



GUTHRIE
THEATER

McGuire Proscenium Stage / March 16 - May 5, 2019



Cyrano de Bergerac

by EDMOND ROSTAND
adapted and directed by JOSEPH HAJ

PLAY GUIDE

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The Guthrie creates transformative theater experiences that ignite the imagination, stir the heart, open the mind and build community through the illumination of our common humanity.

Guthrie Theater Play Guide

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PHOTO: JAY O. SANDERS IN *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (T CHARLES ERICKSON)

“I’ll lend you my words, and you lend me your face.
Together we’ll make one storybook hero!”

- Cyrano to Christian in *Cyrano de Bergerac*

About This Guide

This play guide is designed to fuel your curiosity and deepen your understanding of a show’s history, meaning and cultural relevance so you can make the most of your theatergoing experience. You might be reading this because you fell in love with a show you saw at the Guthrie. Maybe you want to read

up on a play before you see it onstage. Or perhaps you’re a fellow theater company doing research for an upcoming production. We’re glad you found your way here, and we encourage you to dig in and mine the depths of this extraordinary story. [G](#)

DIG DEEPER

If you are a theater company and would like more information about this production, contact Dramaturg Carla Steen at carlas@guthrietheater.org.

PHOTO: JAY O. SANDERS, JENNIE GREENBERRY AND ROBERT LENZI IN *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (T CHARLES ERICKSON)

Synopsis

Cyrano de Bergerac is a poet, soldier and consummate swordsman with a prominent nose that keeps him from declaring his love for Roxane. But that's his only vulnerability — he bullies actors from the stage, battles a hundred swordsmen alone, fights alongside his company of Gascon cadets and composes impeccable verse on the spot.

When Roxane tells him she loves a handsome new cadet named Christian, Cyrano selflessly takes the tongue-tied young man under his wing and helps him woo Roxane, who revels in language and poetry. Their plan works perfectly until Christian goes rogue and decides to speak for himself.

But Christian and Cyrano aren't Roxane's only suitors. The powerful Count de Guiche, who is no fan of Cyrano, has his own designs on Roxane. When the cadets are sent to war abroad, it is during the siege of Arras that love, heroism and the true Gascon heart are revealed. [G](#)

SETTING

Paris, France, and Arras, Spanish Netherlands, 1640

Act One: The theater at the Hotel de Bourgogne

Act Two: Ragueneau's pastry shop

Act Three: Roxane's house

Act Four: Siege embankment, Spanish-occupied Arras

Act Five: Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Cross

CHARACTERS

Cyrano de Bergerac, a poet and soldier

Madeline Robin, called Roxane, his cousin and a précieuse

Christian de Neuvillette, a soldier in Cyrano's company

Duenna, Roxane's companion

Count de Guiche, a nobleman and soldier

Valvert, his friend and Roxane's suitor

Cuigy, a marquis

Brissaille, a marquis

Le Bret de Castel-Jaloux, the captain of the Gascony Guards

Ragueneau, a baker and poet

Lise, his wife

Montfleury, an actor

Bellerose, an actor and theater manager

Mother Marguerite, an abbess at the convent

Sister Claire, a nun at the convent

Sister Martha, a nun at the convent

Other characters include cadets, poets, pages and cavaliers as well as a marquis, actress, lady, buffet girl, musketeer and sentry.

Responses to *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Cyrano de Bergerac is not a great play, merely a perfect one. The distinction is worth noting. Great plays struggle with materials so intractable, explore terrain so uncharted, attempt things so truly impossible, that parts of them inevitably resist encompassing by the author, let alone by the audience. In *Cyrano*, however, the playwright is always in full control. The profile of every act is a swiftly rising action, a succession of ever more resounding climaxes, ending with a perfect punch line. The contour of the whole play, on the other hand, is a parabola reaching its peak with the fourth act, then falling away into the bittersweet denouement of the quietly heartrending fifth act. ...

If *Cyrano* falls short of the highest literary standards — indeed, Rostand's last plays, *Chanticleer* and *Don Juan's Last Night*, are superior as literature — it is nevertheless a masterpiece of the theatrical. Consider the characters: a hero who is a delicious mixture of Romeo and Falstaff, Mercutio and Hotspur; a heroine who is brave, beautiful, pure, faithful and even literate; a young soldier of overwhelming handsomeness who, though lacking the gift of words, can at crucial points find the right insight and even the right remark; a villain who in the end proves intrepid and chivalrous, devoted to the woman who spurned him and generous to an old enemy; a friend to the hero at least as appealing

as Horatio; a poetic clown who on a humbler level is not unworthy of the fools in Shakespeare. Altogether, *Cyrano* at its worst is rather like Shakespeare rewritten by Dumas père; at its best, like Dumas adapted by the young Shakespeare.

John Simon, "Cyrano de Bergerac: An Appreciation," December 5, 2007; Updated from a piece originally published in *Singularities: Essays on the Theater 1964-1974*

Hamlet and King Lear may or may not have been real people, but *Cyrano de Bergerac* was as real as the nose on your face. ... He was a soldier, twice wounded, who gave up military life in 1642 to study science and literature in Paris. He was always an expert swordsman and always had a nose of uncommon size. How big this nose was we have no means of knowing, but it is safe to assume that its size has been exaggerated. It assumes, in Rostand's play, the dimensions of a character in its own right, and this is just one of the ways a 19th-century romantic fantasticated a 17th-century realist. ...

Rostand shows himself aware of the talents and preoccupations of the real Cyrano, but he twists them for his dramatic ends. The bravery and fighting skill are much present, though swollen to epic proportions, but the engaging boastfulness — which expresses all Cyrano's attributes except the one (physical beauty) which seems to matter — is the dramatist's contribution to the historical inventory of character. ... The all-round result of Rostand's meditations on the life and character of the historical Cyrano

PHOTO: JENNIE GREENBERRY AND JAY O. SANDERS IN *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (T CHARLES ERICKSON)



is a glorious monster wholly post-Byronic who, one assumes, could have found no place in true 17th-century Paris.

