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Arthur & Friends Make a Musical **opens Rose 2023-24 Season**

Popular PBS characters take the stage at The Rose

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater kicks off the 2023-24 season with ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical***, playing Sept. 8 - 24, 2023 on The Rose Mainstage. Adapted from the popular books and characters created by Marc Brown, ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical*** features the beloved characters, catchy music, colorful costumes and fun sets, making it the perfect back-to-school adventure for families.

Director Jackie Kappes explains, “The central theme of this show is that each of us has a unique story, and the show, the world, is better with those unique stories in them.”

The Rose is one of the first theaters in the country to perform the new musical. “It is an honor that The Rose gets to bring this production to our community,” says Rose artistic director Matt Gutschick.

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Like the long-running PBS animated series, ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical*** stars Arthur, his family and friends as they work together to creatively solve problems, learn to get along and appreciate each other's differences. Audiences will discover that big things are happening at Lakewood Elementary School – Mr. Ratburn's class is asked to write and perform a big show for all of Elwood City. Everyone is so excited – everyone, that is except Arthur (played by Corbin Griffin), who worries that he isn't as talented or creative as the rest of his classmates. What should he do? Arthur feels more and more nervous as the big performance gets closer and closer. With the help of his family and friends Arthur learns the importance of being his best, unique self.

Arthur & Friends Make a Musical is based on the books and characters created by Marc Brown with book and lyrics by John Maclay and music and lyrics by Brett Ryback. Featuring a bespectacled and beloved aardvark named Arthur, the series has been a mainstay of children's programming on PBS, the longest-running animated children's show in history starting in 1996 and running its final, 250th episode in 2022. Throughout its run, the series encouraged reading and relationships with family and friends by explaining that people have different personalities and interests.

Each of Arthur's friends brings a unique twist to the show. As Kappes explains, "This show is silly! We get to see wacky, imaginative stories come to life in unexpected ways and the cast has a blast portraying these iconic characters." For example, Arthur's little sister, D.W. (played by Lux Tipton) is obsessed with aliens; Muffy (Sydney Sweeney) is concerned with social issues; Francine (Natalie Hanson) is all about high fashion; best friend Buster (Brannon Evans) loves a mystery; while Brain (Isaiah Ruiz) brings, well, the brains to the mix.

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Audiences can look forward to a toe-tapping time with original music that observant theater-goers will appreciate as nods to popular productions. “We were really drawn to the fact that ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical*** pulls inspiration from a lot of familiar shows – *Hamilton*, *Les Mis*, *Chicago*. It just references a lot of different musicals and is a great introduction to a variety of musical theater forms,” says Gutschick.

The set and costumes of ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical*** are also highlights of this production, with many references to the television show and books – plus a little onstage magic – as the characters delve into their imaginations. “We have such fun with costumes in this show, from over the top fashion looks to snazzy rock and roll numbers,” says Kappes. “The set also works in some unexpected and fun ways!”

“While this show is a blast, it also has a really meaningful journey for Arthur who is trying to find and share his own unique story,” says Kappes. “Hopefully this show is like getting a warm hug while hearing a ridiculous joke from one of your favorite aardvarks.”

Arthur & Friends Make a Musical runs Sept. 8 - 24, 2023. The 60-minute show is appropriate for all audiences. Shows are Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Services for audiences with special needs, including interpretation for the Deaf and audio description services will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Sept 23. This showing will also be a sensory-friendly performance.

Tickets for ***Arthur & Friends Make a Musical*** are available for \$30 by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or online at www.rosetheater.org. Rose members receive four free tickets to the production. Discount ticket vouchers are available at area Hy-Vee stores.

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Arthur & Friends Make a Musical is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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 *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. It is The Rose's goal to inspire young people to discover the magic of theater, to find their voices and enrich their communities.

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