



BOOK & LYRICS BY **BRADLEY GREENWALD**
MUSIC BY **ROBERT ELHAI**
DIRECTED BY **PETER ROTHSTEIN**
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY **JASON HANSEN**
ADAPTED FROM THE PLAY *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* BY EDMOND ROSTAND

PLAY GUIDE

WORLD PREMIERE
MARCH 30 - MAY 1 | 2016
RITZ THEATER

**THEATER
LATTÉ
DA**

THEATER MUSICALLY

THEATER LATTÉ DA

THEATER MUSICALLY

Founded in 1998 by Peter Rothstein and Denise Prosek, Theater Latté Da is in its 18th year of combining music and story to illuminate the breadth of the human condition. Peter and Denise began their successful collaboration in 1994 by privately producing five original cabarets to showcase Twin Cities talent. They discovered that by placing equal emphasis on music and storytelling, they could weave tapestries of engaging, challenging and often surprising narratives that resonated with people on many levels. Theater Latté Da officially Incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1998 and to this day remains committed to a rigorous experimentation with music and story that expands the art form and speaks to a contemporary audience.

In 1998, Theater Latté Da began performing at the intimate 120-seat Loring Playhouse. By 2007, Theater Latté Da Productions were playing to sold-out houses. At this time, the company began searching for spaces with different performance configurations to meet the unique needs of its productions. Since 2007, Theater Latté Da has produced shows at the Guthrie Theater, Ordway, Pantages Theatre, Southern Theater, History Theatre, Fitzgerald Theater, the Rarig Center Stoll Thrust Theatre, The Lab Theater, and the Ritz Theater. Matching its productions to appropriate performance venues has given Theater Latté Da audiences the opportunity to experience a wide variety of spaces and neighborhoods throughout the Twin Cities.

Theater Latté Da is now emerging as a leader in the musical theater art form. Theater Latté Da boasts an impressive history of work that has received significant popular and critical acclaim. Its world premieres include *Passage of Dreams*, *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914*, *Steerage Song*, and *A Christmas Carol Petersen*. Unique approaches to classics have resulted in boldly re-imagined productions of *La Bohème*, *Cabaret* and *OLIVER!*, among others.

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C. is being produced by Theater Latté Da at the Ritz Theater.

Book and Lyrics by Bradley Greenwald

Music by Robert Elhai

Directed by Peter Rothstein

Music Direction by Jason Hansen

Adapted from the play *Cyrano De Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand

March 30 - May 1

Previews on March 30, 31, and April 1

Opening Night on April 2, 2016

FROM THE CREATORS

A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

Five years ago I wrote a libretto for the composer Libby Larsen, an adaptation of the novel *A Wrinkle in Time*. I loved doing it. I mentioned to Peter Rothstein that I craved another opportunity to exercise this new muscle. He suggested a music version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. I got an idea, and wrote an opening tableau from my translation of the first act of Rostand's play. Peter read it, and said "If you want to, you should keep going." More translating, a draft of a few more scenes, and we asked Bob Elhai to compose the music. Then came the invitation in 2013 to participate in the first season of Latté Da's *NEXT*.

What settled on the page is not *Cyrano, the Musical*. It's the story of Cyrano with music, I guess; perhaps it's slightly precious to say, the story of Cyrano and music, of Cyrano and poetry, and what music and poetry mean to Cyrano, Roxane, Christian, me, you, all of us in this room right now.

All of us in this theater today, in this moment, are hungry for sophisticated music-theater: the staff, board and supporters of Latté Da, the performing company, the design artists, Peter, Robert and Jason, you and I. We're all poets, as tellers and listeners, eager to continue a magnificent and local-legacy of story-telling. Your eagerness and generosity overwhelm me. I am both challenged and blessed by you. I humbly receive that blessing, and offer *C*. in gratitude.

Bradley Greenwald Book and Lyrics

A NOTE FROM THE ARRANGER/COMPOSER

When I was asked to create the music for a new adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a wonderful opportunity presented itself: to imagine music that was plucked from the air. To bring to fruition the music that is all around us, waiting to be distilled and given voice. A composer's dream!

Furthermore, the technical challenge of writing music that must function variously as folk music that everyone knows, improvised music on the spot, and fantasy music that plays in the character's heads was formidable, but energetically met. My hope is that rather than thinking "where is that music coming from," the viewers of our creation will simply take to heart our gentle plea: "May the melody be beautiful, and the poetry always your own."

Robert Elhai Music



SET DESIGN BY JIM SMART

NEW WORK IN PROGRESS: *C.*

A Q&A WITH PETER ROTHSTEIN

How did *C.* find its way to Theater Latté Da?

I have long been interested in adapting *Cyrano de Bergerac* into a piece of innovative music-theater. Bradley Greenwald, who is one of the Twin Cities' finest singer/actors, was working with me on the world premiere of *Steerage Song*—a musical about the American immigrant experience. He expressed interest in doing more work as a writer. I had experienced Bradley's impressive work adapting operas for Theatre de la Jeune Lune. He has the natural ability to take classical work and make it contemporary, immediate, and bold.

What sort of development have you done on the piece?

We did a two-week workshop of *C.* in our *NEXT* Festival in 2013. The audience response was most enthusiastic. We followed up with a week-long workshop in collaboration with the Guthrie/ University of Minnesota BFA program.



The show uses music in a unique way, can you tell us more about how the music is used to tell this story?

