



INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

CYRANO

based on the book by
Edmond Rostand
adapted for the stage by
Jo Roets

streaming
April 15 – May 9, 2021

from the
OneAmerica
Mainstage

filmed by WFYI



STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts, Resident Dramaturg
with contributions by Janet Allen
Russell Metheny • Linda Pisano • Michael Keck

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CYRANO

based on the book by Edmund Rostand
adapted for the stage by Jo Roets

The most dashing of heroes, the wittiest humor, passionate romance, heartbreak, tragedy, and a really big nose. It's everything you could want in a night of theatre! This thrillingly theatrical gem sparkles with all the enchantment, intrigue, and sacrifice of love—and love lost.

STREAMING April 15 – May 9, 2021

LENGTH Approximately 1 hour, 15 minutes

AGE RANGE Recommended for grades 7–12

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COVER ART BY KYLE RAGSDALE

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THE STORY OF *CYRANO*

Cyrano is one of the greatest love stories ever told, a tale of a brilliant soldier and poet and an unusual love triangle, focusing on the importance of honor, the difference between beauty and illusion, and a rather large nose. Cyrano de Bergerac is a French soldier, a member of the Gascony Guards, famous for his extraordinary swordsmanship, his exquisite poetry, and his extremely large nose. It is this last quality which has convinced Cyrano that no woman could ever love him, especially the beautiful and intellectual Roxane. Meanwhile Roxane has fallen for the handsome new cadet Christian, who alas is completely tongue-tied in her presence. Suppressing his own feelings, Cyrano helps Christian woo Roxane by writing love letters to her under his own name. Yet a third rival for Roxane's attention is the powerful De Guiche, but when he plans a secret midnight marriage ceremony, Roxane manages to marry Christian instead. In a jealous rage, De Guiche sends the entire regiment to the front lines of the war. Surrounded by the enemy, Cyrano nonetheless manages to write Roxane twice daily professing his love under Christian's name. Just as Christian begins to understand Cyrano's true feelings, Roxane arrives with food for the starving soldiers. Christian insists that Cyrano tell Roxane the truth, but before he has the opportunity, the battle begins. The resolution of the tale is poetic and poignant.

*Melisa Pereyra,
Ryan Artzberger, & Jeb Burriss
in the IRT's 2021 production of Cyrano.
Photo by Zach Rosing.*



THE ENDURING CLASSICS

BY JANET ALLEN, MARGOT LACY ECCLES ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Words matter. That phrase has taken on deep political meaning in the past few years, as public discourse has veered wildly away from civility and truth-seeking. In *Cyrano's* case, the phrase gathers meaning not so much in the political (although he covers that too), but in the personal and the poetic. Words are his essence, his means of spinning great webs of humor for his comrades, or expressing the depths of his soul in his words and letters to his love—a love who does not know that those words are his. *Cyrano's* words both hide and illuminate his darkest fear: that he is unlovable because of his over-large nose. He struggles, a man of such prodigious intellect and heart, to realize his own value. This essential struggle binds much of humanity together: are we truly contained only by our outward appearances, or by the depth of our humanity, intellect, and soul?



Nicholas Hormann & Shawn Judge in the IRT's 1990 production of Edmond Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac.

The fact that any of us remember the name *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or the 17th century story that goes with him, is due not to his historic importance, but rather to his elevation by a French Romantic writer, Edmond Rostand, who died in the 1918 flu epidemic. Rostand plucked *Cyrano* from obscure French history and made him an unlikely romantic hero in an era that thought it was done with Romanticism, creating a world-renowned play and a gargantuan role much coveted by famous actors for more than 100 years. There have been operas and movies and musicals and animated adaptations, all attesting to our perennial fascination with the poet-duelist whose bravado is only matched by his insane love of words.

The themes that reappear in *Cyrano de Bergerac*—also buried deep in another French fable, *Beauty and the Beast*—attest to its timelessness. In *Cyrano* we find the tragic fragility of a man with a noble heart who cannot overcome his fear of being rejected. Instead, he woos in the guise of another, taking the secret of his love nearly to the grave, thereby denying both himself and the soulmate object of his love a lifetime of joy. For *Cyrano*, the correlative between love and death is constant. This is what the Germans call *liebestod*—a concept that summons another set of tragic lovers, *Tristan and Isolde*, and Wagner's towering opera. *Cyrano* repeatedly refers to finding love in the same breath as finding death. Here, he speaks for Christian under Roxane's balcony:

I, and you. Hope never ran so high.
 And nothing now remains except to die.
 Has the thought made you shiver as one who grieves?
 For you do tremble, a leaf among the leaves.

While our cultural moment may not celebrate unconsummated love or rhymed couplet verse, our hearts are still able to soar when art takes us out of the world of logic and into the realm of pure feeling contained in flights of expressive language.

The adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* that we are producing comes from a Belgian theatre company, Blauw Vier, and distills the story to its essence: the interwoven love triangle between Roxane, Christian, and the Count De Guiche, with Cyrano as the puppet-master working hard to control the fate of the others while his own heart hangs in the balance. Rostand's original play has a cast of more than 50: this adaptation has a cast of three. In this distillation, each character becomes iconic, mythic, larger than life. And the language—from French, to Flemish, to English—retains the power to move us with the simplest gesture and image.

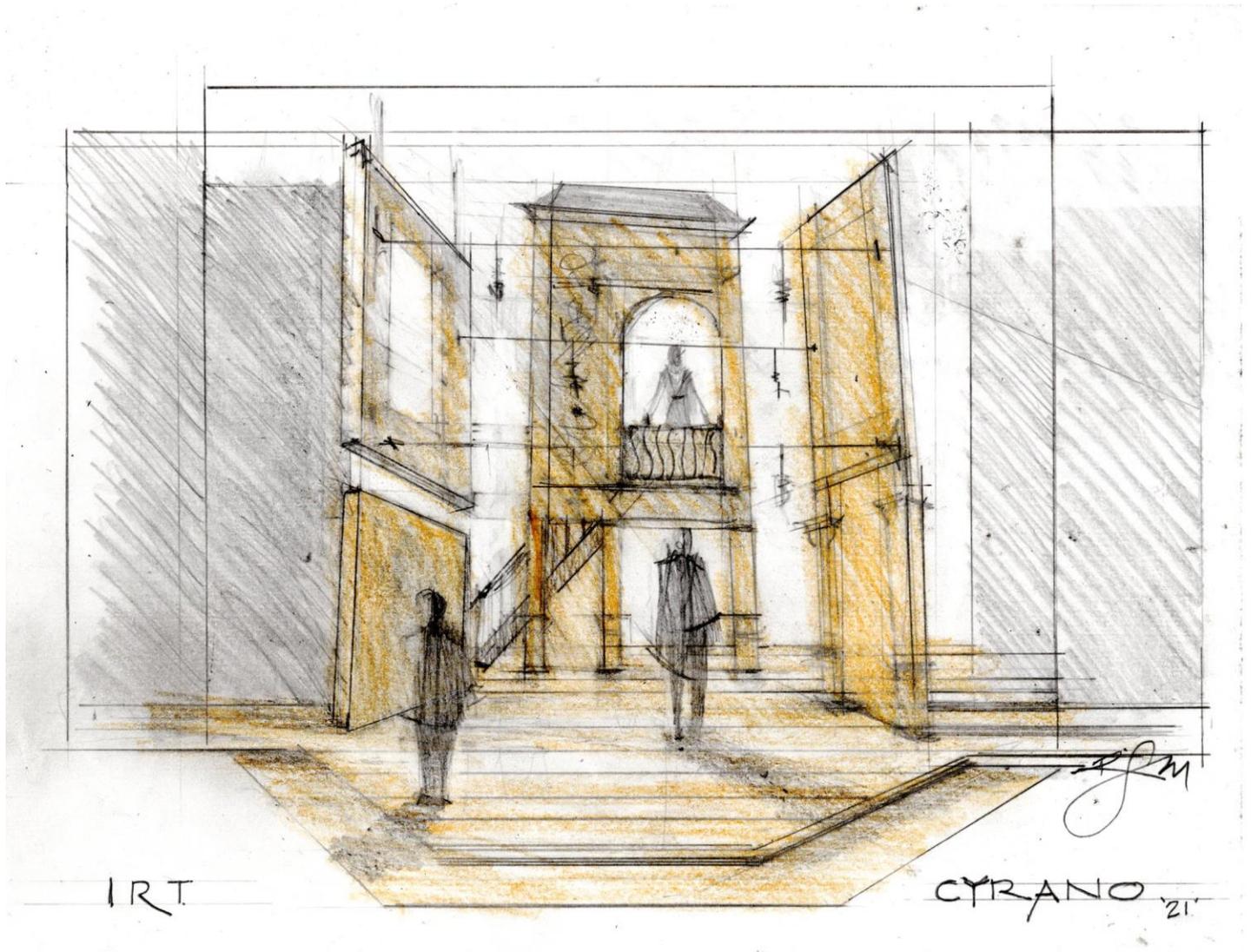
I am particularly delighted to be working with the three actors we have assembled for *Cyrano*: it's so rare that these three would be available at the same time, an odd blessing of COVID, perhaps. One of our local actor titans, Ryan Artzberger, will play Cyrano, a role he seems to me to be made to play. Melisa Pereyra, a member of the acting company at my favorite Midwestern Shakespeare festival, American Players Theatre, will return to us as Roxane. Melisa, a native of Argentina, has been at IRT only once (in *Boeing, Boeing*), so you are all in for a treat to see her take on this classic role where her language skills will really take flight. The third actor—Jeb Burris—also happens to double as Melisa's husband. He played a very Christian-like role at IRT a few years ago, D'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers*. Jeb was also seen at IRT in *The Originalist*, as one of Antonin Scalia's law clerks, so his versatility has already been on display—but nothing like it will be when you see him play six roles in *Cyrano*!

