

Synopsis:

After Queen Wilhemina gives birth to Prince Frederick, she is banished by her controlling, over-protective husband King Wilhelm to the far reaches of the kingdom. There she meets Peter and Maria, a carpenter and his wife, who are expecting their first baby. One night, Wilhemina catches Peter in her garden stealing her most precious plant, the oh-so-rare rampion, also known as “rapunzel”. Threatening Peter with prison for his theft, Wilhemina tells him she will look the other way if he agrees to give her his child. Convinced he has no choice, Peter agrees and gives his newborn daughter to Wilhemina to raise. He tells Maria that their daughter died in childbirth and saddened by their memories, Maria and Peter move to the other end of the kingdom. Wilhemina names the child Rapunzel. Rapunzel grows to a beauty with an angelic voice and beautiful long, golden hair. One day, a Stranger hears her singing in the garden and tries to attack her. Wilhemina decides Rapunzel needs more protection than a garden wall and places her in a remote tower with only one window and no door. Prince Frederick hears her singing in the Tower and climbs her hair to rescue her. They fall in love, naturally, but Frederick has to leave suddenly to rescue his squire Eric from the clutches of Wilhelm’s Page. Frederick accidentally leaves his Royal Sword behind and Rapunzel, remembering that Frederick is useless at rescues without it, is determined to return it to him. She cuts off her braid with it, then climbs out of the Tower to find Fred. Many mix-ups and mishaps ensue but all turns out right at the end. Frederick and Rapunzel marry, Maria and Peter are reunited with their long-lost daughter, and Wilhelm, finally realizing that love is more important than anything else, reconciles with Wilhemina. So ends the tale of Rapunzel.

Setting: Various locations King Wilhelm’s castle and the forest surrounding it.

Set: a Tower as well as two cubes that can be arranged to represent various locations.

Cast Size: 13 (seven men, six women)

Cast: (in order of appearance)

Ben– a minstrel, plays the lute

Jamie – a minstrel-in-training

Wilhelm – the King, over-protective and duty-bound

Wilhemina – his Queen, loves gardening and her freedom

Friar– a man of God determined to build a chapel for the peasants

Page – Wilhelm’s servant

Peter – the best carpenter in the kingdom

Maria – Peter’s wife, very pregnant

Landlord - owns the cottage Peter and Maria buy

Rapunzel – daughter of Peter and Maria, raised by Wilhemina – “spunky”

Stranger – a man who tries to attack Rapunzel

Frederick – prince of the kingdom, son of Wilhelm and Wilhemina

Eric –squire to Frederick

Charlene – a daughter t the Duke of Ernsberger, extremely annoying

Helga - a daughter t the Duke of Ernsberger, extremely annoying

Note: The following roles are to be played by the same actor:

Page/Stranger

Landlord/Eric

ACT I

SETTING: *A forest. Upstage left, The Tower. The Tower consists of two parts: a circular platform six feet in diameter and two feet high, and the semi-circular wall that revolves around it. When The Tower Wall is in the downstage position, we see the exterior of The Tower, a very tall (starting at the stage floor) wall of stone with a window near the top. When The Tower Wall revolves to the upstage position, it reveals the interior of The Tower. A stool sits on one side of the platform and near the window of The Tower is a strong hook. The only other set pieces are two cubes, which will be used to indicate other locations.*

AT RISE: *Forest sounds. BEN enters at a run, a lute strung across his back. He spies The Tower and stops. He examines it a moment then calls off...*

BEN

Jamie! Jamie! Over here! I found it!

(JAMIE enters with a long walking stick.)

JAMIE

Where? Where is it?

BEN

(Pointing to The Tower)

Look.

JAMIE

Wow. It's perfect.

BEN

Just what we were looking for.

(BEN continues to look at The Tower. JAMIE suddenly notices the audience. He nudges BEN with his elbow.)

What?

(JAMIE *points to the audience.* BEN *takes them in and nods.*)

BEN (cont.)

Right then. Time to get the show on the road.

(BEN *pulls his lute off his back and begins to sing.*)

*We are two wandering minstrels of old
Known far and wide for the tales we have told
Of beanstalks and giants and Beauties asleep
Of pumpkins-turned-coaches with deadlines to keep*

JAMIE

*But this day we bring a new story to share
Of a maid in a tower with long golden hair*

BEN

And the tow'r looked a lot like that tower over there...

