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Fractured fairy tale *Shrek The Musical* offers irreverent fun at The Rose

(OMAHA, Nebr.) Everyone's favorite ogre is back and bigger than ever in **Shrek The Musical** (TYA), the hilarious stage spectacle based on the Oscar-winning hit film by DreamWorks Animation. The 75-minute production opens at The Rose Theater on Sept. 30 and continues through Oct. 16. Part romance and part twisted fairy tale, **Shrek The Musical** is an irreverently fun show the entire family will enjoy and a message audiences of all ages will appreciate.

Shrek The Musical is a hilarious, irreverent and heart-warming story of an outsider gaining acceptance and learning the importance of friendship. Odd as some of the characters may appear, **Shrek The Musical** is also a classic love story told with humor and heart. The Tony Award-winning show was nominated for a total of eight Tony Awards including best score and best book. The musical is similar to the original film, while delivering fresh new material in a top-quality Broadway score that appeals to audiences of all ages.

"This version of **Shrek The Musical**, which has been adapted specifically for young audiences, demonstrates a unique lens and way of telling the Shrek story," says Rose Artistic Director Matthew Gutschick, referring to the production's TYA designation. (Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) scripts are slightly condensed version of the Broadway show that are just as entertaining as the original but easier for younger theatergoers to sit through.)

As in the DreamWorks Animation film, the green ogre Shrek finds his swamp invaded by banished fairytale misfits who have been cast off by Lord Farquaad, a tiny (but ambitious) tyrant. Shrek soon finds himself on a life-changing journey alongside a wisecracking Donkey and a feisty princess who resists her rescue from a Dragon-guarded tower, all in the hope that his swamp will be returned to him.

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But within the fractured fairytale lies a deeper message, one that resonates deeply with show director Fran Sillau. “Fran once told me that, as a child, he felt like an outsider until he came to The Rose,” says Gutschick. “And I think that is something he is referencing as he has discussed this project with me and with others. He offers a beautiful lens in which to view a piece that has as its biggest musical number a song called ‘Let Your Freak Flag Fly.’”

Sillau sees an important message in **Shrek The Musical**, one that he hopes young audiences can appreciate. “All of us have a place in this world. All of us – at one point or another – have felt like an outsider, someone who didn’t quite fit,” he says. “This show starts out as an ‘us versus them’ story, but it ends as an ‘us story.’ We all have a stake in this world and we all have a part to play in it.”

Music and choreography are the driving forces behind **Shrek The Musical**. The music was composed by Tony Award-winning artist Jeanine Tesori (*Fun Home, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Caroline or Change*), with book by David Lindsay-Abaire (*Ripcord, Good People, Rabbit Hole*). “Jeanine Tesori has a really unique way of referencing everything from Tchaikovsky to Sondheim in her music. She is a brilliant composer, distinctly theatrical, and truly enjoyable. She isn’t necessarily trying to replicate the animated movie. **Shrek The Musical** has its own sense of the world and has its own sense of humor,” says Gutschick.

Rose resident choreographer Sue Gillespie Booton leads a talented cast of actors and dancers through rigorous dance moves that range from dancing skeleton knights in a spooky Dragon’s lair (where she also plays the Dragon), to crisp, sharp movements to represent the utopian society of the land of Duloc. “It’s almost a Socialistic society,” says Booton. “Everything has to be exactly as Lord Farquaad wants it. It all has to be exactly the same and as perfect as possible. The dances reflect that.”

Audiences will find a “big, bright, beautiful world” on stage at The Rose with a set design by Chicago-based designer Christopher Rhoton that completely fills the stage. The world of Shrek’s swamp is dense and rich with thick foliage and trees – a sharp contrast to the plastic-y world of Duloc. “Chris has done a wonderful job of creating a Dulock that feels very artificial and false,” says Sillau.

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Costumes by Rose designer Sherri Geerdes run the gamut from a giant Dragon, green ogres, skeleton knights and a wide range of fairy tale creatures. A favorite is the diminutive Lord Farquaad, whose costume entails actor Brian Guehring sitting on a short scooter with a costume that is constructed around a hoop skirt; this gives Guehring full movement while giving the effect of him being excessively short.

