

# Man of La Mancha

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—  
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WRITTEN BY  
**Dale Wasserman**

MUSIC BY  
**Mitch Leigh**

LYRICS BY  
**Joe Darion**

DIRECTED BY  
**Mark Lamos**



## STUDY GUIDE

COMPILED BY **SOPHIE SIEGEL-WARREN**  
EDITED BY **DAVID KENNEDY**  
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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## THEATER AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Speaking to your students about theater etiquette is important. Students should be aware that this is a LIVE performance and that they should not talk during the show. Students may respond to the strong emotions elicited by theater in different ways, and appropriate audience reactions are warmly encouraged. But please take the time to address and discuss proper behavior in the theater with your students. This will enhance their appreciation of the work and allow other audience members to enjoy the performance at the same time.

### We have provided the following guidelines:

- Please do not bring food or drink into the theater.
- Turn off all cellular phones and pagers or anything that makes noise or lights up.
- No texting, please.
- Please talk only before or after the performance or during intermission.
- Remember that this is a live performance, and that in addition to being disruptive to your neighbors, unruly behavior can be heard by the actors on stage.
- Act with maturity during romantic, violent or other challenging scenes.
- Open your eyes, ears and mind to the world on stage. Theater has the power to transport us to another place; open your heart to that experience.

Thank you for your help, and we hope that you enjoy the show!



## THE PLOT

In the late 1500s, Miguel de Cervantes is imprisoned by the Spanish Inquisition. Having failed as a soldier and as a playwright, Cervantes was working as a tax collector — until he made the mistake of foreclosing on a church. Now Cervantes and his manservant face a group of fellow prisoners, who stage a mock trial before the inmate known as The Governor. Faced with the loss of all his possessions, including a tattered manuscript, Cervantes proposes that his defense will take the form of a play. He begins to spin the tale of Alonso Quijana, described as “a country squire... no longer young...bony, hollow faced...eyes that burn with the fire of inner vision.” Quijana, having read too many tales of heroic knights, declares he will become a knight-errant — Don Quixote de la Mancha — traveling the countryside righting all wrongs. Cervantes’ manservant takes on the role of Quixote’s faithful companion, Sancho Panza.

Quixote battles a giant — in reality, one of the windmills that dot the landscape of La Mancha. He is defeated, retreating to a castle — really a roadside inn. The inn is populated by rough mule drivers (muleteers) and the kitchen serving-wench, Aldonza. Quixote sees the boisterous muleteers as fellow knights and believes the hard-edged Aldonza to be a beautiful noble lady, whom he calls Dulcinea (meaning “sweetness”). Aldonza is confused by this; no one has ever treated her with kindness.

Cervantes now takes the story to Quijana’s home, where his niece Antonia and her fiancé, Dr. Carrasco, along with the housekeeper and Quijana’s friend Padre Perez, worry about Quijana’s behavior. Although they each declare they are only thinking of Quijana’s well-being, it’s clear that they are determined to put a stop to his antics and bring him home.

While Quixote admires Dulcinea from afar, she wonders what he could possibly see in a woman like her. Meanwhile, the muleteers jeer at Aldonza and her eccentric admirer. When a wandering barber arrives at the inn, Quixote believes the barber’s brass shaving basin to be a magical golden helmet and demands that the barber give it to him. Dr. Carrasco and the Padre witness this, and while Carrasco is certain that Quijana/Quixote is mad, the Padre is not so sure. Aldonza approaches Quixote to ask him why he does these things. He replies that it is necessary to follow the quest — every knight’s mission.

When the lead muleteer abuses Aldonza, Quixote leaps to her defense, leading to a fight between Quixote and the gang of muleteers. Quixote is victorious and is dubbed a knight by the Innkeeper — whom Quixote believes to be the Lord of the Castle. Meanwhile, Quixote is unaware that the angry muleteers have abducted Aldonza in revenge. Setting out on the road once more, Quixote and Sancho are attacked by thieves, who take everything they have. When they return to the inn, they find Aldonza, who has been beaten bloody by the muleteers. She expresses her frustration and rage at ever having believed in Quixote’s dreams.

The Knight of the Mirrors, whom Quixote sees as his mortal enemy, the Enchanter, challenges Quixote to a duel. As they battle, Quixote is struck by his reflection in the Knight’s mirrored shield — he sees himself for the broken old man that he truly is. The Knight reveals himself to be Dr. Carrasco. At this point, the guards interrupt Cervantes to warn him that he will soon be taken to face the Inquisitors. He asks for enough time to conclude his story.

