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For Immediate Release:

Cyrano conquers all but her own heart.

Kimberly Gilbert plays the eloquent poet swordfighter through triumphs and heartbreak.

Cyrano

by Edmond Rostand

adapted and directed by **Lise Bruneau**

from the 1898 translation by

Gladys Thomas and Mary F. Guillemand

Where: Capitol Hill Arts Workshop

545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003

When: September 25—October 11, 2025

Price: \$20 tickets available at www.taffetypunk.com

A hero who fights for right, defends the weak, and inspires all to see and take delight in the beauty of the world. This is the hero Edmond Rostand gives us in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. A curious character plucked from the deep bench of classical French history, and thrust onto the late 19th Century stages to immediate approbation — uplifting the national mood in France overnight, and thrilling audiences all over the world ever since.

And it is a heartbreaking love story. Often emulated; never equaled.

Taffety Punk presents a new adaptation of this epic play with a shockingly minimal cast. Just five actors take on the 50+ character story in the small black box at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. This will be a **Cyrano** to remember: Taffety Punk company members deploy near acrobatic ability to shift into new physicalities and voices to embody the swirling dance of action and poetry of this classic tale.

Perhaps the most memorable element of **director Lise Bruneau's** adaptation is that her fellow company member (and triple Helen Hayes Award winner) **Kimberly Gilbert** plays the lead. Gilbert and Bruneau have been part of Taffety Punk since its inception, and these two pillars of DC Theatre helped bring to life Taffety Punk's long-running Riot Grrrls series, giving the company's women roles that would otherwise be denied them in most classical theatre settings. While the Riot Grrrl tactic has been to have women play the male characters as written, in this production Gilbert will portray *Cyrano* as a woman, in love with another woman.

Finding an opportunity to play this part has long been a dream of Ms. Gilbert, and the question of the same-sex attraction as a potential obstacle to *Cyrano's* love for Roxane coming to fruition is one both the actor and her director are excited to explore.

The story of *Cyrano* is the story of a gloriously positive misfit, whose impulses are **100% punk rock** — written long before we had a name for it. *Cyrano de Bergerac* lives life to the fullest, and says no to any choice that lacks generosity or sincerity. Our hero defies the powers that be, and in doing so becomes the best poet, sword-fighter, and romantic hero all at once.

Despite *Cyrano's* celebration of this self-described “panache”, the character suffers a crippling diffidence about the possibility of being loved. Bruneau says of having a woman play *Cyrano*, “This approach illuminates so many of the subtler themes of the play. A deep self-doubt can come when you think another person couldn't possibly love you for whatever reason; and that can keep you from ever actually taking the risk.” She adds, “When this self-doubt is anchored in a same-sex romance, I just find it so resonant to see someone struggle with the idea of presuming that another person would be open to it, and choosing to just not push it.”

There are men on stage in this show (so it is technically not a Riot Grrrl production) but the always exciting “What if . . .” of giving a woman access to the agency men have in the classical world is a thrill for these veteran Riot Grrrls. However, both Bruneau and Gilbert are not interested in changing Rostand's intentions or shaping the audience's interpretation. This adaptation is still very much Rostand's play: the famous nose, the balcony, the Cadets of Gascony, the poet baker, the battle of Arras, all remain. The goal is to play the play, to tell the story; let the audience bring themselves into this world and form their own reactions.

Company members **Dan Crane** and **Tonya Beckman**, and guest artists **Fabiolla da Silva** and **Gary DuBreuil** make up the rest of the acting ensemble—each taking on a wide range of roles, including their principle characters: De Guiche (Crane), Roxane (Beckman), Carbon (da Silva), and Christian (DuBreuil). This ensemble embraces the substantial shifts required to bring each character to life, with a deft and impressive clarity.

The audience is in sure hands. Taffety Punk has successfully delivered classical epics with nimble small casts many times before. Returning patrons will remember the company's production of Anne Carson's *Antigonick*, in which director Kelsey Mesa echoed ancient Greek practices pulling major characters out of their ongoing duty as chorus members; or Joel David Santner's direction of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*, in which seven actors portrayed all the Danes at the troubled court of Elsinore — some changing costume mid-scene.

Bruneau wants to acknowledge the great debt she owes to the 1898 translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Gladys Thomas and Mary F. Guillemard. There are a great many translations of Rostand's play available, but the phrasing choices of these two women translators—so close to the publication of the original French edition—struck this director with the deepest resonance. While she has emended it heavily, the way any director might do with a Shakespeare play today, she is excited that the words of these women will live on stage again.

Taffety Punk's company members have been inspired recently to bring more heroic epics to the stage. With *Cyrano*, the company hopes to inspire all to robust deeds of authentic generosity and authentic living — core principles of a punk life.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company as always is committed to making the best possible theatre for the best possible price. Tickets for this show will not exceed \$20. Seats are general admission

Cyrano opens at the **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003 – two blocks from Metro's Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market) on Saturday, September 27 at 7:30pm and runs Wednesdays through Saturdays through October 11. **All evening performances are at 7:30pm** and there are two Saturday **matinees at 2:00pm** on October 4 and 11. Additionally, there are two half-price previews on the evenings of September 25 and 26, and an "industry night" performance on the evening Monday October 6.

This show is estimated to run two hours and fifteen minutes in length, including an intermission.

Cyrano is directed by founding company member Lise Bruneau, and stars company member Kimberly Gilbert in the lead role performing with fellow company members Tonya Beckman and Dan Crane and guest artists Fabiolla da Silva and Gary DeBreuil in the ensemble. Light design by Elijah Thomas. Costume design by Elizabeth Morton. Sound design by Matthew Nielson.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company is the resident company at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop.