Classic stories are classic for a reason: they express something so universal and so timeless that they can bounce between generations and eras and cultures and remain deeply affecting, even primal. No IRT season would be complete without one of them, and this COVID season is no exception. Theatre is one of the great containers and uplifters of the classic story because it connects living people in storytelling transmission, in a time-honored ceremony of community making. While we've lost that essential element of the "live" this season, the theatre as an art form has survived pestilences before and will do so again, by going underground in whatever manner it must: whether around the campfire, where storytellers' faces are illuminated by the flickering flame, or around the screen, where the flickering is the digital movement of the actors encased in light.

*Constancy Macy, Rob Johansen, & Michael Callahan
in the IRT's 2002 production of
Cyrano by Jo Roets.*



PANACHE



Preliminary sketch by scenic designer Russell Metheny.

RUSSELL METHENY SCENIC DESIGNER

Cyrano is a three-actor jewel of a play which I have set in an intimate wooden courtyard. Surrounding the courtyard is a romantic surreal sky/landscape. With the actors playing multiple characters, various alleyways for entrances and exits are designed into the space for quick costume changes. As the play progresses, the courtyard opens up to fully reveal a romantic deep surreal atmosphere for Roxanne and Cyrano.

LINDA PISANO COSTUME DESIGNER

The story of *Cyrano* is both beautiful and heartbreaking. The original story is very long with many characters. This adaptation is remarkable in its efficiency. The costume design is not meant to hide the three actors, but rather to allow us to suspend our disbelief and immerse ourselves in the beauty of the storyline. Approaching this idea is difficult, as it must clearly communicate each character rapidly, yet also convey the ever-changing conditions of their circumstances such as war and aging. The costumes must be as efficient as the adaptation of the language, without compromising the splendor and, of course, the poetry of the storytelling.



Preliminary costume sketches for Cyrano, Roxane, & Christian by designer Linda Pisano.

MICHAEL KECK COMPOSER

I am excited by the opportunity to add my voice to this adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. I am familiar with composers of the period; my inspiration, however, comes directly from conversations with Janet and our creative colleagues. The concept, lean, economical, wastes no time diving into the core of the themes of the play. The fragility of the heart, the language of love, with a blend of comedy and pathos, set me on a path of composing with equal parts of classic and contemporary tonalities. To this end, our score blends period wind, percussion, and plucked string instruments with a small contemporary string ensemble and electronica.

POET & PLAYWRIGHT

EDMOND ROSTAND

BY RICHARD J ROBERTS, DRAMATURG

Written in 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac* was the greatest success of French poet and playwright Edmond Rostand's career. At a time when France had lost its position as cultural center of Europe, the play symbolized the glory of France. It is said that on opening night the audience remained on their feet applauding for an hour after the final curtain.

Born in 1868, Edmond Rostand grew up in an artistic family. His father was a scholar and a poet, his uncle was a composer, his aunt wrote a book of verses. But the strongest influence in his life was his Spanish grandmother, who gave Edmond his vivacity and panache. As a child Edmond loved reading, especially the works of the English Romantic Sir Walter Scott and the French Emperor Napoleon. Rostand was an outstanding student and young writer, and once wrote several love poems and letters for a less articulate schoolmate to send to his sweetheart. Although he studied to become a lawyer to please his father, he continued to write poetry.

Rostand's first play, debuting in 1894, was *Les Romanesques (The Romantics)*. The play's simple charm and lyricism inspired a modern musical version, *The Fantasticks*, which opened in New York City in 1960 and ran until 2002—making it the longest-running theatrical production in American history. Rostand's other plays included *T'Aiglon (The Eaglet)* which treated the history of Napoleon II and was awarded the French Legion of Honor. In 1901, he was voted into the French Academy, becoming the youngest writer ever to be admitted. He died in the worldwide flu pandemic in 1918.



Even during his own lifetime, Rostand's poetic drama existed well outside the mainstream. Other playwrights like Ibsen, Chekhov, and Shaw explored contemporary social issues in realistic settings. Rostand deliberately conjured up an old-fashioned, romantic vision of the past. For him, the realities of everyday life were unimportant. Rostand's characters are obsessed by their dreams and their ambitions, and it is their undying devotion to these dreams, even in the face of failure, that makes these characters great. Rostand returns us to a time when theatre can be heroic and magical, tragic and funny, all at the same time. And he reminds us that while we must live in the real world, it is our dreams and aspirations that give life meaning.

Edmond Rostand in the uniform of the Académie Française, 1905.

