

For Immediate Release

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***Peter & The Starcatcher* sets imaginations soaring at The Rose Theater**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) Audiences will be transported to the enchanted world of Neverland, where pirates rule, mermaids sing and a boy can choose to never grow up, in The Rose Theater's production of ***Peter & The Starcatcher***, Dec. 4-27. In this whimsical origin story of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, an apprentice Starcatcher and an orphan boy take to the high seas encountering Lost Boys, pirates, fighting mollusks and mermaids.

Peter & The Starcatcher -- a prequel to the classic story of *Peter Pan* -- opens to find a young orphan (who happens to be unnamed) and his two friends, food-obsessed Ted and power-hungry Prentiss, about to board a ship called The Neverland. The boys have been plucked from St. Norbert's Home for Lost Boys to serve onboard the ship, but little do they know they are about to embark on a wild adventure. Onboard, the boys meet 13-year-old Molly Aster, a brave and plucky girl on a mission to protect a mysterious substance called "starstuff." It is not long before The Neverland is being chased by pirates, eventually coming a-ground on a mysterious, uncharted island inhabited by hostile natives called Mollusks -- with pirates still in pursuit. As Molly and the boys work to protect the starstuff, the many pieces of the Peter Pan legend fall into place. Throughout their adventures, they survive a capsized ship, escape a crocodile cage and repeatedly outsmart their nemeses. Along the way Molly learns what it means to grow up while the boy without a name takes up residence on this island where dreams are born and time is never planned - the island where that nameless orphan is eventually christened Peter Pan.

"The journey Peter takes in this show is really powerful," says Gutschick. "This is a kid who has been denied a childhood, and in the end, he finds one that is never-ending."

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the
Rose
Performing Arts
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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A dozen actors play more than 100 unforgettable characters, employing innovative stagecraft and the limitless possibilities of imagination. The actors perform on a sparse, deconstructed stage (even the exposed brick of the back wall of The Rose stage will be visible) which is transformed into a world of fantasy and whimsy through the clever use of props (designed by props master Christopher Dills) and innovative scenery designed by Adam Rowe. Costumes have been designed by Sherri Geerdes.

“The show is really a love letter to the way that children play,” says Gutschick. “The set is a playground and the props come together in imaginative ways, just as children create their own make believe out of the objects they find in their world.”

Quickly the audience learns they will encounter flying, dreaming and adventure as they are asked to imagine a bustling port in the British Empire where a journey is about to start. There, Lord Aster and his daughter Molly, are preparing for a secret mission of the Queen. Also on the dock are two identical trunks which are key to the plot of the story as each is about to be loaded onto the wrong ship.

Out on the storm-tossed high seas, the orphan boy who distrusts adults so much he vows to never grow up crosses paths with star-struck pirates, cross-dresser mermaids, a huge ticking crocodile and other creatures that promise to delight and entertain anyone who has fond memories of J.M. Barrie’s stories.

“By the end of the show, we are left with a blueprint for the legend of Peter Pan. It leaves all kinds of Easter eggs as to who these characters will become,” says Gutschick.

As the villain Black Stache, Bill Grennan (who last delighted Rose audience in his multiple roles in Buffalo Bill’s Cowboy Band), plays a flamboyant pirate with plenty of panache and a moustache to match.

“Stache is a bad guy in search of a good guy,” says Gutschick. “He eventually finds it, as we all know, in Peter Pan.”

While the entire show is filled with witticisms and wisecracks, Black Stache delivers a multitude of puns, anachronisms and double entendres that will leave audiences rolling in the aisles. All ages will find something to enjoy with the show’s humor, with plenty of slapstick comedy to entertain the youngest family members and an abundance of elbow-nudging, tongue-in-cheek innuendo that will have the quickest wits chuckling.

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Gutschick says the story will appeal equally to kids and adults. "It's like a Pixar movie, with a lot of physical humor for the kids and a lot of clever word play for the adults."

"As we have been rehearsing, there have been many, many moments that have had us all absolutely rolling in laughter. This truly promises to be one of the funnier shows we have ever done here at The Rose," says Gutschick.

Stache's silly sidekick, Smee, is played by Rose artist educator and perennial favorite Kevin Ehrhart. Other Rose Theater veterans fill the leading roles of the show. The boy without a name (who eventually becomes Peter Pan) is played by Joshua Lloyd Parker, in a vast departure from his last role as the blue feline rock star in The Rose's hugely popular production of *Pete The Cat*. Bethany Bresnahan (who was last seen as the bewitching Ivy in *Ivy + Bean: The Musical*) plays Molly, and the remaining cast is filled with returning Rose artists.

The show's cheekiness is balanced by the touching context of the legend. Gutschick says the show is fundamentally about adolescence and transition, an ode to the end of childhood and innocence. Sacrifices must be made, but in the end, not only does Peter learn how to rise above his past, he learns how to fly.

This inventive, high-energy play by Rick Elice is based on the book, *Peter and the Starcatchers*, by Dave Barry (the well-known humorist whose column runs in the Washington Post magazine) and Ridley Pearson (who may be best known to Rose audiences for his *Kingdom Keepers* series of books about children saving the Disney parks from destruction by the movies' villains). Reflecting the sharp, clever wit of Dave Barry and an award-winning instrumental score by Wayne Barker, this prequel to the story of *Peter Pan* has been winning the hearts of both adults and kids since it first appeared on Broadway in 2012 where it earned the most Tony nominations of any play in history -- nine. The play received five Tony awards at the ceremony on June 10, 2012.

Though not a musical, the show does have a few songs interspersed throughout the production which were written by Wayne Barker.

