



The Commedia Rapunzel

Education Guide



In 1934, Dr. Clive McAllister, president of the Old Fort Players (now the Civic Theatre), appointed a committee to create a junior or children’s theater branch of the organization. The committee established the philosophy that the new “Children’s Theatre” would develop poise, better diction, and self-esteem for children through dramatic instruction. They would give at least one play a year, and awaken enthusiasm in children for beauty in art and integrity in dramatic literature.

The first class began with an enrollment of a whopping 40 students, each of which paid just \$1.00 for 8 classes! The first production, “The Steadfast Tin Soldier,” was performed at the Majestic Theatre in Fort Wayne and had a cast of 75 young people. Tickets were only 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults.

In 1954, the Majestic Theatre was deemed unsafe for children by the fire department and so the Children’s Theatre spent the next 10 years at various locations in the city. By the time it rejoined the Civic Theatre at the Old Palace Theatre, it had a new name, the “Fort Wayne Youtheatre.” In 1973, both organizations moved to their current home in the Arts United Center on E. Main Street in downtown Fort Wayne. The Youtheatre became autonomous in 1984.

In 1978, Broadway star Harvey Cocks became the Executive Director of Youtheatre. Even after retiring from that position, Harvey has remained as our Artist in Residence; and after 40+ years, he is still inspiring young actors and actresses! In 2010, he was joined by Leslie Hormann, who served as Executive/Artistic Director until 2018.

Youtheatre is currently managed by Executive/Artistic Director Todd Espeland, who came to us in 2018 after serving as Artistic Director of the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre. He is joined by Assistant Director/Director of Outreach Christopher J. Murphy and Administrative Assistant/Marketing Director Megan Ebbeskotte and a staff of outstanding local artists who serve as teachers, guest directors, choreographers, music directors and designers.

For over three quarters of a century, Youtheatre has produced classes, camps and theatrical productions for the artists and audiences of northeast Indiana. Recent productions include “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory,” “Lord of the Flies” and “Treasure Island.” Our touring “Storybook Theatre” troupe takes literature-based shows into the community, performing in hospitals, libraries, community centers and more. In 2018, our Linda L. Ruffalo “Young Heroes of Conscience Series, which has spotlighted the likes of Anne Frank, Ryan White, Harriet Tubman and Ruby Bridges, won the “Mayor’s Arts Award.”

As the fifth oldest active children’s theatre in the nation, Youtheatre is dedicated to its mission to “educate, engage and entertain” through quality theatrical experiences.



ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

SET- the scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in "After the Miracle?" What time and place does it look like?

LIGHTS- the lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in "After the Miracle" show changes in the time and place?

PROPS (Properties)- the objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

MAKE-UP- the cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used so that the performers' facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in "After the Miracle?"

COSTUMES- the clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case of a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes in "After the Miracle" drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?



Pictured above: Youtheatre's productions of SLEEPING BEAUTY & REMEMBERING ANNE



**It's important to teach good theatre-going manners early.
Below is a list of DOs and DON'Ts for audiences of all ages...**

- Be ON TIME and stay until the end. Yes, parking lot gets busy, but being late or leaving while the show is in progress is discourteous to audience and performers alike. By leaving early, you may miss something special. Allow yourself plenty of time.
- THOU SHALT NOT TALK, or hum, or sing along, or beat time with a body part.
- The OVERTURE in a musical is part of the performance. Please cease talking, e-mailing and texting at this point.
- UNWRAP any candies or cough drops before the performance. If you MUST unwrap something during the show, do so quickly. Slow may seem polite, but only prolongs the noise.
- Make sure CELLPHONES and other electronic devices are OFF. Don't text during a performance. Even if your phone is on silent, the light from the screen is very distracting.
- Stay seated unless absolutely necessary. Use the restroom BEFORE the performance.
- IF YOU'RE HAPPY & YOU KNOW IT, CLAP YOUR HANDS! It is polite to applaud at the end of songs/scenes as well as the end of the show and during the curtain call.
- THE OLD STANDBY: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Unlike the actors on the TV in your living room, these actors can see and hear you. Unlike your family at home, this audience paid to be here. Be respectful.

ABOUT THE GRIMM BROTHERS FOLK TALE



"Rapunzel" is a German fairy tale in the collection assembled by the Brothers Grimm, and first published in 1812 as part of *Children's and Household Tales*. The collection of more than 200 tales includes such well-known tales, such as Little Red Riding Hood, Little Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Rumpelstiltskin. Rapunzel is one of the best known fairy tales, and its plot has been used and parodied by many cartoonists and comedians, its best known line ("Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair") having entered popular culture.

