

“Have you ever loved anyone madly?”

a new musical

**GOODSPEED MUSICALS
AUDIENCE INSIGHTS**

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Cyrano

AUG 3 - SEPT 9, 2018
THE TERRIS THEATRE

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Audience Insights for *Cyrano* was prepared by:
Erin Lafferty, Education & Outreach Manager
Anika Chapin, Artistic Associate
Katherine Desjardins, Creative Content Manager
Dolores Mihaliak, Education & Library Intern

MAX
SHOWALTER
CENTER FOR EDUCATION
IN MUSICAL THEATRE

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Synopsis

SHORT TAKE: The spoiler-free synopsis

Cyrano, a hot-tempered soldier who is as accomplished with a pen as he is lacking in appearance, is in love with his cousin Roxanne but doesn't dare tell her. She, beautiful and penniless, is being courted by the rich and powerful Duke De Guiche, but she vows that she will never settle for anything less than true love.

Cyrano is full of hope when Roxanne wishes to meet with him alone, but she tells him that she has fallen for Christian, a beautiful new soldier in Cyrano's company of guards. She makes Cyrano promise to protect him. Cyrano meets Christian, who is dismayed to learn that Roxanne wants a letter from him; he is not smart and cannot write well. Cyrano, not wanting Roxanne to be disappointed, gives Christian a beautiful letter he had written to Roxanne and promises to write more for him.

The Duke De Guiche visits Roxanne and reveals that he has been put in charge of the guards and will send them to war. Fearing for Christian and Cyrano, Roxanne convinces him to keep their company at home. Meanwhile, Christian is growing frustrated by not speaking for himself, but he fails miserably when he attempts to do so. Cyrano feeds him lines to say to Roxanne as they stand under her balcony, but Christian gets Roxanne's kiss.

A priest arrives with a letter from De Guiche, and though it actually says that De Guiche will be visiting Roxanne that night, Roxanne tells the Priest that the message is an order to marry her and Christian immediately. Furious at the deception, De Guiche sends Cyrano and Christian to war.

Weeks later, the guards are starving during a long and brutal siege. De Guiche tells them they will be attacked shortly, and Cyrano gives Christian the most recent letter to Roxanne. Christian realizes that Cyrano is in love with Roxanne and tells him that Roxanne loves the writer of the letters—Cyrano—not him, but Cyrano won't hear it. The attack starts, and Christian is killed.

Years later, Roxanne is living in a convent, still unaware of the letters' true writer. Cyrano visits her every week, but for the first time he is late. When he arrives, weak and ill, he asks to read Christian's final letter to her. With time running out, will the brave soldier have the courage to admit the truth?

SPOILER ALERT! Read this version if you want all the details. But beware—there are spoilers!

At a theater, friends of Cyrano, a hot-tempered soldier as accomplished with a pen as he is lacking in appearance, fear he'll disrupt the performance. Roxanne, a beautiful but penniless noblewoman, arrives with the powerful Duke De Guiche. Roxanne's chaperone warns her that she shouldn't be cold to De Guiche, who could make her rich—or ruin her if she rejects him. But Roxanne makes it clear in a song that she will not compromise for anything but true love. Christian, a beautiful young soldier, sees Roxanne from afar and is struck by her beauty.

The show begins, and sure enough Cyrano stops the show, claiming the leading actor is too bad to perform. De Guiche mocks Cyrano to Roxanne, who defends him and warns De Guiche not to laugh at him. Challenged, De Guiche calls to Cyrano and insults his appearance. Cyrano sings a barbed song exaggerating how grotesque he is, turning the insult back on De Guiche for his lack of originality.

Cyrano reveals to his protégée Le Bret the real reason he stopped the play—the leading actor looked at Roxanne flirtatiously. Cyrano and Roxanne are cousins who spent their childhoods together, and Cyrano has been madly in love with her ever since, although he hasn't spoken to her in years.

Roxanne's chaperone arrives and tells Cyrano that Roxanne wishes to speak with him alone, and they set up a date for the following morning at a pastry shop. Cyrano, full of hope that Roxanne might love him, fights and defeats one hundred men who are threatening his friend.

