragueneau
His wife - who doesn't.



Apprentice
An enterprising lass.

Duenna
Roxane's chaperone.

Bellerose
A theatre manager.



Montfleury



A fat and lascivious actor.

The Cadets A regiment of The Guards traditionally recruiting younger sons from aristocratic families of Gascony. Theatrical Cadets are traditionally a grand bunch of lads.

The story also features a colourful array of **dodgy poets, doddery priests, fine ladies, not-so-fine ladies, gossipy nuns, randy soldiers, dandy actors, and random musicians** - all presented by a hardworking and versatile ensemble.



Plot Synopsis

The action of the play takes place in Paris in the spring of 1640; at the siege of Arras in summer 1640; and in Paris once again, in the autumn of 1654.

PROLOGUE

A Paris street

A drunken poet, Ligniere, staggers out of a tavern in the early evening. A crowd gathers around him, demanding to hear a rude song he has composed about the powerful Count de Guiche.



Ligniere obliges, and as he sings a threatening figure appears in the tavern doorway to listen before disappearing into the shadows. Unaware that he has been spied upon, Ligniere then heads off to a rendezvous at the theatre.

ACT ONE

The Theatre

The audience gathers for a performance of Baro's *Clorise*, featuring the popular actor, Montfleury. The usual mixed crowd from all of Parisian society. Ligniere arrives with a young Baron, Christian de Neuville.



Christian has recently arrived in Paris and in the morning will join a regiment of the Guards, the Cadets. He has seen a beautiful woman previously at the theatre and wants to know her name. Ligniere has agreed to identify her for him.

They are joined by Ragueneau (professional patissier and amateur poet), and Le Bret (a soldier and friend of Cyrano de Bergerac).

These two are anxiously expecting the arrival of Cyrano, who has publicly threatened the actor Montfleury and warned him not to appear on the Parisian stage for at least a month. Nobody knows what Cyrano's problem is, but he is sure to put in an appearance and stop the show.

Christian asks about Cyrano and the friends describe an extraordinary man - a gifted poet, musician and scientist who is also the finest swordsman in France. A perfect man with one glaring imperfection - his enormous nose.

The Count de Guiche arrives in the company of a beautiful young woman - Roxane. This is the lady Christian has come to see. Ligniere tells him that she is more than just beautiful, but educated and intelligent. She's currently employing all her wits to fend off the advances of De Guiche - who would arrange a marriage for her to his friend, Viscount Valvert, so he can have access to her himself.



Satisfied that he has fulfilled his errand, Ligniere then heads off to a nearby tavern.

Christian is disgusted by the lechery of de Guiche. Enraptured by the gaze of Roxane, he reaches blindly in to his pocket for a glove to throw at Valvert, and finds a pickpocket's hand.

The pickpocket begs for pardon in exchange for information. Tonight the poet Ligniere will be killed on his way home on account of the dirty song he wrote about the Count de Guiche - who, it turns out, doesn't have much of a sense of humour. A hundred men are waiting in ambush at the Port de Nesle.

Christian has no choice but to act on this information. He quits the theatre in search of Ligniere.

The show is about to start, but there is a hiatus as a mysterious figure is secretly ushered into a private box with a grill to conceal his identity. The crowd guess who this must be - Cardinal Richelieu, the most powerful man in France except for the King himself. Count de Guiche is married to Richelieu's niece, which makes the lecherous Count even more powerful.

Montfleury takes to the stage, and is immediately heckled from the shadows by a voice instantly recognizable to those who know him - Cyrano!

Montfleury tries to carry on, but Cyrano beats Montfleury from the stage and offers to take on all comers. He then throws a full purse at the theatre manager to pay for the loss of revenue.



Not everyone enjoys Cyrano's performance and he is challenged, first by the Cavalryman and then by Viscount Valvert. He sees off both with a dazzling display of wit and swordsmanship - composing a ballad while he duels with and defeats Valvert.

When the theatre clears, Cyrano is left alone with his friend Le Bret, who quizzes him about his hatred of Montfleury. Cyrano explains that the actor is a renowned lecher, who lusts after young women.



However, Cyrano's tolerance of this ended when he saw Montfleury leering at the most rare and precious woman in France - Roxane.

Le Bret is astonished to learn that Cyrano is in love, and tells him that Roxane was pale with fear as he fought with Valvert. It's possible that she loves him too.

Cyrano cannot believe that anyone would ever love his ugly face, but at that moment Roxane's Duenna (chaperone) arrives. Her lady would like a meeting with Cyrano the next morning.



Cyrano is astonished and heartened to think that Le Bret might be right. He arranges to meet Roxane first thing in the morning at Ragueneau's Patisserie.

The Duenna leaves and Ligniere rushes in, quaking with fear. He has received a note from Christian telling him that a hundred men are waiting to kill him at the Port de Nesle.

Fired up with the possibility that Roxane loves him, Cyrano relishes the prospect of taking on a hundred men. With an entourage of poets and actors, Cyrano sets forth to the Port de Nesle.

Interlude

On a Paris Street later that night Ligniere sings *The Ballad of The Port de Nesle* - which tells of Cyrano's triumph over the 100 assassins that were lying in wait for him.



ACT TWO

Ragueneau's Patisserie

It's early morning and Monsieur Ragueneau puts his poets pen away and picks up the tools of his trade as a patissier. To his delight, and his wife's annoyance, his Apprentice has made a copy of Apollo's lyre in brioche. Ragueneau is a passionate lover of poetry and his wife despairs that he takes verses as payment for cakes and pies.



Cyrano arrives early for his rendezvous with Roxane, with a cut on his hand from the night before. He's nervous and decides to write her a letter in case he hasn't the courage to speak to her.



As usual a group of poets arrive for breakfast, bringing news of a fight at the Port de Nesle where a hundred men were overwhelmed, and several killed, by a lone swordsman.

As the time approaches for Roxane to arrive, Cyrano asks Ragueneau if he might have some privacy and the patissier and poets leave him alone.

Roxane arrives and Cyrano sends the Duenna away with a bag of cakes. Roxane recalls their childhood friendship and affinity as she finds the courage to reveal something very personal. She notices the cut on Cyrano's hand and offers to dress it for him.

Hope rises in Cyrano's heart as she tends the wound and confesses that she is in love. He is encouraged to believe the object of her affection could be him - a soldier in his regiment but who is too shy to approach her.



It all seems to be pointing his way until Roxane reveals that the man she loves is handsome.

Now under no illusions that it is him, Cyrano demands to know who the man is. Roxane tells him it is Christian de Neuvillette. Cyrano challenges her assertion that she loves a man she doesn't know, but Roxane is adamant that a man of such beauty must also possess great intelligence. He is to join the Cadets that very day, but she is fearful as she has heard rumours of the harsh treatment of new recruits. She begs Cyrano to protect Christian.

With very little coaxing Cyrano promises to look after her little Baron. Roxane leaves having also exacted a promise from Cyrano that Christian will write to her immediately. Cyrano is devastated.



Le Bret arrives with the Cadets. They have heard about Cyrano's exploits at the Port de Nesle and want to hear the whole story from the horse's mouth.

Count de Guiche enters. He too would like to hear the story of the night's adventures. He also has an offer to make to Cyrano...

Cardinal Richelieu was impressed with Cyrano's performance at the theatre and would like to employ him as a poet.

Le Bret is excited for his friend, and Cyrano is tempted until he hears that Richelieu would amend and edit his work. There is no room for compromise in Cyrano's life and he rejects the offer. De Guiche leaves with a warning that Cyrano's fortune will one day run out.

