



# Cyrano



STUDENT+FAMILY GUIDE

# TOC

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### Check out our new section: Activate with Arts!

This feature uses acting, movement, drawing, music and more to help students explore the content of the lesson.

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## Get There

Visiting Center City doesn't have to be a tough trip.

Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

130 N. Tryon St  
Charlotte, NC 28202

**Ride.** Hop on the Lynx Lightrail. Check out the options [here](#).

**Drive.** Directions from door to door [here](#).

**Park.** Participating garages are just \$5. Find details [here](#).

# THE BELK THEATER

## MAKE ANY SEAT IN THE HOUSE THE BEST ONE

Attending an opera in the Belk Theater is an experience not to be forgotten. The performance you are attending is the **final dress rehearsal** in which the cast performs one last full run through of the opera before opening night. Just like a regular performance, there will be an intermission(s) between acts.

Upon entering the theater, notice the production crew's station in the orchestra level seating (the lowest level of seating). The crew is set up with computers and headsets to allow them to communicate with people backstage to ensure that the performance runs smoothly. During this final rehearsal they will

be making sure all cues and technical features of the performance are in place. Also notice the supertitles (English translations of the lyrics being sung) that are projected onto a screen above the stage.

Please remember that this is a **working performance** and the performers on stage are very aware of their audience, especially a distracting audience. The polite audience member ~~should always~~ refrain from talking and stay seated during a performance. Nothing shows more respect and appreciation for the performers on stage than giving them your full attention.

# Opera Carolina

## INVESTED IN OUR COMMUNITY AND ITS LIFE



### Then, now, & years from now

Let's take a journey back to 1948: the Charlotte Music Club is formed by a handful of arts enthusiasts who realize that Charlotte's artistic landscape -but more importantly, cultural community- would be enhanced by opera performances. Fast forward to today: Opera Carolina is a 67 year-old company that's still blossoming, hitting new highs with each season of glorious music, drama, and all that encompasses the operatic art form. Your resident Opera continues to bring high-quality standards of the operatic repertoire to stages near you, but is also continually striving to perform lesser-known gems.

What does our future hold? A rich commitment to our community -which we take seriously- to continue enriching the lives of citizens from all walks of life; a continual quest to produce excellent opera from all eras on our stage; and, most importantly, to connect our community.

### The people

In the early days of Opera Carolina, volunteers designed the sets, built costumes, sang in the chorus, filled leading roles and, of course, sold tickets and held fundraisers to support the company.

Now a fully professional company that not only produces Opera performances on a big scale but also travels programs into local schools and community venues, we never forget the legacy of the original volunteers who made this company the what it is today. Opera Carolina is rooted in the Carolinas; 90%

of our company live and work right here in our region, complimenting the international artists who join the resident company to perform on our mainstage. We guess you can say we've got Carolina on our mind.

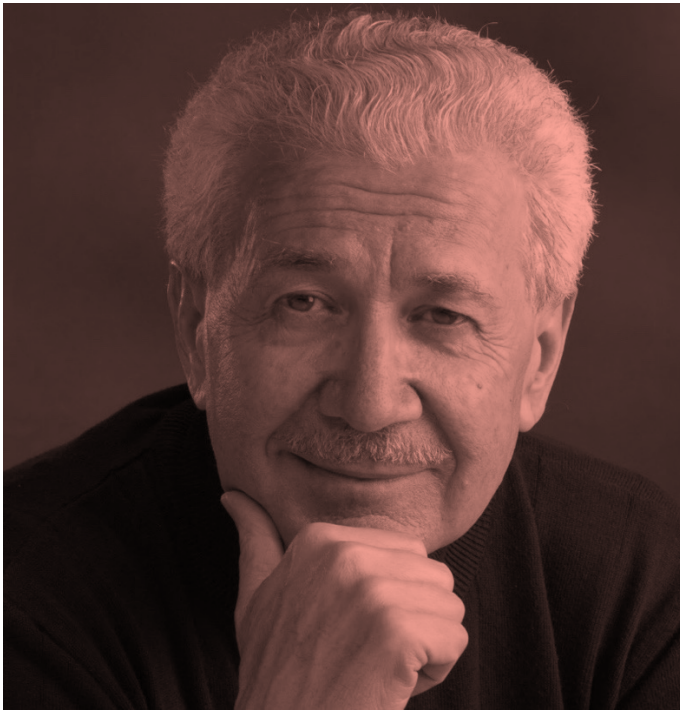
### The House

If the paragraphs before didn't sell you on our commitment to our community, maybe information on the Opera Center will. We may be 67 years old, but we've just moved out on our own. Opera Carolina now resides in the historic Biberstein house, in the Elizabeth neighborhood. The last remaining historic home in the Uptown radius, Opera Carolina's new digs are as much a part of the community as is the company.