The next morning, Cyrano writes a beautiful love letter to Roxanne. She arrives and reveals she is in love with Christian, who is about to join Cyrano's company of guards. Roxanne asks Cyrano, famous for brutally hazing new guards, to protect Christian, and Cyrano agrees. De Guiche arrives and offers Cyrano a place in his retinue, which Cyrano refuses. In a song, Le Bret warns Cyrano about making powerful enemies.

Christian arrives, and Cyrano threatens him until realizing who he is. He tells Christian that Roxanne loves him. Christian is overjoyed until he hears Roxanne wants a letter from him; he's not very smart, and he doesn't write well. Cyrano, not wanting to disappoint Roxanne, gives Christian the letter that he wrote to her and offers to write more letters for Christian.

Later, De Guiche visits Roxanne and tells her that he has been put in charge of the guards, and they have to leave for war. Roxanne, fearing for Christian and Cyrano, flirts with De Guiche and convinces him not to take their

Synopsis

company. De Guiche agrees and promises to return to Roxanne that night.

Cyrano has been writing letters to Roxanne for Christian, who tries to talk to Roxanne for himself, but it goes terribly. Attempting to help, Cyrano feeds Christian lines as they stand under Roxanne's balcony. A priest arrives with a message from De Guiche to Roxanne. The message tells her to prepare for his arrival, but, thinking quickly, she claims the message tells the priest to marry her and Christian. While they marry, Cyrano disguises himself as a musician and sings a song to distract De Guiche. Angered by the ruse, De Guiche sends Christian and Cyrano to war.

Weeks later, the guards are starving during a long and brutal siege, and they sing a song to cheer themselves. De Guiche arrives and tells the guards they will be attacked shortly. Cyrano gives Christian the last letter he has written to Roxanne, and Christian realizes Cyrano is in love with her. He tells Cyrano that Roxanne loves the writer of the letters—Cyrano—not himself, but Cyrano says he is too ugly to be loved. The battle begins and Christian is killed.

Many years later, Roxanne is at the convent where she committed herself after Christian's death and will not rejoin society even when urged to by De Guiche, now a friend. Le Bret tells them that Cyrano, who visits Roxanne every week, is very ill but still too stubborn and proud to accept help. He hears that Cyrano has collapsed and rushes off. Roxanne waits alone for Cyrano, who for the first time is late for their appointment. He asks to read Christian's final letter, which Roxanne always carries with her. Roxanne sees he is reciting it, not reading it, and she realizes it was Cyrano who wrote the letters and Cyrano whom she has loved all this time. Still denying Roxanne could ever love him, Cyrano dies in her arms.

Understanding Military Terms

Welling beneath colorful pastry shoppes and moonlit veranda scenes, *Cyrano* is thick with a sense of foreboding: there is a war going on, and Cyrano and Christian are both soldiers.

As a young man of lower nobility in France, one would begin a military career by becoming enlisted in an apprenticeship with the rank officially known as **cadet**—officer in training—in the infantry. These infantry units would be under the command of an **ensign**—low ranking commissioned officer—who in turn would report directly to the captain of the unit, sometimes called a **gascon**.

Characters

CYRANO DE BERGERAC: A high-ranking soldier in the guards, a swordsman, a scholar, and a poet, courageous and hot-headed. In love with his cousin Roxanne, he has a brilliant mind but fears his appearance will prevent him from ever being loved.

ROXANNE: A beautiful but penniless woman, romantic and smart. Although her circumstances dictate she should marry for money, she will settle for nothing less than true love.

CHRISTIAN: A young soldier. He has a beautiful face and a good heart but not a great intellect.

THE DUKE DE GUICHE: Rich and powerful and a commander of the army, he is very used to getting what he wants and can be spiteful when he doesn't get it.

LE BRET: Cyrano's protégée and a fellow soldier.

RAGUENEAU: The owner of a pastry shop.

JODELET: The owner of the local theater.

MONTGOMERY: A famous actor who is hated by Cyrano.

CARBON: The commander of Cyrano and Christian's company of guards.

