

## CYRANO

On the evening of 2 October members of the Music Club went to see a performance of the ballet *Cyrano* at the Birmingham Hippodrome. Edmond Rostand's play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, was first presented in Paris in 1897. It proved to be Rostand's most popular work and is still performed in theatres all over the world.

David Bintley, the Director of Birmingham's Royal Ballet, has inventively choreographed Rostand's play so that it comes alive on stage in dance form. The composer that Bintley chose for this version of *Cyrano* was Carl Davis, who is well known for composing music for revivals of silent films, for television drama, radio and cinema.

Like Rostand's play, the ballet opens with a reconstruction of the Hotel de Bourgogne theatre in 1640 and the traditional three taps announce the imminent performance. The entry of Roxane during this scene was accompanied by the romantic love theme which was repeated throughout the ballet. Here it was played by the flute, accompanied by pizzicato strings. Roxane was danced by Nao Sakuma, who was born in Japan and trained there and then at the Royal Ballet School. Her technique was excellent and she brought romance and humour to the part.

Discordant chords heralded the arrival of Cyrano. The role was danced by Scottish dancer Iain Mackay, who ably conveyed the strength, humour and tragic despair of the character. One of the most memorable dances he performed was the moon dance in the second Act. The strange music of an *ondes martenot* gave a mysterious atmosphere to the dance. The music was eerily recalled when Cyrano died in the arms of Roxane at the end of the ballet.

*Cyrano* is a ballet which mixes comedy with tragedy. There is the scene when many chefs confect a pastry lyre as an award for services to poetry by Ragueneau, patron of the bakery, and parody the Sleeping Beauty Rose Adagio when they present him with baguettes. Another scene shows Cyrano cursing his fate after he has addressed Roxane on behalf of Christian and sees the latter gaining in confidence and winning Roxane's love. Cyrano can only watch whilst Roxane and Christian dance a *pas de deux*.

The ballet was excellently staged with colourful 17th century costumes and scenery. As we walked home from the theatre, Music Club members expressed their enjoyment of the evening.

**Marjorie Wilkins**