

What to expect when at the Relaxed Performance of Cyrano de Bergerac



Contents

Introduction to the Experience	1
Characters and Costumes	1
Settings and Scenes	10
About watching the relaxed performance	14
Some general things to know about this play	15
Possible Sensory Triggers (spoilers)	16
Possible Content Triggers (spoilers)	17
Scene by Scene Synopsis (spoilers)	19

Introduction to the Experience

You can read the Venue Guide if you'd like more information about what it's like to come to the Manitoba Theatre Centre!

When you come into the theatre, the stage at the front will be mostly covered by a red curtain. This is where the play will take place. The play you will see is called *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It takes place in France in 1640.

It is not safe for you to come on to the stage. If you need to move around during the show, please stay in the areas where the seats are or go into the lobby.

There are many actors in the play. An actor will come on stage to introduce themselves and say hello along with Ksenia, who works in the office at MTC. Ksenia will also explain some of the events in the show that nobody is too surprised, and some sounds that you will hear during the show so that people can get used to the volume.

The characters will change the clothes they wear during the play to show that it is a different day or event. Some actors, called the ensemble, play multiple characters – for example, someone might play a theatre audience member or orange seller in the scenes at the Theatre Francaise, then a worker in the tavern, then a cadet going to war.

Characters and Costumes

The graffiti artist writes lines from Cyrano's poetry around the city between scenes.



The main character in the play is Cyrano. He is famous for his fighting skills, his brilliant mind and beautiful poetry that he writes, and his large nose. Because of his nose Cyrano feels insecure, which makes him angry, and he hides this with his strong personality. He is very brave and makes impulsive decisions. Cyrano is a cadet in the army, along with others from his home region of Gascony in the south of France. People from Gascony had a reputation for being loud and boastful. He is best friends with Roxane who he has known since they were children.



The final scenes take place 15 years later, so Cyrano has aged.



Roxane is a smart, brave, and beautiful woman. She has some money and privilege, but this means that even if she wanted to work, she is not allowed to – she feels trapped. Roxane wants to be independent and fall in love. She is being pursued by a rich man named de Guiche who wants her to marry his friend and then have an affair with her, a possibility Roxane is trying to escape.



< Late in the play, Roxane disguises herself as a boy called Dan to sneak into the army camp and give supplies to the soldiers including Christian and Cyrano.



The final scenes take place 15 years later, so Roxane has aged. >

De Guiche is rich, the nephew of a very powerful man named Cardinal Richelieu. He thinks this gives him the power to do whatever he wants, and in much of the play he abuses that power. By the end of the war, though, he has changed and become a better person, even becoming a true friend to Roxane.



Christian de Neuvillette is handsome, good-hearted, brave, and has good intentions. He has difficulty expressing himself. He has come from Touraine in the country to join the cadets. He quickly falls in love with Roxane.



Lignière is a poet who introduces Christian to theatre. He has written an unflattering song about de Guiche, and when that is found out, Lignière is in danger. Cyrano offers to fight his would-be assassins for him.



Marie is Roxane's maid and companion. As an older woman, she is supposed to chaperone when Roxane spends time with a man. Marie's past is full of secrets and she says and does what you wouldn't expect, which is often funny.



Madame Ragueneau loves poetry and theatre. She is the generous owner of a café. She is not wealthy, but has some independence and freedom as a businesswoman.



Le Bret is Cyrano's friend, and a captain with him in the Gascony cadets. He is serious and fair.



Carbon is another Gascony cadet, a lieutenant. You usually see him in a group of cadets.



Valvert is de Guiche's friend, a cruel, unkind man.



Kate is Madame Ragueneau's assistant.



The Orange Seller works for the Theatre Francaise. Her goods are not actually for sale to those of us in the real-world audience, it is just pretend!



The Theatre Manager tries to keep the peace. She is tired of all the shenanigans.



Montfleury is an actor who is full of himself and gives exaggerated performances. He also uses his job to leer at the women in the audience, treating them like objects. Cyrano hates this about him and insists he not perform. He changes his ways later, giving Roxane makeup lessons to disguise herself as Dan.



Settings and Scenes

Lighting and moving furniture will help represent different locations on the stage.

