

Man of La Mancha From the FAC Rep

Begin track 1 at 9:33 ("tell me once thy name" and continues with "Dulcinea" hot till 10:24 and fade down for Brad.

Brad Fletcher: Welcome to the Weekly Peak and just how it sounded the other night at the Fine Arts Center. *Man of La Mancha* came calling and, with the help of a very talented cast, tight direction, an attentive pit orchestra and superior production, was very welcome indeed. And to detail the hows and whys of this Repertory Theatre Company production of this award-winning musical - it is my great honor to present ArtsPeak's very own knight errant, at least that's the fantasy world he lives in, Dave de Sckolnik de la *New York*.

David Sckolnik: I need to get you a bugle like Sancho Panza so you can properly announce me. This was the most consistent performance I've ever reviewed from the Rep. There are three oft-repeated complaints I've had about their musicals over the years - first, the pieces they've chosen. *La Mancha*, a fresh vehicle for Cervantes literary masterpiece from the 16th century - *The Adventures of Don Quixote* - blends innovative theatrical devices, well-conceived if convoluted story telling (how about a play within a play!) and a strong musical score. It is a classic and as such, wears well and is free from the stupefying cinematic silliness born of the Broadway's Lloyd-Webber revolution.

Brad: You are aware, Sir Knight, that your opinion in this case is in the minority.

David: Such is the fate of true knight of artistic honor. So, unlike many of the Rep's recent special effects tour-de forces, one leaves humming engaging melodies after witnessing a meaningful theatrical experience. We've also had to struggle with porous, bare-bones orchestration of gala musical scores. But here, Dave Corder and his truly virtuosic pit of nine players had all the sound they needed to shine. And save for a few slips in Act II, the balance with the on-stage singers really worked.

Brad: I thought so too. For once, the singers were not over-amplified.

David: My other forever complaint. Yet still, some unnatural sounds were generated and hopefully will be ironed out as the show goes on. And thankfully, those areas where the Rep routinely excels were not glossed over. We're set in a Spanish Inquisition-era dungeon as Cervantes defends his artistic rights by spontaneously staging highlights from his Quixotic tales. Nancy Hankin fashioned a powerful set that she lit with highly atmospheric and effective lighting design. Heather Clark's costumes folded in nicely and the image of the Knight of Mirrors produced a major wow. Stagecraft was well-devised and mostly seamless in execution. With all the production elements in place, the performers were free to do their best with character and song.

Brad: It was fun for me to see this production because I had seen the professional touring company production that played the Air Force Academy a couple of years ago.