Back in Cervantes’ tale, Alonso Quijana is no longer Don Quixote, but a dying man, lying in his bed, his spirit broken. Aldonza comes to Quijana’s side, but he does not recognize her and does not know her name. She pleads with him, saying that he once called her Dulcinea, and he begins to remember. She reminds him of the words of his quest: to dream the impossible dream. Quixote dies as the Padre prays over him, and Aldonza declares that she is now Dulcinea. Cervantes’ story is finished: the prisoners give him his manuscript, as the guards return to remove him from the cell and bring him before the officials of the Inquisition. As Cervantes is led out of the prison, the inmates join together, singing Quixote’s song of his impossible dream.

This article was originally created as part of a resource packet for the production of *Man of La Mancha* at A Noise Within, a repertory theater in Pasadena, California focusing on classic drama.

## WHO WAS THE REAL MIGUEL DE CERVANTES?



Everyone has heard of William Shakespeare, the great English playwright, but have you heard of the Spanish novelist, playwright, and poet Miguel de Cervantes? His masterwork *Don Quixote* — the inspiration for *Man of La Mancha* — is considered to be the first modern novel. Shakespeare and Cervantes lived at the same time, between the years 1564 and 1616, and died within a few days of each other. The publication of *Don Quixote* in 1605 and its subsequent English and French translations shot Cervantes to international fame, and he has made huge contributions to the literary canon.

Little is definitively known about Miguel de Cervantes, but we do know some of his life's milestones before *Don Quixote*. Cervantes was born in a small town near Madrid, Spain, around September 29, 1547. His father Rodrigo was a barber-surgeon and his mother Leonor was a nobleman's daughter who had to be sold into marriage to pay her father's debts. Miguel and his family moved around Spain many times when he was young, and during this period, he met and fell in love with a barmaid, Josefina. They almost eloped, but Josefina's father forbade her from seeing Cervantes because he was so poor. In the late 1560s, Cervantes traveled to Italy to study Renaissance art, literature, and poetry, like many other young Spanish men did at that time. A few years later, Cervantes joined the Spanish navy, and was severely injured in battle. He took a few years to heal, and then he reenlisted in the

navy. While sailing from Naples to Barcelona, his ship was attacked by Algerian pirates. He was a slave in Algiers for five whole years (attempting escape multiple times) before his parents were able to pay ransom and bring him home to Madrid. Although these early life experiences were tremendous hardships, they were rich fodder for *Don Quixote*. Cervantes settled down in Madrid in 1580 and began to live the middle-class life of a tax collector — with the idea of *Don Quixote* bubbling inside.

In 1605, after publishing several lesser-known works, Cervantes published Part I of *Don Quixote* — the full title is *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha, or The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha*. Up until 1605, published works were in two forms: poetry and prose. If it was fictional, it had to be in verse. If it was truth, it had to be in prose. If fiction was presented in prose, it was perceived as truth, and the Catholic Church's censors would have none of this. However, *Don Quixote* was written in prose, and Cervantes was able to get away with this because he stated right away that he was merely translating a story he heard from a Moor. It was a clever way to blur the lines between fiction and reality and avoid censorship — and it worked.

The public loved *Don Quixote* — so much so that before Cervantes could publish Part II a decade later in 1615, someone else wrote their own sequel. It's not clear who exactly this author was, but the publication of the false sequel certainly spurred Cervantes into writing his own. However, Cervantes was not a fan of the fanfiction, and he debunked the false sequel in his dedication of Part II, saying that the reason he kills off *Don Quixote* at the end is so no more books can be written about him.

One of the main themes of *Don Quixote* is how fiction influences real life. This theme is manifested in many ways: Don Quixote (the man) becomes delusional because he reads too many fictional books, and he decides to go on a real-life quest. Another author writes the false sequel (fiction), which influences the real-life Cervantes to write his own sequel, in which he and his characters make references to the fictional knock-off sequel. Don Quixote and Sancho come across the false sequel and their actions are influenced by that encounter. Many of the people they meet on their journeys in Part II have read Part I and therefore are familiar with Don Quixote and Sancho. Cervantes' introduction of metafiction (fiction that thinks or talks about itself) changed literature forever.

*Don Quixote* not only influenced literature, but it also influenced the Spanish language itself. Modern Spanish is even referred to sometimes as “the language of Cervantes” because of how influential his writing was on the language. Cervantes wrote his masterpiece in two types of Spanish; Old Castilian is spoken only by Don Quixote, while the rest of the characters speak a more modern version of Castilian. This serves to accentuate the difference between Don Quixote's old fashioned, chivalrous ways and the more realistic outlooks of everyone around him. This humorous effect is more difficult to see nowadays because the

reader must be able to distinguish the difference between two older versions of Spanish, but when the novel was published, readers loved it. Picture Don Quixote speaking Shakespearean English in today's world, and you'll have a good idea of how effective the two language styles were to the first readers of the novel.

