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Family Plays

RAPUNZEL AND THE WITCH

A Play in Three Acts

by

JACK MELANOS



RAPUNZEL AND THE WITCH

Originally produced by Children's World Theatre of New York.
Intensely dramatic and suspenseful telling of the Rapunzel story.

Fairy tale. Adapted by Jack Melanos. From the story by the Brothers Grimm. Cast: 2 to 3m., 3 to 4w., 1 either gender. Margot and Otto, rejoicing at the birth of Rapunzel, their first baby, are horrified when the child is claimed and taken by a witch, who needs the baby for her own evil purposes. Rapunzel is brought up in the witch's care, unaware of her real parentage. She retains enough human instinct to resist the witch's spells and earns the love of others who have fallen under the witch's enchantment. For this she is exiled to a lonely tower, where no one but the witch may gain admittance, achieved only by climbing up the tower upon Rapunzel's long hair. A young prince happens on the scene and learns the secret. When he tries to rescue Rapunzel, he too falls under the witch's spell. Good triumphs, although it requires great courage to gain possession of the witch's magic chain and find the spell that reduces her to a withered tree.
Two sets. Fairy tale costumes. Code: R91

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(Melanos)

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TO
MONTE MEACHAM
and
BETTE BUTTERWORTH

The premiere production of this play was given in 1953 by Children's World Theatre of New York City, under the direction of the late Monte Meacham. It was shown before the 1953 Annual Meeting of The Children's Theatre Conference at Garden City, New York, and was then toured professionally in the season of 1953 and 1954.

The technical notes at the end of this book were taken from this production, and are incorporated herein by the courtesy of the late Mr. Meacham's estate.

Unfortunately, no pictures of this production remain on record. The pictures used here were expressly posted for the purpose of this book, using the original costumes graciously loaned by the late Mr. Meacham's estate.

RAPUNZEL AND THE WITCH

CHARACTERS

MARGOT: A Peasant Woman

OTTO: Her Chubby Husband

RAPUNZEL: Their Daughter, a Lovely Blonde Girl of 12

PRINCE ERIC: A Young Prince about 15

WITCH

(Listed above are the characters who appear on stage. There are three offstage characters, that is, voices over a microphone representing inanimate characters onstage.)

THE TREE: An Enchanted King

PLANT: An Enchanted Queen

STONE: A Magic Stone

(The characters, Margot and Prince Eric may double as microphone voices for these characters since they are not onstage at any time that these characters speak. If a Stage Manager accompanies the production, he is able to assume the role of one of the offstage voices.)

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: Margot's House and the Witch's Garden, Evening

SCENE TWO: Same, almost a year later, early morning

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: Same. It is Rapunzel's twelfth birthday.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE: A Stone Tower in the forest. Eight months later, morning

SCENE TWO: Same. Later that day.

NOTE TO PRODUCERS

The director of this play is cautioned to keep firm control over the characterization of the Witch. Although only the evil side of her nature is pertinent to the plot, and evil is essentially more colorful and dramatic than good, the Witch must, on no account, be allowed to dominate the play.

This is Rapunzel's story, and in extracting from it the values to be emphasized, the entire cast must be guided by the director's sense of proportion.