As Bradley and I began to work on the adaptation, he pointed out that there was a logical presence of music in each act of Rostand's play – street musicians, a theater band, liturgical music... One thing that Bradley has always found somewhat frustrating as a performer of musical theater and opera, is that the conductor is essentially the one driving the train—at least where the music is concerned. He wanted to create a musical where the characters single-handedly propel the story. Robert Elhai, who has a prolific career as a film composer and orchestrator, was intrigued by this idea and joined the project. With *C.*, Robert has composed music that has its own logical presence in the world (this would be referred to as source music in film). For example, in the final act a female chorus is singing evensong in the chapel adjacent to the monastic gardens where the scene is set. The offstage voices serve as the orchestra and the characters "spontaneously" sing counter-melodies to the extant music. Each act has a different orchestration determined by the organic music present with each setting.

In terms of the show's development, why is now the time for it to get on its feet and into a full production?

Because of the innovative way music works in this show, we now need to realize it in three dimensions in order to move the work forward. The arc of the story, the character development, and the thematic ideas are in place; it's now time to invite audiences into the collaboration.

How does *C.* fit in with the larger mission of Theater Latté Da?

Bold experimentation with the intersection of music and theater is part of our DNA. I have never seen a musical or opera that utilizes music in this way. And while *C.* is based on a 17th century comedy the work has been reimagined for a contemporary audience. Latté Da is celebrated for our ability to re-imagine work from the canon and to create new musical theater that challenges us to thinking deeply about the world in which we live.

Peter Rothstein interviewed by the National Alliance for Musical Theater (NAMT) | Article Source: <https://namt.org/2016/02/new-work-in-progress-c/>



A Q&A WITH BRADLEY GREENWALD

How long have you been a fan of *Cyrano*, and to such an extent that you'd take on this project?

I saw Theatre de la Jeune Lune's remount of *Cyrano de Bergerac* 15 years ago. Dominique Serrand was mesmerizing in the title role. The production was simply exquisite. I didn't feel the need to see another staging after that. I took on the subject initially as an exercise after writing the libretto for Libby Larsen's opera *A Wrinkle in Time*. I loved adapting the novel, and wanted to do more. When I asked Peter Rothstein for a subject he suggested *Cyrano*, because he didn't feel any of the music adaptations of the play had enjoyed any success. When I talked through my take on how I saw music intertwined

with the story, he encouraged me to continue. After a year, the exercise turned into a full script for the first season of Latté Da's *NEXT* series in 2013.

Were you familiar with the Anthony Burgess musical that had its start at the Guthrie or the 1992 "Cyrano: The Musical?"

I read the Brian Hooker and Anthony Burgess English adaptations of the play in my initial research. They are beautiful. But of course, if I was to write my own adaptation I couldn't use any pre-existing script. So I translated the Rostand play myself using my limited knowledge of French, an on-line translation engine, and the glossaries in some old-fashioned books that explained idiom and archaic phrases in Rostand's 17th-century-sounding language. I did listen to a couple tracks of the Guthrie musical and a few songs from other musicals of the play. They simply reinforced my commitment to how I wanted music to work in this story.

What do you bring new to a classic story? What was your own personal statement of intent?

The fundamental story itself is timeless and stands on its own. What struck me in Rostand's play was Cyrano's love of language and music and how vital both are to his spiritual and physical existence; as important as food, water and shelter. So I chose poetry and music as the fuel for the plot, over any stylized 17th-century settings or plot machinations. What bowled me over in the Rostand play, reading direct word-for-word translations—instead of the glittering, giddy, sublimely poetic variations of Burgess and Hooker—was the profound love and humanity in these characters. The content of translated adaptations, by nature, must go off on whimsical tangents to satisfy meter and rhyme. I decided I would not write in verse, except when the characters needed to speak in verse. I wanted Rostand's themes of love and language and the ineffable to speak without any camouflaging veneer of a translator's own poetic athleticism.

Talk a little about the musical style. The songs seem to be integrated with a light musical instrumentation - a naturalistic approach. I imagine there are some more conventional numbers, but what was your vision with Robert Elhai?

I decided against writing a script that took place in any prescribed period, 17th-century or 21st-century Paris or Minneapolis or Sarajevo. That parameter I would leave to the director and designing artists to define according to their own imaginations. So the language has anachronisms, as well as the music: torch song, aria, parlor music, jazz, any convention that suited the moment in the story. The presence of music in my adaptation is active and realistic: when there's music in the scene, all the characters hear it. There's no bursting into song with an invisible orchestra. The characters sing to music that is part of the scene and with instrumentalists who are characters. They improvise to it, sing along with it, use its presence to express themselves. Robert Elhai explained my own idea to me with the language of his other profession, film score orchestrator: in a movie the audience hears "underscoring"—music no one in the movie can hear—but it informs the audience emotionally. What I wanted to do was utilize "source music", a film term for music the characters actually hear (the band playing in the background when the scene is set in a club, or the music coming from the radio when a character is washing the dishes). That's how music works in our telling. It always sounds horribly dry explaining it in theory but in rehearsal, its effect is magical.

How has it gone balancing the two big jobs you are carrying in this production - lead role and writer?

I was wary of playing Cyrano while also serving as writer. Peter Rothstein talked me into it. This is one of the biggest challenges of my career. A 27-year career—I'm exhausted to admit—that has been defined by one terrifying challenge after another. I will say, I would not have the strength or wit to answer these questions if it weren't for everyone involved. Robert Elhai, Peter, Jason Hansen (music director), Elissa Adams (dramaturg), each member of the cast, and all the design artists have invested every fiber of their talent and enthusiasm into this story. I'm humbled by their commitment, in awe of their artistry; and I draw strength from that.

Why has Cyrano endured in so many forms for so many centuries? What things does the story do so well?

Love, insecurity, self-doubt, sabotaged happiness, love, subterfuge, poetry, and love again. In any language, in any telling, that's Rostand's story. It's timeless and it's universal. And the balcony scene is pure genius.