CHAPERONE: An older woman who protects and guides Roxanne in society.

MOTHER MARTHE: The Mother Abbess of the convent where Roxanne goes to live.

SISTER CLAIRE: A young nun in the convent.

ORANGE GIRL: A girl who sells oranges at the theater and has a crush on Cyrano.

Director's Vision

BY ERICA SCHMIDT

I believe *Cyrano* to be an enduring, moving, and beautiful human story. In collaboration with Aaron and Bryce Dessner and Matt Berninger of the Grammy Award-winning band The National, I am creating a brand-new adaptation from the Edmond Rostand play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Although this piece has seen many translations and adaptations into a number of art forms, I seek to create a new hybrid of musical and play.

This idea is born out of working on the play and listening to The National. This is a new idea: to live-score the play with a band on stage and to have songs that don't function in a traditional musical theater way. I hope that you will go along for the ride.

The play in its original form is very verbose, almost bloated with words.

But the central idea—a proud man with a big nose who loves a woman so deeply he agrees to woo her for another man—is an enduring, moving, beautiful story.

What I have done is make the language very spare, very modern. I have pruned the story and changed a couple of plot points. I have focused on the humanity of the characters. For *Cyrano*, his insecurities are not about his nose, not really—his downfall is his own pride. It is the way he sees himself, not the way the world sees him, that finally



defeats him. I have also emphasized that Roxanne is willfully ignoring the signs that *Cyrano* has written the letters; she wants the beautiful illusion so much that she deceives herself. I believe most people can recognize themselves in this well-intentioned self-deception and self-destruction.

I have trimmed the cast to 10. I imagine the period to be ambiguous, sometime between 1500 and 1880, when women wore corsets and large skirts, and letters were the only form of communication across distance. I imagine the place to be set not in France, but anywhere. I imagine a very spare elegant production: gorgeous in its austerity and simplicity—outside of time and place—totally universal and profoundly moving—with the music and words as the main event.

I expect to make changes throughout our time at The Terris Theatre. As this is a developmental production and you are our first audience, I expect that we will discover quite a lot about how the show moves and plays, and that we will need to make quite a few changes during our residence here.

In my work, I write to create art to fall in love with. *Cyrano* embodies those efforts; it is full of longing and sadness, yet hopeful and romantic, with a score by my most favorite band.

ERICA SCHMIDT (*Director, Adaptation*) is an award-winning director and frequent adaptor of works for the stage. She attended Vassar College, where she met long-time collaborator, Lorenzo Pisoni, and had aspirations of performing when she first began her career. In time she shifted her focus toward directing and costume design when she and a group of her friends formed a company together, and her work with Pisoni ultimately produced the much-lauded show, *Humor Abuse*. A solo clowning show Pisoni had been developing since his teens, *Humor Abuse* is the story of his relationship with his father—also a career circus clown. With Schmidt as director and collaborator, the show was developed at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut and, after subsequent developmental productions, went on to be produced by Manhattan Theatre Club in 2009. For the MTC run, the show earned the Drama Desk Award for outstanding solo show, an Obie Award, a Lucille Lortel Award, and the Outer Critics Circle Award for outstanding solo performance. *Humor*

Abuse did not stop there, however, and played Philadelphia Theater Company, a west coast tour, Seattle Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, and Center Theatre Group.

In addition to her work on *Humor Abuse*, Schmidt has directed productions such as *As You Like It* (The Public Theater), *People Be Heard* (Playwrights Horizons), *The Burnt Part Boys* (New York Stage and Film), *Honey Brown Eyes* (Working Theatre), *Invasion* (The Play Company, The Flea Theater), *I Call My Brothers* (New Ohio Theatre), *A Month in the Country* (Classic Stage Company), *Richard II* (The Old Globe), and *Macbeth* (Seattle Repertory Theatre). Also a writer, in 2002 Schmidt adapted and directed *Debbie Does Dallas* for the stage starring Sherie Rene Scott, and she wrote and directed *All the Fine Boys* which premiered in 2017 at The Pershing Square Signature Center starring Abigail Breslin.

