

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Rose Theater welcomes families back to the theater for the 2021-22 season

Local children's theater returns to regular operations for upcoming season

(OMAHA, NE) After a whirlwind year of both in-person and digital shows, The Rose Theater looks forward to a return to normal for the 2021-22 season. The season features several new productions combined with old favorites to provide something for all families in the upcoming year.

“This season is an interesting mix of things that we had to delay because of COVID,” says Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick. “Some of these productions are projects that we have been thinking about for a number of years now. And then, there are also some brand new plays that we think families will be really excited to see.”

While The Rose had to postpone several productions due to COVID-19, the theater continued working on shows’ development throughout the pandemic.

“Yes, we had to delay some shows, but it didn’t mean that we stopped doing our work in classrooms across the metro area and also on our stages. We continued to work toward making new plays and musicals and we are excited to share these with audiences next year,” says Gutschick.

The season begins earlier than usual, with a special bonus concert for members who join by June 1, 2021. *Misunderstood: Heroes & Villains* will feature an onstage musical experience themed around favorite heroes and villains. Rose members from both the 2020-21 and 2021-22 season receive free tickets to the event.

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In addition, the 2021-22 Rose season consists of four hour-long mainstage shows included with membership, along with two premium mainstage shows that will run approximately two hours with an intermission.

The Rose's First Stage program for very young children returns with *Up & Away*, a special production created specifically for the Common Sesnes Festival for the neuro-diverse community.

It's a Wonderful Life will return to The Rose stage this season. The show was the very first production staged by the Omaha Theater Company at the Rose Blumkin Performing Arts Center. The Rose produced the show during the 2020-21 season, but it was only presented digitally due to high COVID rates during the month of December.

Two shows in the 2021-22 lineup postponed due to COVID-19 will also get a new life in the season. ***Corduroy*** and ***The Sound of Music*** were canceled at the end of the 2019-20 season and will be resurrected for the upcoming season.

The complete 2021-22 season includes:

MEMBER SHOWS:

Corduroy! (Oct. 29 - Nov. 14, 2021)

It's a Wonderful Life (Dec. 3 - 19, 2021)

Carmela Full of Wishes (Jan. 28 - Feb. 13, 2022)

Giraffes Can't Dance (Apr. 8 - May 1, 2022)

PREMIUM SHOWS:

Disney's Descendants (Sept. 10 - Oct. 10, 2021)

The Sound of Music (June 3 - 19, 2022)

BONUS CONCERT:

Misunderstood: Heroes & Villains (June 4 - 20, 2021)

FIRST STAGE SHOW:

Up & Away (Mar. 12 - Apr. 3, 2022)

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The Rose remains dedicated to its mission of inspiring young people and their families to discover the magic of theater, to find their voices and enrich their communities. Central to this mission has always been the understanding that theater has the power to transform the community by helping audiences better understand a variety of viewpoints and building empathy for others. “We believe theater is essential to helping children develop the skills they need to lead a successful, fulfilled life,” says Gutschick. “This has been a core value from our early beginnings in 1949, and it is just as true today.”

Four of The Rose’s mainstage shows -- and the bonus concert in June -- are free with Rose membership or \$20 per ticket for non-members. Tickets to The Rose’s two premium shows, **Disney’s Descendants** and **The Sound of Music** are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony. Tickets to the First Stage production Up & Away will be available in early 2022 through the Common Senses Festival website at www.commonensesfestival.com. Rose members receive discounts ranging from 25-40% off all non-member events.

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2021-22 MEMBER EVENT SHOWS

Misunderstood: Heroes & Villains

June 4 - 20, 2021

Directed by Katherine M. Carter

This special bonus concert celebrates the heroes in our community with a lineup of diabolically delightful songs in a musical journey of good and evil.

Audiences are invited to dress as their favorite hero or villain and sit on corresponding sides of the socially-distanced auditorium as they enjoy renditions of popular songs from Taylor Swift, David Bowie, Katy Perry, Billie Eilish, Justin Timberlake and more, performed by local artists on The Rose stage. The show will feature mash-ups of hits from Disney, Dreamworks, Broadway and more, performed by some of Omaha's top talent, including Lauren Krupski, Trey Mendlik, Marcel Daly, Roni Shelley Perez and Audrey Saucier.

As a token of our appreciation, The Rose is giving a free ticket to Misunderstood to hometown heroes -- educators, school employees, medical professionals and first responders. See The Rose website for details.

The 60-minute production of **Misunderstood: Heroes & Villains** will be presented June 4 - 20, 2021 with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. The show is appropriate for children of all ages.



