

CYRANO

DE BERGERAC



UPSTAGE

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UPSTAGE *Callboard*

A Note from the Artistic Director Todd Haimes

This will not be a period piece with presentational speechifying in pretty costumes. These characters will be played as real people, in real clothes, with three-dimensional relationships. Soldiers of the 17th century were not elegant gentlemen with clean feathers in their hats. They were grimy, masculine, hungry men, aggressive in attitude (and probably quite gnarly in odor). That's the world that you'll be seeing in this *Cyrano*, one in which food and dirt are thrown about in equal measure, and every disagreement has the potential to become a bloody fight at a moment's notice. Yes, there will be beautiful, witty language, and there will be love and romance, but these elements will shine even more brightly against a backdrop that reeks of realism.

Act I- Paris, The Hotel de Bourgogne

Two men are in love with the beautiful Roxane: the handsome cadet, Christian, and Cyrano, the clever poet and short-tempered duelist who is endowed with a large, bulbous nose. Cyrano challenges two men to duels, demonstrating his expert fighting style while simultaneously thrashing them with his poetic barbs.

Act II- Paris, The Port de Nesle

Cyrano meets with Roxane, who confesses her love not for Cyrano but for Christian. Knowing how the fierce fighters of the Gascon regiment are less than kind to new cadets, Roxane begs Cyrano to protect Christian. Roxane, however, has become the object of affection of the Comte de Guiche, who intends to marry her to the loathsome Valvert. Cyrano rejects de Guiche's offer of patronage, which angers the Comte. Christian joins the gang of soldiers and repeatedly insults Cyrano's nose. Despite Cyrano's tendency to duel those that spite his face, he keeps his promise to Roxane and also secretly agrees to help Christian woo her by writing the words for Christian to use to capture her heart.

Act III- Marais, Paris; Roxane's home

Roxane has fallen in love with Christian. De Guiche arrives and tells Roxane that he is off to war and has chosen to bring the Gascon regiment as punishment to Cyrano for rejecting his patronage. Fearing that Christian will surely die, Roxane convinces de Guiche that it would be a far better punishment to prevent Cyrano from entering the fray, and thus the Gascon regiment and Christian are spared. Christian rejects Cyrano's help and clumsily pursues Roxane. When his own words fail, Christian is prompted on what to say by Cyrano. The plan fails and Cyrano is forced to step in and mimic Christian. A letter arrives from de Guiche begging Roxane to slip away and meet him. Roxane tricks the friar that delivered the letter into marrying her to Christian on fabricated orders from de Guiche. De Guiche learns that he has been tricked and sends Christian and Cyrano to war.

Arras

Act IV- Arras, the front of the war

Despite the severe conditions of the war, Cyrano has been crossing the front to deliver love notes to Roxane. De Guiche informs the troops that the Spaniards will attack that night and the Gascon regiment will all surely perish. Roxane arrives at the front, beckoned by Christian's letters, and vows to stay and face her death with her new husband. When Christian learns that Roxane now only loves him for his words and that she would love him even if he were ugly, Christian realizes that she is truly in love with Cyrano. As Christian tries to goad Cyrano into confessing his love for Roxane, Christian is shot. Roxane is heartbroken and Cyrano, also distraught, throws himself into combat and does not reveal himself as the author of the love letters.

Paris

Act V- Paris, Fifteen years later

Roxane, still mourning the death of Christian, has entered a convent. Cyrano visits her there every Saturday even though he is poor and starving. His list of enemies grows each day as he continues to publish rants against anyone who displeases him. Word comes that a block of wood has fallen on Cyrano's head, perhaps by the hand of an assassin, and Cyrano is dying. He comes one last time to visit Roxane, despite doctor's warnings. Cyrano reads the final letter from Christian to Roxane and she finally realizes that it was Cyrano's words all along that she fell in love with.

FRANCE, 1640-1655

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Cyrano de Bergerac is known for his way with words. Look for this image of Cyrano throughout the guide for some great Cyrano quotes!



Interview with Actor Douglas Hodge

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with Douglas Hodge to talk to him about his title role in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Ted Sod: How did this project come together?

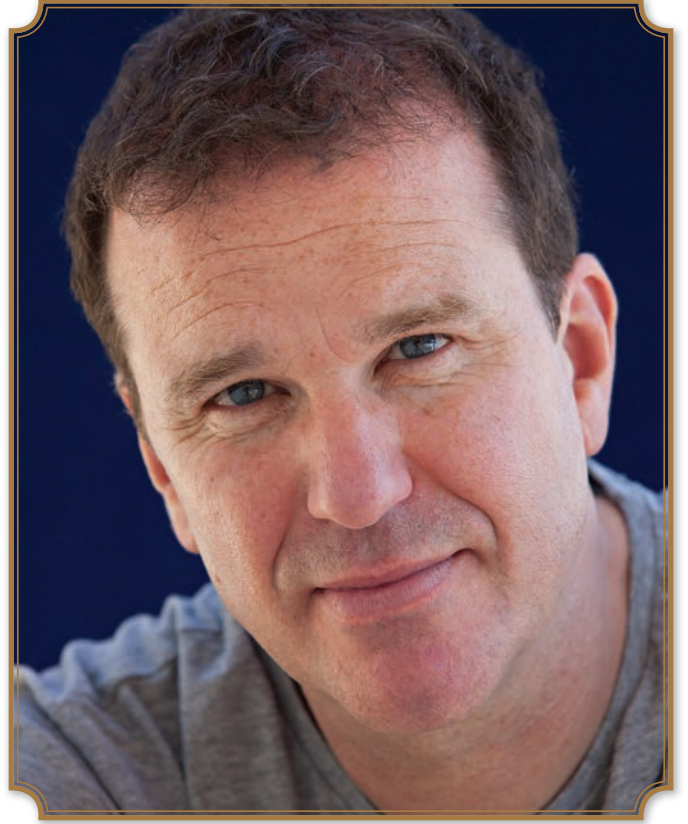
Douglas Hodge: I started talking to Roundabout when I was on Broadway doing *La Cage aux Folles* because I wanted to work with them. We talked about me acting and directing in something. I came back six months ago and did a reading of Larry Gelbart's play, *Sly Fox*. I didn't feel it was quite right. I had just done Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence* in London with Jamie Lloyd directing, and we did a reading of that here, too. But *Inadmissible Evidence* is one of the bleakest, darkest plays I have ever been involved in. It's literally like swallowing a thimble of poison every night. So, we all sat down and I said, "The plays I want to perform in are *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or maybe the Scottish play, but that's it. I'm not interested in acting in any other things." There was a slight hiatus and Todd Haimes called and said, "We are going to do *Cyrano*, who do you want to direct?" I said, "Jamie Lloyd is our man." And suddenly we were hurtling towards this production of *Cyrano*.

TS: Jamie referenced on the first day of rehearsal that this is the fourteenth time, not counting the musical versions, that *Cyrano* has been done on Broadway. Why do you think it is important to present it again?

DH: The first reason is that the translation by Ranjit Bolt is very, very different from what's been seen here. It's very visceral, it's very energized, and I think truer to the guts of the piece. There's a famous review that was written which said, "*Cyrano* is not a great play. It's a perfect play." It really has tremendous opportunities for me as an actor, which is something I love. There are also moments of real darkness, because he detests the way he looks and his self-esteem is zero. The whole idea of beauty and how we think about ourselves and whether or not we think we're good enough—that seems to be quite modern to me. Everybody has their "nose." If we get it right, I think people will see themselves in it, they'll laugh till they beg us to stop, and they'll be heartbroken. I think it's an almost perfect evening in the theatre.

TS: I find it fascinating that *Cyrano* is so confident on some levels and yet can't tell Roxane that he loves her.