C. REHEARSALS | PHOTO BY EMILEE ELOFSON

A ROMANTIC MELODRAMA

BY JERRY L. CRAWFORD

Labeled in various ways, *Cyrano de Bergerac* has been called "heroic comedy" (by its author, no less), "romantic comedy," and "tragicomedy," among others. Yet, perhaps it is best to refer to it as a "romantic melodrama." That it is romantic is indisputable. Also, theatre at its most truly theatrical is melodrama—elevated, intensified reality stretching into a world of fancy, improbability, and imagination.

The play also personifies a lyric expression and exotic grandeur. It is a magic carpet to a world in which everyone delights in escaping. At its opening, December 28, 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac* caused a furor of excitement not seen since 1830 when Victor Hugo's romantic *Hernani* stirred major controversy. Yet, Rostand and his epic play did not stir up controversy; rather, audiences uniformly cheered Cyrano as a man who embodied the very essence of French nationalism, along with his own individualism. Rostand relied on a plot of unrequited love and the language of romantic lyricism to guide his audiences through one adventure after another, culminating in a classic scene in which idealism triumphs and the supremacy of love is assured forever. Yet, while Cyrano was universally popular and was translated at once into many languages, an unusual fact must be kept in mind: the play was in many ways anachronistic, existing out of its given time.

Cyrano de Bergerac was presented to the world in an age conditioned to realism and naturalism. Regardless, there was no dissenting voice to its success. The popularity of this play has never dimmed. Why? Perhaps because there is always a place in our imaginations and hearts for romance, poetry, moonlight, and dashing behavior. Further, the genius of Rostand rested in his ability to balance intellect and emotion, unite poetry and reality, and weld idealism with rationalism without destroying a synthesized theatre experience. His key device in reconciling these seeming opposites was to employ a serious form, but to offset it through self-criticism and laughter on the part of the central figure. Rostand's finest characters always have a sense



of humor. Cyrano, for instance, possesses far more than his great nose; he possesses the unusual capacity to recognize what is immutable in the human experience and simultaneously smile.

Regardless, Cyrano's outlook is not superficial because all his reactions are thoroughly intellectualized—they may be launched from his heart, but they reach us from his marvellous mind. The content and structure of the play are much the same.

Detractors have long accused Rostand of imitating Hugo, of distorting facts (indeed, *Cyrano* is a kind of history play), of exaggerating emotions, of indulging in verbal pyrotechnics, and of being too personal and limited in style and scope. In other words, they accuse Rostand of being a romantic. His supporters, on the other hand, applaud his verbal virtuosity, lyrical dialogue, elevating idealism, wit, grace, gentle satire, and ability to manage feats of enviable theatricality. In other words, they champion him for being a romantic. That he is somewhat limited in comparison to, say, a Shakespeare must be conceded; yet, Rostand has not been excelled in the particular dramatic style that made him famous.

It may be that Edmond Rostand was a minor poet with one major work; yet, despite his failures and shortcomings, Rostand will live on because he has given to the theatre its first, quality romantic melodrama. Rostand has also given to a tedious, often drab world "the gesture of a Cyrano." *Cyrano de Bergerac*: an anachronism that is always in vogue, always in line with our hearts. With tears in our eyes, but a smile on our lips, we bow to Cyrano's grand "white plume."

Taken from the study guide for the Utah Shakespeare Festival's production of *Cyrano De Bergerac* in 1992 (<http://www.bard.org/study-guides/a-romantic-melodrama>)



FROM THEATER LATTÉ DA'S PRODUCTION OF *C.*
PHOTO BY DAN NORMAN

SAVINIEN DE CYRANO

THE STORY OF THE REAL-LIFE CYRANO DE BERGERAC

THE LIFE OF SAVINIEN DE CYRANO

Savinien de Cyrano, better known as Cyrano de Bergerac, was born on March 6, 1619 in Paris, Rue des Deux Portes, later renamed Rue Dussoubs. Son of Abel de Cyrano, a lawyer, and Esperance Bellenger. He died on July 28, 1655, at the age of thirty-six in Sannois.

Cyrano's family were originally Sardinian immigrants. The family name Cyrano was a French version of the Italian surname Cirano. Cyrano's first name was Savinien Jafter his paternal grandfather, who had begun life as a Sardinian fishmonger. Cyrano worked hard to shake off his humble origins and transform himself from Savinien de Cyrano into Cyrano de Bergerac, descendent of a great family of Gascon noblemen. Cyrano manipulated this image vigorously, at different times in his lifetime he signed his signature in each of the following ways: Alexandre de Cyrano Bergerac, Hercule de Bergerac, de Bergerac, de Bergerac Cyrano and De Cyrano de Bergerac. Besides that he was a paradoxical figure: in his lifetime the real Cyrano was much loved and much hated. As a result opposing accounts of the man struggle for dominance, no single version is strictly factual or entirely objective. But most of all the 'real' Cyrano suffered from the fictional Cyrano de Bergerac. One major source hereof is Theophile Gautier's famous *Les Grotesques* (1844) which contained ten pseudo-biographical sketches of romantic personalities in French literature chiefly of the 17th century, among them Cyrano de Bergerac. This 'biography' is filled with errors and yet obviously one of Edmond Rostand's chief sources, Rostand being the playwright who brought Cyrano to life in 1897 in his play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, after which the real Cyrano moved almost completely out of sight.

These circumstances make it rather difficult to reconstruct Cyrano's real life. Also because hard evidence about the life of the real Cyrano is scarce.



