

## For Immediate Release

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### **The Rose Theater announces the cast of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical***

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater announces the cast of its holiday production, ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical***, a musical adaptation by Jahnna Beecham and Malcolm Hillgartner, based on the 1971 children's book by Barbara Robinson. The show will run December 1-23, 2017 on The Rose mainstage.

Everyone in town knows the Herdmans are a family of rotten children -- delinquents who lie, steal, swear, fight, light things on fire and smoke cigars. They are the bane of the community. Unfortunately for the "good" kids, the Herdmans hear that free snacks are offered at the local Sunday School and they show up for the auditions for the Christmas pageant.

Several Rose students -- and a couple of newcomers -- take on the roles of the Herdman children in the upcoming Rose production. Making their Rose debuts are Kaeli Vondra (as Imogene Herdman) and Luke Nieland (as Leroy Herdman). The remaining Herdman siblings will be played by Rose students Chase Robinson (as Gladys), Wayne Hudson (as Ralph), Josiah Hydeen (as Claude) and Jonas Caruso (as Ollie).

Once they learn about the Christmas pageant, the Herdmans insist on playing all the good parts and taking over the rehearsals. With the Herdmans ruling the roost -- even though they have never even heard the Christmas story -- everyone from the terrified pint-sized shepherds to the furious church ladies are calling for the pageant to be called off entirely. The Herdmans insist on telling their own versions of the story, which include hunting down the evil King Herod (who is not supposed to be in the show) with the battle cry of, "Did, Herod, Die!" They loudly communicate their frustrations and disgust with the characters in the Christmas story -- from the Innkeeper who made the pregnant Mary sleep in the barn, to the Three Kings who brought completely impractical gifts to the new baby Jesus.

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When the pageant's usual director, Helen Armstrong (played by Theresa Sindelar), is sidelined with a broken leg, it falls to the reluctant director Grace Bradley (played by Sarah Gibson) and the Reverend (played by Kabin Thomas) to help their community see the Christmas story -- and the Herdman kids -- through new eyes. Bob Bradley (played by Dan Chevalier) does his best to stand by his wife, through the thick and thin of the pageant rehearsals.

Every kid at Lincoln Elementary knows to stay far away from the Herdman kids, lest they "pound you 'til your face is black and blue." Several youth actors, ranging in age from 9 to 16, give life to the small town community. The Bradley children, Beth and Charlie (played by Lily Weak and Carson Bishop, respectively) try to soldier on in support of their mother-turned-director, but have their share of pre-teen mortifying mom moments. Annabella Mosher plays Alice, a snarky, tattletelling, know-it-all poor sport. Other youth cast members include Chloe Irwin, Mason Lindsey, Kian Roblin, Hayden Blayney, Briana Nash and Phoenix Nehls.

Church busybodies are not shy to offer their opinions of the ongoing pageant mayhem -- and sometimes get sucked into the chaos themselves. Jennifer Gilg, Marguerite Bennett, Robby Stone and Ashley Laverty complete the small town community.

In the end, what some folks feared would be the worst pageant ever turns out to have a special quality that makes everyone rethink the real meaning of the Christmas story.

***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** runs December 1-23, 2017, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm, select Saturdays at 7 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. The 2 pm show on Saturday, December 16 will be interpreted for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; this show will also include audio description services for audience members who are blind. Contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 for more information.

Tickets for ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** are \$27 for main floor and \$22 for balcony. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores for \$22. Members of The Rose receive discounted tickets to the production.

***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Hy-Vee, Omaha Steaks, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities, including live reindeer and a visit from Santa, are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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The complete cast of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* includes:

Grace Bradley.....	Sarah Gibson
Bob Bradley.....	Dan Chevalier
Helen Armstrong.....	Theresa Sindelar
Reverend Hopkins.....	Kabin Thomas
Luanne Wendleken.....	Jennifer Gilg
Betty Brown.....	Ashley Laverty
Connie St. Clair.....	Marguerite Bennett
Youth Pastor.....	Robby Stone
Imogene Herdman.....	Kaeli Vondra
Gladys Herdman.....	Chase Robinson*
Ralph Herdman.....	Wayne Hudson*
Leroy Herdman.....	Luke Nieland
Claude Herdman.....	Josiah Hydeen*
Ollie Herdman.....	Jonas Caruso*
Beth Bradley.....	Lilly Weak
Charlie Bradley.....	Carson Bishop*
Ivy Reed-St. Clair.....	Chloe Irwin*
Elmer Hopkins.....	Mason Lindsey*
Teddy Shoemaker-Brown.....	Kian Roblin*
Shelly Shoemaker-Brown.....	Briana Nash
Alice Wendleken.....	Annabella Mosher*
Tracy Armstrong.....	Phoenix Nehls*
Macy Armstrong.....	Hayden Blaney

*\*Broadway and/or Drama at The Rose students*

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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 the stage adaptation of *Prancer*, *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.