From Musketeer to Musical

THE MUSKETEER

As legendary as the story seems, Edmond Rostand's original character of Cyrano was in fact based on a flesh and blood person, whose life was nearly as colorful as it is now in song. In an age of letters and musketeers, corsets and crinolines, Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac was born in Paris to the noble family of Gascon. Between his love of political satire and peculiar appearance, Cyrano did indeed inspire duels wherever he went, and it is said that he found quarrels with everyone in his life except his friend LeBret. Unable to content himself in Paris, at 21 years old he joined the Cadets of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux—in other words, he became a soldier under Count Jaloux. After fighting valiantly, he was dreadfully wounded in the Siege of Arras and in 1640, and honorably retired from the year of his life of a soldier.

THE POET

On his return to Paris, the already accomplished poet took a fancy to philosophy and mathematics, which he would study in great depth over the remaining years of his life. He also held a great love of science fiction, writing the novels Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune (Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon) and Histoire comique des états et empires du soleil (Comical History of the States and Empires of the Sun), writings which would later provide inspiration to authors such as Jules Verne and Jonathan Swift. He would continue to write and publish poetry and plays, his most successful one being *Death of Agrippina*, written entirely in verse and lauded by his contemporary audiences as an absolute masterpiece. Whether the early death of the tempestuous poet was assassination or accidental is still unknown. Cyrano was struck in the head by a block of wood falling from an upper window, a blow from which he never recovered. He was thirty-six.

THE PLAY

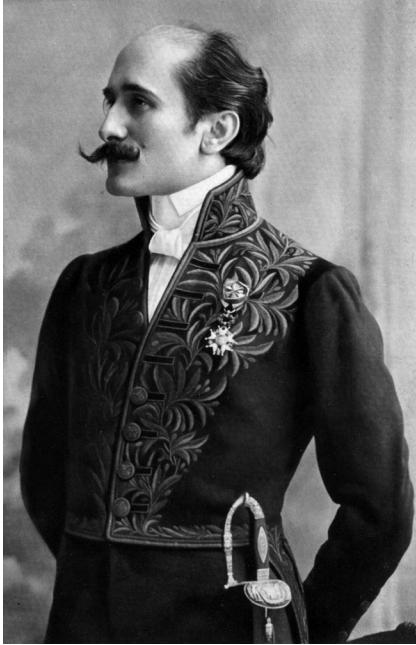
Fast forward about two hundred and fifty years after the historical Cyrano's death. We are still in Paris and have now arrived at the end of the Romantic Era. Edmond Rostand, beyond being a twenty-something failing Parisian poet and playwright, was a devotee of Cyrano and his work, and in 1897 staged the first production of his (highly dramatized) five-act record of Savinien Cyrano's life. It was a smashing success. The play was written entirely in verse, and soon it became known internationally. Within a year it was translated to English, and within ten years it was translated



A portrait of Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac.

into every codified European language, as well as Japanese. The verse posed an interesting challenge and opportunity to translators, and on the American stage it was inevitable that a musical should be born. In 1899 *Cyrano* debuted as a comic opera in New York, featuring music by Victor Hubert. From there, an opera was produced in 1913, an operetta in 1930, a revival in 1946, and no fewer than six films and four more musical adaptations spanning the years 1950 to 2008. The tale of the love sick poet and the unattainable beauty touches us in a timeless manner, and inspires this new adaptation by Erica Schmidt.

Edmond Rostand



The first dramatization of Cyrano de Bergerac's life belongs to the Parisian playwright Edmond Rostand. Edmond Rostand entered the world in Marseille, France, in 1868, at the height of the **Romantic Era**. Born of wealthy parents, he was able to indulge his love of theater and literature from a young age. As a youth he would have seen Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, set with grandiose designs and special effects that were unique to the Comédie-Française. It was also during the peak of Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri carrier, a scenic designer who was considered a master of colors, historical ruins, and illusions on stage. He thrived in **Neo-Classicism**, and his sets and methods became international standards.