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Corduroy

Oct. 29 - Nov. 14, 2021

Based on the *Corduroy* and
A Pocket for Corduroy books
by Don Freeman.

Licensed by CBS Consumer Products.

Adapted for the stage by Barry Kornhauser.

Produced by special arrangement with Plays for New Audiences, a division of Children's Theatre Company



Based on the 1968 children's book written and illustrated by Don Freeman, ***Corduroy*** shares the story of a toy bear in a department store and the little girl who wishes she could buy him.

“***Corduroy*** follows a little girl who really, really wants to take this teddy bear named Corduroy home when she finds him at the department store,” says Gutschick. “At the same time, Corduroy has lost his button and is trying to find it. It’s a fun show where there’s a lot of pratfalls and sort of clownish stuff happening because Corduroy essentially goes through the department store as he’s trying to find his button, making a series of very, very big messes, which is always a super fun thing to have on stage.”

Corduroy’s antics are particularly puzzling to the department store’s night watchman, as Gutschick explains. “The story adds the complication of a night watchman who is trying to figure out where all these weird noises are coming from and who is making all these messes in the department store.”

When the store comes to a close, Corduroy goes on a delightfully destructive chase through every section of the department store in search of his missing button, while across the city, little Lisa tries to convince her mother to let her give the bear a home.

“What is really cool about this piece is that we are going to be using a fairly large puppet version of Corduroy that Stephanie Jacobson, a really brilliant director and educator on our team, has made,” says Gutschick. “This will be a show where Corduroy is going to come to life looking like a stuffed animal, which I think should be really, really fun for little kids.”

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Corduroy will be presented Oct. 29 through Nov. 4, 2021, with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Interpretation and captioning for the hearing impaired and audio description services for the blind will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Nov. 6. A sensory-friendly performance will be presented on Saturday, Nov. 6 at 5 pm. Children of all ages will delight at **Corduroy's** antics in the 75 minute show.

"It's just the kind of show that gives everybody the giggles -- kids and adults," says Gutschick.

It's a Wonderful Life

Dec. 3 - 19, 2021

Based on The Lux Radio Theater Script.
Adapted by Sarah Lynn Brown.

It's a Wonderful Life is a beautiful homage to a cinematic classic, made specifically for our time. The show introduces audiences to George Bailey, whose teenage guardian angel has to descend on Christmas Eve to save him from despair.



It's a Wonderful Life was the first show presented when the Omaha Theater Company moved into The Rose Blumkin Performing Arts Center in 1995; however the script has been newly adapted by Omahan Sarah Lynn Brown.

This version of the show was originally staged in December 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and even though the show had to be presented entirely online, Gutschick notes that audiences responded strongly to the show and its message of hope.

"This is a piece that has a smaller cast and each of the actors play multiple roles. These actors come out into the audience and speak directly to the audience about why we tell certain stories over and over and over again," he says.

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The show has been adapted specifically for The Rose and its young audience members. “This production takes the added step of making the piece more kid-friendly,” Gutschick explains. “It is a lot shorter than the movie, but it doesn’t lose any of the key moments that people will remember. But maybe most importantly, we try to think about our work at The Rose as being about helping kids see themselves in the stories that we are telling. So this interpretation of ***It’s a Wonderful Life*** has the angels Clarence and Joseph played by youth artists.”

The resulting story changes the perspective of the audience, giving a youthful innocence to the experience. “When we are watching the things that happen to George Bailey, we are watching them through the eyes of a child, and the characters are asking the questions that kids ask when they watch the film. We also found that kids in the audience root for Clarence because they are identifying with that character in a new way. It’s just a really, really fun and uniquely Rose take on a classic story,” says Gutschick.

It’s a Wonderful Life is 75 minutes long without an intermission and is appropriate for all ages.

It’s a Wonderful Life will be presented on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 and 5:30 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm, Dec 3 - 19, 2021. Interpretation and captioning for the hearing impaired and audio description services for the blind will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Dec. 11. The 5 pm performance on Saturday, Dec. 11 is designated as sensory-friendly, with special accommodations made for families attending with a child on the autism spectrum or with other special needs. Contact The Rose Box Office for information on the resources available for families.

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Carmela Full of Wishes
Jan. 28 - Feb. 13, 2022



Adapted by Alvaro Saar Rios
From the book by Matt de la Peña, Illustrated by Christian Robinson.
Published by G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

Carmela Full of Wishes is an adaptation of the book by the Newbery Award-winning team behind *Last Stop on Market Street*. The show, making its world debut on The Rose stage, finds young Carmela on her birthday, in a migrant community full of life and vibrancy. While accompanying her brother on his errands, Carmela finds a puffy dandelion and imagines what wishes it might bring.