JAMIE/BEN

This is the tale of Rapunzel

BEN

*The Tow'r was enormous - one window, no door
And how the maid got there we're here to explore*

JAMIE

You'll see witches and squires and castles and kings...

BEN

A Prince with a duty!

JAMIE

A maiden who sings...

BEN

The lessons within will be taught for your sake

JAMIE

How tears of a loved one can heal a heartache

BEN

And a promise is something you never should break

BEN/JAMIE
This is the tale of Rapunzel...

BEN
Once upon a time...

JAMIE
Once upon a time!

BEN
Once upon a time there was a castle...

JAMIE
A castle!

BEN
And in this castle lived a King...

JAMIE
A King!

(WILHELM enters and faces the audience.)

BEN
A king named Wilhelm and his Queen...

(WILHEMINA enters opposite, looking over her shoulder. She carries a hoe and is oblivious to Wilhelm's presence.)

WILHELM
Wilhemina!

BEN
Queen Wilhemina had long, beautiful hair and loved to work in her garden...

WILHELM
Wilhemina, what are you doing here, in the Royal Gardens?

BEN
The Royal Gardens...

JAMIE
The Royal Gardens!

(JAMIE *pushes the cubes into position.*)

BEN

A majestic landscape filled with stately plants and flowers, guarded by two regal statues...

(JAMIE and BEN *stand on the cubes and pose as The Statues.*)

WILHELM

Answer me, Wilhemina. What are you doing here? I ordered you to remain in your room.

WILHEMINA

You have no right to order me about, Wilhelm.

WILHELM

What do you mean “no right”? I am the King. My word is law.

WILHEMINA

But my room suffocates me. I long to be here, in the Royal Gardens, walking amongst the flowers I have planted, hoeing in my garden. Look, husband, just see what I am growing. Do you see it? The tall plant with the flower? It is *rampion*, Wilhelm. I am growing rampion!

WILHELM

I don't care what you're growing – I want you back in your room. You are carrying my child, the future King. I will not allow you to risk his life by gadding about amongst these silly statues.

WILHEMINA

But rampion is so rare – and it has powers! Magic powers! It is said that if a woman with child eats rampion, her baby will be guaranteed a happy and healthy long life.

WILHELM

Old wives tales! I will not let the mother of the future King be swayed by such nonsense. Now go back to your room!

WILHEMINA

Why must you control my every move?

WILHELM

I am trying to keep my child safe. We have a duty to provide an heir to the throne!

WILHEMINA

And is that duty more important than freedom? More important than love?!

(WILHELM *turns away from her.*)

Look at my hair, Wilhelm. See how long it is. Some men call it beautiful. It is beautiful, because it is loved and well-tended and allowed the freedom to grow. The freedom to blow about on the wind as it pleases. This is what I need. I need to be as wild and as free as my hair.

WILHELM

Perhaps your hair has too much freedom.

WILHEMINA

What?

(*He grabs her hair with one hand and pulls his sword with the other.*)

WILHEMINA

No, Wilhelm, no – not my hair! Not my hair!

(FRIAR *enters.*)

FRIAR

Your Majesty!

(WILHELM *cuts Wilhemina's hair. WILHEMINA starts to cry.*
WILHELM *turns to FRIAR.*)

WILHELM

What do you want, Friar...? Speak!

FRIAR

I have come again to beseech Your Majesty for the funds with which to build a chapel...

WILHELM

No.

FRIAR

On the outskirts of your kingdom...

WILHELM

No.

FRIAR

So that your distant subjects would be able to worship...

WILHELM

No, no, no! Every week you come here begging money for this chapel, Friar, and every week I say “no”. When will you stop asking?

FRIAR

When Your Majesty says “yes”.

(PAGE *enters.*)

PAGE

King Wilhelm, the Duke of Ernsberger wishes an audience.

(WILHELM *gestures for PAGE to wait while addressing FRIAR.*)

WILHELM

I believe that concludes your business here, Friar.

FRIAR

Deny me now and I shall return next week and the week after that and the week after...

WILHELM

You will be wasting your time!

(WILHELM *turns to WILHEMINA.*)

Go back to your room, Wilhemina, and stay there.

(WILHEMINA *looks away. WILHELM pulls PAGE downstage.*)

Follow her. I wish to know her every move. But stay out of sight. Don't let her see you.

(PAGE *nods. WILHELM exits. PAGE hides behind The Statues in order to spy upon WILHEMINA. FRIAR turns to WILHEMINA.*)

FRIAR

I should take my leave. Goodbye, Your Majesty.