ROMANTICISM & ROMANCE

Cyrano de Bergerac is often referred to as a “romantic” play. The words romance or romantic are usually used today in reference to loving relationships. But in the world of arts and literature, these words have a long history and a wide variety of meanings. In the middle ages, a romance was a French literary form. Chivalry was in flower, and poetry focused on the heroic deeds of knights and their relationships with their ladies. Many men were away from home during the Crusades, and the tradition of the *chevalier servant* arose—one who loves his lady from afar, writing her poetry, serving her in every way, but never even as much as touching her. In the early 1800s, when the rules of Neo-Classicism governed the art world with order, reason, and balance, Romanticism broke out from these strictures with artworks celebrating freedom, exuberance, and the wildness of nature. Exotic settings, harsh contrasts between beauty and the grotesque, and the lone hero who stands against the tide were hallmarks of Romanticism. Famous novels of the Romantic period include *Frankenstein* and *The Count of Monte Christo*. Popular Romantic composers include Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Verdi.

Written in 1897, as Romanticism was being replaced by Modernism, *Cyrano de Bergerac* nonetheless exhibits the influence of the earlier era. Like the original Romantic plays, *Cyrano de Bergerac* reaches back in history for its exotic setting, evoking the 17th century through both the color and sweep of swashbuckling adventures and the flourish and sentiment of formal love poetry. The play is filled with contrasts between the beautiful and the grotesque: the handsome (but non-verbal) Christian and the long-nosed (but brilliant) Cyrano, the passion of love amidst the violence of war. Even within Cyrano himself, we see both the fearless warrior who doesn't flinch at a combat of 100 to one, and the fearful lover who can never confess his true feelings. The character of Cyrano, a modern *chevalier servant*, also captures the essence of the Romantic hero: the perpetual loner whose quest must inevitably end in an unfulfilled yet valiant death.

Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (1818)
by the German Romantic painter
Caspar David Friedrich.



THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

THE HISTORIC CYRANO

Rostand's play was inspired by a real person. Savinien de Cyrano was born in 1619. His family enjoyed the life of lesser French nobility, with two rural castles, one of which was Bergerac. After receiving his early education from a country priest, Cyrano studied in Paris, where he acquired his distaste for tradition and the authorities of 17th-century society. Cyrano's cousin Madeleine Robineau, married to the Baron de Neuville, took charge of Cyrano's social education. Cyrano enlisted with the Noble Guard of the Gascons, and later the Regiment of the Counts. Cyrano was considered a staunch individualist: historical accounts refer to him as "the Intrepid" and "a madman." He had a hot temper and superb swashbuckling skill. At a time when duels were fought over the slightest insult, he earned a reputation as "a great sword-clanker." One account reads, "Bergerac's nose, which was very ugly, was the cause for his killing at least ten people." Not only a swordsman, Cyrano was also a man of letters. He wrote two fantasies in prose, plays, letters, and even a study in physics, called *Journey to the Moon*. He wrote love poems for the newly wed Count of Canvoye to send to his wife, who wrote him as many as three letters a day. Cyrano's cousin Madeleine retired to a convent when the Baron de Neuville died in battle. Wounded at the siege of Arras, Cyrano lived as best he could in the intellectual circles of Paris. He died in 1655 from a head injury.

THE ART OF THE DUEL

Noblemen in France and throughout Europe had a long tradition of fighting duels to defend their honor. If a man refused to apologize for an insult, or if two gentlemen could not resolve a quarrel peacefully, they settled the matter by sword (or later pistol). It was considered extremely poor taste

for a nobleman to settle matters in the courts; lawyers were very middle class. Like all concerns of French etiquette, the duel was governed by strict rules. Unfortunately, it was a deadly game; between 1589 and 1607—just 18 years—some 4,000 gentlemen in France alone were killed in duels.



*Jeb Burris
& Ryan Artzberger
in the IRT's 2021
production of Cyrano.
Photo by Zach Rosing.*

THE CADETS

The story of *Cyrano* is set in France during the years 1640 to 1655. From 1618 to 1648 France was at war against Austria and Spain. During most of this period—1617 to 1643—Louis XIII was King of France. (This is also the era of Alexander Dumas pere’s novel *The Three Musketeers*, which takes place in 1625.) The Thirty Years War was an effort to wipe out Protestantism and establish a new stronger Catholic rule in Europe. Though largely Catholic, France fought on the side of the Protestants. Ultimately France emerged triumphant, but the war devastated Central Europe. Cyrano and Christian are members of the Gascon Cadets—a company of soldiers from the Gascoyne region in southwestern France. The Gascons were known for their bravery—and for their flamboyant bragging.

THE SIEGE OF ARRAS

Act 4 of *Cyrano* takes place amid the siege of Arras, which lasted from June 22 to August 9, 1640. The French army surrounded the Spanish town of Arras, which was held by a garrison of 2000 soldiers. Although the French army was much larger (32,000), the Spanish field army succeeded in preventing supplies from reaching the French. Cardinal Richelieu’s forces were finally able to get food to the French troops on August 2. On August 8, the Spanish Garrison attacked the French; the real Cyrano de Bergerac was wounded in that battle. The next day, Arras surrendered, and the region has been part of France ever since.

