

once upon a mattress script

once upon a mattress script is a popular musical comedy that has captivated audiences with its witty dialogue, memorable characters, and engaging storyline. This article explores the various aspects of the once upon a mattress script, including its origins, plot summary, character breakdown, and performance tips. Whether you are a theater director, actor, or enthusiast looking to understand the script better or prepare for a production, this guide provides comprehensive insights. The discussion also covers how to obtain the script legally and the importance of respecting copyright when using the material. Below, a detailed table of contents outlines the main sections covered in this article for easy navigation.

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Overview and Origins of Once Upon a Mattress

The once upon a mattress script is based on the fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea," adapted into a musical comedy format. The musical premiered in 1959, featuring music by Mary Rodgers and lyrics by Marshall Barer. It was initially created for a Broadway audience and has since become a staple in community theaters, schools, and amateur productions. The script combines humor, romance, and satire, making it accessible and enjoyable for diverse audiences.

This musical's enduring popularity is attributed to its clever adaptation of classic fairy tale elements, infused with modern comedic timing and memorable musical numbers. The script offers roles for a wide range of actors, from leads to ensemble, making it versatile for different production sizes.

Historical Context and Development

Once Upon a Mattress was developed during the late 1950s when musical theater was experimenting with new themes and styles. It was inspired by the Brothers Grimm fairy tale but took creative liberties to enhance entertainment value.

The original production starred Carol Burnett, whose performance greatly influenced the script's comedic tone.

Significance in Musical Theater

The once upon a mattress script holds a unique place in musical theater history due to its blend of traditional storytelling with contemporary humor. It has been praised for its catchy songs and witty dialogue, contributing to its status as a frequently revived show.

Plot Summary of the Once Upon a Mattress Script

The once upon a mattress script centers around a kingdom where a peculiar queen imposes strict rules about finding the perfect princess for her son, Prince Dauntless. The story unfolds as Princess Winnifred arrives, challenging the queen's criteria with her unconventional personality and presence. The script humorously explores themes of love, acceptance, and breaking societal norms.

The narrative is structured in two acts, featuring a series of comedic trials and misunderstandings that ultimately lead to a heartwarming resolution.

Act One Highlights

Act One introduces the main characters and sets the conflict in motion. Princess Winnifred arrives at the castle, and the queen devises tests to prove her royal status. The act includes lively musical numbers and witty exchanges that establish character dynamics.

Act Two Highlights

Act Two focuses on the climax of the story, where the queen's tests culminate in the famous "pea under the mattress" challenge. The resolution emphasizes themes of authenticity and true love, concluding the musical on a joyful note.

Main Characters and Their Roles

The once upon a mattress script features a diverse cast of characters, each contributing to the story's humor and progression. Understanding the roles is essential for casting and directing effective performances.

Princess Winnifred

The protagonist, Princess Winnifred, is bold, outspoken, and unconventional. Her character challenges traditional princess stereotypes, bringing comedic energy and heart to the script.

Prince Dauntless

Prince Dauntless is the shy and awkward heir to the throne. His interactions with Winnifred provide much of the romantic tension and humor throughout the script.

Queen Aggravain

The queen is the antagonist who enforces strict rules and tests for the princess. Her overbearing personality drives much of the conflict and comedic moments.

Supporting Characters

- Jester: Provides comic relief and commentary on the events.
- Lady Larken: The prince's lady-in-waiting and a secondary love interest.
- King Sextimus: The silent king who communicates through gestures and expressions.
- Minstrels and Court Members: Ensemble roles that add depth to the court setting.

Performance and Production Considerations

Producing the once upon a mattress script requires attention to its comedic timing, musical elements, and set design. Directors and producers must balance humor with the musical's fairy tale charm to engage audiences effectively.

Casting Tips

Successful casting involves selecting actors who can handle both the comedic dialogue and musical numbers. The lead roles demand strong vocal abilities and dynamic stage presence, while supporting roles benefit from versatility

and ensemble cohesion.

Set and Costume Design

The script allows for creative freedom in set and costume design, often reflecting a whimsical medieval aesthetic. Costumes should emphasize character traits and enhance the humor inherent in the story.

Musical Direction

Musical direction is critical, as the songs are integral to storytelling. Directors should focus on clear vocal performances and timing to maintain the script's lively pace.

How to Obtain the Once Upon a Mattress Script

Accessing the once upon a mattress script legally is essential for any production. Scripts are typically available through authorized theatrical licensing companies, which provide performance rights along with the script and musical scores.

Licensed Script Sources

Producers and directors can acquire the script through established licensing agencies specializing in theatrical works. These sources offer official versions that include all necessary materials for staging the musical.

Script Formats Available

The once upon a mattress script is available in various formats, including:

- Printed copies for traditional reading and rehearsal use
- Digital downloads compatible with electronic devices
- Accompaniment materials such as piano/vocal scores and orchestration

Legal and Copyright Information

Understanding the copyright and licensing terms associated with the once upon a mattress script is crucial to avoid infringement. The script is protected

under copyright law, and unauthorized use can result in legal consequences.

Performance Rights

Any public performance of the once upon a mattress script requires obtaining performance rights from the copyright holders or licensing agencies. This ensures that creators are compensated and productions comply with legal standards.