Rostand's megarhinoid hero is really an incarnation of a very romantic ideal, which the author expresses in the term *panache*. A *panache* is properly the white plume that a cavalier wears on his hat — a waving, dashing, dandyish challenge to the world. By metaphorical extension it becomes something rather more difficult to define. ... *Panache* is a kind of disarming conceit, expressed in the exaggerated or the quixotic. It is also, says Rostand, a device of self-comfort or consolation called up by such a heroic extravagance as needless self-sacrifice. It is, then, a stoic grace that can still wave in the air at a time of defeat or depression. ... Mercutio and Hamlet have it, but not Coriolanus and Brutus. It is one thing to be stoic; it is quite another to be stylishly or gaily stoic.

Anthony Burgess, translator, in a program note for the Guthrie Theater's 1971 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*

In about three and a half centuries of modern theatrical history, there have been recorded in France only two other triumphs comparable to that of Rostand's *Cyrano of Bergerac*: the first was Corneille's *Le Cid*, produced in 1637 during the time of Richelieu; the other, *Le Mariage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais, presented in 1784 in the dawn of the French Revolution.

Cyrano of Bergerac was first produced on December 28, 1897, at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre. Exactly one hour after the curtain had fallen, practically the entire audience was still in the theater applauding. ...

The student who recently declared that, in this age of cosmetic surgery, *Cyrano of Bergerac* is no longer plausible nor relevant, has, of course, missed the whole point of the play. It is not Cyrano's nose that prevents Roxane from loving him; it is rather the fact that he is not Christian. ...

Rostand merely develops [from the historical Cyrano] the figure of the noble idealist who fights against the reality of ordinary life. His Cyrano, however, never admits to such a reality but creates his own world. In such a personal cosmos, the objective observer might judge him to be the loser, but Cyrano gains for himself his most precious ideal — *panache*. Cyrano's world comprises two existences: the life of each day and the life of love. He cherishes the highest concepts of life and duty; in them are contained the plot of the play and the story of his soul.

Alba della Fazia Amoia, *Edmond Rostand*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978

Consider the hero: Cyrano is probably the best developed character in all of Rostand's plays. Each act reveals a new dimension of his personality: in Act I he is bold, courageous and arrogant in the face of superficiality; Act II shows him in love, in firm control of his emotions when his love is not returned, and generous to protect and to tolerate jibes from his rivals; in Act III his poetry, lyric and imaginative facets are revealed; Act IV discloses his scorn for cowardice, the lengths to which love has carried him, his joy at the promise of Roxane's recognition and his despair at the death of Christian; Act V maintains his sense of humor, his devotion to and love for Roxane and his courage in death. He is completely credible,

and his actions are completely motivated by his convictions. In this respect, he is true to life. He is also a type character, the universal hero.

Patricia Elliott Williams, "Some Classical Aspects of *Cyrano de Bergerac*," *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, February 1973

Some of the classics in the world of the arts are like family heirlooms, objects of lingering sentiment rather than pinnacles of aesthetic quality. Is the Mona Lisa a great painting, *Les Sylphides* a great ballet or "Clair de Lune" a great piece of music? Not really, but they are all sentimental favorites. So it is with *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Both the play and its hero are more than a trifle silly. Yet this poet-duelist ham who boasts of besting 100 men in a single encounter has proved endearing.

It may be because Cyrano wears his soul with panache, a plume of the lyric spirit. He has the brio of a Don Juan, yet he dares not woo ... Roxane for fear that his monstrous nose will render him ridiculously ugly in her eyes. And so he puts his words of eloquence, passion and longing at the service of ... Christian, whom Roxane fancies. Cyrano also possesses some of the romantic chivalry of Don Quixote. He tilts at the crass, compromising windbags of this world. He has an innate gallantry that makes his last-act death scene extremely poignant.

T.E. Kalem, "The Theatre: Coolheaded Gascon," *Time*, May 28, 1978

Edmond Rostand

Born April 1, 1868, in Marseille, France, to a family that counted poets and a composer among their ranks, Edmond Rostand was a quiet, intense student who enjoyed designing stage sets and costumes for his puppet theater. By adolescence, he was named “school poet” and began to publish his poetry in the local magazine *Mireille*.

At age 16, Rostand went to Paris to attend the Collège Stanislas, where he excelled at French composition, history and philosophy. He also studied law to please his father but pursued his literary interests by writing plays and poems. His first play was produced in 1888, and in 1890, he published a poetry collection, *Les Musardises*. That same year, he married poet Rosemonde Gérard, with whom he would have two children.


Rostand would rise to the heights of French theater over the next decade. *The Romancers* received popular accolades (and is the source story for the 1960 musical *The Fantasticks*), and he wrote two plays for actress Sarah Bernhardt: *The Princess Far-Away* and *The Woman of Samaria*. But it was *Cyrano de Bergerac* that made Rostand an overnight sensation with its opening in December 1897.

“It may be of interest to note that as a young boarder at school, Edmond Rostand, already distinguished among his companions for his talent in composition, had offered to write love letters and poems for a friend of his, who copied them over and sent them to his young girlfriend. This personal recollection somehow imposes itself on the chronicles that have created the immortal trio of Cyrano, Christian and Roxane.”

Alba della Fazia Amoia, *Edmond Rostand*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978

The play was almost immediately translated into other languages and produced around the world.

In 1901, Rostand was the youngest writer to be elected to the prestigious French Academy. His next play, *Chanticleer*, finally appeared in 1910 after delays due to Rostand’s health. The hype was almost unprecedented, yet it proved to be a disappointment among audiences. Scholars today consider it to be Rostand’s masterwork.

During World War I, Rostand was disappointed that his declining health kept him from fighting for his country, and he produced a collection of patriotic poems in *The Flight of the Marseillaise*. Rostand died on December 2, 1918, shortly after the war ended. His final unfinished play, *The Last Night of Don Juan*, was published and performed posthumously. 



