



Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as portrayed by Pablo Picasso in 1955 Bridgeman/Succession Picasso/DACS 2004

Don Quijote rides again in 400-year celebrations

Ben Sills in Madrid

The Spanish government is preparing to celebrate the 400th anniversary in 2005 of its country's most famous literary character, with exhibitions, public readings, films, debates — and €15m (£10.6m) of tax breaks for companies.

The first part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes was first published in 1605. The novel is widely considered among the greatest works of literature, and ministers plan to use the anniversary to promote Spanish culture abroad and literacy at home.

"This celebration will reach every public library in every corner of Spain," said Carmen Calvo, the culture minister.

She hopes to encourage more Spaniards to open a book that is far more well-known than it is well-read. "The most important tribute you can pay the book is to read it," she said.

Don Quijote has been variously described as the first great European novel, the first work of modern literature and the foundation of Latin American fiction.

"All prose fiction is a variation on the theme of Don Quijote," the American critic Lionel Trilling wrote in 1950.

In 2002, the novel was voted the best book of all time by a group of 100 writers, including Salman Rushdie, Nadine Gordimer, Wole Soyinka and Norman Mailer, in a survey organised by editors at the Norwegian Book Club in Oslo.

The novel tells the story of Don Quijote, a humble, book-loving village gent who dries up his brain by reading too many cheap romances, and de-

cides to throw it all in to become a knight errant.

He puts on a cardboard helmet, mounts an old horse and sets off across the plain with his faithful sidekick, Sancho Panza. They are searching for a peasant girl from a nearby village who the Don imagines is a noble princess. Along the way they sow chaos and confusion wherever they go.

Cervantes had experience of an itinerant life. He was born into poverty in Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid, in 1547. He joined the army and lost the use of his left hand fighting the Turks in 1571. He was then captured by pirates on his way home. He spent five years as a captive in Algeria.

Cervantes later worked as a travelling tax collector in Andalucía, and spent a brief time in prison in Seville. It was there, he suggests teasingly in the prologue to the *Quijote*, that the idea for the novel began to take shape.

This week, Ms Calvo and officials have launched a consortium to promote anniversary events and encourage public and private organisations to participate.

The public broadcaster, RTVE, will air documentaries on the theme throughout the year. It has recruited celebrities and members of the public from across the Spanish-speaking world to read a section of the book each day.

Besides organising readings and debates, the ministry of culture will promote new works of music, theatre, film and dance based on Don Quijote.

Companies that sponsor such events in the coming year will receive a tax break from the government.

352 10k Nov 2005
Written by Rachel

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culture

culture

Eloquence, hope and idealism Pirate Productions presents Man of La Mancha

In the year that sees the 400th anniversary of the publication of one of the most celebrated books ever written, Don Quixote, Pirate Productions is presenting the musical based on the work, Man of La Mancha. In a recent interview, the show's director Brian Parker explained why he decided to put on this show, and what he sees as the legend's timeless message.

Tell us about the show – how does it present the story of Don Quixote?

Well, the show works on two levels. On one level you have the true story of Cervantes himself, how he was sent to prison and brought before the Spanish Inquisition for serving a tax notice on a church. The prisoners are going to burn his manuscript, and when Cervantes pleads for the right to defend his precious work, they stage a mock trial. His defence unfolds as a play within a play – the story of Don Quixote – with Cervantes and his servant taking the lead roles, and the prisoners taking on the parts of the other players in the story.

And is this true to history?

Yes and no. As I say, the imprisonment and his being 'put to the question' were quite true, but there was far amount of artistic license used in writing the show. The servant character, for instance, never existed and is there to reflect the Don Quixote/Sancho Panza relationship. And I don't think the mock trial ever took



Director Brian Parker

place. But I love the way the show weaves Cervantes' biographical detail in with the plot of his work, and I think it has a huge emotional impact that is entirely true to his message.

So what do you think is his message, then?

It's about hope and idealism as contrasted with compromise and 'realism'. There's an actual debate in the script about whether it's better to see 'life as it is' or if someone delusional can have an insight into higher things. Cervantes is very eloquent about the fact that he's seen 'life as it is' and we should focus rather on 'life as it should be'. Some of the characters in the play are quite wretched on both the prison level and on 'Don Quixote's charade' level and the point of the show is how they are transformed by the influence of a seemingly crazy idealist.

How does the music fit into this?

