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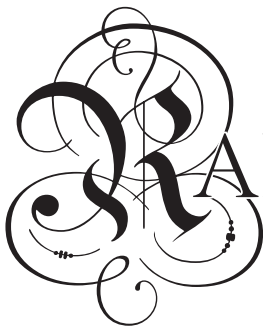
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Fairy tale adapted by  
**Sidney Berger** From the  
**Brothers Grimm**



# RAPUNZEL



*Fairy tale. Adapted by Sidney Berger. From the Brothers Grimm. Cast: 2m., 3w., extras.* Rapunzel is an abused child. She isn't starved or beaten; in fact, she has everything a young girl could want—except freedom

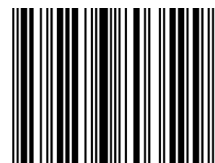
and friends. A witch takes baby Rapunzel from her parents and—to protect her from the evils of the world—locks her in a beautiful tower and gives her every luxury as she grows up. But the tower has no door. When the witch wants to visit, she calls, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your golden hair,” and the long braid tumbles down so the witch can climb up. A handsome prince overhears the ritual, calls out the words, climbs up and rescues Rapunzel in spite of the hilarious dragon who is supposed to guard her. Sidney Berger’s dramatization of the fairy tale about Rapunzel closely follows the original told by the Brothers Grimm. Given an elaborate, expensive production by the Houston Children’s Theatre Festival, it can also be mounted simply and inexpensively as demonstrated in the stage directions in the script and in the production notes. Among the charms of this version is the close relationship between the cast and the children in the audience. The children love it—and so do the actors when they hear the excited voices and see the happy faces of their young admirers. It’s interesting to note the timeliness of the story of Rapunzel. Here is an abused child—abused not by beatings and starvation, but by over-protectiveness. Rapunzel has all the luxuries that money—or witchcraft—can provide, yet she is completely unhappy because she is deprived of the friendship and love of her peers. Does her story help us understand why so many children of the privileged upper classes in today’s society have tragic lives? Extravagantly paid movie stars and entertainers, mega-wealthy industrialists and super-successful politicians—people who are too busy to nurture and care for their own children—often try to substitute expensive gifts and luxuries for personal attention and love. The witch who takes Rapunzel from her natural parents symbolizes the servants and nannies who become substitute moms and dads for today’s kids. It didn’t work in the days of the Brothers Grimm, and it doesn’t work today. *Alternating between the apron and the stage makes action of the two-set production move smoothly. Approximate running time: 60 to 75 minutes. The music and sound effects used in the Houston Children’s Theatre Festival are available in CD format. Code: RB7.*

## Family Plays

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Rapunzel

# RAPUNZEL

A Dramatization of the Tale by the Brothers Grimm

By

**SIDNEY BERGER**

*A 'Stage Magic' Play*

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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SIDNEY BERGER

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**RAPUNZEL***Cast*

**Witch**  
**Wife**  
**Husband**  
**Rapunzel**  
**Prince**  
**Dragon**

Δ

Place: Everywhere

Time: Always

• Δ •

Originally produced by the Houston Children's Theatre Festival June 6-22, 1990, directed by Beth Sanford, scene design by Jay Jagim, costume design by Sylvia Trybek, lighting design by John Gow, with the following cast:

Witch ..... Cheryl Lisa Jones  
 Wife ..... Nancy Sherrard  
 Husband ..... Kevin Bernard  
 Rapunzel ..... Gwendolyn McLarty  
 Prince ..... Clay Keene  
 Dragon ..... Jeff Baldwin

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Sidney Berger's dramatization of the fairy tale about Rapunzel follows closely the original told by the Brothers Grimm. Given an elaborate, expensive production by the Houston Children's Theatre Festival, it can also be mounted simply and inexpensively as demonstrated in the stage directions in this script and in the Production Notes beginning on page 26.

Among the charms of this dramatization is the close relationship between the cast and the children in the audience. The children love it—and so do the actors when they hear the excited voices and see the happy faces of their young admirers.