As Gutschick illustrates, "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."

Carmela Full of Wishes will be presented Jan. 28 - Feb. 13, 2022, with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm & 5 pm and Sundays at 2 pm. Interpretation and captioning for the hearing impaired and audio description services for the blind will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Feb. 5. A sensory-friendly performance will be offered on Saturday, Feb. 5 at 5 pm.

The show is expected to run approximately 50 minutes and is appropriate for all ages.

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Giraffes Can't Dance

Apr. 8 - May 1, 2022

Based on the bestselling book
by Giles Andreae & Guy Parker-Rees
Script And Lyrics by Gloria Bond Clunie
Music By Elton Bradman & Lila Oleszkiewicz



When the date of the big dance arrives, Gerald the Giraffe realizes he has a problem: giraffes can't dance. Based on the bestselling picture book, ***Giraffes Can't Dance*** is a brand new musical with original songs that will transport families to Africa and introduce them to a comic cast of characters.

"When Gerald realizes that the other members of the community think he can't dance very well, he tries to figure out how they can still participate in the moment," says Gutschick. "It rather beautifully moves into place where the giraffe discovers that they all need to dance to the music in their hearts. It is this cool metaphor for how do we embrace the differences that we all bring to the table? How do we embrace the way that we each contribute to our community, to our classroom, to our family -- despite of and because of those differences?"

Giraffes Can't Dance is a script that has been in development with The Rose for several years and the show will be making its world premiere on The Rose stage.

"The music is actually inspired by some Afro pop genres," explains Gutschick. "It is written by Elton Bradman who is a wonderful Bay area based composer. The script is being written by Gloria Bond Clunie, who is a legendary playwright based in Chicago. Gloria was really interested in making sure that the story was honoring a bit of geographic specificity because the picture book sets the story in Africa. She wanted to get really, really granular and make sure that we were being very accurate about our depiction of cultures that are not Omaha-based. So that's something we are really excited about with this project."

Community leader and Rose Theater board member Denise Chapman will direct ***Giraffes Can't Dance***. Chapman's talents were last seen on The Rose stage in its popular production of *Dragons Love Tacos*. Chapman is the director of theater at the Union for Contemporary Art whose directorial skills have been shared with theaters throughout Omaha.

"Denise is just a wonderful leader who brings immense creativity to her projects," says Gutschick.

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Giraffes Can't Dance will run Apr. 8 to May 1, 2022. 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 and captioning for the hearing impaired, audio description services will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, April 23. A sensory-friendly performance will be offered on Saturday, Apr. 23 at 5 pm.

2019-20 PREMIUM SHOWS

Disney's Descendants

Sept. 10 - Oct. 10, 2021

Book by Nick Blaemire.

Music Adaptation by Madeline Smith.

Vocal and Incidental Arrangements by Madeline Smith.

Additional Lyrics by Nick Blaemire.

Orchestrations by Matthew Tishler.

Music Produced by Matthew Tishler

Based on the Disney Channel Original Movies, written by Josann McGibbon and Sara Parriott.

Disney's Descendants: The Musical is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).



The Rose Theater will be among the first to present the stage adaptation of Disney's wildly popular, Emmy-nominated musical, ***Descendants***.

Originally scheduled for June 2021, The Rose moved ***Descendants*** to Fall 2021 due to COVID concerns.

“Descendants is definitely going to be a big musical, and it is a show that we have been excited about for a long time,” says Gutschick. “This is a project that we delayed because of COVID, but we are looking forward to conditions improving such that, in the fall, we can do the show in a way that you might normally expect to see a big musical at The Rose. Hopefully, by that point, some social distancing principles don’t have to be in place, audience and performers are at a place where masking of faces isn’t necessary, and some of those things. That’s some of the reasons why we moved the show from its originally scheduled run into a fall set of dates.”

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“We hope that this show functions as a major celebration for our community, as we are hopefully coming out of the final stages of the pandemic,” he adds.