Le Bret is frustrated that the gifted Cyrano will never achieve the success he deserves if he continues to be so proud. But Cyrano's bitter disappointment over Roxane fuels a searing speech, rejecting all the compromises that the world would demand of him in exchange for fame and glory. Le Bret knows his friend and realizes that his heart is broken.





Christian enters and the Cadets tease the new recruit. Amidst the baiting they give him some sound advice – to never mention Cyrano’s nose.

Christian places himself apart as Cyrano gives his account of the night’s events. As the story of the Port de Nesle begins, Christian heckles with a jibe about Cyrano’s nose. Everyone expects the new recruit to get a pounding, but when Cyrano hears the name of the heckler he backs down and carries on with his story. After enduring a series of wisecracks about his nose Cyrano can take no more and in a fury sends everyone from the room except Christian.

To Christian’s surprise Cyrano doesn’t try to kill him, but instead he passes on Roxane’s message. Christian is sorry to have insulted Cyrano, and thrilled that Roxane is inviting his suit. However, he’s gutted when told that he must write a letter. He has a rough soldier’s wit, but none of the intelligence or eloquence needed to woo a lady with words.

In a moment of inspiration Cyrano offers him the letter he wrote that very morning – assuring Christian that it will fit Roxane perfectly. The two agree that Cyrano will write Christian’s letters for him.

The Cadets reappear convinced that Cyrano will have killed Christian and are astonished to find the two in an embrace. Perhaps Cyrano has at long last found a sense of humour about his nose? Not so. The next Cadet to mention it is knocked unconscious.

There is camaraderie among the Cadets and the possibility that love will triumph somehow. They sing the song of the Gascony Cadets, and we are reminded that France is at war with Spain and that soon the Cadets will be called to do their duty.



INTERVAL

ACT THREE

Roxane's Kiss

A few weeks have gone by and Ligniere is busking outside the door of Roxane's house. The balcony of her bedroom overlooks the street. It's a good pitch for him as Roxane is pursued by many suitors and he makes a good living singing love songs beneath her window.

The Apprentice from the Patisserie appears. Ragueneau's business isn't doing very well and she has a new job, delivering letters for the Baron de Neuville. This keeps her busy as Christian writes at least twice a day, and his letters are the only ones that Roxane accepts.

The Duenna comes to the door to receive the letter and tells Ligniere to move along. She and Roxane are going out shortly to a soiree.

Ligniere takes no notice and starts a song in key that goes too high. Cyrano enters, and pays Ligniere to continue his screeching outside the house of Montfleury. Ligniere takes the coin and exits with a wink.

Roxane and the Duenna now appear from the house, en route to the soiree. Roxane pauses to speak with Cyrano, who is staggered to discover the impact that Christian's letters have had on her.

Cyrano ducks into the house to avoid being seen, by the approaching Count de Guiche, who sends the Duenna away in order to speak privately with Roxane.



De Guiche has come to say goodbye as he has been ordered to lead a military siege on the town of Arras. Roxane is unmoved by this news until she realizes that De Guiche has been made commander of the Guards, and that the Cadets regiment will go with him. The vengeful count is looking forward to giving the most difficult assignments to Cyrano.

Roxane is visibly shaken at the thought of Christian going to the war, but De Guiche interprets her sudden concern as being out of love for him. Roxane artfully plays along with this supposition, and suggests

that a better way to exact revenge on Cyrano would be to leave him and his beloved cadets behind.



De Guiche is convinced that this would indeed be a cunning way to hurt Cyrano, and promises to leave the Cadets behind in reserve.

Having secured Christian's safety, Roxane herself is now in danger, having allowed de Guiche to feel encouraged in his advances. He takes his chance and tells her he will delay his journey to Arras and come to her that night in disguise. Roxane refuses, but the appearance of the Duenna leads de Guiche to infer that she is just keeping up appearances. He leaves believing Roxane loves him.

Cyrano reappears from the house and Roxane tells him that she is no longer satisfied with just written words from Christian. She wants him to speak to her directly of his love. She asks Cyrano to pass on this request that she may hear the voice to match the letters.

Roxane and the Duenna head off to their soiree and Cyrano calls Christian out from the shadows where he has been lurking. He tells Christian of Roxane's request and that there's just time for him to learn a speech. However, Christian has had enough of pretending. The letters have served their purpose, and now it's time for him to take over and be himself. Cyrano questions the wisdom of this, but Christian is determined and confident.

Cyrano leaves as Roxane and the Duenna return unexpectedly having arrived at the soiree too late and been denied admittance. At the sight of Christian Roxane sends the Duenna into the house. She eagerly awaits his spoken discourse on love.



Unfortunately Christian's attempts at improvisation fall far short of Roxane's expectations and she is angry and disappointed. She exits

into the house, demanding that Christian recover his lost eloquence or leave her alone.

Cyrano has been listening of course, and Christian begs him to help. Ligniere returns from serenading Montfluery, and Cyrano sends him to the corner of the street to keep watch. If a man approaches Ligniere is to play a sad song in warning. If a woman approaches, then he must play a merry tune.

Roxane appears on her balcony and Christian begins a faltering speech, prompted by Cyrano in the shadows. This arrangement doesn't work very well, and finally in frustration Cyrano dons Christian's hat and takes his place beneath Roxane's window.



At last able to speak freely to the woman he loves, Cyrano's poetic heart soars and Roxane is wooed and won by the 'voice of the letters'. Having never really heard Christian speak, and never heard Cyrano in this frank and loving vein, she fails to spot the switch and is convinced that the man speaking to her is still Christian.

Christian spontaneously demands a kiss as Ligniere can be heard playing a song that is both sad and merry. Roxane ducks indoors as a Friar enters carrying a letter for Roxane. Cyrano sends the priest off in the wrong direction and then reluctantly agrees to obtain that kiss from Roxane.



Cyrano's sensitive and seductive reasoning easily convinces the willing Roxane to consent to a kiss. Christian resumes his place as the lover and climbs to the balcony to claim the prize. Cyrano is left below, comforting himself that the kiss is as much his as Christian's.

The Friar returns and Cyrano cannot put him off a second time. The kiss is interrupted and Roxane is called down to receive the letter. It's from the Count de Guiche and concerns

his secret visit to her that night. However, Roxane improvises a different text, instructing the Friar to marry her to the Baron de Neuville. The priest is a little bemused but when Cyrano invents a postscript instructing Roxane to make a donation to the Friary all is well.

It will take 15 minutes to perform the solemnities and, as everyone goes into the house, Cyrano hurriedly promises Roxane he will delay de Guiche until she and Christian are married.

Cyrano quickly disguises himself and lies down in the street as de Guiche enters. Cyrano cries out, demanding to know where he is and what year it is. Despite de Guiche's attempts to get to Roxane's door, Cyrano won't let him pass and regales him with a song about how he fell from the moon.

De Guiche is caught up in Cyrano's lunatic pantomime just long enough, and as the hour strikes the newly married lovers emerge from the house.



Unable to vent his fury in front of the priest, de Guiche still manages to exact instant revenge by delivering Christian and Cyrano's marching orders. There may have been a marriage but there'll be no wedding night tonight. Christian obeys his commanding officer without question and exits with the orders. Cyrano lingers just long enough to receive new instructions from the distraught Roxane. Cyrano must as far as possible protect Christian from danger, and ensure that he writes as often as possible...

ACT FOUR

The Siege of Arras

Some weeks later and the siege of Arras has gone horribly wrong. The French have managed to surround the town, but they themselves are surrounded by Spanish troops and no provisions have got through for some time. The men are disillusioned and starving.