It's interesting to note the timeliness of the Rapunzel story. Here is an abused child—abused not by beatings and starvation, but by over-protectiveness. Rapunzel has all the luxuries that money—or witchcraft—can provide, yet she is completely unhappy because she is deprived of the friendship and love of her peers. Does her story help us understand why so many children of the privileged upper classes in today's society have tragic lives? The children of extravagantly paid movie stars and entertainers, of mega-wealthy industrialists and super-successful politicians—people who are too busy to nurture and care for their own children and try to substitute expensive gifts and luxuries for personal attention and love. The Witch who takes Rapunzel from her natural parents symbolizes the servants and nannies who become substitute moms and dads for today's kids. It didn't work in the days of the Brothers Grimm, and it doesn't work today.



Playing time is about 90 minutes.

The music and sound effects tape used in the Houston Children's Theatre Festival is available from the publisher, I. E. Clark.



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

#### **Scene 1**

Various vegetables—in garden  
Hoe—Witch  
Watering can or bucket—Witch

#### **Scene 2**

Magic wand or staff—Witch  
Scissors—Witch

#### **Scene 3**

Stale roll—in Wife's pocket  
Dipper of water—Husband  
Rock and cupcake—Wife

### *Costumes*

The **Witch** and the **Prince** would be appropriately dressed in traditional fairy tale costumes. The **Dragon** may wear a costume of scales, horns, and spikes as shown in the photo between pages 12 and 13, or something as simple as leotards, tights, and a mask or fantastic make-up. The **Husband** (a baker) and **Wife** may wear simple peasant costumes, perhaps with a baker's apron and hat. **Rapunzel** should wear a costume that enhances her beauty and symbolizes the luxury that the **Witch** bestows on her. In the final scene **Rapunzel** wears a ragged cloak and hood which completely cover her costume and enough of her face that the audience accepts the fact that she is now ugly. For a description of **Rapunzel's** hair, see under "The Set."

### *Lighting*

No complex lighting effects are called for. Provision must be made to light actors who descend into the audience. Follow spots are desirable; but if necessary, house lights may be brought up for these scenes.

### *Music and Sound Effects*

Background and scene-change music, as called for in the stage directions, enhances the charm and various moods of the play. In the original production classical music in the public domain was used. Few additional sound effects are required. The Sound Tape (includes music and sound effects) used in the original production is available from the publisher, I. E. Clark, Inc.

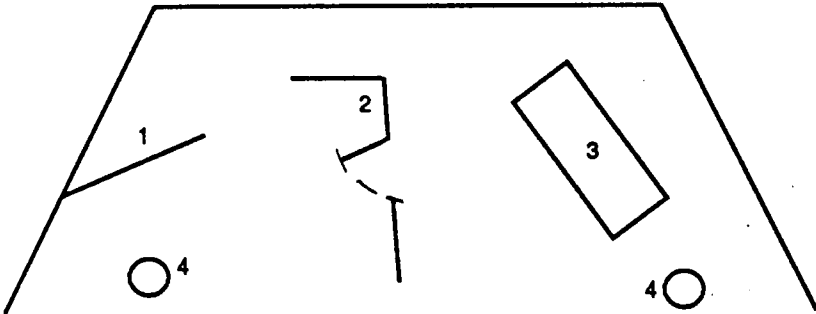
### *The Set*

Two settings are required:

The opening and closing scenes take place in the area between the Baker's house and the Witch's house. To avoid long delays for set changes, these scenes may be played on the apron, with the stage curtain closed. The key (and only required) element is the Witch's vegetable garden, at Stage Left. For magnificent witchery, the vegetable stalks must grow and regress at the Witch's command. This can easily be accomplished by placing the vegetable garden above a trap in the stage floor. Lacking a trap, the vegetables may be placed on a platform tall enough to allow a stagehand to crawl underneath and raise and lower the

plants on command. The actual vegetables that the Husband steals can be loosely tied to the stalks or placed at their base. In the premiere production, the facade of a house, with a window, was visible at Stage Right, and a board fence with a gate separated the Baker's yard from the Witch's vegetable garden. The fence provided opportunity for the Husband to hide as he was stealing the vegetables and offered opportunity for interesting movement as the Wife and Husband peeked through to watch the Witch's antics. However, the cottage and fence are not essential.

