



Storybook Theatre closes book with 'Sir Slob and the Princess'

The Monterey County Herald
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It sounds like it's the upcoming plot for "Shrek IV," but Monterey Peninsula College Storybook Theatre's production of the fairy tale "Sir Slob and the Princess" has some big guns behind it.

It's being directed by Gary Bolen, MPC theater department co-chair, who directed such recent MPC productions as "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "Guys & Dolls," "Grease" and the upcoming "Urinetown: The Musical," which returns later this year.

And its sets were designed by Carey Crockett, a veteran stage designer, actor, producer and director in many Peninsula stage productions.

"Although I've directed productions in the Studio Theater before ('Table Settings' and 'Hold Me!') 'Sir Slob and the Princess' is my first foray into the Storybook season," said Bolen. "To me, it's a very important aspect of our overall theater program in that it brings younger families — and in some cases the entire family — aunts, uncles, grandparents — into the theater to share a live show."

Bolen feels there are ancillary benefits to these "children's theater" shows, which he prefers to call "theater for young audiences."

"It's not like dropping off the kids at a matinee at the movies. We found that, once they get to see one of our Storybook shows, they get intrigued enough to come to the main stage productions. It's a wonderful way to introduce a new generation of audience to the theater."

For one thing, while the shows are aimed at children, they rarely feature children in lead roles.

"A lot of people confuse what 'children's theater' is," he said. "They tend to think that it's plays performed by children. In fact, the idea of children's theater is defined by the audience for which it's performed which is why it's more appropriately referred to as 'theater for young audiences'."

The cast for "Sir Slob," in fact, are far from being neophytes, despite their ages.

"I've got a great mix of current MPC Drama students, both old and new, as well as some graduates from the program in the cast," he said. "It's as good a cast as I've had at MPC. They're really talented and creative actors who are very committed to the whole 'theater for young audiences' experience."

Written by George Garrett and opening Friday in the intimate Studio Theatre, "Sir Slob and the Princess" concludes MPC's 2007-2008 Storybook Theatre season.

"Sir Slob" tells the story of a kitchen scullion who tries to win the hand of the beautiful Princess, Rosebud.

When the King has decided it is time for his daughter to marry, he devises a test so difficult to pass that none of the prospective suitors want to try it.

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None of them, except Slob, who heads off into the woods with his talking horse. Along the way, he will be tested by a lion, a giant and a witch. If he survives all three and Rosebud likes him, they will be married. If she doesn't like him -- off comes his head.

Through naiveté, luck and an honest nature, Slob pratfalls his way past the danger, stumbling and bumbling over all obstacles, to eventually win the hand of the Princess.

The cast includes Chris Deacon as Sir Slob, Hillary Salbacka as the Princess, Fabian Martin as the King, Ana Warner as the Queen and Deena Welch as the Wizard. The last four also play dual roles as the Young Girl, Old Man, Witch and the Giant, respectively.

Bolen said he was impressed with the sets that Crockett has come up with for this production.

"Carey Crockett has designed a really cute and very functional setting for the play," he said. "Although it's only an hour long, it takes place in three different locales — a town square, the court of the king and a dark forest — and you have to be able to get to the different locations quickly and smoothly."

Crockett reached way back into theater history to come up with designs.

"He's designed a series of 'periaktoi' (originally used in ancient Greek theater) that are three-sided and display a different scene on each side," said Bolen. "All it takes is a turn of the scenic unit to take us from the town to the court and back. I have the actors creating the scene shifts and it's been working great. It's actually kind of fun to watch since audiences are used to scenes changing behind a curtain and out of sight. It also solves the problem of our small

performance space and how you create those different settings in such a restricted studio."

Bolen said he's actually directed a production of this play before — in a brand-new, 850-seat, state-of-the-art performing arts center with big sets, big cast and showy effects.

"The show is designed to be done quite simply, which is the way we're doing it now and, frankly, I'm enjoying the process much more!" GO!

THEATER OPENING ·What: MPC Storybook Theatre's presents George Garrett's "Sir Slob and the Princess" ·Where: Studio Theatre, Monterey Peninsula College campus, 980 Fremont St., Monterey ·When: Opens at 7 p.m. Friday, April 4; continues at 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p. m. Saturdays and Sundays through April 20 ·Tickets: \$15 general; \$12 young adults (16-21), \$9 children 15 and under, available at the MPC Box Office at 646-4213 from 3-7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and two hours prior to any performance or online at www.TicketGuys.com ·Information: 646-4213or online at www.mpctheatreco.com "I've directed this show before and was anxious to do it again in such a different venue. The first time I directed it was in a brand new, 850-seat, state-of-the-art performing arts center. It was also the inaugural theater production in that venue and they wanted it to be a showcase for what the theater could do. So it was a very elaborate and big production. Big sets, big cast, showy effects, etc. Actually, the show is designed to be done quite simply, which is the way we're doing it now and, frankly, I'm enjoying the process much more!" "Although I've directed productions in the Studio Theater before ('Table Settings' and 'Hold Me!') 'Sir Slob and the Princess' is my first foray into the Storybook season. To me, it's a very important aspect of our overall theater