The cast of **Shrek The Musical** consists of many Rose Theater favorites. Robby Stone (*Honk, Peter & the Starcatcher, Big Nate, Jackie & Me*) will bring the green ogre to life. Nik Whitcomb (*Pete the Cat, Sherlock Holmes & the First Baker Street Irregular, Honk*) plays Shrek's sidekick Donkey. Princess Fiona will be played by Lauren Krupski (*Honk, Cat in the Hat, Pete the Cat, A Christmas Story*). Three Rose artist educators will also be featured on stage: Brian Guehring (*Robin Hood, Honk, Mary Poppins*) as Lord Farquaad, Sue Gillespie Booton (*Pete the Cat, Cat in the Hat*) as Dragon, and Colleen Kilcoyne (*Honk*) as Gingy. Rounding out the adult cast are Jennifer Castello and Regina Palmer. The show also features 12 youth performers who will share various roles throughout the show.

Shrek The Musical is recommended for families of children ages five and up. The show is approximately 70 minutes long without an intermission.

The show runs Sept. 30 through Oct. 16, 2016, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. There will be additional performances on Sunday, Oct. 9 at 5 pm and Sunday, Oct. 16 at 5 pm. The 2 pm show on Saturday, Oct. 8 will be interpreted for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; the 5 pm show on Saturday, Oct. 8 is designated as sensory-friendly, with special accommodations made for families attending with a child on the autism spectrum. Contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 for more information.

Tickets for **Shrek The Musical** are \$20. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production, but the public is advised that Rose memberships are limited, and are close to selling out; The Rose does not expect memberships to be available for purchase beyond the production of **Shrek The Musical**.

Shrek The Musical is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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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.

About David Lindsay-Abaire (Book and Lyrics)

David Lindsay-Abaire is a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, screenwriter, lyricist and librettist. David wrote the book and lyrics for *Shrek the Musical*, which was nominated for eight Tonys, four Oliviers, a Grammy, and earned David the Ed Kleban Award as America's most promising musical theatre lyricist. His most recent play, *Ripcord*, opens this fall at Manhattan Theatre Club. His previous play *Good People* premiered on Broadway, was awarded the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, The Horton Foote Prize, The Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, and two Tony nominations. His play *Rabbit Hole* received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, five Tony nominations, and the Spirit of America Award. David's other plays include *Fuddy Meers*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Wonder of the World* and *A Devil Inside*, among others. In addition to his work in theater, David's screen credits include his film adaptation of *Rabbit Hole*, Dreamworks' *Rise of the Guardians*, and the upcoming *Family Fang*, starring Nicole Kidman, Christopher Walken and Jason Bateman.

About Jeanine Tesori (Composer)

Jeanine Tesori won the Tony Award for Best Original Score with Lisa Kron for the musical *Fun Home*, which is currently playing on Broadway. She has also written Tony-nominated scores for *Twelfth Night* at Lincoln Center; *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (lyrics, Dick Scanlan); *Caroline, or Change* (lyrics, Tony Kushner); and *Shrek The Musical* (lyrics, David Lindsay-Abaire). The production of *Caroline, or Change* at the National Theatre in London received the Olivier Award for Best New Musical. Her 1997 Off-Broadway musical *Violet* (lyrics, Brian Crawley) opened on Broadway in 2014 and garnered four Tony nominations, including Best Musical Revival. Opera: *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* (libretto, Tony Kushner; Glimmerglass) and *The Lion, The Unicorn, and Me* (libretto, J. D. McClatchy, Kennedy Center). Music for plays: *Mother Courage* (dir. George C. Wolfe, with Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline), John Guare's *A Free Man of Color* (Lincoln Center Theater, dir. George C. Wolfe), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Delacorte Gala). Film scores: *Nights in Rodanthe*, *Every Day*, and *You're Not You*. Ms. Tesori is a member of the Dramatists Guild and was cited by the ASCAP as the first female composer to have two new musicals running concurrently on Broadway. She is the founding artistic director of Encores! Off-Center at New York City Center, and is a lecturer in music at Yale University.

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