ROSTAND’S WRITINGS

1888 *The Red Glove*, written with Henry Lee, premieres at Cluny Theatre

1890 Publishes poetry collection *Les Musardises*

1894 *The Romancers* premieres at Comédie-Française

1895 *The Princess Far-Away* premieres at Renaissance Theatre

1897 *The Woman of Samaria* premieres at Renaissance Theatre

1897 *Cyrano de Bergerac* premieres at Porte Saint-Martin Theatre

1900 *The Eaglet* premieres at Sarah-Bernhardt Theatre

1910 *Chanticleer* premieres at Porte Saint-Martin Theatre

1910 Publishes poetry collection *The Canticle of the Wing*

1914 Publishes poetry collection *The Flight of the Marseillaise*

1922 *The Last Night of Don Juan* premieres posthumously

About *Cyrano de Bergerac*



PHOTOS: JAMES BLENDICK AND ROBERTA MAXWELL IN *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (1971); CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER IN *CYRANO* (ACT TWO PHOTOGRAPHY); JAY O. SANDERS, MARK MAZZARELLA AND ERIC SCHABLA IN *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (T CHARLES ERICKSON)

Edmond Rostand began work on *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the spring of 1896. The year before, he read his play *The Princess Far-Away* for the famed French actress Sarah Bernhardt and her company. Among the invited guests was renowned actor Benoît-Constant Coquelin, who was so impressed with Rostand that he said, “Write me a part, and I’ll play it whenever and wherever you like.”

Rostand had long wanted to write a play about Cyrano de Bergerac — a poet, minor nobleman and soldier who lived during the 17th century. In Coquelin, he discovered the actor who could bring the role to life as he imagined it. Rostand began work on the play in 1896, and in December 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac* opened at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre starring Coquelin as Cyrano.

By the play’s opening, no one thought the play would succeed. The producers’ lack of faith kept production expenses minimal, so Rostand paid for the costumes — a hefty 100,000 francs — out of his own pocket. Before the actors took the stage for the first performance, he apologized for dragging them into his disaster.

However, the audience was charmed. More than an hour after the curtain fell, they were still applauding the show. It became an unqualified success, rocketing Rostand to fame

and a seat in the French Academy while giving the world a story that has inspired millions and been retold and adapted countless times.

“Edmond Rostand is said to have become interested in *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the days of his youth because *Cyrano* represented a type, *le rate* [the failure], which had a great appeal for him. When years later he wanted to compose a play for his friend Coquelin, the life of *Cyrano* readily suggested itself to him as a subject ideally suited to the talents of that famous actor. The principal traits of character of the hero of his play, as well as most of his accomplishments and exploits, Rostand took from the life of the real *Cyrano*. He elaborated each of these

traits in varying degree by bringing his magnificent imagination to bear on them, and he gave particular emphasis to several which embodied his own ideals. Indeed it is probably true that fundamentally the *Cyrano* of the play represents to a considerable extent the author himself, the author as he would have liked to be, a fact which must account in part for the remarkable vitality of this dramatic hero.”

Clarence d. Brenner, Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac: An Interpretation, Studies in Philology*, October 1949

Characters Based on Real People

Edmond Rostand drew most, if not all, of his characters in *Cyrano de Bergerac* from French history, including many offstage characters such as actors, précieuses and poets. Discover the historical people who inspired Rostand to cast them in his heroic tale.

BELLEROSE

Played by

Jason Rojas

Pierre le Messier (ca.1592–1670), called Bellerose, apprenticed with theater manager Valleran LeComte at The King's Players in Paris. Upon LeComte's death in 1613, Bellerose and members of the company toured the provinces, returning to Paris in the 1620s and settling into the Hotel de Bourgogne, where Bellerose was the troupe's manager as well as an actor. Known as a fine actor in both comedy and tragedy, he retired in 1647.



LE BRET

Played by

Remy Auberjonois

Henry Le Bret (1617–1710) was educated with young Cyrano by a country priest. The two remained lifelong friends, and Le Bret became Cyrano's biographer. Le Bret introduced Cyrano to the Gascon captain whose cadets Cyrano later joined (Le Bret has been combined with that character in the Guthrie's production) and was the friend who took Cyrano for treatment after he received his fatal head wound.



CUIGY AND BRISSAILLE

Played by

Robert O. Berdahl and David O'Connell

Both were well-known Parisians. Cuigy was the son of the Advocate of the Parliament of Paris; Brissaille was Mestre de Camp of the Prince de Conti's regiment. They witnessed Cyrano's fight with the one hundred at the Port de Nesle.



CYRANO de BERGERAC

Played by

Jay O. Sanders

The French poet, playwright, army officer and swordsman Savinien de Cyrano (1519–1655) was born in Paris and gained the title de Bergerac when the family acquired a second castle called Bergerac. His early schooling was in the country, under the tutelage of a curate. His education there wasn't great, but he did meet his lifelong friend Le Bret. He attended the College de Beauvais in Paris before entering a company of Gascon guards under the captainship of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. After he was wounded at the siege of Arras, he retired from the military and spent the rest of his life on his literary pursuits. During this time, he likely met the young man who would eventually become known as the playwright Molière. Among Bergerac's best-known works are *State and Empire of the Moon* and *State and Empire of the Sun*, both published posthumously and sometimes considered early examples of science fiction. He did indeed have a large nose, and he died as a result of severe head wounds from a falling beam.



COMTE DE GUICHE

Played by
Cameron Folmar

Antoine III Agénor de Gramont-Toulangeon (1604–1673) was a colonel in the French Guards by 1638 and one of 12 marshals of the French Army by 1642. Cardinal Richelieu wanted to extend the network of people loyal to his policies and sought alliances with prominent families. To that end, Richelieu married his niece, Mlle de Plessis de Chivray, to de Guiche in 1634, and they had four children. De Guiche became the Count of Gramont in 1644, presumably after the death of his father, and was elevated to Duke of Gramont in 1648.

**MONTFLEURY**

Played by
Joel Liestman

Zacharie Jacob (1600–1667), called Montfleury, joined The King's Players around 1637 and was second only to Bellerose. He was a large man with a bombastic delivery who had many fans. However, both Molière and de Bergerac did not care for his acting style, and the quarrel depicted in the play, in which Cyrano bans Montfleury from the stage, is based on a real event.

**MOTHER MARGUERITE**

Played by
Charity Jones

The abbess (d.1657) founded the convent of the Daughters of the Cross in Paris, which was located near the Bastille. Marguerite was rich, well-connected and beautiful, and she kept up her societal connections even after entering religious life.

