

YMTC Puts On Another Great Youth Performance

By Marnina Wirtschafter
& Kyla Mathis-Angress
staff writer

Combine a campy score and script with a slew of talented actors in a large mixing bowl. Add a dose of absurdity and a few sexual innuendos that will fly over the heads of younger audience members. Top it off with flamboyant wigs, a colorful set, and a full pit orchestra. Blend until smooth and enjoy this Youth Musical Theater Company production of *Once Upon a Mattress*, a hilarious take on Hans Christian Anderson's "The Princess and the Pea."

Once your eyes adjust to the neon color scheme, you can immerse yourself in this medieval queendom. Power-hungry Queen Aggravaine goes to great lengths to keep her naïve son, Prince Dauntless the Drab (played by BHS sophomore Alex Senauke), from finding a true princess to marry. As long as Dauntless stays single, not one person under the Queen's rule can marry. Sir Harry, in a terrific performance by BHS senior Kaiso Hill, goes on a quest to find a princess for Dauntless, in order to marry his own love, Lady Larken.

The tyrannical queen overpowers every character, challenged only by the vivacious Princess Winifred, whom Harry retrieves from the far-away marshes. Winifred proves to be anything but a conventional princess; she swims in the moat to make a dramatic entrance. Despite her unladylike qualities, or rather because of them, she steals everyone's hearts, besides the Queen. King Sextimus (BHS junior Nathan Forster), the Minstrel, the Jester, and the Wizard conspire to see Winifred and Dauntless exchange vows.

The ensemble supports the action with strong vocals and gusto, particularly in the energetic dance number, "The Spanish Panic." There were several fun cameo appearances: sophomore Alix Feinsod's eager-

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The musical adaptation of the "Princess & the Pea" stars Shelby Stewart and Alex Senauke. COURTESY OF ALAN SENAUKE

to-please princess applying for Dauntless' hand, freshman Maya Ball-Burack's sour singing bird, and an opening dance with sophomore Octavio Hingle-Webster, freshman Reina Kiefer, and Oakland Tech junior Corinne Vandagriff.

Other highlights include the scene in which the mute King Sextimus tries in vain to describe the birds and the bees to Prince Dauntless, who finally realizes that "it isn't the stork at all!" Senauke's timid and overwhelmingly endearing Dauntless was a stark contrast to Dorothy Gray's arrogant and villainous Queen. Gray, who hails from Albany High, demands the audience's attention and laughter, using her face, her voice, and even her height to her comedic advantage. Another dynamic duo was the Minstrel and the Jester, played by Annie Chin (Albany High) and Misha Riley (Maybeck). These two displayed incredible triple-threat talent, including some acrobatics from Chin.

Shelby Stewart (Head-Royce) brought a

fun-loving energy to Winifred, who swims, belts her face off, gets drugged, climbs on top of a stack of twenty mattresses, and—in just one number — sings operatically, dances, wrestles, plays a lute, pantomimes, and gets drunk.

Yael Platt (Jewish Community High School) hits Lady Larken's high notes with beautiful clarity in her sweet duets with Hill and, though their choreography is fairly trite, the story gives way to kissing, fighting, and cross-dressing.

Although the outrageous wigs complimented the exaggerated style of the spoof, they also tended to be distracting and made it difficult to recognize the actors. This zany musical, reminiscent of Willy Wonka, is certainly not for everyone. If you're looking for realism, we advise that you search elsewhere. If you're prepared for a boisterous story with a touch of truth, *Mattress* provides just that. The show created an infectious energy, we smiled and laughed constantly. Performances run through the end of February, and tickets are available on www.brownpapertickets.com.

As a wise man named Alex Senauke once said, "It's whimsical and ridiculous, and if you're looking for fun, head on down to the Julia Morgan Theater."