PRECIOUS LADIES & THE ART OF CONVERSATION

In Cyrano’s time, the French royal court set standards for fashion and behavior, and those who inhabited fashionable circles followed strict, if not necessarily logical, guidelines. Intelligence and wit in conversation were so highly valued that a particular style was developed by certain fashionable ladies. *Préciosité* was a form of conversation marked by detail and excess. *Préciosité* was developed in the salons, where gossip and conversation about art and politics reigned supreme. The most popular guests were those whose discourse sparkled most. Details mattered; in discussing love, for instance, it was said the *précieuses* “distinguished nine kinds of esteem and twelve sorts of sighs.” In *Cyrano*, Roxane’s love of intelligent conversation and witty repartee identify her as a *précieuse*. Cyrano’s easy success in this world is as clear as Christian’s utter failure. Note, however, how Roxane’s attitude changes as she grows to love “the soul behind the words.”

*Jeb Burris & Melisa Pereyra
in the IRT’s 2021 production of Cyrano.
Photo by Zach Rosing.*



CYRANO'S ENDURING APPEAL

Cyrano de Bergerac has been acclaimed around the world for more than 120 years. In 1923 the *New York Times* wrote, "It would be difficult to exaggerate its charm for all who love humor and fancy the thrill of valiant deeds and the glamour of romantic love enveloped in an atmosphere of poetic eloquence and shot through by the lightning flash of wit." Louis Kronenberger wrote in 1946, "Rostand's play offers all those dashing, pathetic, impossibly romantic things for which the human heart hungers." Next to Hamlet, the role of Cyrano is usually considered the most coveted role for an actor. At 1,400 verse lines, the role is the same length as Hamlet, and requires as much if not more breadth: from comedy to tragedy, from whispered sentiment to brash swordplay, from the grotesque to the sublime.

The title role was written for Constant Coquelin, the most celebrated actor in France at the time. Since then, many great actors have tested their mettle against the role, including José Ferrer (who won both a Tony Award and an Oscar for the role), Christopher Plummer, Derek Jacoby, Kevin Kline, James McAvoy, and Peter Dinklage. There have been five opera versions and at least as many musical theatre versions.

Rostand's play has been filmed ten times, including Gerard Depardieu's original-French-language version in 1990. More than a dozen other films use the original story as a springboard. In 1987 the film *Roxanne* featured Steve Martin as a long-nosed fire chief in a Rocky Mountain ski town who falls in love with a beautiful astronomer who is smitten by a handsome young fireman. The final reel abandons classic Romantic tragedy for a happy Hollywood ending. *The Truth about Cats & Dogs* is a 1996 film which twists the *Cyrano* premise even further. Janeane Garofalo plays a successful radio veterinarian whose on-air voice and wit charm a handsome listener, but whose insecurities about her appearance prompt her to ask a model friend (Uma Thurman) to impersonate her face-to-face. Even without its historic trappings, the *Cyrano* tale is one which continues to delight generations of audiences.



*James McAvoy
in the National Theatre
of Great Britain's
2020 production of
Cyrano de Bergerac in a
contemporary setting.*

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

We recognize that teachers aim to align their lesson plans with standards and that it is important to be able to align your experience at IRT with curriculum standards. Streaming IRT's production of *NO. 6* is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of the text and key elements of classic literature. Some standards to consider for this show would be:

READING – LITERATURE

- RL.1 – Read and comprehend a variety of literature independently and proficiently
- RL.2 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by analyzing, inferring, and drawing conclusions about literary elements, themes, and central ideas
 - Sample: 9-10.RL.2.2: Analyze in detail the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of a work of literature, including how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details.
 - Sample: 9-10.RL.4.1: Evaluate the extent to which multiple interpretations of a story, play, or poem stay faithful to or departs from the text or script.
- RL.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure and point of view
 - Sample: 11-12.RL.3.2: Analyze a work of literature in which the reader must distinguish between what is directly stated and what is intended (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) in order to understand the point of view.
- RL.4 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by connecting various literary works and analyzing how medium and interpretation impact meaning.

READING – VOCABULARY

- RV.2 - Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
- RV.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
 - Sample: 9-10.RV.3.2: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a nonfiction text, including figurative, connotative, denotative, and technical meanings; evaluate the effectiveness of specific word choices on meaning and tone in multiple and varied contexts.



THEMES & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

HONOR

According to the ideal of 17th-century French society, Cyrano was an *honnête homme*, an honorable man, a man whose courage on the battlefield was matched by his refined manners. Etiquette manuals of the time describe the *honnête homme* in almost superhuman terms: he is wise, religious, virtuous yet adventurous, witty yet direct, tall, handsome, and slender (but not vain), an excellent fighter and sportsman, a rider, a dancer, a tennis player, a musician—as one writer puts it, “the height and crown of all virtues.” Make your own list of “honorable” virtues. How is it different from this list? How is it similar? Name some persons with honor, either from history or today’s world or even your own life. What makes them honorable?

