

# College of DuPage Theater Department

## Presents



**Music by** Mary Rodgers

**Lyrics by** Marshall Barer

**Book by** Jay Thompson, Dean Fuller, and Marshall Barer

**Director** Amelia Barrett

**Music Director** Daniel Brennan

**Choreographer** Kyle Donahue

The College Theater Department sincerely thanks the Library for research support for classes studying the script and production, as well as for the cast, director and production team, working on the project. Additionally, we would like to thank both the Physical Education and Music Department for their support.

## Synopsis

**Source:** "Once upon a Mattress." *Concord Theatricals*, [www.concordtheatricals.com/p/44799/once-upon-a-mattress](http://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/44799/once-upon-a-mattress).

Many moons ago in a far-off place, Queen Aggravain decreed no couples could marry until her son, Prince Dauntless, found a bride. Princesses came from far and wide to win the hand of the prince, but none could pass the impossible tests given to them by the Queen. That is, until the "shy" swamp princess, Winnifred the Woebegone, showed up. Would she be able to pass the Sensitivity Test, marry her prince and help Lady Larkin and Sir Harry to the altar? Carried on a wave of wonderful songs, by turns hilarious and raucous, romantic and melodic, this rollicking spin on the classic tale "The Princess and the Pea" provides some side-splitting shenanigans. For after all, a princess is a delicate thing.

**Scenes and Setting:** The action takes place in a small kingdom in medieval times.

## Characters:

Minstrel	Lady Lucille	Lady Mabelle
Pantomime Prince	Lady Larken	Third Knight
Pantomime Princess	Sir Studley	Nightingale of Samarkand
Pantomime Queen	King Sextimus the Silent	Kitchen Wench
Wizard	Jester	Lady H
Princess Number Twelve	Sir Harry	First Lady
Lady Rowena	Princess Winnifred	Second Lady
Lady Merrill	Sir Harold	Third Lady
Prince Dauntless	Lady Beatrice	Emily, Scullery Maid
Queen Aggravain	Sir Luce	

## Musical Numbers:

### ACT ONE

Overture

Prologue

Many Moons- Ago *Minstrel, Court*

An Opening for a Princess - *Prince Dauntless,*

*Lady Larken, Knights and Ladies*

In a Little While - *Lady Larken, Sir Harry*

In a Little While (reprise) - *Lady Larken, Sir Harry*

Shy - *Princess Winnifred, Knights and Ladies*

The Minstrel, the Jester and I - *The King, Minstrel, Jester*

Sensitivity - *The Queen, Wizard*

(The) Swamps of Home - *Princess Winnifred, Prince Dauntless, Ladies*  
Normandy - *Minstrel, Jester, The King, Lady Larken*  
Spanish Panic - *Company*  
Song of Love - *Prince Dauntless, Princess Winnifred, Knights and Ladies*

**One 15 - minute Intermission**

## **ACT TWO**

Entr'acte  
Quiet - Jester, Knights and Ladies  
Happily Ever After - *Princess Winnifred*  
Man to Man Talk - *The King, Prince Dauntless*  
Very Soft Shoes - *Jester, Knights and Ladies*  
Yesterday I Loved You - *Sir Harry, Lady Larken*  
Lullaby - *Nightingale of Samarkand*  
Finale - *Entire Court*

## **Once Upon A Mattress Director's Note**

### **Summer 2023**

*Once Upon a Mattress*, a “fractured fairy-tale” show geared toward family audiences, with its roots fully steeped in the Golden Age of the American Musical. A saucy and revisionist telling of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Princess and the Pea*. It has echoes of pantomime, full dance numbers, belting songs and a whole lot of absurdity packed into a couple of hours of entertainment.

