

RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS



Photos by Tim Keller



Top left: Artistic director Gail Dixon-Willden enjoys an early rehearsal for Raton Choral Society's upcoming production of "Man of La Mancha."

Middle: Percussionist Carmella Barela compares notes with keyboard player Linda Trice.

Top right: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, played by Clint Henson and Rick Trice in a rehearsal Monday. Dress rehearsals at the Shuler Theater begin next week.

Bottom left: Music director Bill Crary balances bass playing, music direction, and shuffling pages.

Man of La Mancha takes shape in rehearsals

By Tim Keller
The Chronicle-News

Don Quixote arrives in Raton May 8, accompanied by his trusty squire Sancho Panza, the dulcet Dulcinea, and their creator Miguel de Cervantes himself. All will mount the stage of the Shuler Theater that Friday night when the Raton Choral Society presents the popular musical "Man of La Mancha", starring Clint Henson in the title role.

Sancho Panza will be portrayed by Rick Trice, love interest Dulcinea by Brenda Ferri. Mark Jansen plays The Duke and Dr. Caracas, both antagonists of the central character. In a clever adaptation of Cervantes' novel by Dale Wasserman, Cervantes himself is a main character during his extended stay in jail - in real life, he spent years there - where he concocts his famous tales for fellow prisoners. In fact, all the actors play two roles apiece: each is a prisoner with Cervantes, and each is a character in the Don Quixote tale made up by Cervantes. Henson plays both Cervantes and Quixote.

With two weeks until opening night, the actors are still mastering their lines, the musicians practicing their musical cues, and the two directors patiently orchestrating it all. Music director Bill Crary is collaborating with artistic director Gail Dixon-Willden to bring all the disparate parts together. With an assist from Cian Hazen at the stage in the Raton Middle School gymnasium this week, each was seen smiling more often than pulling hair or smacking forehead.

With lines and cues learned, actors will don costumes and move to the Shuler Theater for dress rehearsals beginning next week. Songs such as "The Impossible Dream" will fill the room. "I like musicals where the music stays with you when you walk out of the theatre," Dixon-Willden says. "That's the mark of a good musical." The original 1965 Broadway production of "Man of La Mancha" ran for 2,328 performances and won five Tony Awards. Given its pedigree and the level of talent mounting the show for the Raton Choral Society, it's a safe bet that Mr. Cervantes and his friends will do pretty well in Raton, too.

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