

THE  
PRINCESS  
AND THE  
PEA

Adapted by Michele L. Vacca

*(Based on Hans Christian Andersen's story)*

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CHARACTERS:

PRINCE VALIANT

PRINCESS OLIVIA OF BOLIVIA

OLD QUEEN MAUDE, the Queen Mother

KING MAXIMILLIAN

DONALD DUNCE, a squire

LADY HILDEGARDE, lady in waiting to Princess Olivia

ESMERALDA SMYTHE, a gypsy

PRINCESS MINERVA THE MARVELOUS OF MARVY

PRINCESS DIANA DINGALING OF DINGDONG

PRINCESS BEAULAH THE BEAUTIFUL OF BURGUNDY

PRINCESS STELLA THE STRONG OF SLOBOVIA

NOTE: if desired, a company of six can play (doubling) these eleven roles.

The suggested doubles are:

ONE ACTRESS CAN PLAY: Lady Hildegarde, Esmeralda, Princess Diana, and Princess Stella.

ONE ACTRESS CAN PLAY: Princess Olivia, Princess Minerva, and Princess Beulah.

Everyone else plays one role:

TIME: Some time in the Middle Ages.

PLACE: The little kingdom of Maxwell-by-the-Sea.

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS:

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VALIANT – a young Prince, 19 ½ years old. He is a pleasant, down-to-earth young man, loyal to his family and obedient to their traditions.

OLIVIA – a young Princess, pleasant, attractive, sensible, dignified and charming – everything a Princess is supposed to be.

KING MAXIMILLIAN – a gentle man, kind and generous. He spends much of his time preserving the peace of his household.

OLD QUEEN MAUDE – the King’s mother, very old indeed, though quite energetic and bossy. Usually, her bark is worse than her bite.

HILDEGARDE – Olivia’s lady-in-waiting, loyal and devoted and practical as well.

DONALD DUNCE – squire to the Prince. Donald is loyal and enthusiastic, though not terribly intelligent.

ESMERALDA SMYTHE – the wisest gypsy in the kingdom-because she’s the only gypsy in the kingdom. She’ll foretell anything – for a price.

#### FOUR PRINCESSES VALIANT MEETS ON HIS TRAVELS:

PRINCESS MINERVA – an intellectual of the highest order, also plain and completely absorbed in her mathematical studies.

PRINCESS DIANA – overdressed, overly cute and coy, and not too bright. She is more interested in singing and dancing than anything else.

PRINCESS BEAULAH – very beautiful and incredibly conceited. She finds her own reflection in the mirror much more fascinating than a mere Prince.

PRINCESS STELLA – an athlete of great and impressive strength. All her friends call her “Amazon,” and with the best of reasons.

DOUBLING – see earlier title page.

#### COSTUMES

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The time of the play is “sometime during the Middle Ages,” which provides a great deal of freedom as far as costumes are concerned. Color is far more important than any particular consistent style. In fact, costumes could be designed in almost any period, including the modern. The costumes for the four princesses should be quite exaggerated in their separate ways – to offer a contrast to the rest of the characters.

### SETTINGS

A palace interior setting is necessary for both acts.

A minimum of scenery is required to suggest a large central room; several chairs, a large podium, and any other decorations desired. In the first act the setting must either be changed or another portion of the stage used for the locations of the scenes with the four Princesses. Little or no scenery is required for these four scenes. In the second act the palace setting is restored, and some small portion of the stage must become the bedchamber where Olivia spends the night.

### THE MATTRESSES:

It is uneconomical and even unnecessary to use a huge stack of real mattresses for the bed upon which Olivia tries to sleep. A tall bedframe can be built and painted to look like a pile of mattresses. Only the last one or two need to be actual moveable pieces.

The use of music, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play.

# THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

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by Michele L. Vacca

## ACT I

(OVERTURE: THE CASTLE OF THE KING, MAXIMILLIAN, AND HIS ROYAL FAMILY. A LARGE INTERIOR ROOM, THE GREAT HALL. THERE IS A THRONE FOR THE KING, AND SUITABLE CHAIRS FOR THE OLD QUEEN AND THE PRINCE. PERHAPS A LONG TABLE, TOO. SUITABLE DECORATIONS. ALSO THERE IS A PODIUM, DECORATED WITH SCROLLWORK, AND SO ON. ON THE PODIUM IS AN ENORMOUS BOOK, COVERED WITH PURPLE VELVET, AND WITH GOLDEN STRINGS HANGING DOWN ON THE SIDES. TORCHLIGHT EFFECTS. FANFARE. SQUIRE DONALD DUNCE ENTERS THE HALL, HEADING THE PROCESSION OF THE ROYAL FAMILY. HE MARCHES IN, STOPS, AND ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF THE OTHERS. HE IS A PLEASANT FELLOW, NOT VERY INTELLIGENT, BUT DEVOTED TO THE PRINCE.)

DONALD: Hear Ye! Hear Ye! His Majesty King Maximillian of Maxwell-by-the-Sea! Her Ancient Majesty, Maude, the Queen Mother! His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince Valiant! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

GRANNY: (ENTERS, MUMBLING TO HERSELF. THE OLD QUEEN IS INDEED VERY OLD, AND SHE IS AN ENERGETIC AND AGGRESSIVE OLD WOMAN AT THAT. HER BARK IS WORSE THAN HER BITE, THOUGH) Hear ye, hear ye . . . Always shouting and stomping around.

DONALD: Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

GRANNY: (TO DONALD) Oh, be quiet, can't you! We heard you the first time.

KING: (ENTERS BEHIND GRANNY – HE IS A GENTLE

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MAN, AND ALLOWS HIS MOTHER TO BOSS HIM AROUND, OFTEN JUST TO PRESERVE THE PEACE AND QUIET OF THE CASTLE. HE IS NOT THE STRONGEST PERSONALITY, BUT HE IS CAPABLE OF GREAT KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY) Now, Mother, Donald was only trying to do things properly.

GRANNY: Hmph.

DONALD: Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

VALIANT: (WHO HAS FOLLOWED HIS FATHER INTO THE ROOM – IS A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN, INTELLIGENT ENOUGH, BUT VERY NAIVE AND INCLINED TO DAYDREAMING) Donald, I think you'd better stop now.

DONALD: But, Your Highness, I haven't finished the announcements.

GRANNY: Oh, yes, you have!

DONALD: But –

KING: Now, silence, please.

DONALD: But –

VALIANT: (ASIDE TO DONALD) Shh! Donald!

DONALD: Oh, all right. (PAUSE)

GRANNY: Well?

KING: Well, what?

GRANNY: Let's get on with it!

KING: All in good time, Mother.

GRANNY: Well, don't take too long, Maxie. After all, it's almost time for my nap, you know. Old ladies need their rest.

KING: Yes, Mother.

GRANNY: I get very nervous and very grumpy if I miss my nap! And you don't want me to be nervous and grumpy, do you?

KING: No, mother, of course not.

GRANNY: Well, then get on with it!

KING: Yes, Mother. Of course. Right away. Ahem!

DONALD: Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

GRANNY: Not again!

DONALD: Hear Ye!

KING: Uh, Donald – would you – ah – that is –

DONALD: Hear Ye!

VALIANT: Donald!

DONALD: Huh?

VALIANT: Shh!

DONALD: Oh.

GRANNY: And don't you forget it.  
KING: Now, let's see. Where was I? Oh, yes. Ahem! As you all know, we are gathered here in the Great Hall to commemorate a special occasion.

GRANNY: Hear! Hear!  
DONALD: Where? Where?  
GRANNY: Quiet!  
KING: Today, my son, Valiant, is nineteen and a half years old, and the law decrees that we must consult the Ancient Book of Wit and Wisdom. (CROSSES TO THE PODIUM, AND FUMBLES THROUGH THE BOOK)  
Now, let me see, page – uh – page – uh – page – uh –  
GRANNY: Why don't you put on your glasses? That might help.  
KING: Of course, Mother. An excellent idea. (FUMBLES FOR HIS GLASSES, PUTS THEM ON) There we are! Much better. Ah! Here's the page we want. (MUMBLES AS HE READS IT TO HIMSELF – EXCLAIMING – OH! AND AH! – EVERY SO OFTEN)

GRANNY: Speak up, Maxie. We can't hear you.  
KING: Yes, Mother. (READS) "Whereas and whensoever it comes to pass in the course of time whenever that may be in whatsoever year it happens to occur on the proper day of the week in the ordained month of the suitable year, howsoever it may be or were. Whatever the other concerns of the day – "

GRANNY: Get to the point, will you?  
VALIANT: Now, Granny, you know Papa has to read the whole thing. That's the law.