Ultimately, the story that we present today, is about an unconventional princess and an unconventional world view of what it means to be a leader. It celebrates team work and a community trying to come together in order to discover the inner strength we possess to follow our own paths. I hope you are able to see the impact each one of us can have in the world, even when it strays from other’s expectations. ~AB

## **About the Authors:**

### **Marshall Barer, Playwright**

**Source:** Holden, Stephen. “Marshall Barer, 75, Lyricist for ‘mattress’ and Mighty Mouse.” The New York Times, 28 Aug. 1998, [www.nytimes.com/1998/08/28/arts/marshall-barer-75-lyricist-for-mattress-and-mighty-mouse.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/28/arts/marshall-barer-75-lyricist-for-mattress-and-mighty-mouse.html)

### **Marshall Barer, 75, Lyricist For 'Mattress' and Mighty Mouse**

Marshall Barer, the lyricist and the book writer (with Jay Thompson and Dean Fuller) for "Once Upon a Mattress" (the 1959 show that introduced Carol Burnett to Broadway), and the wit who

wrote the words for the Mighty Mouse theme song, died on Tuesday at his home in Santa Fe, N.M. He was 75 and had lived for many years in Venice, Calif., where his home had been an informal salon for West Coast songwriters and performers.

"Mattress," which had music by Mary Rodgers, was a farcical adaptation of the popular fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea." After running for 460 performances off and on Broadway it had two successful television adaptations, both starring Ms. Burnett, and went on to enjoy numerous local productions around the country. It was revived last year on Broadway with Sarah Jessica Parker in the leading role.

A prolific songwriter whose work flourished in cabarets with the support of performers like Michael Feinstein and Andrea Marcovici, Mr. Barer was a master of the witty revue song that satirized human foibles and punctured clichés with a devilish insouciance. If none of his songs was a bona fide hit, he was regarded by cognoscenti as one of the finest exponents of a brittle late-1950's-early-60's style that carried clever lyrical observation to a peak of refinement.

Ironically, his best-known song was probably the Mighty Mouse cartoon theme, "Here I Come to Save the Day." "Some claim to fame, huh?," Mr. Barer once said in an interview. "I'm actually not all that proud of it. I wrote it in the back of a taxicab."

Mr. Barer was born in Long Island City, Queens, and began his career as a designer and illustrator for such magazines as *Esquire*, *McCall's* and *Seventeen*. From there he branched out into writing special material for performers, including Celeste Holm. Moving into children's music, he worked as a staff composer for Golden Records, collaborating with Alec Wilder, and in 1951 he began collaborating regularly with Mr. Fuller. They wrote several numbers for the Broadway revue "New Faces of 1956."

The following year, the same team contributed three songs and a sketch for the 1957 Ziegfeld Follies starring Beatrice Lillie. "Once Upon a Mattress," which was nurtured at the Tamiment Playhouse, the summer playhouse in the Poconos, followed in 1959. And in 1966, he and Ms. Rodgers re-teamed to write five songs in "The Mad Show," the Off Broadway revue based on the humor magazine that ran for 871 performances. The same year, he was lyricist for an unsuccessful Broadway show, "Pousse-Cafe," with music by Duke Ellington.

Although Mr. Barer's most successful collaborations were with Ms. Rodgers, he also worked with Leroy Anderson, J. Fred Coots, Hoagy Carmichael, Burton Lane, David Raskin, Michel Legrand, Vernon Duke and, most recently, Mr. Feinstein.

He is survived by a sister, Natalie Feingold of Florida.

## Dean Fuller, Playwright

**Source:** “Dean Fuller.” Concord Theatricals, [www.concordtheatricals.com/a/2917/dean-fuller](http://www.concordtheatricals.com/a/2917/dean-fuller).

