For Immediate Release:

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**“Man of La Mancha” at Cotuit Center for the Arts**

Cotuit Center for the Arts presents “Man of La Mancha,” by Dale Wasserman, June 28 through July 29. Performances are Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 PM and Sunday at 4 PM. Joan Baird directs. Musical direction is by Liesl Keller.

Inspired by Miguel de Cervantes’ seventeenth-century masterpiece, “Don Quixote,” “Man of La Mancha” debuted on Broadway in 1965, won five Tony Awards, including Best Play, and became one of the most successful musicals in Broadway history. Powerful, brutal, hilarious, and heartbreaking, “Man of La Mancha” celebrates the perseverance of an old man who refuses to relinquish his ideals or his passion.

The score, by Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, includes such beloved songs as “The Impossible Dream,” “I, Don Quixote,” “Dulcinea,” “I Really Like Him,” “Little Bird,” and “To Each His Own Dulcinea.”

“The show’s message is still very relevant today,” said Baird. “It has been performed all over the world and still has great power to move people.”

The 18-person cast is led by Chris Shultz who plays Cervantes/Don Quixote. “This is Chris’s lifelong dream, to play Don Quixote, and he brings something very special to the part,” said Baird. “Terry Brady is playing Sancho, and he is very talented too. Sara Sneed is Aldonza, Don Quixote’s Dulcinea. We have an extraordinary cast of people from all over the Cape. And one of the very nice things about this cast is that they are all team players, and that makes for a really good show.”

“Man of La Mancha” is a play-within-a-play, performed by Cervantes, a failed author-soldier-actor and tax collector, and his fellow prisoners as he awaits trial by the Spanish Inquisition for foreclosing on a monastery. Cervantes transforms himself into Alonso Quijano, who imagines himself to be Don Quixote, a knight-errant who sets out to find adventure and to right the injustices of the world.

There are no elaborate costumes or sets for “Man of La Mancha.” All the action takes place in a dungeon, with props pulled, for the most part, from Cervantes’ large trunk. “It’s a very tight show. Scene changes are done through lighting and imagination,” said Baird. “The intimate Cotuit Center for the Arts stage is just perfect for this play, bringing the audience right into the story. It is very much like the semi-circular space where the show was originally produced.

“The music is gorgeous,” said Baird. “It is done with a little bit of a Spanish flair. Of course, everyone knows ‘The Impossible Dream,’ but there are a lot of other great songs too, like ‘I’m Only Thinking of Him,’ sung by the niece (Hannah Wolfe), the housekeeper (Treather Gassman), and the padre (Randy Doyle), who claim they are only thinking of Alonso/Don Quixote, not of their own selfish needs. The song is really fun, and funny.”

“Little Bird” is sung by the muleteers. “It is a very beautiful song, very simple, sung by these rough guys, very moving,” said Baird. “‘To Each His Dulcinea,’ sung by the padre, is just haunting.”

“Man of La Mancha” has particular relevance for Baird. It is the first play she ever appeared in, back when she was in high school. “You’d never know it now,” she said, “but I was very, very bashful. I was a singer—my mom was an opera singer, so I followed in her footsteps, but was soon drawn to musical theater.

“I was very nervous about auditioning for the role of Antonia, Don Quixote’s niece. Coincidently, the daughter of my father’s boss was part of the second or third cast in the New York production, playing the same role. My dad’s boss had her call me, and she gave me the courage I needed. I got the part and I was forever hooked.”

Baird has been acting and directing ever since. She is on the board of the Falmouth Theater Guild, where she just finished directing a very successful production of “The Producers.” She is passionate about the ability of theater to change people’s lives.

Tickets are $35, $30 for balcony seats. There is a $5 discount for members and a $2 discount for seniors and veterans. Cotuit Center for the Arts is at 4404 Route 28 in Cotuit. For more information, visit artsonthecape.org or call 508-428-0669.

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*Where:*

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*When:*

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*Admission:*

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