DH: On the one hand, *Cyrano* says, "This is what I look like. Take it or leave it." Zaza, the character I played in *La Cage*, didn't like who she was, so she created this tremendous drag character, this suit of armor, to protect the fragile person underneath. There are some similarities with *Cyrano*, this person who's made a construct of himself but privately thinks he's unlovable. In terms of Roxane, I think she civilizes him. She tenderizes him. He says, "My mother loathed me from the minute I was born and she saw my face. I didn't have a sister. I never dared have a mistress because she would only laugh at me. There's this one woman who brings this gentleness into my life and a femininity that is entirely lacking." I think it's very easy to play the card that he's some sort of romantic hero. He isn't. I think he's a virgin, for a start. He's deemed to be hideous. He can't hope to ever be seen by Roxane as someone to love romantically, but he loves her to the core of his being, and that is very moving.



TS: How do you define "panache"?

DH: This is a question I ask myself every day. Panache is essentially the white plume that was worn in the hat of a king. Rostand, when he talks about panache, talks about it as being a sense of humor, being able to laugh at yourself and being able to find things funny in the moments of deepest tragedy. Of course, there's swagger and style, élan. There are deeper elements to the whole way of life that is panache. We've just done the scene where *Cyrano* gets a glass of water and a macaroon as a meal. He's given all his money away and clearly hasn't eaten in three days and he says, "This is the greatest meal I've ever tasted." He puts his napkin on and eats the macaroon and has a nice time. He says, "I want no more." It's making the most of it. That's panache.

TS: Will you talk about process? How do you approach a character?

DH: I work and work and work. You should see my script. Jamie always goes on about my script. You can see that when I should be learning the lines, I'm doodling or drawing anything that comes to me that might be useful. Here's a man [shows a photo of Elton John] who hates the way he looks. That gives you an example. I take images and put them in my script all the time. I've been filming cockerels and watching the way they walk. I learn the lines backwards, forwards and inside out. I collect people who I think have elements of the character. What Jamie's used to me doing is playing a scene twenty different ways and testing each one out. I cherry pick from all of that until I have some sense of who the person is. And then there's all sorts of superstitions and rituals that happen as I get closer to performing.

TS: Did you read about the real Cyrano de Bergerac?

DH: Not much. I tend to just go entirely from the text. It's not that useful for me to know historically what the actual Cyrano was like. What you're dealing with is the story you're telling. I'm guided entirely by what the text says. Having said that, I love the fact that there was a real Cyrano de Bergerac who apparently had a nose that people came from miles around to see and that he was also killed by a block of wood falling on his head.

TS: What do you look for in a director? Obviously, you have a connection with Jamie.

DH: I love Jamie's sense of humor. It's important to me that there's a sense of play in the rehearsal room, where I feel like I can muck about and try things without feeling vulnerable. That's crucial to me. Jamie understands that I'm constantly excavating things that we might want. I also need someone who lets me fly a bit. I don't like to be told what to do. I direct now almost as much as I act. It's quite interesting going between the jobs. Directing has made me a better actor. I'm much more aware of when a scene needs to be about a particular character and how it affects the narrative.

TS: What about the language in the play? Few people seem to relish language and poetry these days. Do you think of our times as being poetic?

DH: I do. I think language is evolving all the time. I love texting and all that. I think it's a growing organism, language. It's constantly changing because of the different demographics of where we live and the speed with which we communicate. As far as the language in *Cyrano* is concerned, I think there's a lot of hip hop in this play, no doubt about it. The idea of standing and rhyming in rhythm, extemporizing off the top of your head, is exactly what hip hop is. It's dazzling when they get the great rhymes right. I love the fact that the play's written in couplets. I think Rostand was perhaps one of the first writers to break the line. He would have half a line and the other person would come in, and then somebody else. It was revolutionary. The language in the play is just sumptuous. It soars. All those words are full of love and romantic poetry and life. And I think there's just as much poetry around today.

TS: What do you recognize as the differences between American and British audiences?

DH: It's the same difference as the difference in the national characteristics. Essentially, I think people in America are happier than the English. I think most English people would agree with that for all sorts of reasons. What that means is that there's a greater generosity of spirit in the audience. They're a more gregarious race than the English. The English are more guarded. Both are highly sophisticated and educated in terms of theatre and highly supportive of it, but the British are perhaps a little more reticent about

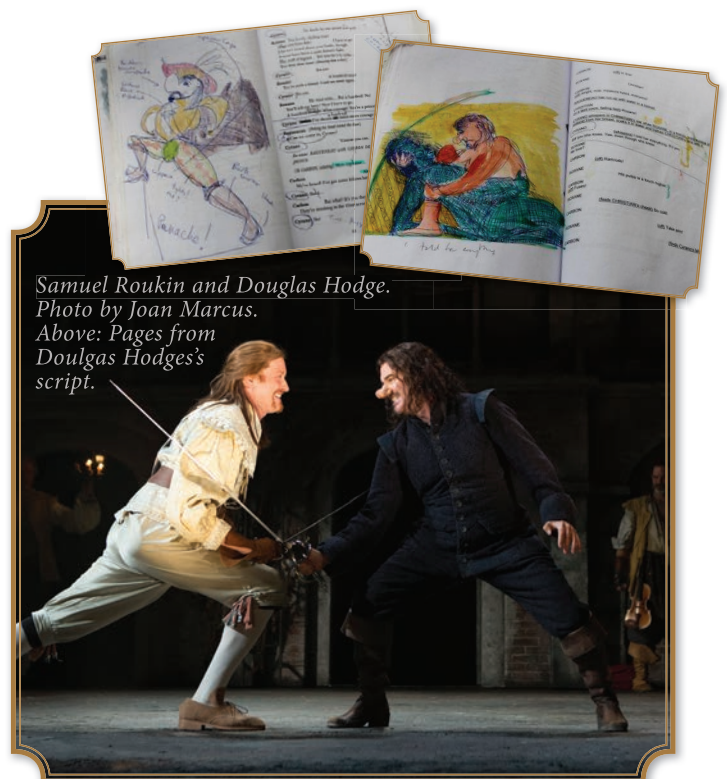
showing their true feelings. You find the laughs may be louder, the applause may be bigger, in America. You'd hardly ever get a standing ovation in Great Britain. People would be too embarrassed. I, myself, have thought, "I should stand!" But then I thought, "No, everyone will look at me if I stand." That's how most people think in Britain. You get a greater sense of encouragement from an American audience.

TS: Would you venture to give some advice to a young person who might be considering acting as a career?

DH: I think that the shock about acting is the continual rejection. It's simple to deal with the success. It's simple to work on things and to become a better actor, but you are continually assessed. Here am I, in the middle of my career, or maybe later in my career, and I still will go do a pilot season and not get a single job out of it. I am doing this play and the critics could say, "Oh, that's rubbish!" I could give my all and work on it and there could be many people saying that it is no good. You really are defined by how many times you can take it on the chin and keep going. Unless you've got that, you absolutely won't survive.

TS: Is there any question you wish I had asked that I didn't?

DH: The only thing I'd like to say is how lovely it is to be in New York working at the Roundabout. This seems like a fantastically supportive operation. It's a great place to hatch a few plans and to try to shake things up.



*Samuel Roukin and Douglas Hodge.
Photo by Joan Marcus.
Above: Pages from
Douglas Hodge's
script.*

“The whole idea of beauty and how we think about ourselves and whether or not we think we’re good enough—that seems to be quite modern to me. Everybody has their ‘nose.’”

The Real Cyrano

Locating the truth at the center of the Cyrano de Bergerac legacy is a bit like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack. The mythology of Cyrano dramatized in film, opera, ballet, television, and novels in addition to theater has so overwhelmed the information remaining about the 17th-century writer that it's nearly impossible to weed out fact from the many fictions. Scholars and biographers must make some leaps to connect the known events of de Bergerac's life, occasionally with suspect results. A 1954 article concerning "The Historical Cyrano de Bergerac as a Basis for Rostand's Play," for instance, recounts a one-hundred-to-one duel and a violent feud with a monkey alongside information about de Bergerac's education and fencing training.