—THE EDITOR

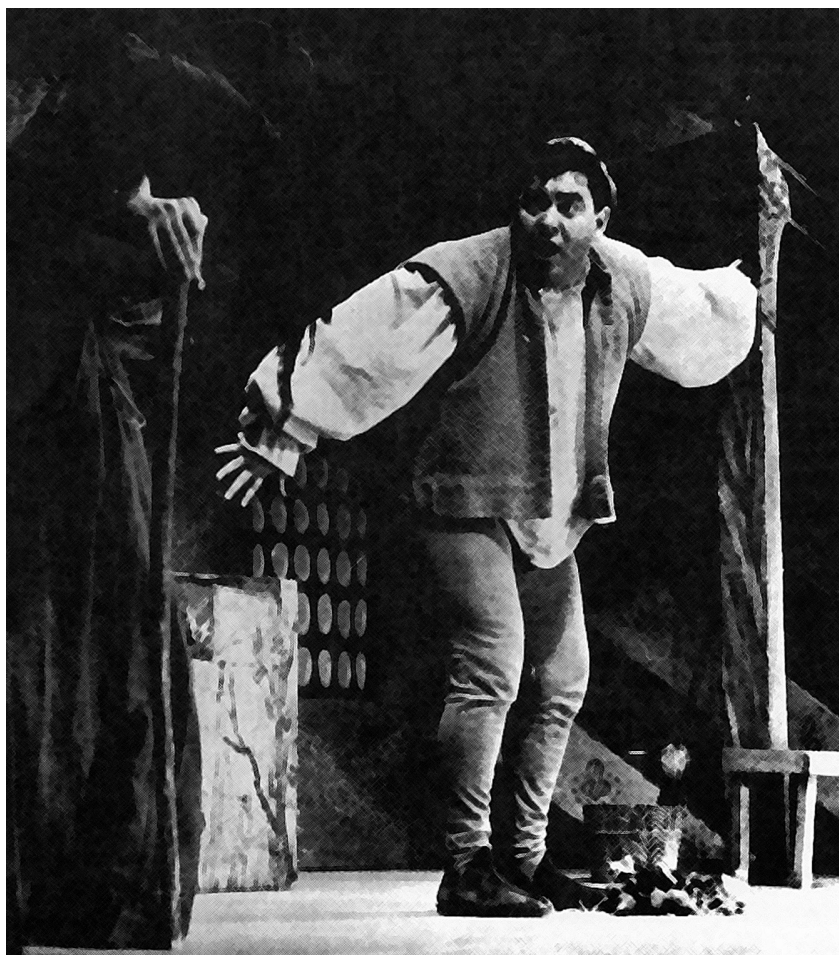


Photo by Charles Caron

RAPUNZEL AND THE WITCH

JACK A. MELANOS

ACT ONE

(As the curtain rises, Margot enters from upstage left, comes down left of the garden wall, humming gaily. She has just picked some berries for dinner in the woods nearby. As she starts down center, the wooden door of the garden wall catches her attention and she stops suddenly, hardly believing her eyes. She takes a few hesitant steps toward it and gasps.)

MARGOT: Why, it is a crack! I never noticed a crack in that door before! Never! *(She gasps)* I wonder what's on the other side of that wall. *(looks about with intake of breath)* Dare I look? Oh, no one will find out. I'll just take a peek.

(She puts basket down and cautiously looks round her, then goes to the door, tiptoeing with great restraint.)

Ohhhh, what a beautiful garden! Oh, and look at those radishes! Goodness, I've never seen such delicious looking radishes in my life! I wish I had some—what a salad I could make! Ohhh, I'd give anything for some of those radishes. *(She tries the door)* Locked! *(She looks up)* And that wall is much too high! *(dolefully)* Ohhh, those beautiful radishes!

(As she returns to look through the crack, Otto, her husband, comes down center from up left. He stops astonished at the sight of Margot bent forward toward the door. He scratches his head in puzzlement, bends this way and that to see what she's looking at, then suddenly realizing what she's up to, pokes her back in indignation.)

OTTO: *(outraged)* Margot!

(She whirls about with a scream of fright.)

What are you doing at that door?

MARGOT: *(gasping)* Oh, Otto, how you frightened me!

OTTO: What are you doing there?

MARGOT: *(contritely)* Well, I saw this little crack in the door . . . look . . .

OTTO: Margot! You know I warned you to keep away from there. You know what I heard in the village!

MARGOT: Oh, Otto, why listen to them? *(picks up basket)* Those villagers are like sheep!

(She starts for house. Otto follows her worriedly.)

OTTO: Never mind, sheep! They know what they're talking about. An evil old woman lives in there, and I, for one, believe it!

MARGOT: Now, truthfully, Otto, have you ever seen her?

Otto: No, I haven't but—

MARGOT: *(blithely)* Then how do you know it's true? *(smiles chidingly)* Evil old woman, indeed! Has she ever troubled us?

