



balletLORENT

RAPUNZEL

Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre

Visual Story Pack

Welcome

Hello, we hope you're looking forward to watching ballet LORENT's *Rapunzel* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre. These notes are for you to read before you see the show. They tell you what happens in the dance and also what to expect when you visit the theatre.

Arriving at the theatre

As you arrive at the theatre you will come into the foyer. It could be busy and loud in the foyer and box office areas. You can borrow a pair of ear defenders from a staff member at the box office to wear if you'd like. There will also be toilets that you can use before you enter the auditorium.

You may hear loud tannoy announcements in the foyer before the performance. This is just to let the audience know the performance will start shortly.

Once you have your tickets you can make your way to the auditorium. Sometimes the doors to the auditorium remain closed until just before the performance is due to start, but you can wait near the doors until they are opened by an usher.

There will be ushers there to check your tickets, help you find your seat and answer any questions you may have.

When you enter the auditorium you will see the stage in front of you with the set for the first act all set up. Only the performers and stage technicians are allowed to go onto the stage and touch the set.

When the performance is about to start the doors to the auditorium will close and the lights in the auditorium will go darker.

About the show

Rapunzel is a dance theatre production performed by balletLORENT's professional dancers. They will be joined by children from a local primary school, and guest dancers with very young children.

The performers tell the story of *Rapunzel* through dance theatre. The performers mostly dance to tell the story, but they will also sometimes act. They will not talk throughout the performance.

There is music throughout the whole performance which sometimes gets loud. There is also a recorded narration with a female voice. This is to help you follow the story. The lights will change lots of times throughout the performance – sometimes they will get darker, but it will only go fully dark at the start and end of Act 1 and Act 2. If it gets too bright, or too noisy you can cover your eyes or ears. If you would like to go out into the foyer you can with your parent or carer and you can come back in whenever you would like.

The performance is split into two acts – the first will last approx. 46 minutes and the second will last approx. 34 minutes. There will be a break between acts of approx. 20 minutes. During this time the stage technicians will enter the stage and move the set into a different position. The audience are welcome to walk around, go to the toilet, and talk during the break. Announcements in the foyer areas will let the audience know when it is time to take your seat for Act 2.

There are many characters in *Rapunzel*. Most of them are human, and some are creatures that crawl on all fours. As the dancers play the different characters they will move in different ways. Some dancers play more than one character. Here are the main characters:



Rapunzel



The Witch



The Prince



The Wife



The King



A Creature



The Husband



The Queen

Story Notes

These notes describe what happens in the performance, so do not read any further if you would rather not know!

If there are any sudden sounds, actions or changes you will see this symbol !

When text is narrated, it will be shown in orange

Act 1

! The lights will go dark in the auditorium and on stage. !

The music will start, with the sound of a girl singing, before a melodic tune starts.

The Husband and Wife dance together on a metal framed bed with a high window adorned with gold petals.

Once upon a time, there lived a wife and her husband who had long wished for a child, but no child had arrived. The wife felt like a planet without a moon, like an ocean without fish, like a tree in the orchard which bears no fruit... but she never gave up on her heart's passionate desire.

The wife climbs up to the window and looks out.



One day in late spring, she was gazing out of the little window at the back of their house. This window overlooked a beautiful garden, bursting with an abundance of flowers and vegetables.

The wife's eyes savoured the rich fertility of the garden until she noticed a bed filled with the finest, freshest flush of rampion.

The Husband distracts the Wife from looking into the garden, and the pair play together. The Husband tempts his Wife with fresh food, but she is drawn back to looking at the Rampion.

But the garden was enclosed by a high wall and no-one dared enter it because it belonged to a powerful and frightening witch.



A Witch enters the garden with her three creatures on leads. **! The creatures are played by performers wearing costumes which are almost lizard like. !** The creatures crawl on all fours, sniffing the ground, menacingly. The Witch has whips to control the creatures, and occasionally cracks them. **! There may be a loud noise as the whips crack. !**

In the Witch's garden, there are beds of flowers and Rampion. Tall trees surround the garden, casting shadows. The Witch waters and tends to the plants



The music changes to a celebratory tone. The King enters floating a large red balloon, representing the birth of a child. He dances with joy as his wife, the Queen shows off their young son, the Prince. Villagers enter, some also floating red balloons and carrying and dancing with their young babies.



