

Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



Man of La Mancha

Book: Dale Wasserman

Music: Mitch Leigh

Lyrics: Joe Darion

Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

<http://www.sactheatre.org>

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Contents

Information on the Play

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Synopsis* | 4 |
| Characters* | 5 |
| About the Playwrights* | 6 |

Scholarly Articles on the Play

| | |
|--|---|
| The Essential Wisdom, The True Vision* | 9 |
|--|---|

Interactive Materials

| | |
|---|----|
| Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play | 11 |
| Theatre Etiquette | 13 |
| Additional Reading Material | 14 |

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Man of La Mancha:

Synopsis

Miguel de Cervantes, aging and an utter failure as playwright, poet and tax collector, has been thrown into a dungeon in Seville to await trial by the Inquisition for an offense against the Church. There he is dragged before a kangaroo court of his fellow prisoners, who plan to confiscate his few possessions—including the uncompleted manuscript of a novel, Don Quixote.

Cervantes, seeking to save the manuscript, proposes his defense in the form of a play. The "court" agrees, and Cervantes and his manservant don make-up and costumes, transforming themselves into Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. They then play out the story with the prisoners taking the roles of other characters.

Quixote and Sancho take to the road in a quest to restore the age of chivalry, battle all evil, and right all wrongs. The famous battle with the windmill follows, with Quixote blaming his defeat on his enemy, the Great Enchanter.

In a roadside inn—which Quixote insists is really a castle—Aldonza, the inn's serving girl and part-time prostitute, is being propositioned by a gang of muleteers. Quixote sees her as the dream-ideal whom he will serve forever and insists her name is Dulcinea. Aldonza is confused and angered by Quixote's refusal to see her as she really is.

The padre and Dr. Carrasco arrive at the inn and are frustrated by Quixote's lunatic logic. They are interrupted by the arrival of an itinerant barber, and Quixote confiscates his shaving basin, believing it is the "Golden Helmet" of Mambrino.

Later Aldonza encounters Quixote in the courtyard where he is holding vigil, in preparation for being knighted by the innkeeper. She questions him on his seemingly irrational ways, and Quixote answers her with a statement of his credo, The Impossible Dream. Aldonza catches the fever of Quixote's idealism but, attempting to put it into practice, is cruelly beaten and ravaged by the muleteers.

Not knowing Aldonza's plight, Quixote and Sancho leave the inn, encounter a band of Gypsies, and are robbed. They return to the inn, only to encounter the disillusioned Aldonza who sings her denunciation of Quixote's dream in the dramatic *Aldonza*. The Knight of the Mirrors enters and defeats Quixote by forcing him to see himself as "naught but an aging fool." The knight reveals himself as Dr. Carrasco, sent by Quixote's family to bring him to his senses.

At home again, the old man who once called himself Don Quixote is dying. Aldonza, having followed, forces her way into the room and pleads with him to restore the vision of glory she held so briefly. Quixote, remembering, rises from his bed to reaffirm the stirring *Man of La Mancha*, but collapses, dying. Aldonza, having glimpsed the vision once more, refuses to acknowledge his death, saying, "My name is Dulcinea."

Back in Cervantes's dungeon the prisoners have been deeply affected by his story and restore to him his precious manuscript. Cervantes is summoned to his real trial by the Inquisition. The prisoners unite to sing him on his way with *The Impossible Dream*.

Characters

Don Quixote (Cervantes): Tall, thin man in his late forties, he is an actor, playwright, and would-be knight. He is a romantic—some sane crazy—and has a vision of a far better and nobler world, where knights and chivalry rule the day.

Sancho (The Manservant): Older than Don Quixote, Sancho is short and squat. He has served Quixote/Cervantes for many years and is devoted to him, even with all his idiosyncracies.

Captain of the Inquisition

Aldonza: A serving woman and a part-time prostitute at the inn, Aldonza is rough on the exterior, but has a gentle heart inside and yearns to believe what Don Quixote tells her. Quixote falls in loves with her and insists her name is Dulcinea and that she is a beautiful, gentle woman.

The Innkeeper (The Governor): A large and powerful man, he is kind as the Innkeeper, but as the Governor is the leader of the inmate society in the prison.

Dr. Carrasco (The Duke): As the character of the Duke he sidekick to the Governor; however, when he plays Dr. Carrasco, he is Antonia's fiancé. He thinks Don Quixote mad and insists that he come home and be treated for his malady.

