

Thunderous ovation for Man of La Mancha

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

The applause was almost as loud as the thunderstorms, which rumbled throughout the opening night performance of *Man of La Mancha*, at the John Elliott Theatre Friday.

Georgetown Globe Musical Productions is presenting this perennial favourite to close its 2009-2010 season.

Directed by Danny Harvey, *Man of La Mancha* is a play within a play. It opens with poet and tax collector Miguel de Cervantes thrown into a prison to wait for a hearing before the Spanish Inquisition. The prisoners demand his possessions, but Cervantes asks, during a mock trial, that he retain his most prized possession a manuscript about an old man, Alonso Quijana, who believes himself to be a knight, Don Quixote de La Mancha. Cervantes's defence is acting out the play with the aid of the prisoners.

The message behind *Man of La Mancha* is enduring— that the maintenance of grace and civility in a world of ugliness can teach all to live *The Impossible Dream*.

This play has always been about two things— the actors and the music. The

actors do not let this production down.

The three leads, Mark Llewellyn as Don Quixote, Cheyenne Harvey as Aldonza and Rob Woodcock as Sancho are community stage veterans and it showed in their top-notch performances. Those three never let an audience down.

While they were the de facto leads, they did not dominate the stage. The whole cast worked as a smooth ensemble, a focused group, not deterred by the constant thunder, drumming of rain on the building, cell phones ringing or rude patrons. They were a pleasure to watch.

The setting was spare and atmospheric, and the direction was clever, except for the missed opportunity of introducing the actors to the stage during the painfully rendered overture.

This great production this night was let down by the orchestra, who unlike the seamless ensemble, could have spent more time in rehearsal. The music was rushed— perhaps Opening Night adrenalin— and at times, lacked harmony.

However, that should improve by this weekend's performances, and it will be an A+ production to watch. So turn on your DVRs and head to the JET to watch quality talent in your own neighbourhood.



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