

## For Immediate Release

DATE: August 2018

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### Set sail for a mad, mad, mad, mad adventure on The Rose Theater stage with *Judy Moody & Stink*

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater invites families to have one last blast of summer with their season opener, ***Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt***. This rolling world premiere finds the popular book characters in an exciting end-of-summer family vacation adventure. The show runs Sept. 7-23 at The Rose.

Based upon the wildly popular Judy Moody series of children's books, ***Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*** finds third grader Judy Moody in a bit of a mood. A child with an overactive imagination, Judy believes she has the most boring life ever, a point made even more clear to her on the first day of third grade when she learns about the exciting vacations taken by her classmates. She's been given a school assignment to create a "Me collage," and her know-it-all little brother Stink keeps getting in the way.

"Judy is a character who has these bursts of emotion and sometimes these can get her into a little bit of trouble or cause problems for her, but she is ultimately a very expressive child," says Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick.

Director and long-time artist educator Kevin Ehrhart believes that Judy Moody will be especially relatable to children who have common challenges. "Being a parent of children who deal with anxiety, it's great to have a story that shows a kid like Judy who is right on the edge of her emotions. This show gives them an example of different avenues for navigating through those," he says.

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“Judy Moody is a compelling character and a great fit for the stage,” said playwright Allison Gregory. “She activates the world around her. From her dogged determination (which frequently looks like impulsivity), to her scrappy resourcefulness, she engages other characters, and us, to root for her.”

When the Moody family drops anchor on Ocracoke Island for a weekend getaway, Judy uses her creativity and problem solving skills (with some help from her brother, Stink) as she tries to win a “T-shirt with words” she can show off to her friends. The solution lies in a hunt to find Scurvy Sam’s secret pirate treasure. Judy and Stink spend their time on the island solving the clues and uncovering the codes in search of goal. Laughs abound as the competitive siblings engage in constant banter as they work together to achieve their goals.

“I think my favorite moment in the show is when Stink wants to give up on the treasure hunt,” says Gutschick. “Judy then has a fantasy about her parents’ reaction to losing Stink, and she immediately pops back into reality to encourage her brother. I think it encapsulates the sense of adventure, imagination and theatrical comedy that the piece does so well.”

Rose artist educator Kendra Ball plays Judy Moody and Rose veteran Robby Stone plays her little brother Stink, marking Stone’s 20th role on The Rose stage. Newcomer Mareshah Smith plays Judy’s mom in her premiere role at The Rose. She is joined by Karl Houser as Dad, Al Kroeten as Tall Boy, and Hayley Greenstreet as Smart Girl. Zach Kloppenborg and Jessica Burrill-Logue take on the heavy duties of playing a multitude of supporting roles throughout the show.

“This story is awesome because it shows how parents and siblings and teachers and friends -- and even strangers -- can all be a part of helping young people navigate through these emotional times of life,” says Ehrhart.

Audiences will be treated to a set, costumes and props that appear to have leaped directly from the page to the stage. Scenic designer Matthew D. Hamel has created a cartoon-like set that gives the impression that it is viewed through a pirate’s telescope and evokes a sense of portholes on a ship. Audiences won’t miss the idea that “X marks the spot,” whether they are following the characters on their adventure on the enormous dock, the streets of Ocracoke Island or even the spooky cemetery.

The set is accentuated by the lighting designs of Craig Moxon, who uses The Rose’s new lighting equipment to infuse robust color into Judy Moody’s world. Moxon explains that The Rose’s new energy-efficient LED lights give new flexibility and control to Rose designers. “With our new lighting, we have a full rainbow of color to work with. If a director wants to change a different color, just like that -- we can do it. We can literally pick colors off a palette and put that together. That’s a really exciting opportunity. We aren’t limited in our color choices,” he says.

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Sherri Geerdes' costume designs and Erin Bragg's hair and make-up plans closely match the characters' look from the books. "We have closely followed the illustrations, giving everyone a sort of caricature style," says Bragg. "Judy Moody's style is really fun and eccentric. Right now, I am working on this crazy Hawaiian style shirt with palm trees all over, something that comes directly from the book's illustrations. There are also a lot of wigs in this show so we can try to make the characters look like they do in the book."

Props mistress Devon Denn-Young has been busy working on various items to give life to Ocracoke Island, but a brightly colored parrot puppet is likely to be a hit among audiences. "He is really a lot of fun," she says. "His mouth opens with the use of a toy 'grabber' that makes his mouth open and close. He has strings on his wings that allow him to flap. He is going to look great on stage!"

