

Cinderella's ball in Pumpkinville

Late Review

Cinderella: A Family Musical

★ ★ ★

Adaptation by Malcolm Heenman et al.
Directed by Jim Warren. At the Elgin
Theatre until Dec. 30. 416-872-5555

SUSAN WALKER
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

Most shows trotted out for the holiday season rely on hearts filled with the Christmas spirit to earn their applause. Happily, *Cinderella* isn't one of them. The latest "family musical" from Ross Petty Productions is everything a pantomime should be: a fractured fairy tale with exaggerated characters that is musical, dancey, full of clowning, topical gags and cornball humour.

Updated for our times, this *Cinderella* concerns a village called Pumpkinville where the local economy is failing because a blight has struck the pumpkins. Cinderella's father is thrown in jail for not paying his taxes — he was away trying to find a way to restore the pumpkin crop. He returns to Pumpkinville with a new wife, Prunella Depraved, and her ugly daughters Dagmar and Ilsa.

As the Fairy Godmother, radio and TV host Erin Davis also has to deliver a prologue, more like a talk show host's monologue on a very bad night. But once we're past the lame Dalton McGuinty and Arnold Schwarzenegger joke, *Cinderella* is all dressed up and ready for the ball.

As Prunella, Ross Petty looks like an



As the title character, Stratford actress Jennifer Gould plays a lusty wench in Ross Petty's just-for-laughs *Cinderella*.

understudy for Dame Edna. But he's not only an outrageous drag queen, he can sing and dance too.

Don Harron plays Baron Hardup, Cinderella's father. He spouts malapropisms — "I've been in solitary refinement" — and teaches the kids in the audience how to make a Charlie Farrowson laugh.

Cliff Saunders is Buttons, the country bumpkin and pal to Cinderella. With a gift for physical comedy, Saunders

opens with a little Three Stooges routine and rubber-legs his way through the entire show.

Jennifer Gould's Cinderella is a lusty, confident wench with a strong voice. The Stratford actor is perfectly matched to Adam Brazier, the truly handsome Prince Jack, who originated the role of Sky in *Mamma Mia*. When he's not being upstaged by Jonathan Wilson, wonderfully comic as the Prince's aide Dandini, the prince gets to

do a bit of funny business too, as when they play "The Size Is Right".

The songs are sometimes borrowed, sometimes original or adapted, and are well sung, especially a duet between Gould and Brazier about a perfect night.

Choreographer Tracey Flye has created some lively dance numbers, including a dance competition featuring tap dancers, Lindy Hoppers and a mean, extreme tango.