OTTO: *(Looks at wall, conceding slightly.)* Well—no. But then we've never given her reason . . .

MARGOT: *(convinced)* There, you see! In that case, we've nothing to fear!

(She puts basket against house excitedly as Otto scratches his head at this feminine logic, and she hurries back to him.)

Oh, now listen to my plans, Otto. I've been thinking all day—*(turns to house)*—wouldn't it be nice to fix up the house—make it shine like new?

OTTO: It's not so bad as it is, Margot, I've—

MARGOT: *(quickly)* Oh, no, Otto, I'm not complaining. But there are a few cracks to be patched—

(she turns front, smiling mysteriously to intrigue him.

—and I'd so like a little fence round our garden in the back.

OTTO: *(indulgently)* Very well, then. Tomorrow, I'll fetch some wood and build one.

MARGOT: *(delighted)* You will?

OTTO: I promise. If it will please you, I'll do it.

MARGOT: *(goes to him happily)* Oh, Otto, you're such a good husband! *(She turns front loftily to pique his curiosity.)*

But it's not only for myself that I was speaking . . .

OTTO: Yes, yes, Margot, I know. *(crosses to stool)* Now go in and see about supper. *(sits, stretches)* Ohhh, I'm so tired.

MARGOT: *(eagerly)* Otto. When you hear my news you will be tired no longer.

OTTO: News? What news?

Margot: What is it you want more than anything else in the world?

OTTO: Right now? Dinner.

MARGOT: No . . . No! What is it you want and have been waiting for for such a long time?

(She pantomimes rocking a baby in her arms and watches him eagerly.)

OTTO: A long time? *(he thinks)* Don't tell me you finally mended my coat!

MARGOT: Oh, Otto, noooo! What is it you've been waiting for since we've been married, something that will make you very happy?

(She broadly pantomimes rocking baby. Otto stares uncomprehendingly, thinking and rocking his body back and forth. Suddenly he gets a revelation.)

OTTO: A horse!

MARGOT: *(angrily)* No! It's not a horse! Goodness, men are so stupid!

OTTO: And women talk too much! Now go see about dinner. I'm starved!

MARGOT: *(huffily)* Very well then! Now I won't tell you what it is.

OTTO: Very well then, don't!

MARGOT: *(knowingly)* How can you say that when you're just bursting with curiosity!

OTTO: Well, I'd much rather be bursting with dinner.

MARGOT: Dinner, indeed! You can't wait to hear my news and you know it.

OTTO: *(beaten)* Uhh, then tell me quickly before I starve to death.

MARGOT: *(eagerly)* Otto, I took a nap this afternoon, and I dreamt . . .

OTTO: *(yawns drowsily)* Yes?

MARGOT: *(stamps her foot)* Otto! Wake up!

OTTO: *(with a start)* Oh . . . oh, yes . . . er . . . what was it you dreamt?

MARGOT: *(proudly)* Otto, we are going to have a child.

OTTO: *(yawns again)* A child?

MARGOT: At last you are going to be a father!

OTTO: *(leaping to his feet)* A child!