GRANNY: Hmph.  
DONALD: I like all the big words.  
GRANNY: Quiet!  
VALIANT: (TO DONALD) Shh!  
DONALD: (IN A WHISPER) Well, I do.  
KING: Ahem! (READS) "other concerns of the day – it shall come to pass that when the eldest son of the royal family has attained the age of ten and nine and one half years – "

DONALD: How old is that?  
VALIANT: Nineteen and a half, Donald.  
DONALD: Oh.  
KING: (READS) "and one-half years, he and his family shall consult the wisest gypsy in the kingdom."

DONALD: That sounds like fun!

GRANNY: Quiet!  
KING: Well! That's clear enough. We must now summon the wisest gypsy in the kingdom.  
GRANNY: That shouldn't be too difficult.  
KING: No, no, not at all.  
DONALD: Why not? How do you know which gypsy is the wisest?  
GRANNY: Because there's only one gypsy in the whole kingdom. Esmeralda Smythe.  
DONALD: Oh.  
VALIANT: We'd better call her, Papa.  
KING: Yes, yes, of course.  
GRANNY: Well? Go on! Call her!  
KING: Yes, Mother. Uh – Mother?  
GRANNY: Now what?  
KING: How do I call her?  
GRANNY: Maxie, you're so helpless. I don't know what would happen to this kingdom without me. I'll get her for you.  
KING: Thank you, Mother.  
GRANNY: (YELLS) Yoo-hoo! Esmeralda! Yoo-hoo! Esmeralda!  
(PAUSE) She'll be here in a minute.

(CRASH OF THUNDER AND A PUFF OF SMOKE AND ESMERALDA THE GYPSY APPEARS. SHE IS YOUNG AND WEARS GAUDY FLASHING COLORS.)

GRANNY: There she is.  
ESMERALDA: (IN A THICK ACCENT) Aha! Ptui! The Great King calls Esmeralda, the lowly gypsy fortune – teller!  
KING: Ah – yes, I do. I did. I think.  
ESMERALDA: What can the humble gypsy do for the Great King Maximillian? Shall I read the tea leaves, or look at your palm? I shall read the lumps on your head, no? Ah – I will read the cards, yes? A glimpse into the future – eh? Whatever you wish, I can do.  
GRANNY: Oh, Esmeralda, be quiet!  
ESMERALDA: Ah! It is you, Ancient one.  
GRANNY: Yes, of course, it's me! And we need you to reveal the mystery of the law to my grandson.  
ESMERALDA: AH!  
KING: My son is now nineteen and a half years old, and the  
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Ancient Book of Wit and Wisdom says that –

ESMERALDA: Yes, Yes, I know! That you must consult me!

VALIANT: Esmeralda, what is it that I must do? What is the ancient tradition? Only you can tell me.

ESMERALDA: It is ordained that each prince – when he is nineteen and a half years old – journey through the neighboring kingdoms –

KING: Yes! Now I remember! I did that myself.

DONALD: A journey!

ESMERALDA: Yes. A long journey.

VALIANT: But why must I take this journey, Esmeralda?

ESMERALDA: To find a REAL PRINCESS. A suitable bride. It is so written.

VALIANT: A bride?!

ESMERALDA: Yes! And if you find no suitable bride after six months, you must return to your home.

VALIANT: Why?

ESMERALDA: (MYSTERIOUSLY) Because.

VALIANT: Oh. (PAUSE) And then what?

ESMERALDA: Oh, you sit around at home and wait.

DONALD: Wait for what?

ESMERALDA: (TO VALIANT) For the bride to come to you!

VALIANT: But what if she doesn't come?