The legacy of *Don Quixote* lasts in its countless adaptations: opera, ballet, musical, symphonic tone poem, puppet shows, zarzuela (Spanish operetta), movies, song cycles, video games, paintings, comic books — you name the art form, and *Don Quixote* has been there. Could Cervantes have imagined that his hero would someday be featured in a superhero comedy drama called *Defendor*, a CG-animated film called *Donkey Xote*, or a puppet opera called *Master Peter's Puppet Show*? Considering that Cervantes killed him off at the end of Part II, he might even be a little angry that *Don Quixote* was resurrected by other artists. But surely, he would secretly be pleased that for someone of such a humble and difficult beginning, he and his hero are still remembered.

This article was originally created by Erin Joy Swank and Emily Murdock for the Center City Opera.

## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS LA MANCHA?



“La Mancha,” translates as “The Channel” and refers to a wide, bleak plain in Spain (pictured in red). It can also be translated as “The Stain” — not great for a knight's home base!

**“...NINE MONTHS OF WINTER AND THREE MONTHS OF HELL ... IT'S EASY TO INVENT FANTASIES IN LA MANCHA, TO BELIEVE THAT MEN MIGHT GO MAD AND INVENT WORLDS NOT YET MADE.”**

**DALE WASSERMAN** (Man of La Mancha) describing the climate of “La Mancha” in the Spanish plains.

## THE MEN AND THE MAKING OF LA MANCHA



The statue of Cervantes, with Don Quixote and Sancho below, in the Plaza de España, Madrid.

As you now know, *Man of La Mancha* is loosely based on Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote*, the first part of which was published in 1605. So how did this centuries-old novel inspire a Tony-award winning musical, which would become a classic of the musical theatre repertoire?

Imagine being an American writer, on vacation in Spain, relaxing in an outdoor café and reading the newspaper — which happens to have an article about you. It says you're there to scope out ideas for a film based on a world-famous Spanish novel. That's exactly what happened to writer Dale Wasserman while on vacation in Madrid in 1958. While laughing at the newspaper article about his supposed *Don Quixote*-based film, he felt someone looking over his shoulder. He turned to find a great marble monument to author Miguel de Cervantes, with the equestrian statues of the characters Don Quixote and Sancho Panza at his feet, right there in the Plaza de España. Coincidence? Perhaps.

Wasserman found himself thinking more and more about *Don Quixote*. He dug into all theatrical fields — puppetry, plays, movies, musicals, operas, ballets and entertainments — and found more than 400 adaptations. However, he felt most of them were failures. Now his curiosity was piqued and he felt challenged. If *Don Quixote*, “the world's greatest novel,” was so famously seminal, so rich in character and idea, why should it be so difficult to

dramatize? He kept researching and became intrigued by the author Cervantes himself, especially once he discovered that *Don Quixote* was written by a man in the declining years of his life, desperate to make some money. Wasserman really hit on Quixote's quote, “I know who I am, and who I may be if I choose.”

Wasserman originally wrote *Man of La Mancha* as a 90-minute live teleplay for CBS. The teleplay received enough interest that producers in New York asked about turning it into either a play or a musical. While not truly a musical, the teleplay included quite a bit of music to underscore or punctuate the action. According to Wasserman's autobiography, he insisted that “a bona fide composer be engaged to create this underscore . . . Certainly I didn't have a musical in mind as I was writing. Just as certainly, the demands for music were emphatic.”



Dale Wasserman, the playwright of *Man of La Mancha*

Approximately four years later, Wasserman was approached by Broadway director Albert Marre, who already had a composer on board. Wasserman had never heard of Mitch Leigh before, but soon found out that Leigh (who was famous for writing jingles) was in a position to be the main financial contributor as well. In one week's time, Marre and Wasserman laid out the foundation for the musical. Wasserman and the lyricist, Joe Darion, met almost daily to collaborate, while Leigh worked with a team of orchestrators. In this succinct and collaborative manner, the musical *Man of La Mancha* was born.

One of the few places interested in taking on the challenge of producing the new show was the recently-restored Goodspeed Opera House in an obscure Connecticut river town. Now known for nurturing promising new musicals (it was the “birthplace” of *Annie*, among others), back then it was only the venue's third year, and the first time it had ever attempted a world premiere.

The show opened in June of 1965 and was not an immediate hit. It was re-worked and re-opened in mid-August, with much more power and impact. The end of the run was sold out, and it moved to New York in November of the same year. The critics' reviews were mixed, and it took the public roughly five weeks to be convinced to take a chance on the show — but word soon spread.

Eventually, the sold-out show moved to the Martin Beck Theatre and won five Tony Awards. If measured by the number of productions worldwide, *Man of La Mancha* may be the most popular musical of the last half-century or so. It has been performed in at least 44 countries in roughly 40 languages, including nine distinctly different dialects of Spanish, often between 300 and 400 productions a year. A film was made in 1972, but it was not as successful. In the stage version, everything takes place in the prison, and uses imagination to recreate the novel's scenes.

