

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT: Kori Radloff, korir@rosetheater.org, 402-502-4641

***Elephant & Piggie* bring magical mayhem to The Rose Theater**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) In a fun vaudevillian romp, the Rose Theater's production of ***Elephant & Piggie: We Are In A Play: The Musical***, will present families with plenty of pachydermal peril and swiney suspense when the show opens on April 22.

Elephant & Piggie: We Are In A Play: The Musical brings two of Mo Willems' beloved characters to life in a rollicking adventure perfect for young audiences. An elephant named Gerald and a pig named Piggie are best, best, "bestus" (a word Gerald and Piggie made up that means "very best") friends. But Gerald worries that something could go wrong that would end their friendship. Piggie is not worried at all. She's even happier and more excited than usual. That's because she and Gerald are invited to a party hosted by the Squirrelles, three singing squirrels who love to have a good time. And so begins a day when anything is possible.

Led by Rose veteran Michael Miller (who also serves as the theater's literary manager and an artist educator), ***Elephant & Piggie*** promises to bring down the house with over-the-top theatrical surprises and hilarious moments of tomfoolery.

"The theater is a magical place where artists start with nothing but a big empty stage in a huge auditorium filled with vacant seats and a bunch of crazy, creative ideas, and—under the most ideal circumstances—collaborate to create a live storytelling experience that transports the audience into another world! Whew. Makes me tired just thinking about it," says Miller. "In all seriousness, I think those of us who have the absolute joy and privilege to work in the theater always retain a little awe about this magical atmosphere. However, sometimes it's worth reveling in the over-the-top drama of it all; and that's what ***Elephant & Piggie*** gives us a chance to do."

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The Rose
2001 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

t (402) 345-4849
f (402) 344-7255
www.rosetheater.org



the
Rose
Performing Arts
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Miller accomplishes this monumental task by throwing open the doors of the theater and allowing the audience a peek backstage. Throughout the play, audiences will see behind the scenes at all the components that make a theater tick: racks of costumes from former shows, piles of oversized props, backdrops that drop in at will. “If you and your family are frequent visitors to our zany theatrical worlds here at The Rose, you might just recognize a few of the costumes and props and scenery that you see dancing around Elephant and Piggie as they discover the drama of the theater,” says Miller.

Elephant & Piggie: We Are In A Play incorporates stories from several of Willems’ books. The production is most similar to the Elephant and Piggie book *We are in a Book!*, but fans of the series will also recognize plotlines from other favorite books such as *Should I Share My Ice Cream*, *Elephants Cannot Dance*, *I Love My New Toy*, *I Am Invited to a Party* and more.

Rose newcomer Will Nash Broyles will bring the role of Gerald the Elephant to life. Olivia Jones (most recently in The Rose’s production of *Ivy + Bean*) gives life to Piggie. Together, they sing and dance their way through peril and suspense, facing fundamental questions like, what do you wear to a fancy pool costume party? Should you share your ice cream? And how can two friends play with one toy? Ann Sterglou, Katy Kepler and Joshua Lloyd Parker round out the cast as the fun-loving Squirrelles, a trio of nutty back-up singers.

Elephant & Piggie features a number of lively songs with lyrics by Willems and music by Deborah Wicks La Puma that will leave audiences doing the “Flippy Floppy Floory” dance all night long.

Over the course of the play, Gerald and Piggie learn about sharing, how to get ready for a fancy-costume pool party and how not to get angry at a friend even when he breaks a favorite toy. (An added bonus? Learn how to make an active audience do whatever you want them to do, including saying “banana”!)

Elephant & Piggie concludes with Piggie explaining to Gerald that all plays come to an end, but reassuring him that they will still be together. As they emerge from their play about a play, the twosome realizes that they can have fun and go on new adventures, even without a script.

The rollicking adventure is perfect for families of children ages five and up, who will appreciate ***Elephant & Piggie***’s messages about being a friend, handling stressful situations and working as a team.

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Elephant & Piggie: We Are In A Play: The Musical runs April 22-May 8, with performances on Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Interpretation for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing will be offered at the 2 p.m. show on Saturday, April 30. The show is 60 minutes long without an intermission.

Tickets for ***Elephant & Piggie*** are \$18 per person. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores for \$14 each. Coupons for \$6 off the regular ticket price are available at area Runza Restaurants. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production.

Elephant & Piggie: We Are In A Play: The Musical is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Runza Restaurants, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

About Mo Willems (Author/Adapter)

Mo Willems, a #1 New York Times Bestselling author and illustrator, is best known for his Caldecott Honor picture books, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, and *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*. His ***Elephant & Piggie*** early reader series have consistently topped the New York Times Bestseller lists, been translated into numerous languages, and have been awarded two Theodor Geisel Medals and five Geisel Honors since debuting in 2007. Mo began his career as a writer and animator for *Sesame Street* (PBS), where he garnered six Emmy Awards for writing. His TV career includes creating *The Off-Beats* (Nickelodeon) and *Sheep in the Big City* (Cartoon Network) and serving as head writer for *Codename: Kids Next Door* (Cartoon Network). After leaving television, he has continued to produce short animated films based on his books that have won numerous awards in festivals around the world. As a performer, Mo has appeared at numerous venues including the San Francisco Sketchfest, BBC Radio, and NPR. His first play *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical*, (performed during the 2013-14 season at The Rose), was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for best new play.

About Deborah Wicks La Puma (Music)

Deborah Wicks La Puma is a composer, music director, and orchestrator. Her work for adults and children has been seen by thousands around the world, from Australia to Bahrain to the East Room of the White House, enjoying both popular and critical success. She also worked with Mo Willems on the world premiere of *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical* at the Kennedy Center. Her other works for young audiences include *OLIVÉRio: A Brazilian Twist* (with Karen Zacarias), *Frida Libre* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Ferdinand the Bull* (based on the book by Munro Leaf), *Chasing George Washington: A White House Adventure* (Kennedy Center), *Einstein Is a Dummy* (Alliance Theatre) with playwright Karen Zacarias, and *Nobody's Perfect* (based on the book by Marlee Matlin) with Doug Cooney, a musical in English and American Sign Language. Her awards include the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, a National Endowment for the Arts' New American Works Grant, two Parents' Choice Awards, an iParenting Media Award, and two Helen Hayes nominations for Outstanding New Play.

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.