Restrictions and Permissions

Unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or adaptation of the once upon a mattress script is prohibited. Licensed users must adhere to the terms outlined in their agreements, which may include audience size limits and geographical restrictions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find the full script of 'Once Upon a Mattress'?

The full script of 'Once Upon a Mattress' can often be found through licensed script retailers, theatrical publishing companies like Samuel French or Dramatists Play Service, or sometimes through library or educational resources.

Is 'Once Upon a Mattress' script available for free online?

Officially, 'Once Upon a Mattress' scripts are typically not available for free online due to copyright restrictions. However, some sample scenes or excerpts might be found for educational purposes.

Who wrote the script for 'Once Upon a Mattress'?

The script for 'Once Upon a Mattress' was written by Mary Rodgers (music and lyrics) and Marshall Barer (book and lyrics).

Can I perform 'Once Upon a Mattress' using a script I found online?

You need to obtain the proper performance rights and a licensed script from the authorized publisher before performing 'Once Upon a Mattress' to comply with copyright laws.

Are there any good adaptations of the 'Once Upon a Mattress' script for schools?

Yes, there are adaptations of 'Once Upon a Mattress' available that are tailored for school productions, often with simplified scripts or edited content to suit younger performers and audiences.

What is the general plot of 'Once Upon a Mattress'?

The plot of 'Once Upon a Mattress' is a comedic retelling of the fairy tale 'The Princess and the Pea,' focusing on Princess Winnifred's quest to marry Prince Dauntless and the challenges set by Queen Aggravain.

How long is the typical runtime of a 'Once Upon a Mattress' script performance?

A typical performance of 'Once Upon a Mattress' runs approximately 90 minutes to two hours, depending on the production's pacing and any cuts made to the script.

Are there any notable songs included in the 'Once Upon a Mattress' script?

Yes, notable songs from 'Once Upon a Mattress' include 'Shy,' 'The Very Thought of You,' and 'Happily Ever After,' all integral to the script and story.

Can the 'Once Upon a Mattress' script be adapted for different group sizes?

Yes, the script can be adapted for different group sizes by modifying or doubling roles, cutting certain scenes, or rearranging ensemble numbers to fit the resources of the performing group.

Additional Resources

1. Once Upon a Mattress: The Musical Script and Score

This book contains the full script and musical score of the beloved musical "Once Upon a Mattress." It offers readers a chance to dive into the witty and humorous retelling of the classic fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea." Ideal for performers, directors, and fans, the book includes all the songs, dialogue, and stage directions needed to bring the story to life.

2. The Princess and the Pea: A Classic Fairy Tale Retold

A beautifully illustrated retelling of the original fairy tale that inspired "Once Upon a Mattress." This book captures the charm and whimsy of the story about a princess whose sensitivity is tested by a tiny pea under many

mattresses. It's perfect for young readers and those interested in the source material behind the musical.

3. *Broadway Musicals: A Hundred Years of Stories, Songs, and Stars*

This comprehensive guide explores the history of Broadway musicals, including the era that produced "Once Upon a Mattress." Readers will find insights into the creative process behind musical theatre, profiles of key figures, and the cultural impact of shows like this one. It's an excellent resource for theatre enthusiasts wanting to understand the context of the musical.

4. *Musical Theatre: A History*

A detailed exploration of musical theatre from its beginnings to the present day, this book covers influential shows and their scripts, including "Once Upon a Mattress." It discusses the evolution of storytelling through music and the integration of script and score. The book is useful for students and fans interested in the development of musicals as an art form.

5. *Once Upon a Mattress: The Making of a Musical Comedy*

This behind-the-scenes look at the creation of "Once Upon a Mattress" offers interviews, production notes, and anecdotes from the original cast and crew. Readers gain insight into the challenges and triumphs of bringing this humorous fairy tale adaptation to the stage. It's a must-read for anyone curious about musical theatre production.

6. *Fairy Tale Musicals: Songs and Stories for the Stage*

A collection of scripts and songs from musical adaptations of classic fairy tales, including selections inspired by "Once Upon a Mattress." This book highlights how traditional stories are transformed into engaging musicals. It's perfect for educators and performers looking for fairy tale-themed material.

7. *The Art of Adaptation: From Fairy Tale to Musical*

Focusing on the process of adapting traditional stories into musicals, this book uses "Once Upon a Mattress" as a case study. It examines scriptwriting, character development, and musical composition to show how familiar tales gain new life on stage. This insightful read benefits writers and theatre creators.

8. *Comedy in Musical Theatre: Scripts, Songs, and Styles*

A study of comedic elements in musical theatre, this book includes analysis of the humor found in "Once Upon a Mattress." It explores how wit, timing, and character contribute to successful musical comedies. Theatre students and practitioners will find practical advice and examples.

9. *Once Upon a Mattress: A Guide for Directors and Performers*

This practical guide offers tips and strategies for staging "Once Upon a Mattress," including character breakdowns, staging ideas, and vocal coaching notes. It's designed to help directors and actors bring the musical's lively script and score to life with confidence. An essential resource for any production team tackling this show.

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