The film version of the musical cuts to open-air, realistic scenes, with Don Quixote on horseback and sweeping views. Additionally, like many movie musicals, several plot points were also changed for the film, not necessarily for the better. *Man of La Mancha* works best on stage, sweeping the audience in by allowing them to create their own visuals of this fantasy world. Using Wasserman's words, "...what keeps *Man of La Mancha* alive is not only its philosophy but its accessibility. It can be performed in a myriad of ways, in all sorts of spaces and at many levels of professionalism... It 'works,' even in the hands of amateurs and arty directors. I have seen it performed in a tent adjacent to a thundering freeway; on a stage bare of all scenery but projection screens; in the midst of a war with interruptions of exploding grenades; in almost every conceivable environment... it is not an 'impossible musical' after all. Merely improbable."

This article was originally created by Erin Joy Swank and Emily Murdock for the Center City Opera.



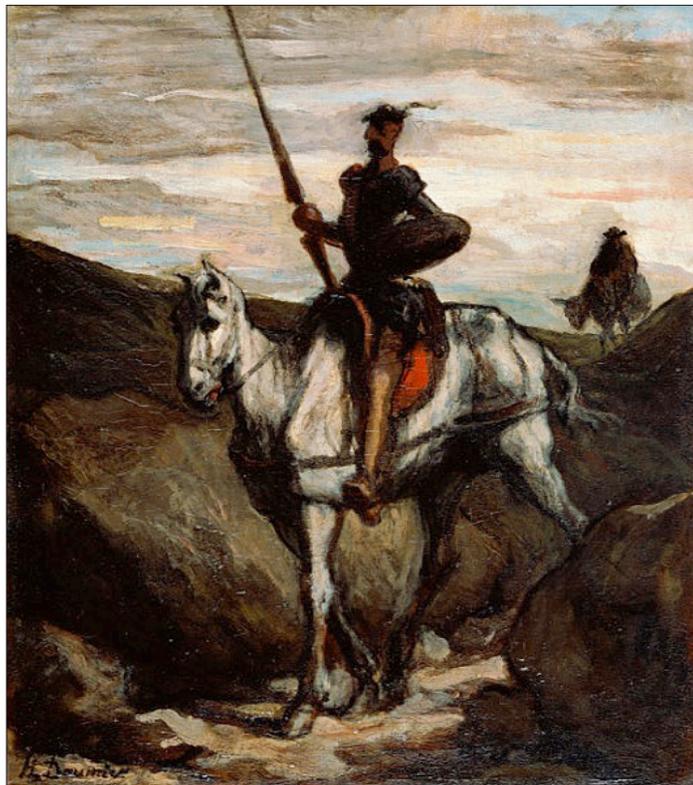
The program cover for the New York premiere in 1965.



The album cover for the original Broadway cast recording from 1966.

## “I KNOW WHO I AM AND WHO I MAY BE IF I CHOOSE.”

Perhaps *Don Quixote* was always destined to be one of the world’s great masterpieces. And perhaps it was inevitable that Cervantes’ great novel would become a stage musical. After all, Cervantes was primarily a playwright and actor. And in the novel, Quixote says to Sancho, “In my childhood I loved plays, and I have always been an admirer of the drama. Plays are the semblance of reality, and deserve to be loved because they set before our eyes looking-glasses that reflect human life. Nothing tells us better what we are or ought to be than comedians and comedy.” In another passage in the novel, Quixote says, “I know who I am and who I may be if I choose.” The actors in *Man of La Mancha* play the part of an audience for Cervantes’ play, and then that audience becomes actors by playing parts in his play. For added dramatic effect, the prisoners’ personalities are like those of the characters they are given to portray. The Governor becomes the Innkeeper, the cynical Duke becomes Dr. Carrasco, etc.



There are two audiences to be served — the prisoners who have put Cervantes “on trial” and the theater audience. Because of the parallel between the prisoners and their characters, Cervantes attempts to convince the prisoners of his story’s value while his character, Quixote, is trying to convince the characters within the play of the value of his world view. It can be argued that the director and actors of *Man of La Mancha* are trying to convince their audience of the value of the musical’s story. The burden of suspension of disbelief falls on both audiences simultaneously.

An actor portrays Miguel de Cervantes in *Man of La Mancha*, who in turn portrays Señor Quijana, who has become Don Quixote de La Mancha. At the end of the show, the Governor says, “I think Don Quixote is brother to Don Miguel,” in other words, all that is brave and good about the mad knight is also a part of Cervantes. When this story takes place (the late 1500s), there have been no knights in Spain for over three hundred years, but this is entirely irrelevant to Quixote. What matters to him is what those knights stood for (at least as portrayed in his books).