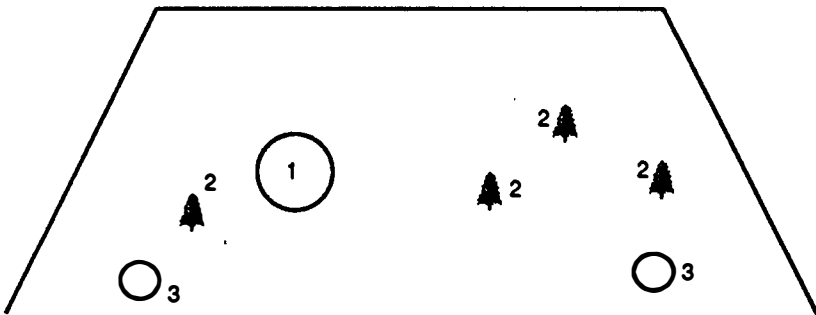
A tree stump at Down Right and another at Stage Left are on stage throughout the play.



- 1—Cottage facade
- 2—Garden fence with gate
- 3—Vegetable garden
- 4—Tree stumps

Trees (which may also be used in the rest of the play) may be added.

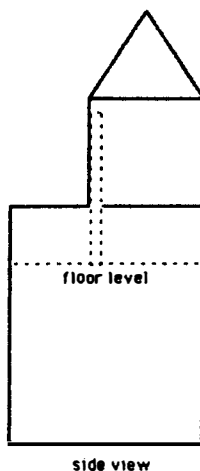
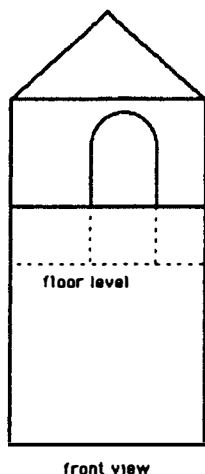
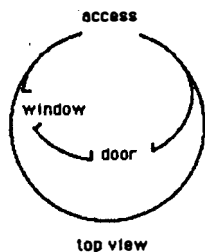
All the other scenes are played around Rapunzel's tower in a forest.



- 1—The tower
- 2—Trees (only one tree is essential)
- 3—Tree stumps (same as preceding set)

The author's comments on the tower: "As indicated on the ground plan, the tower is seen only from the front. Rapunzel plays at her window and on the

balcony. While our balcony was cantilevered, this made construction more demanding and contributed to problems in climbing the hair. A tower solution as indicated on the accompanying sketch might be preferable. Architectural features (buttresses, corbels, etc.) which would allow for small ledges or surfaces on which an actor's foot could rest would enable the actor to more gracefully climb the hair."



Scale:  $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'0''$

The tower may, of course, be square; towers are not required to be round.

The trees may be profile pieces, as shown in the photograph at the center of this playbook.

Rapunzel's long hair is actually a set prop rather than a costume piece. In the original production Rapunzel's hair was accomplished by braiding thick yarn (blonde) and fabric hair ribbons around a length of rope anchored at the top and piled behind the balcony railing. Rapunzel wore a braided wig extending below the level of the railing. She would then lower and raise the hair as necessary. It is important not to use a rope of too great or small a diameter; the actor must get a firm grip around the finished braid. Three-quarter-inch to one-and-one-

quarter-inch rope should provide a good basis upon which to construct the braid. The original was tapered, with larger diameters toward the top when an actor need not support himself on the hair, but could grasp the balcony railing.

Obviously, the easiest way for the actors to climb and descend the tower is this: Let Rapunzel drop the hair at the side of the tower; the climber can, in the process of appearing to climb, carry the hair behind the tower, out of sight of the audience, and ascend the ladder or step unit placed behind the tower for easy access.

**CAUTION:** To prevent injury to your actors, be sure the tower and ladder or step unit are well anchored to the stage so that they won't tip over. The platform on which actors stand must be supported and braced sufficiently to hold the weight of the actors who must stand on them.