Unfortunately, by the time Rostand was through with schooling, the **Romantic period** was quickly phasing out, and amorous French poetry was falling before the **Naturalist movement**. Rostand was determined, however, and having fallen in

love with Cyrano's writings long ago in Marseille, he began to weave the first retelling of the life of the poet and playwright who had lived two and a half centuries before him.

The character of Cyrano as portrayed by Rostand is remarkably true to life. A person of much *éclat* for his poetry and dueling skills, and yet notorious for his short temper and self-consciousness of appearance, Cyrano's character shines true in Rostand's drama. Further, Cyrano was indeed present and wounded in the Siege of Arras in 1640. Less accurate, however, are the figures that surround the hero in the play. Christophe de Champagne (known as Christian in the play) was indeed present and died at the Siege of Arras, but there is no evidence of his friendship with Cyrano. Further, Cyrano's cousin Madeleine Robineau—on whom it is believed the character Roxanne was based—was a well-known intellectual snob, and there is no record of any of Cyrano's poetry being written to her. However, with a few poetic and imaginative liberties, Rostand was able to build his drama that would be staged in Paris in 1897—the last great play of the Romantic Era of France.

On opening night, Rostand was as self-conscious about the play as Cyrano was about his appearance. With less than half an hour to curtain, the playwright jumped up on stage and begged the packed audience to go home so they would not be witnesses to his abject failure. Thankfully to all concerned, the audience paid him no heed. The curtain went up, and what followed was one of the most historic openings in theater history. It is said that the audience remained in the theater for two hours after the play had ended, still happily applauding the author and play.

Rostand would continue to write over the next twenty years of his life, and his poetry became famous across the globe. In 1914, he signed up for military service, but unlike his hero Cyrano, was rejected for poor health. He devoted his final years to writing patriotic poetry and died on December 2, 1918, with the close of the First World War.

Neo-Classicism 1700s-1840:

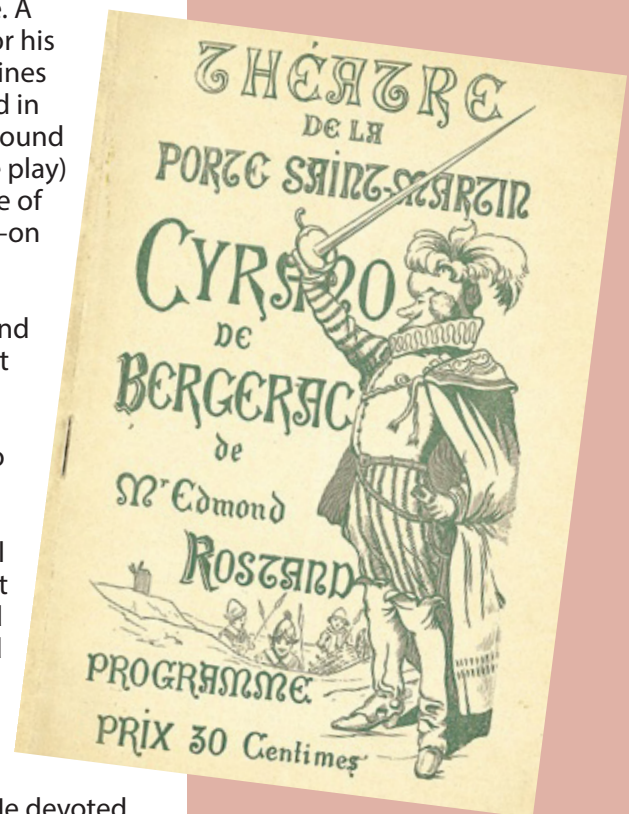
looking back to the Greco-Roman age, to recapture the Unities (one time, one place, one action) and gaudy marble encrusted style of the ancient world.

Romanticism 1780-1880:

drawing strength from the over-the-top grandeur of Neoclassicism, this period celebrated the triumph of the individual and the imagination.

Naturalism 1848-1900:

also known as Realism, this short lived period was a reaction against the imaginative age of Romanticism, attempting to portray the reality of daily life and struggles.