It's early morning at the Cadets' encampment. All are asleep except Le Bret and one sentry on lookout. A volley of shots announces the arrival of Cyrano, who every night sneaks out to post a letter to Roxane, and every morning returns at first light. Le Bret scolds him for taking such risks, but Cyrano promised that Christian would write. He also has intelligence that the Spanish will attack that day - an assault that the weakened French are unlikely to survive. Cyrano disappears into his tent to write a last letter to Roxane.

The Cadets stir from their sleep. They are starving and their spirits are low. The Apprentice has been out hunting and for a moment they have hope of a meal but she has caught nothing worth eating. Cyrano emerges from his tent to see what all the fuss is about. Le Bret urges him to give the men some words to sustain them.

Cyrano reminds the Cadets of their youth in Gascony. He asks one of the ranks to play an old tune from home. The men sing the song and weep. Cyrano asserts that this will not weaken them, but give them courage.



De Guiche arrives and the men's contempt for him is palpable. He brags about his success in a charge against the Spanish, during which he dropped his identifying scarf to avoid capture. Cyrano berates him for cowardice before producing de Guiche's scarf, which he has somehow retrieved from the field on one of his excursions.

De Guiche is unruffled and uses the scarf to give a signal from the rampart, identifying the Cadet camp as the place for the enemy to attack. His spy will tell the Spanish that this is the weakest point -

though in fact it is the best defended. The Cadets will buy time for the French while reinforcements arrive – though they will surely all die in the process.

Christian wishes he could say goodbye to Roxane, but Cyrano is already ahead of him and produces the letter he has just been writing. Christian reads the letter and notices a spot where a tear has splashed onto the paper. Cyrano has finally given himself away and Christian pockets the letter, understanding at last.



A burst of cannon heralds the passage of an unidentified wagon across no man's land. A cloaked figure enters and reveals herself – Roxane! She has come to live or die with the man she loves – and brought Monsieur Ragueneau with her and food from his shop.



The Cadets tuck in, but hide the food from de Guiche. Cyrano pulls Christian aside and warns him not to be surprised at how many letters Roxane has received. Christian demands to know how often Cyrano has written on his behalf, and his mounting suspicions are confirmed.

When Roxane manages to speak to Christian she tells him that it is the letters that have brought her to the front line to be with him. She is ashamed for loving Christian first for his handsome looks. She tells him that this was not really love at all. Now she loves him for his soul alone, and if he were to be horribly disfigured in the battle that day she would not care. She would love him if he were ugly.

The Spanish assault begins.



Christian now realizes the truth. He finds Cyrano and tells him that Roxane loves the letter writer. He is standing in the way of their happiness now, and insists that Cyrano tell Roxane that he loves her.

Christian calls Roxane over to talk to Cyrano and takes a position on the rampart. Cyrano can't find the words to speak to Roxane, but when she reasserts that she doesn't care for Christian's beauty any more he at last has the courage to tell her how he feels.

Cyrano takes Roxane by the hand to finally tell her the truth, as a single sniper shot finds Christian at his post. The Cadets bear the dying Christian down from the rampart and Cyrano's hopes are shattered. He whispers to Christian that Roxane truly loved him, and the young Baron dies happy.



Unaware of what Cyrano was about to tell her Roxane is distraught, and De Guiche, having acquitted himself bravely in the battle takes her to safety.

Robbed of his friend and his happiness, the heartbroken Cyrano throws himself into the fray.

INTERLUDE

Through the smoke of the battle a ghostly Ligniere appears strumming a melancholy tune on his guitar.

He tells us 14 years have now passed; that many, including himself, are long gone - and that the widowed Roxane took refuge in a convent and has lived there ever since.

ACT FIVE

Cyrano's Gazette

In a convent garden in Paris the autumn leaves are falling as two novice nuns set out a basket of wool and a tapestry frame as they do every Saturday. They bicker and tell tales on each other to Mother Marguerite, who threatens to turn them over to the merciless teasing of Monsieur Cyrano when he comes to visit his friend Roxane.

The sisters exit as Roxane appears on the arm of De Guiche who is paying a rare visit. He has mellowed over the years and accepted that Roxane will never love him. Her grief for Christian is still as raw as on the day he died. Only Cyrano's weekly visit brings any relief from her sorrow. She calls him her 'gazette' as he brings all the news and gossip from the outside world.

Le Bret arrives, looking for Cyrano and while Roxane speaks to one of the sisters de Guiche lets him know that he has heard rumours of a planned attack on Cyrano. Cyrano's satirical pen has made many powerful enemies over the years. Le Bret promises to warn Cyrano.

Roxane walks de Guiche to his carriage as Ragueneau arrives. He tells Le Bret that Cyrano has been ambushed. A large block of wood has been dropped deliberately from a window as he passed underneath. His skull is fractured and he is very weak. Le Bret and Ragueneau go off to Cyrano's lodgings to tend on their friend.

Roxane returns and is surprised to find Le Bret and Ragueneau gone. She sits at her tapestry and awaits Cyrano's arrival on the hour, but he's late. Roxane is puzzled and then she hears his familiar step on the path and picks up her wool as always, and without turning to look at him.

Cyrano has risen from his deathbed to pay Roxane one last visit, but he tries to carry on as normal. Eventually she turns and sees that he is faint. He blames his old wound received at Arras, and Roxane acknowledges they both



carry scars from that day that won't heal. She still carries Christian's last letter with her - now yellowed with age. Cyrano asks to read it, and she invites him to read aloud.

The letter is one of goodbye, as Cyrano wrote it 14 years earlier believing he was about to die.

Today he really is dying so the words are appropriate. As the twilight falls and he continues reading Roxane realizes that he knows the letter by heart - and that this can mean only one thing.

At last she understands that the letter writer and the voice beneath her balcony was Cyrano, not Christian. She is angry with him for not telling her, but Cyrano reminds her that the letter is stained with Christian's blood.

Ragueneau and Le Bret return, having found Cyrano's lodgings empty. They tell Roxane that he has hastened his death in coming to see her. Cyrano finishes his 'Gazette' with news of the assassination of Cyrano Hercule Savinien de Bergerac. He removes his hat to reveal the bandaged wound on his head.



Roxane tells Cyrano that she loves him, and begs him to live - but it's too late. Cyrano's time has come, and in his final moments he lashes out at all his old enemies: hypocrisy, cowardice, compromise. Then, with his last breath, he declares that though Death may take everything from him, one thing will remain pure and unspoiled - his panache.

THE END

PRODUCTION

Meet the team...



Back row: Conrad Nelson, Christian Edwards, Anthony Hunt, Lis Evans, Andy Cryer, Paul Barnhill, Robert Wade

Middle row: Denise Body, Francesca Mills, Jessica Dyas, Andrew Whitehead, Rebekah Hughes, Angela Bain, Deborah McAndrew

Front row: Sharon Singh, Perry Moore, Michael Hugo, Adam Barlow, Andy Hall

The team is pictured here in the rehearsal space at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-u-Lyme. This is a theatre-in-the-round and the first shows are prepared for this space. As we tour around the performance will adapt to different size and shape of venue. We play virtually every configuration there is: the Round; Traverse (with audience sitting either side); Thrust; Proscenium Arch (a conventional raised stage with concealed wings either side) and sometimes even an Elizabethan style theatre.

