



Mute king Beau Davis mimes his distress to Anneka Jones and Mishele McQueen.

Young Gilroy amateurs work to challenge pros

By Barbara Wood
Dispatch Staff Writer

They may not be ready for Broadway, but the Young Performers Theatre Festival cast of *Once Upon a Mattress* is not just kids dressed up in the family garage.

The Gilroy High School Theater was sold out for Thursday's matinee, the seats full of youngsters and their mothers, none of whom seemed to mind the stifling heat in the theater.

The children cheered loudly after each scene, and although they didn't catch some of the lines aimed toward adult sensibilities, they had some good laughs.

Once Upon a Mattress is loosely based on the fairytale *The Princess and the Pea*. Prince Dauntless (Michael John Montez) is the weakling son of an overpowering mother, Queen Aggravain (Brenda Flipppo).

Flipppo was one of the strongest characters in the play as the

whining and pushy queen.

Aggravain won't let Dauntless marry until a princess is found who passes her tests, which are designed to be impossible.

Until Dauntless marries, none of the other court lords and ladies can either.

Sir Harry (Mark Benthimer) decides to help Dauntless out when he finds out his true love Lady Larkin (Cindy Davis) is pregnant.

Harry sets out to find a princess for Dauntless, returning with Winnifred (Holly Chadd) who makes her grand entrance into the palace by swimming the moat and insulting the queen.

Chadd, just recovering from a bout of strep throat, showed she possesses a strong singing voice in her pint-sized frame, although still not quite over the illness.

Her missed practice-time may have slowed her down, though, as she expressed some hesitation over a few of her lines.

The queen's test for Winnifred

is to place a pea under a pile of mattresses. If she doesn't feel it, she doesn't pass the test.

Chadd's bad luck continued, but brought loud laughs from the audience, as she did some scripted bouncing on the mattress stack and ended up with an unscripted breaking of the bed.

Elliot Cady was a joy as the wizard, faithful sidekick to the queen. Beau Davis did an excellent job miming the part of King Sextimus the Silent, Aggravain's overpowered husband.

The romantic duo of Lady Larkin and Sir Harry was well played by Davis and Benthimer, and Anneka Jones almost stole the show with her rendition of *Very Soft Shoes* as the jester.

The play will continue tonight and Saturday, and Aug. 27 and 28 at the Gilroy High School Theater.

Tickets are available at the door, or by calling 842-7469, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cost is \$4.50 for adults, \$3 for 12 and under.