

For Immediate Release

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***Wynken, Blynken & Nod* sets sail for imaginative seas at The Rose** *Theatrical adventure designed to introduce children to the theater*

(OMAHA, Nebr.) A trio of fun-loving adventurers set sail among a star-filled sky in The Rose Theater’s latest First Stage production, the world premiere production of ***Wynken, Blynken & Nod***. The 45-minute interactive production designed for very young audiences opens at The Rose Theater on its Hitchcock Stage on February 10 and continues through March 4, 2018.

Wynken, Blynken & Nod is based on the poem of the same name by Eugene Field. Rose artist educator Ashley Lavery has adapted the piece to appeal to young theatergoers, first time audiences and children with special needs. Told through non-verbal creative movement and charming puppetry, audiences will “sail on a river of crystal light into a sea of dew,” (as the words of the original poem say).

Lavery found herself instantly drawn to the classic poem. “There seemed like there was so much dramatic potential,” she says. “I love the imagery of the poem. Sailing into a river of crystal dew seemed like such a beautiful image! That sentence has really inspired a lot of the design for the show.”

The 45-minute production is filled with visual delights (but without any loud sounds or full blackouts), making the show especially suited for children over age two. The show doesn’t rely on loud or busy action to hold the audience’s attention, but will instead engage their curiosity and imaginations. Parents can expect a soft, gentle story reminiscent of a lullaby, quietly engaging young imaginations with wonder and humor.

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Music played live by Jesse Wohlman lends to the feeling of lullaby land. His enchanting compositions played on the guitar, harmonica and banjo give added dimension to the story. “Jesse’s musical composition is a lovely accompaniment to the show. There are many surprising discoveries the actors and the musician and I found in rehearsals by playing with the different instruments. One of my personal favorites is when the harmonica accompanies the jumping herring fish,” she says.

The show is not without its moments of action. The characters discover a variety of curiosities as they sail among the stars. They interact with the moon; they discover treasures; they dance with sea creatures. In one scene, Wynken, Blynken and Nod encounter a storm. The storm occurs all around the audience, complete with windchimes, spray bottles and a pseudo-parachute.

“I really enjoy shows with adventures and journeys,” says Laverty. “Wynken, Blynken, and Nod have a very specific task to complete and they go to great lengths to accomplish it.”

Lauren Crabtree’s dreamy set design is filled with floating, billowing fluff, evoking a sense of the sky, the sea and dreamland in general. Costume designs by Erin Bragg evoke the Victorian era with frills and fluffs paired with steampunk-style accessories perfect for the trio of explorers.

With its low reliance on spoken language, ***Wynken, Blynken & Nod*** is simple and silly at times, making it ideal for young children and for children on the autism spectrum. The show has been designed specifically for first-time theater-goers with simple scenes and a gentle storyline.

“This show serves as a gentle introduction to theatre for children under 5 years old,” says Laverty. “From its conception, this show has been created specifically and intentionally for two- to five-year-olds. That may mean very young children feel inspired to call out or talk back to the performances, or move and dance, throughout the show -- and we encourage that interaction.”

Laverty partnered with Sandy Wlaschin, a Head Start teacher at Liberty Elementary School, and Becky Bounds, the Childhood Education Director at the Downtown YMCA, during the development of ***Wynken, Blynken & Nod***. Through several creative drama workshops, the children helped inspire plot points and character traits found in the play. Throughout rehearsals in January 2018, the cast presented pieces of the play to preschool children at Liberty Elementary and the YMCA. By rehearsing and sharing pieces of the play with them, Laverty discovered firsthand what was exciting, boring, surprising, chaotic, or disinteresting to them and used that information to create a production that will directly engage very young audiences.

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Laverty recounts an example of how her work with the student influence the show. “The scene where Mother Octopus saves Nod from being stuck in the ocean was an idea a 3 year old child offered at the YMCA. As a group, we pantomimed the entire idea, and then I added it into the script,” she says.

The result is an enchanting and interactive production that is sure to capture the imaginations of young audiences.

Wynken, Blynken & Nod is recommended for families of children ages two and up. The show is approximately 45 minutes long without an intermission. It is presented on The Rose’s Hitchcock Stage, the black box-style theater on the theater’s fourth floor.

The show runs February 10 through March 4, 2018, with performances on Saturdays and Sundays at 9:30 and 11:00 am; and Mondays at 10 am. Contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 for more information.

Tickets for ***Wynken, Blynken & Nod*** are \$12. Members of The Rose receive discounted tickets to the production.

Wynken, Blynken & Nod is sponsored by Vetter Health Services.

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