

Crazy works in Capital Playhouse musical

Classic 'Man of La Mancha' follows a dreamer on a quest

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Asked how much he relates to the role of Don Quixote in "Man of La Mancha," Jeff Kingsbury laughed.

"Don Quixote is crazy," said Kingsbury, who plays Quixote (and author Miguel Cervantes) in the Capital Playhouse production, opening tonight.

The Broadway classic, which won five Tony Awards, sets the Don Quixote story within the context of Cervantes' life. In the play, the author is imprisoned during the Inquisition and ends up acting out his story for, and with the help of, his fellow prisoners in an attempt to save his manuscript.



The show unfolds with props and costumes from a trunk Cervantes carries with him and with objects found within the prison itself.

Kingsbury first played the role 20 years ago and enjoyed it then, but he says he can relate to it better now. "The role was written for someone in his mid-40s, and I am 47," Kingsbury said. "My memory is that it was a pretty good production 20 years ago, but today I am very comfortable in the role. This character fits in my skin very well."

It was when asked whether he related better to Cervantes or Quixote that Kingsbury started laughing at the idea that he might be out of touch with reality.

But he does see a similarity between himself and the knight who tilts at windmills.

"Don Quixote is crazy, but he's following this quest," said Kingsbury, artistic director of the playhouse and an Olympia city councilman. "He's a dreamer. He sees things as they ought to be rather than as they are, and by his willingness to continue this vision of what they ought to be, he helps them come to pass."

"I don't think I'm crazy, but I do think I'm a dreamer in many ways."

Troy Arnold Fisher, who's directing the show, also is no stranger to the musical or the story.

"I've musically directed it four times in the past in different places in the country," he said. "But it's my first time to direct the show."

"I have always loved the story," Fisher added. "I've read Cervantes's book 'Don Quixote.' As I grew up, my father always quoted from the book."

Directing it is a very different thing, he said.

"When you're the musical director, you are sitting there waiting to play the next song. As a director, it's all-engaging. I'm trying to discover what each actor brings to the stage and at the same time keep true to what's in the script and what's in the score."

The impromptu staging of the play within the play has inspired Fisher's directing.

"I would not generally call myself an organic director," he said. "I come with a set idea of how I want everything to go. Maybe it's the nature of the show, but I find myself working more organically, coming to rehearsal and letting it happen. My job as director is more guiding and shaping what is happening. I really have tried to encourage it to come to life out of what was there."

"It feels like being Cervantes, as I am having the actors move around, move here, move there, try this," Fisher said. "The end result is very honest."