

# Season closer 'Once Upon a Mattress' has performances remaining at Millbrook

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MILL HALL — There are fairy tales, and then there are fractured fairy tales. "Once Upon a Mattress" is the really fractured fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea" set to music.

As Millbrook's final main stage attraction, "Once Upon a Mattress" has a 2 p.m. performance today, Wednesday and Aug. 9 with 7:30 p.m. shows Wednesday through Sunday at Mill Hall's barn theater.

Set in a comical kingdom "Many Moons Ago," "Once Upon a Mattress" tells the tale of young Prince Dauntless searching for his bride, and the devious devices which his mother, Queen Aggravian, uses to keep her sonny-boy single.

Heading the cast is Sheura

Feuerstein as Winnifred who swims the moat to reach the castle seeking out her prince. In the role which propelled Carol Burnett to stardom decades ago, Feuerstein is likable and loud as Winnifred, whose nickname is not Winnie, but simply Fred.

Nicholas Carroll plays Dauntless, hoping that some fair maiden will pass his mother's test, thereby proving to be a true princess.

Objecting to every candidate is Queen Aggravian, played by Marc de la Concha. Having donned a dress and fur stole in last summer's "Bye, Bye Birdie," the diminutive de la Concha now wears a gown and royal hat getting the show's biggest laughs either in attempting to ascend the throne or bouncing off of mattresses.

Objecting to the queen's objections is the King. Problem is

the King is mute, so he commensurates with the minstrel, played by Nate Zimmerman, and Thom Caska, who doubles as the jester and the wizard.

Tim Dietrich — having wowed audiences as "The Nerd" earlier this season — is a replacement fit for a king, playing King Sextimus the Silent with agility and pantomime skills.

There is a subplot involving Lady Larkin (Erin Rye) being a lady-in-waiting for a baby and the pompous Sir Harry (Andy White) with an energetic singing and dancing ensemble which includes area actress Erin Long.

Linda Ames Key is in the director's chair briskly moving the lords and ladies around the castle with Dax Valdes' choreography highlighted by the vigorous Spanish Panic.

Musical director Martena Rodgers — who last musically directed "My Way" — is off stage at the piano with other instrumentalists playing the bouncy score.

Sir Harry and Lady Larkin's ballads are "In a Little While" and "Yesterday I Loved You." Winnifred's solos are the painfully "Shy" and "Happily Ever Again." The jester's "Very Soft Shoes" is a quiet effective memory tune.

Some songs always strike me as surplus: Act I's "Normandy" and Act II's "Larken Nightengale Lullaby," which is a bit clumsily staged and dis-

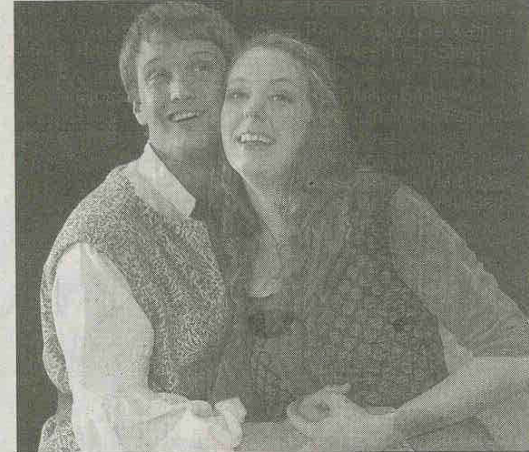


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Above, Andy White, as Sir Harry, and Erin Rye, as Lady Larkin, appear in a scene from "Once Upon a Mattress."



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Above, cast members appear in a scene from "Once Up-

At first glance, the set looks more rustic than regal. At second glance, the set looks more metallic than rustic. As part of a Green initiative — and likely a budget-saving measure — the two-tiered set is constructed of entirely recycled, found, reused and donated materials, mainly dozens of silver spray paint cans and lids.

The biggest set piece is a bed with 10 mattresses — although, there are references to 20 — under which the queen has placed a pea.

Spoiler alert: It's not a pea that keeps Winnifred awake, which proves to be the ultimate test of a princess. Moving the bed into place on open-

ing night proved frustrating for the "crew" but amusing to the audience as the queen gave the bed a couple of hefty hip bumps.

Good looking costuming with ladies in gowns and men in tights with extra velvet trim robes for the king and queen.

So it's "Happily Ever After" as Dauntless weds Winnifred and "The Hawk and the Mouse" (translated King and Queen) switch roles.

Millbrook's main stage should have a happy ending at the box office as "Once Upon a Mattress" is a carefree fairy tale, and a funny, frothy treat for the whole family on a hot August evening.