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Rumpelstiltskin



Drama/Comedy
by
Linda Dougherty

"Rumpelstiltskin is another feather in [Ms. Daugherty's] cap. The play builds an absorbing, complex mood. Every dire development has its paradoxical upside, and every cause for joy bears a burden of fear."

The Dallas Morning News

Rumpelstiltskin

Drama/Comedy. By *Linda Daugherty*. Cast: 5m., 7w., 2 children. May double to 4m., 5w., 1 child. Rumpelstiltskin, the last of his kind, dances alone in the darkness before a leaping fire, casting a giant shadow on a craggy mountain face as he relates in ominous verse his plan to "find a child of my own to chase away the dark." Huddled around a fire in a primitive, nomadic village, Uta conspires with his mother to swindle the king out of his yearly tribute by inventing a false prophecy that his daughter, Alana, would, at the first full moon of each year, spin straw into gold. As Rumpelstiltskin peeks out from a nomad's tent, Alana is abducted by the king and his reluctant son, Marius, and taken to the king's castle, where she is sent to work spinning straw into gold. In the castle the mood lightens as romance blossoms between Alana and Marius and comedy reigns among the royal servants: Old Nanny, Cook, Birdy and her niece Pigeon. Still, the rhyming Rumpelstiltskin is manipulating every step of the way, and there is always the underlying unease that he will appear and exact his dreadful payment. *One ext., two int. sets.* Approximate running time: 65 minutes. Code: R82.

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(l-r) Karl Schaeffer and Amy Shoults. Photo: Linda Blase.
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RUMPELSTILTSKIN

By
LINDA DAUGHERTY



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(RUMPELSTILTSKIN)

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This play is dedicated to
Karl Schaeffer, my favorite actor ever!

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Rumpelstiltskin premiered at Dallas Children's Theater (Robyn Flatt, Executive Artistic Director) on July 11, 1997, directed by Artie Olaisen.

Original Cast

Rumpelstiltskin. Karl Schaeffer
Alana Amy Shoults
Prince Marius Bryan Matthews
The King Douglass Burks*
Rollo. Alberto Ramirez
Birdy Rosemary Kolbo
Uta / Guard Donald McDonald
Esme / Cook Sarah Jane Einerson
Arno / Footman Cary Dean Bazan
Boy / Servant. Blake Crosby

Original Production Staff

Set Designer Zak Herring
Costume Designer Leila Heise
Lighting Designer. Linda Blase
Sound Designer Paul Callihan
Properties Designer David Joy
Stage Manager Andrew Christopher Gaupp*

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

A Play in Two Acts
For 5m., 7w., 2 children
(may double to 4m., 5w., 1 child)

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

UTA, Alana's father

ARNA, Uta's mother in village

CHILD in village

ESME, woman in village

ALANA

KING

PRINCE MARIUS, his son

PIGEON, a servant girl

BIRDY, a servant, Pigeon's aunt

GUARD in castle

OLD NANNY in castle

PAGE in castle

COOK in castle

POSSIBLE DOUBLING:

UTA, Alana's father / GUARD in castle

ARNA, Uta's mother in village / OLD NANNY in castle

ESME, woman in village / COOK in castle

CHILD in village / PAGE in castle

TECHNICAL NOTE:

At the end of the play Rumpelstiltskin in a rage stamps through the floor, sinks to his waist, bends over and grabs his foot, tears himself in half and disappears. In the Dallas Children's Theater production this effect was achieved by Rumpelstiltskin first stepping down through a trapdoor leaving only the top half of his body visible to the audience. He then leaned over and picked up a prop leg which he held up by his side so that only the foot down to the knee is seen by the audience. He then sinks down into the floor.

[After an attempt by her father and grandmother
to trick the king out of his tribute,
ALANA is
taken to the palace to fulfill her
father's
boast that she can spin straw into gold.]

PIGEON. Why? Why? Why?! For three days, sunup to sundown, I'm to the field and back again to fill this chamber with straw! And why? Why?

(BIRDY enters, upset. She looks at piles of straw, gasps and exits.)

PIGEON *(cont'd)*. Hey, now, Aunt Birdy! There she flies with not a word. Aunt Birdy and the others frantic with the fixings for a grand feast tomorrow. And me ordered to fill this chamber to the rafters with *straw*? And why? Is the king's honored guest an elephant?! Strange folks, these royals. Tomorrow? It's no holiday I know of.

(BIRDY crosses.)