When writing for this kind of touring, Deborah McAndrew must keep in mind that the show has to be very adaptable. Designer Lis Evans creates a flexible design that is robust enough to stand up to the rigours of the road, and Lighting Designer, Daniella Beattie produces a

lighting plot that will adapt to the technical capabilities of every venue.

IN REHEARSAL

Nose to nose... ***with Christian Edwards***

We talked to actor, Christian Edwards, in his dressing room as he prepared for the Press Night performance of *Cyrano*. He wanted to do the interview then to take his mind off the nerves!



He began by telling us about that famous nose.

“The nose is made of really thin latex. The woman who made it is a special effects and prosthetics specialist, who came and met me in London when I was doing the job before this. (I was playing Santa – which was a job I really didn’t like doing but actors have to do whatever they can to pay the bills.) She came to meet me and took a cast of my face, so it’s made to fit over my real nose and it stays on.

We’ve got 44 in total for the number of performances, because each nose only lasts a couple of shows.



It’s so thin, and once it’s on I can’t feel it. It just gives me a bigger, more bulbous nose, about another inch on my real nose; makes my face look a bit more grotesque.

My worry was that it might fall off, but it doesn’t. I don’t think about it at all when I’m performing. During the dress rehearsal, and even during the latter stages of rehearsals I wore it. I had it on from about 10 in the morning until about 5 in the afternoon a couple of times – so it really stays on, and we did that to make sure it would stay on.

***There's no way round it. I'm playing
Cyrano de Bergerac
and he's got to have a big nose.***

The false nose has got big nostril holes which means I can breathe properly - which is very important. It looks so realistic.

The great thing about this nose is that it's not overly big. It could be real. I don't think it should be comical - it's more about how he feels about it really.

We all have issues with the way we look in some way. My big issue has also always been my nose, I was bullied as a kid about the size of my nostrils. I totally get that about Cyrano.

In every photo of me I'm aware of my nose, and I've said it to all of my friends, though they say they don't notice it. And it's like that with Cyrano. His friends are aware he's got a big nose, but it disappears once you know somebody.

***Disfigurements disappear and it's the person you fall in love with -
as Roxane does with Cyrano.***



In rehearsals trying to find the character and the truth was the real work, but knowing the nose was coming and getting that final touch just made it.”

The Company Stage Manager, Andy Hall helps me to glue it on and the whole process takes about 20 minutes.

It's part of the routine, part of the transformation. When I look in the mirror I look quite different. I am that other person.

As we talk the Deputy Stage Manager, Denise Body, arrives with Christian's sword. He tells us about what that involves...



"I've done sword fighting before - a couple of years ago in a show at Regent's Park. For *Cyrano* I've had to recap all those skills, and add new ones that I didn't really have.

Setting a sword fight to music, as we do in this show, where there are stabs on brass or drum as our swords hit, is another layer to add to think about.

Our fight director, Philip D'Orleans, says it's very unusual to have that kind of choreography in sword fighting.

So you're fighting, you're singing... saying your lines and trying to remember the moves.

Cyrano has been the greatest challenge of any role I've ever played in my career. It's like playing a Shakespearean lead. He goes from being a brilliant wit to a brilliant poet, lover... There's comedy, pathos, romance, and finally this extraordinary scene at the end where he's dying.

And once he's on, he's never off - so in rehearsal there's no free time for line learning. One thing I've learned from doing this is, for me, in future, in



playing a part like this you have to learn the lines as soon as possible - because then you're free.

Once you've learned the lines and they're in you, you can change how you say them and how you react and you can work with what the other actors in the scene are doing.

But this is the biggest thing I've learned...

I was scared. In the middle of rehearsals, I had a couple of weeks where I had a massive crisis of confidence. It was being aware that playing this part was like climbing a mountain - but you can't think about playing the mountain. You just have to go on and play it one scene at a time.

If you think about everything you've got to do, you'll just curl up in a ball - which is what I did at home in my digs one night.

So I've learned to just go out there and play it, and that's fine - and I'm not there yet! I've got so much still to do and discover and everything, but that's the joy of playing a part like this is that there's so much to find and so many layers that you can add and play with.

I'm very lucky to such a good company of people who are so giving and supportive- I'm not just saying that. It's been a massive learning curve for me. Massive.

I'm looking forward to touring, changing the staging. Here we're in the round and in other places we'll be in a normal pros arch stage with the audience in front of us, so we'll be changing the staging substantially and it will be like a different show. So I will settle, and have great fun."

We're sure he will!



Eye to Eye...

with Francesca Mills

The youngest member of the company, Francesca (Frann) Mills will celebrate her 21st birthday while the company is out on tour. She tells us what it's like to be at the beginning of a very promising career...



“I’m from Shropshire, and grew up very close to the New Vic Theatre where we open *Cyrano*. Mainly as a kid I did dancing, but then when I was 9 (in 2006) my dad saw an advertisement in the Sentinel for kids to open audition for a production of *Oliver* at the New Vic Theatre.

***My dad said, ‘oh, Frann you should give it a go,’
- and I was like, ‘you know what, Dad - I will.’***

I’d always loved performing but never done drama classes or anything like that that. So I went along to this week-long summer school that the New Vic held with all the Creatives, and it was just a load of children from all over Stoke and Staffordshire who wanted to be in the Christmas production of *Oliver*. And it was so much fun, and luckily I got accepted to be in one of the two teams (Dawkins and Twist) - because you need two teams of children to perform in a professional show.

And Conrad Nelson was in that show - he was Mr Bumble - so I remember him very fondly from my childhood, and it’s now crazy that he’s directing a show that I’m in.

Then after *Oliver* I did the following three Christmas productions: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; *Arabian Nights*; and *The Wizard of Oz*. Then I got too old for it and I was gutted, but through the Christmas shows I’d started going to the New Vic Youth Theatre. That was an awful lot of fun, and I learnt such a lot and to be in a building where things were happening all the time - and it’s like one big family.

I stopped Youth Theatre to concentrate on my GCSEs and then I did 2 years at The Jill Clewes Academy for Theatre Arts - studying musical theatre.

But Frann is still only 20 years old – so how come she already has such a lot of professional work on her CV?

“Just before I went to the Academy I got signed with Warwick Davies - who has his own agency that specializes in short actors - and that was amazing. He also has his own company - The Reduced Height Theatre Company - and I got to work with them. Throughout my training the Academy let me take time out to do professional work so when I came out I kind of had a few contacts to get me going.

I always wanted to move to London, because you're always down there and when I was 19 my best friend, Olly, got into ArtsEd - a drama school in London - and he didn't have anyone to live with.

*I was dying to go live in London -
so I said, 'I'll come and live with you.'*

Then we found another Arts Ed student, so I was living with two drama students in Chiswick, which was really cool. Really expensive though, and after a year of living there I moved to Kingston, which was a bit cheaper. Since moving down south I've been signed by London based agency, Cole Kitchen.



Frann with Warwick Davis and The Reduced Height Company in *See How They Run*

I get asked about my height a lot, but for me being small isn't a thing. I've never felt prejudice in a casting room, or felt that I've been in an audition for something purely because of my height but I think that's because people have worked hard to make it that way. And I'm the generation that's coming up and experiencing the change that people

have made. Because from other actor friends that I know who are of short stature it's not the same story for them.



I'm proud to tell them that things are changing. Casting is getting more diverse.

I don't go into an audition ever thinking I won't get this because I'm small. I'm just an actor going against other actors. I never look at others and think, 'they're not short like me, why have I been put in here?' I feel very blessed to have that mentality and that I'm finding that in the world. And I've done some pretty cool things."

So how does Frann see her future shaping up?

