<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters &amp; Synopsis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creators</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cyrano</em>: Learn More!</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss <em>Cyrano</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Classroom</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Opera Theatre</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact &amp; Sources</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# The Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Voice type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyrano</td>
<td>SEER-Ah-noh</td>
<td>Soldier/poet/scientist with a large nose</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxane</td>
<td>Roks-Ann</td>
<td>Cyrano’s beautiful cousin</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>KRIS-tyan</td>
<td>A Soldier, Roxane’s suitor</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeGuiche</td>
<td>Duh-GEESH</td>
<td>Richelieu’s nephew, wants Roxane as his mistress</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Bret</td>
<td>Luh-Bray</td>
<td>Cyrano’s friend</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lignière</td>
<td>Leen-Yair</td>
<td>A poet, Cyrano’s friend</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragueneau</td>
<td>Rag-uh-NO</td>
<td>A Poet</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td>Car-bone</td>
<td>Commander of Gascony Bridge</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montfleury</td>
<td>Moh-fluh-REE</td>
<td>A famous actor</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Duège</td>
<td>Lah Duh-nyuh</td>
<td>Roxane’s nurse</td>
<td>Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Capucin</td>
<td>Ah Cap-oo-seh</td>
<td>a monk</td>
<td>Countertenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquis de Cuigy</td>
<td>Mahr-kEE duh Kwee-ZJEE</td>
<td>member of DeGuiche’s entourage</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquis de Brisaille</td>
<td>Mahr-kEE duh Bree-zai</td>
<td>member of DeGuiche’s entourage</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Inconnu</td>
<td>Leh coh-noo</td>
<td>Assassin</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Portier</td>
<td>Luh Pohr-tyay</td>
<td>“the doorman”</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Une soeur</td>
<td>oon suhr</td>
<td>“a sister”</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE STORY

Setting
Paris and Arras, France in the 1640’s

Act 1
The scene is set at a theatre when Christian, a new cadet, arrives and is instantly attracted to Roxane. Christian learns from an unknown man that assassins are preparing to kill Lignière because he satirized a very powerful Parisian. During this time, the play begins, and Cyrano chases Montfleury, the famous actor, off the stage, because Cyrano had previously banned him from performing there that month. Everyone else is unhappy about this, and a Marquis challenges Cyrano to a duel, during which the marquis makes fun of Cyrano’s very large nose. After the duel, Cyrano tells his friend, Le Bret, that he dislikes Montfleury so much because Montfleury is lustful towards Roxane. Cyrano then learns about the assassins who want to kill his dear friend, Lignière, and vows to face off with them all 100 of them all by himself.

In Ragueneau’s bakery, Cyrano plans to meet with Roxane. She tells Cyrano that she is in love with the very handsome Christian and asks Cyrano to befriend him. Cyrano promises to encourage Christian to write to her. He goes to meet with Christian, but Christian insults Cyrano’s large nose as he is trying to impress the other cadets. After everyone leaves, Cyrano gives Roxane’s message to Christian and pledges to help him write her letters, as he is a poet.

Act 2
The second act begins at Roxane’s house, where she is happily reading Christian’s love letters, which have actually been written by Cyrano. DeGuiche suddenly arrives, and Cyrano must leave. DeGuiche tells Roxane that the regiment that Cyrano and Christian are a part of has been ordered to attack Arras. Roxane convinces DeGuiche to let Cyrano’s regiment stay in Paris by using her charms. Then Christian arrives and attempts to woo his lady with his own words, but he fails miserably. Cyrano then speaks for him under the cover of darkness, and Roxane is won over once again. Cyrano realizes that she is in love with his words and with Christian’s looks. The monk, Capucin, arrives with a letter ordering Roxane to report to DeGuiche. Before she leaves, she marries Christian in secrecy. This enrages DeGuiche when he finds out, and he takes back his promise to keep Cyrano’s regiment in Paris. Roxane begs Cyrano to watch after Christian and to make him write her all the time.

