

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT: Kori Radloff, korir@rosetheater.org, 402-502-4641**CARMELA**
FULL OF WISHES**World Premiere of *Carmela Full of Wishes*
at The Rose celebrates the power of dreams**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) A young girl's birthday wish transports audiences into the Latinx culture in the heartwarming world premiere of ***Carmela Full of Wishes***. The play, making its debut on The Rose stage, opens January 28, 2022 and runs through Feb. 13, 2022 at The Rose Theater.

Adapted by Alvaro Saar Rios, ***Carmela Full of Wishes*** brings to life the book by the Newbery Award-winning team behind *Last Stop on Market Street* -- author Matt de la Peña and illustrator Christian Robinson. The inspiring story opens on Carmela's seventh birthday, where she finds her wish has already come true – she is finally old enough to join her big brother as he does the family errands. Together, they travel through their migrant community full of life and vibrancy, until they arrive at the Laundromat, where Carmela finds a lone dandelion growing in the pavement. But before she can blow its white fluff away, her brother tells her she has to make a wish. If only she can think of just the right wish to make....

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The puffy dandelion fills Carmela's imagination with wonder as she imagines what wishes it might bring.

As Rose Artistic Director Matthew Gutschick explains, "The story revolves around which wish Carmela is going to choose. At the same time, she is navigating this relationship with her older brother, who as you might imagine, is sometimes trying to distance himself from Carmela and maybe isn't so excited about her tagging along."

Carmela's vivid imagination pictures a wide variety of possibilities as she tries to decide what truly is her deepest wish.

"I think one of the things that makes this story so beautiful is that Carmela is examining what's the most meaningful wish that she can make? Is it something that she wants to wish for her mother, or her brother, or for herself," says Gutschick. "She's moving through each of these scenarios and we get to see those scenarios acted out on stage quite fantastically in front of our eyes, which is fun, too, because there are moments where she wants an unlimited amount of stuff to come out of a vending machine and that kind of thing. So, we get some silly wishes that she's considering. But we also get some more serious and heartfelt ones as well."

The actors in ***Carmela Full of Wishes*** come to The Rose from across the country. Mireya Luna, who plays Carmela, is a theater artist from Houston, Texas. Tatiana Sandoval is a recent graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, making her Rose Theater debut at Mamí. Rose Theater veteran Emmanuel (Manny) Oñate returns to play the role of Papí. Isaiah Ruiz, plays Carmela's older brother; Ruiz recently relocated to Omaha from California to serve as The Rose's new Director of Community Connections. They are led by guest director Anna Skidis Vargas, a director, actor and playwright from Austin, Texas, who subverts stereotypes through myth, spirituality, and humor with a focus on Latinx and mixed identity stories.

Carmela Full of Wishes illustrator Christian Robinson stresses the importance of children seeing characters that look like them. "To see a character like Carmela in a story can make a lot of difference to a lot of children. I know, for me, it would have made me feel less a one and more connected," he says.

The stage production draws inspiration from Latinx traditions, most notably in the set design by Tara A. Houston. Robinson notes that many of his illustrations were inspired by the art of papel picado, a Mexican folk art made by cutting shapes in tissue paper to create colorful banner displays. Houston has translated Robinson's illustrations and the traditional artform into larger-than-life banners that serve as the setting for the action on stage.

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Called “a moving ode to family, to dreamers, and to finding hope in the most unexpected places” by critics, ***Carmela Full of Wishes*** highlights the importance of kindness, compassion and accepting real life with all its imperfections.

“The basic concept of the story is very simple,” says book author Matt de la Peña. “It is about sibling love and loyalty, and family, but there is also an undercurrent. Around 9 million people living in America today are part of mixed-status families like Carmela’s, where at least one family member is undocumented. We wanted to tell a basic story that takes place in that community.”

The Rose co-commissioned the script for ***Carmela Full of Wishes*** with Chicago Children’s Theatre, which will produce the show April 23 to May 22, 2022, after The Rose’s production closes. “We are grateful for this collaboration,” says Gutschick. “Working alongside other theaters allows us the opportunity to bring exciting new work to Omaha families.”

Carmela Full of Wishes is recommended for families with children of all ages and is 50 minutes long without an intermission.

Carmela Full of Wishes runs Jan 28 - Feb 13, 2022, with performances on Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. American Sign Language interpretation for audience members who are deaf or hard-of-hearing will be offered at the 2 p.m. show on Saturday, Feb. 5. Audio description services for audiences who are blind or have low vision will also be available at this performance. A sensory-friendly performance will be presented at the 5 pm performance on Saturday, Feb. 5. Contact The Rose Box Office for information.

Tickets for ***Carmela Full of Wishes*** are available for \$20 by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or online at www.rosetheater.org. Discount tickets are available at area Hy-Vee stores. Rose members receive free tickets to the production.

Due to Omaha’s mask ordinance, audience members are required to wear masks while inside The Rose Theater.

Carmela Full of Wishes is sponsored by Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Kiewit Companies Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Opening night is sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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About The Rose

For more than 70 years, The Rose Theater has been providing Omaha-area families with the best in live theater and arts education. The Omaha Theater Company was one of the first in Omaha to offer classes in the theater arts, and today The Rose stands as a leading program and training ground for young artists interested in pursuing a career in theater.

Students enrolled in classes at The Rose learn from some of the best educators in the region. Rose teachers include professional actors, accomplished dancers, award-winning playwrights, highly-decorated directors, renowned choreographers and more. Rose classes encourage creativity and imagination while enriching the understanding and enjoyment of theater. Many classes offer performance opportunities, and all classes promote ensemble work and skill development. Dance, acting and voice classes emphasize technique and professionalism, giving students the tools they need to succeed in the classroom, their schools, in the community, and on stages around the world.

Onstage, The Rose 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. 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 *Van Gogh & Me*, *The Meaning of Maggie*, *Pete the Cat: The Musical*, *Sherlock Holmes & the First Baker Street Irregular*, *Zen Ties*, *Leo Lionni's Frederick*, *A Palette of Possibility*, *Thumbelina*, *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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