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**GUTHRIE THEATER PRESENTS EDMOND ROSTAND'S *CYRANO de BERGERAC*,  
A SWASHBUCKLING ROMANCE  
ON THE McGUIRE PROSCENIUM STAGE**

"It's not the greatest play ever written; just the most perfect one."  
– John Simon, American film and theater critic

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*) — The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) today announced casting for ***Cyrano de Bergerac***, one of the most notable pieces of work from French dramatist **Edmond Rostand**. **Joseph Haj** will direct on the Guthrie's McGuire Proscenium Stage for the first time using his own adaptation of this classic story.

Haj previously directed this adaptation in 2006 for PlayMakers Repertory Company, where he served as artistic director before joining the Guthrie in 2015. Three productions of *Cyrano de Bergerac* have been performed previously at the Guthrie, each using previous English translations.

*Cyrano de Bergerac* will run March 16 – May 5, 2019, on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. Single tickets start at \$15 for preview performances (March 16–21), and regular tickets range from \$29 to \$78. Tickets are on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) or online at [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org). Post-play discussions and access services (ASL-interpreted, audio-described and open-captioned performances) are available on select dates and by request.

*Cyrano de Bergerac* is the full package: he's a poet, playwright and consummate swordsman. The only thing standing in the way of declaring his love for Roxane is his grotesquely large nose. When Roxane confesses that she's fallen for a handsome young cadet named Christian, Cyrano takes him under his wing, adds brains to his beauty and, through Christian, expresses his own feelings to Roxane without her suspecting a thing. Wit, wordplay and rousing passion make this a heroic comedy for the ages.

Rostand's name is forever linked with his most celebrated and enduring play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. First performed in Paris in 1897, it made its mark in France and launched Rostand into stardom overnight, much to his surprise. Rostand was convinced his work would be a disaster, but legend says it left the audience clapping for well over an hour after the curtain fell on opening night.

The play was written during an exceptionally cynical period in an incredibly optimistic way, paying a nostalgic visit to the romantic dramas the French have always held dear. Rostand explores what beauty is, where it lies and how it affects our perceptions of ourselves and others. His use of dazzling language, panache and masterfully blended comedy and pathos provided a welcome change from the fatalistic dramas emerging at the time.

To write his adaptation, director Joseph Haj combined his working knowledge of French with two early English translations — one in verse and one in prose — to create a version of *Cyrano de Bergerac* that strengthened the storyline and characters in a muscular, meaningful way. "Rostand's play is spectacular," said Haj in the rehearsal room. "I wanted to pursue the original rhythms of the piece and amplify Rostand's central examination of where beauty actually resides. For all its dazzle, this is a deeply human play about how we take a single blemish and let it eclipse our best selves. It touches our hearts in places we can't escape. And we all can see ourselves in it."

**Jay O. Sanders** (Guthrie: debut) will be playing the title role of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. He has been a regular presence in theater, on Broadway and Off-Broadway for over 40 years (*Loose Ends*, *Buried Child*, *Stuff Happens*, *Titus Andronicus* and a long list of leading roles in The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park productions). Most recently, Sanders appeared as the title character in Richard Nelson's *Uncle Vanya* at the Frederick Loewe Theatre at Hunter College in New York City. *The Wall Street Journal's* Terry Teachout said, "One of our most accomplished character actors, Mr. Sanders gets to be the star of this show, scoring a decisive triumph in the title role." Theater critic Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* named the production one of the best theater productions in 2018, calling it "the most affecting version that [he has] ever seen — with a devastating Jay O. Sanders in the title role." Sanders has also done extensive work in film (*The Day After Tomorrow*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Angels in the Outfield*) and television ("Sneaky Pete," "True Detective," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent").