MARGOT: A child, Otto! Little feet to patter about!
 OTTO: (*joyfully*) A baby to play with when I come home!
 MARGOT: A little girl to help me with my housework.
 OTTO: A little boy to go hunting and fishing with.
 MARGOT: (*stronger*) A little girl to sew and cook and be a comfort to me!
 OTTO: (*stronger*) A little boy to teach my trade to . . .
 MARGOT: A little girl!
 OTTO: A boy!
 MARGOT: (*topping him*) A girl, I say!
 OTTO: (*beaten*) Very well, a girl!
 (*With a triumphant nod, Margot starts in the house but Otto's comment stops her.*)
 OTTO: (*pleased*) A little girl! To buy pretty things for . . .
 MARGOT: (*comes back*) No! A boy! A little boy who gets into all kinds of mischief.
 OTTO: A little girl who will always love her old father . . .
 MARGOT: A little boy to protect his mother!
 OTTO: A little girl . . .
 MARGOT: A boy!
 OTTO: What does it matter, Margot? A child! Our child.
 MARGOT: Our child. You're right, Otto! Oh, we've waited so long.
 OTTO: (*putting an arm around her*) But it was worth it, Margot, it was worth it. A little child to run about . . .
 MARGOT: (*As they go into their house.*) A little baby to love! Oh, Otto, the wonder of it
 (*They go into their little house and exit off left out of sight. From stage right, a terrible scream of rage is heard as the lights flash on and off and on again. A horrible old witch rises up from behind the wizard's stone, shaking a fist angrily.*)
 WITCH: Power! . . . Power! I need more power!
 I must make the whole world cower!
 (*She goes rapidly to left of stone.*)
 Wizard's stone, why don't you speak?
 I need your help . . . I'm old, and weak!
 (*From a large tree in the garden comes a peal of laughter. The Witch whirls about and goes to it.*) (*Darting around it.*)
 Silence, King, SILENCE, I say! Beware my anger, King, or I'll chop you down, blow by blow!
 TREE: (*with quiet amusement*) I've watched you beg, and heard you plead.
 Your book of spells, I've seen you read
 Listened to you groan and sigh
 But still the stone does not reply!
 WITCH: The stone will speak, you stick of wood! I ought to set a torch

to you! Remember how it felt when once I burned your branch.

Another word and I'll roast you to the ground.

TREE: *(A terrible groan)* Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh . . .

WITCH: *(laughs and goes to plant)* And then I'll trample on your Queen who came here seeking you! I'll stamp on her!

PLANT: *(a feminine wail)* Ohhhhhhhh! Don't anger her, my King.

WITCH: *(bends over plant)* That's right, my Queen, you remember well, don't you? Then silence, not another word! *(to herself)* Just one more spell, the last one . . . It must work . . . it MUST!

(She hurries to stone.)

O, great Wizard's stone, hear me . . . hear me!

In my garden, many dwell

Caught within my magic spell

All who come here, I enchant

Once a Queen, now she's a plant

Over there, a King you see . . .

I turned him into a tree!

But of garden spells I've tired!

My imagination's fired!

Tell me what I wish to know

Tell me how my strength may grow!

. . . . And now the SPELL!

(LIGHTS FLICKER)

Wizard's stone upon the ground

Show me light and give me sound

Round and round the stone I go

Till the stone begins to glow . . .

(Slowly, the stone lights up, its eyes shine. Witch gasps avidly.)

Round and round the stone I walk

Wizard's stone, I beg you, talk!

STONE: *(A long eerie sound)* Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Who calls upon this ancient stone

Who lived in Wizards' caves alone!

WITCH: Mother Gothol is my name

Long and far is spread my fame.

STONE: What do you wish, Mother Gothol?

WITCH: Power I want POWER!

STONE: But you have power.

WITCH: Yes . . round my neck I wear this chain, which keeps me from all harm and pain, but I cannot weave my magic outside these garden Walls!

O, great Spirit, hear my plea

How may I control the sea?

Rule the lightning and the sun

Put a spell on everyone . . .

STONE: You wish to rule the world?

WITCH: Yes . . . yes!

STONE: Then listen carefully, for you cannot do it alone. First, you must steal a child, and raise the child as your own. When it is twelve, you must transform it into a Witch. Then, and only then, can you rule the world.

WITCH: But how many I steal this child? I have no magic powers outside this garden.

STONE: That, I cannot tell you. You must find a way to get the child yourself.

WITCH: Then tell me, great stone, how may I transform the child into a Witch?

STONE: You must follow these instructions, be it boy, or girl . . .

WITCH: Tell me . . . tell me!

STONE: Feed her candy . . . feed her cake

Of everything she must partake

When she's twelve and in your care

Then you must feed her Witch's fare

Feed her once . . . then feed her twice

But when she's eaten of it thrice

To Witch's blood her blood will turn

And all the Witch's ways she'll learn . . .

(The voice dies away, stone lights out and stage lights up full.)

WITCH: Oh, thank you, great stone, thank you! And now . . . I must find a child . . . *(she thinks)* . . . A child!

(A sudden idea occurs to her and she goes to the Tree.)

