



Winning by a Nose

By [williamstafford](#)

**CYRANO**

***New Vic Theatre, Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2017***

The New Vic has teamed up with Northern Broadsides for this new version of the classic romance by Edmond Rostand. Writer Deborah McAndrew cleverly keeps the play as a verse drama – it's not just rhyming couplets and doggerel; it's a technical achievement in itself, let alone its faithfulness to the original while having an altogether fresh feel. It's her best work yet.

Director Conrad Nelson blends naturalism with more heightened moments – the changes in pace and tone of each act are handled to perfection. We laugh, we love, we cry – in all the right places. Nelson has also composed the score, performed by the ensemble of actor-musicians, that adds to the period feel and the emotional impact of each act. Led for the most part by Michael Hugo's Ligniere, the music casts its spell as much as the story and the characters. Hugo is such an appealing presence as the minstrel – I also enjoy his ham actor Monfleury, heckled off the stage by the eponymous Cyrano.

Christian Edwards in the title role is outstanding – and I don't just mean his massive conk. He is everything you could wish for in a Cyrano de Bergerac. Swaggering, witty, charming, brave and selfless. Edwards plays it with panache, literally and figuratively. He is supported by a team of excellent players: Sharon Singh is an elegant Roxane, headstrong and independent – worthy of Cyrano's devotion. Adam Barlow is the handsome but dim Christian, the third point of the love triangle – he contrasts nicely with Cyrano's erudition and we can't help but see how sweet he is. Andy Cryer's De Guiche changes our opinion – we see there's more to him than the figure lampooned by Ligniere. Paul Barnhill's poetic pastry-purveyor Ragueneau, Perry Moore's prancing ponce Valvert, Jessica Dyas's sardonic Mrs Ragueneau, Francesca Mills's busybody Sister Martha, all help to populate the story with a wide range of characters, different facets of humanity – Rostand has respect for all walks of life

and yet he makes Cyrano seem more human than all of us. Especially touching is Andrew Whitehead's Le Bret, his heart breaking to see Cyrano's decline.

Lis Evans's design is stylish – the stage floor is beautiful – and the New Vic's costume department has pulled out all the stops for the 17<sup>th</sup> century setting. Daniella Beattie's lighting emulates the soft glow of the chandeliers with the occasional shaft of brightness – like Cyrano's wit, enlivening the gloom. Cyrano's panache tickles the funny bone before plunging into your heart. I know it's only February but already I think I might have seen the show of the year.

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