

For Immediate Release

DATE: October 2017

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The Rose Theater receives honor from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

(OMAHA, Nebr.) An original play commissioned by The Rose Theater has been selected by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for inclusion in the biennial festival, New Visions/New Voices. The event will take place April 27-29, 2018, marking the 15th showcase of this renown industry workshop.

Dedicated to the development of new plays and musicals for young people and their families, the Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices festival provides a unique and vital forum for the field of Theater for Young Audiences (TYA). The 2018 festival will present seven new works by American Playwrights, including a work by The Rose Theater (known nationally as the Omaha Theater Company). Others represented in the festival include theater companies based in Atlanta, GA; Minneapolis, MN; New York, NY; St. Louis, MO; Tempe, AZ; and Washington, DC.

The script selected from The Rose, ***Return to Niobrara***, is inspired by the true story of Chief Standing Bear, a Native American who stood up in court and demanded that a federal judge recognize that Indians were "persons" under the law. The script follows Chief Standing Bear's great-great grandson, Steven, who, 180 years after his ancestor's historic court case, is being bullied at school on account of his long hair. When Steven is involved in an altercation at school, he must follow in his grandfather's footsteps and speak out against his school district's attempt to force him to cut his hair, and ultimately, to erase his identity.

Return to Niobrara was written by Mary Kathryn Nagle, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. The show is directed by Roxanne Wach. The production is scheduled to be performed locally as a part of The Rose's 2018-19 season.

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“Return to Niobrara invites the audience to see the past emerging in our present, and ultimately, what it means to truly stand for who we are,” says Matthew Gutschick, artistic director of The Rose.

While at the Kennedy Center event, the selected playwrights, directors, music directors, composers, and Equity actors will work collaboratively in a weeklong intensive workshop setting to develop their projects. After revisions, rewrites and rehearsals of the new plays and musicals, the works will be presented as rehearsed readings during a three-day national festival for theater professionals, educators and others interested in the field. Participants will also engage in discussions, conversations and other events.

Return to Niobrara’s theme of courage under pressure and standing up for what is right coordinates well with other scripts being highlighted during New Visions/New Voices. The Kennedy Center explains that there are common threads weaving between the young protagonists in all of this year’s plays -- characters who exist in different cultures, different countries, in the past and in the present.

“They transcend emotional, spiritual, and physical obstacles, and, when they emerge on the other side, both they and the audience are changed,” said the organization in a news release announcing the honorees.

Since its inception in 1991, New Visions/New Voices has assisted in the development of 111 new plays, musicals, and operas from 96 playwrights and 38 composers working with 61 U.S. and 12 international theater companies. This year’s conference will continue to expand opportunities for high-quality performance experiences for young people, facilitating the development of productions by a variety of world-class writing teams, directors, and organizations.

Washington, D.C. based playwright Karen Zacarías said, “For many years, New Visions/ New Voices has always been on the frontiers of both TYA and the American Theater by giving diverse talented writers the opportunity to share their evocative, insightful and delightful stories and hone their work. New Visions/New Voices has always been about tearing down walls and creating bridges of understanding locally, nationally and internationally ... which is especially vital in this day and age.”

“It is now more important than ever to cultivate imagination, curiosity, and empathy in young people,” said Jonathan Schmidt Chapman, Executive Director of Theatre for Young Audiences/USA.

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“In developing daring and original theatre for them, New Visions/New Voices creates one of the most powerful vehicles to achieve this outcome. As opportunities to develop new work are scarce across the field, New Visions/New Voices continues to offer the vital opportunity to incubate new stories that will go on to surprise, delight and challenge children and their families across the country and around the world.”

About the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is the national champion for arts learning and creativity. Committed to increasing opportunities for all people to participate in, learn about, and understand the arts, the Center offers programs and events that strive to reflect the nation and its communities, and that are accessible and inclusive for all. From the Center's stages to classrooms and communities across the country, to online resources accessible nearly anywhere, the Center serves the burgeoning artist, the curious explorer, the student (of any age), the teacher and teaching artist,-any person interested in arts learning and utilizing the arts for positive change.

The breadth of the Center's national education initiatives amplify community partnerships and support local and national infrastructure with programs including: Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child, which works with 25 municipalities and their school districts around the country to develop long-range strategic plans for arts education; ARTSEDGE, a digital platform that offers standards-based materials for use in and out of the classroom; Partners in Education which forges relationships between arts organizations and their neighboring school systems to build effective arts education programs for teachers and teaching artists; the Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards celebrate teachers whose efforts have made a significant impact on their students; Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences on Tour brings original Kennedy Center productions for students and families into communities and performing arts centers around the country; and the Turnaround Arts program which empowers high-need, low-performing schools with innovative arts programming and resources to help address broader school challenges and close the achievement gap.

The Center's locally-based school and community initiatives serve educators and students with Changing Education Through the Arts, a program that works in partnership with area schools to affect long-term change in school culture through professional learning in arts integration; professional development opportunities for teachers which trains educators to teach the arts or other subject areas through the arts; and a Washington, D.C. schools partnership program, where the Center provides resources and teaching artist residencies to 22 PreK-12 schools.