The King and villagers dance merrily around a maypole, clad with colourful ribbons. All the time, the Witch watches on from a window in her courtyard.

The Wife is seen again at her window, looking longingly at the Rampion.

Every day she stared longingly from her window, craving for the rampion, the rampion... but, as she knew she had no chance of getting it, she grew pale and sad and began to visibly pine away.

Her Husband joins her, and they see the Witch tending the plants, with her creatures. As the Husband tries to calm his Wife, she more and more frantically peers through the window. She is upset that the Rampion she desires is out of reach, and falls asleep.



! The music changes to a fast, frantic rhythm. ! The Husband is torn, as he wants to help his Wife, but doesn't know how to calm her anxiety.

The husband became very worried and when she exclaimed that she

would die unless she could taste the rampion from the witch's garden, he swore to her that he loved her so much that he would fetch her some, no matter what it cost.

The Husband leaves the bedroom, and climbs the wall into the Witch's garden to pick as much Rampion as he can carry. **! The music changes to a furious, urgent, fast rhythm. !** The Husband climbs back over the garden wall to his bedroom. He sprinkles Rampion petals over his sleeping Wife, and as she wakes, she is overjoyed. The pair dance happily, intimately together. Their love for each other is strong.



As the music changes, the Witch and her creatures are in the garden again. The Witch is angry that the Rampion plants have been picked. She settles in her chair to keep watch on the garden.

The Wife wakes, wanting more Rampion. In a hurry, her Husband climbs the garden wall and sets about picking more of the bright red petals. This time, the Witch is watching.



She leaps up and approaches the Husband, with whips in her hands. She whips the ground around the Husband, and he shakes in fear of

what she might do to him now he has been caught stealing. **! There may be a loud noise as the whips crack. !**

“How dare you trespass in my garden like a thief and steal my rampion! You will suffer badly for this!”

The trembling husband fell to his knees before the witch.

“Do not harm me,” he begged. ‘I took it for my wife because she said she would die if she could not eat it.’

The witch stared long and hard at the husband because she was a woman and knew very well what a craving for rampion might mean. The witch was alone in the world and feared and shunned by everyone. But she burned and yearned for a child of her own, like a

bonfire longs for a match or thunder for lightning, like darkness longs for a shooting star. So she said:

“Very well, you can have as much rampion as you wish, day or night, by the plateful or the bucketful... on one condition. The child that will come into this world must be given at once to me and I will be the mother.’

The husband’s fear was so great that he promised everything, shaking from head to toe, and the dreadful witch let him go.

The Husband hurries back to his Wife with handfuls of Rampion.



! The lights go dark. ! The Witch is lit in her window as she watches the Husband leave.

Once safely home, the sweat cooling in his shirt, his fear grew less and less, just as his wife’s belly grew more and more.



In dark red lighting, the Wife is asleep, under a red sheet. She dreams of parenthood, as young families cross the space, some babies in their parents’ arms, and some on bikes and skateboards.

Time has passed. The Husband enters the bedroom, with an egg

nuzzled upon his feet, and like a father penguin caring for his chick, he passes it gently to his Wife. She places it carefully in to a pouch where the egg can grow.

! The lights go dark. ! The Witch appears, with shadows streaming through the trees. She is waiting.

Time passes, and the Wife now carries a young baby. Her husband floats a large red balloon, and the couple take their baby for a walk in the pram. They are delighted at the birth of their child.



! Some viewers may find the following fight scene upsetting. Feel free to cover your eyes, or look away for a few moments !

Suddenly, the Witch and her creatures appear, demanding to see the new baby. A battle ensues as the creatures hold back the Wife and the Husband frantically tries to protect their child from the Witch's grasp. **! There may be a loud noise as the balloon is popped. !**



The Witch destroys the red balloon, tears the baby from its father's

arms, and makes off. The Wife is distraught. She scolds her Husband, and is inconsolable with grief.

! The characters are pretending to fight and no one is hurt !

The witch was triumphant and gave the child the name Rapunzel. Then she took Rapunzel away with her and the husband was left alone with his distraught wife, whose wasted milk was already curdling uselessly in her breasts.