Even de Bergerac's own works have contributed to his legend. His utopian vision of a voyage to the moon, *Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune*, describes a society in which a large nose is a sign of nobility. Rostand includes a light-hearted reference to the work in his play, in a scene in which Cyrano distracts de Guiche from the nuptials of Roxane and Christian. But many scholars have read de Bergerac's words as a confession, citing *Histoire... de la lune* as evidence of de Bergerac's greatest insecurity: a hideously large nose. In truth, the deformity is an invention. Though de Bergerac may well have had a prominent nose, our current concept of its size is merely the result of a gradual exaggeration, one that was immortalized in Theophile Gautier's *Les Grottesques* pen portraits of the mid-1800's (see right).

The real Cyrano de Bergerac is actually more notable for his intellectual, rather than physical, attributes. He was indeed a trained swordsman and served two years in the army, where he was twice wounded. But the second injury, at the siege of Arras, pushed de Bergerac onto a cerebral path. He left the army and spent the remainder of his adult life in academic and artistic pursuits. Eventually, he gained some renown (and some notoriety) as a prolific writer of prose, poetry, and drama. An atheist, a friend to risqué writer-philosophers, and possibly gay, de Bergerac was a provocative figure. His writing often veered towards social satire and criticism, which earned him the disapproval of the church and fueled a particularly heated—and mutually disdainful—relationship with the Jesuits. Though de Bergerac's work hasn't maintained a foothold in our literary canon, he is still respected by scholars for his sharp political mind and bold imagination. His artistic influence is also apparent in the work of some of his contemporaries, most notably in the work of classmate Molière, who would go on to be one of the greatest playwrights of his time.



Natural Panache?

The title character of *Cyrano de Bergerac* exhibits the gentlemanly quality of "panache". He is full of witty remarks and quick with a sword. He developed these skills through dedication and practice. Every one of the profiles of the real Cyrano mentions extensive time in study: at school or with a mentor, with books or a fencing sword. Though de Bergerac worked his way up to a comfortable position in high society, he didn't come from an aristocratic family. Born in 1619 in the outskirts of Paris, he came from an immigrant family of modest beginnings (his grandfather was a Sardinian fishmonger) and developed into the gentlemanly Cyrano audiences have loved for centuries.

**"Poet; philosopher; duelist; wit;
And lover, though he got no joy from it"**



The Evolution of Cyrano

However pieced-together de Bergerac's biography may be, his story maintains a strong hold on our collective imagination. Whether we're compelled by his gallant selflessness, his insecurity, or simply his familiar tale of unrequited love (no returned or reciprocated love), we just can't seem to shake Cyrano. Below are some of the ways his legacy has reared its nose on our stages and screens.

1897

Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* premieres at the Theatre de la Porte Saint-Martin, Paris, with Constant Coquelin in the title role. The production is met with immediate acclaim. The play appears in New York the following year, with Richard Mansfield in the role, but he never quite fills the shoes of Coquelin. When Coquelin reprises his role in *Cyrano* at the Garden Theatre, NYC, in 1900, the New York Times praises his portrayal as capturing the "soul of Cyrano" in a way that Mansfield's did not.

1936

Brian Hooker's translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* opens in New York, with Walter Hampden in the title role.

1946, 1950, 1953

Jose Ferrer takes the title role in two Broadway revivals (1946, 1953) of Hooker's translation. He wins a Tony® for the role in 1947. In 1950, he reprises the role again in a film version of the play and wins an Academy Award®.

1972

"The Brady Bunch," a 70's television classic, airs an episode called "Cyrano de Brady." Eldest brother Greg attempts to help his younger brother, Peter, charm a new crush by feeding him lines from behind the bushes. The girl in question quickly figures out what is going on but mistakenly believes that Greg is trying to woo her.

1973

A musical version of the play, *Cyrano* (translation by Anthony Burgess, music by Michael J. Lewis), premieres. Christopher Plummer takes home a Tony for the title role.

1987

Steve Martin stars opposite Daryl Hannah in an updated film version of the play, *Roxanne*. The movie sets the story in a small Washington town, where Martin's character, C.D. Bales, is the good-natured fire chief. The movie eliminated the tragic aspects of Rostand's play: C.D. and Roxanne confess their love in the film's happy ending.

1990

Gerard Depardieu appears in a (French) film version of the play and takes home the best actor prize at the Cannes Film Festival. In an interview with the Seattle Times, he explains his motivation for pursuing the role: "I saw every *Cyrano* ever made, including the silent versions, and I wasn't happy with any of them... This pushed me into making it. It had to be done." Director Jean-Paul Rappeneau explains that many previous attempts at *Cyrano* had missed the point of the story, saying that, "The real problem is not the nose. He's afraid of love."

1996

The Truth About Cats & Dogs, a film take on the play starring Janeane Garofalo and Uma Thurman, switches the gender of the *Cyrano* storyline. Garofalo's character, Abby, is a plain radio host who woos a man through her attractive neighbor. Like *Roxanne*, the film emphasizes the lighter aspects of the story and resolves with a happy ending.

1997

Frank Langella adapts a new, minimalist version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, based on Brian Hooker's translation, for Roundabout Theatre Company. He directs and stars in the production, which strips the production to its bare bones. "I'm trying to wipe away all the artifice," he says of his adaptation. "It's going to be as real as I can get it to be."

2006

Calvin Berger, a musical by Barry Wyner, opens at the Gloucester Stage Company in Massachusetts. Based on *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the musical sets the action of the story in a high school. The musical appears again in 2010, in a George Street Playhouse production directed by Roundabout Associate Artist Kathleen Marshall.

2009

Cyrano de Bergerac is satirized in the episode "St. Valentine's Day" of the television comedy "30 Rock," when Kenneth the Page falls in love with a beautiful, blind new staffer. Unable to talk to her due to his crippling shyness, his friend Tracy Jordan speaks for him. The staffer falls for him at first, but dumps him when she asks to feel his face to "see" him and is repulsed by his weak chin, a trait Kenneth is often teased about on the series.



*"Duelling and poetry rolled into one—
D'you like the sound of that?"*



Interview with Director Jamie Lloyd

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, spoke to director Jamie Lloyd about his thoughts on *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Ted Sod: Could you tell us where you were born and how you decided to become a theatre director?

Jamie Lloyd: I was born in Poole in Dorset, which is on the south coast of England. We moved further along the coast when my mother remarried, to Hastings. But we always lived in quaint towns by the sea. My father is a truck driver. My mum was once a cleaner. We were a very working class family. I've got two brothers and two sisters, and they have vastly different occupations. I've been trying to figure out how I got into all of this theatre madness.

TS: Are you in the middle?

JL: I'm the youngest. Even though I didn't grow up in a theatre family per se, there was a kind of bizarre theatricality. My mum went on to run a fancy dress shop. I used to dress up with my cousins as Michael Jackson and perform shows. We used to stage "Thriller" and make graveyards out of polystyrene blocks. My dad was a talented drummer in a local band and ended up managing a Cliff Richard and the Shadows tribute band. You probably don't know who Cliff Richard is here in the States, but in London, you would be saying, "That's hilarious!" There were entertainers in my family. My granddad used to play the spoons and did it incredibly well and intricately. We had all sorts of characters stay with us. One of our lodgers was a snake charmer. I used to play with the snakes in the paddling pool at the back. When my mum remarried, my stepfather did children's entertainment. He used to dress up as a clown called Uncle Funny who was the most unfunny clown. He was also a kiss-a-gram, which is like a stripper. But instead of being Mr. Universe—a big muscle man—he was "Mr. Puny-verse." He was this unpleasant tiny, skinny man in his fifties and he would take his clothes off! He used to keep the dwarf rabbits that he used in magic tricks in the living room, and they would poo all over the floor. My mother married yet again (unsurprisingly), and my new stepfather was a guitarist in local bands. It was the most extraordinary childhood you could have conceived!

TS: It sounds like a terrific plot for a movie. When did you get bitten by the bug?

JL: I ended up being in local shows, pantomimes and things like that. They would always take kids from the local dance and drama school, and I was doing that. I got into a school on a drama scholarship. It was then that I started to act a lot and started going to the theatre on school trips. My parents were very supportive.

TS: Were you very familiar with the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* when you agreed to direct it?