Most of the characters in the show think Quijana/Quixote is insane because he sees windmills as giants, a kitchen wench as a high-born lady; he sees the world as he’d like it to be, as he thinks it should be, instead of as it is. Quixote says in the musical, “When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies?” Even more today than when the show opened in 1965, our real world does seem lunatic. The only way to stay sane in our contemporary world is to see the world as it could be. Though *Man of La Mancha* is over fifty years old, and the novel is over four hundred years old, the message is as timely today as ever.

This article was edited from: Scott Miller (1996), “From Assassins to West Side Story: The Director’s Guide to Musical Theatre”.

Scott Miller is the founder and artistic director of New Line Theatre, an alternative musical theatre company in St. Louis, Missouri.

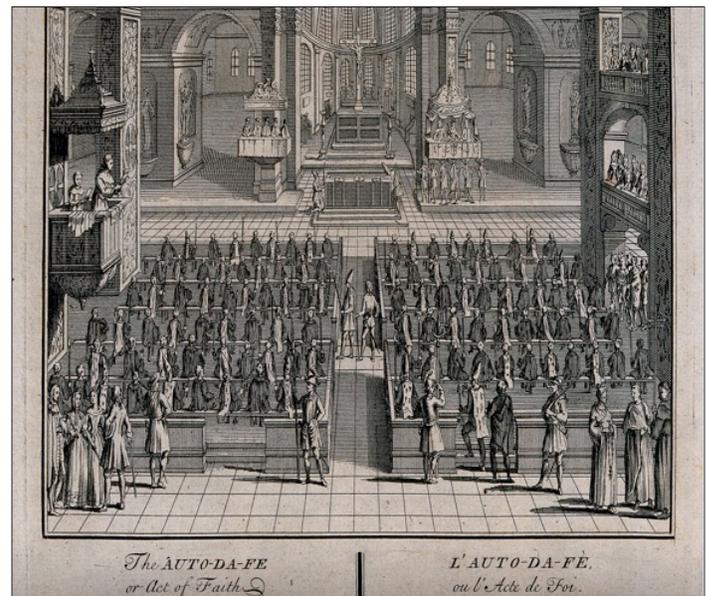
## MAN OF LA MANCHA AND THE SPANISH INQUISITION

*Man of La Mancha* is set in a prison vault, a waiting room of sorts for those to be tried by the Inquisition or other courts. That prison and all it implies swims under the surface of the show, never letting the audience forget that this story is being told inside a cell, to an audience who are also imprisoned. References to imprisonment are everywhere in *La Mancha*, both in explicit terms — as the site of Cervantes’ storytelling — and also more subtly — as when Quixote speaks of his “captive heart.” Certainly, many of the characters in the interior story are metaphorically imprisoned, including Aldonza, Antonia, and others.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, opposition to the Roman Catholic church swept across Europe, and Spain in particular feared being overtaken by Muslims and Jews. Pope Innocent III established a tribunal in 1215 called the Inquisition to try people accused of heresy against the church. The word *heresy* comes from the Latin word for *choice*. In other words, choice was not an option when it came to God; you believed what the Pope told you to believe, or else. The Inquisition was originally intended to protect the Church and to protect “civilization” in a world where secular law enforcement was often absent or irrelevant. There was no central authority (other than the Pope), no single Inquisition, but instead several relatively independent Inquisitions, in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and later in Latin America.

The Pope appointed “inquisitors” who would secretly gather information, opinion, rumor, and gossip, build their case, and then arrest and accuse the alleged heretic. The accused was given two options: to recant or be burned at the stake. These accusations functioned much like the Salem Witch Trials in the 1690s and the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s: if the accused recanted and admitted his heresy, he still had to inform on others, and if the accused would not inform on others, he would be imprisoned anyway and be fined all his possessions. In some cases, people were accused posthumously, and if convicted, their graves would be vandalized and their surviving family would be fined all their possessions and left destitute.

By the early 1400s, the Inquisition began to fade from public view — with the exception of Spain. During the Middle Ages, Jews had been expelled from most of Europe and many had settled in Spain, where they lived happily. But by the end of the 1300s, economic and social problems sent Spaniards looking for scapegoats and they found them in the Jews. Hoping to end the resulting violence and upheaval, the crown declared that all Jews in Spain either had to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Those who did convert now could rise to high social, governmental, and religious positions previously off limits to them, but this brought with it resentment and fear from Christians who could not rise as high. Thus, the Inquisition was resurrected.



This Spanish Inquisition, the most feared and brutal of all, reached its height in Spain during the days of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Quite separate from the Inquisition that had come before, this one was controlled not by the Pope, but by Ferdinand, who carried it to extremes, in large part in order to acquire for himself the great wealth held by the converted Jews of Spain. The Inquisition was used as a cloak for grand larceny as well as political and private revenge, and the inquisitors were known for their fanatical zeal and great cruelties. The Inquisition continued in modified form in Spain until 1820.