"There's so much I want to do it's ridiculous. I feel like every job I've got is for a reason. I've learned so much. In this cast everyone plays musical instruments, bar me. I've been put on tambourine! But just through listening and looking at sheet music and working with Musical Director, Rebekah Hughes, I now understand a bit about reading music - which sounds tiny, but before I didn't know any of this. I'm really passionate about going away and learning an instrument. I've been talking to Robert Wade about learning the clarinet - and I love that I take something from each job.

I pinch myself every time I'm in a theatre environment because to be in a room with actors of such experience - probably because I'm so young, I look up to them. And the actors I've worked with... Conrad as Mr Bumble, Mike Hugo was Mr Tumnus when I did *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*... and he bought me a cake the other day in the café! So today I'm just another actor that they work with, but if you'd have told my 10 year old self that he'd buy me a cake one day when you're working together.

And it's extra special being here. When I did *Zoolander 2* and I met Ben Stiller he was just an actor I was working with, but when I come here with Mike Hugo and Conrad - that blows my mind because there's more history to it and they have been part of my journey. It has more meaning.

It's such a big deal being here. My mum was so excited when I told her I was going to do this job at the New Vic, and my Gran was on the roof. For my whole family this theatre was my childhood. Mum still now when she's going into Newcastle automatically finds herself in the New Vic carpark because she came here so much.



For me this is the theatre I've been dying to come back. So to come back with Conrad and Northern Broadsides, it's like one big family."

Right now Frann is home with her family, and enjoying being back at the New Vic - but this show moves on at the end of February to tour all over the country. Is she looking forward to that?

"I love to tour. I get itchy feet, so tour is perfect for me. By the time you get itchy feet you're on the road again. I love living in digs with old ladies who make you meringue when you get in. I love that. I have many phone numbers of old ladies in places like Ipswich and you sleep in those bedrooms with a bed with a voodoo doll above it. It's all part of the process. You ring your Mam with the tales.

I'm not very organized with digs, but I try really hard to get on to of things. Moving on, new theatres, visiting places. Revisiting places is great, and I'm starting to go back to places now, which is nice.



I'm most looking forward to Liverpool. Liverpool 100%. It's my favourite place. I always stay in the same place, ever since I did *Peter Pan* at the Liverpool Empire about three years ago. It's an apartment with two spare beds, so the whole family come up and take turns to visit and stay with me and see the show. Like a holiday.

And I'll be celebrating my 21st birthday while we're there! And our Company Stage Manager Andy Hall will be celebrating his 40th on the same day so it'll be quite a party!

A Stitch In Time...



As the first night approaches, the incredibly skilful New Vic Wardrobe department are working flat out to dress our 17th Century epic with panache!

Costume Supervisor, David Thorne, puts down the iron for a moment to tell us about making the clothes for 17th Century Paris...

David: What's nice about this period is it's not done very often - well, we haven't done it very often. What's tricky is it's quite unusual waistlines and it's very easy to over think it almost, because it looks a bit odd. A theatre show is not a museum. If you look at more 20th Century - if you look at a lot of photos from any period you see there's really a mixture - different ages wear different styles. It's very easy to get too academic about it all.



We're using quite a broad spectrum. We're making about half the costumes and the rest from stock, altered to fit the actors and made up with detail for this production. Ultimately it was never meant to be totally specific. The designer, Lis Evans, likes to keep it more real. It could get very contrived, and it's not a fashion show. We need to give room for character and the audience isn't too fussed about period detail. It's not what the piece is trying to achieve.

And there's a lot of breaking down to do. Making sure that the new makes and all the stock blend together and look like one show.

Costume technician, Deborah Hall, is working on Cyrano's doublet...

Deborah: Once this is made, unfortunately, it will be broken down to make it look worn and lived in. Cyrano isn't a rich man. You spend ages making it and then somebody trashes it.

It's a nice period to work on - lots of details that make it interesting. We wouldn't spend time not making in a modern way, basically we adapt anything that they would have done and try and produce it as quickly as possible in a modern way. Some things can't be done by machine. This period has lots of cartridge pleats, which have to be made by hand - so there's no easy quick way to do that, other than by hand. But lots of things can be done with modern methods.



Because we don't do this period very often when you do come to do it there might be things you haven't done for a while so you might have to recap on how you did it last time, or reassess and see if there's an easier way to do it.

You can find ways and means of moving on and learning each time you do a period.

Costume cutters, Sarah Thorne and Alison Sunnuck are working on jackets for the cadets...



Alison: I'm cutting out a cadet jacket - collars and lining. It's had its fitting so it's just to be made up - for Angela Bain. There are loads of cadet jackets, how many Sarah?

Sarah: Eight!

Alison: They're all slightly different. Because there weren't uniforms then so they all would have worn their own.

We talk to Lis and look at the designs and ask questions. Then we do our patterns and cut out the fabric, do fittings, and after the fittings we sort it out so people can do the sewing.

Sarah and Karen and me split the cutting up into 3 - usually by actors, but this time we've done actors and characters, so Sarah's done all the cadets, Karen did all the musicians and I've done all the nuns.

David: Choice of fabrics is important. We've bought expensive fabrics for the right people. People who have no money really don't. We need to put the budget where it will show. But sometimes when you have to think about things because of budget you get better results. Putting the detail where it shows.

In the Round people are very close, and the back of a costumes is as important as the front.



That all-important nose also comes under the jurisdiction of Costume Supervisor, David Thorne.

David: Because of the time of year it was always going to be tricky to get the nose made and delivered on time. It's a show where the audience is very close. My main concern was that it had to be done right in the first place, as there wasn't time to get it wrong. And on this occasion there wasn't a back up plan.

We hired company called Kryolan - the biggest theatre makeup company - knowing it would get done. But through them we ended up using a freelance artist.

We have 44 noses, as they don't last very long - 2 or 3 shows. It looks great. It works. It needs to go on properly every night. They're made of latex. If we'd gone for silicon it would have been one per show, and that was too expensive.



My main concern was that when it goes on it feels right - is light and easy to wear. Your artist has to be totally comfortable, and it's about the person wearing it. It matches Christian's face really well.

It's now a week and a half until opening night, and there's still a lot of work to do. How does the team manage the workload?

David: For me, the job is providing the right stuff at the right time and making sure that as a workroom nobody is being over loaded. We all back each other up. It's my job to run up the schedule and coordinate.

Alison: We're on track.

Sarah: A busy track!

Alison: I get achy legs from standing up. We stand up more than others, because we're long hours standing at the cutting table.

Debbie: At the machines you get achy neck.

Celia: You get brain ache!

David: We always knew we would be pushed for time. People in this department are very good at what they do, but sometimes taking shortcuts takes longer.

We like to make sure that the majority of stuff is done by the end of the final week of rehearsals. We tend to finish of the detail like buttons and accessories to the start of tech week - which is quite a nice thing to do. We get all the slogging out of the way and then it's the finishing touches.

THE TEAM



Deborah Hall, David Thorne, Christina Whitehill, Sarah Thorne, Celia Rhoden, Karen Norcross-Downs
Alison Sunnuck, Sarah Chapman



Let There Be Light

Interview Lighting Designer Daniella Beattie

Daniella (Danni) Beattie has designed the lighting for *Cyrano* at the New Vic Theatre, and every venue that the show will go to on its long tour. We caught up with her as she prepared for the all-important 'tech week'.

We started by asking Danni about her job, and how it all began for her...

My official job title is 'Resident Lighting Designer and Chief Electrician'. Generally anything that lights up whizzes and bangs comes under my jurisdiction.