A portrait of Cyrano de Bergerac, drawn and engraved by an artist who signed with a monogram, after a painting by Zacharie Heince.

One of the major source is the short biography by Cyrano's friend Henry Le Bret in his introduction to the publication of *The Voyage to the Moon* in 1657, two years after Cyrano's death. Being his friend it is no discredit to Le Bret that he painted a favorable picture of Cyrano: "he always passed for a man of singular rare wit." But it is not difficult to find other sources that paint a different picture, that of a 'madmen' (*Voltaire!*), an 'atheist' and more.

In 1622, the family moved out to the manor house on the estate of Mauvieres near Chevreuse, to the south-west of Paris on the road to Chartres. The name Bergerac had attached to the lands in the late fourteenth century when they were awarded as a gift from King Charles V to Ramond de la Riviere de la Martigne for his bravery in regaining that city from the invading English. La Riviere was originally from Bergerac and so renamed the meadows to the west of this land in honor of his home town and of his achievement, so that the seigneure became known as de Mauvieres et de Bergerac. Cyrano later adopted this name 'de Bergerac', and

to this day, despite his well-documented Parisian immigrant roots, the Gascon town of Bergerac in the south-west of France proudly proclaims Cyrano as its most famous native son. However, there is no record of Cyrano ever been to Bergerac.

Cyrano was sent away at the age of seven from home to be taught alongside other boys his age by the local country curate, a private school where he met his lifelong friend Henry le Bret. Cyrano complained repeatedly to his father about the tutor and was taken away from the parson and sent to the College de Beauvais in Paris. Its head-master, Jean Grangier, became the model for the hero in Cyrano's play *Le Pedant Joue* (*The Pedant Outwitted*; published 1654). In 1637 he left Beauvais and turned to a life of drinking, gambling and dueling. The next fact of life is perhaps the best-known fact of his career: Cyrano served as a member of the noble corps of cadets under the aristocratic commander Carbon de Cateljaloux from 1638 to 1640. It was at the point of his enrollment with Casteljaloux's men that Cyrano introduced the element of ambiguity about his origins that was to prove so enduring. Firstly, by his use of the name Cyrano de Bergerac, rather than the more accurate Savinien de Cyrano, and secondly, by his affiliation to an almost exclusively Gascon regiment.

When joining the corps of cadets Cyrano was already a brilliant swordsman and helped many friends in duels, as second. In those days men fought for the merest trifles, not so much for honor as for the love of fighting, of prestige and notoriety. Duels were at the time the most rapid means of becoming known. The defining moment in Cyrano's 'swordsman' career was his 'duel with a hundred man' as it became known, at the Porte de Nesle somewhere around 1642. There is no surviving documentary evidence recording the precise details of Cyrano's single-handed battle against a gang of hired thugs. But at the time the story blazed through the taverns and back streets of seventeenth-century Paris.

Once his period of training with the cadets in Paris was complete, Cyrano left for Mouzon and the front line of the war with Germany in 1639. He was shot in the chest but he survived. Cyrano's second military campaign saw him taking part in the siege of Arras in 1640. The recapture of Arras from the occupying Spanish forces was of critical importance for the king due to France's deepening involvement in the power struggles of the Thirty Years War. He was hit with a sword in the neck at the battle of Arras, from which wound he never fully recovered. He returned home and left the army.



An illustration of The Battle of Arras, 1640



After leaving the army Cyrano enrolled himself as a student at the College de Lisieux in late 1640 or early 1641. He had never completed his original degree at the College de Beauvais and he did not last long at this new institution either. He further resumed his studies while working under the materialist philosopher and scientist Pierre Gassendi, where he probably met other intellectuals like Moliere and Chapelle. At the same time he also entered into two contracts, with Pierre Moussard for regular fencing lessons, and a similar contract with David Dupron for dancing lessons.

There is very little known of the last ten years of Cyrano's life. He seems to have settled quietly in Paris and lived a fairly simple life. In August 1650, he was staying with Monsieur Barat in the main street of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. During the winter of 1651, he was in a different parish, Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, in the inauspiciously named Cemetery Street. The spring of 1653 found him still in the same parish, but in a different street, the rather more appealing sounding Fountain Street. He had a private income from his family, possibly the inheritance of his father who died in January 1648, that was not large enough to allow him any great extravagances, but enough money to live off and so he was able to devote all his time to studying the subjects that interested him. He does not seem to have actively pursued commercial publication at this stage and so he also had total freedom to write about whatever he chose. Having abandoned his military career for the intellectual life, Cyrano seems to have quickly discovered that his boundless imagination and dark wit were best suited to satire.

The period up to Cyrano's death is filled with unclear events. There is some evidence that Cyrano was imprisoned in a prison or asylum during a short period of time, based on the 'madness' of his ideas and writing. Henry Le Bret, friend and first biographer, accused Cyrano's brother, Abel, for this but there is no hard evidence. Friends vowed for Cyrano and got him out. At the beginning of *Voyage to the Sun* there are clear references to this period with passages of the imprisonment and escape of the protagonist. Later Cyrano was abandoned from the house of his patron, d'Arpajon. Cyrano's disgrace and expulsion from the house of d'Arpajon seems to have been the direct result of a dramatic incident that took place in early 1654, right at the point when his works had finally made it into print. Until the discovery of the uncensored version of Le Bret's biography, d'Arpajon's decision to kick the dying Cyrano out of his house was difficult to account for. According to some sources, Cyrano had suffered a blow to the head, because a piece of plank dropped on his head, that had left him seriously ill, and it was in this condition that he was suddenly sent away from the duke's household in disgrace. There is also reference to a 'disease' (probably venereal; there goes your romantic hero ...) as the cause of death. In Le Bret's biography he describes Cyrano's injury as a gunshot wound as a result of an ambush by ten men who were sent to surround and stop the carriage Cyrano was traveling in, one of them took the opportunity to fire the fatal bullet at close range - this is clearly testament to the great swordsman's fearsome reputation. The moment when the attack on the carriage happened it must have become unpleasantly clear to d'Arpajon that supporting Cyrano was a risky undertaking with consequences far beyond those of literary scandal. Who ordered the attack will probably never be known, although Cyrano had enough enemies, especially religious (Jesuits).