Ahhhhh, you, my King, you have a baby Prince! I've heard your Queen speak of him!

TREE: He's safe in the palace where you can never reach him.

WITCH: If you bring him to me, I'll reward you handsomely.

TREE: Never!

WITCH: *(Harshly)* Very well! *(Hurries to Plant.)* Listen to me, my Queen, I'll make a bargain with you. Your freedom for your child.

PLANT: I would rather stay here forever.

WITCH: O, great Queen, I'll let you both go free . . . you and your King. Only promise me the baby Prince.

PLANT: Never!

WITCH: Baah! Then stay here forever! I'll find another child, I'll not waste my time with you!

(A thought occurs to her and she hurries over to radishes.)

Little radish, let your scent

Go travelling out to where it's meant

A little child is what I need

Now go, my radish, do your deed

(She reaches in her pocket, pulls out a key, hurries to door and unlocks

it. Then she backs away to stage right, surveying everything quickly.)

There! The web's prepared! Now I will wait

Until I've snared a baby with my bait!

(She sweeps off right triumphantly. At that moment, Otto and Margot come out of their little house. Otto is contentedly patting his stomach, but Margot appears to be listless. She sits on the stool with a small wistful sigh.)

OTTO: Ahhhh, what a delicious dinner! If there's anything I love, it's a good dinner. *(Notices Margot's behavior)* Why, Margot, what's the matter?

MARGOT: I'm hungry, Otto, hungry!

OTTO: *(amazed)* Hungry! But we've just eaten.

MARGOT: I know, Otto, but I'm still hungry! I want some radishes . . . some nice little rapunzels.

OTTO: *(kneels at her side)* Well, is that all! Don't fret, Margot, I'll bring you a nice bunch from the village tomorrow.

MARGOT: But I must have them now, Otto, this instant! Oh, I simply crave them!

OTTO: *(rises)* Very well, Margot. If it pleases you, I'll hurry to the village right now and get some.

MARGOT: Oh, Otto, No! It's good of you, but I don't want radishes from the village.

OTTO: But why not? Where else can I get them at this hour?

MARGOT: *(rises eagerly)* Oh, Otto, I've seen radishes today the like of which I've never seen before. Big, red, delicious radishes. They were dug up and left on the ground.

OTTO: Well tell me where they are and I'll fetch them.

MARGOT: Otto . . . they are behind that wall.

OTTO: Behind that wa—YOU MEAN—IN THERE?

MARGOT: I saw them with my own eyes.

OTTO: Oh, no, Margot, I wouldn't dare go in there. Besides it would be wrong to take them. They don't belong to us.

MARGOT: Oh, Otto. Otto, I crave them so.

OTTO: Margot, listen to me. I tell you there's an old Witch in there. She cannot harm us out here, but if she were to find me in her garden . . . stealing her radishes!

MARGOT: You could pay her, Otto . . . you could bargain some trifle.

OTTO: No Margot! I can't do it. You must forget the radishes.

MARGOT: Very well, Otto. *(She sits and sighs heavily.)*

OTTO: Now, Margot, please don't be unhappy.

MARGOT: It's no use, Otto. If I can't have those radishes, I shall die from longing.

OTTO: Oh, don't say that. . . *(he kneels anxiously at her side)* Why . . . why you look so pale! You'll be ill, Margot. Please, please forget them.

MARGOT: *(With a wail)* Oh, I cannot! The scent of them comes to me and I cannot! Ohhhhhhhhhhh! *(It sounds like her last breath.)*

OTTO: *(jumps up)* Margot—I'll get them! I'll do anything, only please don't look like that!

MARGOT: *(hopefully)* Will you, Otto? Will you get the radishes?

OTTO: Yes, yes, Margot, I'll get them.

MARGOT: *(goes to him)* Oh, you're such a good husband, Otto. But hurry, I'm simply weak from craving! Go on, now . . . go on . . .

(She urges him to the door of the garden. As they reach it, all the enchanted creatures within hiss out a warning.)

VOICES: *(With hissing urgency)* Keep away . . . keep away . . . keep away . . . keep away . . . keep away . . .