This year I'll be celebrating 20 years working at the New Vic Theatre - a space that is always challenging me to expand what I do. I get to work with lots of people who come in and visit us and people I've known for many years. It's a great job, and I love it.

I got into lighting when I was at school. I never could be an actor, I'm quite happy being in the dark at the back, but I loved building things. I'm a Blue Peter kind of girl; give me a toilet roll and a sticky bit of paper and I'm off. So I started making props for school shows. I had a really good drama teacher who let me get on with that and didn't push me into acting - but I was clearly taken with the idea of being part of a group and making something to put on stage.

I did my A Levels at a separate college, where they offered drama. As it happened there was no one there in charge of the lighting so for two whole years I got to play and do stuff. I was doing it all horribly wrong I now know, but I had two years of freedom to just play and do all of the productions that we worked on there.

After that I went away to Bretton Hall College in Yorkshire, and studied Theatre Design and Technology. That meant that I could eat, sleep, breathe drama for three whole years.

Back in the early 1990s this was one of only three courses in the country that was degree level. My dad was unemployed at the time, and the only way I could afford higher education was with a full grant from the Council. I couldn't do any of the London courses because they weren't degree level and you couldn't get a grant for that.

While I was there I came here to the New Vic Theatre on work placement. Then, when I graduated in 1995 I went off and did other things: small scale touring and things. Finally I returned to the New Vic in 1997 and started as assistant technician.

Gradually I worked my way up and became Resident Lighting Designer in 2000.

Over the years I've continued to learn. I've done more qualifications in electronics, and through YouTube I've taught myself all about Computer Aided Design. The internet is amazing. I'd have loved that when I was a student.

So, what does Danni enjoy most about being a lighting designer...?

I love telling stories. That's what it's all about for me. There's an old adage that if somebody notices the lighting you've done it wrong. It's all about does my lighting complement that story telling - and if it doesn't then it shouldn't be there for me.

We've been thinking about *Cyrano* for quite a long time, so there have been lots of ideas going round, particularly the striking scenes like the theatre at the beginning - and the moonlight in the balcony scene. How we can make those really beautiful in the space.

First element I always think about is function. Can we see the actor? Or if not, why not? There's a good example of this function of lighting in *Cyrano*, in an important bit where the character of Cyrano is half hidden and pretending to be someone else. Roxane can't see him -



but we have to see her not seeing him. We know he's in the shade, but we still have to see him. It's a theatrical illusion, and one in which the lighting is a key factor.

The second question I ask myself when designing is 'what does that feel like?' Are we looking for a realistic feel in which the lighting tries to mimic a real world lighting state, such as a living room or a summer garden; or are we looking to make the audience understand something about the characters' emotions through the lighting - more of a mood feel?



Particularly in the Round where we have less set, there are fewer features for people to know where we are. We need the audience to have a kind of group hallucination. We use their memories and collective knowledge to build a picture. We work with their expectations. Are we going to be saying where we are literally, or are we following the characters emotionally? It's all to do with how the director wants the audience to connect with what's happening on stage. Do they just need to know where they are, or do they need to share more in the emotions of the scene?

The set is very important in dictating how I design the lights. Set designer Lis Evans and I were talking very early on about how we might solve some of the challenges of doing *Cyrano*. One of the big questions for the Round staging was how to make the balcony scene work. We talked about positioning, and how we would draw the lights in. How we can make someone appear as if they're in the shadows even if they're right in the middle of the stage.

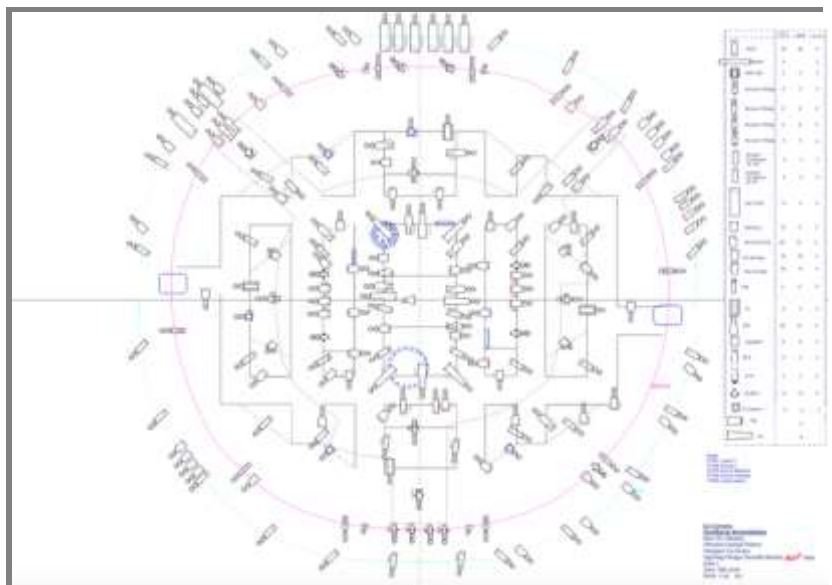


A lot of lighting design is about working with the physics of the human eye - what it's looking for and how it works. Our field of vision is enormous - 180 degrees, and we lighting designers exploit that. Sometimes we want to bring something in that attracts the eye and draws attention, and sometimes we want something low level and constant that the human brain will ignore.

In the round not everyone's field of vision is the same as audiences view the action from all around the stage. I think of the lighting as a three dimensional sculpture, because what's someone's front light is somebody else's back light. If you do just light everything the same all the way round it gets very boring to look at and loses that three dimensional quality which is its strength.

For example, in *Cyrano* there'll be a lot of low-level work, particularly with the candle stuff in the early scene at the theatre. Within that scene there are many different moods and changing the angles and positions of the lights will help us understand where we are and how we've moved around the space.

Danni's rigging plan for *Cyrano*.



Finally, we asked Danni to talk us through her basic kit of lamps.

Our basic tool is the light itself, and we use mainly three different types of lantern:

Profile - these give us clearly defined spots of hard-edged or soft-edged light, and are the most versatile of the lanterns.



They have a lens (some have two), a lamp and a reflector, and they also have shutters and a gate. Profile lanterns can also be fitted with 'gobos'. A **gobo** is a small steel disc about 15cm across with a cut out in it of any shape imaginable, and when we fix that to the lantern it makes

a pattern on the floor or on a person. This might be leaves from a tree to create a dappled woodland floor effect, or a moon shadow. We can create all kinds of useful effects with gobos – such as the shape of a window on the floor, or abstract shapes, letters or whole words.

The Fresnel (pronounced “Frennel”) is a soft-edged spotlight. It’s a powerful but wide light that allows us to do broad brushstrokes over the stage.



This lamp is named after its French inventor, Augustin-Jean Fresnel. He developed the lens for French lighthouses in the early 19th Century so that they could be seen further out to sea and could achieve a longer focal length with a lot less glass than a standard lens. It was first used in stage lighting in the late 1920s.

The Parcan lets us do hard-hitting colour. As soon as you put a coloured gel in front of a lamp (a gel is like a sweet paper) you start to weaken the light. We often have to make the light travel a long way (at the New Vic this can be up to 7 metres), so we need very powerful lights to pass through the coloured gels and make a strong enough impact on the stage. We need intense lanterns.



I’ll be using all the lamps and effects in my tool kit for *Cyrano*. It’s a massive puzzle and a big juggling task. I love that mix of the technical and the artistic: art and science performing together. I can’t do it without the technology, but if you just stick the lights on it’s not artistic.

