



BOB JONES
UNIVERSITY
EST. 1927

smart

SHARING MASTERWORKS OF ART

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

Edmond Rostand's
Cyrano de Bergerac
November 2024

These study materials are produced for use with the Classic Players production

with a new adaptation of **Brian Hooker's**
classic translation from the French

Adapted, directed and designed by
JEFFREY STEGALL

Lighting Design by
RICHARD STREETER

Sound Design by
BOB JOHANSEN

with Original Music by
DAVID RASBACH and KENON RENFROW

Cyrano on Our Stage: Its History with Classic Players



Dr. Bob Jones Jr. as Cyrano, 1950



BJU Classic Players' *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 1950

BJU Classic Players has a long history with Edmond Rostand's poetic swordsman. Dr. Bob Jones Jr. first donned the hero's plume in 1950. With great love for the character, he reprised the role three times in 1957, 1966 and 1975.

The 1957 production deserves particular note. A young Dr. Bob Jones III played Christian de Neuvillette opposite Beneth Peters in the role of Roxane. An onstage romance soon blossomed offstage, and

Cyrano de Bergerac



Dr. Bob Jones III (Christian), Beneth Peters (Roxane), 1957

the couple married in 1959. When they welcomed a daughter in 1964, they named her Roxane in honor of their beginnings. The pair reprised their roles twice in 1966 and 1975.



BJU Classic Players' *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 1966



Dr. Bob Jones III (Christian),
Beneth Peters Jones (Roxane),
Dr. Bob Jones Jr. (Cyrano), 1975

Cyrano de Bergerac

When BJU Classic Players produced *Cyrano* in 1988, Dr. Bob Jones III stepped into the title role. He played the romantic daredevil once more in 2004.



Dr. Bob Jones III as Cyrano, 1988



Dr. Bob Jones III (Cyrano), Jennifer Polson (Roxane), 2004

Recent productions in 2013 and 2024 saw Dr. Darren Lawson and Mr. Isaac Stephens fill Cyrano's shoes, respectively. 🤖



Dr. Darren Lawson as Cyrano, 2013

— continued —

Cyrano de Bergerac: A True Hero

Cyrano de Bergerac: An Heroic Comedy in Five Acts premiered in Paris on December 28, 1897, at the theater of Porte-Saint-Martin. The play was both a literary anomaly and a smashing stage success. It brought great acclaim to the young French poet-playwright Edmond Rostand (1868–1918). Soon after enjoying one of the most enthusiastic audience receptions in theater history, *Cyrano* became popular on stages around the world.



Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655)



The action takes place in Paris, on the battlefield at Arras during the Thirty Years' War and in a sheltered cloister in the French countryside. In addition to a vivid historical backdrop, *Cyrano* engages the heart in an exquisite story of unrequited love. The plot is quasi-historical, based on the life of a real person — the French soldier-poet-philosopher Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655), a classmate of Moliere and one of the most famous swordsmen of his day. He was also an innovative writer of fiction and a man with a legendary long nose.

A True Hero



By portraying the protagonist as a poet and man of letters, Rostand created the ideal frame for displaying his own gifts for writing witty poetry, beautiful love letters, showy diatribes and spontaneous comments on every subject imaginable.



In an era in which naturalism and realism prevailed, Rostand dared to offer his sophisticated audience a heroic comedy in verse. This opulent period piece stood in stark contrast to the analytical drama that was standard fare on the French stage. Some French naturalist writers fixated on contemporary social problems as crime, poverty and illness.



These naturalistic playwrights present theater audiences with life “as it is.” Since life is not beautiful, they theorize, art should not misrepresent it as such. They write in flat prose, avoiding all forms of heightened language, and their works promote a deterministic mindset — the idea that the quality of a person’s life is entirely predetermined by his or her heredity and environment.



Resisting this aesthetic, *Cyrano* presents poetry, love and idealism in a plot full of high adventure and swashbuckling romance. Instead of reflecting the ugly side of such subjects as war and rivalry in love, Rostand idealizes them, representing them in an elevated fashion as fairer and nobler than they are in real life. “Idealism in life” has been defined as “the character of those who regard the ideas of truth and right, goodness and beauty, as standards and directive forces.”



Cyrano succeeded because of, not in spite of, Rostand's romanticism. The qualities that seemed to doom the play to failure on the Paris stage actually became the major components of its success. It offered audience members wit and humor as well as occasion to exult in the hero's triumphs and cry over his sad fate in love.

In the character *Cyrano*, Rostand created a true hero through whom he depicts the power of a great soul to rise above mockery and disappointment. Rostand's masterpiece, rather than an escapist fantasy, is a thought-provoking drama that probes the human condition and respects the playwright's insight into universal themes. 🛡️

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**BOB JONES
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RODEHEAVER AUDITORIUM
November 19–21, 7:30 p.m.

2024/2025 BJU Performing Arts season at bju.edu/arts



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Chimes will sound and lobby lights will flash three minutes before the end of intermission. After the houselights are dimmed following intermission, guests will not be readmitted to their seats.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. Cameras and recording equipment are not permitted in the auditorium during any performance. We request that personal communication devices be turned off during the program.