Grimm's fairy tales, as they have come to be known, are among the most well-known narratives in the Western world. While no one is exactly sure when it originated, its themes reflect a Medieval culture of princes and Medieval superstitions as well. The enduring power of such stories is based on universal themes such as love lost and regained, and the power of good to overcome evil.

SYNOPSIS

A childless couple who wanted a child lived next to a walled garden which belonged to an enchantress. The wife, as a result of her long-awaited pregnancy, noticed some rapunzel plant (or, in some versions of the story, radishes or lamb's lettuce), planted in the garden and longed for it to the point of death. For two nights, the husband went out and broke into the garden to gather some for her; on the third night, as he was scaling the wall to return home, the enchantress, whose name is said to be "Dame Gothel," caught him and accused him of theft. He begged for mercy, and the old woman agreed to be lenient, on condition that the then-unborn child be surrendered to her at birth. Desperate, the man agreed. When a girl was born, the enchantress took her and raised her as a ward, naming her Rapunzel. When Rapunzel reached her twelfth year, the enchantress shut her

away into a tower in the middle of the woods, with neither stairs nor door, and only one room and one window. When the witch went to visit Rapunzel, she stood beneath the tower and called out:

*"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,
so that I may climb the golden stair."*

Upon hearing these words, Rapunzel would wrap her long, fair hair around a hook that sat beside the window and drop it down to the enchantress, who would then climb up the hair to Rapunzel's tower room. A variation on the story also has the enchantress imbued with the power of flight and/or levitation and the young girl unaware of her hair's length.

One day, a prince rode through the forest and heard Rapunzel singing from the tower. Entranced by her ethereal voice, he went to look for the girl and found the tower, but was unable to enter. He then returned often, listening to her beautiful singing, and one day saw Dame Gothel visit, thus learning how to gain access to Rapunzel. When Dame Gothel was gone, he bade Rapunzel let her hair down. When she did this, he climbed up, made her acquaintance, and finally asked her to marry him. Rapunzel agreed.

Together they planned a means of escape, wherein he would come each night (thus avoiding the enchantress who visited her by day), and bring her silk, which Rapunzel would gradually weave into a ladder. Before the plan came to fruition, however, Rapunzel foolishly gave the prince away. In anger, Dame Gothel cut short Rapunzel's braided hair and cast her out into the wilderness to fend for herself.

When the prince called that night, the enchantress let the severed braids down to haul him up. To his horror, he found himself staring at the witch instead of Rapunzel, who was nowhere to be found. When she told him in anger that he would never see Rapunzel again, he leapt from the tower in despair and was blinded by the thorns below.

For months he wandered through the wastelands of the country. One day, while Rapunzel sang as she fetched water, the prince heard Rapunzel's voice again, and they were reunited. When they fell into each other's arms, her tears immediately restored his sight. The prince led her to his kingdom, where they lived happily ever after.

COMMENTARY

The witch is called "Mother Gothel," a common term for a godmother in German. She features as the overprotective parent, and interpretations often differ on how negatively she is to be regarded.

Folkloric beliefs often regarded it as quite dangerous to deny a pregnant woman any food she craved. Family members would often go to great lengths to secure such cravings. Such desires for lettuce and like vegetables may indicate that the folkloric traditions are based on a nutritional need for vitamins.

The uneven bargain, on the other hand, is based on a narrative convention, not historical precedent. Such bargains are a common feature in fairy tales, creating a narrative problem that must be resolved in the course of the story. For example, in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Jack trades a cow for beans, and in *Beauty and the Beast*, Beauty comes to the Beast in return for a rose.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Youtheatre's *The Commedia Rapunzel* is a fun-filled play-within-a-play.

Columbine, Rosetta, Punchin, Brighella, Arlequin and their acting troupe let down their hair to tackle the tangled tale of Rapunzel for a group of local villagers (audience members included) who keep getting roped into the fun. When Gottel the Witch discovers the thief in her garden, she tricks him into exchanging his first born daughter for the salad he took. Full of lots of lazzi (stock gags) and witty fun and audience participation, this commedia tale is a pure delight! You may know the story of Rapunzel, but you've never seen it quite like this!

The Commedia Rapunzel features and **ENCOURAGES** audience participation!
So come ready to clap, laugh, cheer and even boo your favorite villain!