The lighting is a character within the play, and it’s how that character interacts with other characters.

I hope my *Cyrano* lighting makes a series of beautiful worlds. Locations are specific and the language is beautiful, so I want the audience to listen to the words and that the lighting will fit with that. The design has to be interesting, beautiful, complex – and flexible enough to tour to many venues. We have to work all that out...

SECTION TWO

BACKSTORY

Edmond Rostand

Edmond Eugène Alexis Rostand was born on 1 April 1868. He was a French poet and dramatist. He is most famous work is the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which was an instant hit when it was first performed in 1897.



Rostand was born in Marseille, France, into a wealthy and cultured Provençal family. His father was an economist, who was also a poet and translator. Rostand studied literature, history, and philosophy at the Collège Stanislas in Paris, France.

When Rostand's first play was performed in August 1888 he was just twenty years old. This one-act comedy called *Le Gant rouge* went almost unnoticed, but the young Rostand persevered, working and honing his craft as a playwright and poet. Less than a decade later in December 1897 the first production of his heroic comedy *Cyrano de Bergerac* opened at the Theatre de la Porte Saint-Martin to instant acclaim. The first production lasted for more than 300 consecutive nights. The play was quickly translated into English, German, Russian and other European languages, and has remained a popular classic ever since.

Rostand continued to write, and in 1902 became the youngest writer to be elected to the Académie Française, but nothing ever equaled the dramatic heights of his *Cyrano*.

Rostand's wife was the poet and playwright Rosemonde-Étienne Gérard. They were married in 1890, and it's possible to speculate that the intellectual compatibility between Roxane and Cyrano was inspired by Rostand's own relationship with his talented wife. The couple had



two sons, and during the 1900s, the family went to live in a Villa Arnaga in the French Basque Country, seeking a cure for Rostand's pleurisy. The house is now a heritage site and a museum of Rostand's life.

Rostand died on 2nd December 1918, a victim of the famous flu pandemic at the end of the First World War. He is buried in the Cimetière de Marseille.

The Real Cyrano

The inspiration for Edmund Rostand's romantic character was a real person. There are many similarities between the real life Cyrano and the love-struck poet in the play, though Rostand has altered, embellished and invented much of the story.

The real Cyrano's full name was Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, and he was indeed a gifted writer, musician and swordsman. Unlike the Gascony-born hero of the play, the real Cyrano was born in Paris on the 6th of March 1619. His father, Abel de Cyrano, was a lawyer and his grandfather had been a successful Parisian fishmonger.



The family owned a small property in the region of Chevreuse, to the South West of Paris, which is where the boy Cyrano grew up. During this rural childhood, Cyrano devoured all the books in his father's library. He received his education from a local clergyman, along with another boy - Henri Le Bret - who later became his biographer. On his grandfather's estate was a little village called Bergerac, from which young Cyrano took his name. Nobody else in the family ever used this title.

Cyrano completed his education in Paris - probably at the College de Beauvais. It was during this time, in his mid teens, that he fell into a life of dissipation, according to his friend Le Bret. By the time he was 19 Cyrano's father had lost most of his money and the estate at Chevreuse was sold.

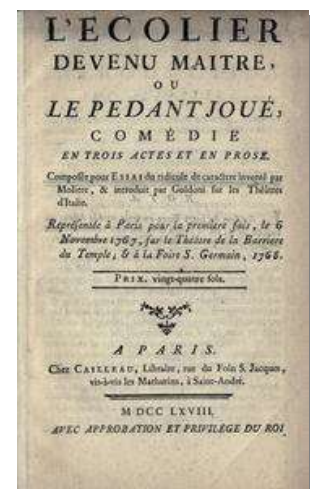
In need of a wage packet, young Cyrano joined the Guards, which did indeed consist mainly of men from Gascony. He quickly gained a reputation as a 'demon of courage'. The French were at war and Cyrano immediately distinguished himself fighting against the Germans at Mouzon in 1639, where he was shot through the chest. The following year, 1640, he was stabbed in the throat at the siege of Arras - the battle depicted in Act 4 of the play. It's interesting to note that the real Cyrano was just 21 at the siege of Arras.

Not long after this he left the army to return to his studies in Paris. He became renowned as a great duelist - particularly in defense of a point of honour, or punishing anyone who was foolish enough to remark on the size of his prominent Roman nose.

Real events in Cyrano's biography are represented in the play, as he did indeed defend a friend called Ligniere against an enormous ambush at the Port de Nesle. He was also credited with disrupting a theatrical performance and throwing the famous actor Montfleury off the stage.

But the real Cyrano was far from being just a fighting man. Like the character in the play he was brilliantly clever and moved in the intellectual circles of 17th Century Paris.

When Cyrano's father died in 1648 he left his son a small inheritance, but Cyrano was always short of cash. He worked and wrote for a living - poems, pamphlets, plays and novels. The combination of science and romance in his stories make him a very early exponent of what today we would call Science Fiction.

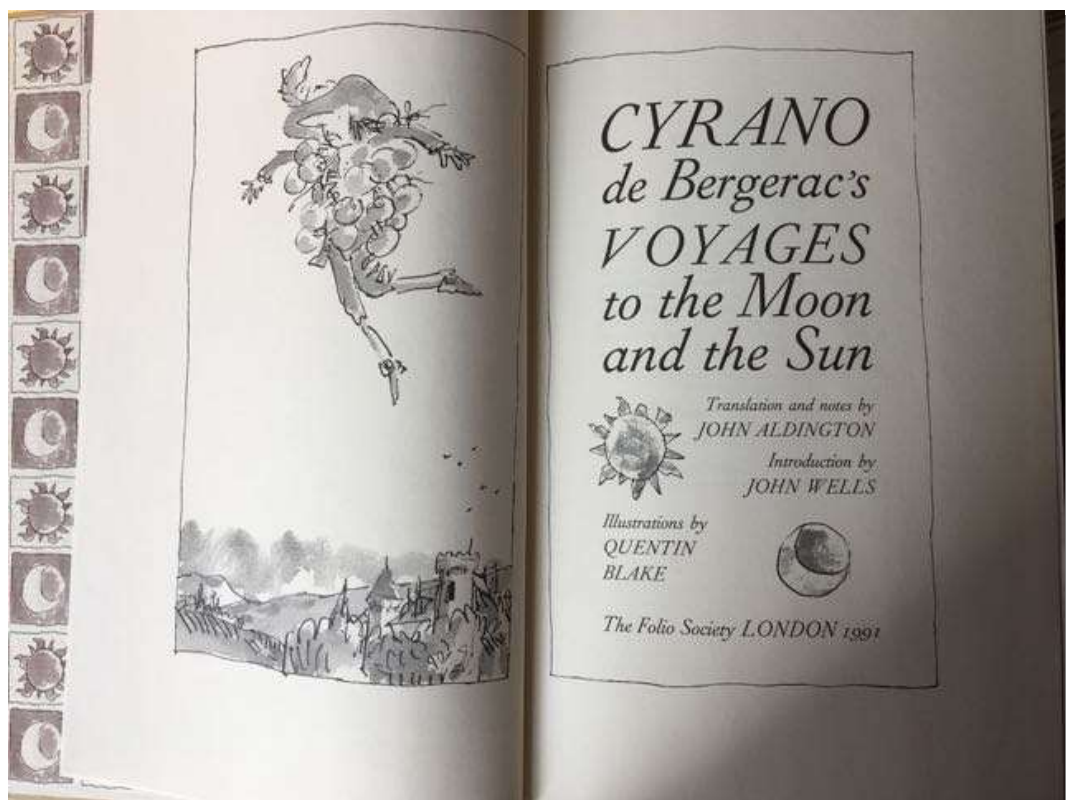


How Cyrano actually died remains a mystery. It's not even clear where he died, or is buried. He may have been injured in a botched assassination attempt, or he may have suffered from a disease such as syphilis - or maybe both. It seems he was nursed for a time - at a convent in the rue de Charonne by his aunt, who was a nun. This also may be the place of his death and burial, but another account has him dying at the house of his cousin, Pierre de Cyrano.