**RAGUENEAU**

Played by
Ansa Akyea

As a well-known Parisian pastry cook and poet, Ragueneau's life closely paralleled the job-hopping described in *Cyrano*. He was hired by Molière's troupe as a candle snuffer and super. He died in 1654 while the company was on tour. His son-in-law wrote the first biography of Molière.

**ROXANE AND CHRISTIAN**

Played by
Jennie Greenberry
and Robert Lenzi

Cyrano's cousin (through his mother), Madeleine Robineau (1610–1657), was born in Paris and became an educated and social leader. She married Christophe de Champagne, baron de Neuville, in 1635. He was killed at the siege of Arras in 1640. After his death and the death of her mother and stillborn child, she devoted herself to prayer and helping the poor and sick. She (as well as one of Cyrano's aunts) was connected to the Daughters of the Cross convent, who looked after Cyrano later in his life. Roxane died on April 10, 1657. The Carmelite father Saint-Cyprien wrote the *Collection of the virtues and the writings of Baroness Neuville* in 1660. Rostand gave her the précieuse name Roxane.

**VALVERT**

Played by
Eric Schabla

Pierre d'Auteuille, baron de Valvert, was a poet, protector of men, writer of letters and a one-time performer in one of Molière's plays.



It Sings of Gascony

Gascony is a region in southwestern France that borders Spain. Basque-speaking people from Spain invaded and established the duchy of Gascony in the early seventh century. Throughout its history, Gascony has been under the influence of the Basques, the English and the French, and it became an official part of France in 1607. Gascony, like much of the south of France, spoke a slightly different French than the north. The southerners' reputations grew as one of their own, Henry IV, became king in 1589 and held court in Paris.

From the 16th to 18th centuries, anyone who spoke a *langue d'Oc*, one of the languages of the south of France, was ... unjustly labeled a Gascon. (*Langue d'Oui* was spoken in northern France and the parent of modern French.)

In military circles, however, one did not make this mistake, and the only Gascons whom one spoke of were those who actually hailed from that province of the far southwest known as a "breeding ground for soldiers" — a reputation that it would continue to enjoy for centuries. Even Napoleon would say, "Give me an army of real Gascons, and I'll cross a hundred leagues of hell!"

Because they were such fearless warriors, the Gascons quickly became part of the royal



PHOTO: THE CAST OF *CYRANO de BERGERAC* (T CHARLES ERICKSON)

entourage, and they were the first to be integrated into the king's guard. The reigns of Henri IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV saw the apogee of the King's military house and, consequently, the Gascons.

But the Gascons had a very different personality compared to the inhabitants of the kingdom's capital. With their arrival in Paris, these boisterous men brought with them their colorfulness, and they shocked the Parisians who were unaccustomed to such displays of exuberance. And the fact that they occupied powerful posts, with access to the king and his counselors, drew the jealousy and animosity of many a northerner. In the 17th century, in particular, the Gascons' omnipresence in the military and political spheres of France was quite palpable. They had established their own network, and it was among the elite corps of Musketeers that they were most present. (Even without the Gascons, these elite soldiers had quite a reputation in Paris.) When they were not busy on the field of battle, they noisily took over the capital, making ladies swoon and

fighting each other in duels. In the taverns, one could not help but notice their fondness for good food and drink. ...

A Gascon character appeared on the French stage and in literature in the 17th century. His traits were that of a braggart and teller of tall tales in the lineage of the *matamore* of Spanish comedy or the *capitan* of the Italian *Comedia dell'Arte*. However, this buffoon was a little less excessive and, more importantly, French (or rather, Gascon). This new character became a real success with the public.

Excerpted and edited from "L'esprit Gascon" on *The World of D'Artagnan*, created by Regis Meyer and Claudia Richard, of *Academie de Civilisation et Cultures Europeennes*: lemondededaragnan.fr

Précieuses



Précieuses were people, especially women, who aspired to refined taste, manners and language. The term is usually associated with the précieuses of 17th-century France. The French word literally translates to “precious,” but that doesn’t capture the nuance of the French.

The précieuse movement was rooted in French high society and likely got its start in the cultural and literary salon maintained by Catherine d’Angennes (1588-1664) at her Paris townhouse, the Hotel de Rambouillet. Marquise de Rambouillet held her salon from about 1610 to 1650, and some of the salon regulars helped found the French Academy in 1635.

Among the chief interests and aims of the précieuses was to improve the “indelicacies” of the French language, which led to a fondness for rhetoric and circumlocution. It also led to the general impression that they were affected and exhibited a kind of artificiality. Novelist Honore d’Urfe (who is mentioned in passing in *Cyrano de Bergerac*) wrote a pastoral novel called *L’Astree* in 1607 that is thought to have inspired many aspects of the précieuses’ code.

Molière wrote an enormously successful play called *Les Précieuses ridicules* in 1659. “Everybody knows that the little farce ridiculed the literary movement which had originated in the Hôtel Rambouillet and extended over the country, with the object of improving and purging the French language, but which, with its extreme affectation of

refinement, threatened to convert the clear French language into the most confused and absurd tongue in the world,” writes scholar Karl Mantzius in *Molière and His Times*. “But what gave importance to his play was not the subject, but the wonderful humour and inventive power with which the style of the précieuses was parodied.”

A.B. de Somaize created a *Dictionary of Précieuses* in 1660, in which he recorded not only many of the précieuses themselves, but a good number of their preferred elegant expressions. That dictionary is likely the place where Rostand found the names of his précieuses, including Roxane. There is a Roxane in the dictionary, but she is not associated with Madeline Robin (that is Rostand’s invention).

The Thirty Years' War

The Siege of Arras in Act Four of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a tiny footnote to a long series of conflicts in Europe called the Thirty Years' War. It began as a religious civil war within the Holy Roman Empire and ended as a political war that affected most of the continent. By its end, France had asserted its influence and power and was on the rise.

BACKGROUND

The issues underlying the Thirty Years' War were many, not least of which was the ongoing religious struggle between Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant Reformation began in 1517 and threw much of Europe into turmoil for the bulk of the 1500s as Protestantism grew and Catholicism pushed back. A number of decrees brought some stability: the Edict of Nantes in 1598 gave Protestants in France freedom to worship (mostly) as well as civil rights; a Letter of Majesty issued by Bohemian ruler Rudolf II in 1609 gave his subjects some religious liberty and established Defensors to enforce it. But it wouldn't be quite accurate to call it a purely religious war.