A program from the original 1897 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Music, *Cyrano* & The National

Music is a language that all humans speak. We all know the feeling of playing an upbeat song to dance to when we're happy or wallowing in sad harmonies when we're feeling blue. There is a visceral communication that music has with our emotions.

Musicals, as a form, are built on this foundation. If drama brings you to emotional places, and music can enhance your emotional experience, why not combine the two? Music can elevate the storytelling by helping you feel it viscerally.

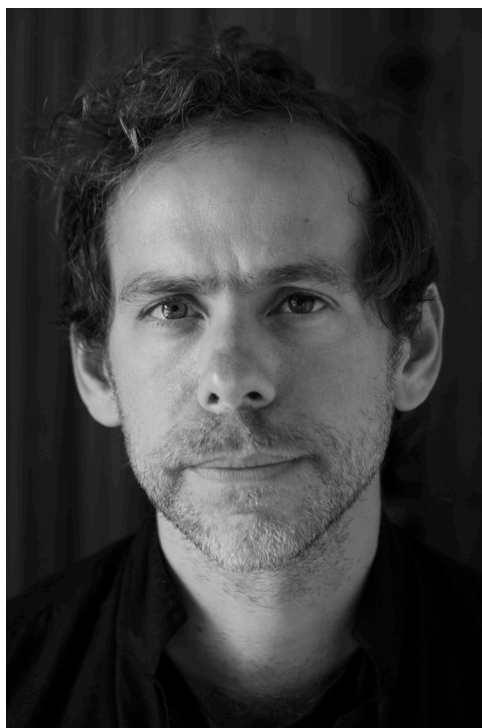
The emotions in *Cyrano* are honest and raw. It's the story of a man who loves a woman so entirely he is willing to communicate with her any way he can—even through his romantic rival. It's the story of a man whose only obstacle to achieving that love is his own deeply-held belief that he is unlovable. It's the story of a woman who refuses to settle for anything less than a true, perfect love, although her devotion to the concept makes her blind to its truth. Love and frustration and hope and melancholy are in every line of the play.

When the original play by Edmond Rostand premiered in 1897, it was written in rhyming verse and featured

moments of music within the drama. The transition from play to musical is a natural one. This adaptation by Erica Schmidt pares the story down to highlight the emotional truth of the piece, removing the specificity of its original place and time to focus on the characters and their messy, complicated relationships with each other.

Given this focus, it feels doubly right that members of The National have written the music and lyrics for the piece. The Grammy Award-winning band (they won Best Alternative Album in 2018) has released seven critically-acclaimed albums since forming in 1999. As their legions of fans will tell you, their music—raw, emotional, and beautiful—hits a nerve. To accompany *Cyrano*, they haven't written a conventional musical theater score, but rather infused the story with music. It surges forth from *Cyrano*'s letters as though the love in them cannot be contained in speech, it sneaks behind melancholy moments, it gently illustrates in chords the breaking of a heart. It is, in short, the sound of unrequited love, brought achingly to life.

So when you sit down to watch *Cyrano*, open your heart to a story so deeply human it has resonated for over a century. And open your ears to a way of telling it that is distinctly new.



Bryce Dessner of The National (Music)



Aaron Dessner of The National (Music)



Matt Berninger of The National (Lyrics)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