PIGEON *(cont'd)*. Aunt Birdy, about tomorrow—

BIRDY. Oh, Pigeon, do not speak of it! *(BIRDY exits.)*

PIGEON *(shouting to BIRDY)*. It's my future we must speak about! *(Imitating BIRDY.)* "You don't want to spend your life in the pigsty," says my auntie. "Such an honor to serve His Highness. I'll take you under my

wing, Pigeon. Your Aunt Birdy'll show you the ropes of royal servitude." And my uncle just begging, *begging* me to be a baker. Ah, but "No," says I. Up at three to coax the yeast for that crusty fellow? "They'll be no loafing about, my Pigeon. It's rise and shine for the baker!" A baker? Perhaps that's the life I need. Royalty! I tell you, this is the last straw!

(Muttering, PIGEON turns and climbs up a ladder to pile straw on top. ALANA, beautifully dressed, enters and stares at roomful of straw, overcome at the sight.)

PIGEON *(cont'd)*. Better yet, just banish me to the barnyard where I know what I'm about and straw is kept in its place! *(She sees ALANA.)* Ah, miss, I'm glad of your company. I see a roomful of straw leaves you agape.

ALANA. Indeed...Pigeon...

PIGEON. And every blade carried by meself. And why, I'd like to know. Is it madness?

ALANA. Oh, yes...it's madness, Pigeon.

PIGEON. I knew it! Just like that English king they tell of. Moved the royal bed—curtains and all—to the henhouse. His wife, they say, hid a dozen eggs every morn—

(BIRDY enters.)

ALANA *(throwing herself in BIRDY's arms)*. Oh, Birdy... I'm frightened!

BIRDY. Oh, sweet girl—

ALANA. I can't! I can't spin straw into gold.

BIRDY *(weeping)*. Oh, you must, you must!

ALANA. Birdy, no one can do such a thing. *Tomorrow*, when the king sees—

PIGEON (*interrupting*). Pray, Aunt Birdy, I'm at a loss here. Spin straw to gold? Who would think such a thing?

(*Trumpets flourish.*)

ALANA & BIRDY. The *king!*

PIGEON. The king?! That's it!!! I'm moving my bed to the henhouse!

BIRDY. Quiet, niece! Oh, my dear Alana, what shall we do?

ALANA. There's nothing to be done. Oh, Birdy, how can I tell you—

BIRDY. I know, my dear. My daughter. That's what you are to me.

(*Trumpets flourish.*)

BIRDY (*cont'd*). Oh, mercy!

(*KING enters with GUARD. ALANA, BIRDY and PIGEON bow.*)

KING. Ah, so much straw! Well done. It would make a bed as soft as feathers, but do not sleep this night, my dear. How lovely you look. The new moon is rising, full and golden. I've waited patiently. Clothed and fed you like a princess.

ALANA. My king, I beg you—

KING (*raising his hand to silence her*). Enough! Now return my favors, my dear.

BIRDY. If I may, I'll attend Alana—

KING (*to PIGEON*). Lock the door, you. And leave Alana alone to her business.

(ALANA and BIRDY embrace.)

KING (*cont'd*). Alone!

(ALL except ALANA exit straw-filled room. PIGEON locks door and gives key to KING who exits with GUARD. BIRDY and PIGEON talk in anteroom by closed door.)

PIGEON. Hey, now! Can she do it? Spin straw into gold? That would be fine. I wish I'd hid a bundle in the corner with my name attached. Can't I just imagine it! "Good-day, Lady Pigeon!"

BIRDY (*swatting her*). Pigeon brain's more like it! Spin straw into gold?! Be gone! Back to the mud of the pigsty where you and the king both belong!

(She threatens PIGEON who exits.)

BIRDY (*cont'd*). It's true, so true. No matter if master of a kingdom or the dung heap, greed makes fools of us all. And my Alana will perish...all alone this night in a roomful of straw.

(BIRDY tearfully exits. ALANA sits at spinning wheel and desperately tries to spin straw.)

ALANA. I am as foolish as the king! Let this night be long...this last night... (*She stands and, nearly fainting, leans on the door.*) Oh, this chamber is so close...so little air...

(*MARIUS enters in a rush, tries to open door and beats on it frantically.*)

MARIUS. Alana! Alana!

ALANA (*listening through the door*). Marius? Is it you?

MARIUS. My father sent me out...before dawn. On a hunting party but I slipped away.

(*OLD NANNY enters breathless, wringing her hands.*)

OLD NANNY. Marius! Your father—he's looking for you. He won't be happy to find you here.

MARIUS (*gently putting his hands on her shoulders*). My dear old Nanny. I'm no longer a boy. You can't protect me forever nor can my father rule my heart.

OLD NANNY. Oh, Marius—

MARIUS. Go warm yourself by the fire, Nanny. These are not your worries. Go.

(*OLD NANNY exits. MARIUS beats on the door and calls:*)

MARIUS. Alana! Alana!

ALANA. How far away you sound, Marius. I can barely hear you.