The Witch cradles the young Rapunzel, dancing with joy and excitement at finally having a child of her own.



As the seasons changed and the child grew, the witch spun with Rapunzel in the snow, whirled with her in the wind, and knew nothing but happiness and joy within her stolen motherhood.

The Wife is distressed, and cries. She struggles to cope with the loss of their daughter.

The wife had endured a hard, bitter time of unimaginable suffering. Her body ached day and night with the loss of her child and although she had managed to forgive the husband, she could never forget the appalling price he had agreed to pay for the rampion.

The Wife and Husband fall asleep. Time passes.

! The lights go dark, and only a moon is seen. !

As time dragged on, the wife tried to console herself with imagining Rapunzel now that she had passed her twelfth birthday. Each night, she would lie in the barren darkness with the husband and invent a story about Rapunzel, a fiction which began to turn into a prayer that might be answered.

A single light shines on the Wife who sits on her bed, with a writing book. She begins to write a story with her Husband. As the bed is moved, it reveals a 12 year old Rapunzel playing, happily in a garden with strange creatures.



She skips, swings and leaps about with the Witch, who has now lost the bitterness and sadness she once carried.

The music changes, and is lively and celebratory. The King circles the stage on a bicycle with his now 12 year old son, the Prince, and the Queen follows pushing a scooter. They play fun games together. When the Prince's parents leave, he comes across Rapunzel. The pair dance together, each taking it in turns to show their favourite steps.



They like each other, and want to be friends, until the Witch sees them, and demands Rapunzel come away

at once. The Witch does not want Rapunzel to be with other people, and pulls her away furiously. Scared, Rapunzel begins to tremble.



! The music gets loud, fast and anxious. ! Rapunzel, frustrated that she cannot do as she wishes, stamps her feet and jumps angrily. The Witch takes her whips and cracks

them on the ground loudly. **! There may be a loud noise as the whips crack. !**

She orders her creatures to lure Rapunzel into the tower. Rapunzel climbs to the top, and the Witch slams the huge doors closed.



All the time, the Husband and Wife have been looking on, writing the story.

! The will be loud percussive music as the doors are slammed shut. !
! The lights go dark. !

Interval

The performance will start again in 20 minutes. You may see the stage crew changing the set ready for Act 2

Act 2

! The lights will go dark in the auditorium and on stage. !

The music will start.

Low lights will come on to show a silhouette of the tower where Rapunzel is trapped.



Time has passed, and Rapunzel's hair has grown. She passes the time playing with her hair and looking out of the window. The Husband and Wife are still in their room, writing their story for Rapunzel.

When the witch wanted to get in, she would stand below and cry:

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel! Let down your hair.'

The Witch climbs the tower, using Rapunzel's long hair as a rope. She brushes Rapunzel hair, and tends to her as best she can.

Below, the King and Prince play football. The Prince isn't interested. The King encourages him to join in, but the Prince isn't happy. He wants to be himself. His father is trying to make him to do something he doesn't want to, and eventually he throws down his crown in frustration.



! The lights go darker. ! The Prince rides his scooter through the woods. As time passes, children and their parents travel through the woods. Seasons change, through spring, summer, autumn and winter. Rapunzel is alone in the tower. It snows. Rapunzel is cold, and wraps herself up.



'One day,' continued the wife to the husband, 'a King's son was riding through the wood and as he came to the tower he heard the sweet singing of the loveliest voice in the world.'

Rapunzel sings from the top of the tower.

The Prince looked for a door in the tower but there was none. Rapunzel's song had entered his heart like an exquisite splinter.

The Prince tries and tries to find a way into the tower, with no luck.



The Witch comes to the tower and calls Rapunzel to let her hair down. The Witch climbs the tower, once again using Rapunzel's hair as a

rope. The Prince is watching on from a nearby tree.

Once, as he stood listening under a tree, the witch arrived. Then he saw how Rapunzel released her long tresses and how the witch climbed up and in through the window to the girl.'

The Witch offers food to Rapunzel, but she is sad about being trapped in the tower alone, and discards it. The Witch leaves her. Soon after, the Prince calls Rapunzel to let her down, imitating the Witch. He climbs the tower and into Rapunzel's room. Rapunzel is surprised, and initially scared. But the Prince reassures her that he is kind, and means no harm.