I think it's magical but then I would say that. It was actually the main reason I first became interested in this show, because the Spanish influence in the music means there's a lot of guitar. When I was growing up my parents played a lot of musicals and I wasn't really bothered about most of them, but I was learning to play the guitar and therefore paid attention when they played Man of La Mancha. It's always been special to me. It has amazingly complex Spanish rhythms and unusual tonality that you never get in what people think of as standard Broadway musical. I'm so happy to have Phillip Dutton as musical director because I sure as anything needed someone good to take care of this complex music, and it was just my extreme good fortune that he was here and willing to take care of it.

One of the songs is 'Dream the Impossible Dream' that has become a bit of a cliché, hasn't it?

Yeah, unfortunately it's one of the songs that have been

massacred by lounge singers over the years. But it's like a lot of songs from musicals – 'You'll Never Walk Alone' and things like that – you really have to hear in context. It's back to that thing about idealism: when you first hear that song it's Don Quixote in full flow, but later it's reprised by the prisoners and – I don't want to give the game away – but it's pretty special.

Tell us a bit about your cast.

I'm so pleased with them: there was a real chemistry between everyone, right from the beginning. The show asks a lot – everybody has to have two roles, for the prison and for the play and for some it's even more. For instance, the leading man has to play Cervantes, Don Quixote and the man who concocts Don Quixote as an alter ego, called Alonzo Quixana. And the

leading lady has to go through some gruelling events – fights, despair, assault. The three leads each have a huge task, and I am so glad to have Malcolm Turner, Danny Wells and Alex Teligadas. They are all experienced, excellent performers and really, I think, perfect for their roles. And there are some great supporting roles, from people like the marvelous Gavan Guilfoyle and a few people taking their first tour on stage. It's a pleasure working with these people.

So sum up the reasons for going to see this production.

Because there's far too little idealism in the world.

Man of La Mancha is at the ISL Auditorium 23 – 26 November at 8 pm.

Tickets can be booked by email molm@sarumlux.lu



Danny Wells, Malcolm Turner and Mike West

Last rehearsals for Man of La Mancha

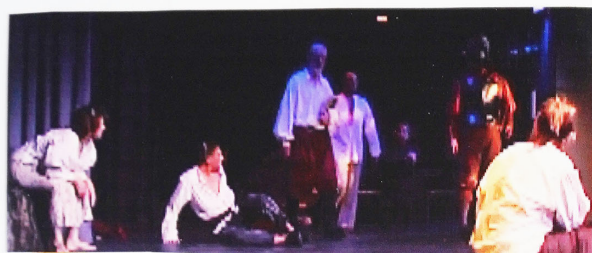
As the performance dates draw ever nearer, full cast calls for Pirate Productions' Man of La Mancha took place at Gasperich church hall last week. Cast members pictured here include Malcolm Turner, Alex Teligadas, Sarah Wilkie, Dany Wells, Steve Wilkie and Steve Preston.

The musical, which interweaves the stories of Don Quixote and his creator Cervantes, will take place at the International School of Luxembourg Auditorium from Wednesday 23 to Saturday 26 November at 7.30 p.m. Set in a prison, where Cervantes has been sent for serving a tax notice on a church, the show takes the form of a play within a play, as Cervantes has the prisoners take on parts in his tale of a nobleman who believes he is a knight errant. Everyone in the prison is transformed by this tale of daring foolishness – but will the magic work on the Inquisition? The production features some stirring music, such as 'Dream the Impossible Dream', and is a must-see in the year that marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of this classic work.

Tickets are 15 euro for adults and 12 euro for children, and can be booked by email to molm@sarumlux.net or by calling 35 87 78. See www.pirates.lu for more information.



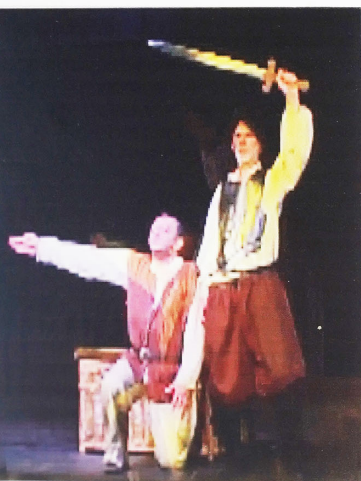
The Orchestra



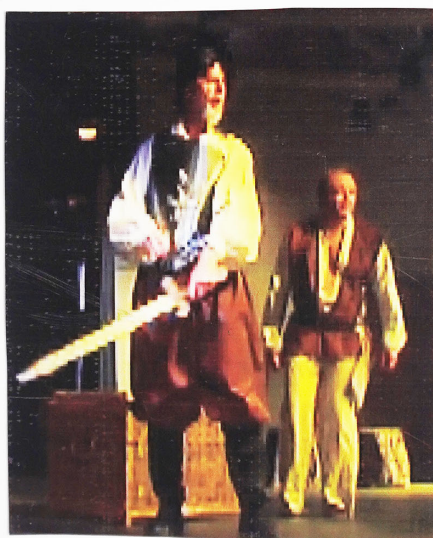
Cervantes and manservant enter prison



Cervantes pleads with the Governor
not to burn his manuscript.