MARIUS. My father cannot do this!

ALANA (*trying to get her breath*). It is done, Marius. I know how you have tried to change his mind. I am grateful, my friend.

MARIUS (*to himself*). Oh, Alana, why did I not tell you how I feel?

ALANA (*leaning against door*). Marius...so much straw... the air. (*Sinking to floor*.) I feel I can barely breathe...

MARIUS. Alana! Alana!

(Pounding on the door, he falls to his knees. KING enters with GUARD and PAGE who carries MARIUS' coat, bow and quiver of arrows.)

KING. Marius. You have lost your way from the others.

MARIUS. Father...

KING. Get up. You will rejoin the hunt and forget this peasant girl. Think, Marius! If she spins straw into gold, you will have your choice of princesses.

MARIUS. And if not—

KING. Either way she is not for you, Marius.

MARIUS. Father—

KING. The hunters are waiting. Come, Marius!

(MARIUS exits reluctantly with KING followed by GUARD and PAGE.)

ALANA. Marius? (*Banging on door*.) Marius?! (*Realizing he's gone*.) Alone...

(She lies down on straw and cries as she goes to sleep. Pile of straw begins to move. A foot pops through and wiggles. A hand appears, scratches the foot and then

disappears. RUMPELSTILTSKIN emerges from the straw, backside leading. Holding a finger under his nose, he stifles a sneeze. He sees ALANA sleeping, spins the wheel, chuckling, and then tickles ALANA with blade of straw, waking her. As she is about to scream, RUMPELSTILTSKIN silences her by putting his finger to her lips.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

In the dark your tears began,
one, two, three.

A thousand fell, "'Tis the River Grief!"

"Come, come," it called to me.

A trail of salt, a path of woe
I followed to this place.

I'm here. Take heart. You called?

Ask all.

The task? 'Tis great? Not much

I'll take.

ALANA. Who?! Who are you?! Where did you come from?!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

The hour is late.

Your need is great.

Don't hesitate.

Talk man to man,

Though we are nought.

No time to rhyme.

All can be bought.

ALANA. Bought?...but...but I have nothing...nothing!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

Maiden, stop your stammering.

At our door they will be hammering.
The sun will be rising
And I'll be no wiser.
Let me help you in your plight
While we have our friend—the *night*.
Simply, slowly,
Now tell me, boldly.

ALANA. I...I must spin this straw—this chamber full of
straw—into gold or...or...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

Or...or...

Tell me more.

ALANA. Or tomorrow I must...*die*.

(RUMPELSTILTSKIN stares at her without emotion. Suddenly he grabs a bundle of straw, holding it like a baby, dancing and laughing madly. ALANA cowers, terrified, in corner.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Oh, forgive me, my dear. On such joyous occasions... *(Seeing her terrified and bewildered expression, he alters his mood.)* ...or, in the most tragic and tearful entanglements, I find a jig, a jaunt, a joyous tune clears the head and lets the heart find its way. Do I make myself clear?

ALANA. I'm...I'm afraid not.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Well, the point is, my dear, you are in a pickle. That is to say, a briny predicament, a perilous position... But hopeless? No.

ALANA. No?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. No, no, no. You and I must have hope. Dreams can come true as the fairy tales instruct us. But you are not dreaming, my dear.

(He pinches ALANA who cries out.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN *(cont'd)*. Life is painful, yes? Sacrifices must be made. Hope is at hand. And so on. And so on.

ALANA. I do not understand.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. No? Well, that brings us to the subject of talent. And I have many. Spinning?... Spinning...

ALANA. Is it possible you have a talent...for spinning? Spinning straw into gold?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. It's possible. It's probable. But what's the price of such an undertaking? Takes its toll—this talent. 'Tis a task requiring... *(He looks her in the eye and presents his empty hand.)* ...payment.

ALANA. I...have...nothing...nothing...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN *(gasps, amazed as if just discovering)*. You have a golden ring upon that tiny finger!

ALANA *(confused)*. Yes...but...you would spin a roomful of gold for this little ring?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN *(brusquely)*. Call me sentimental. And give me the ring. Now sleep.

ALANA. You can do it? I'm so grateful... *(Growing sleepy.)* ...so grateful...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN.

Don't thank me too soon
'Til you see a room
Gleaming and glistening.

My dear, are you listening?
Sleep!

(ALANA fights sleep as if overtaken but succumbs and lies in the straw.)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN *(cont'd)*.

All that glitters is not gold
Tells the rhyme from days
of old.
Gold warms not this
beating heart.
Not gold but life...*life*
lights the dark.

(RUMPELSTILTSKIN begins to spin. A strand of gold appears. He laughs and pounds his foot on the pedal as the lights fade.)