WILHEMINA

Friar, wait! Take me with you. I must escape this place.

FRIAR

Escape...? But you are the *Queen*. You are carrying the King's child.

WILHEMINA

This is my child, too. I can no longer live this way Friar. I can no longer stay locked in a cage. My husband has replaced love with "duty" and "obedience". Look what he did to my hair. Just think what he might do to my child...

I will run so far the King will never find me. I will grow a garden for food. What I don't eat I can sell. I will raise my child in a house of freedom. In a house of love.

FRIAR

How will you escape? You are recognized everywhere.

WILHEMINA

That is why I need your help.

FRIAR

Your Majesty, what you're proposing to do is considered treason!

WILHEMINA

When you took your vows, you promised to serve all God's children, did you not?

FRIAR

I did.

WILHEMINA

Am I not one of those children? Am I not worthy of that promise? Help me. Please.

(FRIAR considers a long moment then takes off his robe.)

FRIAR

You will need a disguise. Take my robe.

(He hands it to her.)

My horse is in the stables. Meet me there in an hour, when the sun has set. Go!

(WILHEMINA exits. FRIAR exits opposite. PAGE emerges from behind The Statues.)

PAGE

The stables. In one hour.

(PAGE *rubs his hands together gleefully then exits. BEN and JAMIE come back "to life".*)

BEN

The stables...

JAMIE

The stables!

(JAMIE *rearranges the cubes to look like stalls in a stable.*)

BEN

The Royal Stables of King Wilhelm. One hour later...

JAMIE

The stables!

BEN

And in those stables...

BEN/JAMIE

The horses!

(BEN and JAMIE *position themselves in the stall and become The Horses. They whinny softly. FRIAR enters and looks around.*)

FRIAR

Your Majesty? Queen Wilhemina?

(JAMIE *whinnies softly. FRIAR crosses to him and pets him.*)

There, now. We'll be leaving soon, my friend. Only this time you shall be carrying two on your fine, strong back...

(WILHELM *enters dressed in a cloak and hood.*)

Your Majesty. Hurry, take my horse. We must leave at once if we are to avoid detection.

(WILHELM *pulls back the hood to reveal his face.*)

WILHELM

Too late.

(FRIAR *tries to run off opposite. PAGE enters and catches him.*)

WILHELM (cont.)

I could have you killed for this. You are a traitor to the King. However, because I am merciful, I shall merely banish you to the far reaches of my kingdom. If you set foot near this castle again, you will pay with your life.

(WILHELM *turns to the PAGE.*)

Take him away.

FRIAR

What about the Queen?

WILHELM

Ah, yes. The Queen. At this very moment she is being taken to a tower...

(BEN *and* JAMIE *are no longer The Horses.*)

BEN

A tower...

JAMIE

A tower!

(BEN *and* JAMIE *cross to the base of The Tower.*)

WILHELM

A remote tower set deep in the forest, with only one window and no door. At the base of this tower lies a fierce thicket of briars...

BEN

Briars...

JAMIE

Briars!

(BEN *and* JAMIE *position themselves as The Briars. WILHELM crosses to them.*)

WILHELM

In this tower she will be held prisoner until the birth of my child...

(BEN *and* JAMIE, *as The Briars, push The Tower Wall upstage so that the interior is revealed. WILHEMINA is standing there, holding a bundled infant, humming.*)

WILHELM (cont.)

At which point, the child will be taken from her and she, too, will be banished to the far reaches of the kingdom...

(WILHELM crosses behind The Tower and disappears. PAGE pulls FRIAR off. WILHEMINA starts to sing.)

WILHEMINA

*Little one, I promise
Little one, I swear
Whenever you need me
I will always be there*

(She sees someone out the window and starts to back away from it.)

No. Please. No...

(The Briars push The Tower Wall around full circle until it is in the downstage position again. WILHELM enters with them, carrying an infant in his arms. WILHEMINA appears in the window.)

No! My son! Give me back my son! Don't take away my boy! *NOOOOO!!!!*

(Lights out on The Tower. WILHEMINA disappears. PAGE enters.)

WILHELM

Remove the Queen from the tower and banish her. Then announce to the kingdom that she died while giving birth to my son, Prince Frederick.

PAGE

It shall be done, sire.

(PAGE exits. The baby starts to cry.)

WILHELM

Don't cry, little Frederick. I am your father. And you shall obey me always and do your duty – as a good son should.

(WILHELM exits. BEN and JAMIE are no longer The Briars. BEN strums his lute.)