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

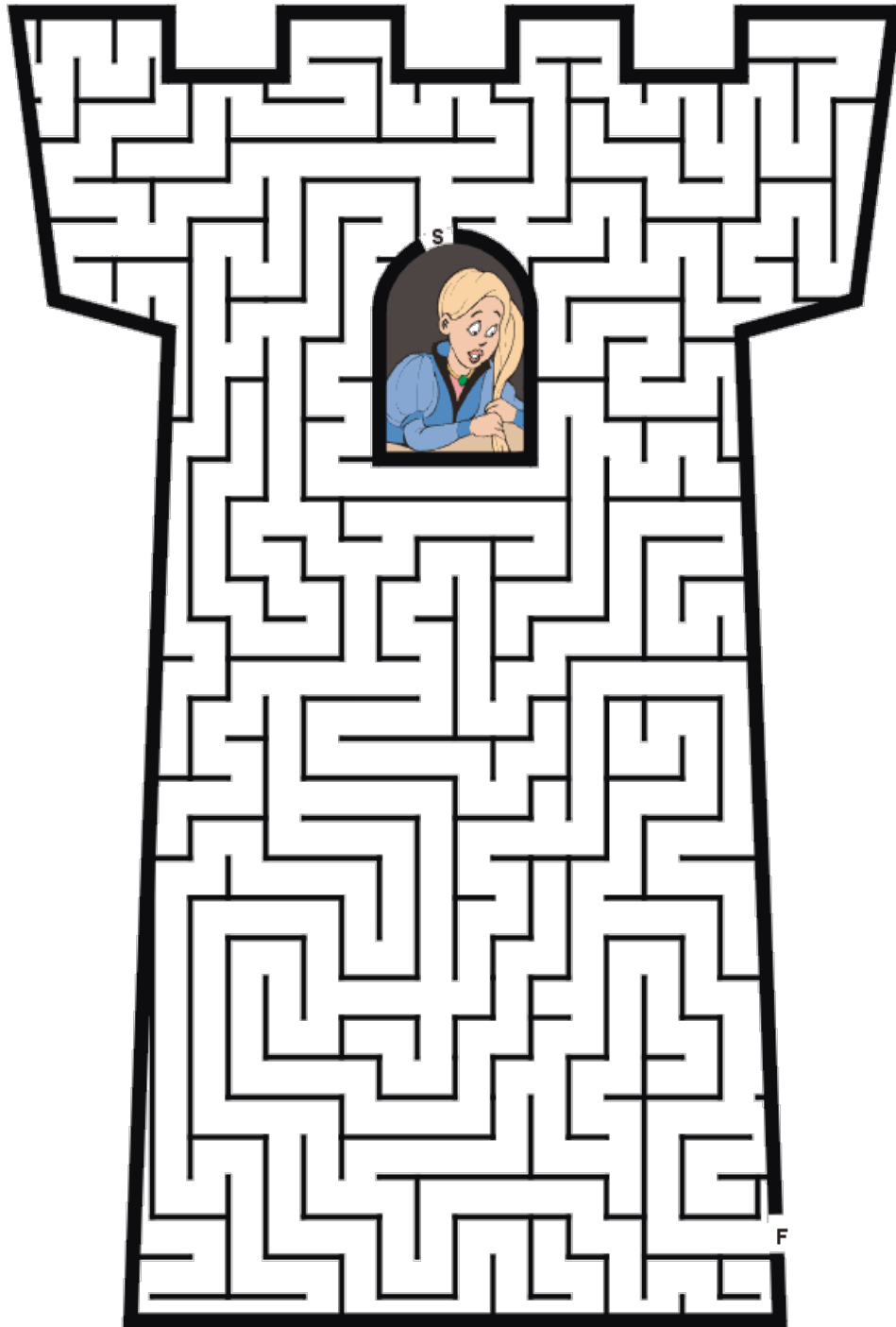
Lane Riosley

Lane Riosley is a writer living and working in Houston, Texas. She is the 1991 winner of the Roger L. Stevens Award in Playwriting from the Kennedy Center For the Performing Arts' Fund for New American Plays. Lane also has written a screenplay for KUHT-TV/PBS television series CENTERSTAGE as featured in the 1993 American Film Institute Festival in Los Angeles, and she served as a speaker at Theatrefest '93, the 43rd annual convention of the Texas Educational Theatre Association. Lane most recently served as a panel speaker at Comicpalooza 2013.

Currently, Lane has 20 plays in publication, twelve with Pioneer Drama. She is the author of the Houston Museum of Natural Science Burke Baker Planetarium program and Lucky Hightops and the Cosmic Cat Patrol, a six part science theatre series. Lane's plays have been produced by schools and theatres nationwide including The Taradiddle Players, The Actor's Company of Burbank, The Little Top Theatre Company, The West Coast Ensemble, The Texas Renaissance Festival, EarlyStages of Houston, Stages Repertory Theatre, The Merry Go Round Theatre and the Asolo Theatre. She is an alumnus of the Sam Houston State University Department of Theatre and Dance.