The Padre

Antonia: Quixote's niece and Dr. Carrasco's fiancée.

The Housekeeper

The Barber

Pedro: The head muleteer, Pedro is a mean and vicious man, leading an attack on Aldonza.

Anselmo: A muleteer

Jose: A muleteer

Juan: A muleteer

Paco: a muleteer

Tenorio: A muleteer

Maria: The Innkeeper's wife

Fermina: A servant girl

The Guitarist

Man of La Mancha: About the Playwrights

By Rachelle Hughes

Man of La Mancha, as it is seen on the stage, is the result of a long, twisting, and sometimes bumpy adventure. Playwright Dale Wasserman first wrote *Man of La Mancha* as the ninety-minute television drama, *I, Don Quixote*, that won considerable acclaim and many awards. Personally dissatisfied with his first written tribute to Don Quixote and its author Miguel Cervantes, Wasserman revamped *Man of La Mancha* for the theatre. The new version never reached production stage, and Wasserman remained dissatisfied with his work.

It was not until Wasserman joined forces with lyricist Joe Darion and songwriter Mitch Leigh that it became, as Wasserman said, "a kind of theatre that was, at least within the boundaries of our experience, without precedent" (Dale Wasserman, *Man of La Mancha: Preface* [New York: Random House, 1966], viii). And so the three men, not unlike Don Quixote, ventured on a quest that was in some ways an impossible dream. Despite an initially cool response to *Man of La Mancha* from producers and backers, the playwright, the lyricist, and the songwriter persevered. They were finally rewarded when audience after audience gave their resounding approval. In Wasserman, Darion, and Leigh we find three men who throughout their theatre and musical careers have continued to reach for the stars, always guided by their own quixotic dream.

Dale Wasserman

Dale Wasserman was born in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. As to when, he claims to not know exactly. His formal education ended after one year of high school. He now holds three honorary doctorates from three universities. A self-proclaimed "show biz hobo" and "secretly lazy man" (he has written over seventy works for television, approximately two dozen plays and musicals and seventeen feature films), Wasserman entered the world of pro theatre at age nineteen. He has worn almost every theatre hat from lighting designer to producer and director. His theatre career took a sharp, permanent turn when he walked out on a Broadway musical he was directing with the feeling he "couldn't possibly write worse than the stuff [he] was directing" (Dale Wasserman Biography. www.dalewasserman.com: [Rodin International, April 12, 2001] 1).

His abrupt career change to writer has seen success in every performance venue. His theatre credits include, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *How I Saved the Whole Damn World*, and his recent work, *A Walk in the Sky*. Television and feature film credits include *The Power and the Glory*, *Circle of Death*, *Perchance to Dream*, *Cleopatra*, and *Aboard the Flying Swan*. He has received over forty-five awards including Emmys, Tonys, Ellys, and Robys. Yet, he rarely attends award ceremonies or opening nights. One theatre critic has even questioned his existence.

He did, however, show up to accept an honorary doctorate from the University of Wisconsin, not because he had the chance to address an audience of 25,000, but because "a scant quarter mile from where I was being doctored I had hopped my first freight at twelve years of age. Irony should not be wasted," he said. (Dale Wasserman Biography, www.dalewasserman.com [Rodin International, April 12, 2001] 1).

Wasserman may avoid the limelight but there are a few clues to his inner psyche, and nowhere are they more apparent than in his work, *Man of La Mancha*. "I wrote *Man of La Mancha* because I believed in it. It is my most personal play," he said in an interview (Dale Wasserman Biography, www.dalewasserman.com [Rodin International, April 12, 2001] 1).

Wasserman decided to write *Man of La Mancha* because he felt drawn to the author of the original novel, Don Quixote. Miguel de Cervantes led a life that Wasserman calls a "catalogue of catastrophe." Yet he managed to produce one of the most beautiful stories ever told. We can take a line from Wasserman's own play to explain why he wanted, even needed to pay tribute to Cervantes.

The Duke asks: Why are you poets so fascinated with madmen?

Cervantes replies: I suppose . . . We have much in common.

Duke: You both turn your backs on life.

Cervantes: We both select from life what pleases us (60).