Act 3
The regiment is now in Arras, and it has just been announced that the Spanish will attack soon, which means that the French will soon die. Cyrano has been writing Roxane frequently, and he leaves to write her one last love letter in Christian’s name. Roxane arrives with Ragueneau to deliver food to the regiment. She tells Christian that she loves
the soul he reveals in his writing and would love him even if he were ugly. Christian goes to Cyrano to tell him that it is in fact Cyrano that she is in love with, and not himself. As Cyrano is about to go to Roxane and tell her the truth, Christian is fatally wounded, so Cyrano keeps the lie to himself. Before Christian dies, Cyrano lies and tells him that he told Roxane everything and that she still loves him. Cyrano is then called to the battlefield.

The opera ends in a convent 14 years later, where Cyrano visits Roxane. She begins reading Christian’s farewell letter when she realizes that it was written by Cyrano. Cyrano then reveals that he has been struck by an assassin and will soon die. Roxane is upset at losing her soulmate not once, but twice.
"As I think back over my 50 years of producing operas and musicals, I am flooded with memories of the incredible artists that I had the pleasure of working with, some wonderful and some less than easy to work with. But all in all, I wouldn’t trade any of those memories for the thrill of working with the most exciting and talented artists in the world.” - David DiChiera

David DiChiera was born in Pennsylvania to Italian immigrants, but grew up in Los Angeles, California. He holds a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree in Composition from the University of California Los Angeles. He went on at UCLA to earn his PhD in Musicology while extensively studying 18th century opera. Soon after graduating, DiChiera moved to Michigan to join the faculty of the newly established Oakland University where he soon worked his way up to the Chair of the Music department.

DiChiera continued to be a trailblazer throughout his career when just 9 years after moving to Michigan, he founded the Michigan Opera Theatre and was the founding Artistic Director of the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts. DiChiera’s primary mission from the very beginning has been to incorporate the community in new and different ways. Prior to founding MOT, DiChiera was delivering opera to the public in a series traveling performances under the title, “Overture to Opera.” Opera was new to much of Detroit when the Michigan Opera Theatre was founded in 1971, and he made it a priority to make sure that the African American community of Detroit was represented on the operatic stage. While still running MOT, he became President of Opera America in 1979, which is a position that he held for four years. During his time there, he created ‘Opera for a New America’, which was a grant program allowing companies to fund new opera works. Then, in 1981, he became the Artistic Director of Dayton opera, and in 1986, he became the Director and founder of Opera Pacific.

All of these endeavors were important, but none were as profound as DiChiera’s move to purchase and build the Detroit Opera House, which still houses the Michigan Opera Theatre today. Once DiChiera set his sights on a new home for MOT, he resigned from both Dayton Opera and Opera Pacific in order to give all of his attention to the Detroit opera House. The Detroit Opera House opened in 1996 and has been thriving ever since that time. All of DiChiera’s trail blazing did not go unnoticed. He has been awarded numerous awards, including the “Bridge Builders” honor by partners for Livable communities in 2000 as well as the “2013 Kresge Eminent Artist” award.
In 2007, DiChiera and his colleague, Bernard Uzan, began to collaborate on the idea of *Cyrano*. The opera was Uzan’s idea, and he could think of no one better to convey the Cyrano’s story. DiChiera’s composing style has been described as “romantic” and “heartfelt”, which is a contrast to the style of serialism impressed upon him in his studies. The romantic style is heard and felt in *Cyrano*. The opera premiered at Michigan Opera Theatre in 2007 and was followed by successful performances at Opera Philadelphia in 2012 and Florida Grand Opera in 2011.

**The Librettist: Bernard Uzan**

Bernard Uzan returns to Michigan Opera Theatre to direct *Cyrano*, the opera for which he wrote the libretto and premiered with MOT in 2007. In addition to his longstanding relationship with MOT, including directing more than 25 productions, Uzan’s background in the performing arts includes great achievement as a General Director, Artistic Director, Stage Director, Artist Manager, Set Designer, Librettist, Educator, Actor, and most recently, published Novelist and Internet Journalist. Last year, Mr. Uzan received a lifetime achievement award from the Giulio Gari Foundation. This season, in addition to *Cyrano*, he directs *Il barbiere de Siviglia* at Toledo Opera and Opera Carolina, *Carmen* at Florida Grand Opera, and *Roméo et Juliette* at Opera Tampa following its massive co-production across five cities last season. —*Courtesy of Erica Hobbs, Michigan Opera Theatre*
DID YOU KNOW…?

