

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT: Kori Radloff, korir@rosetheater.org, 402-502-4641

The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites returns to The Rose Theater

(OMAHA, Nebr.) Back by popular demand, ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites*** takes the stage at The Rose Theater on Sept. 28. While The Rose is usually noted for producing its own mainstage productions, when Rose artistic director Matt Gutschick saw the show, he knew he wanted to bring it to Omaha.

“***The Very Hungry Caterpillar*** is a very unique show, and the Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia is the only theater in the world licensed to perform it,” explains Rose artistic director Matt Gutschick. “We wanted the Omaha community to see this unique staging that brings the classic children’s book to life in breathtaking fashion. It is something not to be missed and we are proud to bring the Mermaid Theatre to Omaha.”

The show was a hit when it made its Omaha debut in 2014, explains Gutschick. “Audiences really responded to the show and its unique use of blacklight puppetry. It just feels like Eric Carle’s drawings are magically coming to life all around them,” he says. “After four years, we felt there was a new generation of young theatergoers who would want to experience that for themselves.”

As one of Canada’s largest arts companies, the Mermaid Theatre has performed a variety of plays for five million spectators on four continents. In 2014, the production of ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites*** celebrated its fifteenth year of continuous touring and welcomed its two millionth spectator. To date, over 3500 performances have been presented in 13 countries.

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The Rose Theater
2001 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

t (402) 345-4849
f (402) 344-7255
www.rosetheater.org



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Audiences will quickly learn that this is a show designed with the very young in mind. A pre-show announcement explains that this is a “non-shushing” show. Director and designer Jim Morrow devised the term, explaining that children should be allowed to interact with the show unfolding before them. “I think it’s important to let children engage and interact with the performance. You don’t usually get that in the theatre; you’re always told to be quiet,” he says.

“One of the things that appealed to us about the Mermaid Theatre is that we share a common mission of bringing theater to young people and families. They are one of the best children’s theaters in the world, committed to creating top-notch performances and introducing children to high-quality entertainment. Like The Rose, Mermaid believes in opening the doors to the secrets of stage magic and letting young audience members see how things really work. Families can expect a mesmerizing show, followed by a Q&A session, just as they have always seen at The Rose, where the performers will share the ins and outs of bringing Eric Carle’s stories to life,” says Gutschick.

The Mermaid Theatre is headquartered in Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada. It was started in 1972 when its founders were intrigued with finding a way to introduce school-age children to theater. Starting by adapting folktales for local schools, the company was soon touring to larger venues outside of the province. In the 40 years since its creation, the theater’s unique adaptations of children’s literature have delighted more than five million young people in 16 countries on four continents. The company has traveled to more than a dozen countries and the narration for its plays has been translated into Spanish, Korean, Japanese, French, Cantonese and Mandarin. It ranks among North America’s most active artistic touring organizations.

Jim Morrow, director and designer of ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites***, started as a puppeteer with the Mermaid Theatre in 1978 and now serves as artistic director for the theater. He believes strongly in the theater’s mission to produce work which is good theatre – entertaining, informative and stimulating to all the senses. “Young people can benefit substantially, both in their emotional and aesthetic development, from early exposure to literature, the arts, and the power of imagination,” says the company’s mission statement.

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Mermaid Theatre focuses on puppetry arts and has become an expert in the medium. The company picks stories specifically on their ability to be translated well with puppets. It can take several years for a show to move from concept to completed production. Each individual puppet must be imagined, drawn, re-drawn and refined. Designers select the perfect materials to bring the puppets to the stage, drawing on their original source material while still giving them personality and life. It can take up to a month to make one puppet.

“Puppetry arts are not a simple medium. It’s one thing to say, ‘I want to use that object and have it animated to speak on stage,’ but you have to have performers who are technically able to do that, and bring the puppets to life,” said Morrow in a recent interview with *Saltscapes Magazine*. “What separates us from everybody else is our ability to entertain in an elegant way with these objects.”

The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites runs Sept. 28 - Oct. 14, 2018, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favorites is sponsored by Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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