

Notes from the Director

We began our theater season back in October by exploring our own imaginations and our own individual worlds of illusion. Without a true appreciation for the power of illusion and make believe, we wouldn't have been able to meet Don Quixote where it needed to be met—in a world that truly didn't exist, but was somehow more important and more exciting than the one that did. When I finished reading the script for the first time, I found myself facing a deeper dilemma than I had expected. Here was a famous literary character, Don Quixote, who's world of creativity and illusion had been celebrated for hundreds of years and yet the central goal of the story was to strip him of that world or to heal him of his "madness." And when cured, I didn't like him anymore.

After reading the script, I went back to Cervantes' classic, which I hadn't read since college, to find more answers. It wasn't until I finally identified myself with Sancho Panza, Don Quixote's faithful sidekick, that I began to find my answers and fully understand where I wanted to go with this production. Sancho's world most represents the place we all find ourselves every day, stuck living in a world we know to be real and yet sometimes traveling at the side of someone who's world is more rich, has more appeal and mystery, and offers more joy. And sometimes we just can't get there. Sometimes the enchantment is powerless or the magic isn't strong enough. And other times we don't want to get there. The imaginative seems like foolishness, the illusion like madness. You've been there too, in Sancho's dilemma, on those days where you're so engrossed in a good book that your husband calls for you to come to dinner and you wish for a quick moment he didn't exist. You've been there when you watch your nine year-old-child in the backyard sitting on the swing-set pretending to be a superhero. For a moment, you almost see the swing-set as a spaceship yourself, or wish, as you go back to paying bills, that you could run out there and get lost in that world too. But you face the fact that you have no time or you worry what the world would think or maybe you doubt your own power of creating. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it a willing suspension of disbelief, Tolkein called it secondary belief, the poet Eve Merriam simply said it was a time "when unicorns were still possible."

It wasn't long into our journey of this production that I realized I wanted to take you on Sancho's adventure more than Don Quixote's. I wanted you, as an audience, to find yourselves stuck watching both worlds side by side—the imaginary world of the play and the real world of its production. To see a windmill as Don sees it and at the same time see it for what it really is. To see a scene of our production as a creative world you could lose yourself in for a short period and to also see it clearly as a work of actors and crew members, stripped of the guise of costume and set. And in the end, I wanted you to feel the same perplexing struggle I felt when I first chose this production and began interpreting the ending. Which Don do you like better? Which world? The man of illusion who may sometimes put us in danger, might require us to wander in a mixed up world, and who will most definitely confound and bewilder those around us? Or the other Don, a middle-aged gentleman of La Mancha who, without his creativity, is all but unknown. It seemed to me that the world had already made that decision. Almost everyone has heard of Don Quixote, whether they know of his adventures or not. But ask someone who he was before he dreamed up his new illusionary self and you're bound to get nothing but a puzzled brow. No one really knows Alonso Quixano. To choose the world of Alonso, you needn't do anything. His world is at your fingertips. To choose the world of Don Quixote, a world of the "rubbish found in books," a world of madness and illusion, a world Shakespeare and Mozart and DaVinci chose, you need only heed Don's warning: "You must learn not to trust your eyes." And we will probably answer like Sancho, believing they are "the only things" we can trust. But, we must always remember that "when wizards and enchanters are about, nothing is what it seems." Have fun.



Jeremy Schmolala