Wasserman continues to add his talent to the stage. The 2000-2001 season saw five new plays: *Beggar's Holiday*, *Western Star*, *How I Saved the Whole Damn World*, *An Enchanted Land*, and *A Walk in the Sky*. His two most popular plays, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Man of La Mancha*, have made him the most produced American playwright worldwide. Still he continues to put pen to paper. Perhaps, Wasserman would echo his own Don Quixote on why he continues to work so hard. "I hope to add some measure of grace to the world. . . . Whether I win or lose does not matter, only that I follow the quest" (49).

Joe Darion

Joe Darion left a legacy of musicals, cantatas, pop songs, operas, librettos, and masses when he died in June 2001 at eighty-four. His lyrics for "To Dream the Impossible Dream" in *Man of La Mancha* won Darion the 1965-66 Tony award for best lyrics of the Broadway season. Other popular songs that he was the lyricist for, such as "Ricochet," "Midnight Train," and "Changing Partners," sold records in the tens of millions. His opera based on the characters Archy and Mehitabel was turned into the Broadway musical *Shinbone Alley*. On the more serious side, his work with composer Ezra Laderman includes the oratorio operas *Galileo* and *And David Wept* and the cantatas *A Handful of Souls* and *The Questions of Abraham*. He has received a variety of awards including the Drama Critics Circle Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Gabriel Award, the Ohio State Award, and the International Broadcasting Award.

Like his *Man of La Mancha* colleagues, his talent reached into every aspect of written music. In the past eighty-four years he has touched all of us with his poetry. He too could take a line from Don Quixote and his own lyrics to describe his life: "My destiny calls and I go; And the wild winds of fortune will carry me onward, Oh whithersoever they go" (12).

Mitch Leigh

Pianist, Arthur Rubenstein has said of Mitch Leigh, "He's the most brilliant composer writing for music today." Leigh earned his bachelor's degree in music from Yale in 1951 and his master's in music in 1952, studying with Paul Hindemith. Since then he has worked as a composer, a

producer, a director, and a businessmen. He is the only living composer whose work was included in the Metropolitan Opera's Centennial Celebration. Among Leigh's awards are the Drama Critic's Circle Award, the Contemporary Classics Award from the Songwriter's Hall of Fame for "To Dream the Impossible Dream," and the first Yale Arts Award for Outstanding Achievement in Musical Composition.

In 1957 Leigh formed Music Makers, Inc., a radio and television commercial production house, where as creative director, he won every major award within the advertising industry. His most recent honor came in September 2001, when Yale University named their new School of Music building after him and his wife, Abby.

The Essential Wisdom, The True Vision

By Ace G. Pilkington and Sara M.M. Heischober

In E. M. Forster's "The Celestial Omnibus," the innocent boy determines that he must discover whether the everyday world or the world of imagination is the true one. "I shall be a fool one way or the other . . . until I know" (James A. Thurston, ed., *Reading Modern Short Stories*, [Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1955] 390). Perhaps no one in literature seems more foolish than Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote. Caught up in the strange world of romances and chivalry, he seems hopelessly out of touch with reality and all that matters in life. Dale Wasserman, however, saw through the surface foolishness to the essential wisdom, the true vision of the world beneath. Speaking of his own re-creation of Don Quixote and Cervantes, Wasserman says, "*Man of La Mancha* must seem hopelessly naive in its espousal of illusion as man's strongest spiritual need, the most meaningful function of his imagination" ("Preface," *Man of La Mancha: A Musical Play* [New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1966] 11). The boy in Forster's story is transported by his imagination to a kind of heaven. Albert Marre, the director of the 1965 Broadway production of *Man of La Mancha*, described the audience reaction in similar terms. He said, "They're not just watching a play, they're having a religious experience" (Wasserman, "Preface" 11).

Originally written for television, *Man of La Mancha* "underwent several metamorphoses before it was exposed to a New York audience" (Wasserman, "Preface" 9). Wasserman rewrote the screenplay for the Broadway stage, but was dissatisfied with the result. He felt that he had not reached the real form of what the play was destined to have. Enter Albert Marre, who said the play simply had to be a musical. The play was written again, this time in collaboration with lyricist Joe Darion, composer Mitch Leigh, and Albert Marre himself.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza were mounted on their noble steeds, but the road was still not cleared for them. Prospective backers regarded *Man of La Mancha* as "too radical, too 'special' and most crushing of all, too intellectual" (Wasserman, "Preface" 10-11). Nevertheless, the "Quixotic dream" would prevail.