Built in 1906, the Biberstein House was designed and lived in by R. C. Biberstein, one of the noted mill architects of the Southeast. Mr. Biberstein is credited with building many of the mills in the Charlotte region, including the Highland Park #3 mill. Mr. Biberstein eventually moved his business into this house, his talents and self-designed home playing a role in the New South Industrial movement. Today, the home is registered as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark.

The house has since been adapted into offices and is now the proud home of Opera Carolina. The Opera Center hosts the company's administrative offices but also serves as space for auditions, recitals, and more. *Our doors are always open.*





*"I've done so many things people told me I shouldn't or couldn't do..."*

~~David DiChiera~~  
*...what they didn't understand is when they say that, it makes me more determined."*



## David DiChiera (1935- )

### *MIND BEHIND THE MUSIC*

Dr. David DiChiera, founder and artistic director of Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) and the man who saved and restored the Detroit Opera House, was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and raised in Los Angeles by Italian immigrant parents. His career in music started with a "piece of junk" piano that his family kept in their garage.

DiChiera built an impressive resume in his early years. After studying composition at UCLA and earning his master's degree in 1956 with highest honors, he also won a Fulbright scholarship to Italy. Returning to America, he joined the UCLA staff as an instructor, and earned his Ph.D. in musicology. To the surprise of some who thought the stylish and accomplished young man from Los Angeles was destined for more prestigious things, he took a position in the music department in the tiny Oakland University in Detroit, Michigan in 1962. DiChiera worked at the school for almost 10 years building the opera community in the city. By 1970 he left Oakland University to become artistic director of Detroit Music Hall, building what would become the Michigan Opera Theatre.

His longtime friend Betty Brooks remembers, "Everyone thought we were crazy." 1971 was just four years after the Detroit riot, and the city had become known for violence, poverty, and urban decay. "But David didn't worry much about the past. He saw what the building [Detroit Music Hall] could be. And he wanted everyone — even people who lived in the city — to be a part of it."

By 1985, Detroit Music Hall became a force in the Detroit cultural scene, hosting jazz and dance events as well as occasional operas. Next, he wanted the well-respected company, who had outgrown the Detroit Music Hall, to have a permanent home. He set his sights on a huge old abandoned movie palace built in 1922, and in such disrepair that standing inside, one could look up and see the sky.

Once again, many thought he was crazy for wanting to build downtown at all, especially in a building that needed so much work and in a part of town with such a bad reputation. "Even after our success at the Music Hall, people kept telling me that nobody goes downtown," says DiChiera. "But downtown is where things belong. That's how you build a community." Eventually, he grew the building into Detroit Opera House, and continued to build the Detroit Opera into the well-respected company that it is.

DiChiera composed *Cyrano* late in his career - the opera premiered when he was 72 years old. Few modern composers have created operas that become classics, and though *Cyrano* is still relatively new, it is on its way to becoming a modern classic.

## Pre-Performance

# INTRODUCING THE OPERA

### Questions to get you thinking about the themes in Cyrano:

1. Have you ever had a crush on someone because of their looks only to find out that their personality was all wrong for you?
2. What wins someone's heart, or woos someone, in today's culture? How do you think this differs from the past? In what ways does *wooing* someone remain unchanged?