JL: I'd never read it before and I've never seen it. Of course, I knew the story. Everybody forgets that it's a classic French play because it has become so much a part of everyone's culture. Some people about the Steve Martin movie, *Roxanne*, others about the swashbuckling hero played by Jose Ferrer. The play has often been dismissed as a two-dimensional action-rom-com. The work that I have been doing with Soutra Gilmour, who is designing sets and costumes, is as detailed as possible. These are based on real people. Cyrano actually walked the streets of 17th Century Paris. If you consider that, you can't dress him with a kind of flamboyant, phony theatricality. He's got to wear real clothes. You've got to give him a costume that is worn in. You have to populate the society around him with real people, with thorough back stories. There's a real texture and grime to their lives. There is a sweaty underbelly to the world that we're creating.

TS: Evidently the real Cyrano also had a big nose.

JL: Yes, apparently. Although he was probably less appalled and embarrassed



Clémence Poésy and Douglas Hodge.
Photo by Joan Marcus.

by it than Rostand makes the character in the play, if at all. If you're going to do a play based on a real person, even if that play veers away from the truth and fact, your impulse is not to make him an unknowable icon. Make him a flawed human being like the rest of us. Make him a man with a deformity who is struggling to come to terms with something as prominent as that nose. Plus, what is interesting to me is seeing *Cyrano*—the play—as a piece for our times. All over the world at the moment is a sense of the underdog finding a voice. It reminds me of the people on the streets with the Occupy movement and in the Middle East with the Arab Spring, or the women of Pussy Riot in Russia. There's a sense of finding your voice and not bowing down to a morally corrupt elitism or any kind of dictatorship. What's interesting about Cyrano's society is there's an extreme power at the top, led by the Catholic Church and Cardinal Richelieu. He was this incredibly powerful figure because he took the power of the Church and combined it, as a political figure, with the power of the state. This extraordinary power resided in one man. The corruption that goes with that kind of power, and the fear that it instills in the people below you, is incredible. So for someone like Cyrano, who is a free thinker, to say, "I will not bow down. I will not bend backwards to appease these people. I will not rely on having a patron to fund my art, to change my words to suit them. No, thank you!" is incredibly brave. It really meant something to say something political in that era. It was dangerous. It reminds me of what's going on in many countries in the world at the moment, and it gives the production a purpose.

TS: *Cyrano* is a soldier as well.

JL: What's great about it is that you're matching political thought with a beautiful lyricism, because he is a creative soul, plus an audacious military spirit that gives him a kind of physical aggression. I find that amazing combination very intriguing. To belittle that by just making him an Errol Flynn cartoon character, a stereotype, would be a real shame.

TS: I'm curious why you think Cyrano doesn't tell Roxane that he loves her. You've described a man who is self-possessed, who understands who he is, and yet, when it comes to this woman that he adores, he can't tell her the truth.

JL: I do think it genuinely has a lot to do with his nose, this terrible disfigurement that comes with a level of shame. I think we can all understand that as human beings. We either feel too short, too ugly, too whatever it might be to live confidently in the world at all times—especially nowadays where we've become so obsessed with appearance and image. And people are rewarded for their beauty. Doug Hodge and I think that Cyrano is, ultimately, the shyest man in the world. To combat that, there's this incredible aggression, but at the heart of it, he is deeply wounded by this deformity. Because it is all hanging out, as it were, it means he can speak his mind, too. No wonder he's become a political animal, a revolutionary, a voice for the underdog. There's nowhere to hide! Everything is motored by that nose.

TS: Talk to me about collaborating with Douglas Hodge. You both recently worked on a well-regarded revival of John Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence*. What is the magic there?

JL: I think that he is a gifted actor. There's something very exciting about being in a rehearsal room with an actor who literally offers you a hundred thousand choices. He's so dexterous and he thinks so quickly that he's able to spin on a dime and literally say, "What about if I did this? Or what about if I jump on the table here? Or I could come over here? What if I think like this?" And that's really exciting because, as a director, you can take the best of those ideas and pursue particular choices and distill those and push him in a particular direction and encourage him to take one option or discard another. The great thing about working with a collaborator like Doug is that we'll get together and read the script and we haven't even designed the play. I was able to work with Soutra on the design based upon the ideas that were being generated in my head as Doug was reading the lines.

TS: When you held auditions for the rest of the cast, what did you need besides actors who are well-spoken?

JL: The good thing about Ranjit Bolt's translation is that he writes at the speed of thought. People in this play speak as they think and think as they speak. It's all on the line. A pause is an exception rather than a rule. A pause has to be earned. As actors, you have to be incredibly nimble. It has to be played at a terrific, furious speed, which is exciting for an audience. All of the actors have to match the speed of the play, particularly because the tone is set by Doug. If he leads in that mode and everyone else is too considered, it will be this languorous, steady, safe company and this daring tour-de-force at the front, which makes it completely uneven. *Cyrano* isn't just about Cyrano and his journey. That is the central narrative, but it is populated by a true ensemble. If you don't have that, then you might as well do a one-man show. That would be a wasted opportunity, especially with this exceptionally talented cast.

TS: As a director, is one of your goals to create an ensemble that looks as if they have been working together forever?

JL: Yes. It's trying to create an environment in rehearsal that is as safe and as enjoyable as possible. I always say that there is no such thing as a stupid question or a stupid suggestion. If you are playing Cadet #5 and you have three lines, what a real shame to spend all your time in the rehearsal room feeling that you are a spare part and there just to decorate the set. If each and every person is telling the story then, sitting in the audience, your eye can wander from the

main thrust of the action, from whoever has a particular line at a particular moment, and look over at someone else on the stage and see a real thought in that person's head. They're not just drifting away and thinking about what they're going to eat at McDonald's after the matinee. It makes for a very detailed on-stage tapestry.

TS: How would you define the genre of *Cyrano de Bergerac*?

JL: It's a very hard play to define. It's not melodrama, it's not a boulevard comedy, it's not a heartbreaking tragedy, and it's not a naturalistic drama in the mode of Ibsen, who was Rostand's contemporary. And yet it's all of those things. He puts absolutely every aspect of all of those genres into one play. It is a bit like directing five plays in one. One minute you're rehearsing a love story, the next a visceral battle scene. I think it's often called heroic comedy, which belittles its great humanity and its insight into the behaviour of a flawed human being. It's very witty, too. Ranjit Bolt's translation has a kind of English vaudevillian wit to it. The combination of Ranjit's words and Doug's genius is very exciting in terms of the comedy in the play. Doug is also able to go into these very, very dark recesses. He draws you in, and it's incredibly moving. It's extraordinary to have someone who has a great lightness of touch and really make you laugh, who can then plunge into something very dark and break your heart. He also has a masterful control of the language and the verse. He adds that panache, that kind of excitement and dynamism and sheer energy. How many actors can really do all of that?

TS: How do you define "panache"?

JL: Historically, the literal translation is the great plume that you would wear on your hat, an extra decoration. In a way, that sums it up for me. Panache is that extra bit—that added little measure—that little sparkle on the top of something that might be brilliant already. It's something that makes you stand out even more.

TS: What is it about the play that audiences have responded to for centuries?

JL: It is incredibly entertaining. There is a bit of everything: love, comedy, tragedy, conflict, song. Just like that old cliché, "There's something for everyone!" But I do think it comes back to this idea of Cyrano being someone that we can all understand. Even if you are the most beautiful man or woman in the world, you are going to feel like there is something missing at some point in your life. That's the curse of being human. It is something profound that we can tap into, whoever we are. There is a deep connection with the character's insecurities, an empathy. I hope our audience will draw their own parallels with our own time, especially in terms of the play's political resonance.

TS: Language is a huge part of the play's machinery, but it seems as if language is taken for granted these days.

JL: We don't even spell correctly anymore. We write in shorthand in text messages and tweets. We write "great" with two letters and a number: "GR8." There's no relish, no passion. Something that Doug and I share is a great fondness for wordplay, for rhythms, for poetry. I think that's what Roxane is trying to do in the play. She wants to define something that is so intangible, this thing called love with a capital L, with literature and art. Love is so indefinable, so unreachable. How can you truly define that experience, that mode of being, that situation you find yourself in with somebody else? To try and use language to describe that is thrilling, I think. And that's what she's after. That's what excites her, and I hope it will excite our audience, too.

