

## **Another opening, another world premiere**

*By Stacy Trevenon--Half Moon Bay Review*

What are the magical things that can happen when young readers get really caught up in a story book?

That question is answered with lots of imagination and fun in "The Mystical, Magical, Marvelous Story Book," the latest original musical play created by the classes of the Half Moon Bay-based Young Actors Workshop (YAW).

It will be presented to the Coastside and to the world in three performances this weekend at Hatch Elementary School.

This play follows the improvisation, student-driven traditions of the varied YAW premieres over the last decade, which include "Harry's Bug Bistro!" "The Demons of Destiny," "Ralph," "Neverland," "The Dream Factory," "Emmy and the Witches of Oz," and "Camp-in-the-Body."

It began with an idea hatched by the students and developed in YAW classes in what YAW founder Auri Nagggar calls "guided improvisation" - which allows the kids' imaginations free rein as they build the plot with encouragement by teacher Nagggar.

But this play differs a little, Nagggar said; while the main storylines are generally guided by the older students, this play, which is more of a play-within-a-play, had more input from younger classes who created and will perform the substories.

Performed by a cast of 48, the play begins at a girls' slumber party that involves normal activities: a pillow fight, a pizza feast and teaching Gramma to play Truth-or-Dare.

Then along comes a door-to-door salesman who leaves his briefcase. Inside it is a mysterious book with three stories: "Don't Clobber the Pee-Wees," "The Princess' Treasure Hunt," and "Fatticus Atticus."

Suddenly, an unseen force sucks the girls and Gramma into the book, where they realize the meaning of the salesman's slogan of "Read three, be free," to mean that they must read all three stories in order to get out.

The first story, which is created and performed by the younger YAW students, revolves around a group of happy elves, their happy-go-lucky friends the Pee-Wees, and a treacherous rattlesnake that tries to introduce a harmful new game to the elves and the Pee-Wees.

The new game hurts the players. Just as things are beginning to look bleak, the elves and Pee-Wees enlist the local mayor to whisk the rattlesnake off to jail so they can play happily together from then on.

"The Princess' Treasure Hunt" is about a lonely princess who finds a map that, though written in a mysterious language, points to great but hidden treasure.

To reach it, she must overcome the Forest of Curses and a bridge guarded by the "Big Fat Dummy" and his frog, who demand that she guess the password to cross the bridge and get the treasure.

In the third story, Czar Fatticus Atticus, who maintains power by devouring those who oppose him, and the Mystics who share his castle, receive an ominous warning of the coming of a jester who will end their world. After a complex series of attempts to foil the message, the court realizes that the warning is about to come true.

But just before it does, the salesman returns - and introduces a fourth story of the slumber party, which the girls and their Gramma are living. He opens the book - and the characters of the three stories fall out, free at last.

This production, which the YAW students have been developing since January, will run on Friday, May 10, and Saturday, May 11, at 7:30 p.m., and on Sunday, May 12 at 1 p.m., in the Hatch Elementary school multipurpose room. Tickets are \$15 at the door, and refreshments will be served.

For more information, call YAW at 726-1304.