

Maressa and Merlone: A Musical Fairy Tale

Shaeri Richards

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Charming Maressa embodies the modern, enlightened princess in this pleasing audio production, which combines traditional fairy tale motifs with New Age themes. Bored by castle living and her elders' notions of ladylike behavior, Maressa embarks on a quest that requires her to believe in the power of her dreams and connect with her heart's voice in order to succeed. Along the way, she encounters the usual fairy tale characters—a talking frog, wise elders, and a handsome stranger, Merlone—and confronts danger in the form of a frightening beast, enemies of her father's kingdom, and the imminent death of her brother.

The author's experience as an actress and radio broadcaster are apparent in the skillful narration of the story. Her animated, versatile voice brings each character to life. A former host for a radio talk show on healing and matters of the spirit, Richards infuses this tale with her awareness of the powers of spirituality.

Each step of Maressa's journey heightens her perceptions of herself and draws her more closely in tune with the consciousness of the world around her. Threatened by a hairy, aggressive creature, she doesn't fight or flee, but follows her heart's command to "feel what he feels." As she lets the creature's feelings wash over her, she senses a change. Instantly, the scary being is transformed back into his original state: the father of her love interest, Merlone.

Later in the story, Maressa, Merlone, and his father are frustrated in their attempt to locate a magical flower. When intense searching yields no result, they turn inward, inviting the plant to communicate with them and waiting for its location to be revealed. The success of this strategy is underscored by a lively song, "Wait," which reminds the listener that "the answer often comes through if you wait."

There are five songs interspersed with the narration of the story on this recording. The music is catchy, and the lyrics tie loosely into the plot, but the songs themselves seemed geared to a younger audience than is typical for this type of romantic coming-of-age tale.

The songs make the production more attractive to younger listeners, and so families with children ages five to thirteen will find something for everyone in this audio production. It will satisfy listeners and provide a tantalizing glimpse of the powers that result from a deeper listening to the human heart.

CAROLYN BAILEY (January / February 2002)

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