The play begins at the Theatre Francaise, a theatre in France. In this scene, we are pretending that we are all members of the audience of the Theatre Francaise! You do not have to participate in any way, but the actors will speak to the audience as a group as though you are part of their world. Actors will come through the doors at the back of the theatre and walk through the audience. There will also be voices through speakers at the back of the theatre as though you are hearing from people you cannot see, as well as from the front where you can see that people are talking. There will be people up above the audience on small balconies at either side of the theatre as well. Depending on where you are seated, you might not be able to see all the actors all the time in this scene. That is okay! You will still be able to hear them, and all the important action happens in the centre where everyone can see.



Once the scenes at the theatre are over, it is like we the audience become invisible in the story – the characters are no longer acknowledging our existence, we are watching them live out their lives. Of course, the actors are actually humans and they can see us in real life! But in the world of the play, we are no longer involved.

This the café. It is owned by Madame Ragueneau, who is a widow.



This is the street outside of Roxane's house, below her balcony. It is late evening.



This is the French army camp, outside of the city of Arras. They have been at war for months and the army is in bad shape. There is an officer's tent on the left.



When the battle begins, the soldiers move towards the back of the stage and there is a lot of haze, and the lights change colour. The scene gets very loud.



This is Madame Ragueneau's café again, fifteen years later. Roxane often sits here to read and meet her friend Cyrano.



About watching the relaxed performance

During the play, there will be bright lights and music on the stage. Sometimes the actors shout. You can close your eyes or cover your ears if anything becomes too bright or loud. You can also get some earplugs in the lobby if you need them.

The lights shining on the stage will change colour throughout the play. They will get brighter and darker, and sometimes they flash. There will always be some lights on in the audience, so you will always be able to see.

Please do your best not to have conversations - everyone else is doing their best too! But if you need to react to the show, that is totally okay! Other people might also make some noise as they react. Everyone is welcome to be themselves and enjoy the show.

If you need to, you can leave and go to the lobby or the sensory space/quiet room on the second floor to take a break. A volunteer can help you leave the theatre and come back in when you are ready. Please do your best to exit and re-enter carefully to be respectful of the people around you. **It is not safe for you to come onto the stage.**

After about an hour and twenty minutes, there will be an intermission. An intermission is a 20-minute break.

At intermission, you can stretch your legs and talk to your family and friends. You can also use the bathroom in the lobby, or sit in a quiet room, if you need to.

You will know the play is starting again when you hear bells and an announcement. You will go to back your seat. The lights will dim, everyone will make sure their phones are off and stop talking, and the play will begin again. The second piece of the play is about one hour long.

When the play is over, the actors will come on stage as themselves again. Everyone usually claps their hands to show appreciation, which can get a bit loud.

Everyone will leave the theatre at the end of the play the same way they came in. You can wait in your seat until the crowd is gone if you want.

The play is a total of 2 hours 45 minutes long including the intermission break.

You can find more information about the MTC building and the general audience experience in the [Venue Guide](#).

Some general things to know about this play

The actors are wearing microphones to help us hear their voices more clearly. If you are sitting close, you might see these wires on their cheeks.

There will be some yelling between some of the actors. It is only pretend.

There are many weapons onstage. They have all been made safe – swords are blunted and guns are not functional. Before every performance, these props are checked to make sure they're still safe.

There are many fights onstage, with weapons and hand to hand. This is all pretend; these moments have been staged by a fight director whose job it is to make sure that everyone is safe and comfortable while making the fight and struggles look real. The actors practice their movements every night before the show begins.

There is some coarse and strong language in the show including "sh*t" and infrequent use of "b*tch," "tabar**k," "da*n," "b*stard," and "Go***mn." One use of "tit" as an insult.

There is a haze during the play that looks like smoke. It hangs in the air. You may notice it when you enter the theatre and as light shines through it during the play. Sometimes there is rolling fog. These effects are made with water vapour and are safe to breathe; they will not make you cough or sneeze.

Volume levels in this play are generally loud and there is music underscoring most of the scenes. It is about the level of seeing a movie in the cinema. In the lobby you can sign out a sensory bag with a pair of noise-reducing ear covers, or ask for some earplugs. You can also bring your own ear protection, or cover your ears during the show if things are too loud.

If you want to learn more about the play including the context and history, you can look at the [Enrichment Guide](#).

If you have questions, you can contact Ksenia, Royal MTC's Education and Enrichment Manager by email at kbroadamillian@royalmtc.ca or phone at 204 956 1340 extension 221.

Possible Sensory Triggers (spoilers)

Water-based haze that is safe to breathe is used throughout the show. It will become stronger during the scenes in the second half of the play to give the atmosphere of dirt and gunsmoke at war.