Rounding out the cast are **Ansa Akyea** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *Harvey*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*) as Ragueneau, **Remy Auberjonois** (Guthrie: *Noises Off*, *Sense and Sensibility*) as LeBret, **Robert O. Berdahl** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *The Royal Family*, *The Music Man*) as Cuigy, **Kaitlyn Boyer** (Guthrie: debut) as First Lady, **Nate Cheeseman** (Guthrie: *Juno and the Paycock*) as Marquis, **Fernando Collado** (Guthrie: *West Side Story*) as Second Cavalier, **Cameron Folmar** (Guthrie: *The Legend of Georgia McBride*) as Count de Guiche, **Jennie Greenberry** (Guthrie: *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*) as Roxane, **Charity Jones** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*) as Duenna/Sister Marguerite, **Robert Lenzi** (Guthrie: debut) as Christian, **Joel Liestman** (Guthrie: *West Side Story*, *A Christmas Carol*, *South Pacific*) as Montfleury, **Mark Mazzarella** (Guthrie: debut) as First Cavalier, **Andrea Mislan** (Guthrie: *West Side Story*) as Lise, **David O'Connell** (Guthrie: debut) as Brisaille, **Jason Rojas** (Guthrie: *Frankenstein – Playing With Fire*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*) as Bellerose, **Eric Schabla** (Guthrie: debut) as Valvert and **Christine Weber** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Winter's Tale*) as Buffet Girl.

The creative team for *Cyrano de Bergerac* includes **Joseph Haj** (director/adaptor), **McKay Coble** (scenic designer), **Jan Chambers** (costume designer), **Rui Rita** (lighting designer), **Elisheba Ittoop** (sound designer), **Jack Herrick** (composer), **Carla Steen** (dramaturg), **Robert Ramirez** (voice and text coach), **Kara Wooten** (fight director), **Katie Hawkinson** (stage manager), **Michele Hossle** (assistant stage manager) and **Seonjae Kim** (assistant director).

**Joseph Haj** (director) was appointed the eighth artistic director of the Guthrie Theater in 2015. Within a year of his arrival, he announced the Level Nine Initiative supported by a \$1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Level Nine Initiative emphasizes the creation of a theater that wrestles with urgent questions, inspires dynamic dialogue with its audiences, expands the diversity of voices, visions and styles on its stages and engages community members currently underserved by its work. Since his appointment, Haj has directed several shows at the Guthrie, including *West Side Story*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Sunday in the Park With George*, *King Lear*, *South Pacific* and *Pericles* (also Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Folger Theatre).

Prior to his appointment at the Guthrie, Haj was the artistic director at PlayMakers Repertory Company, where he presented the world premiere of *Surviving Twin* by Loudon Wainwright III, Mike Daisey's *The Story of the Gun*, UNIVERSES' *Spring Training* and the premiere of *The Parchman Hour* by Mike Wiley. While at PlayMakers, Haj also directed *The Tempest*, *Metamorphoses*, *Cabaret*, *Henry IV* (Parts I and II), *Henry V*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Illusion*, *Amadeus*, *Pericles*, *Big River*, *As You Like It*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Haj's adaptation) and *Into the Woods*.

Other directing projects include *Hamlet* (Folger Theatre, Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Production) and *Henry V* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), as well as directing maximum-security inmates in a production of *Henry V*, creating and directing *Voices* with the rural community of Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina, and conducting workshops in the West Bank and Gaza.

Haj received an M.F.A. from The University of North Carolina before beginning a career in acting and has worked as an actor with many internationally known directors, including Garland Wright, JoAnne Akalaitis, Anne Bogart (as an original member of SITI Company), Peter Sellars, Sir Peter Hall and Robert Woodruff. He has been named one of 25 theater artists who will have a significant impact on the field over the next quarter-century by *American Theatre* magazine, and he is the recipient of the 2014 Zelda Fichandler Award (SDCF) and 2017 Rosetta LeNoire Award (AEA). Haj currently serves on the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

**THE GUTHRIE THEATER** (Joseph Haj, artistic director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving nearly 400,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org)

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