"...What is interesting to me is seeing Cyrano—the play—as a piece for our times. All over the world at the moment is a sense of the underdog finding a voice."

The Man Behind the Nose

The life of French playwright Edmond Rostand has been called “a barometer of that turbulent yet heady era” in which he lived. Rostand was born in 1868, just a few years before France’s self-confidence was shaken by defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. The government was shifting from monarchy to republic, while the rise of industrialization changed the economy and social life. Rostand lived through these changes and the end of World War I, to see France re-emerge as a major European power.



Edmond Rostand with Sarah Bernhardt

Rostand was born into an affluent and cultured family in Marseille, an important center for industry and maritime trade. His father Eugène was an economist and poet, a member of the Marseille Academy and the Institute de France, and his mother, a strict Catholic, raised Rostand in the Catholic tradition. As an adult Rostand was not devout, but he used elements of Catholic themes and symbols throughout his plays.

Rostand excelled as a student of history and philosophy. Pushed by his father, he went on to study law at the Sorbonne in Paris. As a student he also published poetry and essays in literary magazines. After publishing his first volume of poems, *Les Musardises*, in 1890, he abandoned the law to pursue literature—to his parents’ disapproval. Around this time, he married fellow poet Rosemonde Gérard, the granddaughter of one of Napoleon’s marshals.

Rostand was fascinated with theatre and played with a puppet theatre when he was growing up, but his first attempts at playwriting were unsuccessful. The French theatre at this time favored social realism—plays by authors like Émile Zola and Henrik Ibsen that looked at difficult social issues. Alternatively, popular Boulevard theatre offered light farces and vaudeville. Rostand’s plays were historical, heroic, and poetic, reviving the Romantic tradition, which made them feel out of step with popular taste. He had his first theatrical success in 1884, when *Les Romanesques* (*The Romantics*, a revision of *Romeo and Juliet* with a happy ending) was produced at the Comédie Française; many years later it became the source of the popular American musical *The Fantasticks*. Rostand developed a friendship with France’s greatest actress of the time, Sarah Bernhardt, who starred in two of his most important plays: *La Princesse Loïtaine* (*The Princess Far Away*, 1895) and *L’Aiglon* (*The Eaglet*, 1900)—a historic tragedy based on the life of Napoleon’s son.

In 1897, Rostand created the play that would fix his place in history with the premiere of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a poetic, five-act verse drama written for Constant Coquelin, one of France’s leading actors. Prior to opening, no one expected a success. Rostand apologized to Coquelin, “Pardon me for having involved you in a disastrous adventure.” But on opening night, the first audience applauded for a full hour after final curtain. *Cyrano* brought 29-year-old Rostand fame and success. At the height of his popularity he was elected to the Académie Française. But he found it difficult to adjust to the dramatic change in his life. Biographer Sue Lloyd explains, “[his] future was assured but he had to live up to the expectations of the French people... the fame he had set out to achieve from his very first book of poems turned into a crushing burden.”

Rostand’s later years are marked by depression, illness, and a failing marriage. He retreated to his country estate at Cambon and continued to write plays (including a version of *Faust* and *Chanticleer*, based on the animal characters of La Fontaine), as well as a dramatic poem based on Don Juan. None of these works achieved the same success and popularity as *Cyrano*. He had several mistresses and eventually separated from his wife. His last years were reclusive, though when France went into World War I, he joined the war effort, visiting French soldiers in the trenches. Rostand died of pneumonia on December 2, 1918, six weeks after the war ended. He was succeeded by two sons, Jean and Maurice, who both went on to become writers, but he is best remembered in France and throughout the world as the creator of *Cyrano*.

“He’s an author, isn’t he? And he just saw a fellow author’s play *Totally wrecked*. It must have made his day.”



Cyrano in Translation

After its success in Paris, demand for translations of *Cyrano* immediately followed. The play came to London and America in 1900, and a handful of English translations were made in the 20th century. Roundabout's current production features the American premiere of a new version by Ranjit Bolt, one of England's leading translators.

In his book *The Art of Translation*, Bolt discusses the artistic choices a translator makes and articulates his own philosophy: "I try to follow the rule laid down by perhaps the greatest translator of all, John Dryden, who maintained that a translator should ... make the version as entertaining as possible, while at the same time remaining as faithful as possible to the spirit of the original." Bolt argues that the translator must have license to make interpretative choices that differ from the original but ultimately serve it better in English.

An important decision for Rostand's translator is how to handle the original French verse. Rostand revived the alexandrine, a French poetic form that was popular in the 17th century. The alexandrine consists of a rhyming couplet with 12 syllables in each line. The nearest English equivalent is the heroic couplet, which consists of rhyming iambic pentameter with 10 syllables per line.

Prior to Bolt's version (which premiered in London in 2007), the favored *Cyrano* translation was by Anthony Burgess. Burgess actually made two translations: one in 1971 with some radical changes for an American audience, and a second for England in 1983, which followed Rostand's original more closely. Burgess disliked the pattern of rhyming couplets, feeling it stopped the action and surprise of the play, and chose to use rhyme only for select moments.

Bolt has returned to the pattern of five-iamb, rhyming lines. Bolt feels that the rhyme makes the play "speakable and playable" and allows him to insert some humor not found in the original. Simon Reade, the British director who commissioned Bolt's translation, says, "Its melodies and harmonies can be appreciated by all." Bolt also reduced the large cast, taking out 31 small roles. Reade declares, "In Bolt's *Cyrano*, at the dawn of the 21st century, we have a maverick hero for our own uncertain age."

Poetry Vocabulary

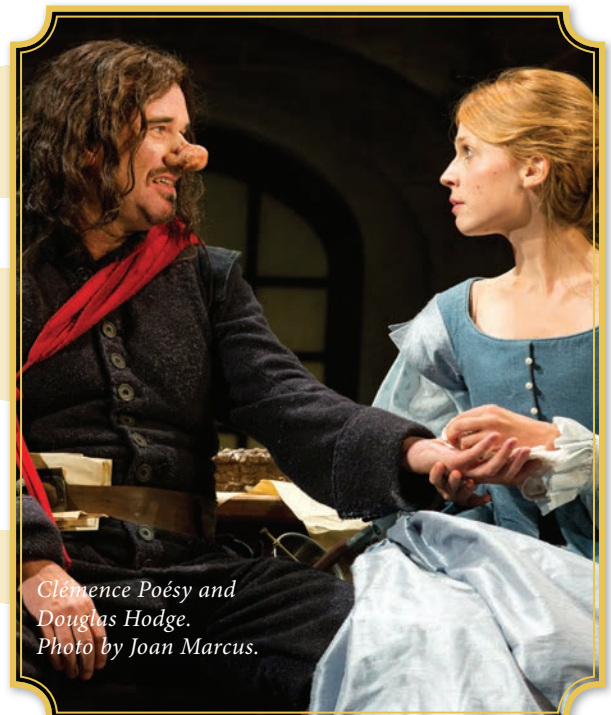
ENVOI A short stanza at the end of a poem used either to address an imagined or actual person or to comment on the preceding body of the poem
Cyrano "writes" an envoi during the duel with Valvert.

EPIGRAM Witty saying
Ligniere boasts that Cyrano writes epigrams.

EPITHET Any word or phrase applied to a person or thing to describe an actual or attributed quality
Cuigy writes an epithet for Cyrano: "Cyrano's quite a hero in his own way."

PROSE The ordinary form of spoken or written language without metrical structure
Ragueneau wonders, since his wife would use his poems to wrap pastries, what she would do with his prose.

SONNET A fourteen-line, rhyming poem
Cyrano writes sonnets.



Clémence Poésy and Douglas Hodge.
Photo by Joan Marcus.



*"Just one change would be more than I could bear—
To lose one comma would be worse than Hell."*

17th Century France

The first four acts of *Cyrano de Bergerac* take place in France in the year 1640.