The musical underscoring includes lots of percussion, low strings, and high strings. Sometimes there are drones or fast squeaky violin sequences. The timing of these including “cue lines” so that you can prepare to use ear protection if any of these are particularly triggering to you will be updated the week of the Relaxed Performance. When emotions get high, there tends to be either a beat drop or swells in the strings.

- In the lobby you can sign out a sensory bag with a pair of noise-reducing ear covers, or ask for some earplugs. You can also bring your own ear protection, or cover your ears during the show if things are too loud.

The staged swordfights have the weapons hitting each other, which makes loud sounds of metal on metal. This is particularly loud in the Theatre Francaise scene.

There are some instances of flashing lights and quick colour changes, particularly after the cadets’ entrance in the café in the first half of the show, and during the battle in the second half of the show. Details will be updated the week of the Relaxed Performance.

Possible Content Triggers (spoilers)

Details of where these moments occur in the show, including “cue lines” so that you can prepare to cover eyes, cover ears, or leave if these will be triggering to you, will be updated the week of the Relaxed Performance. For now, here is an overview so that you can begin to prepare.

Intimacy

- Physical intimacy: kissing and touching. Some of this is something that the characters want and consent to, and some is unwanted/unconsented to. In real life, the actors are pretending and have consented to everything happening onstage. These moments are staged by an intimacy director whose job it is to make sure that everyone is safe and comfortable while making the fight and struggles look real. The actors practice their movements every night before the show begins. Details of what is happening and when will be available the week of the Relaxed Performance.
- De Guiche, in power, is married but lusts after Roxane, so he is trying to arrange her marriage to his friend Valvert so they can "share" her.
- Roxane reads a letter where de Guiche has said that if she denies him he will be ruthless.
- Cyrano, pretending to be Christian, recites a steamy monologue below Roxane's balcony that includes lines such as "I love your purity, I want to dirty you" and "I want to trace the map of you with my mouth."
- The cadets chant that they are here to "give the ladies heavy pets."

Violence

- There are several fights and threats onstage.
- Weapons include most men wearing a sword and muskets being used in the war.
- There are 100 men lying in wait for Ligèner as revenge for his unflattering song about de Guiche. They are not seen, just talked about.
- Offstage, Cyrano battles and kills the men waiting for Ligèner; Kate is late to work because “there were all these bodies in the way.”
- When he discovers that the orange seller has been lying, Christian grabs her by the wrist and twists her arm behind her back.

- Wounds onstage include being stabbed, a nose being split, having a gash on the hand, and being shot in the war.
- Marie reveals three times that she has one or a pair of pistols, in a comedic way. She points them at various characters but does not shoot anyone.
- While distressed at Christian's death, Roxane is picked up and forcibly removed from the camp.

Blood

- In the final scenes of the play, Cyrano opens his jacket to reveal a large bloodstain on his shirt.

Death

- During the battle in the middle of the second half of the play, Christian is shot (not seen.) He is carried back to the army camp where his wife and friends are incredibly distressed. Christian dies onstage.
- Cyrano is stabbed offstage which is revealed by another character at the beginning of the final act of the play. Throughout these scenes, he is visibly weak and staggers. Roxane is very distressed. Finally he dies onstage and the play ends.

Substances

- Faux alcohol is consumed; there is whiskey at the cafe.
- Cadets chant to "dump that tea, we drink whiskey in Gascony."
- A character suggests "let's get plastered."

Food and starvation

- At the beginning of the show when the whole theatre is being used as the Theatre Francaise, there is a character selling oranges. They are not actually for us in the audience! None are eaten onstage.
- There is a platter of baked goods in the café at the beginning of the scene that Marie takes away.
- In the second half of the show, the army is starving. They speak about how difficult and painful this is. They talk about eating rats, and boiling a boot and eating the leather. Roxane brings them a cart of supplies including food; she specifically mentions cheese.

Scene by Scene Synopsis (spoilers)

This section contains spoilers.

Act 1

At the Theatre Français, a handsome young man named Christian is looking for a mysterious woman that he saw on the street earlier that day. Christian is new to Paris, and is joining up with the cadets (an elite part of the French army). He is introduced to Mme Ragueneau, a cafe owner, and to Le Bret, the leader of his squad. Christian is warned to keep an eye out for Cyrano de Bergerac, who is also a member of the cadets. Cyrano is known for his ferocious temper and his sensitivity about his large nose. However, Cyrano is also a famous poet.

