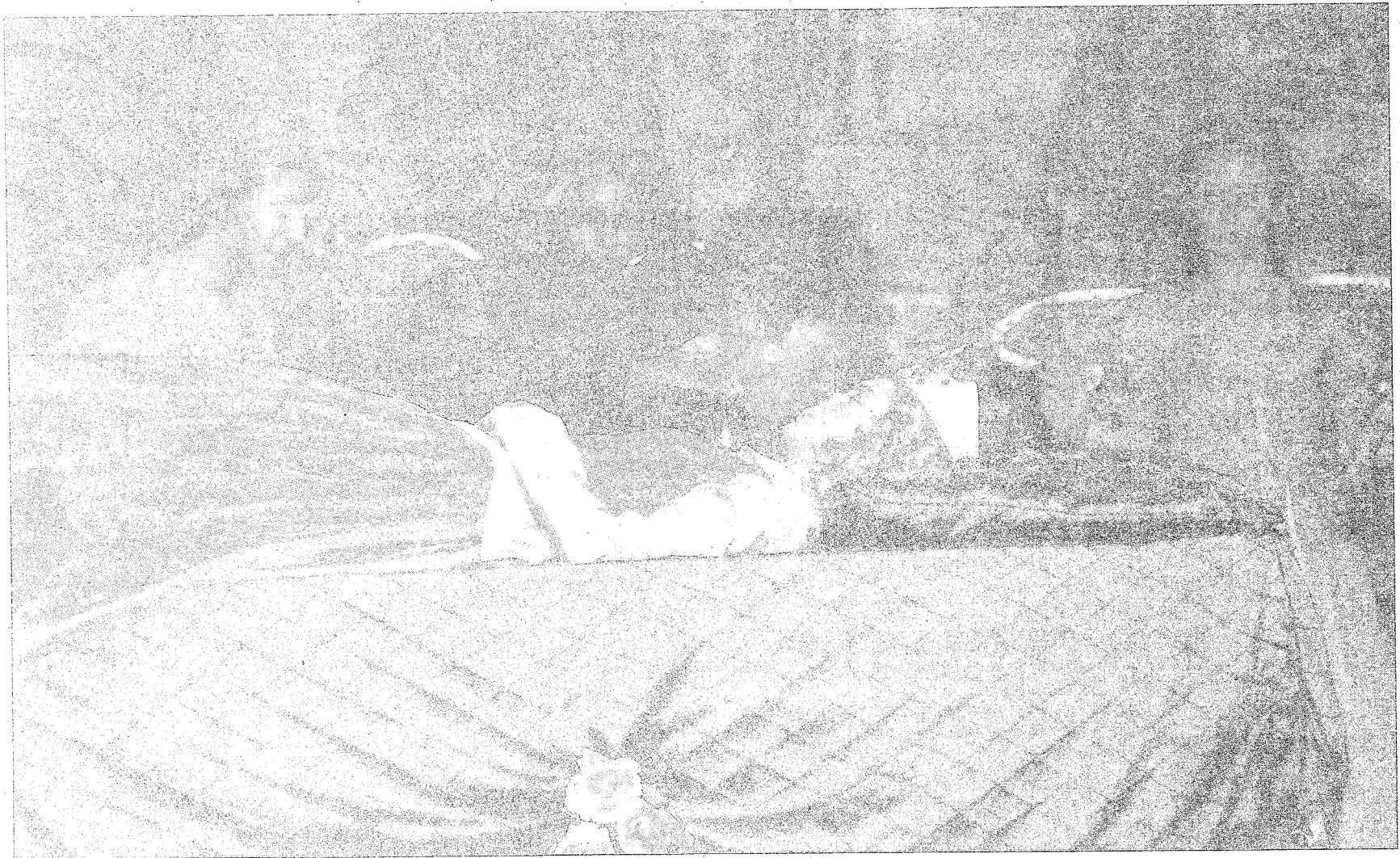
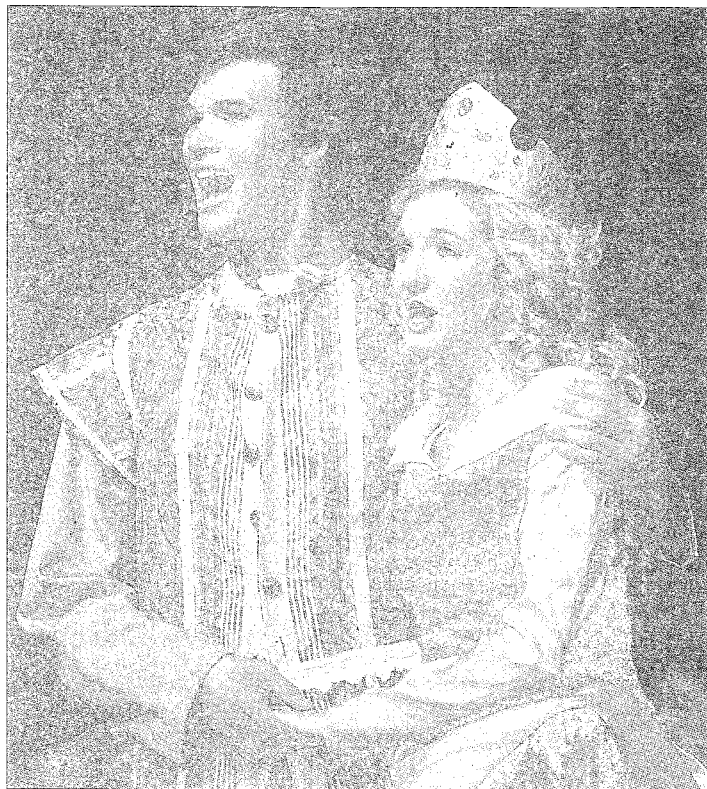


Johnson County

SOMEDAY IS HERE, AND SO IS THE PRINCE



Community



PHOTOS BY SUSAN PFANNMULLER | SPECIAL TO THE STAR

At left, Corey Dingess as Prince Phillip and Haley Knudsen as Sleeping Beauty rehearsed Wednesday night for the Theatre in Park's production of "Sleeping Beauty." Above, Abby Kate La Sala (left) as Fauna and Masha Clyma as Merryweather rehearsed their roles in the show. "The Jungle Book" and "Sleeping Beauty" make up a Disney double feature running tonight and Sunday and July 12-15.