In 1640, Paris was the cultural capital of Europe. A city of 420,000 people, it was expanding rapidly. Under the direction of King Louis and Cardinal Richelieu, palaces, churches, and public buildings were going up everywhere. Richelieu founded the Académie Française, a French literary society tasked with promoting and regulating the French language. He also financially supported many writers and playwrights. Salons (house parties where writers, artists, philosophers and others would meet up to educate themselves and hold discussions) were popular, and Cyrano and his friends were part of this new literary world.



“Marquis” or “Marais” is a title of nobility, roughly equivalent to a British Earl; a “Comte,” as in Comte de Guiche, means Count. Cyrano de Bergerac, Comte de Guiche, and Cyrano’s military unit are all “Gascons,” from the province of Gascony. Gascony is in the southwest corner of France on the Atlantic Ocean and shares a border with Spain.

While Paris flourished, most of Europe was caught up in the Thirty Years War. It began in 1618, when the staunchly Catholic King Ferdinand came to power in Bohemia (now a region in the Czech Republic). Bohemians were mainly Protestant, and the region had received permission to practice their faith from the Holy Roman Emperor, who controlled most of Europe.

When King Ferdinand ascended the throne, he had two Protestant churches closed, and Protestants felt their rights were under attack. Soon, Bohemia was in revolt against Ferdinand. The monarchs of Spain and Bavaria (a German province) sided with the Catholic king. Protestant kings, queens, and nobles joined the conflict. Most of Europe was soon involved in the war. Beyond the religious issues at stake, the war was about how much of Europe the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor would control.

17th Century France Vocabulary

CHAPERONE An older woman whose job is to look after a younger, unmarried woman
Roxane is escorted around town by her chaperone.

COQUETTE A flirtatious woman
Christian refers to Roxane as a coquette.

CONFRÈRE A friend or colleague
Cyrano calls Ragueneau an “old confrère,” meaning old friend.

DUNCE A dimwitted or ignorant person
Christian calls himself a dunce after failing to woo Roxane.

FOOTMAN An attending servant
When Ragueneau’s pastry business fails, Cyrano finds work for him as Roxane’s footman.

PANACHE Literally translated to “plume,” panache means having unique style, flair, and reckless courage.
Rostand’s depiction of Cyrano de Bergerac exemplifies panache and established the term as a virtue rather than a failing.

PLUME A feather, or group of feathers, used as an ornament
Cyrano wears a three-plumed hat.

SOIREE A party or social gathering
De Guiche reports on the gossip he heard at the Queen’s soiree.

France was involved in the politics of the Thirty Years War from the beginning, but they didn't enter the military conflict until 1635. Though France was primarily Catholic, the nation joined with the Protestant powers in order to protect its territory from the Holy Roman Empire.

At the time, France had no central army. Provincial noblemen, like Comte de Guiche, would muster and train their own regiments for battle. At the beginning of the play, Cyrano's regiment, the Gascons, is stationed in Paris awaiting orders. They are soon sent to participate in the siege of Arras, an important town held by Spanish forces. Thirty thousand French troops surrounded the town, hoping to starve the Spanish into surrender. The French were then surrounded by Spanish units that cut off their access to food and supplies. Supply wagons eventually made it through the French, prompting the Spaniards inside the town to make one final, desperate charge, which failed. The French won the siege of Arras.

The Gascons were known for their aggressive, impulsive, proud fighting style. They, like many Frenchmen of the era, were fierce protectors of their honor, and arguments were often settled by duels. While duels in American history were often fought with guns and proved fatal, dueling in France in 1640 was done with swords, and the loser was left humiliated but alive.



Magdeleine Robin, known as Roxane, is the great love interest for several characters in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, including Cyrano, her cousin. In the past, the term "cousin" could mean any type of distant relative, and it wasn't unusual to marry a member of one's extended family.

Rostand's Romantic History — While *Cyrano de Bergerac* takes place in 1640, it wasn't written until 1897. The author, Edmond Rostand, was looking back at what he saw as an exciting, heroic era in French history. The play isn't an accurate depiction of the historical time period. Rather, it's Rostand's heightened, romanticized vision of 17th century France.

Military Vocabulary

CADET	A man, usually young, who entered the army to prepare for a commission <i>Christian is a cadet in the Gascon regiment.</i>
DUEL	A prearranged combat between two persons, fought with deadly weapons according to an accepted code of procedure, especially to settle a private quarrel <i>Cyrano has a propensity to duel anyone who offends him.</i>
LANCE	A pole weapon or spear designed to be used by a mounted warrior <i>Cyrano threatens Montfleury with his lance.</i>
RAMPART	The barricade or surrounding protection of a fort <i>During the Siege of Arras, Cuigy warns his fellow soldiers that the Spaniards have breached the rampart.</i>
REGIMENT	A group of armed military forces consisting of two or more battalions <i>Cyrano and Christian are in the same Gascon regiment.</i>
SIEGE	To surround and attack a fortified place <i>Cyrano and the Gascon regiment fight in the Siege of Arras.</i>



"Just think: if Paris sent a second force. This siege would turn into a layer cake!"

Interview with Set and Costume Designer Soutra Gilmour

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with set and costume designer Soutra Gilmour to discuss her designs for *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself and how you became a designer for the theatre?

Soutra Gilmour: I was born in London but grew up in a Scottish family. I went to school in North London. I went to a place called Wimbledon School of Art and did a three-year degree in theatre design. I had briefly spent a year at Bristol University doing English and Drama, but by that point I already knew that I wanted to be a theatre designer and there wasn't enough of the art aspect. There was a lot of Drama and English and lots of the text stuff, but not enough of developing the artistic or design side of it. My father was an architect and my mother studied constructive textiles, like weaving and printing, but didn't really work in it. Whilst I didn't see that at the time, theatre design is kind of a perfect amalgamation of the two different things that my parents were interested in.

TS: Were you happy with your education at Wimbledon?

SG: What was lovely about it is that it let you do your own thing. It had a big theatre department but it was basically a fine arts college. It wasn't within the realm of a drama department. It was much more in the realm of a painting, sculpture, and printing college. That was brilliant for me because it meant that there was room to explore, to find your own language and not feel cajoled into being too practical at that point. It gave you a lot of room to develop a personal aesthetic, which was great for me. I talk about my time at Wimbledon as not really being taught anything, but being given the space to learn, which is a very different thing. There weren't a bunch of people telling us how to do it, but there were people giving us room to make things and see what our language might be.

TS: Did you have a light bulb moment when you realized you should be a theatre designer?

SG: It was a much more organic process than that. My favorite subjects were English, History, and History of Art. I suppose what I loved about the idea of theatre design, and I don't think I was as conscious of this at the time, was the fact that it was pulling all of those things together. I don't even remember the moment where I went, "Oh! I'll do theatre design." I was in some plays at school and then there was a play at the end, before I went to college, where I did a bit of set design and somewhere in there, I got this spark that there was this thing called theatre design that potentially I would quite like to do. I saw a couple of productions at the National Theatre that totally made me want to be involved in those things. The key one was Richard Eyre's production of *Guys and Dolls*, which is the seminal *Guys and Dolls* of the last 40 years, at least in Britain. It was really fantastic. I remember I went to see it three or four times. I was really blown away by it. Something in all of that started me drifting towards what we call theatre design in Britain, which is both set and costume design. We don't tend to specialize in one or the other. We tend to make the whole world.

TS: Did you have any great teachers who influenced you at school?

SG: I was given a couple of bits of brilliant advice, and there are two things that I have taken away from it. One a fantastic director said to me: "Don't ever try to be original; just try and be personal," which is one of the most amazingly insightful sentences. Don't be self-conscious, don't



try too hard, but just have your own personal response to it. It gives you two things: you're not so unique that people won't get something from it, and you are yourself, so there will be something personal and particular about it. I think both of those things are crucial to a theatre designer's role, because you can't see it through anybody else's eyes but your own. That's the only way of doing an honest piece of work. You talk to other people, and you talk to the director, and talk to the performers about their costumes, but ultimately it can only go through you. You have to try and be very genuine and truthful, and not try to lay on big ideas or concepts. And another tutor said to me, "There's never enough weather in theatre." I don't think he literally meant rain, but the possibility of the smell of it, or the texture of it, or the idea of it. It's about the ephemeral and not making everything too solid and heavy and awkward. I think there's something in that idea that has always inspired me to try and find a level of texture and detail. It's always been useful to me as an idea in the back of my head.