I am I, Don Quixote
The Man of La Mancha



Tilting at windmills

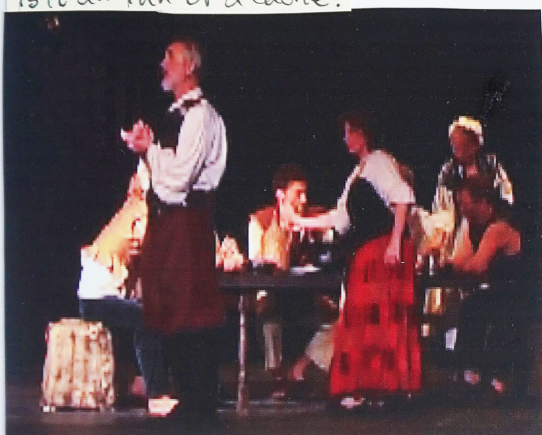




The Innkeeper and the muleteers



Is it an Inn or a Castle?



Aldonza sings
"It's All the Same"

Don Quixote sings of his Dulcinea

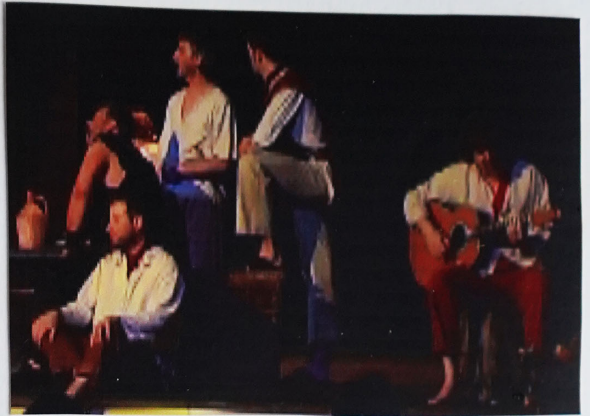
The muleteers jeer "Dulcinea"



Neice, Padre and Housekeeper sing
"We're Only Thinking of Him."



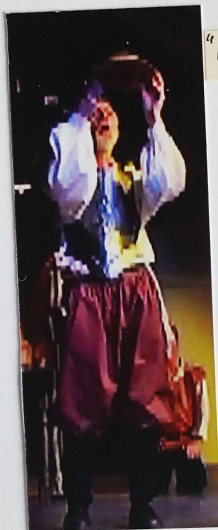
Sancho sings "I like him"



The muleteers sing "Little Bird"
(Is that the Director on guitar?!)



The Barber

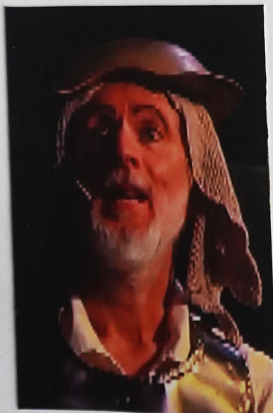
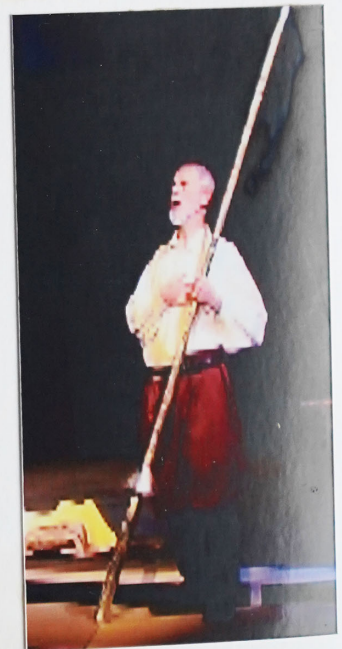


"Golden Helmet of Mambrino"

"To Dream the Impossible Dream"



Padre sings
"To Each his Dulcinea"





Don Q., Sancho & Aldonza fight the muleteers



"Hail Knight of the Woeful Countenance"



