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The Rose Theater's Stephanie Jacobson invited to participate in 2017 National Puppetry Conference

OMAHA, Ne--Stephanie Jacobson, a Teaching Artist and the Director of Youth Productions at The Rose Theater was one of six select participants invited to work with Ronnie Burkett in a 3-day preconference for the 2017 National Puppetry Conference hosted by the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut this past June.

The overall mission of the National Puppetry Conference is “to encourage puppet artists to create and communicate through the visual and kinetic form of the puppet, to push beyond their personal boundaries, and develop new works for puppet theater.”

The conference brought renowned guests with directing, puppet artistry, and playwrighting backgrounds together to help puppet artists explore puppetry through writing, music, marionettes and other workshops.

At the preconference, Jacobson participated in the writing track with Ronnie Burkett as the group instructor. She learned four writing prompts that taught the artist how to use visual, sculptural and performance aspects to write theater that focuses on creating plays for puppets rather than actors.

Jacobson said, “To be a part of the invited participants was humbling and awe-inspiring. It was amazing talking with other artists and staff who’s mission is to support new artists as they Risk, Fail and Risk again.”

Possibly one of the more important aspects of the prompts is the ability to adapt them for different age groups and experience levels. When Jacobson is not on stage or directing, she is often teaching classes to students of all ages from all over the Omaha/Metro area.

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Jacobson at 2017 National Puppetry Conference

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This summer she is teaching a conservatory class that is working toward performing an adaptation of *Orestes*. After her experience with Ronnie Burkett's writing group, she has already been able to apply techniques that have helped her conservatory students in their rehearsal process.

"Since returning from the conference, I have used two of the four writing prompts that I learned at the conference with my conservatory students. 99% of the students said that they would use tools that we explored in the exercises again," said Jacobson. "I was able to adapt the writing prompt for my students easily and cannot wait to adapt them further to other classes."

"I know I will use these exercises with younger students as well as older. It works for both experienced and inexperienced playwrights and visual artists," she stated. Jacobson's experience at the National Puppetry Conference was not only beneficial for her, but will prove to be beneficial to The Rose Theater students as well.

Jacobson has worked with The Rose for the past 10 years. Starting out as a freelance artist, she then signed on as full-time staff in 2011 and has since played a significant role in the mainstage, Pre-K and youth productions.

Some of Jacobson's past credits include directing *George and Martha*, *Charlotte's Web*, The Rose's world premiere of *The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid*, *The Misfits* and others. She has also appeared in several mainstage shows such as *Frog & Toad*, *Ivy & Bean*, *Honk!* and *The Jungle Book*.

Jacobson holds an MFA in Acting and is trained in puppet artistry, emphasizing shadow puppetry and Bunraku. As such, she often guides and helps directors at The Rose to better understand the use of puppetry in their own productions. She works with puppeteers one-on-one so that their artistry can be as effective as possible.

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 *Pete The Cat: The Musical*, *Sherlock Holmes & the First Baker Street Irregular*, *Zen Ties*, *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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