TS: Did you start to work right away?

SG: When I came out, like most people, I started doing tiny little projects, basically working for free. I was up all night, working seven days a week and just getting to know more people. I wasn't involved in the industry; I didn't know anybody or have any contacts. I had been in my own little world just making stuff. I wasn't very up on what was hip or in or cool. I just got some really good small jobs out of my degree show. I never said no. I took everything, more or less. I tried stuff out, because I didn't have a view that I wanted to work here or I want to do this kind of work. I worked for a long time on small-scale projects in London and bigger projects outside of London, more in the repertory system. For the first five years of my career,

I was working outside of London. I have been working for seventeen years and I have never been unemployed. I was lucky. I have only ever had more work than I can do. I've never had any time off. I haven't had a holiday in ten years. It's been very full on.

TS: What was the first thing you did when you knew you would be designing *Cyrano*?

SG: The first thing I did was re-watch the Depardieu film. One of my responses was that the 1650s is a period that we're not particularly used to seeing onstage. I think it's quite tricky, aesthetically. Particularly in the clothes, it's very heavy and big and bulky. A lot of the film versions have slicked that down, having the men wearing tight trousers, but none of that is actually correct. It was much more blouson than that, it was bigger and chunkier. One of the first things I said to Jamie was, "You do know this is 1650, which is pretty much one of the hardest costume periods to make look elegant?" And he said, "Uh, right." I said we'd do our best. I was struck by that, by needing a way through that that had truth for the characters and truth for the period, but allowed us a lightness. We didn't want a huge barrier between the audience and the actor with these bulky costumes. I felt like I needed to break the back of the problems quite quickly. I needed to create a set that would allow for five key, significant spaces, and allow us room to move and change and make each of those spaces special and really different. I think that is one of the key things about the piece, each of those acts has a distinct emotional quality to it.

TS: It's true. It's almost as if they reflect the four seasons.

SG: You're right, there is a real difference in the color of each scene. I think they feel very, very distinct. That's why they are acts rather than scenes. Each one needs its own quality in a really particular way. I very quickly came to see the theatre. I wanted to do something that, while making a distinct world onstage, connected to the architecture and the world of the auditorium, so that there was a soft transition between the auditorium and the stage. It doesn't feel like there's an auditorium and then this really contrasting picture sitting inside it that is slightly removed or distant. I wanted the whole thing to feel like there was a soft blend from auditorium to stage, so that we're completely in their world, not outside looking at it. I picked up on the shape of the proscenium, the shape of the boxes. Also, because there's not much depth on the American Airlines stage, I needed to go all the way to the back wall, so I've actually drawn the back wall into the design. I want the set to feel completely integrated into the building, rather than something that feels separate.

TS: Talk about working with Jamie Lloyd, the director of *Cyrano*, because you've worked with him before. What makes the collaboration successful?

SG: All my most successful collaborations are with people who leave me to do my job on my own. It sounds like a crazy thing to say. It doesn't sound like the art of collaboration. But what I think is fantastic is that we all bring different skills to the room. Jamie and I have a brief conversation at the beginning, maybe a little about texture or a little about sense or something, but nothing really detailed. I go off and am given space to think about the problems of the play, think about the practical issues, think about the

auditorium, think about the subject matter, think about the historical time, and start to put together a shape. I offer that back up to him, and he might say, "What about a little bit of this?" or, "That's interesting." It's very much a case of having a lot of room to bring myself and my thoughts and my input to the table, and then him responding to that. Generally, that's how our relationship has also progressed. I don't tend to hang around a lot in rehearsals. I hand it to him at that point. I equally don't need to be on his back going, "Are you doing it like this? Are they using those stairs? Are they popping their head out of that window?" The stuff is there. It's a playground. I make a lot of my work have a freedom to it. It doesn't force the actors to use it in a specific way. I like it to have a looseness and a freedom to it and then they can use it however they interpret it. The nature of our collaboration is trust more than anything—trust that the other person isn't going to do something ridiculous or silly or wrong. We've worked together a lot now. We've done a huge amount of shows together. You get a good sense of what each other does, but also sometimes how to push people to do something a bit different or to challenge themselves a bit. And I think that's quite good.

TS: Do you have any advice for the young person who wants to design for the theatre?

SG: I think two things: I think that if you start it and you find yourself still doing it five years or ten years down the line, then you will be a theatre designer and that is what you will do forever. You will find enough jobs. You will grow. You will make enough contacts. But it's partly about giving yourself nothing else to fall back on. The people that fall by the wayside are people who give themselves a teaching job to fall back on or a job in the fashion industry or a PR company. You have to give yourself no other options if you really want to do it. You just have to stay in it, even when you earn no money, it's annoying you, and you're up all night when you haven't had a holiday for four years. You just have to carry on. I think in order to do this, there is no easy way into it. It's hard work. I question all the time why I'm still doing it. It must be because it's what I'm meant to do. It must be because somewhere deep down, I really do love doing this.

*Set Model and Costume Sketch
by Soutra Gilmour*



Pre-Show Activities

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY #1: HOW DOES AN ACTOR IMPROVISE A SCENE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FRIENDS?

The story of *Cyrano* is based on a universal conflict: two friends fall in love with the same person and become romantic rivals. Romantic triangles test individual loyalties and the ability of friendships to endure. Before seeing the play, explore these themes from your own perspective.

- ACTIVATE** Break students into pairs and allow a few minutes to make some specific choices about these given circumstances:
- CHARACTERS: A and B are best friends. (Can be male, female or mixed. Who is the object of their affection?)
 - CONFLICT: A and B have JUST discovered they both like the same person. They must find a solution to the problem.
 - TIME/SETTING: Students decide location and time of scene. It can be present day, or a different historical setting.

Give each team 1-3 minutes to improvise the scene in front of the class. Stop the scene when the conflict is resolved, or if a “stalemate” is reached, or if it escalates into threats of violence.

- REFLECT** After each scene, ask the audience:
- How did these characters handle the conflict?
 - How did the two actors show us what was happening? (e.g.: choices of physical, facial, and vocal expression)
 - How do we balance our own desires with our loyalty to friends?
 - What advice would you give to the characters in this scene?

(As an option, you can allow the students to *REPLAY* the same scene, this time taking some suggestions from the audience, and compare the outcomes of the scene. Or you can invite a new student to step into the scene and take over one of the roles.)

- WRITE** After looking at a few improvisations, students choose one pair of friends they observed and write a new scene in dialogue between the two characters. Challenge students to take the scene further than the improvisation; for example, it could pick up the next day and imagine the next event between the friends.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY #2: HOW IS THE POETRY OF CYRANO DE BERGERAC SIMILAR TO MODERN SONG LYRICS?

In *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Cyrano fights a battle of words, much like a freestyle rap battle, with a man who has criticized his nose.

Materials: scripts, pencils, open space

- ADAPT** Working in small groups, students adapt the following scene into a freestyle rap or song lyric, paying special attention to meter and vocabulary. What is the rhyme scheme? What does the meter reveal about which syllables are stressed? What do you need to look up to understand this scene?

Cyrano

And it's going to go like this:
Three eight-line stanzas, plus an extra bit -
An envoi, at the end of which I'll hit.
Duelling and poetry rolled into one -
D'you like the sound of that?

Valvert

It can't be done.

Cyrano

Oh, no? Just watch me. 'Ballad of the duel
Between De Bergerac and a bloody fool
That took place in the Hotel de Bourgogne.

- ACTIVATE** Students perform their raps or songs for the class. Encourage audience to listen for the use of rhythm in the performance.

- REFLECT** Group discussion, including one of two of the following questions.
- Did the group make any surprising choices in rhythm their performance? How did those choices change the meaning of the lines?
 - What similarities do you see between modern lyrics and Cyrano's lines?
 - What kind of person do you think Cyrano is? Why?