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season, sponsored in part by Target, with "Sir Slob and the Princess" written by George Garrett. "Sir Slob and the Princess" plays Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 3 p.m. from April 4 to April 20 in the Studio Theatre, on the Monterey Peninsula College campus, 980 Fremont St., downtown Monterey. "Sir Slob and the Princess" is directed by Theatre Department Co-Chair Gary Bolen, who directed such recent MPC Productions as "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "Guys & Dolls," "Grease" and "Urinetown: The Musical," which returns later this year. "Sir Slob and the Princess" marks Bolen's first time directing the popular MPC Storybook Theatre program. "Sir Slob and the Princess" tells the story of a kitchen scullion who tries to win the hand of the beautiful Princess, Rosebud. When the King has decided it is time for his daughter to marry, he devises a test so difficult to pass that none of the prospective suitors want to try it: None of them, except Slob, who heads off into the woods with his talking horse, where he encounters danger and adventure. Through naiveté, luck, and an honest nature, Slob prafalls his way past the danger, stumbling and bumbling over all obstacles, to win the hand of the Princess. "Sir Slob and the Princess" plays 7 p.m. Friday & Saturday (April 4, 5, 11, 12, 18 and 19); and 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday (April 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 20). \$15 general; \$12 young adults (16-21), and \$9 children 15 and under. Tickets may be purchased from the MPC Box Office at 646-4213 from 3-7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and two hours prior to any performance or online at www.TicketGuys.com. The play opens on a not-so-typical "typical day in the make-believe kingdom of Roselandia. A Herald appears with the exciting news that the King has decided that it is time for his daughter, the Princess Rosebud, to get married. All the men of the kingdom, be they rich or poor, humble or proud, can vie for her hand. Three pompous and egotistical knights (Sir Jack, Sir Joe and Sir Jim) each decides that he'd like to marry the Princess so that he

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can be a rich Prince and live in a castle. Their kitchen servant, a friendly youth whom they call "Slob" says he'd like to marry the Princess just "for herself alone." The knights tease him and chase him back to the kitchen. Meanwhile, the somewhat foolish old King is distraught to hear from the Herald that everyone has passed the test the King made up (with questions like, "Which weighs more: a pound of lead or a pound of peanut butter?"). The three knights arrive and try to impress the King and Queen with their "talents" of singing, dancing and swordplay. Unfortunately, they can't sing or dance, and Sir Joe still can't find his sword. The king dismisses them and summons the Wizard who devises a new test that will "... test the man. Test the qualities of the man." The Herald announces that this time, the suitor for the hand of Rosebud will have to go to the castle via "The Old Road." Along the way, he will be tested by a lion, a giant and a witch. If he survives all three and Rosebud likes him, they will be married. If she doesn't like him -- off with his head!! Slob is the only man of the kingdom willing to take the test. The three vain knights outfit him in "armor" made of a pot for a helmet, a butterknife for a sword and a trashcan lid for a shield and provide him with a noble "steed" -- old Nag from the pasture. Sir Slob (now known as the "Knight of the Kitchen") and Nag set out along the Old Road and quickly encounter an old man (who bears a great resemblance to the King) who gives them what may (or may not) be magic dust. The dust proves to be no help in their rapid encounters with a lion (a big kitty that looks just like the Herald), a giant (who must be the Wizard's very tall identical twin) and the Witch (who you'd swear was the Queen herself). Having passed all three parts of the test they finally meet a very pretty young girl (who-just couldn't be Princess Rosebud, could she?) who informs them that the king will probably cut off Slob's head. She sends Slob and Nag off on their way once again, but before they walk even a few steps, the King's soldiers seize

them and drag them off to be tried by the King. At the trial of Sir Slob, the Wizard presents evidence that Slob really didn't pass the test, but which proved that he was good and kind and generous. The King decides not to cut off Slob's head (much to the great disappointment of the Executioner) and let Rosebud decide if she likes him. Rosebud and Slob meet and she realizes that he would be a fine Prince if he were given a chance (not to mention a bath). She flips a coin to decide Slob's fate. If it's tails, they will marry. If it's (pardon the expression) heads, then --ZIE! She flips the coin up and it lands on _ . . ? Meanwhile back in town, the Herald announces a royal wedding and the three vain knights are "persuaded" (with help from the points of the soldiers spears) to "volunteer" to wash dishes. As the women of the town dance for joy, a groomed and flower bedecked Nag brings in Princess Rosebud and her new Prince- "Slob the First." And, as the Herald reminds us, even in a "fractured" fairy tale: "They lived happily ever after. Of course they lived happily ever after!" Sir Slob and the Princess Cast List The Herald ♂ Holly Timmons Sir Jack -- Chris Baldwin Sir Jim ♂ Adam Stein Sir Joe ♂ Matt Pavellas Sir Jerry ♂ Spencer DeVine Sir Slob ♂ Chris Deacon King/Old Man ♂ Fabian Martin Queen/Witch ♂ Ana Warner Princess/Young Girl ♂ Hillary Salbacka Wizard/Giant ♂ Deena Welch Nag ♂ Courtney Leggett Executioner ♂ John Radley Guard ♂ Nick Ide Ensemble ♂ Maleia Udarbe-Gruber Sydney Stampher Ari Safi

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