It is interesting to note that in this period a man’s honor was considered to be more important than his honesty. Thus the characters in the play have no inhibitions about disguising themselves or pretending, even lying. As long as they act with honor, their character remains intact. What is more important? Honor or honesty?

IRONY

Irony may be loosely defined as a difference between what appears to be and what is. What examples of irony can you find in *Cyrano*’s plot, characters, and situations? Describe & discuss these ironies.

LOVE

Usually, when lovers say, “I would die for you,” it is a figure of speech. Cyrano really means it. Every day he crosses enemy lines merely to send love letters to Roxane. What is love? How important is love to a person’s happiness?



FRIENDSHIP

Just as love is a major theme in the play, so is friendship. What is the difference between love and friendship?

SACRIFICE

Cyrano grants Roxane’s wishes while sacrificing his own feelings. He remains loyal to Christian long past Christian’s death. To what lengths should a person go for a friend? In what ways does Rostand express the idea that the spiritual is nobler than the physical in life?

CHARACTER

Does Cyrano have a “tragic flaw”? If so, what is it? Do you see the play as a tragedy or a comedy? Why? One of the principal ways we define characters is how they change over the course of the play. How do each of the three main characters in this play—Christian, Roxane, and Cyrano—change?

WISH FULFILLMENT

Suppose events in the play were different and Roxane and Christian were able to live together in marriage. What do you think would happen? What if Roxane learned the truth and she and Cyrano married—what would happen?

OBSESSION

Roxane is a 17th-century *précieuse*—one who is obsessed with literary talent, witticisms, and wordplay, to the point where this obsession governs all her feelings. Her assumption that Christian’s physical beauty must be matched by verbal dexterity leads to deception, and eventually death. How might Roxane’s life have been different if she had been more open-minded about love? What obsessions do people have in today’s world which interfere with their relationships?

TRUTH & APPEARANCE

Cyrano, in many ways, defines himself by the shape of his nose. In what ways has this focus on his appearance inspired him to develop excellence in other areas? In what ways does his insecurity hold him back? Think about our contemporary culture’s obsession with appearances. How does this phenomenon affect the quality of our lives? Are there ways in which Christian’s good looks are somehow a disadvantage? What good qualities in him are overlooked by either Cyrano or Roxane or both? In many ways, Christian corresponds with what we might call today’s “dumb jock.” What happens when we allow such stereotypes to limit our perception?



(above) Melisa Pereyra & Ryan Artzberger in the IRT’s 2021 production of *Cyrano*.

(opposite) Ryan Artzberger, Melisa Pereyra, & Jeb Burris in the IRT’s 2021 production of *Cyrano*.

Both photos by Zach Rosing.

WRITING PROMPTS

You be Cyrano! Write a letter to Roxane, pretending to be Christian. Be as romantic and poetic as you know Cyrano to be. Or write a letter from Cyrano to Roxane, confessing to her the truth.

Or be Roxane! Write a letter to Christian, responding to one of his (Cyrano's) letters. Be as romantic and poetic as you know Roxane to be. Or write a letter from Roxane to Cyrano, telling him about Christian's letters.

Choose a character: Roxane, De Guiche, Le Bret, or Ragueneau. In that character's voice, write a eulogy for Cyrano's funeral. In what style would your character write? What aspects of Cyrano's life would they choose to focus on? What memorable stories would they tell? How would they use rhyme, humor, allusion, and/or imagery?

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? How did watching this play streaming rather than live affect your experience? Did you notice the reactions of any others who watched with you? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education.irt@gmail.com

ACTIVITIES

Cyrano by Jo Roets is a distillation of the full-length *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand. Can you distill the play even further—down to 30 lines? Divide the class into small groups. Have each group present their own 30-line version of the story. Make sure to include all the important story points, and to tell the whole story from beginning to end. What is absolutely necessary for the audience to follow the story? What can be eliminated? What form might you use to tell the story: puppets, rap, musical theatre? Have each group perform their version for the class. What did the different versions have in common? How did they differ? How might distilling and play or novel to its bare essentials help you understand the original version better?