"We are excited to bring this show to Omaha and for the opportunity to do something very fresh and original. This is a show that not only challenges us as artists, but also challenges the audience. It is a show that engages the imaginations of adults as well as children," says Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick.

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Peter & The Starcatcher runs Dec. 4-27, with performances on Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. There will be no show on Friday, Dec. 25. Interpretation for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing will be offered on Saturday, Dec. 19.

While appropriate for all ages, this Peter Pan backstory will be best appreciated by children 10 and older. It is two hours long with an intermission.

Tickets are \$25 for main floor and \$20 for balcony seats. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores through a special Kid Cuisine purchase. Members of The Rose receive discounted tickets to the production.

Peter & The Starcatcher is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Kid Cuisine, Hy-Vee, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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. 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. For additional information, visit www.rosetheater.org.

About Peter & The Starcatcher

After its origination at the La Jolla Playhouse, followed by a brief Off-Broadway run, ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** opened on Broadway in 2012 and went on to win five Tony Awards. The playwright sets the time and place - via the official ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** web site - "...on an island, our Neverland. Wendy has not yet appeared. Instead, we have Molly, our hero, in a time before girls were encouraged to be heroes. We have no Captain Hook...or rather, we have no Hook yet. Instead, we have the pirate who shall become Hook, but not until we're through with him. He, whom the pitiful pirate kingdom calls Black Stache. We have our orphans, perpetually lost, though not quite yet Lost Boys. We have natives and mermaids and a perilously hungry crocodile. Even Tinker Bell reaches our island before we leave it, because she could not stay away. The nameless boy at the center of our story ironically learns what it is to be a man over the course of our play, when he's destined to stay a boy forever. The principle difference between our play and [J.M.] Barrie's is that we bring this boy and Molly to the brink of understanding what love might be, so that the thrill of an eternity of 'awfully big adventures' is tinged with the ineffable sadness of what a boy who will never never know. Only when Molly leaves him behind, bound for adulthood, does our boy truly become Peter Pan." Elice concluded, "James Barrie found his character [Peter Pan] by embracing the notion of never growing up. I found mine by realizing I had."

Entertainment Weekly described ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** as "an absurdly funny fantastical journey." *The New York Times* review raved, "With grown-up theatrical savvy and a child's wonder ... this show never stops flying." *New York Magazine* called it "Miraculous. Spectacle, wit and joy spill out of this production like treasure from a magic pocket."

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About Rick Elice, Playwright

Rick Elice is considered one of the theater world's bright stars as the playwright for ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** (2004) and the book writer for the musicals *Jersey Boys* and *The Addams Family*. *Jersey Boys* garnered him a Tony Award for best musical in 2006. Six years later, ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** received nine Tony Award nominations and then came away from the 2012 Tony Awards with five of those awards.

Elice has an impressive resume of theatre work. He wrote the popular thriller, *Double Double* with his partner Roger Rees (translated into sixteen languages), *Leonardo's Ring* (London Fringe, 2003), and *Dog and Pony* (New York Stage and Film, 2003). From 1982 to 2000 he worked as the creative director at Serino Coyne Inc. where he produced ad campaigns for some 300 Broadway shows, from *A Chorus Line* to *The Lion King*. He served as a creative consultant for the Walt Disney Studio from 1999 to 2009. He pays homage to his theater education as a Teaching Fellow, Harvard University and as a charter member, American Repertory Theatre. In 2003, he appeared off-Broadway in Elaine May's comedy, *Adult Entertainment*. He wrote the book for *The Addams Family* Broadway musical which is now on national tour. His latest success ***Peter & The Starcatcher*** is a play with music adaptation of the original novel *Peter and the Starcatchers* by authors Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson.

About Dave Barry, Book Co-Author

Dave Barry is a Pulitzer Prize winning American author and columnist, who wrote a nationally syndicated humor column for The Miami Herald from 1983 to 2005. He has also written numerous books of humor and parody, as well as comedic novels. Barry won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary. One of Barry's columns was largely responsible for the movement to observe International Talk Like a Pirate Day every year on September 19.

Barry has written more than 30 books, including the novels *Big Trouble*, *Lunatics*, *Tricky Business* and, most recently, *Insane City*. He has also written a number of books with titles like *I'll Mature When I'm Dead*, which are technically classified as nonfiction, although they contain numerous lies. Two of Barry's books were the basis for the CBS sitcom *Dave's World*.

About Ridley Pearson, Book Co-Author

Ridley Pearson is an author of suspense and thriller novels for adults, and adventure books for children.

Pearson became the first American to receive the Raymond Chandler-Fulbright Fellowship at Oxford University in 1991. He received the Quill Award from the Missouri Writers Hall of Fame, its highest honor. This award serves as a reminder of the importance of writing, and encourages young people to develop their own joy for writing.

Ridley teamed up with his long-time friend, humorist Dave Barry, to co-author *Peter and the Starcatchers* (2004), a prequel to *Peter Pan*. The novel was adapted as a play, ***Peter & The Starcatcher***, written by Rick Elice, which earned the most Tony nominations of any play in history— nine. The play received five Tony awards in 2012.

Pearson and Barry have produced three additional prequels – *Peter and the Shadow Thieves* (2006), *Peter and the Secret of Rundoon* (2007), and *Peter and the Sword of Mercy* (2009). Another Peter-related book published by the duo is *Bridge to Neverland* (2011). Also for Disney, Pearson has written a series of novels set inside Disney theme parks, called *The Kingdom Keepers*, in which five teenagers battle the Overtakers—the evil Disney villains—to keep the parks safe. Also with Dave Barry, Ridley Pearson has written *Science Fair* (2008) and three Never Land books: *Escape from the Carnivale* (2006), *Cave of the Dark Wind* (2007), and *Blood Tide* (2008).

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