In June 1654 Cyrano was received into the house of M. Des Bois Clairs, with whom he remained for fourteen months until a few days before his death. He then moved to a house at Sannois, a small village just outside Paris on the fringes his beloved valley of Chevreuse, belonging to this cousin Pierre de Cyrano. Cyrano breathed his last on July 28, 1655, at the age of thirty-six. He was buried at the local church.

THE WRITINGS OF CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Cyrano de Bergerac wrote letters, plays and poetry and his stylistic range covered satire, tragedy and comedy. His writing career encompassed a range of styles and over a period of a decade he was to produce two plays (a tragedy in verse and a comedy in prose), some verse (of which the surviving examples are mainly those written in praise of his writer friends and published in their works), various letters and a two-volume science fiction novel, *The States and Empires of the Moon and Sun*.

Cyrano chose to sign his first published work, a short introductory piece for his friend Charles Coyseau d'Assoucy's poetic work *The Judgement of Paris* (1646-47), of which it is believed that around 1640 he became the lover, until 1653 when they became engaged in a bitter rivalry. Cyrano did not sign with his family name but with a pen name that he had chosen for himself for its combination of a Gascon surname and a truly heroic forename: 'Hercule de Bergerac'. Although this was Cyrano's first printed work it is extremely unlikely that it was his first composition. By 1648 he had already begun to establish a reputation for himself due to the circulation of his works in manuscript form.

Cyrano's first success as a professional writer was a comedy entitled *Le Pedant Joue* (*The Pedant Outwitted*). It was written in 1645 but it is unclear whether this play was ever performed during Cyrano's lifetime, and was only published in 1654. Moliere plagiarized this play in his *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1671). In 1646/47 Cyrano began work on a classical tragedy in five acts. He entitled the play *La Mort d'Agrippine* (*The Death of Agrippina*) and in it he explored ideas about power and corruption and expressed ideas that were a direct challenge to the Catholic hegemony. It was first published in 1654, played in 1653 and 1654 and revived for one performance on November 10, 1872.

It was in the period leading up to his untimely death that Cyrano's literary career began to take off. In 1653, he had finally accepted the assistance of a noble patron, the Due d'Arpajon, and was preparing his work for print publication. Two volumes duly went before the censor for official approval in late 1653, and in early 1654 Cyrano's *Oeuvres Diverses*



Cyrano's comedic work, *Le Pedant Joue*

(*Diverse Works*) were published in two quartos by the bookseller Charles de Seroy. They contained, *The Death of Agrippina*, *The Pedant Outwitted* and *The Letters*, and a specially commissioned portrait engraving of the author by his friend Zachary Heince. *The Death of Agrippina* was a great success thanks to rumors about its scandalous atheistic content lending it sinful notoriety.

His most enduring and influential works are his fictional accounts of fantastical *Voyages to the Moon and the Sun: The States and Empires of the Moon and Sun*, also known as *Voyage to the Moon* and *The States and Empires of the Sun*. The latter being unfinished at his death. Both were published posthumously, in 1657 and 1662 respectively. The third volume in this 'series', a voyage to the stars, has been lost. This work served as an important inspiration to other illustrious writers: Moliere, Voltaire, Jonathan Swift, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells all owe debt to Cyrano. Although Cyrano's literary heritage has been obscured for a long time.

Cyrano's work was popular, there were at least twelve reprints of the complete works, of which the first appeared in 1676, and numerous editions of individual works, but there are very few surviving copies. No edition of his work appeared in Paris between 1699 and 1855, and only making a comeback in the second half of the 19th century culminating in the play by Rostand. There is some circumstantial evidence that a vendetta was pursued against Cyrano, also after his death, to destroy his work.

Also all editions up to the end of the 19th century were censored: most of the passages omitted in the printed editions are philosophical or satirical arguments of sarcasms directed against the Church and religion and were omitted in the 17th century for obvious reasons.

In 1894, the academic Pierre Brun had already published a complete edition of the works of Cyrano de Bergerac, accompanied by an account of his life. Brun's biography had been painstakingly pieced together from various sources that he had managed to unearth from the obscurity of parish records and the dark depths of the Bibliotheque Nationale. The aim of Brun's six years of dedicated research was to establish a clear, factual picture of the real Cyrano, unclouded by the exaggerations and rumor that his extraordinary career had always attracted. Ironically, Brun's new edition of Cyrano's life and works may very well have been a key element in drawing the playwright Rostand's attention to the subject. Sadly, for the unassuming academic, his work was quickly overshadowed by Rostand's popular success.

It was not until 1997, when Jacques Prevot published an edition of the *Complete Works* based on precious manuscript sources, that Cyrano's fractured texts were finally fully reconstituted, uncensored and entire.

THE FICTIONAL CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Today, the name Cyrano de Bergerac is known to most of us as that of a fictional character with a enormous nose, the hero of a five-act tragicomedy in verse by Edmond Rostand. The play *Cyrano de Bergerac* premiered in Paris on December 28, 1897 and was an immediate success. The final ovation lasted over an hour and after the first forty curtain calls the stage manager gave in and simply left the curtain raised. Partly due to the leading man: Benoit-Constant Coquelin, who would play the title role over four hundred times in the course of the initial fourteen-month-long sell-out run of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Coquelin also played the roll in London and in the United States and was the first actor to play Cyrano on film.