Look at the image on the cover of this study guide, a painting by Kyle Ragsdale commissioned for this production by the IRT. Imagine that your school were doing a production of *Cyrano*. How else might this play be depicted visually? What moment(s) from the play might you select? Would you be realistic or more impressionistic or abstract? Create a poster for your school's production, including the title, the playwright's name, and the name of your school. Use paint, watercolors, pen and ink, pencil, colored pencil, collage, or any other artistic medium. Make sure your poster conveys the spirit of the play and is inviting to potential audience members.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, translated by Anthony Burgess

Young Cyrano, a novel by Sir Paul Cicchini

The Man Who Was Cyrano: A Life of Edmond Rostand, Creator of Cyrano de Bergerac by Sue Lloyd

Chantecler by Edmond Rostand

The Eaglet by Edmond Rostand

The Other World: The Comical History of the States and Empires of the World of the Moon
by Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac

A Voyage to the Moon: With Some Account of the Solar World by Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac

FILM-DVD

Cyrano de Bergerac starring José Ferrer (1950)

Cyrano de Bergerac starring Peter Donat
& Marsha Mason—PBS (1973)

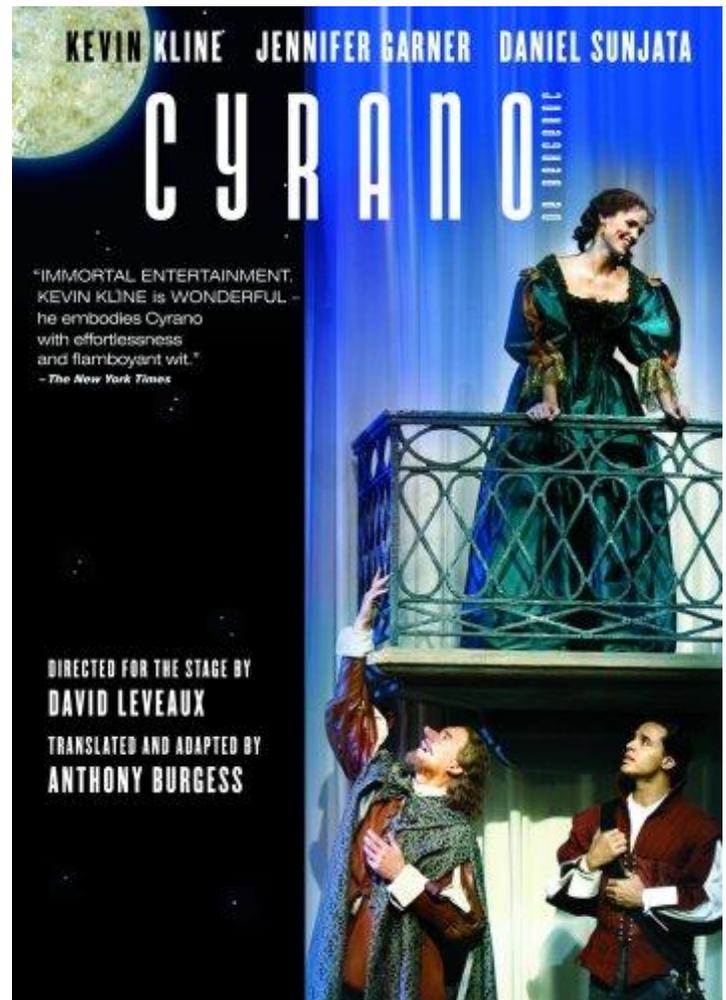
Roxanne starring Steve Martin & Daryl Hannah
(1987)

Cyrano de Bergerac starring Gerard Depardieu
(1990—in French)

The Fantasticks starring Joel Gray
& Bernard Hughes (1994)

Cyrano de Bergerac starring Kevin Kline
& Jennifer Garner (2008)

Cyrano de Bergerac starring James McAvoy—
National Theatre Live (2020)



GLOSSARY

page

2 Mount Everest

Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world, located in the Himalayas. The China-Nepal border runs across its summit at 29,031 feet.

2 a Gothic perch

Gothic is a complex style of medieval architecture; here Cyrano is suggesting his nose is an elaborate structure for such a simple function as a bird's perch

3 pedantic

scholarly, usually in an ostentatious manner

3 Aristophanes

Aristophanes (c.446–c.386 BC) was a comic playwright of ancient Athens. Eleven of his forty plays survive virtually complete. Aristophanes has been said to recreate the life of ancient Athens more convincingly than any other author. His powers of ridicule were feared and acknowledged by influential contemporaries.

3 hippocamelelephant

Rostand found the term “hippocampelephantocamelos” in a letter from the real Le Bret to the real Cyrano, referring to an especially pedantic medical professor. According to Le Bret, it is a term that the Latin playwright Gaius Lucilius quoted from a lost play of Aristophanes (whose works often feature strange mythical creatures as characters).

4 squire

the owner of a country estate; less than a knight but more than a gentleman; De Guiche uses the term as an insult

4 viscount

less than a count (De Guiche's title) but more than a baron

4 No gloves ... I left it in some viscount's face

If Cyrano has slapped a viscount in the face with his gloves, that means that he has challenged him to a duel.

5 rapier

A rapier has a slender and sharply pointed two-edged blade. It was popular in Western Europe, both for civilian use (dueling and self-defense) and as a military side arm, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. It is similar in appearance to an epee used today in fencing.

5 En garde!

French: “On [your] guard,” a warning term in fencing and sword fighting.