Sound apprentice Christy Hernandez has been working with Moxon to develop a full soundtrack for the show that communicates Judy's tumultuous emotions, whether she is feeling dreamy and content, anxious, scared or adventurous. She has given special attention to the show's transitions, mixing music and ambient sound to help transport audiences from one location to the next.

***Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*** is a national collaboration with seven of the country's leading children's theaters, a first-of-its-kind commission of this magnitude. The production began as an idea from Michael Bobbitt of Adventure Theatre MTC in Rockville, Maryland.

"I thought a cross-section of Theater for Young Audiences (TYA) companies around the country might be a unique challenge for a playwright, but, ultimately, would produce a script that worked for many theaters. I reached out to my friends in the field, and six of my colleagues said, 'Yes!' It has been such a positive experience. I don't know if I ever want to develop a play *without* colleagues and co-commissions. We have some of the most brilliant minds in the business working in TYA."

"This is a show that definitely comes to The Rose through a unique path," says Gutschick. "It can sometimes be challenging for a single theater to approach an author or publishing house about the rights to make a theatrical adaptation, especially when it is a popular book series. Going together with several theaters made this an easier process."

The Rose is just one of seven theaters performing the show this season. Other co-commissioners include First Stage (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Adventure Theatre MTC (Glen Echo, Maryland), Bay Area Children's Theater (Oakland, California), Oregon Children's Theatre of (Portland, Oregon), Children's Theatre of Charlotte (North Carolina), and Orland Repertory Theatre (Orland, Florida). Each theater will stage their own productions in rolling premieres, ending in the spring of 2019.

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Gutschick explains that once approval was granted to adapt one or more of the ***Judy Moody*** books into a stage play, the theaters worked together to collect proposals from playwrights through an open application process. Many well-known playwrights submitted proposals, but Allison Gregory, a popular playwright among youth theaters, quickly rose to the top with her understanding of the materials and fun approach to the popular characters.

“***Judy Moody*** is the kind of thing that just leaps off the page into a stage adaptation,” he says.

The play is actually a combination of two Judy Moody books: *Judy Moody Was in a Mood* and *The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*.

Author Megan McDonald says, “I’m thrilled readers will get to see my books make the leap from page to stage,” McDonald, creator of the *Judy Moody and Stink* series, said, “Judy Moody has been to Antarctica, The Freedom Trail, Artichoke Island and college. She has gone around the world in eight (and a half) days. But never before has she been on stage!”

***Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*** runs at The Rose September 7-23, 2018, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. The 2 pm show of ***Judy Moody*** on Saturday, Sept. 15 will be interpreted for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; this show will also include audio description services for audience members who are blind. Contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 for more information.

Tickets for ***Judy Moody*** are \$20 for general admission seating. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores. Members of The Rose receive free tickets to the production.

***Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*** is sponsored by Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Mutual of Omaha, Baird Holm, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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#### **About the Playwright**

Allison Gregory (Playwright) has plays that have been produced all over the country. She has received commissions, grants and development from Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, The Kennedy Center and Indiana Repertory Theatre, among many others. An award-winning playwright, Allison also writes for young audiences; plays include *GO DOG. GO!*, adapted from the P.D. Eastman book, co-written with Steven Dietz; *EVEN STEVEN GOES TO WAR* ("Zoni" Best New Script Award; AATE and UPRP awards; Kennedy Center New Visions/New Voices selection); *PETER AND THE WOLF* (Seattle Times Best New Play Award; National tour), *JUNIE B. IN JINGLE BELLS*, *BATMAN SMELLS!* and *JUNIE B. IS NOT A CROOK* (over 200 professional productions), adapted from the beloved book series by Barbara Park, *RONIA: THE ROBBER'S DAUGHTER*, adapted from Astrid Lindgren's story, premiered at Teatr Pinokio in Poland this year. Her adaptation of *JUDY MOODY: THE MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD TREASURE HUNT*, a seven-theater commission, is being produced during the 2017-18 season. Allison is a 2017-20 Core Member of the Playwright's Center, and an alumni of LATC'S Wordsmiths and Hedgebrook. She splits her time between Seattle and Austin, where she is the co-founder of the Marthas, a playwright collective. Her plays are published by Playscripts, Smith & Krauss, Dramatic Publishing and Rain City Press.

#### **About the Book Author**

Megan McDonald penned the popular *Judy Moody* book series. She is also known for the *Stink* books, a series based on the adventures of Judy Moody's little brother. She and her four sisters were born to John and Mary Louise McDonald. She received her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and her Master's of Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh. Before publishing her first book, she worked as a librarian at the Minneapolis Public Library. She authored multiple novels in the *American Girl* and *Sisters Club* series. She won the Judy Blume Contemporary Fiction Award in 1993. She lives in Sebastopol, California.

#### **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.