

TAMBERG**Cyrano de Bergerac**

Sauli Tiilikainen, Mia Huhta, Mati Kõrts,
Jassi Zahharov; Estonian National Opera
Chorus & Orchestra/Paul Mägi
CPO 999 832-2
108:26 mins (2 discs) £ £ £



Cyrano de Bergerac, swordsman and poet, was a real character in 17th-century France. It wasn't until 1897

that Edmond Rostand made him the hero of his famous play, showing him in love with his cousin Roxane but forced by his unsightly nose to woo and win her only by proxy, writing letters on behalf of a young army colleague. This 1974 'Romantic opera' by the Estonian Eino Tamberg (b1930) – Cyrano's fourth operatic incarnation, at least, with a libretto by Jaan Kross – divides each act into an almost cinematic sequence of short scenes, continuous even when they're separated by the passing of time, with some effective set-piece

arias and ensembles. The musical language is conservative, frequently hinting at the graces of the French Baroque, but with more discordant fanfares for the battle scenes. The writing for the voices (in Estonian) seems grateful, and Tamberg manages the story's gradual darkening of tone well. The epilogue, in which the long-widowed Roxane realises as Cyrano dies that it was his words she really loved all along, is very touching.

This performance has two Finnish leads, the baritone Sauli Tiilikainen a strong Cyrano and the soprano Mia Huhta a sweet but not always secure Roxane, joining a competent if not vocally outstanding Estonian cast, with good choral and orchestral support. The studio recording places the voices well forward, obscuring orchestral detail. And the booklet is poorly translated with a clumsily laid-out libretto. *Anthony Burton*

PERFORMANCE

★★★

SOUND

★★★

• BBC Music Magazine Direct

£23.99