# RAPUNZEL

## Scene 1

*[This scene may be played on an apron or forestage. At Stage Left is row or two of vegetables. At Stage Right is the window of a small house (or an imaginary house may be just offstage). The WITCH enters, admires her vegetable garden and then hoes in her garden with great determination. After a moment or two she notices the audience]*

WITCH. Ah, children! So many children! Not many people know this but I am one of the very few witches who LOVE children. Do you hear me? *[She crosses to edge of stage]* LOOOOVVVE children! But not all of my relatives did. Have you ever heard the story of Hansel and Gretel? My great grandmother was the witch in that one. She was fond of children, too. Baked them into gingerbread. But I LOVE children. *[Crosses to Stage Left]* Good morning to you all! *[CHILDREN respond. She looks shocked and screeches]* Did no one ever tell you not to talk to strangers??? Hmpf! If I had a child I would raise it perfectly. But witches cannot have children. That is what makes some of us very nasty. Even with magic spells. Watch. *[She points to herself and chants]* Powers great and powers mild, bring to me my very own child! *[THUNDER, LIGHTNING, various light flashes. Then nothing]* See? No matter what magical powers I use, I cannot have a child! So all I can love is my wonderful, perfect garden. *[Crosses to vegetables and kisses them]* I must go now *[starts to exit, returns Down Stage Right]*—but there are thieves everywhere, you know, wanting perfect vegetables, so children, you must be my guards! Have you ever helped a witch? Never mind. You watch my garden very carefully and let me know if anyone—and I mean *anyone*—tries to steal my precious babies! I will turn them into sticks to burn in my fireplace! *[Laughs raucously and loudly as she begins to exit. A YOUNG MAN (Husband) sticks his head out of the window (or through stage curtains at Right)]*

YOUNG MAN. Please! Not so loud. My wife is not feeling well.

WITCH. *[Taking a threatening step or two toward him]* Oh, hush before I turn your wife into a toad and you into a pig!

WIFE. *[Offstage]* Husband!

WITCH. Or an elephant! Or *two* elephants! *[Turning back to the children]* You see, children, life is not that easy for a witch. All I can be is a mother to these perfect vegetables in my garden. They get all my love. *[Caressing the plants, cooing]* Oh, my sweet little rutabagas! My darling cauliflowers! dear little eggplants! *[Crosses Down Center]* I am a wonderful mother to my vegetables. It is not hard. Watch. *[Shouts]* GROW!! *[They do immediately, but get too high]* GET DOWN THIS MINUTE! *[They do]* That is a good deal better. *[She exits Stage Left with hoe]*

*[The WIFE emerges from the house in tears and crosses Left. The HUSBAND, obviously upset, follows. They play the following scene quickly]*

WIFE. You must!

HUSBAND. *[At Right]* I cannot!

WIFE. *[Facing her husband]* YES!

HUSBAND. *[Facing his wife]* NO!

WIFE. I'll die!

HUSBAND. You will not!

WIFE. I WILL!

HUSBAND. WILL NOT!

WIFE. WILL! WILL! WILL! *[She falls down in a faint at Stage Left]*

HUSBAND. *[Crossing and kneeling beside her]* I am a baker! I can give you loaves of bread to eat.

WIFE. *[Rises, crosses away toward Right]* No!

HUSBAND. *[Following]* Wonderful cakes!

WIFE. I will die!

HUSBAND. NO!

WIFE. YES! YES! YES!

HUSBAND. *[Turning his back and stomping away]* NO! NO! NO! and finally NO! *[She throws herself to the ground at Stage Right]* She did die! *[Rushes to her]* Oh, dear wife. Why did you do this? Why did you have to die?

WIFE. *[Getting up]* I did not die, husband.

HUSBAND. *[Cheering]* You are alive!

WIFE. For heaven's sake, I only fainted.

HUSBAND. Dear wife, I know . . . *[WIFE faints again at Left]* Oh! Now she must really be dead! What will I do?? *[WIFE gets up]*

WIFE. I fainted again. Husband, you have to do something about this. I cannot go on fainting every five minutes. *[Begins to waver]* Oh, there I go again. *[Faints at Center]*

HUSBAND. *[To the children]* You see, my wife is going to have a baby and she has been fainting all day long. What can I do?

WIFE. *[Getting up]* I will tell you what you must do. I know this will sound strange but I have this terrible hunger. I cannot sleep, I cannot do anything until I can satisfy this terrible craving.