Rapunzel's Escape!



Help Rapunzel escape her tower by weaving her way through the maze from S (start) to F (finish)!

ABOUT COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE



Commedia dell'arte, (Italian, meaning "comedy of professional artists") was a form of improvisational theater which began in the 16th century and was popular until the 18th century, although it is still performed today. Traveling teams of players would set up an outdoor stage and provide amusement in the form of juggling, acrobatics, and, more typically, humorous plays based on a repertoire of established characters with a rough storyline, called *Canovaccio*.

Troupes occasionally would perform directly from the back of their traveling wagon, but this is more typical of **Carro di Tespi**, a sort of travelling theater that dates back to antiquity.

The performances were improvised around a repertoire of stock conventional situations, adultery, jealousy, old age, love, some of which can be traced in Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence. The dialogue and action could easily be made topical and adjusted to satirize local scandals, current events, or regional tastes, mixed with ancient jokes and punchlines. Characters were identified by costume, masks, and even props, such as the slapstick.



THE INFLUENCE OF COMMEDIA: Thus, the *commedia dell'arte*, with its stock situations and stock characters and improvised dialogue, has shown the way to many other forms of drama, from pantomime and Punch and Judy - which features debased forms of the *commedia* characters (see below) - to the modern animated cartoon, situation comedy, and even professional wrestling. Aspects of *commedia dell'arte* also passed into the silent tradition of mime. The Bohemian actor Jean-Gaspard Deburau (1796 -1846) brought the new forms of mime to Paris in the 1830s. He standardized the French image of Pierrot.

THE CHARACTERS: Many male *commedia dell'arte* characters were depicted by actors wearing masks, although the Amorosi (or *lovers*) did not wear masks. Female characters, however, were usually not masked, until the 1800s. Unlike their English contemporaries (see Shakespeare), *commedia* troupes usually employed female actresses for female roles. The theatrical device of men in women's clothing and wigs, *en travesti*, was used for humour. The most famous character is the comic servant Arlequino, also known as Arlequin or Harlequin.



*Influences of commedia characters are still prevalent today.
Above left is the commedia character Pantalone, a greedy old man.
Right is his modern counterpart, Mr. Burns from The Simpsons.*

What is Rapunzel?

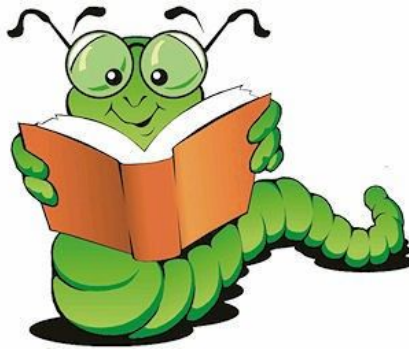


The plant *Campanula rapunculus* is commonly known as rapunzel or rampion. This species was once widely grown in Europe for its leaves, which were used like spinach, and its parsnip-like root, which was used like a radish. The Brothers Grimm used named the title character in their fairy tale *Rapunzel* after this plant, which the girl's father steals from the witch's garden.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS

1. What did Rapunzel's mother ask her husband to bring her to eat at the beginning of the play?
2. How did the Prince defeat the giant Ogre?
3. Can you name the three gifts the Prince's mother gave him before starting his adventures?
4. How many stairs were there in Rapunzel's tower?
5. The witch tricks the Prince into thinking she is a cursed what?

1-Salad. 2-By Flirting with HER. 3-Rope, Anti-Enchantment Powder, Mirror. 4-NONE! 5-Princess turned into an old hag.



SUGGESTED READING & VIEWING

BOOKS...

LAZZI: The Comic Routines of the Commedia Dell'Arte by Mel Gordon

THE ORIGINAL FOLK AND FAIRYTALES OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM by Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm

FILM...

Disney's TANGLED

THE PRINCESS BRIDE

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

1. What made this version of RAPUNZEL different than most?
2. The Witch and Rapunzel's relationship is complicated. Do you think the Witch is evil or just an over-protective mother?
3. The play-within-the-play ends with "They all lived happily ever after!" But what do you think happens to the characters after we leave them?



303 E. Main Street • Fort Wayne, IN 46802 • (260)422-6900

LANGUAGE ARTS & STANDARDS

Most Youtheatre Stories are Literature Based and on the recommended reading list of Library of Congress

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre. Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