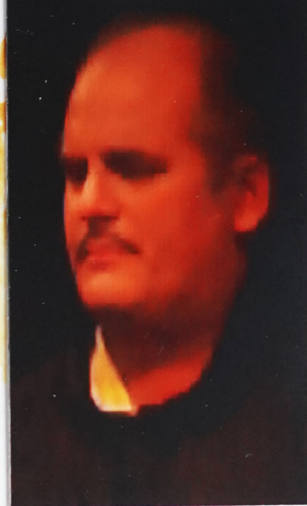
Aldonza is punished



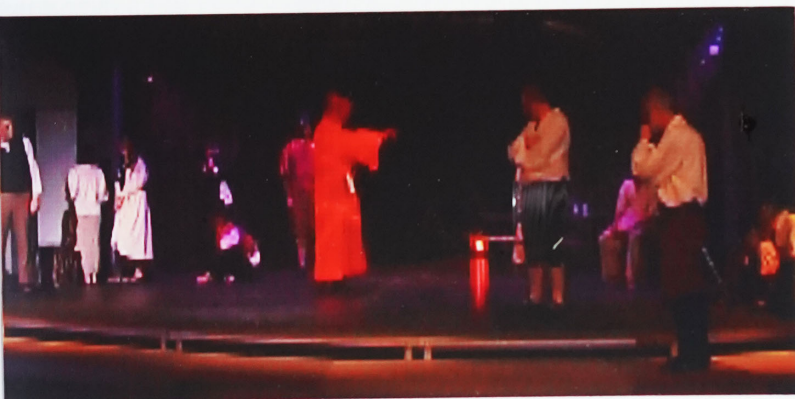
Aldonza sings
of her
wretched life



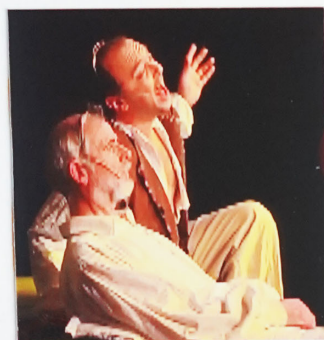
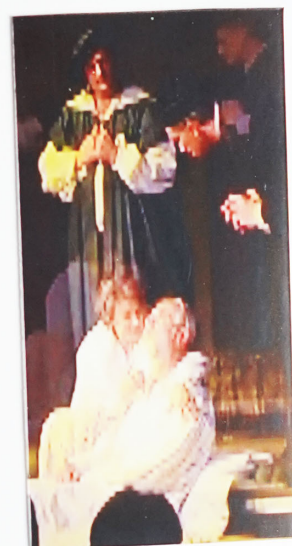
The Mirrors



The Enchanter



The Inquisitor



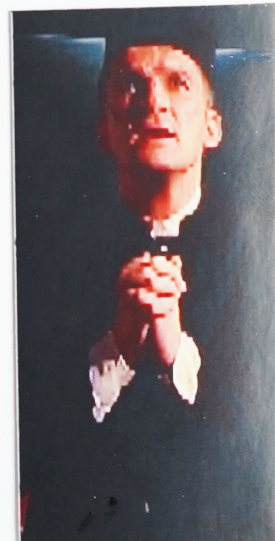
"A Little Gossip"



Onward to Glory 190



You called me Dulcinea





Finale

Man of La Mancha - Bravo!

I know there are exalted critics who dismiss "Man of La Mancha" as plebeian entertainment. What can I say? It's hard to hold out hope for people with wax heads who go walking in the sun. The mere mortals I know, leaving the theatre with The Impossible Dream finale still ringing in their heads, all felt exhilarated.

Why? If it's not Gershwin or Kurt Weill, what is it? Answer: Just what the reviewers said it was when it opened on Broadway almost exactly 40 years ago: "One of the finest and most original works in the music theater....Bold and originalEloquent.... A triumph!" The splendid Pirates production at the International School last week marked the sixth time I have seen it and everything they said still goes.

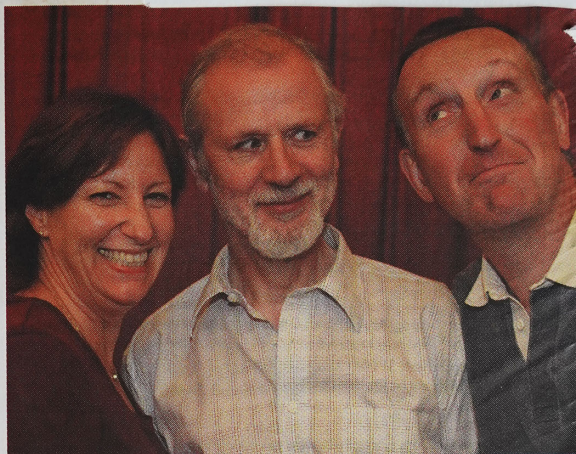
The play celebrates Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote "Don Quixote," that enduring classic of world literature, by dramatising his imprisonment during the Spanish Inquisition. It unfolds in a brilliantly-interwoven play-within-a-play: In one, the legendary knight errant, Don Quixote, tilts at windmills, champions the oppressed and, his senses disordered by fantasies of chivalry, sees in Aldonza the whore the "fair and virginal lady" he will worship and revere. In the other, Cervantes himself is thrown into a dark prison cell with his Sancho Panza, his faithful manservant, to await trial by the Inquisition as a heretic, with only his wits to keep safe from his fellow inmates,