Another major factor was the tension between the Holy Roman Empire and independent states in Europe. The Empire was based in central and western Europe (modern-day Germany, with other states coming and going over time) and had existed since 962. Since 1438, the Habsburg family held the imperial throne, but the Protestant Reformation had weakened the Empire as it divided German states along religious lines. Many nearby countries, such as France, were long suspicious of the political aspirations of the Empire. Complicating matters for France was that there was also a Spanish line of the Habsburgs, and France was geographically caught between the two branches of the Habsburg family.

BEGINNINGS

The event that started the war was the Defenestration of Prague in May 1618. The previous year, the Bohemian ruler Ferdinand reneged on the Letter of Majesty. At an assembly in Prague, Protestant Defensors threw two members of a newly established Catholic regency council and their secretary out of a window (they survived). The Protestants removed Ferdinand as king, gave the Bohemian crown to Frederick of the Palatinate, raised an army of rebellion and war was imminent. Then Ferdinand was elected Holy Roman Emperor.

WAR PERIODS

Bohemian Period (1618–1624): The rebels made some advances, but Ferdinand appealed to the Spanish branch of the Habsburg family and the Catholic League (a military alliance among German Catholic states), and the Bohemian Protestants were defeated in 1620. Frederick lost both Bohemia and the Palatinate, and Ferdinand made Bohemia solely Catholic. Rebel leaders were rounded up, many of them executed, and Protestants were exiled or had to convert. But these harsh countermeasures against Protestantism ultimately extended the conflict.

Danish Period (1625–1629): Other Protestant countries felt threatened and became involved in the conflict directly and indirectly. Catholic support came from Rome and Genoa (money) and Tuscany and Poland (troops), but some countries that might otherwise support the Empire initially remained neutral, including England, France and the Dutch Republic. Dutch neutrality didn't last long — a 12-year truce with Spain was about to expire in 1621, and, not trusting either branch of the Habsburgs, they threw in with the Protestants. Denmark got involved (ostensibly to defend Protestantism; really to expand its influence in northern Germany) and invaded the Empire in 1625. After they were beaten a few times and the imperial army in turn invaded Denmark, peace was made and Denmark was out for good. Ferdinand issued an edict that restored Catholic control of land that formerly belonged to the Catholic Church and had most recently been in Protestant possession. But because other rulers within the empire weren't consulted, he met with opposition and other countries outside the empire felt even more threatened.

Swedish Period (1630–1634): Sweden was the next Protestant country to join the war, led by Gustavus Adolphus, because it was in Sweden's interest for German states to be both Protestant and independent. The Swedes made decent headway, gathering support among some German Protestants and financing from

the Dutch and French (the latter didn't like

WAR PERIODS (continued)

the Habsburgs, despite their shared Catholicism). After a few solid years of victories, Sweden suffered a huge blow when Adolphus was killed in battle in November 1632. Spain arrived in southern Germany to aid the Empire in 1634 and helped force Sweden out. Protestant Germans didn't want Swedish involvement in Germany, so they negotiated with the Emperor and got some of the things they wanted (in part because French armies gathering at the border put pressure on the emperor). The Peace of Prague in 1635 mostly left Sweden without German Protestant support.

French Period (1635–1648): France officially jumped into the war militarily in 1635. Behind the scenes, France had provided financial support to Sweden, entered into alliances with the Dutch and Swedes and occupied a key bit of land that connected the Spanish and German Habsburgs. Now it was finally ready to declare war on Spain. At this point, it was primarily France, Sweden, Dutch Republic and Protestant German princes on one side and the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire and Spain on the other.

STAKES

France's main goal was to defeat its longtime rival Spain; it didn't have political aspirations in Germany. The Swedish-French alliance was tenuous, but after neither was able to make headway against the Habsburgs, Sweden threw in fully with France in 1641. They agreed not to seek separate peace but to have joint negotiations with the Empire and German princes.

They coordinated strategies, but generally France fought the duke of Bavaria and the Spanish while Sweden took on Ferdinand and the Empire. Arras was just a few miles north of France's then-border, in the Artois region known then as the Spanish Netherlands (Artois is now French). Sweden put Ferdinand on the run and advanced toward Vienna — the seat of the Habsburgs.

PEACE

The Peace of Westphalia was negotiated by the Emperor, France, Sweden, German princes and the Dutch between 1644 and 1648 (it involved 194 European rulers in total — only England, Poland, Russia and the Ottoman Empire weren't involved). France gained territory on its northeast border; the Dutch Republic and Swiss Confederation gained

their independence; Sweden got control in the Baltic Sea; and the Empire acknowledged Lutheranism and Calvinism on an (almost) equal footing to Catholicism.

The Holy Roman Empire's power was significantly diminished. Germany was as devastated as it would be after World War I or II. Its economy and population didn't recover for a century. France took a huge step forward on the international stage. Louis XIV had become king of France in 1643 at age 4 and was crowned in 1654. France entered its golden age under Louis, nicknamed the Sun King, who would rule until 1715.

Siege at Arras

Arras is the historic capital of the Artois region in northeastern France that borders modern-day Belgium. It has seen more than its fair share of war: besides its siege during the Thirty Years' War, it was almost destroyed in 1435 when Burgundy and France carried out a series of wars and it sustained heavy damage during both world wars. Beginning in 1493, the Spanish occupied Arras and the surrounding Artois. It was reconquered by the French during the Thirty Years' War siege, which is depicted in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Though important in *Cyrano*, the siege of Arras is a very minor event within the Thirty Years' War. Its strategic purpose was to secure France's northeastern border and hit the Spanish while they were also dealing with an internal difficulty in Catalonia. A memoirist from the time, Charles de Montglat, recorded some of what happened: The siege began on June 13, 1640, with the French surrounding the city with two armies. Within two weeks, the French had built their fortifications for the siege and defenses for themselves should they be attacked (as did happen), as well as a bridge over the river which runs north of Arras to provide better communication between the armies. The Spanish, however, surrounded the French and cut them off from provisions. French reinforcements arrived on August 2 and the city fell on August 9.