HUSBAND. It's the baby. Women have very strange cravings sometimes when they are going to have a baby. The butcher's wife kept eating eggs! With the shells on!

WIFE. Yes! That's it! A craving!

HUSBAND. I know! I'll get pickles and ice cream! *[Starts to run off Up Center to get it]*

WIFE. No, no!

HUSBAND. *[Crossing back to her]* Oh. Onions stuffed with whipped cream! Covered with chocolate syrup! *[Runs off again to Up Center]*

WIFE. Now I truly am getting sick . . .

HUSBAND. What about—

WIFE. Never mind! I know what I want! *[Looking in direction of Witch's garden]*

HUSBAND. What?? What is it?

WIFE. *[Passionately]* RUTABAGAS!

HUSBAND. Rutabagas??

WIFE. From the Witch's garden! They are so beautiful! *[Starts toward garden]*

HUSBAND. *[Stopping her, he stumbles, finally hanging on to her foot as she struggles to get closer to the garden]* Dearest, the Witch's garden, I mean—

WIFE. And red, ripe beets! Precious, scrumptious, luscious red, ripe beets!

HUSBAND. I can go to the store and—

WIFE. *[Continues to struggle toward garden, dragging him along]* NO! NO! NO! From the Witch's beautiful garden! I must have them or I will die!

HUSBAND. But dear wife, the Witch would get very angry . . .

WIFE. Sweet, sweet celery, light and tender lettuce!

HUSBAND. Where?

WIFE. *[Pointing]* THERE!

HUSBAND. *[Terrified]* Th-thh-there?

WIFE. *[Pouting]* You don't care!

HUSBAND. I CARE! Where?

WIFE. *[Pointing]* THERE! THERE! *[HUSBAND tiptoes to the garden and stares at the vegetables]* Do not stare!

HUSBAND. *[Stomping his foot]* It is not fair!

WIFE. *[Fanning herself, starts to faint]* Air! Air! *[Faints]*

HUSBAND. *[Rushing to her]* Dear wife, that is the Witch's garden. It is bad enough having her for a neighbor, but to steal her vegetables . . . !

WIFE. *[In a frenzy]* I will die if I cannot have red, ripe beets! And green, green, green beans, and luscious purple eggplants from the Witch's garden! Do you want me to die?? The Witch has so much, she will never miss them. *[Pushing Husband toward garden]* Hurry, husband, before she comes back.

HUSBAND. All right, all right. Just try not to die, please!

WIFE. HURRY!

HUSBAND. *[Moving to the Witch's garden]* All right. Just this once.

*[Furtively, he creeps to the Witch's garden. (MUSIC may underscore what becomes a kind of Feydeau chase, with the HUSBAND grabbing vegetables and carrying them behind a bush or fence, the WITCH coming out to water the garden and just missing him, etc.) Finally, he has enough and takes the vegetables to his wife]*

WIFE. Oh, good, good, good! You are a wonderful husband and you will be a fine father. Carry them in, dear husband, and I will eat them all! *[They exit into house. WITCH enters and, humming or singing happily, waters her garden. She notices that vegetables are missing and screams]*

WITCH. Arrrrgh!! *[To audience]* WHO STOLE MY RED, RIPE BEETS? *[Running back to the garden. Scream. Running back to the audience]* AND my green, green, green beans! *[Running back to garden. Scream. Back to audience]* AND MY LUSCIOUS PURPLE EGG-PLANTS! Who did it?! You were watching, you dear little children. Do you know that I love children? Well, darlings, I do. *[Sweetly]* Now, cherubs *[very fast]*, WHOSTOLEMYREDRIPEBEETSANDMY GREENGREENBEANSANDMYPURPLEEGGPLANTS!!!!???WHO???



HUSBAND. *[Sticks his head out the window, gestures for children not to tell. Stage whisper:]* Please!