The Prince was gentle and talked kindly to her. He told her how her singing had possessed his heart, so that he could not rest until he saw

her. Now that he had his wish, he was overcome with her beauty and asked her to take him as her husband.

The pair dance together in the tower, they talk, laugh, embrace, and kiss. **! They swing from the highest points of the tower, but are safe !**



The Husband and Wife are still in their room. They are hopeful of a happy ending for Rapunzel's story. The Prince climbs down, and leaves just before the Witch returns. **! The lights go darker. !**

Rapunzel grew careless and, without thinking, asked the witch why she climbed the tower so slowly when the King's son was with her in an instant. 'You wicked child!' shrieked the witch. 'I thought I had hidden you away from all the world and you have betrayed me!'

! The lights change, and the tower is lit in silhouette, so that large shadows are cast. The music becomes tense and fast. !



The Witch takes a large pair of scissors and launches at Rapunzel, chopping large chunks of hair away.

Rapunzel uses the cut hair to scamper down the tower where the creatures are waiting. The Witch chases Rapunzel around the garden. She is very angry that Rapunzel betrayed her. Rapunzel begs the Witch to be let go, but the Witch attacks her, throws her to the ground, and hits her. The creatures rally round to protect and defend Rapunzel.

! The characters are pretending to fight and no one is hurt. !

As the Witch leaves, Rapunzel escapes.

! The lights go completely dark. !

A small light appears at the top of the tower. The Witch has climbed back up, and is imitating Rapunzel by singing, and waving the long, chopped locks of hair. The Prince climbs up, believing it is Rapunzel at the top.

! Loud Music. !

'You came for your sweetheart but the bird has gone from the nest and sings no more.'

The Witch grabs the Prince, and pulls him into the tower. She attacks him. He is scared and tries to get away. **! The characters are pretending to fight and no one is hurt !**

The witch jabbed and spat at the Prince and in his grief he jumped from the tower and fell into vicious thorns which stabbed into his eyes.



The Prince falls from the tower.
! The performer does not really fall, and is not hurt !

! The lights go dark. !

Only a dim light shines on the Prince as he lays hurt. He takes a bandage and covers his eyes.

In an agony of loss and longing, the Prince stumbled blindly through the wood, doing nothing but weep for Rapunzel.



Both the Prince and Rapunzel are now lost, and wandering through the trees. **! The tall trees are moved**

about the stage as the performers climb. !

! The lights are dark throughout this scene, shining on the tops of the trees. !

The Husband and Wife continue with their story.

The Prince's misery allowed him no rest, so he wandered for a long, long time until at last he came to the desert place where Rapunzel survived with the twin children she had given birth to.

Rapunzel is in a small house in the woods. She is holding two small children.

She was singing to the children and the blind Prince recognized her voice.

The Prince arrives where Rapunzel has been staying. She helps him

When her tears touched his eyes they were healed at once. He could see again, as well as ever.

The Prince removes the bandage from his eyes, and the pair are so happy to see each other again. They dance together – a dance echoed by the Husband and Wife.

The Wife is pleased that they have imagined a happy ending for Rapunzel, and is able to stop grieving.

Rapunzel and the Prince are in love, and hold both of their young babies.



Then the Prince took Rapunzel to his kingdom, where they were welcomed with great joy.

Many villagers appear. They celebrate, dancing with ribbons, spinning and jumping.



! The lights are bright, and a mirror ball spins, shining bright spots of

light across the stage and auditorium. !

! The lights go dark, and only the window and garden are lit. !

The wife fell silent and went to the little window at the back of the house which overlooked the witch's garden and the husband followed her. It was dawn. A blackened, twisted tree stood in the garden, lifeless and leafless. But then they heard the sound of the sweetest singing and there was a young mother playing with her two children among the flowers.

! The lights go dark, and show is ending. !

At the end of the show, the lights will come on again. The performers will come to the front of the stage to bow. You can clap your hands to show that you enjoyed the show if you want to.

! As other members of the audience clap, it may be loud. You may cover your ears if you want to. !

The lights will come on in the auditorium and it will be time to leave.

Photos: Neil Ferry, Luke Waddington, Bill Cooper

For more information please contact Education and Projects Manager, James MacGillivray: james@balletlorent.com