

Good voices blend in musical fairy tale

Performances of the Plymouth Theatre Guild production of "Once Upon a Mattress" continue through Saturday, May 18, at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of Northville Regional Hospital. Interpreters for the hearing impaired will be provided Friday, May 17. For ticket information call 349-7110.

The show is loosely based on Hans Christian Anderson's "The Princess and the Pea." As in all good fairy tales, the plot is capricious, yet somehow elegant.

It's about an imperious queen who is most possessive of her son. He longs to be married. Alas, she only will approve of a princess with "true royal blood." Her tests, of course, are so demanding that all the young ladies-in-waiting fail.

When Princess Winnifred (they call me "Fred") appears, the queen has her sleep on 20 mattresses, into

which she has put a pea. Only a blue blood would remain awake because of the pea, she reasons. All's fair in rigged tests, so members of the court conspire to make sure the princess passes the sensitivity test. You see, they cannot be married until the prince says, "I do."

LINDA PICCOLI brings equal measures of comic timing, stage presence and a fine voice to her role as the domineering, hyponchondriac queen. Michael Shulman, in most amusing as her muted king, who favors, chasing young damsels and doing pantomime and charades

In lieu of talking, Daryl Ziegelman plays their son, Prince Dauntless the Drab, with a delightful naivete. The object of his affection, Princess Winnifred the Woebegone, is charming, earthy and bemused in the capable hands of Karen Groves. She wisely doesn't try

to imitate the yuks of a Carol Burnett (who did the role on Broadway).

Bob Weibel of Westland is a free-lance writer, who has spent more than 25 years in community theater as a director, designer and performer.

By Bob Weibel
special writer

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