**Dean Fuller** (1922-2017) was a composer, playwright, conductor, sailor, pilot, novelist and teacher. B.A. music and drama, Yale University. Alumnus Tamiment Playhouse, last of the Borscht Belt boot camps for revue writers, lyricists and composers. He co-wrote the book for *Once Upon A Mattress*, contributed music (with lyrics by Marshall Barer) to the revues *Once Over Lightly* (Zero Mostel, Jack Gilford, Sono Osato), *New Faces of 1956* (Tiger Haynes, Inga Swenson, Maggie Smith) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (Beatrice Lillie). Musical director and arranger for Tallulah Bankhead's only nightclub appearances (Sands Hotel, Las Vegas). Composer, National Repertory Theatre (Eva LeGallienne, Denholm Elliott, Farley Granger, Sylvia Sydney). Co-author/composer of the Off-Broadway musical *Smith*. Author of three novels: *Passage*, *A Death in Paris* and *Death of a Critic*.

## Mary Rodgers, Composer

**Source:** Weber, Bruce. “Mary Rodgers, Author and Composer in a Musical Family, Dies at 83.” The New York Times, 27 June 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2014/06/28/nyregion/mary-rodgers-author-and-composer-and-daughter-of-richard-rodgers-dies-at-83.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/28/nyregion/mary-rodgers-author-and-composer-and-daughter-of-richard-rodgers-dies-at-83.html).

Mary Rodgers, who wrote songs and children’s books and, by virtue of genetics and serendipity as well as talent, lived at the red-hot center of American musical theater, died on Thursday at her home in Manhattan. She was 83.

The cause was heart failure, her son Alexander Guettel said.

Ms. Rodgers, the daughter of the composer Richard Rodgers, is probably best known for writing the music for “Once Upon a Mattress,” the fairy-tale farce about a love-hungry princess that made Carol Burnett a star in 1959; and for writing “Freaky Friday,” a novel for young people about a teenage girl who switches bodies with her mother.

Well reviewed when it was published in 1972, “Freaky Friday” has had several lives on the screen, including a 1976 film version starring Barbara Harris and a teenage Jodie Foster — Ms. Rodgers wrote the screenplay — and a 2003 movie starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan.

In perhaps any other family Ms. Rodgers would have been the star. But along with a series of men in her life, she belonged to the Windsors of the musical theater. With Lorenz Hart or Oscar Hammerstein II as lyricist, her father created a cache of Broadway's signature shows, among them "Pal Joey," "Oklahoma!," "The King and I," "Carousel" and "The Sound of Music." Her son Adam Guettel is the Tony Award-winning composer and lyricist of musicals like "Floyd Collins" and "The Light in the Piazza." Together with her great friend Stephen Sondheim, they describe a straight line through nearly the entire history of American songwriting for the stage.

Ms. Rodgers was born in Manhattan on Jan. 11, 1931. Much of her family life was a secret until 2001, when a television documentary and a biography of her father revealed the dark side of the man who wrote the music for "You'll Never Walk Alone," "My Favorite Things," "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" and many more of the sunniest songs ever written for the stage.

An alcoholic and a serial philanderer tormented by phobias, Richard Rodgers was portrayed as a genius who put everything into his work with little left over for his wife, the former Dorothy Feiner, and his children.

"There is a home movie of Daddy with me when I was 10 months old or so out in Hollywood," Ms. Rodgers said in an interview with Frank Rich of The New York Times in 2001. "There's a really handsome, loving, funny guy lying in a pair of swimming trunks on the grass playing with this baby, with a kind of good-natured, silly joy that I had never seen in my life because I was too young to remember that. And I looked at it and thought, God, where did that man go and why did I never see him? That charming-looking handsome kid turned into a wizened, sad, deer-in-the-headlights person."

Ms. Rodgers grew up playing piano — "moderately well," she said. She graduated from the Brearley School and went to Wellesley College, where she studied music, though not composition. Years later, she recalled that at Wellesley they didn't even teach composition.

"They obviously didn't think women should or could write music," she told The Juilliard Journal. She was chairwoman of the Juilliard School board from 1994 to 2001.