Cyrano is not the only opera that Dr. David DiChiera wrote. He also co-composed a children’s opera, Rumpelstiltskin, with Karen VanderKloot DiChiera, which currently tours in the greater Detroit area. Rumpelstiltskin was composed in 1975, and Cyrano was written 32 years later in 2007.

In 1965, he also wrote Four Sonnets for Soprano and piano.

The story of Cyrano is based on a real person, Cyrano de Bergerac. His story became fictionalized in the play Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand.

Many versions and adaptations of the play have been made including other plays, musicals, movies, and of course, Dr. DiChiera’s opera.

There is another opera based on Cyrano’s story. The opera, Cyrano de Bergerac, composed by Franco Alfano in 1936, is actually being performed at the Metropolitan Opera this May 2017.

The 2012 Disney movie “Let it Shine” along with 2010 comedic animated film “Megamind” both contain strong parallels to the original story of Cyrano.

Cyrano de Bergerac

The play, Cyrano de Bergerac, was written by Edmond Rostand in 1897 and premiered at Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in Paris. Rostand’s play was a huge success and had hundreds of performances. Just one year later, Cyrano de Bergerac was touring all over Europe and into Spain. Not long after that, an English translation was developed that made its way to Broadway in the United States beginning in 1923. The translation most notably used was American poet and librettist, Brian Hooker’s translation.

Although Cyrano was a real person, the story line presented in the play (as well as the opera) has been fictionalized. In the original play, there are only six characters: Cyrano, Roxane, Christian, DeGuiche, Le Bret, and Ragueneau. These characters are still the most important ones in the opera.
THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

• **WHO?** The war included Bohemia, Sweden, France, Spain, Scotland, Denmark-Norway, the Dutch Republic, Austria, the Holy Roman Empire, and England. The battle occurring in Act 3 of the opera is between France and Spain.

• **WHAT?** Thirty years war: A very long war and sad time with a large loss of life. The **French battled the Spaniards at Rocroi** in 1643, and the war eventually ended with the ‘**Peace of Westphalia**’ establishing **state sovereignty**.

• **WHEN?** 1618-1648. The opera takes place toward the end of the war in the 1640’s.

• **WHERE?**

• **WHY?** Religious turmoil! After the **Reformation** and **Counter Reformation**, countries were divided between the Protestants and the Catholics. In 1618, **Ferdinand II**, Holy Roman Emperor of Bohemia, became heir to the throne and began to make rules and restrictions on religious practices in order to impose his own religion, Catholicism.
Adaptations

Along with many adaptations of the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, there are a plethora of film adaptations as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>French drama directly based on Rostand’s play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Feature film in English, using Brian Hooker’s translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>French film in which Cyrano teams up with a Musketeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Modern day adaptation feat. Steve Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>A close adaptation to Rostand’s play set as a dating agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>South Korean Romantic comedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Musical tv film set for children &amp; teens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 1: Art in Our Lives

• What is art? What is music? How do these fit into our lives?
• Define what opera is, and what it is not. How does it differ from other musical and/or theatrical forms?
• What was your first exposure to opera? What do you remember about it?
• Do you consider yourself an artist? What is the criteria for being an artist?
• What did you expect to experience with this opera? Were your predictions correct? In what ways were your expectations met or not met?

Part 2: About the Production

• How did you see the technical elements support the story? What did the costumes tell us about the characters, etc.? Did anything in particular stand out?
• How did the music reinforce the action on stage? What musical changes did you note throughout in terms of changes in setting and atmosphere?