ESMERALDA: (SHRUGS) Then you don't get married.

VALIANT: Oh. Then why do I have to go on a journey at all? Why don't I just stay home?

ESMERALDA: (HORRIFIED) You can't do that!!!

VALIANT: Why not?

ESMERALDA: It is so written that the Prince must take a long journey.

VALIANT: But why?

ESMERALDA: Listen, Your Highness, I only repeat the laws, I don't explain them.

VALIANT: Oh. Well, thank you, anyway, Esmeralda.

ESMERALDA: You're welcome.

KING: Yes, Esmeralda, thank you for – uh – dropping in.

ESMERALDA: Any time. Just call me. By the way, I have a cousin, Samantha, just in case you don't find a princess you like –

GRANNY: Let's get on with this! It's time for my nap!

ESMERALDA: Then farewell, Ancient One! Farewell! (A PUFF OF SMOKE AND A CRASH OF THUNDER, AND SHE DISAPPEARS)

GRANNY: (COUGHING) Hmph! All that stupid smoke. Why does

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she do that? Just makes a lot of dust. And it doesn't impress anybody.

DONALD: I think it's fun!

GRANNY: You would.

DONALD: I want to go on the journey, too!

GRANNY: Quiet!

VALIANT: Of course you'll go with me, Donald. No Prince can travel without his loyal squire.

KING: (READING THE BOOK AGAIN) Let me see. Ah, yes, here it is! (READS) It is so decreed and declared that whensoever the eldest son of the family has consulted...(MUMBLES AS HE READS)

GRANNY: Speak up, Maxie!

KING: Yes, Mother. According to the Book, Valiant must begin his journey at once.

DONALD: Oh, good!

VALIANT: Well, if that's what the Book says, then I suppose that is what we must do.

GRANNY: Right! Go on, Valiant, pack your things. You, too, Donald. And be quick about it.

VALIANT: Yes, Granny.

DONALD: Yes, Madam. (THEY GO OUT)

KING: Well, Mother, you have just enough time to take your nap before Valiant sets off on his journey.

GRANNY: I hope I don't have any trouble falling asleep. It's always so noisy around here during the day. Tell that Donald to stop shouting "Hear Ye, Hear Ye," all the time, and then maybe I can get some sleep.

KING: Yes, Mother.

(THE LIGHTS DIM AND THE MUSIC PLAYS. TIME PASSES, AND THEN THE LIGHTS COME BACK UP AGAIN. ALL REAPPEAR. DONALD AND VALIANT ARE NOW PREPARED FOR THEIR JOURNEY. DONALD CARRIES A LARGE BUNDLE OF ITEMS THEY WILL NEED.)

KING: Did you have a nice nap, Mother?

GRANNY: No! I didn't sleep a wink.

DONALD: Gee, that's too bad.

KING: Are you ready for the journey, Valiant, my son?

VALIANT: Yes, Papa.

DONALD: I'm ready, too!  
GRANNY: Quiet!  
DONALD: Well, I am.  
KING: Well, son, take care of yourself.  
VALIANT: Yes, Papa.  
DONALD: I'll take care of him, Your Majesty.  
KING: Yes, well, uh, yes, of course you will, Donald.  
GRANNY: Come here, grandson. Now, remember, if you find a princess you really like, bring her back to the castle.  
VALIANT: Yes, Granny.  
GRANNY: Remember, you can only marry a true princess, Valiant.  
VALIANT: Yes, Granny.  
GRANNY: And I am the only one in the family who knows the Secret Test.  
DONALD: Secret Test?!  
GRANNY: No prince of our family can marry a princess who isn't a real princess. Only a princess of the truest princessness can pass the Secret Test.  
KING: That's true.  
DONALD: Wow! A secret test!  
KING: Now, Valiant, here's a bag of gold for your travel expenses.  
VALIANT: Thank you, Papa.  
GRANNY: And I have something for you, too. (HANDS HIM A LARGE SCROLL) Here.  
VALIANT: What is it, Granny? I won't have much time for reading.  
GRANNY: I picked out a few proverbs from the Book of wisdom.  
DONALD: (EYEING THE ENORMOUS SCROLL) A few?  
VALIANT: Well, thank you, Granny. That was sweet of you.  
GRANNY: Now, when you're traveling, and something happens, and you don't know what to do, just look at the list here, and find a little piece of wisdom to help you out.  
VALIANT: Yes, Granny, I'll do that.  
KING: (SENTIMENTALLY) Your grandmother gave me a list of proverbs when I set out on my journey, too.  
DONALD: (TOUCHED) Gee, that's nice.  
KING: (TO DONALD) Yes, it is, isn't it?  
GRANNY: Well?  
VALIANT: Well, what, Granny?  
GRANNY: Go on! Get started! Why are you standing around here wasting time? You only have six months.  
VALIANT: Yes, Granny. Good-bye, Papa.