This article was edited from resources from *Theatre Latte Da*.

## “I COME IN A WORLD OF IRON ... TO MAKE A WORLD OF GOLD”

It’s important to remember the times in which *Man of La Mancha* was written, times that mirror the current atmosphere in America, a sharply divided country, a distrust of government, and so much more. Quixote, at least as he’s portrayed in *Man of La Mancha*, is a hippie. Wasserman describes him this way:

*The Knight of the Woeful Countenance is a world-class symbol of nonconformity, an idealist, posited against an overly rational, cynical age. He believes in love’s power to prevail over all challenges, even death. And he imagines the world not as it is, but as it might be.*

But look even deeper. There are parallels between our world today and the world into which the Spanish Inquisition was imposed. The Inquisition’s doctrine of guilt-by-association and cleansing by informing on others was mirrored in America’s own Communist Witch Hunts in the mid-twentieth century. And the long-ago religious “Holy War” in Spain between the Catholics on one side and the Jews and the Muslims on the other, mirror both

the religious wars of the twentieth century and today. Sixteenth-century Spain was embroiled in the same kind of ethnic cleansing we’ve seen in Nazi Germany, the Balkans, Kosovo, Iraq, and elsewhere. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

But *Man of La Mancha* goes even further. The Spanish Inquisition — as well as its modern parallels — are not just a backdrop for the story, not just an outside evil that surfaces here and there in the script. No, Quixote’s story is a metaphor for the world of the Spanish Inquisition. Quixote is a social and political heretic. He does not accept the mainstream view of the world. He does not accept its rules. He will not adhere to its philosophy. And in both worlds, the only answer is to confess or be killed. Because Quixote will not confess to being insane, he is “murdered” — in other words, Carrasco’s tactics “kill” the idea that is Don Quixote. When Carrasco is done with Quijana, Quixote no longer exists. He is dead. Like unrepentant heretics or Jews, Quixote simply disappears.

Source: Scott Miller, *Inside Man of La Mancha*, and *Theatre Latte Da*.



The set design for the Westport Country Playhouse production of *Man of La Mancha*, designed by Wilson Chin.

## MAJOR THEMES IN MAN OF LA MANCHA

### IMPRISONMENT: CAPTIVITY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

You already know that *Man of La Mancha*'s prison setting is a constant reminder of human captivity — and this continues on a metaphorical level as well as a literal one. The play is filled with characters who are trapped both by circumstance and viewpoint.



Dr. Carrasco views Quijana as suffering from a “prison of the mind.”



Cervantes describes Quixote's madness as a liberation from a realistic, but often unbearable understanding of the hardships and suffering of man.



When Cervantes presents his defense in the form of a story about one man's journey to hope and idealism, he guides the prisoners on a journey to their own psychological freedom.

### QUIXOTISM, IDEALISM, AND FAITH

Don Quixote is such an iconic literary figure, that his name has become synonymous with the ideas of chivalry and unrealistic idealism. So much so, in fact, that the adjective “quixotic” means impractical, idealistic, foolishly romantic — all characteristics attributed to Don Quixote. *Man of La Mancha* was born out of a movement of experimental and political theatre in the 1960s. Often, politically radical individuals are challenged or written off for being irrational, overly idealistic, or impractical. Anything outside the scope of traditional ways of thinking is labeled quixotic. In this play, quixotism is an attribute celebrated as something that opens minds and hearts and challenges pervasive cynicism and despair.



Quijana's transformation into Quixote is catalyzed by his despair about the cruelty of humankind and his desire to right all the world's wrongs. He is perceived as mad in part because of his utter selflessness.



When Aldonza chooses to accept Quixote and his idealized vision of her, she is set free from the oppressiveness of her position and able to find faith and hope in herself and others.

### THE POWER OF STORYTELLING AND ART

The prisoners in *Man of La Mancha* viciously attack Cervantes and his servant when they arrive. When the inmates try to steal their possessions, Cervantes wants to protect his precious manuscript at all costs. Cervantes attempts to gain respect and empathy from his fellow prisoners through the power of his storytelling. Alonso Quijana, the protagonist of Cervantes' story, is a man disheartened by the world he lives in, trapped by feelings of despair and overwhelmed by human cruelty and suffering. He seeks solace and comfort in novels about chivalrous knights and heroic journeys.



Quijana is so moved by the stories he reads, that he changes his entire identity to mirror the knights he so greatly admires. Quijana, transformed into Quixote, believes that by living out those stories, he can effect change in the world. Quixote creates meaning for himself and for others whom he enlists on his hero's journey.



Cervantes's story is so powerful that not only do his fellow prisoners agree to return his belongings to him by the end of the play, but they also all begin to sing “The Impossible Dream” as he is marched to trial.

This article was edited from resources from *A Noise Within*.