## Themes

**Source:** Constantakis, Sara. "Once Upon A Mattress." Drama for Students, Volume 28. Gale, Cengage Learning. 2011. <https://www.scribd.com/read/385751516/A-Study-Guide-for-Mary-Rodgers-s-Once-Upon-a-Mattress#>

## ***Determination***

At First Queen Aggravain appears to be the most determined person in this play. She wants to keep her son unmarried, as she believes, she is the best person to watch over him for the rest of her life. She is determined to do anything to that end, even to cheat and lie.

However, as the play continues, it becomes apparent that both Prince Dauntless and Princess Winnifred are even more determined than the queen. They intend to be married, and much of the play is spent on their preparations to beat the queen at her all-but-impossible challenge.

Sir Harry also demonstrates determination in his quest to find a suitable princess for Prince Dauntless so that he and Lady Larken can be married. The king, once he meets Princess Winnifred, also becomes determined to undermine the queen because he discovers that his son is truly in love with Princess Winnifred.

## ***Confidence***

Prince Dauntless appears to doubt himself and lack confidence; he is constantly giving in to his mother's wishes. When Princess Winnifred appears in the scene, though, she seems to have enough confidence for both of them. Princess Winnifred's confidence inspires the prince, and he finally finds the courage to stand up to his mother. It is because of this new found confidence that the curse on the prince's father, the king, is broken. The original curse stated that the king would remain mute until the mouse ate the hawk. The mouse, in this case, was the once-timid prince, who finally talks back to his mother, who represents the hawk. As soon as the prince exhibits his new found confidence and defeats his self-doubt, the king regains his voice and regains his power in the kingdom.

Although the princess lacks book knowledge, the source of many of the queen's perplexing quizzes, Winnifred has enough confidence in herself to do her best in beating the queen. She knows the prince does indeed love her and that she loves him. She will try her hardest to become his bride. Princess Winnifred's confidence comes from knowing and understanding herself. She does not try to pretend to be anyone other than who she is. For instance, she does not try to be graceful or delicate, like the stereotypical fairy tale princess. She is loud and bold and is proud of herself. Her confidence is not something someone had to teach her. It comes to her naturally from merely being true to herself.

## ***Silence***

Until the very end of this play, the king is mute, allowing the queen full rule over the kingdom. She is the sole word of law and, with the wizard's help, she controls the fate of all the people of the court.

Although the prince retains his voice, he never talks back to his mother, so in essence, he too is relegated to a world of silence. The queen takes advantage of this silence and is often ridiculed behind her back, for being so talkative. Not until the end of the play do the king and the prince regain their voices, silencing the queen.

### ***Love***

One of the questions that Lady Larken repeatedly asks her lover, Sir Harry, is whether love overrules law. Sir Harry has trouble answering this question for much of the play. He is adamant about never breaking a law, including the queen's law that no one may marry until the prince does. However, it is Harry who heads out to the swamps to find the last princess who might be strong enough to pass the queen's test and be allowed to marry the prince. Harry does this out of his love of Lady Larken. Later, when he fears that the queen might outsmart Princess Winnifred, he admits that love is superior to the laws of the land.

It is also for love that Prince Dauntless finds the courage to stand up to his mother. He has fallen in love with Princess Winnifred and is determined to fulfill that love by marrying her. Another form of love that is expressed in this play is that between the gentle king and his son. Though the king cannot vocalize his love, he is very adept at expressing his love for his son through hand expressions and physical contact.

### ***Royalty***

This play raises questions about the nature of royalty. What is royalty? Can it be measured? The queen's definition of royalty is a high degree of physical sensitivity. She claims that a true princess could be discomforted by the smallest pea placed under multiple mattresses. If a young woman cannot sleep because she is sensitive enough to feel disturbed by the pea, then she is truly of royal birth.

The story, however, describes royalty in another way. A truly royal person is one who sees the truth, in himself or herself and in others. Princess Winnifred sees the worth of Prince Dauntless, for example. She sees his true strength and courage behind the facade of his shyness and fear. She also sees the love in the king's facial expressions. The irony in this story is that while the queen defines royalty in relation to sensitivity, of all the characters in this story, the queen lacks sensitivity the most. According to this play as a whole, there is no one special characteristic that defines royalty.



