



Prince Dauntless sings it out at center stage with the entire cast backing him up

## 'Once Upon a Mattress' is entertainment for entire family

By Linda Tarvin

The musical play "Once Upon a Mattress" is an enjoyable evening of G-rated family entertainment. There are two remaining performances, Friday and Saturday, Aug. 27-28, at Gilroy High School.

"Once Upon a Mattress" is a retelling of the story of "The Princess and the Pea". The plot has complications that add to its interest and the cast has done a good job of providing audiences with a couple of hours of entertainment. The Thursday matinee was well-attended with a preponderance of elementary and preschool children in the audience. The play started late and many of the younger children were getting restless. However, once the music began and the action started they were very interested in the story.

Mishele McQueen of Morgan Hill is the minstrel. She serves as a sort of narrator in the opening scene. McQueen was excellent in all her spoken lines.

Prince Dauntless is played by Michael John Montez. While onstage, Montez seemed to be searching the audience for the reactions on familiar faces. This is distracting and should be minimized as Montez gains experience. He knows his part very well and has a pleasant, clear singing voice.

Holly Chadd plays Princess Winnifred (Fred to her friends). Chadd seems the perfect choice for the part of the tom-boyish princess. She captivated the audience with her solo, "Shy". Quite a powerful voice emerges from the petite Chadd as she belts out her numbers. During the second act Chadd has a problem with the lyrics on a long, involved song called "Happily Ever After". She paused to apologize to the audience and good-naturedly took up where she had fumbled.

My favorite character was the wicked Queen Aggravain. Brenda Flippo is terrific as the erratic bad-numored mother of Prince Dauntless. She has lots of lines that are typical for mothers everywhere. For example, she instructs Dauntless to "Listen to your mother"

and reminds that she never nagged him, as she nags him again).

King Sextimus the Silent is played by Beau Davis. In lieu of a voice, the king uses a horn carried at his waist and lots of sign language. Davis has a very expressive face and carries off the part of the mute king with aplomb.

Into the storyline has been injected a pair of on-again, off-again lovers, Lady Larken (Cindy Davis) and Sir Harry (Mark Benthimer). They have an intense interest in seeing the prince find a genuine princess to marry. Davis and Benthimer are effective in their parts.

Anneka Jones of San Martin plays the part of the jester. Jones is lively and moves gracefully about the stage. The wizard is played by Elliot Cady. David Weiss is Sir Studley and Mary Spencer is Princess No. 12.

Others in the cast are 27 ladies in waiting

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### Review

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and eight knights. They provide a chorus and also do lots of dance numbers. Especially noteworthy is their rendition of the "Spanish Panic". The choreographer is Sharon White who has done an impressive job.

The musical director is Shelly Andrews whom you may remember as Laurie in "Okla-homa!"

The costumes are beautiful and authentic-looking enough to evoke the year 1423.

Director Darin Kerby has been working with the youthful cast since June and should be congratulated. The play seemed to be enjoyable to both audience and cast. It's commendable to see a group of young people spend their summer in diligent preparation of a project designed to entertain others.

I would certainly recommend the play as family entertainment. The Young Performers Theatre Festival is sponsored by the Gilroy Community Theatre and the Gilroy Parks & Recreation. For reservations call 842-SHOW.