

'Faerie Tale Theater' Healthy Development

By Henry Herx
New York (NC) — Since most pay cable services offer their subscribers basically the same assortment of movies, each pay channel tries to create a distinctive image by developing its own exclusive programs. A noteworthy example is "Faerie Tale Theatre," a series of one-hour classic children's stories presented on Showtime's pay cable schedule.

One of the recent productions in the year-old series is "Sleeping Beauty," which began airing during the holi-

days and can also be seen on New Year's Day.

Starring Bernadette Peters and Christopher Reeves, the program demonstrates the strengths and some of the weaknesses of this enterprising series.

"Faerie Tale Theatre" gets the services of top acting talent, perhaps because they find these old but durable fairy tales an interesting change of pace.

In the story of the princess upon whom a spell has been cast, Reeves, Miss Peters and the rest of the cast seem to be

having a lot of fun playing out their storybook characters, so that youngsters can follow the fantasy while adult viewers enjoy the calculated exaggerations.

Purists will not appreciate the kind of slapstick humor and loud verbal gags that are used to spin out an hour built around what is essentially a very basic story whose strength is in its simplicity.

Although it will go over the head of the kids, parents probably won't feel comfortable about some of the discrete sexual inferences that the producers of the show

seem to think necessary for adult viewers. It's the kind of entertainment built on the principle of something for everyone and that usually means nothing very special.

Although that is an irritating flaw, it does not destroy the enterprise which succeeds so well in creating a visual realm of fantasy appropriate for each story. The sets are simple but imaginative and the costumes richly add to the action. "Sleeping Beauty," for example, is set in Eastern Europe and that gives a very

fresh look to the familiar story.

Created and produced by actress Shelly Duvall, the series is a healthy development for cable production, which like its broadcast

counterpart gives too little thought to the young viewer. "Faerie Tale Theatre" is still developing its approach to bring new life to old classics and that is an undertaking that needs encouragement.

Broadcast Highlights

Television
 Sunday, Jan. 8, (ABC) "Directions" — ABC News examines the fears young children have about a future nuclear war. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)
 Sunday, Jan. 8, (CBS) "For Our Times" — CBS

News correspondent Douglas Edwards reports on the homeless in America. (Please check local listings for exact time and station in your area.)
Radio
 Sunday, Jan. 8, (NBC) "Guideline" — TV personality Arlene Francis talks

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