DISNEY DOUBLE FEATURE IN THE PARK

Young cast of 44 performs in both summer shows.

By JOE HENDERSON
Special to The Star

Twelve-year-old Daniel Owens plays a unique role in "The Jungle Book." As the orphan Mowgli, he's the only "human" in a jungle full of animals.

"Being the only human is great," Owens said. "I wear swim trunks and stay cool while the rest

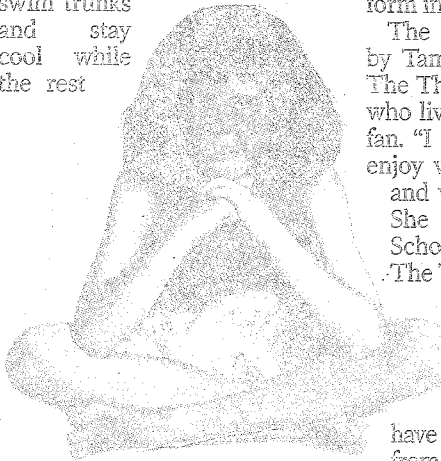


PHOTO BY BOB COMPTON
Daniel Owens as Mowgli

of the cast wears those hot animal costumes."

"The Jungle Book" is the first half of a Disney double feature that opened Friday at The Theatre in the Park. The twin bill's second show, following a brief intermission, is "Sleeping Beauty." There is a cast of 44, ages 8 to 17 years old, all of whom perform in both shows.

The double feature, directed by Tammy Ruder, is a first for The Theatre in the Park. Ruder, who lives in Olathe, is a Disney fan. "I like Disney shows and I enjoy working with youngsters and watching them develop."

She directed Disney's "High School Musical" in 2009 at The Theatre.

"Scheduling rehearsals with the same cast involved in separate productions is a bit challenging. The kids have to change their mind-set from one role to another depending on the show we were rehearsing at the time," Ruder said.

"I play an elephant in "The Jungle Book," quite a change from being a princess."

HAYLEY KNUDSEN, WHO HAS THE LEAD ROLE OF PRINCESS AURORA IN "SLEEPING BEAUTY"

"They've done remarkably well. They're an amazing, talented group, quick learners. About half are teen-agers, the rest are even younger."

Owens said it wasn't difficult learning two roles. "It wasn't hard. Once we got started, I got my lines down pretty quick. I go from being an orphan found in a jungle in India to a member of the Royal Court in Europe in "Sleeping Beauty."

"I'm on stage most of the time in "The Jungle Book." I do have a lot of lines, but they were easy to learn," said Owens who lives in Overland Park and is home-schooled.

Emily Walton, 16, plays Bagheera, a black panther who finds Mowgli in the jungle and becomes his protector. "I'm kind of a mother hen who takes care of Mowgli. I protect him from a

man-eating Bengal Tiger and an Indian python that try to kill him," she said.

"I like playing a panther. It's exciting. I've never played an animal before. It's a different type of character. I'm enjoying it," Walton said.

She also enjoys being a dancer in "Sleeping Beauty" with her best friend, Hayley Knudsen, who has the leading role of Princess Aurora. "Emily and I have been friends since we were five years old," Knudsen, 17, said. Both live in Leawood and are students at Blue Valley North.

"I have been in three shows at The Theatre in the Park but this is my first leading role there. It's also the first time I've played a princess," she said. Her previous shows at The Theatre were "Beauty and the Beast," "The Wizard of Oz" and "The Sound

SHOW TIMES

The Disney shows run tonight and Sunday and again July 12-15 at The Theatre in the Park in Shawnee Mission Park. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. For more information go to www.theatreinthepark.org or call 913-236-1237.

of Music."

"When I auditioned I hoped I would get the role of princess. But I would have taken any role. I just wanted to be in the shows. I play an elephant in "The Jungle Book," quite a change from being a princess," she added with a laugh.

Corey Dingess, 17, a senior at Blue Valley Northwest, portrays Prince Phillip to whom Aurora is betrothed in "Sleeping Beauty." "I like being a prince. It's my second time. I was Prince Charming in "Cinderella" in the eighth grade," he said.

SEE DISNEY | PAGE 4

DISNEY

FROM PAGE 3

"It's nice to play someone elegant like a prince. I'm not really an elegant type person but it doesn't hurt to be elegant once in a while," Dingess, who lives in Overland Park, said. He is a narrator in "The Jungle Book."

Maleficent, an evil sorceress who casts a spell on Princess Aurora that puts her into a deep sleep, is played by Shelby Keller,

17, a senior at Olathe East. "Being someone wicked is new for me. It's the first time I've done an evil person. It's fun because it so different from roles I usually play," said Keller, who lives in Olathe. "It doesn't turn out too well for me in the end, though. I turn into a dragon and I'm slain by Prince Phillip."

"My ending is more pleasant in "The Jungle Book." I'm a singing monkey who is happier than a dragon," Keller said with a chuckle.