## The History of the American Musical

**Source:** Maslon, Laurence. "Elements of the Musical." PBS.org. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/essays/elements-of-the-musical/>. 24 June, 2022.

No one person created the musical. It evolved over time and incorporates a variety of influences and elements. First of all, of course, there is the music. Minstrel songs and the cakewalk; Irish ballads and patriotic jingles; ragtime marches and stirring blues; poignant torch songs and jazz ditties; totemic anthems and rock opera — the musical has captured every idiom of American expression. There is definitely a "Broadway" sound, often referred to as "Tin Pan Alley," a musical structure pioneered by songwriters like Irving Berlin and Richard Rodgers. However, this is by no means the only kind of music to appear on Broadway.

Then, there are the lyrics, the words that go with the music. They can be rhapsodic, witty, risqué, or patriotic. Broadway lyrics have become another form of native poetry — words, catchphrases, sentiments, and stanzas that have entered the American lexicon. The lyrics of Cole Porter, Ira Gershwin, and Irving Berlin — to name but three — are routinely quoted in poetry anthologies around the world.

In the early days of the musical, what mattered most were the songs, and it was essential that they were catchy enough to amuse the audience or provide material for dancers or comedians. But, beginning in the 1930s, the situation, the book or libretto, of the musical started to achieve primary importance. A story or narrative became more frequently the spine of the musical, and in the 1940s, mostly due to the narrative sophistication of the shows of Rodgers and Hammerstein, the songs followed the plot and the characters, rather than the other way around. This narrative spine has made the musical quite influential as a cultural and artistic force; from the epic Kern-Hammerstein "Show Boat" and its view of race relations (1927) to "Oklahoma!" (1943) through "West Side Story" (1957), "Hair" and its antiwar sentiments (1967), "Company" (1970), and "Rent" (1996), the themes of prominent Broadway musicals reflected the controversial, revolutionary, and nostalgic issues of an evolving American culture. As the musical got more complex, it required a director to shape the production and its design and concept. Strong musical directors like George S. Kaufman and George Abbott emerged in the '30s; currently major artists like Harold Prince, Jerry Zaks, and Julie Taymor are key to shaping a musical's success. Choreographers were next to emerge as major artists; in the teens and '20s, they were simply "dance directors," but influential choreographers like George Balanchine and Agnes de Mille brought visionary ideas to the stage. With gifted choreographers like Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse broadening their range in the '50s, it was only matter of time before they took on the job of director in addition to their dance duties. The director/choreographer became a major visionary force on the stage, guiding every visual and physical

moment of a musical. Robbins and Fosse were joined by such talents as Gower Champion, Michael Bennett, and Tommy Tune.

Performers have also been the cornerstone of the musical. They could be comedians like Bert Lahr or Bert Williams; singers like Ethel Merman or Ethel Waters; dancers like Ray Bolger or Marilyn Miller. With the stronger demands of the narrative musical, performers had to become actors as well; indeed, after the success of non-singing actor Rex Harrison in “My Fair Lady,” actors with minimal singing ability — Richard Burton, Lauren Bacall — became major musical stars. Of course, what Broadway values most these days is the “triple threat” — performers who can sing, dance, and act. In fact, in the past, there were separate dancing and singing choruses; now everyone is expected to do it all. Star performers like Bernadette Peters, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Nathan Lane appear to have limitless talents.

None of these elements would come together without the producer. The idea for a new musical can come from a writer, composer, or performer, but it can only be realized by a producer. He or she must raise the money for the production; the amount required is called the capitalization. This amount must not only cover getting the show to opening night but also create a financial cushion for several weeks or months until the show catches on with audiences. The producer will rarely spend his own money; he raises it from investors — usually called backers or “angels,” for obvious reasons — and pays himself a salary. If the show is a success and makes back its initial expenditure (recoupment), investors get whatever percentage of their contributed amount back in profits. For example, if you invested \$1,000 in “Oklahoma!” in 1943 and it cost \$100,000 to produce, you would get 1 percent of the profits after recoupment (distributed weekly). If “Oklahoma!” had flopped, you would have lost all your money; luckily, the show was a big hit: anyone who did invest \$1,000 received \$2.5 million!

