

SFGATE <http://www.sfgate.com/performance/article/A-Cyrano-with-a-bit-too-much-length-7239949.php>

A 'Cyrano' with a bit too much length.

By Chad Jones Published 2:28 pm, Sunday, April 10, 2016

ADVERTISEMENT



IMAGE 6 OF 6

De Valvert (Kit Wilder) locks swords with Cyrano (J. Anthony Crane) in TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's production.

Though not born of either Marvel or DC, **Cyrano de Bergerac** has been a superhero all along. From his debut on the French stage in 1897 to his current appearance with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Cyrano is the ultimate romantic

warrior with unrivaled skills as both poet and swordsman.

In TheatreWorks' "Cyrano," which opened Saturday, April 10, at the [Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts](#), the 2011 adaptation by [Aaron Posner](#) and [Michael Hollinger](#) (who also translated from [Edmond Rostand](#)'s French original) takes pains to show us Cyrano's heroics.

In an early scene set in a theater, the proud, quixotic Cyrano, played with gusto by [J. Anthony Crane](#), is offended by a beribboned fop called De Valvert (Kit Wilder). Rather than simply cross swords with the man, Cyrano challenges him to a duel and promises to compose a Shakespearean sonnet while he fights.

It's a wonderfully entertaining scene, mostly because Crane wields his sword and his words with such — and here's a word said to be popularized by Rostand — panache, followed shortly by another swashbuckling episode in which Cyrano singlehandedly fends off 100 armed attackers.

By the end of Act 1, though, Cyrano is wilting in the face of his Kryptonite: Roxane, his unrequited love. Not to psychoanalyze poor Cyrano too much, but it seems his unusually large nose has caused his self-esteem to crumble, with his acts of derring-do masking a lonely heart that has long since given up hope of returned affection. At the thought of telling Roxane how he feels, Cyrano says, "She'll laugh in my face, at my face."

ADVERTISEMENT

So Cyrano helps his young compatriot, Christian (Chad Deverman), woo the lovely Roxane (Sharon Rietkerk), resulting in the second-most-famous balcony scene in Western drama, with Cyrano feeding Christian the poetry that will make Roxane fall for the wrong guy.

There's a robust charm to director [Robert Kelley](#)'s production in the first act, when Cyrano is surrounded by a noisy crowd of soldiers, actors, friends and antagonists. The second act, however, loses steam in a major way as the lively comedy and masterful swordplay (fight direction by Jonathan Rider) gives way to less exciting romance, a detour into battle and then a 15-year time jump into outright tragedy.

At nearly three hours, this "Cyrano" is at least 20 minutes too long and has a much easier time bearing the laughs and action of the first act than it does the increasingly sad drama of the second. Still, Crane's central performance has its

affecting moments, and Rietkerk makes it easy to see why Cyrano might find Roxane's spiky-sweet intelligence and lust for poetry so disarming.

ADVERTISEMENT

There's some lively support in the ensemble as well, from **Darren Bridgett** as drunken poet, **Michael Gene Sullivan** as a beleaguered captain, Monica Cappuccini as a donut-loving nurse. And the stage is attractive. The moving set pieces designed by **Joe Ragey** are simple and elegant, while the part-modern/part-period costumes by **Fumiko Bielefeldt** make a handsomely convincing case for cargo pants as 17th century fashion.

Still, in the end, the shine on this "Cyrano" dulls and you can't help wishing Roxane would just figure it out already: Her boyfriend is a handsome dullard and the guy with the nose is Superman with a sword and a soulful way with a sonnet.

Chad Jones is a Bay Area theater critic and writer.



Cyrano: Romantic drama. By Edmond Rostand, adapted by Michael Hollinger and Aaron Posner. Directed by Robert Kelley. Through May 1. \$19-\$80. TheatreWorks Silicon Valley at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Two hours, 40 minutes. (650) 463-1960. www.theatreworks.org.

© 2016 Hearst Communications, Inc.

HEARST

ADVERTISEMENT