

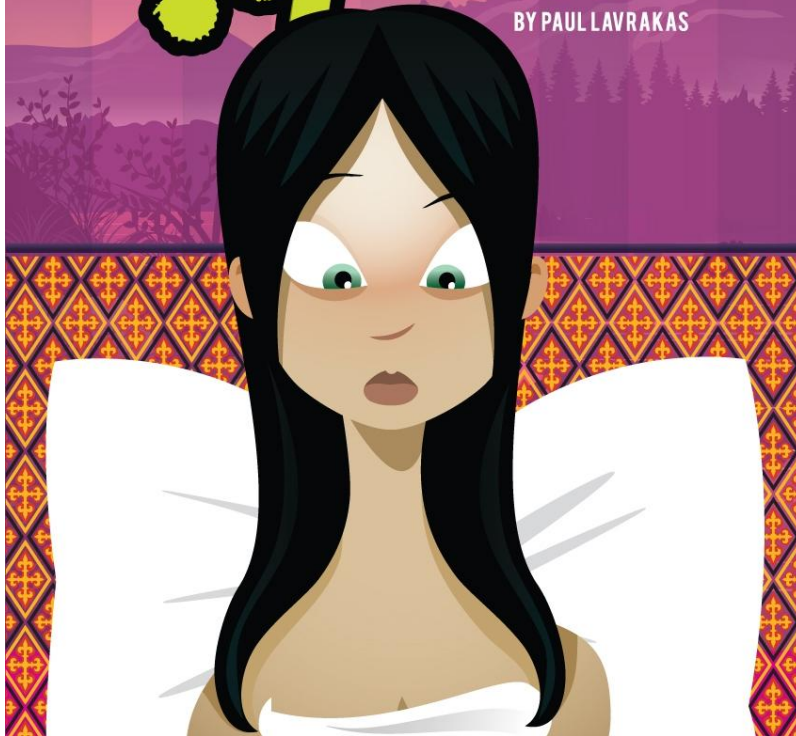
spartanburg youth! theatre presents:

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the  
**Princess**  
and the  
**pea**

BY PAUL LAVRAKAS



The Princess and the Pea  
Teacher's Guide

Spartanburg Youth! Theatre  
February 10 & 11, 2010

## ***The Princess and the Pea*** **Teacher's Guide**

### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

#### **Paul Lavrakas**

Paul Lavrakas is a native of Massachusetts, a graduate of Boston College, and has lived in the Washington, D.C. area for thirty years. He has been commissioned to write 12 plays produced throughout the United States, including three historical plays written for the National Archives. Of his plays for young audiences, three were commissioned by the Kennedy Center, and three by Birmingham Children's Theatre, including *White Sails, Dark Seas*. He has received the American Alliance for Theatre and Education unpublished play award for *Princess and the Pea* (1989) and *White Sails, Dark Seas* (1992). Mr. Lavrakas is primarily employed in public interest politics, as well as writing for conventions/events. He has been Chairman of the Board of the Violence Policy Center since 1989.

#### **Hans Christian Andersen**

Hans Christian Andersen was born in the town of Odense, Denmark, on Tuesday, April 2, 1805. "Hans" and "Christian" are traditional Danish names. It was during 1835 that Andersen published the first installment of his immortal *Fairy Tales* (Danish: *Eventyr*). More stories, completing the first volume, were published in 1836 and 1837. The quality of these stories was not immediately recognized, and they sold poorly.

## About *The Princess and the Pea*

The Princess and the Pea is a story by Hans Christian Andersen, included in his first collection of tales (1836). The story follows a prince who wishes to find a true princess for his bride but cannot discover one. There comes to the town gates a girl drenched with rain, who claims to be a real princess. The Queen Dowager tests her by having a bed made up with twenty mattresses and twenty feather-beds, all piled on top of each other; beneath them all is one pea. The next morning, the girl complains of having spent a wretchedly uncomfortable night because there was something hard in the bed. By this they know her to be a true princess, and she then marries the prince.

Andersen claimed to have heard the tale in childhood. In fact, it does not seem to have been a traditional tale in Denmark, but instead a tale Andersen developed with Swedish folk-tales. He improved on the tales by increasing the princesses' sensitivity—in Swedish versions, she is subjected to a number of tests and is told of the presence of objects in the bed by her dog and cat.

This story is a contemporary adaptation of Andersen's classic tale. Princess Astrid finds she has been lured from her home by Gustav the Troll as a prospective bride for the bookish Prince Eric. Although this feisty princess has no interest in either marriage or princes, she spiritedly takes a series of tests to prove that she is "a real princess." Despite the plotting of the oily courtier, Osric, Astrid and Eric are drawn to each other out of respect for the other's stubborn individualism. However, before there may be a proper happy ending, Astrid must pass a final test.

## Before the Play

1. Discuss with students that the play is an adaptation. Tell them the common qualities of an adaptation, then ask them to name other examples they may know.
2. The story of *The Princess and the Pea* is a fairy tale. Have your class (or individual students) write their very own fairy tale. Here are some basic writing tips:
  - a. The story takes place long ago and far away.
  - b. Magical things can happen in fairy tales, things that could never happen in the real world.
  - c. There are magical characters in the fairy tales.
  - d. Problems must be solved by either a person or a family. There is always some conflict that must be overcome.
  - e. Oftentimes in fairy tales, young people are the heroes or heroines.
  - f. Characters in fairy tales tend to be one-dimensional.
  - g. Character names typically generic and/or descriptive (Jack, Tom Thumb, etc.)
  - h. Good always wins over evil.
  - i. The plot is simple.
  - j. The hero or heroine is often helped by magical creatures along the way.
  - k. Virtues help the hero or heroine overcome obstacles.
  - l. The story always has a happy ending.

## After the Play

1. Students can discuss their favorite parts of the play. Have them write an essay about what they enjoyed the most. You are welcome to share the best essays with us at SYT and we'll even be willing to supply prizes to the best writers.
2. Have students write a story about Gustav and Bertha the Beautiful living happily ever after.
3. Set pieces are always an important part of any production. Have your class talk about how the set added to (or distracted from) the action taking place on stage.
4. If your class didn't write a fairy tale before the show, have them talk about the various elements of fairy tales that were evident in the production. If they did write a fairy tale, compare the tale they wrote to the production.

## Emergency Procedures

The Spartanburg Youth Theatre and the Chapman Cultural Center request all teachers to advise the students and adults of the theater layout, pictured below.

Please be sure that an adult is sitting on the aisle in order to direct your group to the appropriate exit.

Your class should understand the importance of:

1. being quiet so directions can be heard
2. **walking** quickly, and
3. staying with their group.

Refer any questions about emergency evacuation to the staff on arrival at the theater.