### Things to know about the setting

Share the following before reading the synopsis:

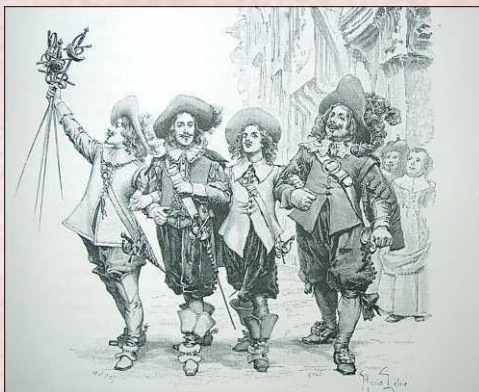


Cyrano

The story of Cyrano is set in **1640s Paris**, a golden-age in the city's history. Art, music, and literature flourished during this time under the reign of **King Louis XIV**. And although the



King Louis XIV, The Sun King



The Three Musketeers

**The Thirty Years' War** and the **Frano-Spanish War**, a war within the war, were beginning to churn in other parts of Europe, Paris remained a safe-haven for culture and the arts. The well-known story, **The Three Musketeers**, is also set during the general time period.



Paris, 1640s style



# SYNOPSIS

Be sure to check out the **Who's Who in *Cyrano*** worksheet on page 12. This sheet will help you learn about your characters by mapping out their relationships and characteristics.

## THE STORY IN SHORT

Cyrano, an eloquent man with a tender heart and a massive nose, writes poems to help his handsome rival, Christian, win the heart of the beautiful Roxane because Cyrano believes she could never love someone with looks like his.

### ACT I

At a theater where a famous actor will be performing

#### Scene 1

Christian de Neuville, a new military recruit, points out to a friend a woman in one of the boxes he's in love with. Roxane is beautiful, wealthy and learned. Christian laments that he's not bright or polished enough to win her heart.

The performance begins, but in the middle of it, **Cyrano de Bergerac**, a duelist and writer with a prominent nose, chases the famous actor offstage. A nobleman makes a bad joke about Cyrano's nose. Cyrano counters with wittier alternatives. Swords are drawn, and Cyrano wounds the nobleman.

Cyrano confesses to a friend his love for Roxane. Yet, he laments his large nose will keep her from ever falling for him. Soon, Roxane's nurse arrives to ask Cyrano to meet Roxane at a bakery the next day.

#### Scene 2

Cyrano arrives at the bakery. Roxane confesses to him her love for a man. Cyrano thinks she's referring to him, but it is actually Christian. Roxane makes Cyrano promise to protect Christian in battle.

The cadets arrive, praising Cyrano's bravery and skill. Christian can't resist interjecting several references to Cyrano's nose. Cyrano orders the room cleared and is alone with Christian. He tells Christian he is Roxane's cousin, and Christian confesses his love for her. The two become unlikely friends and decide Cyrano will write letters to Roxane under Christian's name.

## ACT II

Roxane waits for Christian. Cyrano exits before Le Comte de Guiche enters. He, too, is in love with Roxane and asks her to become his lover before he goes to war against the Spanish. She declines, but not before convincing him to allow Cyrano and Christian's company to remain in Paris.

Christian arrives and tells Cyrano that he no longer needs his services; he believes he can win Roxane on his own. But he fails. Cyrano tells Christian he will "feed" him the right words to woo Roxane.

Eventually Cyrano takes over the courting, speaking while Christian merely mouths words. Christian climbs up the balcony and kisses Roxane. A monk arrives – just in time – and agrees to marry Christian and Roxane. Cyrano, Christian and their company are sent off to war. Roxane makes Cyrano promise that Christian will write every day.

## ACT III

### Scene 1

Cyrano has braved enemy lines every day to deliver "Christian's" letters to Roxane. Roxane later crosses enemy territory to see Christian. Cyrano tells Christian about the letters, and gives him a letter to sign so he can give it to Roxane if he dies. Christian notices a mark on the letter, and Cyrano tells him it is one of his tears.

Roxane tells Christian she would love him even if he were unattractive, and he realizes she actually loves Cyrano. Before heading into battle, Christian convinces Cyrano to tell Roxane the truth about the letters. Just as Cyrano is about to, two soldiers enter carrying the fatally wounded Christian.

### Scene 2

Fifteen years later, a still-bereft (grieving) Roxane lives at a **convent**. Cyrano visits every day, delivering news from the outside world. During one visit, Roxane notices blood on his head. Cyrano confesses he has been brutally beaten by one of his enemies and is dying.

Before he dies, Cyrano asks if he may read Christian's farewell letter to Roxane one last time. Roxane realizes Cyrano is not reading the letter; he's reciting it. Now she knows: It was Cyrano she loved all along. Cyrano dies in Roxane's arms.

