

## For Immediate Release

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### The Rose Theater's production of *Babe the Sheep Pig* shares a message of being your best self

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater throws open the barn doors -- literally -- as it opens its 2017-18 season with its production of *Babe the Sheep Pig*. The play, which tells the story of a remarkable pig named Babe, opens Friday, September 8 and runs through September 24 on The Rose mainstage.

*Babe the Sheep Pig* is told from the viewpoint of a menagerie of barnyard animals. The story follows the adventures of a young piglet named Babe who arrives at the Hogget Farm after a farmer wins him at a country fair. Befriended by a kind sheepdog named Fly, Babe struggles to fit in with the others on the farm, who taunt him for being a less desirable animal. Under Fly's gentle guidance, Babe not only learns the secrets of sheepherding, but discovers he has an innate talent for the skill.

"In *Babe the Sheep Pig* you have this young pig who is sent to a farm and introduced to rules he doesn't understand," explains director Matthew Gutschick. "It is a world where each species is separated and they each have a view of the hierarchy that exists between them. Babe uses his unique gifts to break through the barriers and leads with kindness and love. It is just a piece that, to me, resonates with great importance to our current socio-political climate."

A cast of nine actors portray a wide range of animals, from pigs and sheep, to cats, ducks, geese, puppies and more. Each of the barnyard animals reveals their own distinctive personalities, helping to convey lessons on kindness, loyalty, love and beating the odds.

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### **The Rose Theater**

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“It is a very vibrant world filled with colorful characters. In the beginning, only a few of them are nice to Babe, but as the story progresses, Babe teaches the entire farm how rules can be upended,” says Gutshick.

**Babe** audiences will find that even traditional theater rules have been upended in this production. Families will enter the auditorium to find a quaint village fair taking place before the show starts. Children are invited to come onstage prior to the show where they can engage in carnival games reminiscent of a time gone by. Seating is even available onstage for families who wish to do so, allowing a stage-eye-view of the production.

“This is a unique experience for audience members who wish to see the show from the stage. This on-stage audience then becomes a part of the action when Babe competes in the Grand Challenge Sheep Dog Trials,” Gutschick explains. “There is also another message for these folks; it is about what it feels like to have your life on stage with others looking in.”

The overall look of **Babe the Sheep Pig** features timeless designs that are equally at home in a world of the past as they are in modern rural life. While the original book takes place in the countryside of Great Britain, Gutshick has chosen to relocate the piece to rural America, an environment that will not be unfamiliar to Nebraska audiences. Props mistress Devon Denn-Young has created a old-fashioned but universal look that feels homey, warm and inviting.

“We really aimed to create a design that embraces a sense of playfulness and imagination,” says Gutshick.

Scenery is minimal, with few moving parts. Scenic designer Christopher Rhoton’s design features a well-worn, skeleton-like barn that can become everything from a country hillside to a farmhouse to a village fair with the help of a handful of flown-in pieces. Lighting designer Craig Moxon uses layers of textured light to further suggest locations and changes in mood.

Costume designer Sherri Geerdes was challenged to create recognizable barnyard creatures with costumes that could be changed quickly -- often onstage. She has tackled this with her usual finesse, and a nod to some tongue-in-cheek references, such as a turkey costume constructed using turkey basters.

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While ***Babe the Sheep Pig*** is not a musical, Gutschick has chosen to incorporate a musician performing original and folk tunes live on stage throughout the performance. Musician Adam Sherrerd has written original compositions for The Rose's production which are intertwined with more familiar tunes.

"There are moments when the show stops to celebrate," says Gutschick. "It just turns the moment into something musical and magical that audiences are going to love."

In the end, ***Babe the Sheep Pig*** offers a message of warm and joyful life lessons in a heart-warming tale of friendship, adventure and bravery.

With its message about embracing your talents and finding your place in the world, ***Babe the Sheep Pig*** is perfect for families with children ages five and up.

***Babe the Sheep Pig*** runs September 8-24, 2017, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Following an ongoing tradition at The Rose, the opening night audience will be treated to special pre-show activities, including live potbellied pigs to view and pet on Friday evening. The 2 pm show of ***Babe the Sheep Pig*** on Saturday, September 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. The 5 pm show on Saturday, September 16 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 ***Babe the Sheep Pig*** are \$20. Discount ticket vouchers are available for \$16 at area Hy-Vee stores. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production.

***Babe the Sheep Pig*** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Wells Fargo, 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.

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