Culturally responsive programming draws from the Center's resources as the national performing arts center and a convener of arts and education leaders, as well as the National Symphony Orchestra, The Suzanne Farrell Ballet, VSA (the international arts and disability organization), Washington National Opera, and the Performances for Young Audiences series. Over 100 events and performances throughout the season are offered for more than 100,000 local school-aged children. Additionally, the Explore the Arts series provides learners of all ages insights into the cultural and historical context of the works presented on stage and sparks connections between audiences and the artists who have created the performances through participatory workshops, demonstrations, panels, master classes, and open rehearsals. The annual spring Arts Summit brings thought leaders from the arts and related fields together for discussion and exploration of the power and impact of the arts on society.

Committed to nurturing young artists' growth, the Center offers multiple local and national skill and development programs for students and professionals including the National Symphony Orchestra's Youth Fellowship Program, Summer Music Institute, and High School Competition; the Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, Opera Institute, and Kids Create Opera Partnership; the biennial New Visions/New Voices forum for development of new plays for young people; Exploring Ballet with Suzanne Farrell; BeTy Carter's Jazz Ahead; VSA's Playwright Discovery Program, Young Soloists, and Visual Arts programs; arts administration internships; and the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival which impacts hundreds of thousands of college-aged theater students across the country and marks its 50th anniversary in 2018.

As an essential component of the living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center's Education programs utilize the arts to embrace the ideals of service, justice, freedom, courage, and gratitude, and cultivate the Citizen Artists in all the people we serve. For more information, visit kennedy-center.org/education.

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About Mary Kathryn Nagle

Mary Kathryn Nagle is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. She is also a partner at Pipestem Law, P.C., where she works to protect tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of Indian Nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. Nagle has authored numerous briefs in federal appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court. She is a frequent speaker at law schools and symposia across the country. Following law school, she clerked at the United States District Court, District of Nebraska in Omaha, where on May 12, 2009, she worked to produce and write a play (along with director Roxanne Wach) that commemorate the 130th anniversary of a trial wherein the federal court in Omaha became the first court in the United States to declare Indians to be “persons” under the law. This play, *Waaxe’s Law*, was later presented at the Newsuem, New York University School of Law, and the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian.

She is an alumn of the 2012 PUBLIC THEATER Emerging Writers Group, where she developed her play *Manahatta* in PUBLIC STUDIO (May 2014). Her productions include *Miss Lead* (Amerinda, 59E59, January 2014), and *Fairly Traceable* (Native Voices at the Autry, March 2017), as well as *Sovereignty* (Arena Stage, January 2018), and *Manahatta* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, April 2018). In 2019, the Rose Theater will produce her new children’s play, *#IAmAMan*.

She has received commissions from Arena Stage (*Sovereignty*), the Rose Theater (Omaha, Nebraska), Portland Center Stage, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and Yale Repertory Theater. Her other plays include *Diamonds are a Boy’s Best Friend*, *Waaxe’s Law*, *Sliver of a Full Moon*, and *My Father’s Bones*.

About Roxanne Wach

Roxanne currently serves as the Executive Director for Shelterbelt Theatre. A multifaceted artist, she has performed, designed and directed for many Omaha stages over the past 45 years, including work with BroadStreet Productions., Chanticleer Theater, Dundee Dinner Theatre, Omaha Community Playhouse, Omaha Symphony, Opera Omaha, Quincy Productions, Shelterbelt Theatre and SNAP! Productions. Favorite productions she’s directed include *Untitled Series #7*, *Thank You For Being A Friend: The Unauthorized Golden Girls Musical* and *My Occasion of Sin* (Shelterbelt); *Hand to God*, *A Perfect Ganesh* and *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told* (SNAP! Productions), *She Loves Me and Quilters* (Dundee Dinner Theatre), *Free to Be You & Me* (PCOC), *Vagina Monologues* (Little Apple Productions), *Lend Me a Tenor* (Chanticleer Theater), *Nine* (BroadStreet Productions, with GPTC and Arthur Kopit), and an original staged version of *Bach’s Cantata No. 82* (Midland College). She has written two youth musicals with composer Jay Atwood, *The Purple Pomegranate* and *Faith*. A TAG life member and past-President, she has received numerous TAG Awards nominations and won several including *Special Event Production*, *Director/Musical*, *Director/Comedy and Drama*, *New Script* and *Supporting Actress/Musical*. Roxanne is a member of International Centre for Women Playwrights. Roxanne was honored with the Master Teacher Alumni Award from Midland College for her work in theatre, as well as recipient of Bob Roberts TAG Board Recognition Award and Norm & Louise Filbert TAG Lifetime Achievement Award. She also is the Executive Director of Compassion Omaha, www.compassionomaha.org. She is pleased to have been a part of GPTC since its inaugural year.

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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