## Panache

The play first introduced the word "panache," which means grand, confident style or flair. Cyrano is famous for his panache, and the play ends with him saying he lost everything except for his "panache."

**Quick Discussion:** In Cyrano's day, panache meant personal style and a quickness with words and a sword. What is panache today? Can you think of any famous people who are attractive not because of their actual beauty but more because of their panache?



## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

LISTEN TO THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS FROM THE OPERA BEFORE YOU GO. WHICH ONE WILL YOU BE LISTENING FOR IN THE THEATER?



### Act I Duet

Note: This is a duet, or song written for two people to sing together, for a baritone, which is the lowest male voice, and a tenor, which is a higher male voice. Cyrano is the baritone and Christian is the tenor.

### Quintet (Act II)

Note: This is a *quintet*, or song written for five people to sing together. The different vocal parts blend together in *harmony*, or a combination of notes that create chords.

### Letter reading scene

Note: This is an opera *aria*, or song, written for a *soprano*, or the highest female voice. In this scene, Roxane reads Christian's final letter to her and realizes that it was actually Cyrano who wrote it.

### Final Scene (Act III)

Note: This is the *finale*, or final song of the opera. It is a *duet*, or song written for two people to sing together, for a *soprano*, the highest female voice, and a *baritone*, the lowest male voice.



# ACTIVATE WITH THE ARTS: ACT IT OUT!

These activities enhance student engagement and learning through arts-based skills. This Act it Out activity is a fun way to introduce the characters of Cyrano.

Remember to think about the following as you (and your parents, siblings, or friends) act out the scene:

- your position in relation to the other actors
- your tone of voice
- comedic timing

In the following scene, Cyrano has been feeding Christian letters to give to Roxane, but now Christian has become a little over-confident...

CHRISTIAN:	Yes... Yes... Tell me a bit <i>how</i> you	But I...	I beg you!
No, I am tired of borrowing my love me?			
words, my speeches...		ROXANE (leaving):	ROXANE:
And I feel she loves me, I am not	CHRISTIAN:	Goodbye!	
afraid anymore.	Um... a lot!		No, you don't love me anymore, go
Thank you. I will speak myself. I will		Roxane goes home. Cyrano was away!	
know how to speak alone!	ROXANE:	hiding and heard everything, he	
I will always know how to take her	Oh! Elaborate, my dear!	now joins	<i>Cyrano whispers the words to</i>
in my arms!		Christian.	<i>Christian.</i>
	CHRISTIAN:		
<i>Christian sees Roxane</i>	Your neck, I would like to kiss it!	CYRANO:	CHRISTIAN:
		What a success!	Accusing me of not loving anymore,
CHRISTIAN:	ROXANE:		when I love you more than ever!
It's her! No, Cyrano, don't leave me!	Christian!	CHRISTIAN:	Love is growing...in my
		Help!	soul...worried...
CYRANO:	CHRISTIAN:		Do not ignore it!
Speak on your own, Sir.	I love you!	CYRANO:	
		No, Sir, you don't deserve it.	ROXANE:
CHRISTIAN (to Roxane):	ROXANE:		That's better! But your words are
I love you...	Again?	CHRISTIAN (screaming):	hesitant, why?
		I'm going to die!	
ROXANE:	CHRISTIAN:		<i>Cyrano takes Christian's spot under</i>
Yes, talk to me about love.	No! I don't love you, I adore you!	CYRANO:	<i>the balcony.</i>
		The night is dark, get over there,	
CHRISTIAN:	ROXANE (standing up, ready to	will get under the balcony and	CYRANO:
I love you.	leave):	whisper the words to you!	It's because it's night, in this
	Oh! Enough!		shadow, feeling for it, the words
ROXANE:		CHRISTIAN:	seek your ear.
That's the theme, exaggerate,	CHRISTIAN:	But...	
exaggerate!	Yes, I'm acting stupid!		ROXANE:
		CYRANO:	Mine do not experience the same
CHRISTIAN:	ROXANE:	Shut up! Call for her!	difficulty.
I...	And that does not appeal to me! It		
	is as bad as if you were ugly!	CHRISTIAN:	CYRANO:
ROXANE:		Roxane!	My words are going upward,
But again?	CHRISTIAN:	CYRANO:	Madam, it requires more time.
	I...	Louder!	
CHRISTIAN:			ROXANE:
I love you so much.	ROXANE:	ROXANE (opening her window):	But they've been climbing much
	You love me, I know, farewell.	Who's calling me?	more easily in the last minutes.
ROXANE:			
Yes, what else?	CHRISTIAN:	CHRISTIAN:	CYRANO:
	Don't go... I will tell you...	Me, Christian, I wanted to talk to	And you would kill me if from this
CHRISTIAN:		you.	height,
And... I would be happy if you loved	ROXANE:		If you'd let a harsh word from you
me!	That you adore me, yes, I know, go	ROXANE:	fall on my heart.
Tell me, Roxane, that you love me!	away!	No, you speak too badly. Go away!	
			ROXANE:
ROXANE:	CHRISTIAN:	CHRISTIAN:	I'm coming down!