On November 22, 1965, the musical opened on Broadway. It was not an immediate hit. Some people thought it would have a short run, but rapidly growing ticket sales proved such predictions wrong. In fact, tickets were soon extraordinarily difficult to get, "To Dream the Impossible Dream" became a hit song, and the cast album was a best seller. "*Man of La Mancha* had grown into one of the biggest hits in New York theatrical history" (Wasserman, "Introduction" 13).

What was it about this strange, mystical, unlikely adventure that caught the nation's attention and made it a Broadway success? It could have been the contagious melodies and the sophisticated musical score. It could have been the nonrealistic theatre "where, with suggested scenery, creative lighting, epic acting, and a little audience imagination, we can have any kind of magic we wish" (Wasserman, "Introduction" 16). It could have been Quixote and Sancho Panza's physical humor and unfailing camaraderie. While all of these aspects of the performance contributed to the play's success, perhaps none is as important as the central message that emerges from the character of Don Quixote/Cervantes himself.

Although Don Quixote is ostensibly a figure of fun, ridiculous in his inability to tell giants from windmills, demented by his obsessive reading of hopelessly outdated romances, he is

in truth much more. As Quixote says to Doctor Carrasco, "Facts are the enemy of truth" (Wasserman 74). While, in fact, Don Quixote is a madman, in truth he is the one person in the play who sees life as it actually is, lives it as it must be lived, and shows the other characters their real natures. Perhaps the clearest affirmation of this is Aldonza's expression of faith at the end of the play. Doctor Carrasco has managed to shake Don Quixote's belief in his dream and steal his memories of the Quest. Aldonza comes to Quixote's rescue, refusing to be turned away. She insists that he remember her and the Quest. She has been transformed, and has come to believe in herself, not as Aldonza, the whore, but as the lady Dulcinea. She tells him about the incredible change he has made in her, "Everything. My whole life. You spoke to me, and everything was—different" (Wasserman 119).

On some level, Cervantes' novel and *Man of La Mancha* are not criticisms of the chivalric romances. In the words of Vladimir Nabokov, "Don Quixote cannot be considered a distortion of those romances but rather a logical continuation" (*Lectures on Don Quixote* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983] 47). It is the nature of romances to suggest that behind the contradictions and confusions of daily life, behind the coincidences and calamities of incredible plots, there lie the ultimate human values of compassion, belief, friendship, and love. Shakespeare's romances reflect a faith in human nature and a hope for the future. Sir Thomas Malory, author of one of the longest and most famous romances in English, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, wrote of the transforming power of love, "First a man must love God his Creator, and then, if he is to be ennobled, he must love a woman, for God has created him thus" ([New York: Penguin Books, 1962] 458).

Throughout the play Cervantes/Don Quixote proves himself to be a great teacher as well as a dreamer. As Don Quixote says in the novel that bears his name, "In the profession that I follow . . . one needs to know everything" (*The Portable Cervantes: Don Quixote* [New York: The Viking Press, 1969] 273). The most important thing that he knows and teaches is the power of dreaming, of imagination in human life. Without the ability to see beyond reality to a new and brighter world, we are left to the dust and the broken-down inns and the ramshackle prisons that Quixote encounters. The Knight of the Woeful Countenance transforms such hopeless places into castles, strong bastions of the human spirit. Even though Don Quixote dies, his dream lives. Ultimately, he cannot be defeated, for the world he imagines is far finer than the world he inhabits. And once his dream has transformed the people around him, everyday reality must inevitably be changed as well. Quixote knows better than to give up because his foes are too feeble and his goals are too great. He will never stop trying to "reach the unreachable star!" (Wasserman 121).

Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

Questions to ask before the play:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

Questions to ask after the play:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and

opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme, or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Additional Reading Material

Man of La Mancha Study Guide- Rob Hartmann Publications

http://www.robhartmann.com/Rob_Hartmann/Publications/Publications_files/ManOfLaManchaStudyGuide.pdf

Man of La Mancha Study Guide- Globe Theatre

[http://globotheatreive.com/+pub/plays/13-](http://globotheatreive.com/+pub/plays/13-14%20Main%20Stage/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha%20study%20guide.pdf)

[14%20Main%20Stage/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha%20study%20guide.pdf](http://globotheatreive.com/+pub/plays/13-14%20Main%20Stage/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha/Man%20of%20La%20Mancha%20study%20guide.pdf)

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