Jean-Benoit Constant Coquelin was the first stage Cyrano. Rostand's play was dedicated to him.

The play *Cyrano de Bergerac* tells the tale of a fearless, ferocious Cyrano that falls madly in love with his beautiful cousin Roxane. To come close to her, he allows Baron Christian de Neuville to speak for him. Since Christian is so entranced by Roxane's beauty and wit he cannot find the courage to speak to her himself and is happy to accept Cyrano's offer to write his love letters for him, and even allows Cyrano to make a moving speech on his behalf from the shadows beneath Roxane's balcony, pleading for a kiss. Roxane marries Baron Christian de Neuville, who is sent to Arras, a besieged city. Cyrano continues to write love letters of which Christian is not aware. Roxane visits Christian at the battlefield and reassures him of her love, referring to the letters she received from the battlefield. Christian is killed by enemy fire before he can force Cyrano to admit the deception and ask Roxane to choose between them. Fourteen years later, a wounded and dying Cyrano visits Roxane in the convent, she has shut herself away from to mourn the loss of her beloved husband. He finally admits to Roxane that he was the one who wrote the letters.

Rostand won the prestigious *Croix de la Legion d'honneur* with his play. With the story of *Cyrano de Bergerac* Rostand followed in the success of Alexandre Dumas' novel on the three musketeers in the 1840's. Rostand didn't create the legend of Cyrano he merely added new fuel to a fire that had already been burning fitfully for over two hundred and fifty years. Everything picturesque which fancy and rumor had attached to the name of Cyrano during the centuries was taken up by Rostand and exaggerated and idealized almost to infinity. Strangely, Rostand apparently shared the illusion with many that his character was like the 'real' Cyrano. A french savant, M. Emile Mange, wrote a pamphlet pointing out some of Rostand's worst errors, and Rostand replied with a letter, claiming that his play was historically correct. Also Pierre Brun's academic study of *Cyrano de Bergerac* was known to Rostand.

This phenomenal success of Rostand's fictionalized version of Cyrano's life has been so overwhelming that today it is for many a surprise to learn that *Cyrano de Bergerac* really existed. Rostand's play further propagated that the great swordsman was a Gascon nobleman from the Perigord region in the south-west of France, which he wasn't (see above). Furthermore he gave the character a nose that seems hard to ignore. The historical Cyrano does not seem to have been plagued by any such morbid dissatisfaction with his own appearance. A portrait painted a year for his death reveals that the real Cyrano was not hideous and that, although he did have a fairly long beaky nose, he definitely didn't have a complex about it. It was Cyrano himself that is the originator of some of the jokes that are projected on the real Cyrano. In one of his plays we can read:

"As for his nose, well it's just asking for us to have a dig. This wonderful nose arrives everywhere a quarter of an hour before its master; ten reasonably fat cobblers could take shelter from the rain underneath it to do their work."



Bradley Greenwald as Cyrano de Bergerac in Theater Latté Da's production of *C.*

THE RETELLING OF CYRANO

A SELECT COMPILATION OF CYRANO'S MANY FORMS

1900 A first film version of the story appeared in 1900 with Jean-Benoit Constant Coquelin in the leading role performing the duel scene from *Cyrano de Bergerac* with sound recording on phonograph cylinder.

1923 A film by Augusto Genina starring Pierre Magnier and Linda Moglie.

1936 Franco Alfano composed his opera, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, to a libretto based on the play.

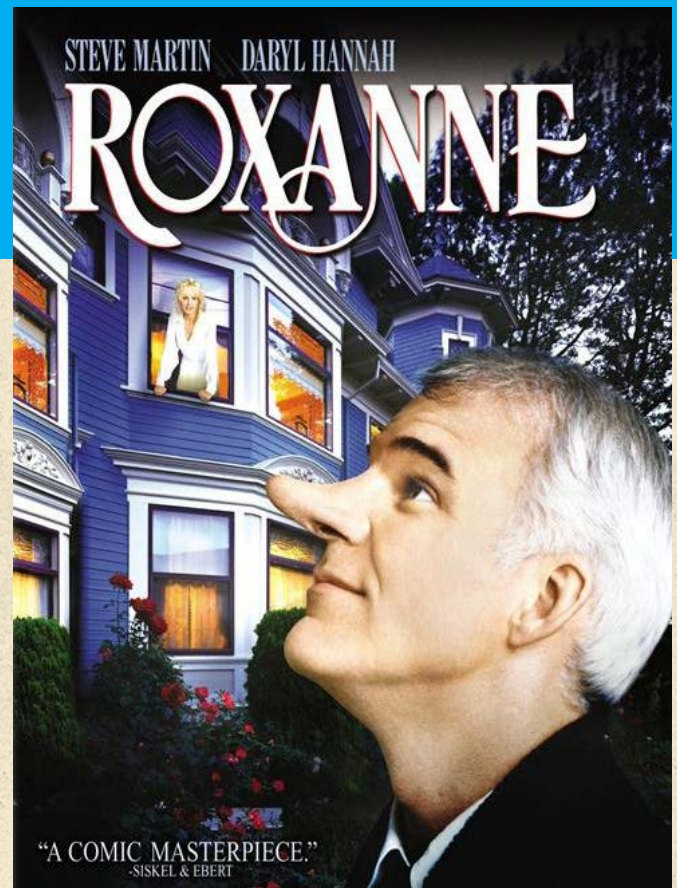
1950 A film version in English with Jose Ferrer in the title role, a performance for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor. He reprised his role in the 1960 French film *Cyrano et d'Artagnan*, directed by Abel Gance, opposite Jean-Pierre Cassel as D'Artagnan.

