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The Rose Theater's 2017-18 season inspires, educates and entertains

(Omaha, NE) It is said that experience is the best teacher. Matt Gutschick, artistic director of The Rose Theater, puts a slight twist on that old idiom.

“Theater experience is the best teacher,” he says.

He has data to back up his claim. Study after study by source after source shows that theater has a positive influence on young people. The benefits are extensive, ranging from the intangible (such as increasing empathy) to the concrete (improved academic success.) Whether children are regularly exposed to theater as an audience member or actively participate in theater through classes or workshops, research shows that theater improves the lives of children.

But this is not new information to the staff at The Rose. For nearly 70 years, the Omaha Theater Company has been dedicated to enriching the lives of children and families through live theater and arts education. This continues to be evident as they launch the 2017-18 season with a collection of plays and musicals that addresses important social issues, interpersonal relationships, overcoming fears and seeing the world from a new perspective.

“The Rose is a place where parents can bring their children and know that they will not only have a special time set aside for their family -- a time that will resonate in their memory for a lifetime -- but they will also receive a real benefit in the lessons that they will learn through the stories being told onstage,” says Gutschick.

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Gutschick has crafted a season that offers a range of shows and activities that will inspire, educate and, of course, entertain children of all ages. Whether inspiring children to think creatively, to stretch their horizons, to face the world bravely or do a little self-reflection, Gutschick hopes the topics addressed in the 2017-18 season will encourage families to see the world through new eyes, to delve further into educational topics and to enjoy the magic of the arts.

One way that The Rose helps young audience members better understand the ideas being presented on stage is through its unique audience engagement activities. The 2017-18 season will continue to offer its series of audience engagement activities designed to highlight the themes or artistic components of each show in a fun and thought-provoking way. These will consist of interactive lobby activities, on-stage contests, photo opportunities and more. In addition, families who attend on the first night of each mainstage show can continue to enjoy special activities celebrating the show's opening. Varying by production, on opening nights at The Rose, audiences may participate in unique interactions with the shows' directors and creators, one-night-only activities and special refreshments served to opening night audiences.

The Rose's long-standing tradition of post-show autographs and the Q&A session that takes place from the stage will both continue, giving children the opportunity to interact directly with performers. Gutschick has been working to further enhance these experiences by including a question at the end of each performance that the actors ask to the Q&A participants. These questions encourage children to reflect on the performance they just experienced and apply the lessons and ideas to their own lives.

As is Rose tradition, when the actors open up the floor to questions from the audience, nothing is off limits. Cast and crew take the time to explain the mechanics of theater magic, from the physics of flying across the stage to how light can be manipulated to create a specific mood. Frequently Rose cast and crew offer more detailed information about how science, technology and engineering are a part of every theater production, sparking interest in those creative and technical careers that involve both imagination and ingenuity.

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A noise-proof “Restless Room” with a live video feed of the show is available in a classroom off the lobby. Free booster seats are available to ensure even the smallest audience members have a great view of the show. Concessions will be available at the premium event shows.

New this year, The Rose will offer a number of performances at 10 am on Sundays and at 7 pm on Saturdays. There will be 10 am performances of **Madagascar** on Sunday, October 15 and Oct. 22, and 10 am performances of **Wonderland** on Sunday, March 25 and April 8. **Seedfolks** will offer 7 pm Saturday performances throughout its run.

The Rose is excited to expand its ability to accommodate audience members with special needs. As in the past, for audience members with special needs, The Rose will offer sensory-friendly performances of mainstage productions. Previously, this was offered for only two shows throughout the season, but starting in 2017, one performance of each regular season show will be designated as “sensory-friendly,” with special accommodations made for families attending with a child on the autism spectrum or with other special needs. American Sign Language interpreters will continue to be available for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing. After several trial runs during the 2016-17 season, The Rose will now also provide audio description services for the blind during one showing of every mainstage production. Contact the Box Office for information on services for people with special needs.

The theater’s mainstage season will consist of nine main stage shows, including:

- *Babe the Sheep Pig*
- *Madagascar: A Musical Adventure*
- *Van Gogh & Me*
- *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*
- *The Meaning of Maggie*
- *Seedfolks*
- *Wonderland: Alice’s Rock & Roll Adventure*
- *Curious George & the Golden Meatball*
- *Disney’s Newsies*

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Seven shows are included with Rose membership; non-members may purchase tickets for regular season shows for \$20 per ticket. The Rose's two premium event shows, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* and *Disney's Newsies* are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony. Rose members receive a \$7 discount off the price of premium event tickets and \$2 off the price of the FIRST STAGE Series.

In addition to the regular season shows, two shows produced specifically for preschoolers and children with special needs will be presented in The Rose's smaller Hitchcock Auditorium as a part of their newly renamed FIRST STAGE series. Two whimsical opposites discover a world of imagination in *Point A to Point B*. An original adaptation of Eugene Field's poem, *Wynken, Blynken & Nod*, adapted by Rose artist educator Ashley Laverty will entertain the youngest audience members in February.

"Our entire organization is focused on helping young people ask meaningful questions about the world, and we encourage that curiosity to start at a very early age," says Gutschick. "We want all our audiences, no matter their age, to ask questions, to love being curious, and to experience the transformative power of live theater."

The Rose's 2017-18 season is sponsored by Children's Hospital and Medical Center and Nebraska Furniture Mart. Show sponsors include Mutual of Omaha, First National Bank, Hy-Vee, Kiewit Companies, Wells Fargo, Runza Restaurants, Omaha Steaks, Security National Bank, Baird Holm, the Vetter Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

About The Rose

The Rose Theater is one of the largest and most accomplished children's theaters in the nation, with a reputation for enriching the lives of children and families through top-quality professional productions and arts education. In 2016, *American Theatre* magazine named The Rose one of the 20 top children's theaters in the United States. The Rose is committed to making the arts accessible to all children, providing opportunities for thousands of children throughout the community to attend shows and participate in classes each year. Over the course of a year, approximately 70,000 people attend the public performances held at the theater, and nearly 30,000 students attend field trip shows annually. The theater strives to introduce young people to a mix of both traditional favorites and ground-breaking original productions. A number of plays and musicals have made their world premiere on The Rose stage, including *Pete the Cat: The Musical*, *Sherlock Holmes & the First Baker Street Irregular*, *Zen Ties*, *Buffalo Bill's Cowboy Band*, and *The Grocer's Goblin & The Little Mermaid*. We take pride knowing that The Rose is the place where children of all ages experience theater for the first time, and we are dedicated to helping them appreciate theater for a lifetime.

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