

Phoenix

Regional Reviews by [Gil Benbrook](#)

Rumpelstiltskin

Mesa Community College

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One of the more famous Brothers Grimm fairy tales that has yet to be turned into a Disney movie, *Rumpelstiltskin* has been adapted into an hour-long theatrical show that audience members of all ages can enjoy. The Mesa Community College production of the drama just ended its two-weekend run in a fine presentation with a talented cast of young



Sam Richardson, Marissa Salazar and Janae Dunn

actors and confident direction, with sumptuous creative elements including some beautiful costume designs. While the MCC production has ended its run, it will now tour through the Mesa school system, performing a dozen more times over the next month for hundreds of students.

Fleshed out somewhat from the original Grimm tale, playwright Linda Daugherty has crafted a fairly faithful adaptation with a few moments of humor to help liven up the prevalent darker themes. When Uta doesn't want to pay his taxes, he lies to the King and says that his daughter Alana can spin straw into gold. The King takes the girl, locks her away in a tower in his castle and tells her that if she doesn't turn the straw that he has brought her into gold he will kill her. Distraught, Alana doesn't know what to do until a strange little man appears and tells her that he can turn the straw into gold, but only if she gives him some of her precious items. With the King continually asking for Alana to repeat her gold spinning abilities, his son Marius falling in love with Alana, and the strange man becoming even more demanding, Alana doesn't know what to do.

Director Kevin Dressler has assembled a gifted cast, some of whom play double parts with the use of different voices to set the roles apart. The small cast is quite

effective in portraying the characters, especially Janae Dunn as the strange little Rumpelstiltskin, bringing the right balance of menace, playfulness and mischief to the role. Marissa Salazar plays Alana with the appropriate layers of fear, desperation, and concern for her future. Sam Richardson as Marius has the requisite charm needed to play the warm Prince, which is a nice respite from Jared Kitch who portrays Marius' father the King as a man only looking out for himself. Leah Aumick and Lucia Williams provide humorous voices for the two roles they each play, with Aumick virtually unrecognizable as Arna, the older grandmother of Alana, compared to her later role, the bright and much younger Birdy whom Alana meets once she is taken to the King's castle. Williams efficiently provides much of the humor in the second half as the eavesdropping friend of Alana, Pigeon.

Dressler's direction balances the serious moments with humorous ones so it doesn't let the dramatic elements of the story get too intense. Creative elements are quite lush, especially Mallory Maria Prucha's costume designs which range from various layers of cloth for Rumpelstiltskin; torn, worn rags for Uta, Arna and Alana; and rich colorful designs for the King and Marius. The lighting design by Alan Moerdyk paints the varied moments, from the bright sunny ones to the more intimate, dramatic ones, with beautiful hues and the appropriate use of shadows. Shawn Smith's sound design incorporates some moody musical underscoring to flesh out the dramatic moments.

While aimed more for a younger audience, MCC's production of *Rumpelstiltskin* is a charming adaptation of the Grimm Brothers' tale. Under Dressler's solid direction, the young talented cast effectively brings the story to life in an enjoyable production with solid creative touches including some beautiful costumes. I'm sure the students in the Mesa schools will enjoy it as much as the audiences at the MCC Theatre did.

The Mesa Community College production of *Rumpelstiltskin* ran October 10th to the 18th, 2014, at the MCC Southern & Dobson Campus at 1833 W. Southern Avenue in Mesa. The play will tour 12 performances to eight different Mesa Public Schools elementary schools on Fridays during October and November as part of the Theatre & Film Arts Department's outreach program. Information for their upcoming productions of *Mother Hicks*, *Beyond Therapy* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* can be found at <http://www.mesacc.edu>.

Written by Linda Daugherty
Directed by Kevin Dressler
Stage Manager: Zach Bell
Assistant Stage Manager: Kiri Malolo
Lighting Design: Alan Moerdyk
Costume and Makeup Design: Mallory Maria Prucha
Sound Design: Shawn Smith
Cast: (in alphabetical order):

Arna/Birdy: Leah Aumick
Rumpelstiltskin: Janae Dunn
The King: Jared Kitch
Marius: Sam Richardson
Alana: Marissa Salazar
Uta: Roman Sanchez
Esme/Pigeon: Lucia Williams

Photo: Mallory Maria Prucha

--[Gil Benbrook](#)