After the fall of Arras, the French invaded and occupied the rest of Artois, which was captured from the Spanish Habsburgs. Spain got it back as part of the peace terms in the Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War.

People, Places and Things in the Play

PEOPLE

Achilles

One of the greatest legendary Greek heroes, the son of the mortal king Peleus and the sea nymph Thetis. During the Trojan War, Achilles had a falling out with Greek leader Agamemnon, which resulted in Achilles refusing to fight and sulking in his tent. It was only the death of his friend Patroclus that brought Achilles back into the war.

Aristophanes

A Greek playwright (ca. 450 - ca. 388 BCE) who worked in the style of Old Comedy, known for *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Frogs*, etc.



PHOTO: BALTHAZAR BARO

Balthazar Baro

A poet and playwright from Valence in southeastern France (1600-1650) who wrote three tragedies, two odes, one pastoral, one heroic poem and four dramatic poems. He was secretary to French novelist Honoré d'Urfé and responsible for getting the fourth and fifth parts of d'Urfé's novel *Astrea* published after the author's death. Baro was prominent enough to be elected to the French Academy in 1636.

beadle

An inferior parish officer appointed by parishioners to keep order in church, punish petty offenders and act as the messenger of the parish; a parish constable.

Monsieur Benserade

Isaac de Benserade (ca. 1612-1691), a minor French poet and playwright in the court of Louis XIV.

Comte de Bucquoi

Charles II Albert de Longueval, 3rd count of Bucquoy (1607-1663), who served in the Habsburg army and rose to the rank of general in the Spanish Cavalry in the Low Countries; his family had the hereditary title of Master of the Hunt of Artois.

cadet

A young gentleman training to become an officer.

Caesar

Julius Caesar (ca. 100-44 BCE), a Roman general turned statesman who was famously killed on the Senate floor on the Ides of March. He was a member of Rome's aristocracy; a general who conquered Gaul and crossed the Rubicon to wage and win a Roman civil war.

Cardinal Infante of Spain

Archduke Fernando (1609-1641), a son of Philip III and brother to Philip IV, kings of Spain. Fernando led an army in 1634 through southern Germany on his way to Flanders. He led an army of 30,000 to keep French convoys from reaching the French army at Arras, but ultimately had to surrender to the French on August 9, 1640,

after French reinforcements finally arrived. Cardinal is a high-ranking official in the Catholic Church and is part of the college that elects Popes. Infante means prince — son of the Spanish king and queen but not the heir to the throne.



PHOTO: CARDINAL INFANTE OF SPAIN

Cleopatra

Cleopatra VII (ca. 69-30 BCE), a historical queen of Egypt, perhaps best known for her entanglements with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. She was an intelligent, capable ruler who is often associated with great beauty.

Cupid

From Roman mythology, the god of love, who is often depicted with a bow and quiver of arrows, sometimes as a child and sometimes blindfolded. Cyrano's reference to "Cupid's arrows, quivers, torches," may refer to the story of Cupid and Psyche. To protect her from his mother Venus, Cupid hid Psyche, a mortal princess, and visited her only at night in complete darkness. One

night she lit a lamp to look at her mysterious lover and found he was in fact a god, but oil from the lamp fell on Cupid and he awoke. He fled, then rescued her again; she was made immortal and they married.

Descartes

René Descartes (1596–1650), a French scientist, mathematician and philosopher best known for his phrase, “I think, therefore I am.” Cyrano in 1640 is reading a contemporary’s work, and it is most likely Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method* published in 1637.

duenna

A chaperone or older female companion; originally a Spanish term for a lady in waiting at court.

D’Urfé

Honoré d’Urfé (1567–1625), a French author whose major work was the pastoral romance *L’Astrée*, which was published in five parts between 1607 and 1627. *L’Astrée* is about the loves and adventures of shepherds and shepherdesses, with the title character being the female half of a pair of lovers unable to marry because their families don’t like each other. It was incredibly popular in the 17th century and influenced later writers.

Count Fiesque

A 16th-century Italian nobleman in Genoa who conspired against the Doria family.

Galileo

An Italian philosopher, astronomer and mathematician (1564–1642) whose treatise comparing the Ptolemaic and Copernican ideas about the world (earth-centered versus sun-centered) raised the hackles of the pope, led to Galileo’s trial by the Inquisition and his subsequent conviction and house arrest in Siena and Arcetri. This is a

fairly contemporary reference for Cyrano to make.

Guards

The French Guards were one of the royal household regiments (dating back to 1563), the oldest permanent regiment in France and foot soldiers along with the Swiss Guard. Le Bret’s company would be one of 20–30 companies within the Guards. Various regiments vied for precedent and privileges, with the Guards claiming the right to be first through a breach during a siege, as well as pride of place on parade, first choice of barracks and first choice of position in battle.

Henry of Navarre

Henry IV, king of France and Navarre (1553–1610, r. 1589–1610), the founder of the Bourbon line of French kings that lasted until the French Revolution. He helped end the Wars of Religion in 1598 in part by converting from Protestantism to Catholicism (“Paris is worth a mass”), rebuilt and mostly united France and set the country on its way to becoming a major European power. He was the father of Louis XIII, the king of France at the time of the events in *Cyrano*. A recent high-water mark for French royalty, military prowess and charm, Henry is a natural reference point for Cyrano. Henry was also a Gascon.



PHOTO: HENRY OF NAVARRE

Hercules

The Roman name of the Greek hero Heracles known for his strength and temper. He was a son of Zeus, the king of the gods. One of his earliest exploits occurred when he was an infant: he strangled two serpents Hera sent to kill him in his cradle.

Lazarus

In Luke 16 of the Bible, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus who lived at the rich man’s gate and hoped to eat whatever fell from the table. Both men died, and Lazarus was taken to heaven while the rich man was taken to hell.

Mancini

Marie Mancini (1640–1715), a lover of Louis XIV. Louis wanted to marry her, but Cardinal Mazarin sent Marie to Spain and arranged for Louis to marry Marie-Therese of Austria. Mancini was described in a Dictionary of Précieuses as the wittiest, cleverest woman on earth.