The play concludes with Cyrano's speedy death from an ambush attack, 14 years after the siege of Arras. In fact, if this ambush did take place in 1654, Cyrano took almost a year to die - finally succumbing in July 1655, aged just 36.

Many writers owe a debt to Cyrano, including Jonathan Swift in his far more famous satire, *Gulliver's Travels*. But, as Rostand's fictional Cyrano observes in the final moments of the play - that was his station - 'to be the silent prompter in the wings.'

The works of Cyrano de Bergerac are all that remains absolutely certain of this great man's life and extraordinary imagination - and they continue to be a source of inspiration to writers and scholars to this day.



POET'S CORNER

Verse and *Cyrano*

The original is entirely in verse and follows an Alexandrine form: rhyming couplet lines of twelve syllables. The form was revived by Rostand, having been a highly popular format in French verse during the 17th Century.

For writer Deborah McAndrew sticking to this Alexandrine form throughout was not flexible enough for her adaptation. Sticking slavishly to one poetic structure throughout means that the writer is obliged to make the lines fit the form. Often this results in language that is awkward for actors to say, and constantly chasing a rhyme is a constraint that threatens to undermine the flow of narrative and characterisation in performance.

Most of Deborah's version is in verse, but she has been far freer with the form, so that each mood, intention and character is served as well as possible but using different poetic constructions for different purposes. For example, as dramatically it doesn't make sense if the plain soldier Christian speaks in the same meter and register as the epic Cyrano.

This adaption also drops into prose from time to time, when the requirements are prosaic, though the use of all poetic devices - rhyme, alliteration, metaphor and rhythm are always present. The intention throughout is hope that the shifting form will serve the actors and help them play each moment to the full.

**Playwright
Deborah
McAndrew in
rehearsals**



SECTION THREE

STUDY



English – *Science Fiction*

Creative Writing

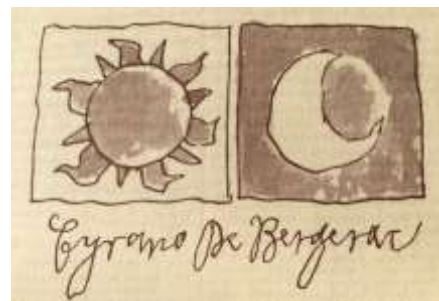
The original Cyrano de Bergerac was a writer of early science fiction. His book *Voyages to the Moon* is believed to have been written in 1648, and clearly inspired the section in Rostand's play where Cyrano pretends to have fallen from the moon.

In his story Cyrano imagines the landscape on the moon, the kind of people and creatures that live there, and the social structures and hierarchies.

Cyrano was imagining this place in the context of his time - including scientific knowledge. He describes how the hero travels by means of rocket, hot air balloon and parachute, and in his writing he mingles physics with metaphor and satire. In some way the fantastical world of his invention has witty and satirical parallels with his own earthly 17th Century France.

Task

Write a story in which a human (male or female) travels from the earth to another celestial body in the universe. This can be the moon, or another planet, or the moon of another planet, or a comet, or asteroid. Whatever you choose - in that place there is a whole different landscape to discover.



Here are a few pointers to help you write your story...

- *Who is the main character?*
- *Why do they have to travel to this distant place in outer space?*
- *What does the main character want?*
- *Do they go alone, or is there another character with them?*
- *What is the place like - landscape, vegetation, cities?*
- *What are the inhabitants like? Are they like us, or quite alien?*
- *What problems do your characters encounter? How do they overcome them?*

Above all, enjoy writing your story, and let your imagination run wild - just like Cyrano!



History - *The Thirty Years' War*

Time Detectives

The **Thirty Years' War** was a series of wars in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. It was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history, as well as the deadliest European religious war, resulting in eight million casualties.

In the 17th century, religious beliefs and practices were of far greater significance for Christians than they are today. During that time, almost everyone felt strongly about these matters, and whether they clung to the old Catholic faith or had embraced the relatively new Protestant movement, beliefs were closely tied to people's ethnicities and loyalties, religion greatly affected people's ideas on the legitimacy of their monarchs and political masters.

Initially a war between various Protestant and Catholic, the Thirty Years' War gradually developed into a more general conflict involving most of the great powers of Europe. France and Spain were on

opposing sides, and this is the point of conflict that affects the characters in *Cyrano*.

Task

What can you find out about The Thirty Years' War?

Here are some questions to get you started...

- How did the war start?
- Who were the main political figures?
- Why did the situation escalate?
- What were the key battles, moments in the war.
- How did it come to an end?
- What was the legacy of the war?



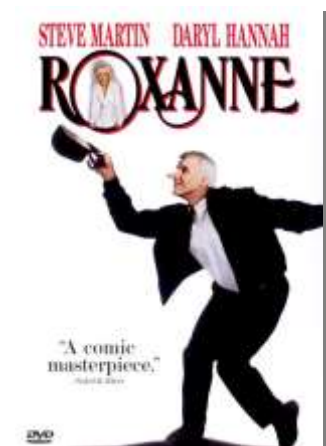
Drama - 21st Century *Cyrano*

Devising and adaptation

In his play *Cyrano de Bergerac* Edmond Rostand was actually creating historical fiction. The play is set around 250 years before it was written. In adapting for 2017, Deborah McAndrew chose to leave the play in its original time setting of 1640-54.

However, there have been many other adaptations over the past 100 years, including a film in the 1980s which brought the story into a more modern setting.

Roxane, adapted by and starring the comic actor Steve Martin, tells the story of local Fire Chief, Charlie Bales and his love for a beautiful astronomy student. Roxane herself is in love with the handsome but dim fire fighter, Chris.



The story follows much of the same narrative, though the modern setting means that the context of the war is lost, as is the antagonistic Count de Guiche.

Steve Martin also changed the ending for this feel-good romantic comedy - and it was a very successful and popular film.

For young people today, 1987 is ancient history too. So how could you update the story to fit in the modern world?

Task

Devise a modern version of Cyrano - in which the main character is very clever and brave, but insecure in love due to some aspect of their appearance.

Here are some ideas on what you might want to include...

- Where is the story set?
- What is the main job / position of your 'Cyrano'.
 - This doesn't have to be the army. It could be another group, such as a sports team; or Cyrano could be a fearless investigative journalist...
- How do 'Cyrano' and 'Christian' communicate with 'Roxane'? Is it usual now to send letters?

Remember:

- The 'Cyrano' character doesn't have to be a man, and 'Roxane' doesn't have to be a woman.
- The story doesn't have to have the same ending.



Credits and links

Production and rehearsal shots © Nobby Clark

<http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/lighting/types-of-lantern/>

Other images and sources

http://www.uktheatre.net/magazine/read/see-how-they-run-at-the-richmond-theatre_2282.html

<https://www.wikipedia.org>

Cyrano de Bergerac's VOYAGES to the Moon and the Sun - Translation by John Aldington. Illustrations by Quentin Blake.

Information and education pack written and compiled by Deborah McAndrew for Northern Broadsides © 2017