1959 A Japanese film version appeared entitled *Aru kengo no shogai*, released in the English-speaking world as *Samurai Saga*, which was directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starred Tashiro Mifune.

1973 A musical adaptation by Anthony Burgess, called *Cyrano* and starring Christopher Plummer (who won a Tony Award for his performance), appeared in Boston and then on Broadway.

1987 The romantic comedy *Roxanne* starring Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah, which is a modern retelling of the verse with Steve Martin as a chief firemen with a large nose.

1990 A french film version with Gerard Depardieu in the leading role, written in rhymed couplets by Anthony Burgess and directed by Jean Paul Rappeneau.



1992 *Cyrano: The Musical* was a musical based on Edmond Rostand's play, produced by Joop van den Ende, starring Bill van Dijk which premiered in 1992 at the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam. It also ran for 137 performances at Broadway in 1993-1994.

1997 There is also a 'feministic' rewrite of the story in the novel *Attentat* by Amelie Nothomb.

2007 David Bintley, Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, created a ballet of the story in 2007.

2007 Geraldine McCaughrean rewrote the play as a novel entitled *Cyrano*, which was longlisted for the Carnegie Award in 2007.

2008 David DiChiera rewrote the play as another opera entitled *Cyrano*, which was produced first by Michigan Opera Theater and then by the Opera Company of Philadelphia in February 2008.

The story of the real-life Cyrano de Bergerac and the Retellings of Cyrano taken from History of the Future: Savinien de Cyrano.
http://www.crossmedialab.nl/files/Savinien_de_Bergerac.pdf

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: EDMOND ROSTAND

Edmond Rostand was born in Marseilles, France, on April 1, 1868 to wealthy parents. He went to Paris to study law and was admitted to the bar, but became more interested in writing poetry than in the legal profession. In 1890 he published a volume of lyric verse that received a few favorable reviews. The same year, Rostand, then twenty-two, married Rosemonde Gérard, a nineteen-year-old poet of later distinction and the granddaughter of a marshal of France under Napoleon. Such personal associations with national glory, as well as Rostand's upbringing in southern France, perhaps accentuated a natural penchant for romance and grandiloquence. He published other poetry and soon became increasingly attracted to the theatre, to which he was to devote most of his future efforts.

His first play actually to reach the boards was *The Romancers* (*Les Romanesques*, 1894), a charming, if trivial, satire on romance that was to achieve enormous success in New York over half a century later as *The Fantasticks*. Though it ridicules excessive romantic attitudes, the play itself is in sharp contrast to the drab naturalism of contemporary drama, and it presages the very mixture of imaginative romanticism, declamation, wit, and wistfulness that was to characterize Rostand's major works.

Sarah Bernhardt starred three years later in Rostand's *The Woman of Samaria* (*La Samaritaine*, 1897). Here the triumph of ideal over physical love is dramatized in a biblical spectacle with a very human Jesus (speaking like Rostand himself) inspiring a new Magdalen to carry his message, lead the mob to Jacob's Well where Jesus waits, and join in the Lord's Prayer.

It was his next work, however, that elevated Rostand into the ranks of great French playwrights. *Cyrano de Bergerac* brought him immediate and worldwide fame. Not yet thirty, he was lionized at home. In 1900, Rostand was appointed officer of the Legion of Honor, and three years later he became the youngest member ever elected to the French Academy.



EDMOND ROSTAND

Rostand wrote his leading parts for great French actors such as Coquelin and Bernhardt. In fact, it was Bernhardt who played Napoleon's weak-willed son in Rostand's next work, *The Eaglet* (*L'Aiglon*, 1900). While this play did not create quite the furor of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, it enjoyed international success and consolidated Rostand's reputation.

Ill health at this time caused Rostand to leave his admirers in Paris and take his family into retirement to a luxurious villa in Cambo, in the southern countryside at the foot of the Pyrenees. He spent many years working on an allegorical animal drama that eventually became *Chanticleer*. The play was eagerly anticipated by a public that had not had a new Rostand drama for a decade. But, though it has been praised by some critics as his most profound work, it never enjoyed the popularity of the preceding plays.

In his last years, Rostand produced a verse pantomime, worked on a never-completed Faust, and almost finished his dramatization of another legendary character in *The Last Night of Don Juan* (*La Dernière Nuit de Don Juan*, 1921), which was published posthumously. Rostand died in Paris on December 2, 1918.

LARGER THAN LIFE: A LOOK AT THE CHARACTER OF CYRANO DE BERGERAC

BY DREW LICHENBERG ASSOCIATE DRAMATURG, BALTIMORE CENTERSTAGE

At first glance, the character of Cyrano de Bergerac appears to be a tangle of opposites, a conjunction of contradictions. Made famous by Edmond Rostand's enormously popular 1897 play, *Cyrano* has become one of the iconic roles of the theater. It would be easy to see him as a figure of pure theatrical exigency, an entirely aesthetic being, eternally larger than life and dreamed up by Rostand to serve the needs of Romantic pageantry.

But Cyrano was also quite real. Rostand based his character on an actual historical person, named Hercules-Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, who lived from 1619 to 1655. The real Cyrano was classmates with the comedian Molière in study groups led by Pierre Gassendi—a philosopher, physicist, and contemporary of logician René Descartes. Perhaps it surprises us that the real Cyrano composed plays (which Molière promptly plagiarized); wrote fantasies equal parts physics and metaphysics (*The Comical History of the States and Empire of the Moon and the Sun*); and yet also fought with the fierce Gascon companies in bloody battles like the Siege of Arras. It should certainly surprise us that this remarkable figure would lie fallow in the obscure folds of history until resurrected by Rostand in the late 19th Century.