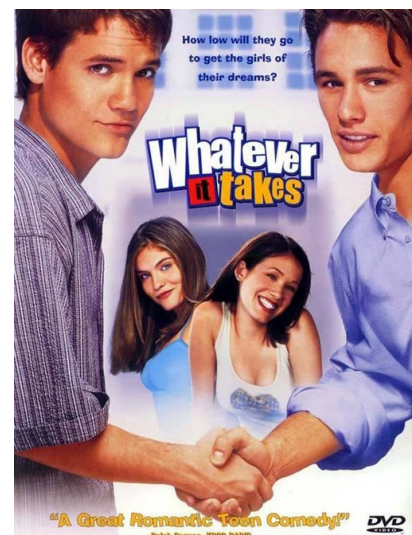
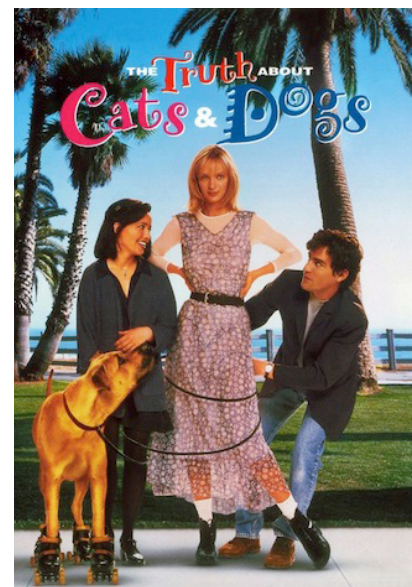
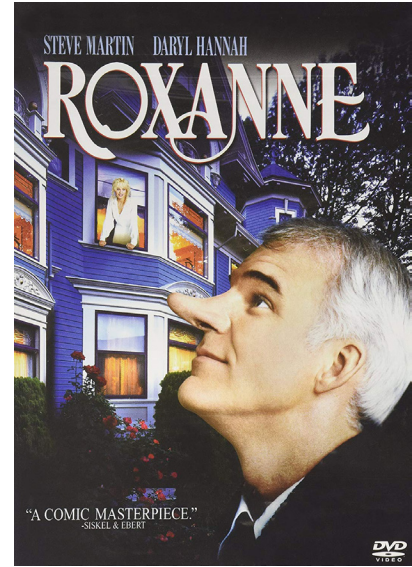
ADAPTATIONS IN POPULAR CULTURE

A timeless story of a soldier who is at once courageous and strong-willed as well as full of self-doubt and loathing, *Cyrano de Bergerac* has made its mark in our collective consciousness through many different adaptations on stage and screen. In plays such as *Moon Over Buffalo* or films like *Bigger Than the Sky*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* is performed as a play-within-a-play which, despite backstage hijinks and near-catastrophes, must make it to opening night; in the film adaptations below, the story of a man too self-deprecating to express his true love has been retold through new perspectives and updated characters.

ROXANNE is a 1987 film adaptation written by and starring Steve Martin in which Charlie, the fire chief of a small town in Washington, is smart, charismatic, and talented, but his sensitivity about his large nose prevents him from expressing his true feelings for Roxanne, a graduate student home for the summer. When she falls for another firefighter, Chris, Charlie helps him write poetic love letters to make her fall in love with him. Charlie soon begins writing more letters to Roxanne without Chris' knowledge, and eventually Chris must face Roxanne in person, unable to match the poetry in his letters. Roxanne, with a tip from local diner owner Dixie, discovers the truth about the author of the letters, and though she is angry at Charlie for lying to her, she realizes it was he whom she had loved the whole time.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CATS AND DOGS was written in 1996 by Audrey Wells and starred Janeane Garofalo, Uma Thurman, Ben Chaplin, and Jamie Foxx. When Abby, a veterinarian and radio show host, makes a blind date with Brian who called in to her show, she convinces her beautiful friend Noelle to impersonate her on the date because she is nervous that Brian won't find her physically attractive. Though Noelle tries to steer Brian toward Abby, she, too, develops feelings for him, testing the women's friendship. Finally Brian realizes he has been tricked when he recognizes Abby's voice from the radio, and after first feeling angry at the situation the women created, he and Abby ultimately get a second chance.

WHATEVER IT TAKES is a film inspired by *Cyrano de Bergerac* that premiered in 2000 and starred Shane West, Marla Sokoloff, Jodi Lyn O'Keefe, and James Franco. In this teen rom-com with parallel *Cyrano*-inspired plots, Ryan, a geek, pursues Ashley, a popular girl in school, with the help of top-jock Chris—but there's a catch: Ryan must also help Chris land a date with Ryan's best friend and neighbor, Maggie. To woo Maggie, Ryan writes heartfelt emails to her on Chris' behalf while Chris advises Ryan that the best way to win Ashley's heart is to be rude to her. As their plan starts to work, Ryan sees Maggie in a new light and wonders if Ashley really is the right girl for him.



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