a band of bloodthirsty thieves and murderers, his most precious possession -- the manuscript of a novel called "Don Quixote."

"Man of La Mancha" may be a great musical play, but it is not an easy one to stage; highest marks to Pirate Productions for plunging into a tangle of stagecraft to take it on, and my sympathies herewith to all theatre-lovers in Luxembourg who missed seeing it. An elongated stepped stage and deft use of lighting turn the brooding cell where the Inquisition holds its prisoners into a wayside inn -- the grand castle of Quixote's fevered imagination -- and then into the La Mancha home of Cervantes' alter ego, the country squire Alonso Quijana.

Brian Parker, who directed an excellent version of "Company" a few years ago, says he wants to quit directing, but his inventive yet focused touch with "La Mancha" will make it hard for Pirates to let him walk away. The orchestra, from the goose bump producing overture to the last notes, was, as it should be, the backbone on which the entire production was built, and it was superb. Plaudits to director Philip Dutton.

I have known Malcolm Turner as a reliable spear-carrier in any number of plays, but I see now that he was only biding his time. He was made for the Cervantes-Quixote role. He imbues the knight errant with the infinitely appealing insanity Dale Wasserman,



the play's author, faithfully modelled on the original, yet plays the Cervantes role with steel and tenacity, a man who will stand up to both the Church court and the murderous wretches holding his manuscript hostage. His singing is heartfelt and affecting, and with defiant eyes shining out of a gaunt face, he wrings every last measure of emotion out of the death scene.

Danny Wells, on the other hand, has known Pirates stardom going back to her standout performance as Teyve's long-suffering wife Golde in "Fiddler on the Roof" and, hey, she's still got it. There was never any question about her ability to belt out a great show tune, but in her song, "Aldonza," in which she bitterly spells out the sordid details of her life -- "....spawned in a ditch....bride to the murdering scum of the earth...." she simply tears your heart out. And to watch her closely as Quixote sings "The Impossible Dream" is to see her evolve from Aldonza the

whore to the Dulcinea of the befuddled old man's dreams.

Alex Teligadas' Sancho Panza is wonderfully inventive. He calls himself Quixote's squire, his friend, and you can see his affection for the old goof. But more than pity or friendship make him willing to "follow my master to the end." Isn't he secretly hoping that some of Quixote's idealism will rub off on him? Alex Teligadas makes you think so.

More plaudits: To Mike West and his "murdering scum of the earth," as effective a menacing gang of cutthroats as have trod the boards; and to Liz Turner, Fran Potasnik and Chris Albrecht, whose charming rendition of "I'm Only Thinking of Him" was show-stopper.

"Man of La Mancha," says Brian Parker in his program note, "because there's far too little idealism in the world." I'll drink to that.

Larry Elliott

Friday 2nd Dec 2005

By now you will probably have read the ecstatic review of "Man of La Mancha" by Larry Elliott in 352. Once again, congratulations to everyone involved in this great production. I genuinely can't remember enjoying any Pirate production so much (including - maybe especially! - the ones I was in :-o). It was beautifully cast, acted, played and sung and for me it was a joy to be associated with it, even as general nitpicker! Its being such a good story and well-written piece of music theatre helps, of course (thanks again, Brian, for introducing me to it). As a story it certainly left the Neumünster Don Quichotte in the shade, fantastic spectacle as that was.

I just wish there hadn't been one or two glaring omissions from the review (you know the ones - Steve's wonderfully contrasting portrayals of the three characters he took on so late - the Duke, Dr Carrasco and the Knight, Gav's hilariously camp barber (I'm still laughing), certain prominent muleteers, innkeepers' wives, prisoners, not to mention stage and props managers and lighting and sound engineers (OK, some were mentioned, it's true). And OK, maybe he ran out of space (but there is such a thing as smaller print!). A couple of my friends singled out Steve and Gav for special praise. So there.

End of essay. Thanks again for a fantastic experience, guys.

Love,

Barbara