

May River Theatre mounts Man of La Mancha... and one happy thespian gets a second chance.

I arrived on Hilton Head Island the summer of 1977. I was not happy to be here as I had left my on-air television job in South Florida at the height of my career. What in the world was I to do here?

The Island Packet was a two day a week tabloid so I hungrily awaited Tuesdays and Thursdays to find out what was going on in our new home. And, that is when I saw it: "Auditions for Man of La Mancha at the Hilton Head Playhouse." Salvation! There was a community theatre on the island!

I eagerly attended the first night of auditions only to find out that the theatre was a large warehouse building on a side road near the Sea Pines Circle. The local theatre group had performed at The William Hilton Inn and now they were going to build a permanent home. And build we did. It was our love for the theatre that brought us to hammer and paint in hopes of getting open for the first show.

I was delighted to be cast as The Housekeeper in this cast of few women. I now had a new home, a new theatre and new friends. However, my father was not well and due to his illness, I had the director get an understudy for me. Dad worsened over the summer and I had to give up the role. He passed away on opening night.

So now, 37 years later, I found myself once again auditioning for the same role in this year's May River Theatre's opening production. And yes, I got the part!

Directed by Wendell MacNeal and musical direction by Beth Corry, La Mancha will open the 13th season for May River Theatre. It will play from May 9-25 Friday and Saturday evenings at 8 p.m. and Sunday matinees at 3 p.m.

Man of La Mancha debuted on the Broadway stage in 1968 and won five Tony awards. Since then it has had four Broadway revivals. It is essentially a play within a play as the audience watches Miguel de Cervantes display his bizarre imagination in his attempt to proclaim his innocence.

Cervantes, (played by Daniel Cort) a poet, playwright and part-time actor has been arrested, together with his manservant (played by Rodney Vaughn), by the Spanish Inquisition. Thrown into prison they engage the other prisoners in the story of Don Quixote in a charge that takes them on a journey to find his quest for truth. Debbie Cort plays the lead role of Aldonza, the object of Don Quixote's affection.

Says MacNeal, "I chose this play because I love the music, the characterizations and the challenge to have the audience 'dream the impossible dream.' The music is wonderful, inspiring and enduring. Hopefully the audience will walk away contemplating their own personal quest."

Season tickets will commence with this show and are available for \$75 per person for the season (4 shows for the price of 3) with reserved seating the first weekend of each show.

Tickets for the show are available by calling the box office at 843.815.5581. Box office hours are 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Friday. All reserved seats are \$25.