(Otto freezes in his tracks, terrified. From off right, the Witch rushes on, and looks around herself swiftly and suspiciously.)

OTTO: *(fearfully)* What . . . was that?

MARGOT: *(Her obsession overcomes her fear.)* Nothing . . . nothing. It's only the sound of the wind.

(They creep up to the door at the same time as Witch creeps up on her side.)

MARGOT: Look through the crack, Otto, and you'll see the radishes.

(As he looks through, the Witch bends over and looks through on her side. He sees her eye staring at him.)

OTTO: I see something big and red . . . but it doesn't look like a radish to me.

MARGOT: Let me see. *(The Witch moves upstage of door.)* Yes . . . there they are, look.

OTTO: *(looking)* Oh, yes, I see them. *(He pushes closer and door opens.)* Look! The door's unlocked.

MARGOT: How very strange! I could have sworn it was locked. Oh, now it's easily done. You go in and get the radishes . . . and I'll go back to the house and make a salad.

(She hurries to her house, turns and sees him hesitate at door.)

And hurry, Otto, I'm weak as a cat!

(She quickly goes into house.)

(Otto goes in, eyes wide as saucers and looks all about. The Witch is concealed behind the door, and thinking no one is about. Otto proceeds downstage with great caution, and starts right and upstage, behind him, the Witch slowly closes the door. Otto comes up to stone and peers around it off right, but cannot see anything of the Witch. On top of the stone, a flower of great loveliness catches his eye. Through his terror, he is awed, and tentatively sniffs at it.)

FLOWER: *(in a tiny voice)* How dare you! Would you like it if I were to sniff at you?

(Otto recoils with a terrified gasp, recovers himself and looks hard at the flower.)

OTTO: Oh, I . . . I must have imagined it!

(Gasping, he starts around the stone, the Witch, creeping up is now directly behind him. He sees horrible face of stone, and quickly skirts around to right of it, causing the Witch to run rapidly up to left of it to keep out of sight. She starts down right of it as he comes out from upstage side, going left. Witch goes up right and disappears behind it, as Otto tiptoes to radishes and picks them up. He starts to door, and sees that it is now closed. Thunderstruck, he drops radishes, and slowly, with great terror, begins to look around. The Witch leaps out from behind the stone with a terrible cry, raising her arms as he cries out in fright.)

WITCH: Hard onto the ground you'll freeze
Until you're frozen to your knees!

(He struggles but cannot move his legs. The Witch circles him, poking him with her stick.) (Harshly)

Stop your squirming, foolish man, you can't get away! Tried to steal my radishes, eh? Svil will befall you for this!

OTTO: Oh, please . . . please Witch, grant me pardon before justice! I only did it from great necessity!

WITCH: You came here to steal from me and you'll be punished.

OTTO: Listen to me, I beg you. My wife saw your radishes and took such a fancy to them she would have died unless she tasted of them.

WITCH: *(slyly)* Ohhh, is that so? Well, now, perhaps there is a way you can repay me for your crime.

OTTO: I'll do anything . . . I'll give you anything!

WITH: Have you any children, my pet?

OTTO: No . . . none yet. But we're expecting our first.

WITCH: *(Avidly)* Good! Then you must give me this child, you must promise it to me. *(Slyly)* All will go well with it and I shall care for it like a mother.

OTTO: What! My child? I'll never give you my child, never!

WITCH: *(Enraged)* Very well then, their! I'll send a plague of illness to your wife. I'll dangle radishes by my door till she dies from longing!

OTTO: Oh, no, please! I'll give you anything else.

WITCH: And as for you, stubborn fool, I'll turn you into a tree, and thus you'll spend your days in misery! *(She raises arms for spell.)*

OTTO: Wait . . . wait! I cannot bear my wife to die of longing. I'll give you my child.

WITCH: *(Coming over)* You promise? You promise on your solemn oath?

OTTO: Yes . . . I promise. Now let me go.

WITCH: That's better, my fox. Very well, then.

Spirits dark and spirits gray
Take my curse off him this day
Let him move about again