Christian makes eye contact with Roxane, the lady that he fell in love with on the street. He's warned that Roxane is out of his league, and that the powerful Comte de Guiche is trying to marry her off to his friend so that he, de Guiche, can have access to her bed. Christian then learns that de Guiche has sent 100 swordsmen to kill Ligniere, a poet who wrote a satirical song about the nobleman. Christian runs off to warn Ligniere.

The play begins. A terrible actor named Montfleury begins to perform, but a voice shouts that he needs to get off the stage or be punished for his bad acting. Cyrano enters, frightening Montfleury off the stage. De Guiche pushes his friend Valvert into dueling Cyrano, but Valvert is beaten easily and Cyrano gives him a mortal wound.

Le Bret demands to know why Cyrano acted so recklessly. Cyrano responds that Montfleury is not only a bad actor: he was leering at a certain woman in the theatre. Le Bret deduces that Cyrano is in love with Roxane. Le Bret encourages Cyrano to try wooing Roxane, but Cyrano is afraid that his nose makes him too unattractive to even consider it.

However, Roxane's maid arrives and gives Cyrano an invitation to meet her mistress at the cafe the next morning. For the first time, Cyrano has hope that Roxane might return his affections. Ligniere enters, terrified of the 100 assassins sent to kill him. Cyrano declares that, in defiance of de Guiche, he will take on all 100 by himself.

Act 2

Having killed or frightened off the squad of assassins, Cyrano waits for Roxane at the cafe. When she enters, she confesses that she is in love with a cadet. At first, Cyrano is hopeful that she is referring to himself – but it is soon revealed that she is talking about Christian.

Roxane and Christian haven't spoken yet, but she felt an instant connection and feels certain that she and Christian are meant for each other. Cyrano questions whether she could really love a man that she has never spoken to, especially given Roxane's love for books and intelligent conversation. She agreed that she is probably being silly, but says,

In a life of ten thousand strings,

Is it too much to hope for just one perfect thing?

Roxane begs Cyrano to look after Christian once he joins the cadets. Cyrano reluctantly agrees, as he feels that her happiness is more important than his jealousy.

Roxane leaves as the cadets enter, rowdy and eager to hear about Cyrano's great battle. As Cyrano gives himself a moment to get over his disappointment, Christian also enters and is teased by the other cadets. They warn him not to mention Cyrano's nose; thinking that this is part of the hazing, Christian takes this as a challenge.

When Cyrano tells the story of the 100-man fight, Christian interrupts with references to Cyrano's nose. Eventually Cyrano loses his temper and shouts at everyone else to leave. However, instead of fighting Christian (as everyone expects), he honours his promise to Roxane and encourages Christian to woo her.

Whereas Cyrano is incredibly intelligent but unattractive, Christian is very attractive – but feels self-conscious about his intelligence. Hating to let down Roxane and her hope of “one perfect thing”, Cyrano promises to help Christian woo her.

Act 3

After receiving gorgeous letters for weeks, Roxane is rapturously in love with Christian – not knowing that the letters were actually written by Cyrano.

De Guiche appears outside Roxane's door and tells her that he is going off to war. He has been made a colonel in charge of Cyrano and Christian's regiment. Roxane tricks de Guiche into promising to keep the cadets at home. She also tricks him into leaving without having to reject him – which would be a dangerous thing for a woman in her position to do.

Roxane tells Cyrano that she and Christian have a date that night, but she won't tell him what she wants to talk about... so Cyrano is unable to prep Christian. Christian tries to woo Roxane without Cyrano's help and fails miserably. Cyrano wants this exercise to be over, but when Christian pleads for help he reluctantly agrees. The two men stand under Roxane's balcony, and Cyrano feeds Christian lines that the handsome young man sometimes gets wrong. Eventually Cyrano takes over and, unable to help himself, uses the opportunity to express all of his true feelings to Roxane.

A priest arrives with a letter from de Guiche: the nobleman wants to sleep with Roxane before he leaves for war, and he won't take no for an answer. Roxane tricks the priest into marrying her and Christian, while Cyrano stalls for time. Enraged that Roxane is now married, de Guiche goes back on his word and orders the cadets to report for duty at the front. Roxane begs Cyrano to protect Christian, and to make sure that he sends her "lots and lots of letters". Cyrano promises.