When ***Disney’s Descendants*** opens, it’s the present day, and in the kingdom of Auradon, all of Disney’s beloved heroes and royalty are living happily ever after, safe from the terrifying villains and troublesome sidekicks they have banished to the magic-free Isle of the Lost. Until, that is, Ben, the benevolent teenage son of Belle and former Beast King Adam, offers the chance of redemption for the troublemaking offspring of the evilest villains. Mal, Evie, Jay, and Carlos – the children, respectively, of Maleficent, the Evil Queen, Cruella De Vil, and Jafar – are welcomed to Auradon Prep to attend school with the children of their parents’ sworn enemies. Now entering a completely foreign world and way of life, these four children of villains have a difficult choice to make: Should they follow in their parents’ wicked footsteps, or instead learn to be good? Family audiences will delight in discovering the answer together in the theatrical version of ***Disney’s Descendants***, a thrilling and funny entertainment for all ages that *Broadway World* praised for its “tight adaptation that transcends the source material to create an even stronger stage musical.”

The show is being directed by Katherine M. Carter. The cast includes:

- **Mal** - Roni Shelley Perez
- **Evie** - Briana Nash
- **Jay** - Summer Hurtienne
- **Carlos** - Dina Saltzman
- **Ben** - Trey Mendlik
- **Chad** - Marcel Daly
- **Audrey / Dance Captain** - Natalie Hanson
- **Jane** - Brooke Vogel
- **Doug** - Carson Bishop
- **Maleficent** - Leanne Carlson
- **Fairy Godmother** - Lauren Krupski
- **Royal Page** - Andrew Hedin
- **Snow White** - Maddie Smith
- **Jafar** - Joshua Orsi
- **Maurice** - Sue Gillespie Booton
- **Cruella de Vil / Belle** - Zhomontee Watson
- **Grimhilde** - Sarah Gibson
- **Guard** - Grand Peters Jensen
- **Ensemble** - Taylor Adams, Stella Clark-Kaczmarek, Artie Shaw, Sophia Presser, Savannah Clay and Callahan Hernandez

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Audiences can expect fun renditions of songs from several of the Disney movies, including “Evil Like Me,” “Good is the New Bad,” “Rotten to the Core,” “Chillin’ Like a Villain,” and many more.

Disney’s Descendants will have audiences of all ages dancing in the aisles. The premium event show runs two hours with an intermission.

Descendants will be presented Sept. 10 through Oct. 10, with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Interpretation and captioning for the hearing impaired and audio description services for the blind will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Sept. 25. Tickets are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony. Members receive discounted tickets.

The Sound of Music
June 3 - 19, 2022

Music by Richard Rodgers.
Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II.
Book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse.
Suggested by “The Trapp Family Singers”
by Maria Augusta Trapp.



The world’s most beloved musical bursts onto The Rose stage, alive with **The Sound of Music**. Most recently staged by The Rose in 2011, **The Sound of Music** tells the spirited romantic musical story of Maria and the von Trapp Family. The popular musical features award-winning music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstien II, including “My Favority Things,” “Do-Re-Mi,” “Climb Ev’ry Mountain,” “Edelweiss,” and the title song, “The Sound of Music.”

“We are very excited about this piece, not only because of the classic and very, very beautiful music that we are all familiar with, but also, I think that **The Sound of Music** has a really important message about the power of family and how we show up for one another, particularly during difficult times,” says Gutschick.

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The Sound of Music was the final collaboration of Rodgers and Hammerstein, and has won the hearts of audiences worldwide. When Maria is dispatched from the convent to serve as governess to the seven children of the von Trapp family, her arrival is met with resistance. But Maria's soaring spirit and love for music is a winning combination that helps the family unite as they face the threat of a Nazi-occupied Austria.

"It is easy to forget that when we meet the von Trapp children and Captain von Trapp, they are still suffering from the loss of their mother," Gutschick explains. "This is a piece that I think, while it is celebratory and wonderful, there are some things about it that I think are deeply rooted in pain. How we navigate that with authenticity and with courage -- presenting this show at this moment in time as our community is coming out of this pandemic that paused all of our lives -- that's the message that I think will resonate with audiences."

"I have seen a statistic that says one in five people in America have lost someone to COVID. I think a big musical like this that is also very clear-eyed about the fact that the world isn't perfect, but that we each can bring our own moments of perfection and generosity and love to the improvement of that world, that's something that I think is a really important message," says Gutschick.

The enduring story set to a stirring musical score make ***The Sound of Music*** the perfect family outing for audiences of all ages. The 2-1/2 hour show will include an intermission. ***The Sound of Music*** will be presented June 3 - 19, 2022, with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Interpretation and captioning for the hearing impaired and audio description services will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, June 11. Tickets are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony. Members receive discounted tickets.

***Rose Theater memberships are on sale now at www.rosetheater.org
or by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849.***

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.

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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 groundbreaking 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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