## BEFORE SEEING MAN OF LA MANCHA

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### Going to the Theater

1. What are the **differences between live theater and cinema**? What is the responsibility of an audience when watching a play? What is the responsibility of an audience when watching a musical?
2. When you get into the theater, look around. **What do you see?** Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show.
3. Discuss **the elements that go into producing a live performance**: The lights, set, props, costumes, and stage direction. All the people involved in the “behind the scenes” elements of the theater are working backstage as the play unfolds before the students’ eyes. Tell them to be aware of this as they watch the show. Observe the lighting cues. How do special effects work? How do the actors change costumes so fast?
4. Pay attention to **when you’re excited about something on stage**. What excited you? Pay attention to when you’re bored. Why were you bored? What would you have done differently to make the play more interesting? Actors in a live performance are very attuned to the audience and are interested in the students’ reactions to the play.

Ask the students to write letters to the actors about the characters they played, and to ask questions of the actors.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### The Play

1. **Read some excerpts** from Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. What do you notice about the style of language? How do you think this might be different in a musical?
2. The stories and characters of *Man of La Mancha* explore the concept of **idealism vs. realism**. Research these practices and pinpoint moments in the play that are idealistic and those that are realistic. Which moments did you enjoy the most? Why?
3. *Man of La Mancha* is a play about Cervantes telling the story of Quixote, creating **a play within a play**. Can you think of other writers who do this? Research this element/device, found in novels, film, television and theatre. Discuss how the setup and structure varies from medium to medium.
4. The main character dreams of being a knight and is often seen as intelligent but also mad or crazy. He gets lost in a world and identity he creates for himself. Do we do this in our modern age? Discuss and give examples of how we might **create different identities and worlds for ourselves with technology and social media**. Much like Don Quixote does in the play, how might we use these platforms to influence those around us in a positive way?

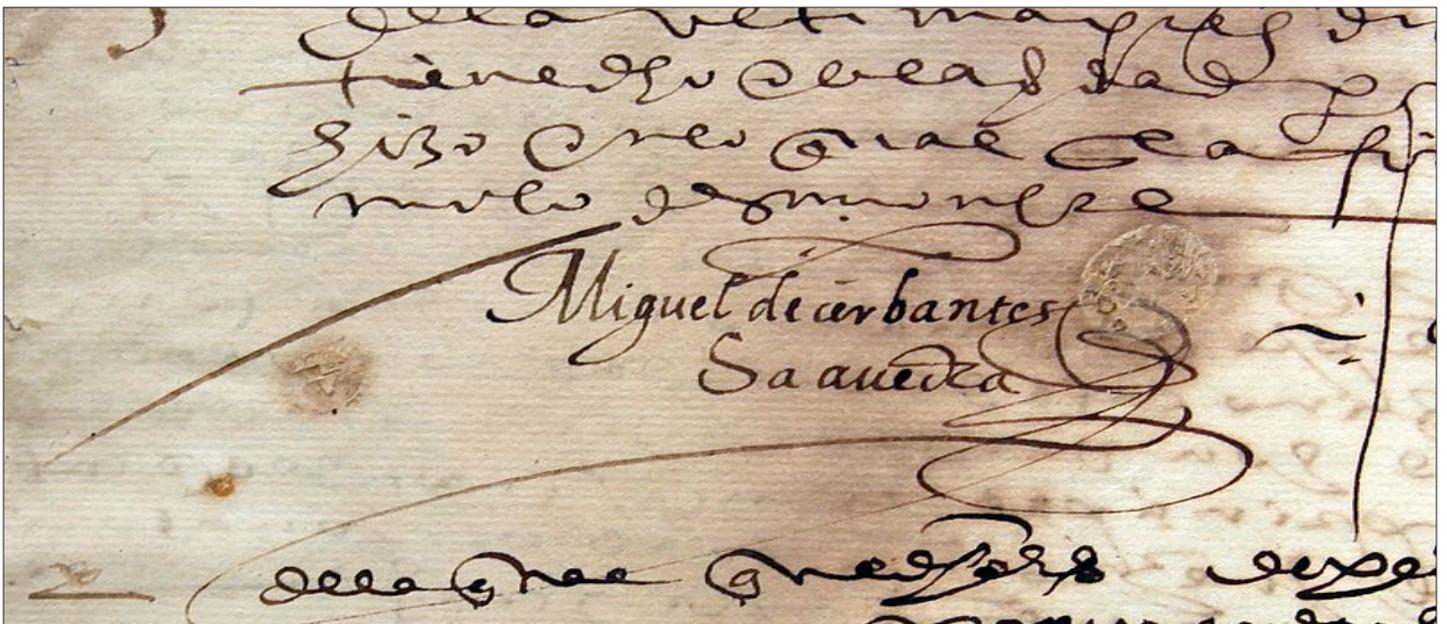


The costumes from the Westport Country Playhouse production of *Man of La Mancha*, designed by Fabian Fidel Aguilar