A Broadway musical is both a risky and an exciting proposition. It is the most costly business venture in the theater. Typically, a musical will now cost at least \$10 million to produce; to put this in context, 30 years ago, a musical cost one tenth that amount. (Tickets also cost about one eighth as much in 1974.) As hard as it is to raise that money, the rewards can be enormous. Cameron Mackintosh’s four shows (“Cats,” “Les Misérables,” “The Phantom of the Opera,” and “Miss Saigon”) have run on Broadway for more than 62 years total and, internationally, have made more money than these four movies — STAR WARS, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, JURASSIC PARK, and TITANIC — put together. But the rising costs of originating a show have driven away more independent individual producers and opened the field for corporations like the Walt Disney Co. For example, “The Lion King” may well be the most expensive show ever — rumored at above \$20 million — and took about four years to turn a profit, but a big company can afford to wait that long for a return on their investment. That’s why there’s no business like show business!

As if these weren't enough, the story of the musical is also the story of its creators and performers, men and women from every aspect of American — and foreign — society, who came together, often under the most invidious circumstances, to create something that transcended their differences. Refugees came together with native sons and daughters; task masters worked with dissipated alcoholics; white producers championed black performers — and black performers turned right around and made fortunes for those producers; artists fled financial failure for the blandishments of the lucrative worlds of film and television — then fled right back to the stage; gay artists created enduring models of heterosexual romance and heterosexual artists became icons within the gay world; songwriters lost fortunes in the Depression, only to regain them by writing about the Depression itself — the list of ironies and strong compelling biography is endless, each story replete with illuminations about our culture.

Yet, still, the elements that constitute the musical don't end there. The production of the musical is an art form itself. Complicated and often inflammatory, the craft of producing a Broadway show involves knowing the public's tastes (and usually challenging it), raising capital, battling societal trends — all on the most expensive real estate in the most fractious city in the world. And, finally, there is the dissemination of the musical, which encompasses a vast narrative of communications and the media. Through sheet music, over the radio, in movies, on television, on gramophones, hi-fis, and CDs, through word-of-mouth, through visiting tourists, servicemen, grandmothers and their grandchildren, the world of the Broadway musical has been brought to every corner of this country and, by extension, the world. The musical is as powerful an image-maker of America as Hollywood has been and the shaping and shifting of that image is another cultural marker.

### **Social Commentary and Musical Theater**

From *The Beggar's Opera* to *Avenue Q.*, musicals have commented on social issues for as long as there has been musical theater in America.

People have always gone to the theater expecting to be entertained. What do you find interesting about theater which talks about social and political issues as entertainment? Why do you think we have such a long history of doing this? How does this relate to our first amendment right of freedom of speech?

*Avenue Q* broke many barriers in terms of subject matter for musical theater. Can you think of a subject matter that has not yet been addressed by musical theater that now could be? Do you think there is a subject that might still present challenges as a tale for a musical venue or that would still be considered taboo for musical theater? How do you think we benefit by examining these difficult subjects through the lens of story, song and dance?

There will always be issues of huge social importance to face; wars, poverty, injustice to name a few. At the community level there are also always topics of contention between people or groups like budget issues, environmental concerns, bullying and the like. What do you think might happen if your school, or community (or family) got together to put on a musical to deal with pressing issues you are facing? Could this be a way to learn about and talk about a difficult topic in a creative and maybe even a humorous or light hearted way?

### **Where is Musical Theater Headed?**

As the rock musical gave way to the spectacle musical, shows like *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Starlight Express* came to rely less on story and more on technology. Heather Nathans talks about the changes in musical theater in the last forty years and where musical theater appears to be headed. Looking back at the history of musical theater in America, there was a period of relative stability followed by some pivotal points of change in the way musicals were presented.

