

EDHS' Once Upon a Mattress: A Lullaby of Laughter!
written by Mayumi Nishida, a sophomore at University High School

Curtains rip apart, revealing a stage full of funky, vibrant colors and a stunning, storybook-esque medieval castle. El Dorado High School reinvents the classic tale of The Princess and the Pea with their lively rendition of Once Upon a Mattress.

The story follows the not-so-perfect Princess Winnifred (Rylan Ladewig), whose commitment to nerdy, excitable physicality creates an endearing, adorable leading lady. Numbers like "Shy" and "The Swamps of Home" display Ladewig's undoubtable vocal strength, as well as her hilarious nasal placement, successfully characterizing Winnifred as a charming, giddy girl.

Luckily, this princess does have a perfect pair—Prince Dauntless, performed by Maddoc Brown. Brown's ceaseless adherence to childlike choices, namely crawling up the stairs while begging to his mother or excitedly bounding about on his toes, aptly depicts Dauntless's youthful charm.

"Song of Love," the closing number of the first act, is pure fun, with Ladewig's energetic movements dazzling the audience while Brown feigns exhaustion. Additionally, the EDHS Props Team creates hand-painted signs spelling Winnifred's nickname, Fred, and a cartoonishly large barbell, which the princess, of course, lifts with ease.

These beautifully designed props are woven into each number through the near-professional work of student choreographer Tessa Moore. Her original dances and staging for every song highlight each of the royal subjects, bringing life and movement to the stage.

Costume designers Melody Choi, Olivia Girgis, and Makaela Moore work alongside the EDHS Hair and Makeup crew to splendidly display this funky, modern rendition of a traditionally medieval-era musical. Costuming's combined use of modern sneakers, '70s go-go boots, and Renaissance pieces continues El Dorado's imaginative twist on every aspect of the production.

King Sextimus, the Jester, and the Minstrel (Aidan Mathewson, Tessa Moore, and Brennan Esguerra, respectively) round out the show as an unexpected yet delightful comedic trio, using wildly elaborate gestures while venturing around the castle in their song "The Minstrel, The Jester, and I." Their comedy is elevated by the EDHS Set Team's outstanding castle. This monstrous, 36-foot-long set is made even more impressive by its variety of stone textures, numerous parapets, and colorful window panes and banners, all used by the trio as they dash around the towers.

El Dorado's remarkable cast and crew create a whimsical production that is undoubtedly fit for a princess.