Madame Montglat

Marguerite de Montglat, a woman famous for her amorous adventures and intellect.



PHOTO: MOLIÈRE

Molière

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622–1673), the greatest comic playwright in French theater. He and Cyrano de Bergerac knew one another, either as classmates or as adults when

they were both young writers. Among Molière's best known works are *The School for Wives* (1662), *Tartuffe* (1664), *The Misanthrope* (1666), *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (1670) and *The Imaginary Invalid* (1673).

Musketeer

In 1600, Henry IV, king of France, reformed the cavalry and created a special king's guard called the Carabiniers armed with carbines. His son Louis XIII continued the force, but armed them with muskets, added pikemen and renamed them the Musketeers in 1622. They lasted in this form until 1646.



PHOTO: MUSKETEERS

Orpheus

In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a Thracian poet whose music was so powerful, it could affect even inanimate objects. After the death of his wife Eurydice, he plunged into a prolonged grief. The maenads, female attendants of Dionysus, encountered him in his grief and tore him to pieces during one of their orgies.

Phoebus

From Greek mythology, a name for Apollo, the god of music, poetry, oracles and the sun.

Cardinal Richelieu

Armand Jean du Plessis (1585–1642), a Roman Catholic priest and prime minister of France under Louis XIII from 1614 until his death. He was instrumental in raising France's profile in the European



PHOTO: CARDINAL RICHELIEU

and international stages and was a patron of the arts.

Samson

A legendary warrior and leader of the Israelites who got his strength from his uncut hair. After the deaths of his wife and father-in-law, the spirit of God helped him break his bonds; he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand men.

Socrates

A Greek philosopher (ca. 470–399 BCE) who was a gadfly to Athenian democracy. He was tried for religious impiety, found guilty and sentenced to death by poisoning.

Ulysses

The Roman name for the legendary Greek hero Odysseus, known for his wit, cleverness and eloquent tongue. He spent 10 years at the siege of Troy and 10 more years after to return to Ithaca and his wife Penelope, in adventures detailed in *The Odyssey*.

PLACES

Bapaume

A town in northeast France about 13 miles south of Arras in Artois. It eventually surrendered to the French army in September 1641, a year after Arras was captured.

Bergerac

A town in southwestern France along the Dordogne River in the historical region of Gascony.

Among its many agricultural products are tobacco, several excellent wines, wheat, orchards and truffles as well as livestock. The Dordogne gave the area direct access to the Atlantic Ocean and trade with Britain, the Baltic and the Netherlands.



PHOTO: THE TOWN OF BERGERAC

Doullens

A town in the Picardie region of northeastern France about 23 miles southwest of Arras.

Flanders

A former small county in the Low Countries (Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) along the North Sea; now part of Belgium and France.

Fontainebleau

A town in France 40–45 miles southeast of Paris and the location of a historical residence for French royalty. Louis XIII, the French king at the start of *Cyrano*, was born at Fontainebleau. His successor, Louis XIV and the king during Act Five, began work on the Palace at Versailles in 1661.

Quai d'Orfevres

A road on the Ile de la Cite, an island in the Seine, which runs along the southwestern edge of

the island. The detritus of Cyrano's fight would have extended from the Quai, across the Seine on the New Bridge and along the Quai des Conti to the Port de Nesle.



PHOTO: A MUSKET

Porte de Nesle

The gate next to the Nesle Tower, which was one of the guard towers along the wall that circled Paris in 1220.

Red Sea

A long, narrow stretch of water that connects Suez, Egypt, with the Gulf of Aden in the Arabian Sea. It occasionally has a red-brown color when certain algae in the water dies.

St. Roch

A famous old parish church on the Rue St. Honore just north of the Tuileries and a few blocks west of Le Palais Royal, which itself is a few blocks west of the Theater Burgundy.

THINGS

Academy

The Académie française, an organization of 40 members (the Forty Immortals) that was formally established in 1634 by Cardinal Richelieu in order to maintain standards of taste and establish French as a literary language. Among those who have been Immortals are Corneille, Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Eugène Ionesco and Edmond Rostand.

Agrippine

Cyrano de Bergerac wrote a tragedy called *La Mort d'Agrippine*, probably around 1650, which finally found a patron and was produced in 1654. Because of a misinterpreted line that the audience saw as sacrilegious, there was a riot at the first performance, the play was shut down and sales of the script skyrocketed.

ballade

A poem typically consisting of three (or multiples of three) stanzas of seven or eight lines, with cross-rhymed lines and each stanza sharing a common final line. It usually ends with an envoi (a summary postscript).

Don Quixote

An early 17th-century novel (1605–1610) by Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes. Its title character is a self-declared knight-errant who sets out from his home in La Mancha for adventure. Suffering from delusions of grandeur, he gets into a number of embarrassing scrapes while conducting himself with honor.

Hippocamelelephantoles

An imaginary animal created from a hippocampus (sea horse), camel and elephant. If Aristophanes referred to this creature, that play is lost.

Iliad

An epic poem attributed to Homer that details most of the 10th year of the siege of Troy (aka Ilium) by the Greeks. It is a very military, very testosterone-driven epic, not inappropriate reading for impatient and bored soldiers waging their own siege.

La Clorise

A pastoral comedy (ca. 1631) by Balthazar Baro that is dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu. It has eight characters: Phedon, the father of Clorise; Nicandre, father of Éraste; Éraste; Clorise; brothers Alidor and Philidan; Éliante; and Dorilas.

musket

A shoulder-fired gun in which the ammunition is loaded via the muzzle. The musket came into use in the mid-16th century and its heyday lasted until the breech-loading rifle (ammunition inserted toward the back) was invented in the mid-1800s. A musket might have a range of 250 yards, but a salvo by musketeers would generally be fired at 65 yards.

Scapin

Molière wrote *The Deceits of Scapin* late in his career in 1671. Rostand fudges the dates in Act Five of *Cyrano* a bit, because the historical Cyrano de Bergerac and the Cyrano of the play die in 1655 and wouldn't have been around for the playing of *Scapin*.

serge

A wool fabric known for its durability and often associated with being worn by the poor.

sleeve-knots

A bunch of ribbons worn on the sleeve.

white scarf

In most companies, the infantry and officers essentially wore the same clothes, though an officer might add a cloak. Officers' white scarves made them recognizable on the battlefield.