# ABOUT THE OPERA & EXPECTATIONS

## About the Opera

### What to listen for/look for in *Cyrano*

- *Opera is a drama (play) - that is sung!*
- *Opera uses many different art forms to tell stories.*
- How could each of these art forms help to tell the story in an opera?

*Music*  
*Lyrics*  
*Dialogue*  
*Costumes*  
*Sets*

Remember to look out for each of the above elements in the performance.

Review the following terms from the previous lesson: *Aria, baritone, soprano, tenor finale, chorus.*

Remember to read up on the composer, DiChiera, on page 4.

## Expectations

### Performance Expectations Discussion

What does being a respectful and engaged audience member look like?

Note: This is some comedy in this opera, so some laughter is appropriate!



# REFLECTING, ADAPTING, & CONNECTING TO OTHER SUBJECTS

The following exercises are designed to enrich student academic learning by further exploring and analyzing their experience at the opera.

### Reflection Questions

1. Has being self-conscious about your looks ever gotten in the way of talking to someone you liked? After seeing the opera, what are your thoughts about looks versus substance? Can you learn anything from the story of Cyrano or is it unrealistic?
2. Describe your experience of seeing the opera. What were your observations of the music? The costumes? The casting? The sets? What was most memorable to you?
3. Pick something about yourself that makes you feel insecure. Create one or two humorous things you could say about it like Cyrano does in the previous scene. Did this activity change how you feel about your insecurity? Why or why not?

### Activate with Arts: Modern Day Adaptation

Write a skit that is a modern day adaptation of the story of Cyrano. Think about modern day equivalents of each character, some of the most memorable scenes in the opera/play, and some of Cyrano's witty banter.

### Interdisciplinary Connections: Literature + History/Social Studies + French Language

- What is quintessentially French about this story (think about cultural clues within the play/opera)?
- What are some ways that French language and culture has seeped into the American culture and consciousness?
- Create a visual representation of their findings that can be shared on the web.



# Worksheet

## WHO'S WHO IN CYRANO

AS YOU READ THE SYNOPSIS, DRAW AND LABEL LINES BETWEEN THE CHARACTERS TO INDICATE CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH CHARACTER AND ILLUSTRATE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, BETWEEN ROXANE AND CHRISTIAN, DRAW A LINE AND LABEL IT WITH HEARTS TO ILLUSTRATE THAT ROXANE HAS FALLEN FOR CHRISTIAN.

*Roxane*



*Cyrano*



*Christian*



# Connect the Curricular Dots

## Common Core Standards Addressed in the Guide

The following anchor standards provide a basis for all of our Student Guide activities:

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences

CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Don't miss our next **Student Night** opportunities:



February 9, 2018

Verdi's story of power paving the way to get away with murder. A curse is triggered when hunch-backed court jester, Rigoletto's daughter, Gilda, falls for the Duke of Mantua. Outraged, Rigoletto begins to plot the demise of the Duke to save his daughter from heartbreak. Revenge is within his reach...or so he thinks.



April 13, 2018

Written on the heels of the French Revolution, this sequel to *The Barber of Seville* takes place on a single day of madness in the palace of the Count Almaviva as the non-noble Figaro attempts to marry. With plot full of twists, turns and comically conniving characters, you'll enjoy watching Figaro and his cast outwit the Count.