

The Adventures of Don Quixote

Vpstart Crow presents Cervantes' classic story of a knight-errant

By Josh Eiserike

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This weekend, Jamie Bartosavage Erdman will watch her husband perform in drag.

As the director of Vpstart Crow Productions' "The Wonderful Adventures of Don Quixote," Bartosavage Erdman cast her husband, Brett Bartosavage, as "Country Girl No. 2," or Dulcinea, the girl Don Quixote falls for.

"Put me in a dress, makeup and a wig and I look pretty, as far as I'm told," said Bartosavage, 34, of Woodbridge. "It gives me a moment to be absolutely silly. It's a very minimal role."

The play, which opens Friday at the Cramer Center, is about a young woman, Antonia, who is upset with her uncle who decides he is a knight-errant and needs to go out and have adventures.

"It's about how his niece tries to prevent him from going," said Bartosavage Erdman, 28. "When that doesn't work, a plot is devised by a friend of the family to bring him home."

As with the original novel by Cervantes, the uncle, Don Quixote, sees things that don't exist.

"He sees windmills as giants," said Bartosavage Erdman. "His squire, Sancho, sees things as they really are. There's a lot of humor in the communication."

She added that this adaptation by Conrad Seiler, unlike the musical "Man of La Mancha," is family-friendly.

For David Berkenbilt, playing Don Quixote is the actor's first time in a lead role.

"I think it's a wonderful part, but it's the longest part I've ever done," said Berkenbilt of Alexandria. "It's very funny. I love the people I'm working with and Jamie is a fantastic director."

This is Berkenbilt's second performance with Vpstart Crow. He previously appeared as Candy, a character in the 2005 production of "Of Mice and Men."

Still, anchoring a play like this has been a challenge for Berkenbilt.

"Even at the age of 70, I guess I'm at the beginner/intermediate stage of my acting career," said Berkenbilt, a retired pediatric dentist, who has been seriously been pursuing acting for the last seven years. "It's almost feeling like a second career."

Berkenbilt said Don Quixote is "arrogant, self-centered and sure of himself."

"He thought that he was going to kill all the evil people in the world," said Berkenbilt, adding that sense is eventually knocked into Don Quixote.

"It's a wonderful satire," said Berkenbilt.

He added that Don Quixote reminds him of the character Candide, from the novel by Voltaire, who returns home and learns the lesson to live and cultivate life at home.

Bartosavage Erdman also said that the play has some serious themes of insanity and dementia, but Vpstart wanted to keep a storybook atmosphere.

"What we really want the audience to take away is a good, old-fashioned comedy," said Bartosavage Erdman. "We're trying to give everyone something light and fun for the summer."

The set uses two-dimensional backdrops to give it a storybook feel. Built by Bartosavage, there's artificial grass, trees and a windmill.

"It's just beautiful," said Berkenbilt. "It really is."

Staff writer Josh Eiserike can be reached at 703-878-8072.

WHEN YOU GO

- **"The Wonderful Adventures of Don Quixote"**
- **Runs 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sundays through July 29**
- **Tickets: \$20 adults, \$15 for students, seniors and city and county employees, 800-494-8497 or boxofficetickets.com**
- **The Cramer Center, 9008 Center St., Manassas**
- **Vpstartcrow.com**