

For Immediate Release

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

***Prancer* puppetry making strides at The Rose Theater**

(Omaha, NE) The Rose Theater's upcoming season will continue to provide entertaining and educational offerings for children and families. The nine mainstage shows in the 2016-17 season promise to introduce children to worlds of color, excitement, adventure and exploration with offerings that range from wildly popular children's books, to classic favorites and original theatrical works.

The Rose's premium holiday show will take audiences on a flight of fancy. ***Prancer***, based on the film produced by Raffaella De Laurentiis, will make its world premiere on The Rose mainstage November 24 - December 18. In the production, young Jessica Riggs' family has fallen on hard times. Even though the world keeps trying to bring her down, Jessica holds tight to her optimism and hope -- and especially to her belief in Santa Claus and miracles. When a hurt reindeer appears in Jessica's backyard, she is convinced it is Prancer, from Santa's sleigh team. As she nurses the creature back to health, the entire community learns about Prancer, causing big problems for Jessica as she tries to return the reindeer home. The show will incorporate innovative puppetry techniques to bring ***Prancer*** to life on stage and warm the hearts of holiday audiences.

The premium holiday show will be led by Rose Artistic Director Matthew Gutschick, who returns to the director's chair after heading several successful productions, including *A Christmas Story: The Musical*, *Robin Hood* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*. New York City puppet designer Erik Novak will lead the efforts to bring the title character to life on stage, assisted by Rose teaching artist Stephanie Jacobson as puppetry choreographer.

Prancer will delight families with children ages seven and up. The premium event show runs two hours with an intermission.

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The Rose
2001 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

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



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Prancer will be presented Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm during its run on The Rose mainstage, November 24 - December 18. Interpretation for the hearing impaired will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, December 3. Tickets are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony.

The Rose's 2016-17 season is sponsored by Children's Hospital and Medical Center and Nebraska Furniture Mart. Show sponsors include Mutual of Omaha, First National Bank, Hy-Vee, Kiewit Companies, Wells Fargo, Runza Restaurants, Kid Cuisine, Security National Bank, Baird Holm, the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and WOWT NBC Omaha.

About Erik Novak

Eric Novak is a puppet designer, sculptor, fabricator and master craftsman working in film, theatre, museum exhibition and store display. In his Brooklyn studio, Eric has designed and built puppets and specialty props for a wide range of clients including Radio City Music Hall, Omaha Symphony, Brookfield Properties, Scholastic, The Skirball Cultural Center, and Mabou Mines among many others.

Most recently he designed and directed puppets for Radio City Music Hall's *New York Spring Spectacular* which premiered in March 2015. Previously, Eric made his Broadway debut puppeteering as Magic Screen in "*The Pee Wee Herman Show*" (2010). In 2007, the permanent exhibit *Noah's Ark* opened at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. Eric sculpted 25 pairs of life-size animal heads in wood, along with the sculptural welding of puppets and kinetic sculptures designed by Christopher Green. Also, he was the Lead Sculptor at Constructive Display, Inc., for clients such as Disney, Sony and Scholastic Books. He also constructed four life-sized marionettes for the feature film "*The American Astronaut*" (2001), two parade-scale puppets for the North American Tour of "*Miss Saigon*" (2002), and a 25-foot praying mantis puppet for the Village Halloween Parade (2001).

Currently in production is his first short film with puppets, "*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*" in which he is designer and director. Original theatrical works include "*The Adventures of Charcoal Boy*" at the HERE Arts Center (2006) and the National Puppet Festival (St. Paul, MN, 2007), "*The Bacon / Mingus Triptych*" at the Voice 4 Vision Puppet Festival (2004), "*E-Volution*" at the Jim Henson Puppet Festival Cabaret (2000), and "*Rex Rocket in Outer Space*" at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, GA (1997).

In addition, Eric has designed and built puppets for many other notable artists and companies including: Basil Twist/Tandem Otter Productions – including the Broadway production of "*The Addams Family*", Jon Ludwig, Ping Chong, Roudabout Theater Company, Amy Trumpeter, Tom Lee, Matt Acheson, and Chris Green.

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Eric has received numerous grants from the Jim Henson Foundation and is a MacDowell Colony Fellow. He received his BFA in Set Design from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI (1989). He lives with his wife and two children in Brooklyn, New York.

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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