For hi-res photos, go to: www.taffetypunk.com/press

- **Lise Bruneau** (director) is a highly esteemed actor and director and a co-founder of Taffety Punk Theatre Company, where she was recently nominated for a Helen Hayes award for her portrayal of Macbeth in the Riot Grrrls: *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, directed by Michelle Shupe. Before that she appeared with fellow company member Tonya Beckman as narrators of *Venus and Adonis*. She played Iago in the Riot Grrrls: *Othello* (directed by Kelsey Mesa), and has directed many of the Riot Grrrls, Bootleg Shakespeare, and TPunk shows: notably *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Oxygen*, *Bloody Poetry*, *Pericles*, *King John* and *Owl Moon*. DC area appearances include her recent Helen Hayes winning performance in Solas Nua's *The Honey Trap*. Other area credits include Arena Stage: *Junk*, *Watch on the Rhine*, *The Heiress*, *Legacy of Light*; Shakespeare Theatre Co: *Hamlet*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Othello*; Mosaic Theater Co: *Eureka Day*, *Paper Dolls*; Theatre J: *Breaking Glass*, *Mikveh*; Round House Theatre: *This*, *The Book Club Play* and Center Stage: *Mary Stuart*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Blithe Spirit*. Outside of DC, Lise has performed in New York on Broadway in Roundabout Theatre's *The Cherry Orchard*, directed by Simon Godwin; and at the Park Avenue Armory in *Hamlet*, and *The Oresteia*, directed by Robert Icke; and at American Regional Theatres such as ACT San Francisco in *Sweat*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Angels in America*; Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in *The Revolutionists*; Denver Center Theatre Co in *Heartbreak House* (Henry Award); Chicago Shakespeare Theatre in *Merry Wives of Windsor*; and Alabama Shakespeare Festival as Margaret of Anjou in *Wars of the Roses*. As a freelance director, she has helmed the recent *Oresteia*, and *Measure for Measure* for Chesapeake Shakespeare Company; *4000 Miles* for Clarence Brown Theatre; *Hamlet* (starring Marcus Kyd) for Nebraska Shakespeare; and *Savage in Limbo* for MetroStage, among others. Ms. Bruneau trained at RADA. www.lisebruneau.com

- **Kimberly Gilbert** (*Cyrano de Bergerac*) is a Taffety Punk company member where she has performed in *La Salpêtrière* (Helen Hayes Award), *suicide.chat.room*, *Phaeton*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Owl Moon*, *Measure For Measure*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cardenio Found*, *And Then It Faster Rocked*, as well as the Bootleg Shakespeare productions of *Cymbeline*, *Henry VIII*, *Troilus & Cressida*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *King John*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen Of Verona*, *Henry VI parts 1, 2, 3*, and *Richard III*. DC area credits include Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Avant Bard, Longacre Lea, Prologue Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, Kennedy Center, Theater J, Ford's Theatre, Mosaic Theater Company, Forum Theatre, MetroStage, Faction Of Fools, Source Theatre, Scena Theatre. Regional theatre credits include: Arden Theatre, Denver Center, Syracuse Stage, Portland Center Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Adirondack Theatre Festival. Kimberly has received three Helen Hayes Awards for her work on stage. She holds an MFA from The STC Academy at GWU. Upcoming performances include *Appropriate* at Olney Theatre Center and *Sally & Tom* at Round House Theatre.
- **Taffety Punk Theatre Company** is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. Founded to establish an actively collaborative company of actors, dancers, and musicians, the company has been at the forefront of theatre innovation, presenting groundbreaking productions that inspire audiences, and introducing new playwrights and stories to the stage alongside new works of choreography and new compositions of original music. Through its artist-nurturing Generator program Taffety Punk has a rich history of developing original works that challenge theatre norms. Generator projects that have realized full production include the widely celebrated dance plays *suicide.chat.room*, *Fragments of Sappho*, and *Enter Ophelia, distracted*; as well as the world premieres of Liz Maestri's *Inheritance Canyon*, and Kelsey Mesa's *La Salpêtrière* (nominated for five Helen Hayes Awards in 2024 including Outstanding New Play, and winner of two of those nominations: Outstanding Production, and Outstanding Supporting Actor - company member Kimberly Gilbert). Over the years, Taffety Punk has garnered numerous accolades and recognition for its work and, in fact, won the very first John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company from the Helen Hayes Awards. The Washington Post declared the company "The most vital of the city's small troupes." The company's all-female ensemble, the Riot Grrrls, have repeatedly delighted audiences delivering impassioned productions of classical plays while empowering women in theatre. The recent Riot Grrrls production of *The Tragedie of Macbeth* garnered two Helen Hayes Award nominations: Lise Bruneau for Lead Performer, and Marcus Kyd for Sound Design. The Bootleg Shakespeare is a widely celebrated event the company hosts with the partnership of the Folger Theatre providing the most exciting night of theatre anyone could ask for: an entire Shakespeare play rehearsed and performed in a single day. The company has released albums by its company members and their tangential bands, most notably the indie rock sensation Beauty Pill, the musical home for two Taffety Punk Company Members: composer Chad Clark and singer Erin Mitchell Nelson. Taffety Punk's music catalog is available on all streaming platforms and via taffetypunk.bandcamp.com where LPs and singles can be ordered. Taffety Punk is thrilled to add company member Teresa Spencer's book of poetry and short stories to the company's media catalog. *Too Like the Lightning* is available at bookstores everywhere. As Taffety Punk Theatre Company moves forward, it remains committed to its mission to ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable. The company is excited to continue its legacy of excellence and making the greatest theatre for the lowest price. www.taffetypunk.com

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