Part 3: Story and Themes

• Cyrano writes love letters on behalf of his comrade, Christian. How would this happen today? Do people still write love letters? How has communication changed? Is it still possible to deceive others through today’s communication standards?

Part 4: Cyrano to You

• Did you identify with any characters in this opera? Why or why not?
• The composer, Dr. DiChiera played a large role in the building of the Detroit Opera House. If you could design your own opera house, how would it be different? What would your opera house look like?
• Cyrano has an insecurity about his appearance that keeps him from revealing his whole self. How does his story relate to today’s culture? Have you ever held back due to an insecurity?
Pre- and Post-Performance Activity: Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never

Assign four corners of the room (or four spaces within the room) to be the location for Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never.

When a statement is given, have students move to the location that matches their answer and discuss with their group members why those chose their answer. After several minutes of discussion, choose one group member from each area to share with the whole class why the group as a whole answered Always, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

Statements about live performance:

I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) think that attending a live performance (an opera, play, concert, or sporting event) is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television.

I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) think that attending live performances is an important thing to do.

Live performances hold my interest (always, sometimes, rarely, or never).

When I attend live performances, I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) feel like the story is relevant to my life.

I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) wish I could attend live performances more often than I do.

Notes on this activity:
Remember to encourage your students to talk about WHY they chose their answers. Follow questions with more questions- for example, if students RARELY believe that operas and live performances are relevant to their lives, make sure to ask why. And how can we change that? Who is telling the stories right now? How do we position ourselves to make sure our stories, and stories that are important to us, get told? What stories would we like to see represented on stage? Also, if this activity is conducted both pre- and post-performance, make sure to encourage students to note if their answer has changed, and why it changed. Encourage them to talk about elements of the performance that may have contributed to their answer changing.
English Language Arts

1. Choose a bolded text topic from page 9 to further research, and prepare a short PowerPoint presentation.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2
   Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

2. Write a review of *Cyrano* and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4
   Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

3. Write a letter to your future self about what insecurities you would like to overcome and what steps you can take to do that. Describe specific instances in which your insecurity held you back.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.D
   Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

Geography

1. Choose one country from the map provided on the war that was a part of the Thirty Years War. Prepare and present to the class a comparison of that specific country during Cyrano’s time and today, including language, religion, governmental system, and cultural traditions.

   6 – G2.2.1 Describe the human characteristics of the region under study (including languages, religion, economic system, governmental system, cultural traditions).

U.S. History

1. In 1618, when the Thirty Years War first began, the Colony of Virginia had just been founded in America. Research and discover 10 important events that occurred in America from 1618-1648. Analyzing these events, how did they impact the formation of American government?

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
   Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

   F1.1 Describe the ideas, experiences, and interactions that influenced the colonists’ decisions to declare independence by analyzing colonial ideas about government (e.g., limited government, republicanism, protecting individual rights and promoting the common good, representative government, natural rights)
English Language Arts

1. Write a review of Cyrano and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.D
   Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

2. Create and present an informational presentation about opera that utilizes video and/or audio clips, Power Point slides, photos, etc.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5
   Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4
   Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

3. Write your own Cyrano story based on one of the film photos and short descriptions.

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3
   Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

World History and Geography

1. In small groups, research the effects of the Reformation and Counter Reformation. How did they lead to the Thirty Years War?

   WHG 5.3.5 Analyze the major political, religious, cultural and economic transformations in Europe by analyzing how the Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment contributed to transformations in European society.

Science

1. Create a scenario in which Cyrano’s large nose is the result of a recessive gene.

   HS-LS3-3 Apply concepts of statistics and probability to explain the variation and distribution of expressed traits in a population.
**English Language Arts**

1. **Write a review of *Cyrano*** and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.
   
   **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1**
   
   Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

2. **Individually or in small groups, have students brainstorm “Who, what, where, when, why, how” questions they may have relating to DiChiera’s *Cyrano***. These could be about the production itself (“What is the process of putting up an opera?”), about the themes represented in the opera, or the historical context of the piece. Let students choose one question to guide their research project, and then share final projects with the class.
   