Post-Show Activities

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #1: HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT MAKE CHOICES ABOUT A CHARACTER'S ACTIONS?

You've seen how Edmond Rostand created a complex character in *Cyrano*. Despite his panache, Cyrano can never find the courage to reveal his feelings to Roxane. Now, imagine what might have happened if Rostand had allowed his creation to take a different course of action in the play.

ACTIVATE

Where Do You Stand?

Define a single line across the room: one side is "strongly agree," the opposite side is "strongly disagree" and the middle "undecided." Ask students to move to one side or the other, based on whether they agree, disagree, or are undecided on the following statements:

- Cyrano should not have been ashamed of his nose.
- Cyrano should have revealed his feelings for Roxane when they were in the bakery.
- Cyrano should have refused to let Christian to use his words at Roxane's balcony.
- After Christian's death, Cyrano should have told Roxane the truth about writing the love letters to her.

REFLECT

For each statement, allow one or two students to defend their position of agree/disagree and give students the option of changing their position.

WRITE

Write your own scene for the play, imagining what might happen if Cyrano had taken a different action somewhere in the play. (Work in pairs or individually)

- Choose one moment of the play we just discussed (or choose another if you remember it). Imagine what would happen if Cyrano had made a different choice at that moment.
- What might he have said or done differently?
- How would the other characters respond to him?
- What would happen NEXT in the play?

Write the dialogue for your new scene. (As an advanced option, students can write, or rewrite, their dialogue in rhymed couplets.) Refer to the Callboard in the front of this guide for the names of the major characters.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #2: HOW DOES A TRANSLATOR ADAPT PROSE INTO POETRY?

Ranjit Bolt, translator of the script used in Roundabout's production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, chose to use heroic couplets.

Materials: Text to translate, paper, pencils

WRITE

Students are given one paragraph of text to translate into heroic couplets. Text could be anything related to the curriculum, though historic speeches or descriptions of scientific processes are a good option.

- What is the speaker trying to communicate?
- How can you use heroic couplets to highlight his or her meaning?

ACTIVATE

Students read aloud their translations in a mock poetry slam. If students are working on historic speeches, the audience can offer theories about which speech was the source text.

REFLECT

What was difficult about translating text into heroic couplets? How did you decide which words to rhyme? Was it harder or easier to understand the text after it had been translated? Why?

Glossary

ABSCOND	To sneak away to avoid capture <i>Ragueneau's wife absconded with a musketeer.</i>
ARTIFICE	Hiding of true intentions <i>Cyrano, mimicking Christian, tells Roxane he would not spoil their romantic evening with "futile artifice" but will speak from the heart.</i>
BESIEGE	To surround and attack <i>The Gascon army besieged the Spanish army at Arras, only to be besieged by the Spaniards.</i>
BULBOUS	Swollen or bulging <i>Used to describe both Cyrano's nose and Montfleury.</i>
CONNOISSEUR	A person who is exceptionally competent in a particular subject <i>De Guiche describes Cardinal Richelieu as a connoisseur of plays.</i>
DESTITUTE	Deprived or lacking <i>Ragueneau is left destitute after his wife leaves him and takes all of his money.</i>
ELOQUENCE	Notable speaking ability; the ability to speak forcefully, expressively, and persuasively <i>Cyrano speaks eloquently; Christian does not.</i>
FORMIDABLE	Having great force or power <i>Ligniere calls the Comte de Guiche a formidable foe in the competition for Roxane's affection because of his money and power.</i>
GROTESQUE	Odd or unnatural in shape, appearance, or character; fantastically ugly or absurd <i>Cyrano's nose is described as grotesque.</i>
MUSE	The goddess or the power regarded as inspiring a poet, artist, thinker, or the like. From Greek mythology, one of the nine daughters of Zeus who presided over arts and sciences. <i>Ragueneau demands that the muses depart so his chefs will stop writing and help him bake.</i>
OLFACTORY	Related to the sense of smell <i>Cyrano's olfactory organ is insulted by the Pest.</i>
PARAGON	A model of excellence; the ideal <i>Cuigy refers to Roxane as a paragon after hearing Christian praise her beauty and style.</i>
PATRON	A sponsor; a giver of money or other support to somebody or something, especially in the arts <i>Cyrano rejects having a patron for fear that they would influence his poetry.</i>
PERVASIVE	Spreading throughout <i>Cyrano, as Christian, describes his love for Roxane as pervasive.</i>
PROMONTORY	Prominent or protruding <i>Used to describe Cyrano's nose.</i>
PROTÉGÉ	A young apprentice or mentee <i>De Guiche propositions Cyrano to be his protégé, which Cyrano refuses.</i>
PRUDENT	Practical, careful, and having good judgment <i>Roxane describes Penelope, wife of the mythological Ulysses, as prudent because she waited for years for her husband to return from war.</i>
QUIP	A witty remark <i>Cyrano is known for his funny quips.</i>
WIT	The ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny <i>Cyrano refers to himself as having the "soul of wit."</i>

"I cannot speak what's here. In writing though...yes, that's the best idea. What better than a few well chosen lines? I've penned them in my head a hundred times—Just copy them—pour out my soul in words."



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When you get to the theatre...

BELOW ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR THEATRE-GOING EXPERIENCE MORE ENJOYABLE.

TICKET POLICY

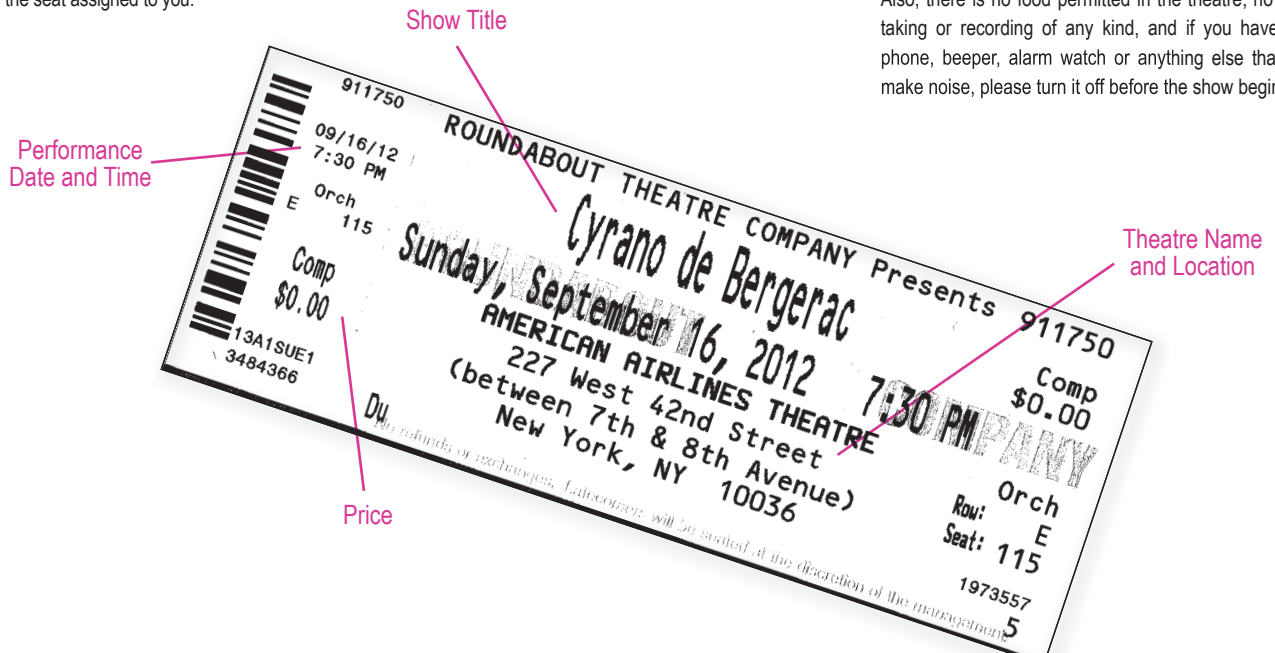
As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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