In the 1970's and 1980's musical theater hit a slump after about 60 years of relative stability. During this time the creative energy behind the musical was spent on creating extravagant special effects. Why do you think this change happened? Do you think this change was driven by audience demand or by creative inspiration or by the technology itself? Did we lose our interest in story? Did technology give us a sense of wonder, power, control? What else was happening in the world of art, politics, and culture at this time? How might that have had anything to do with this change?

As you can see, the history of musical theater is an art form that has gone through many changes and continues to thrive and be important to our cultural experience. Can you draw a comparison between musical theater and a living organism or as something that has a natural life cycle of its own? What can studying the history of musical theater reveal about our society that say the history of politics or science or legislation might not tell us?

## **9 Things You Never Knew About *Once Upon a Mattress***

**Source:** Tepper, Jennifer. "Digging deep into Broadway's trove of behind-the-scenes accounts, we discovered some gems about the musical that opened November 25, 1959." Playbill, 25 November 2019. <https://www.playbill.com/article/9-things-you-never-knew-about-once-upon-a-mattress-com-377122>



Carol Burnett in *Once Upon a Mattress*

When *Once Upon a Mattress* opened November 25, 1959, the musical adaptation of the “The Princess and the Pea” fairy tale had already enjoyed an Off-Broadway run of 216 performances at the Phoenix Theatre. Directed by George Abbott and choreographed by Joe Layton, it would go on to run for another 244 performances on Broadway, making Carol Burnett into a star.

But though the show has become a staple of for schools and community theatres, few fans know all of these fun facts about the musical fable by Mary Rodgers, Marshall Barer, Jay Thompson, and Dean Fuller. Enjoy these nine facts about the show below!

1. Carol Burnett was appearing on *The Garry Moore Show* on television at the same time as she was starring in *Once Upon a Mattress*. This caused some crazy antics. According to Burnett, the double duty meant she got less than an hour of sleep some nights. During one Broadway performance as Winnifred, who cannot sleep on the mattresses with a pea underneath (spoiler!), Burnett actually fell asleep onstage! She came to when she heard the stage manager yelling: "Carol! WAKE UP!"

2. Ann B. Davis replaced Carol Burnett as Winnifred during the original run. This was her Broadway debut, and her only other Great White Way stage credit was playing Mother in *Crazy for You* over 30 years later. A decade after *Mattress*, Davis would win the role of Alice on TV's *The Brady Bunch*.

3. The original production played five Broadway theaters — a record for a Broadway musical. In May of 1959, *Once Upon a Mattress* opened at the Phoenix Theatre on Second Avenue. (This venue alternated between an Off-Broadway or Broadway contract through the years.) The show then moved to the Alvin (now Neil Simon), Winter Garden, Cort, and St. James, never getting to stay put for more than two or three months! During that time, theatre owners would more quickly evict a show if they felt they had a better money-maker for their house. After *Mattress* closed, *Variety* reported that because of the many moves, the show's budget had

been inflated \$55,000 — and that at the Winter Garden and St. James, the theater owners took an unusual share of the gross. All of these moves were not great for *Mattress*' bottom line.

4. Sarah Jessica Parker promoted the Broadway revival herself in Times Square — while she was starring in it! The 1996 Broadway revival featured Parker as Princess Winnifred, along with Jane Krakowski as Lady Larken. When the show, which played the Broadhurst, was struggling at the box office, Parker took to the TKTS booth with flyers.

5. There have been many acclaimed performers who have appeared in *Mattress* over the years. Notably, legendary actor Buster Keaton played the King on the first national tour, dispensing chocolates and advice to the younger actors. Movie star Elliott Gould appeared on screen for the first time ever as the Jester in the 1964 TV adaptation. And a pre-*Glee* Matthew Morrison appeared as Sir Harry in the 2005 TV adaptation.