   **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7**
   
   Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

3. **Write your own Cyrano story based on one of the film photos and short descriptions.**
   
   **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3**
   
   Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**World History and Geography**

1. **The Thirty Years War is occurring in Europe due to religious controversy in the 17th century.**

   a. **How does that war relate to current events in American politics?**
      
      **WHG 9.1.2 Transformation of American Politics – Analyze the transformation of American politics in the late 20th and early 21st centuries**

   b. **Expand upon part A, and trace the spread of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism from their origins. How has this affected other cultures and politics?**
      
      **WHG5.1.2 World Religions – Use historical and modern maps to analyze major territorial transformations and movements of world religions including the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain, Christianity to the Americas, and Islam to Southeast Asia, and evaluate the impact of these transformations/movements on the respective human systems. (See 4.1.2) (National Geography Standard 9, pg. 202)**
AN INTRODUCTION

Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT), the state of Michigan’s premier opera company, which, through its commitment to producing and presenting the very best professional productions of opera, dance, musical theater, and arts education programming, serves as a statewide cultural resource.

The vision of Founder and Artistic Director Dr. David DiChiera, and led by President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne S. Brown, MOT offers an essential, vibrant contribution to the quality of life for Detroit-area residents and to communities throughout the region. This dynamic cultural resource exemplifies artistic excellence. Since its founding in 1971, MOT has offered southeast Michigan the finest arts and cultural performances, concerts, education, and entertainment. By presenting culturally significant productions relative to the diverse populace of the region, such as Porgy and Bess, Anoush, King Roger, Dead Man Walking, and the world premiere production of Margaret Garner, MOT has brought the magic of live theatre to thousands of people.

In April of 1996, on the Company’s twenty-fifth anniversary, the ribbon was cut for the grand opening of the Detroit Opera House. Michigan Opera Theatre joined the ranks of major opera companies worldwide with the multi-million renovation of a 1922 movie palace. Michigan Opera Theatre is one of only a few opera companies in the United States to own its own opera house. The product of Dr. DiChiera’s dream, the Detroit Opera House is comparable to the world’s greatest houses in visual and acoustical beauty.

OUR MISSION

Michigan Opera Theatre is the premier multi-disciplined producer and presenter for opera, musical theatre, and dance in the Great Lakes Region. Based in the city of Detroit, the organization engages artists of national and international stature for stellar main stage and outreach performances, and provides compelling cultural enrichment programs for the diverse audiences and communities that it serves, making it one of Detroit’s pillars of arts and culture.

SELECT AWARDS & HONORS INCLUDE

Best Opera: The Passenger, Wilde Awards 2016 | Best Opera, Elektra, Wilde Awards, 2015 | Founder and Artistic Director Dr. David DiChiera named the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist | Opera Honors Award to Dr. David DiChiera, National Endowment for the Arts, 2010 | Outstanding Service in the Field of Opera for Youth, National Opera Society, 2006 | Success in Education Award, Opera America, 2002
MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE’S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Department of Education and Community Programs has brought its varied musical programs to every age group in Michigan for nearly 40 years. Artists visit schools, community centers, and stages throughout Michigan, performing shows that range from lively children’s operas to musical revues. Founded by Karen V. DiChiera, the Department of Education and Community Programs serves the entire state with quality entertainment and education.

Since its inception, the Department of Education and Community Programs has been honored with awards and recognitions including the Governor’s Arts Award, a Spirit of Detroit Award, and multiple Philo T. Farnsworth Awards for Excellence in Community Programming, among others. Touring productions, concerts, workshops, and residencies have reached many thousands of people throughout the state of Michigan, and programs have extended as far as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Canada. With an ever-growing repertoire of productions, an exciting roster of up-and-coming singers, and a circle of experienced and passionate teaching artists, the Department of Education and Community Programs continues to provide people of all ages with opportunities for access, growth, and learning through the arts.
CONTACT

For more info about the Department of Education and Community Programs please contact:

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Facebook: Michigan Opera Theatre
Instagram: @MichiganOpera
Twitter: @DetOperaHouse

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