

## For Immediate Release

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### ***Harold and the Purple Crayon* takes audiences on a fantastic journey of imagination at The Rose Theater**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) A colorful crayon is the passport to whimsy and wonder in ***Harold and the Purple Crayon***, the next production to be featured on stage at The Rose Theater, March 24 - April 9, 2017. The musical adventure features the beloved character created by Crockett Johnson, following along as his scribbles take him on adventures on the earth and into the heavens.

The title character in ***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** is a curious young boy who, armed with his trusty purple crayon, has the power to create a world of his own simply by drawing it.

***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** opens to a largely white set, similar to a broken-up blank page: the perfect canvas for a young boy who loves to draw. Using his handy purple crayon, Harold (played by Dan Chevalier) soon draws a road and other objects that fill the “page” with the objects in his imagination, thanks to clever projection designs by Brittany Merenda. The limited color palette explodes into a rainbow of color as Harold’s drawings become physical objects that transport him to a forest, a dragon’s cave, the ocean, outer space -- and safely back home again.

“The show has a surrealist feel to it. It is blending waking life with dream life,” says director Matthew Gutschick. “It is always asking the question: what is real and what is imagined?”

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***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** is based on books by Crockett Johnson, which have been a staple of children's literature for the past 50 years. Playwright Don Darryl Rivera teamed with composer Auston James and lyricist Rob Burgess to adapt the minimalist style of Johnson's books into a gentle adaptation that peeks into the mind of a child's imagination. The script uses the storyline of the original book, but also incorporates scenes from several of the series' sequels.

The production of ***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** uses limited language and tells its story largely through song, animation and movement. This unique style of storytelling makes the production perfectly suited to introducing young children to theater, while engaging older audience members through its artistry and design.

Characters emerge from Harold's drawings through innovative use of puppetry. Props mistress Devon Denn-Young and costume designer Sherri Geerdes fashioned many of the objects on stage from recycled or found objects. The result is a world filled with porcupines made from colanders, puffer fish made from expanding toy balls and deep-sea diving apparatus made from salad bowls and soda bottles.

"Harold encounters a wide range of characters as he travels to unknown lands," explains Gutshick. "He helps out characters such as a puffer fish, porcupine, moose, aliens and more! This show demonstrates that there are no boundaries for a child with a crayon and an imagination."

With its gentle storyline and whimsical on stage artistry, ***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** is perfect for families with children ages four and up.

***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** runs March 24 through April 9, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. The 2 pm show on Saturday, April 1 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, March 4 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 ***Harold and the Purple Crayon*** are \$20. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production.

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*Harold and the Purple Crayon* is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, First National Bank, 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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