WITCH. *[Turns. He is gone]* What? I thought I heard something. *[HUSBAND sticks his head out and imitates wind]* Oh, must have been the wind. Now, children, you were watching, who did it? *[HUSBAND appears and gesticulates wildly. WIFE sticks her head out avidly munching a head of lettuce. He pushes her back inside. WITCH goes into audience if possible]* If you do not tell me, I will turn you all into bumblebees! Wait, no, too aggressive. ANTS! I'LL TURN YOU ALL INTO ANTS! Do you want to become tiny, crawling ants?! All right. I am going inside. *[Crossing to Upstage Right]* When I come back I want answers! Or I'll turn you into . . . into . . . *[Stops, asks children:]* What did I say I would turn you into? Cannot remember anything any more. *[AUDIENCE responds, hopefully]* Oh, yes. ANTS! Crawly, ugly ants! *[WITCH exits. HUSBAND and WIFE enter, cross Center as they speak]*

WIFE. Mmmm. That was delicious!

HUSBAND. How could you eat all that?

WIFE. Well, husband, *[sits on stump (or stage floor)]* I am going to have a baby, so I must eat for two. Or three. *[Takes a radish from pocket and gobbles it]*

HUSBAND. Oh, no!

WIFE. Or six! *[HUSBAND faints]* Oh, dear. *[Takes an eggplant from her pocket]* Here, husband, eat an eggplant. *[HUSBAND eats the eggplant as WIFE looks on hungrily]* Uh, oh!

HUSBAND. What is it?

WIFE. I feel faint again . . .

HUSBAND. Oh, no! You just ate! *[WIFE looks longingly toward the garden]* I cannot go back there again! I cannot!

WIFE. *[Rises]* Please! I need cool crisp cucumbers! Succulent sweet squash! *[Begins to waver]* Ooooooh . . .

HUSBAND. All right! Just one more time. *[Starts to garden]*

WIFE. Oh, you are such a dear husband. I just know our child or twins, or quintuplets will just adore you! *[She exits Right]*

HUSBAND. *[Creeping into the Witch's garden, grabs some vegetables and is about to scamper back. He stops to speak to the audience]* I've done it! I've done it! *[The WITCH enters. He immediately becomes a scarecrow]*

WITCH. *[Enters with watering can. Notices missing vegetables]*

Ahhhhh! My garden! What happened to my cool creamy cucumbers?? My succulent sweet squash! Gone! Gone! *[To the children]* Who took them?? Who?? *[Looks. Sees him. HUSBAND holds a vegetable in front of him and slithers towards his house]* Vegetables do not walk! But human thieves do! *[Grabs him and throws him to the ground]* Now you're mine!! And if you do not return all my wonderful vegetables, I will turn you into a . . . a . . . what shall I turn him into, children?

HUSBAND. *[On his knees pleading. WITCH holds him by his hair]* Oh, please, no, I beg you! My wife is about to have a baby and, well, you know how women get when they're about to have a baby—they get these strange cravings. And my wife said she would die if she did not eat all of the beautiful vegetables in your very fine garden.

WITCH. *[Suddenly very interested, releasing her hold on Husband]* Your wife is about to have a child?

HUSBAND. Well, yes, didn't you notice?

WITCH. I am a busy witch, I cannot notice everything. *[WIFE enters from the house]*

WIFE. Husband, did you get more—uh, oh.

WITCH. Your wife seems to have gotten appreciably larger since this morning!

WIFE. *[Falls to knees]* Oh, please do not turn him into anything! Please, please, please! I made him do it! I just couldn't help it! I just—

WITCH. Oh, hush before I turn you into a fat turnip.

WIFE. *[Liking the idea]* Mmmmmmm . . .

HUSBAND. Wife, please! Oh, what am I to do? I could never be happy with my wife as a turnip.

WITCH. So you like my vegetables, do you?

HUSBAND. Like them? She's crazy about them! Watch. *[To Wife, holding up cucumber]* Emerald green cucumbers!

WIFE. OH! Cucumbers! Cucumbers! Give me cucumbers! I will do anything for cucumbers! Squash! Lettuce! Carrots!

WITCH. Anything? *[She smiles all too sweetly]*

WIFE. Anything!

WITCH. I am suddenly feeling very generous. *[Crosses to Wife]* So, you like my ruby red tomatoes, eh?

WIFE. *[Looking at garden]* Mmmmm . . . ruby . . . red—

WITCH. And my leafy, crisp lettuce?

WIFE. *[Taking a step or two toward garden. Ecstatically]* Oh, leafy—crisp! Crisp!