From the Director and Creative Team



PHOTO: NATHAN DALE STUDIOS

The cast and creative team for *Cyrano de Bergerac* met for the first day of rehearsal on February 12, 2019. Adapter and director Joseph Haj invited members of the creative team to describe their inspiration and vision for the world of the play. Below are edited excerpts from their comments.

DIRECTOR JOSEPH HAJ

It's probably worth mentioning that the French love this story. I don't just mean the story of *Cyrano*; I mean the story of the idea of where beauty truly resides, which I think is the central question and theme of *Cyrano*. If you look at *Beauty and the Beast* from the 1740s and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* from the 1830s, they're trafficking in that space. In the 1940s, the central tenant of Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* is that what is essential is invisible to the eye. So the French love this story and the examination of where beauty is and isn't.

Rostand wrote his play in *fin de siècle* Paris at an incredibly cynical time. France had lost its position as a world leader rather capriciously. Most of the plays that were being written were taking on the social ills of the day. He wrote a remarkably un-cynical play for a remarkably cynical time. Trying to make a production in today's world mirrors that a little bit.

We're doing my own adaptation — version is probably the better word for it — of the play. I think it's very true to what Rostand was pursuing. It hasn't been dropped from a great height. It isn't "inspired by." We're doing the play largely as it was made.



SCENIC DESIGNER
McKAY COBLE

NOTE: The container for the set is a curiosity cabinet with panels painted with Vanitas inspired by the work of Jan de Heem and Rachel Ruysch.

Cabinets of curiosity were really big starting in the 17th century. Because travel and trade was so extensive, people would gather objects from around the world. It almost became a competition to have the coolest stuff in your curiosity cabinets, so it also became the coolest thing to have the best curiosity cabinet. And this is just the tip of the iceberg of all the different drawers and compartments you have. I love the idea that it looks like one thing, yet when you start to pull it apart, it has so much variety and other information.

Another inspiration for this is the Vanitas, in which the images — beautiful flowers, carrots, different fruits, oysters — represent a whole world we don't even understand anymore. In the Vanitas is an indication of

PHOTO: SCENIC DESIGN BY McKAY COBLE



death, the idea being that you can have all this beauty but ultimately, death will come and you must always remember your mortality and reality.

The audience first will see a big plume and letter, and they may be thinking that they're looking at a writing box. The plume and letter leave the stage, and what we're left with immediately is the basic curiosity cabinet. It's very decorative, but actors burst through it and start setting up the theater and taking down panels. What looks like a large drawer comes out and is a bench. A couple of the panels on the top become Montfleury's stage. All of the drawers hold props, are furniture or become something else. By the very end, it's all gone. We have an enormous explosion of red leaves, and they continue to fall on this naked set where Cyrano says what he needs to say to Roxane and she hears what she needs to hear from Cyrano.



COMPOSER
JACK HERRICK

Joe [Haj] came to me last fall with the idea of doing *Cyrano*, and we talked about what kind of music it ought to be and came to absolutely no conclusion. So I listened to a lot of French music of the period, and there are a couple French composers that I have come to love in researching this. One, Yann Tiersen, is minimalist, beautiful, French folky stuff, and that was my model.

Our scheme is to have pre-recorded, beautiful-sounding music as well as live music from onstage. Not that the beautiful production music isn't going to be completely wonderful, but we want anyone in the cast who's willing to play. It'll be fun.

For Further Reading and Understanding

EDITIONS OF THE PLAY

Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

Translation in verse by Gladys Thomas and Mary F. Guillemand, dating to 1898, available on Project Gutenberg.

Translation in prose by Gertrude Hall, New York: Doubleday & McClure Co, 1898, available on Internet Archive.

Translation in prose by Helen B. Dole, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1931.

Translation in verse by Brian Hooker, New York: Bantam Books, 1923.

Translation in verse by Anthony Burgess, New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 1985. NOTE: Burgess was commissioned by the Guthrie Theater in 1971 to write a translation/adaptation, which he further revised for a musical version titled *Cyrano*. He revised it once more for Royal Shakespeare Company production in 1983.

WRITINGS BY CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Journey to the Moon by Cyrano de Bergerac.

Other Worlds: The Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon and the Sun by Cyrano de Bergerac.

FRENCH AND THIRTY YEARS' WAR HISTORY

By the Sword: A History of Gladiators, Musketeers, Samurai, Swashbucklers, and Olympic Champions by Richard Cohen, New York: Random House, 2002.

Eminence: Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France by Jean-Vincent Blanchard, New York: Walker & Company, 2011.

French Armies of the Thirty Years' War by Stephane Thion, Auzielle, France: Little Round Top Editions, 2008.

How the French Invented Love: Nine Hundred Years of Passion and Romance by Marilyn Yalom, New York: Harper Perennial, 2012.

An Introduction to Seventeenth Century France by John Lough, New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1954.

The Thirty Years' War: Europe's Tragedy by Peter H. Wilson, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

FILM AND OTHER MEDIA

Cyrano de Bergerac, directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau, starring Gérard Depardieu as Cyrano, Anne Brochet as Roxane and Vincent Perez as Christian, 1990. Color, 137 minutes. In French.

Cyrano de Bergerac, directed by Michael Gordon, starring José Ferrer as Cyrano, Mala Powers as Roxane and William Prince as Christian, 1950. Black and white, 113 minutes.

Roxanne, directed by Fred Schepisi, screenplay by Steve Martin, starring Steve Martin as C.D. Bales, Daryl Hannah as Roxanne and Rick Rossovich as Chris, 1987. Color, 117 minutes.

The Truth About Cats & Dogs, directed by Michael Lehmann, starring Jeaneane Garofalo as Abby, Ben Chaplin as Brian and Uma Thurman as Noelle, 1996. Color, 97 minutes.

Classics Illustrated *Cyrano de Bergerac*, adapted by Peter David and Kyle Baker, New York: Papercutz, 1991.

The World of D'Artagnan: <http://www.lemondededartagnan.fr/SITE/ENG/accueil.htm>