

## **Don Quixote' is entertaining but silly**

Theater review

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Thursday, July 26, 2007

After a heavy-handed production of August Strindberg's "The Ghost Sonata," Vpstart Crow takes it down a notch with the much lighter, storybook tale of "The Wonderful Adventures of Don Quixote."

The play opens with the wailing cries of Antonia (Michael Izquieta), who's upset over her uncle who now calls himself Don Quixote de la Mancha. After reading books about chivalry, he imagines himself to be a knight-errant and believes he must find his lady, Dulcinea del Toboso, and fight the villainous Knight of the White Moon.

Don Quixote has acquired the services of Sancho Panza (Chalmers Hood), a simple and sweet-natured family man. At first, his domineering wife Teresa (Lauren Billingsley) and his dirt-covered daughter Sanchita (Erin McGuire) object to his journey. His wife later has a change of heart when told she will become a duchess.

Against his niece's wishes, Don Quixote heads off into the country with his trusty sidekick and horse Rocinante (Philip Coralde, who deserves points for dragging a silly-looking clunky contraption that serves as the horse's back half). Then again, one would want to leave town, too, with Antonia's incessant whininess.

Jamie Bartosavage Erdman makes her Vpstart Crow directing debut with this play, based on the novel "The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha" by Miguel de Cervantes. ("Man of La Mancha" is her father's favorite musical).

The production is overwhelmed by silliness as Erdman chooses to focus on the lighter elements of the play such as the humor and adventure and not the heavier parts. It's mildly entertaining to watch Don Quixote and Sancho go off in search of adventure, battling windmills (giants), meeting royalty (innkeeper and his wife) and battling the Knight of the White Moon (played by Dr. Carrasco in an attempt to bring Don Quixote home).

Set in the Spanish countryside, the stage at the Cramer Center is blanketed in artificial grass and features props painted to look like trees and a brick wall. A dark blue sky with a few puffy clouds serves as the main backdrop. The overall effect resembles a recycled elementary school stage production. Then again, it is a family-friendly show.

The large cast appears to have a good time with "Don Quixote," letting their inner child out. Some of the secondary cast members offer serviceable performances and a few are pretty much flat.

But it is the lead actors who truly shine in this production. As Don Quixote de la Mancha, Berkenbilt is impressive in his first leading role. He perfectly captures this old man's delusional and headstrong personality. He's loud and brash and will not stand for insolence. Poor Sancho Panza, who is just trying to help, is constantly berated by his master. In a

Shaggy-esque performance, Hood is delightful as Don Quixote's squire and eats up every scene he's in and plays up to the audience.

If theatergoers are in search of lighter, sillier fare this summer, "Don Quixote" is the way to go.

#### **WHEN YOU GO**

- **"The Wonderful Adventures of Don Quixote"**
- **8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday**
- **The Cramer Center, 9008 Center St., Manassas**
- **Tickets: \$15 to \$20, 800-494-8497 or [boxofficetickets.com](http://boxofficetickets.com)**
- **[vpstartcrow.com](http://vpstartcrow.com)**