5 foppish

a fop is a man who is excessively devoted to his appearance; he is often considered foolish or silly

5 lout

an uncouth and aggressive man or boy

5 peal

the ringing of a bell

6 Le Bret

Cyrano’s friend and confidant.

7 Duenna

a chaperone; an elderly lady who serves as governess or companion to a young noblewoman in the Spanish or Portuguese court

7 the church of Saint-Germain

Saint-Germain-des-Prés is located in the district of Saint-Germain, which at the time of the play was among the most desirable on the Left Bank.

8 Ragueneau

A poet who runs a bakery shop where other poets congregate.

8 Rue Saint Honoré

The Rue Saint-Honoré is located in the 1st arrondissement of Paris. It is located near the Jardin des Tuileries and today is the site of a number of museums and upscale boutiques.

8 rendezvous

a meeting at an agreed time and place, typically between two people

9 De Ligniere

A poet, Cyrano’s friend, an outspoken drunk.

9 Porte de Nesle

a dock on the Left Bank of the River Seine in Paris



Jeb Burris in the IRT's 2021 production of Cyrano.

Photo by Zach Rosing.

11 Bergerac

Bergerac is a town in southeaster France, in the province of Gascony. It is known for its production of tobacco and wine.

14 Baron

Although he is young and from the countryside, Christian holds the rank of baron, the lowest tier among the ranks of the nobility (just above a knight).

14 Gascons

Gascony is a province of southwestern France, bordered by Spain and the Atlantic Ocean. As well as Cyrano and Christian, it is the home of d'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* (which takes place about 15 years before *Cyrano* begins).

16 the men of Castel-Jaloux

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux is the captain of Cyrano and Christian's company.

16 coronets

Small crowns worn by a noblemen or ladies, not by kings or queens.

16 brochettes

skewers; the cadets brag that they cook their enemies like shish kebab

Melisa Pereyra in the IRT's 2021 production of Cyrano. Photo by Zach Rosing.



16 quay

A wharf. Pronounced *key* or *kay*.

21 muse

a person or personified force who is the source of inspiration for a creative artist

22 Siberia

Siberia is an extensive geographical region spanning much of Northern Asia. It is part of Russia, and one of the most sparsely populated regions on earth. Worldwide, Siberia is known primarily for its long, harsh winters.

23 Capuchin monastery

The Capuchins were an austere branch of the order of St. Francis, engaged in missionary work and preaching.

24 jasmine

Jasmines are widely cultivated for the characteristic fragrance of their flowers.

26 Adieu!

French: goodbye

27 disdain

consider to be unworthy of one's consideration

27 locks

Strands of hair that coil or hang together; tresses

29 transported

to be overwhelmed with a strong emotion, especially joy

30 a kiss ... the Queen of France once gave one to the lucky Lord Buckingham

In *The Three Musketeers*, Alexander Dumas *pere* created a fictional affair between Queen Anne, the wife of Louis XIII, and George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham.

32 the Cardinal

Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) became chief minister to Louis XIII of France in 1624 and held that position until his death. He consolidated royal power by restraining the power of the nobility, transforming France into a strong, centralized state. A patron of the arts, and founded the Académie Française, the learned society responsible for matters pertaining to the French language. He is the villain in Alexandre Dumas's 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers*.

38 Vimy

the next village northeast of Arras

39 the King

Born in 1601, Louis XIII became King of France at the age of eight in 1610. His mother acted as regent until 1617, when he exiled her and executed her followers. He reigned until his death in 1643. Taciturn and suspicious, he relied heavily on his ministers, particularly Cardinal Richelieu, who helped him to establish absolute monarchy in France.

40 “Por favor, señorita.”

Spanish: Please, miss.

40 pâté

a rich, savory paste made from finely minced or mashed ingredients, typically seasoned meat or fish

40 a game dish

Game is wild animals hunted for their meat. French game dishes might include deer (venison), boar, and rabbit, as well as pheasant, grouse, partridge, and other birds.

40 Burgundy

Burgundy wine is made in the Burgundy region in eastern France. The most famous wines produced here—those commonly referred to as “Burgundies”—are dry red wines made from pinot noir grapes, and white wines made from chardonnay grapes.

47 the King

Born in 1638, Louis XIV was King of France from 1643 until his death in 1715. Known as the Sun King, he presided over the age of Molière, Racine, Lully, Charpentier, and Charles Perrault.

48 Moselle

a German white wine

48 Fontainebleau

one of France’s greatest castles, the king’s “hunting lodge”

48 Madame Mancini

Louis XIV (age 17 at the time of this scene in the play) had been crowned at the age of four; his mother acted as regent, working closely with Cardinal Mazarin, who may or may not have been her lover as well. In his teens, Louis fell in love with Marie Mancini, Mazarin’s niece, and was secretly engaged to her. Louis’s mother did not consent to the marriage, and Marie was packed off to Italy to marry a nobleman.



*Ryan Artzberger in the IRT’s 2021 production of Cyrano.
Photo by Zach Rosing.*