

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.

Cyrano

a new musical