

Once Upon a Mattress – Synopsis & Characters

Synopsis: This musical is a clever retelling of the fairytale about the *Princess and the Pea*. Our story begins many moons ago in a distant kingdom. Due to an unhappy curse, King Sextimus is unable to speak, while his terror-of-a-wife, Queen Aggravain, has taken over control of the kingdom. Most importantly, in an attempt to keep Prince Dauntless single and powerless, she has decreed that only the princess that can pass her test may marry her son. Further, no one else in the kingdom may marry until Prince Dauntless does. Luckily, Sir Harry is able to find an amazing princess, Winnifred the Woebegone. She instantly catches the attention of Prince Dauntless, and is able to pass the Queen's supposedly impassable sensitivity test. When the Queen still tries to prevent the prince from marrying, he tells her to 'shut up' which ends up breaking the curse on the king. Now able to speak, King Sextimus regains his rightful position as leader of the kingdom, and all is well.

CHARACTERS:

QUEEN AGGRAVAIN: Very protective of her only son, Dauntless. She is a strong character that takes the stage with her presence. She is overbearing, lively, domineering, but should be played comically.

Adult Female (Age 40 – 60's)

Audition Age: 40+

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Alto

Dance Requirements: minimal but must move well

PRINCESS WINNIFRED the Woebegone: She is not the "classical" princess in any sense of the word.

She can swim moats, lift weights and she prefers the swamps of home to a fancy castle. She is energetic, adventurous, independent and optimistic.

Adult Female (Age 20s – flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Mezzo/Belter

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

PRINCE DAUNTLESS: Still a "mama's boy," but it is evident that he is ready to move on. He is childr like, naïve, with a likeable sense of innocence. He adores Winnifred and is in awe of her every step.

Male (Age 20+ – flexible)

Vocal Requirements: baritone

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

LADY LARKEN: A classic beauty. She is graceful, charming and in love with Sir Harry. She is very eager for Dauntless to marry so she can wed Harry before her little bundle arrives. She is eager to please and would never cause embarrassment to her love, Sir Harry.

Adult female (Age 20's flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Soprano (sings the romantic ballads)

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

SIR HARRY: He is a handsome and masculine knight, but quite pompous and a bit of a "stuffed shirt."

He is chivalrous, brave, determined but a bit taken with himself.

Adult male (Age 20s – 30s)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Tenor

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

MINSTREL: May be cast as male or female. Functions as the narrator and has a direct link to the audience, and is attractive and "worldly". Has an air of confidence and enjoys telling the real story to the audience. S/he is likeable and cunning when need be. Works at foiling the Queen's plans.

Adult male/female (Flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, tenor/soprano

Dance Requirements: good physical skills required, light choreography

JESTER: May be cast as male or female. Must be flexible, agile and full of energy. Has a hidden passion for show business and the "good old days" His/her loyalty lies with his/her friends, the King & the Minstrel.

Adult male/female (Flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, tenor/soprano

Dance Requirements: Dancer and special talents (juggling, gymnast, contortionist) a bonus.

WIZARD: The Queen's Loyal Confidante. He is magical and mysterious and is able to do several magic tricks. He possesses a sense of showmanship. Kind of a buffoon though.

Mature adult male (flexible)

Vocal Requirements: Primarily a speaking role

Dance Requirements: minimal

KING SEXTIMUS, THE SILENT: He is mute, due to a curse, but you always know what he is thinking, He is expressive, mischievous and playful.

Mature adult male (flexible) (40+)

Vocal Requirements: Primarily a mimed role strong facial and physical comedy

Dance Requirements: minimal

THE NIGHTENGAL: This bird is brought in by the queen to assist in putting Winnifred to sleep.

Young Female (Ages 8+)

Vocal Requirements: Must have a strong high soprano voice.

Dance Requirements: minimal

Ensemble: The **Ladies in Waiting** and **Knights** who are all waiting for the Prince to get married so that THEY can get married to each other.

The following are character roles and will be cast from the ensemble.

- Queen's Ladies-in-waiting: **Lady Rowena, Lady Merrill, Lady Lucille, Lady Helena, Lady Sarah, Lady Mabelle**
- Knights: **Sir Luce, Sir Russell, Sir Michael, Sir Humphrey.**
- Kitchen Wench: A woman chased around the castle by King Sextimus.
- Emily (chambermaid), Soldiers, Servants, Musicians.