KING: Good-bye, Valiant. (WAVES) Have a good time!  
VALIANT: Yes, Papa!  
DONALD: We will! (THEY GO OFF)  
GRANNY: (WATCHING THEM GO) Well, I hope they don't get lost.  
KING: Now, Mother –  
GRANNY: – or robbed –  
KING: Now, Mother –  
GRANNY: – or get their feet wet. (CALLS OFF) Don't get your feet wet! You'll catch cold! Too late. Let's hope they have enough sense to come out of the rain.  
KING: Of course they do, mother. Come, it's time for supper. We're having the Creamed Curry Cucumber Casserole that you like so much.  
GRANNY: (AS THEY GO) I don't like it. I hate it. It gives me indigestion. If it isn't one thing around here, it's another  
KING: Yes, Mother. (THEY ARE GONE)

(LIGHTS DIM. MUSIC. TIME PASSES. THE ROAD. REPRESENTATIVE SET PIECES WILL BE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT FOR THE FOLLOWING FOUR SCENES. NEAR THE KINGDOM OF THE FIRST PRINCESS. PRINCESS MINERVA THE MARVELOUS OF MARVY. THE PRINCE AND DONALD ENTER.)

VALIANT: Well, Donald, we're almost there.  
DONALD: Yes, Your Highness.  
VALIANT: So far the journey hasn't been too bad. We've only seen one dragon, two giants, and a small band of robbers.  
DONALD: And it only rained once.  
VALIANT: That's true. You know, Donald, I always thought that princely journeys were more dangerous than this.  
DONALD: (WHO IS DISAPPOINTED) Me, too. (POINTS TO GATE) Your Highness! Look!  
VALIANT: The home of Princess Minerva the Marvelous of Marvy.  
DONALD: The first Princess! Are you nervous, Your Highness?  
VALIANT: (WHO IS) Of course not!  
DONALD: Well, I am!  
VALIANT: Donald, do you still have that list of proverbs that Granny gave us?  
DONALD: Oh, yes, Your Highness. I have it – uh – (HE

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SEARCHES THROUGH THE TRAVEL BAGS) – I have it – uh – right here – uh – somewhere – Oh! Here it is!

VALIANT: Good. Now put it in a safe place.

DONALD: Yes, Your Highness. (PUTS IT BACK IN THE SAME PLACE)

VALIANT: Well.

DONALD: What?

VALIANT: I suppose I should knock on the gate.

DONALD: Right!

VALIANT: Donald?

DONALD: Yes, Your Highness?

VALIANT: You knock.

DONALD: Right! (POUNDS ON THE GATE)

VALIANT: That's enough, Donald.

DONALD: Yes, Your Highness.

VALIANT: Well, I guess nobody's home. Let's go.

DONALD: But, Your Highness –

(PRINCESS MINERVA APPEARS. SHE IS PLAINLY DRESSED, AND LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE'S IDEA OF THE "TYPICAL" LIBRARIAN. RIMLESS GLASSES, A CHIGNON HAIRDO, AND ORTHOPEDIC SHOES. VERY PLAIN, UGLY CLOTHES, AND SHE CARRIES A HEAVY BOOK.)

MINERVA: SHH! (TO DONALD) Your excessive cacophony has disturbed the beatitude of the atmosphere.

DONALD: Huh?

VALIANT: She means you made too much noise.

DONALD: Oh.

– END OF E-MAIL SEGMENT – THERE ARE 48  
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