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by Patricia Kelly

'CYRANO REVIEW'

Casting about for a tale on which to base a musical, composer David Reeves settled on *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 19th-century Edmond Rostand's tale of one of the 17th century's more dashing figures. Reeves hoped to create a musical that would succeed where other versions had failed.

Cyrano premiered this week in a concert version to "celebrate the album" of the music recorded for international release by Queensland Symphony and Philharmonic orchestras.

This pleasant excursion revealed a work not yet realised in its full swashbuckling potential. Its component and derivative parts probably wouldn't stand a chance in the glaring light of analytical scrutiny, but the ingredients, well blended could make a smashing total. So much will depend on production, on the embellishment that only staging, design, colour, sound and general theatrical wizardry can provide. It gives opportunity aplenty for artistic imagination. Designers rejoice!

In embryonic form, *Cyrano* revealed easy-listening melodies sung engagingly and performed by real musicians, playing real instruments, directed by a real conductor, Reeves himself. Musicians rejoice!

It gives singers opportunity to flex their dramatic vocal muscles, to sing high and low without grovelling in the laryngeal nether regions. A children's chorus gets to process a la *Sound of Music* and bring it all to a celestial finale. Singers rejoice!

Literary purists who do not like their classics watered down to this colloquial level will probably avoid it. They didn't like what Rudolf Friml did to Victor Hugo's *The Three Musketeers* either, but that was long ago. *Les Misérables* has happened since then, with Normie Rowe, who turns up here as our hero.

Rowe is no Pavarotti, but he has plenty of heart and soul. Audiences like that.

Rowe's discovery in Toowoomba, Miranda Gehrke, is a star of a Roxane if ever there was one: cool and confident, a poised singer surely destined for (musical) greatness. It all needed much more rehearsal, but appears to be on its rollicking way.