## AFTER SEEING MAN OF LA MANCHA

1. How do the characters change throughout the play, both in their character arc and in their literal transformation on stage? What production elements indicate these transitions into new roles? Which transition was your favorite and why?
2. The leading actor in *Man of La Mancha* plays Miguel de Cervantes, who acts out the story of Alonso Quijana, who imagines himself to be Don Quixote. How was the actor different as Cervantes, Quijana and Quixote?
3. What moments stood out to you in the performance? Why?
4. *Man of La Mancha* has been performed over 10,000 times since it was first written. What do you think draws people to this story? What makes Don Quixote a memorable character?
5. How would you describe the music? What did the songs add to the story?
6. Why do you think the author chose to have the “frame story” of Miguel de Cervantes acting out the tale of Don Quixote? Why not just tell the story of Don Quixote’s adventures?
7. Can you imagine a different ending to the story? What would it be?
8. Alonso Quijana reads so many books about knights, chivalry, and adventure that he believes he is a knight. Is Cervantes warning us about the danger of stories and taking them too literally? Do you think Don Quixote is a hero or a fool?
9. Quijana becomes Don Quixote, a very different person from himself. Is he a happier, better person with this assumed identity? Do we sometimes act like Quijana and take on a different identity? If so, why?
10. What do you think an “impossible dream” would be in today’s world? Can you think of examples of people with “impossible dreams”?
11. What are the benefits of being an idealist (a “dreamer”)? What’s the downside to being a dreamer? What are the advantages to being practical/realistic? What are the disadvantages?
12. If you had to choose one, which do you think you are: an idealist or a realist? Why?
13. Have you ever read a story or seen a television show or movie that changed your opinion about something? Do you think a story can persuade people to change their minds? Why or why not?

Some of the above questions are courtesy of Arizona Theater Company, *A Noise Within*, and Robert Hartmann



## FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

### BOOKS ON CERVANTES

Close, Anthony J. *Cervantes: Don Quixote*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Echevarria, Roberto Gonzalez (Editor). *Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Casebook*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

McCrary, Donald P. *No Ordinary Man: The Life and Times of Miguel de Cervantes*. Dover Publications, 2006.

Murillo, L.A. *A Critical Introduction to Don Quixote*. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2003.

Stevens, Ian. *Quixote: The Novel and the World*. W.W. Norton Incorporated, 2016.

### RESOURCES ON DALE WASSERMAN

Wasserman, Dale. *The Impossible Musical: The "Man of La Mancha" Story*. Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2003.

*Don Quixote as Theatre* by Dale Wasserman.

[www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/artics99/wasserma.htm](http://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/artics99/wasserma.htm)

*A Diary for I, Don Quixote* by Dale Wasserman.

[www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/articf01/diary.pdf](http://www.h-net.org/~cervantes/csa/articf01/diary.pdf)

*Don Quixote Throughout Time: Imagining the Man of La Mancha*  
[dsomeka.haverford.edu/quixote/exhibits/show/donquixote](http://dsomeka.haverford.edu/quixote/exhibits/show/donquixote)

## ABOUT WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

Westport Country Playhouse is a nationally recognized, not-for-profit, professional theater under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos and management leadership of Michael Barker. The mission of Westport Country Playhouse is to enrich, enlighten, and engage our community through the power of professionally produced *theater worth talking about* and the welcoming experience of our Playhouse campus. We create this relationship with our community and provide this experience in multiple ways:

1. From April to November, we offer live theater experiences of the highest quality.
2. We provide educational and community engagement events and opportunities to further explore issues presented by the work on stage.
3. We offer special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material.
4. We offer Script in Hand play readings throughout the year to deepen our relationships with audiences and artists alike.
5. During the summer months we offer the renowned Woodward Internship Program training program for aspiring theater professionals.
6. From November through March, we offer Family Festivities presentations to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater.
7. The beautiful and historic Playhouse campus is open for enjoyment and community events year-round. The value of the Westport Country Playhouse to all it touches is immeasurable.

Originally built in 1835 as a tannery manufacturing hatters' leathers, it became a steam-powered cider mill in 1880, later to be abandoned in the 1920s. Splendidly transformed into a theater in 1931, it initially served as a try-out house for Broadway transfers, evolving into an established stop on the New England straw hat circuit of summer stock theaters through the end of the 20th century. Following a multi-million dollar renovation completed in 2005, the Playhouse became a state-of-the-art producing theater, preserving its original charm and character.

Today, the not-for-profit Westport Country Playhouse serves as a cultural nexus for patrons, artists and students and is a treasured resource for the State of Connecticut. There are no boundaries to the creative thinking for future seasons or the kinds of audiences and excitement for theater that Westport Country Playhouse can build.