6. The show started out as an extended skit as a Jewish summer camp for adults. In the early to mid part of the 20th century, there were many summer recreational resorts where adults might do things like write and appear in a musical together. Many theatre professionals, from Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock to Moss Hart, got their start at these camps. *Once Upon a Mattress* began as a one-act at Tamiment adult summer camp resort in the Poconos!

7. Marshall Barer, who wrote *Once Upon a Mattress* with Mary Rodgers, was also engaged to her for a time...but it didn't work out. Barer was supposedly the inspiration for the Mary Rodgers-Stephen Sondheim song "The Boy From..."

8. The Chicago Daily News thought the title *Once Upon a Mattress* was too "salacious!" In fact, in their 1960 review of the touring cast, they cautioned audiences not to be turned off by what sounded from its title like a dirty show but was actually "effervescent" and "mirthful."

9. *Once Upon a Mattress* was up for Best Musical in the 1960 Tony season — pitting daughter against father, as Mary Rodgers wrote the music to *Mattress* and Richard Rodgers wrote the music to *The Sound of Music* that year. The other nominees for Best Musical were *Gypsy*, *Fiorello*, and *Take Me Along* — quite a season, and *The Sound of Music* and *Fiorello* both won in a tie!

## Things to think about prior to performance:

- Are you familiar with the original Hans Christian Andersen story of “The Princess and the Pea?” If you are familiar, think about that story telling and how this might be translated into a musical.
- Have you ever seen a musical or, for that matter, a play? What do you think the difference between a musical theater piece and what we call a “straight” play might be?
- Because we are staging this production in the Belushi Performance Hall, we are able to drop the “Grand Drape” and cover the set. What is your initial experience walking into the space?

## Things to watch for in performance:

- Once the drape rises, notice your impression of the set.
- How would you describe the main characters in the play? Do you identify with any of them and why?
- This set design is an example of what is called a unit set, which is a scenic design made up of pieces (or units) which can be used to produce more than one setting (or rearranged to do so). Was this set design helpful to the production? Why or why not?
- How is the passage of time and locale conveyed in lighting, sound, use of the set, costume pieces and in character action?
- How do the songs communicate the journey of the characters, as well as the story of play?
- Notice the different styles of dance within the play. What are the effects of these styles and the characters who move in them?
- Observe how the actors establish their relationship with one another. How do we “meet” each character? Does their circumstance affect how we empathize with them?
- Notice the costume design and the properties design. What do the visual cues tell you about the play?
- Listen to the sound design. What does the sound-scape communicate to you?

## Things to think about after the performance:

- What do you notice about this play? What stands out to you about the language, characters, setting and conflict? Does it remind you of anything else you have seen or read before?
- Since this story is based on a “fairytale”, do you feel as if you need to know the story in order to enjoy the play? Or can it stand on its own?
- While looking at each of the characters, can you name one quality each of them may represent?
- What do you think about a character(s) finding their voice?
- What lessons or messages have you taken away experiencing this play?

## Other Analysis Tools:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, WHAT happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is 'about?' In a nutshell, how does the playwright drive their point(s) home?
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwrights decide that this was the most quintessential title for their work?

The running time for this production is approximately 2 hours and includes a 15 min. intermission. We do not hold pre or post show discussions for our summer productions. But, please join us during the year for more entertainment and education!

In addition, you may wish to visit College Theater's touring production this summer of:  
<https://www.atthemac.org/events/hare-today-tortoise-tomorrow/>

**Hare Today, Tortoise Tomorrow.** FREE

Monday, June 26, 7pm, Glenside Library

Wednesday, June 28, 7pm, Wheaton Library

Thursday, June 29, 3pm, Winfield Library

Wednesday, July 12, 11am & 1pm, Cantigny

Saturday, July 15, 11am, Oakbrook Library

Saturday, July 15, 2pm, LaGrange Library

**Please join us!**