Act 4

Months into a siege at Arras, the soldiers are starving, terrified, and dehydrated. Christian and Cyrano have become close comrades-at-arms, and have saved each other many times.

De Guiche shows up and tells the cadets that there is hope for the French army: a supply line has opened up. However, opening up the line has meant that this group of cadets is going to have to hold off the entire Spanish army by themselves, which they know is a suicide mission – especially without any supplies, including food and bullets. Christian tells Cyrano that he needs to write Roxane a farewell letter. Cyrano reveals that he has already written one, and Christian is confused to realize that the letter is long and tear-stained.

A sickly young man enters the camp dragging an ancient cart. The soldiers back off, fearing that he may be carrying the plague. Instead, the boy is revealed to be Roxane in disguise, bringing supplies to the camp. Her maid, Marie, is hidden in the cart to act as protection. Although the cadets are grateful for the food, they are terrified to realize that Roxane and her maid are going to be caught in the upcoming battle.

Roxane refuses to leave Christian's side. De Guiche reluctantly decides to stay and help protect her. Christian has realized that Cyrano is in love with Roxane. He speaks to her, and asks if she would still love him "even if he were ugly". She assures him that she would.

Christian is enraged that Cyrano didn't tell him the truth. The two argue in the tent before making up and admitting that they have come to love each other like brothers. Christian forces Cyrano to tell Roxane the truth, and leaves them alone to talk as gunfire starts up in the distance.

Cyrano gathers his courage, but before he can confess to Roxane, Christian is carried into the camp. He's been shot. Roxane tells Christian:

Christian, we had so little time but it was perfect.

You gave me this one perfect thing.

Christian dies, and Roxane is forcibly removed from the camp as the war explodes into action.

Act 5

Fifteen years later, Roxane is reading a book at the cafe. The Comte de Guiche arrives and tentatively asks how she is doing, and whether or not she has reconsidered marrying him. When she firmly rebuffs him, he takes it well; it is apparent that the war has changed him.

De Guiche and Mme Ragueneau talk about Cyrano, who has become increasingly reckless. His satire skewers all of the important people of Paris, and De Guiche is worried that Cyrano's life is at stake. Sure enough, Ligniere runs in and informs Ragueneau and de Guiche that Cyrano was cornered on the street by three fighters and walked away bleeding heavily. Worried, the three of them leave the cafe to try to find and help Cyrano. They leave Roxane reading, and don't tell her what has happened.

Cyrano enters and chats with Roxane. He asks her if she still has “Christian’s” letters; she assures him that she does. He asks if he can read one, and she gives him Christian’s final letter, which she carries with her at all times.

Cyrano reads aloud from the letter. Eventually he stops looking at the page, and Roxane realizes that he was the original author. She is furious and heartbroken at his deception. Cyrano tells her that he didn’t want to sully the memory of Christian, whom they both loved, and that he didn’t want to destroy her “one perfect thing”.

Roxane tells Cyrano:

When I said I wanted “perfect”...

What I meant was “real”.

He asks if there was ever a world where she could have loved him. She tells him yes. However, as they start to approach each other, Cyrano collapses.

It is revealed that Cyrano was shot in the street fight. He refuses medical help, knowing that it’s too late for him. In a delirium, he makes jokes, gives his own eulogy, and fights to stay upright. Eventually, he loses his words and dies.

Credits:

These are the people responsible for what you see in the photos in this booklet.

Photos by Dylan Hewlett.

Director: Amanda Goldberg

Set Designer: Beyata Hackborn

Costume Designer: Deanna Finnman

Lighting Designer: Hugh Conacher

Ragueneau/Cadet/Medic - Lara Arabian

Le Bret - Alexander Ariate

Valvert / Cadet / Priest - Andrew Cecon

Cyrano de Bergerac - Jack Davidson

Lignière / Montfleury / Carbon - Braydon Dowler-Coltman

Ensemble - Alex Furber

De Guiche - Brian Hamman Christian - Darren Martens

Marie / Theatre Manager - Megan McArton

Ensemble - Siobhan Richardson Roxane - Stephanie Sy

Kate / Orange Seller / Cadet - Sydney Williams

To see the names and biographies of the full cast and creative team, check out the Ovation program or visit <https://royalmtc.ca/Current-Plays/Cyrano-de-Bergerac.aspx>

This guide was created by Ksenia Broda-Milian with the assistance of Emily Jane King. The synopsis was written by Jessy Ardern.