In both the theater of history and the history of theater, Cyrano's temperament shifts between what can look to us like irreconcilable extremes: fiercely independent, accepting no patron, yet a loyal defender of friend and country; quick-witted, silver-tongued, fearless in battles both intellectual and physical, yet fearful when it comes to the simple act of professing love. Real or fictional, he is a multitude of selves, overlapping and folding ever inward—a romantic dreamer and a man of action, an amateur scientist and an inveterate fabulist, a poetic fighter, a fiercely truthful exaggerator, a heroic loser, all in one ineffable bundle. Even Cyrano's physical appearance speaks to an irresolvable duality: instantly identifiable



by his quintessentially Gallic proboscis, his grotesque external features belie a mild inner profile. After all, who can't relate to feeling, and failing to conquer, the pains of unrequited love?

Yet all of these seeming contradictions can also be seen as part of a larger mosaic that unifies them. A sense of context reveals the extent to which Cyrano entered history and fiction as a profoundly synthetic figure, one for whom the characteristics that we see as opposites in fact represented the requisite touchstones of a balanced temper. For Cyrano reflects the French beau ideal of the Renaissance Man, a figure in which disparate cultural and historical associations unite to form a kind of national hero. As a national icon, Cyrano's Frenchness is determined by the character's capacity to accommodate opposites, to demonstrate well-roundedness. In this sense, he is utterly unlike the myths we Americans tend to make from our history: we celebrate the stoic, the taciturn, the homespun; we revere the Lincolns, the Washingtons, the Jeffersons, the Daniel Boones, Davy Crocketts, Harriet Tubmans, and Johnny Appleseeds. And we give the type fictional life through the likes of Gary Cooper and Henry Fonda and Clint Eastwood. We conveniently forget that many of these folks were slave-owning, multilingual, propertied elitists; or proudly ethnocentric eccentrics with a penchant for violence; or otherwise complex

and contradictory individuals. We'd rather recall Ben Franklin the quipping backyard inventor of Poor Richard's Almanac than the sophisticated, ethically relativist internationalist of our first Paris embassy—just the side the French fell for, before we gave them Jerry Lewis.

What is easy to forget, though, is that the combination of qualities we perceive in Cyrano as being paradoxically contradictory were for centuries considered perfectly consistent aspects of a cohesive character. This held true more widely, and for longer, than we might credit. The combination emerged from Medieval ideals of the true knight—the *preux chevalier*, manly yet gentle. It was codified in Renaissance Italy as the ideal courtier, also popping up in the gallant early-modern person of Englishman Walter Raleigh or tales of the German Baron Munchhausen. The archetype celebrated a combination of dashing physical action, intellectual introspection, emotional expressivity, verbal acuity, immense pride, and infinite humility—all carried off with an apparent lack of effort dubbed *sprezzatura*. Or *panache*, a word contributed to the English language by way of Edmond Rostand's 1897 play.

The original Cyrano, reimagined for the stage at a moment when France longed to revisit ancient glory and celebrate what it meant to be French, lived during the moment in which France emerged as the dominant political, intellectual, and military force of Europe. A soldier in the elite French Guard and cultivated apostle of the philosophes and libertins, Cyrano nevertheless puts individual capacity ahead of inherited title, embracing a meritocratic way of life. Despite his aristocratic roots, he makes common cause with the common man and steadfastly refuses to take noble patronage. He is the democrat's aristocrat, the ordinary man's exemplary man.

In this respect, Cyrano has a few peers in the dramatic canon—Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* for Norway, the Spaniard *El Cid*, and Shakespeare's echt-English *Henry V* are some examples: national heroes of the drama who share common characteristics. They form the center of epic narratives, have a foot in history and the other in fable, and their temperaments are multifaceted in similar ways, both (ostensibly) exemplary of national character and somehow inclusive of similarly

contradictory aspects. The fact that the theatrical Cyrano was drawn so closely from a real-life source only adds to the character's fascination. He is both myth and history, ethnography and alchemy, all at once.

But perhaps even this Cyrano becomes just another mirage. After all, we watch his story at multiple levels of remove, three worlds away from the real McCoy. To Rostand—writing for a post-Romantic boulevard theater at the end of the 19th Century—the era of musketeers, love poems, and duels represented a halcyon era. France in the late 1890s was a very different place from France circa 1640. The theater was dominated by dour “social problem plays” that diagnosed the diseases of society. The disastrous Franco-Prussian war served as the capstone to a century of political and military decline. Worst, the infamous Dreyfus Affair had torn the country apart, foreshadowing yet-more-turbulent 20th Century struggles over ethnic and religious minorities. Rostand, in fact, had the same relation to Cyrano and his age, a time 250 years in the past, as we do to our own semi-legendary Founding Fathers and Revolutionary Era. Little surprise, then, that he turned to this subject for solace. Now, with Jo Roets' adaptation, we encounter a 21st-century Cyrano, distilled and very much acknowledged, even celebrated, as a theatrical myth. The episodic narrative remains in outline, as does the most famous nose in theater history, but with a renewed focus on the play's resonant themes and eternal triangle of character dynamics, with Cyrano at the apex. After all this time, the fascination remains. In spite of his specific deformity and his extravagant irregularity, Cyrano speaks for (and to) all of us.

<https://www.centerstage.org/cyrano/DigitalDramaturgy/LargerThanLife.aspx>

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David Darrow and Bradley Greenwald in Theater Latté Da's production of *C.*