

**David:** Okay – to the true heart of the matter. Director Kelly Walter did a superior job of moving the story and his forces along. The cast gave us well-developed characters with uniformly excellent voices – as pleasing to listen to as they were rich in personality. Leading the way was none other than the Cervantes/Don Quixote character, an easy mark for Robert Tiffany, who from Noah to Voltaire has shown himself an able and often brilliant workhorse in bringing these epic characters to life. Here was his best singing yet, with plenty of theatrical power to boot. I was also delighted to finally see Shannon French earn a starring role as the Aldonza or Dulcinea who brushed aside some operatic frosting to bring us a wildcat of a character with genuine transformation and powerful voice. Two newcomers anted up with style and much future promise – Julie Novak as the Don's niece Antonia was solid vocally and theatrically and Dan Shaw had a powerful and intelligent presence as Carrasco.

**Brad:** All very true. But what did you call it- a lack of grittiness in the production?

**David:** It just wasn't messy enough. The "mob," such as it was, wasn't nasty or ugly enough. Aldonza's rape scene didn't match the hard drive of its scene music. And the comic relief, mostly the responsibility of Michael Augenstein's Sancho Panza, just didn't play. His was a two-dimensional character which didn't foster audience sympathy. Quixote, in its original incarnation, is high satire. And while Man of La Mancha leaves much of this behind, Sancho's plight does add an important balance to the show. Michael's too good of a performer to not find the laughs for his character as this run continues. So Brad, the answer is that what is on stage is really quite good, it's just short of the intensity needed to make this into the awe-inspiring experience it can be.

**Brad:** Makes sense. And there were performances I also found quite impressive – Brennan Searain produced a well-sung and interesting Padre; August Mergelman a brief but brilliant Barber and Richard Bowles a warm and real Governor/Innkeeper

**David:** And how 'bout that wife of his. Danine Schell had the best comic presence of the evening as Maria. Choreographer Jan Johnson was also on the creative team and obviously worked well with Walter's concept. In addition to some good gypsy dancing there were fun fight scenes that must have borne her stamp.

No, the Rep's La Mancha isn't quite Broadway, but there's no need for excuses here and most importantly, it only costs 20 bucks and runs 12 performances right here in our town. Our sidelight here – this was the first Rep show since Sandy Bray took over as producer. Maybe the most dramatic moment of the evening came when she introduced herself as the Director of Performing Arts for the Fine Arts Center. She could barely introduce herself without crying – this is a dream come true for her. But as Sandy is quick to point out, her actual impact on the Rep will only happen over time.

**Brad:** Well, to each his or her Dulcinea in the quest for the Impossible Dream. Man of La Mancha runs Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through October 20<sup>th</sup>. For times and tickets, call 634-5583. Next week, its Symphony time as the CSSO brings music of Schumann, Brahms and Prokofiev to the Pikes Peak center and the Weekly Peak, this is Brad Fletcher.