



# CLASS SHOW GUIDE

## *Return to* NIOBRARA

### **Pre-Show Activities**

#### **Nebraskan Tableaux**

OUT-OF-CHAIR ACTIVITY • 15 MINUTES

**Objective:** Students will use their bodies and imaginations to create different frozen pictures.

**Materials:** An open space.

**Discussion:** “We are going to see a play at The Rose Theater called *Return to Niobrara*. It takes place in both present day and in the 1800s and in many different locations. We are going to create some of these places using our bodies by creating tableaux. A tableau is a frozen picture that we create with our bodies.”

**Modeling:** Invite a few students to come to the front of the class to create a frozen tableau of a familiar location, such as the playground or a grocery store. Encourage students to share what part of the location they’re creating, then freeze!

**Activity:** Decide as a group which scene to create. A few examples from the play are the Niobrara River, a courtroom, a Principal’s Office, or a family dinner table. One at a time, students will add to the tableau. Remind students that they can be either people or objects in the scenes they will create. As each student adds to the tableaux, ask them what part of the picture they will create. Encourage bold choices and interesting poses.

**Extension:** Encourage students to compare the tableaux they created with their bodies to the tableaux they will see in the production of *Return to Niobrara*.

#### **Theater Etiquette**

IN-CHAIR ACTIVITY • 10-15 MINUTES

**Objective:** Students will actively explore proper theater behavior.

**Discussion:** “Etiquette is a word we use to describe the way people behave when they are in social situations with other people. What is the proper etiquette when you see a play? How should you behave during the show? Is it the same way you should act when watching a movie at home or playing outside? Is it okay to laugh during a play if you think it is funny? Is it okay to talk to your neighbor during the performance?”

**Brainstorming:** As a class, create a list of ways that audience members might behave, good and bad, while in the theater. Write these behaviors on the board in two different columns: one for “Good Theater Etiquette” and one for “Bad Theater Etiquette.”

**Modeling:** Pick two students to come and sit in chairs in front of the class. Ask them to act out one of the “Bad Theater Etiquette” behaviors (with the teacher if desired) for ten seconds. Then have the class discuss why the behaviors were inappropriate and how they could be fixed. Now have the two students act out one of the behaviors under “Good Theater Etiquette” and discuss why this behavior is better.

**Activity:** Give the entire class one of the scenarios from their list of bad behaviors, like talking to their neighbor or not paying attention. Have the class act out this behavior for ten seconds then ask the students how they think this behavior makes the actors or the other audience members feel. Have them fix the behavior and act out this new scenario for twenty seconds. Repeat with a few other bad behaviors from the list.

# UPCOMING SHOWS



## Thumbelina

BEST FOR Pre-K - 2nd Grade  
INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE • 30 MINUTES

Adapted by Stephanie Jacobson

Based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen

Back by popular demand! Thumbelina is a flower-sized girl determined to discover the true meaning of friendship. Follow her on a magical, thumb-sized adventure that will find your child swimming with fish and flying with sparrows using inventive puppetry and innovative design.



## The Doll Maker's Gift

BEST FOR 4th to 10th Grade  
HIGH STAKES MUSICAL DRAMA • 75 MINUTES

Book by EllaRose Chary and Fran Sillau

Music by Brian Feinstein. Lyrics by Sammy Buck

Based on The Doll Maker's Gift by Sashi Fridman

Produced in Partnership With Deborah Denenberg

Nora is an imaginative little girl whose Russian Jewish community faces the Pogroms of the 1900s, a time of ethnic cleansing of Jews in Russia. After their cousins' village is attacked, Nora's family is forced to flee to America. They discover at the last moment that they don't have enough funds to pay for everyone's passage. Young Nora will have to stay behind, with the threat of attacks ever increasing. She is left with a family friend, a kind doll maker who offers to care for her until they can earn enough money to pay for her journey to America. Nora and the devoted doll maker show that all obstacles can be overcome with the help of good friends and community.

### Want to book a workshop?

## Workshops at Your School

The Rose offers several workshops that can take place AT YOUR SCHOOL. A professional Rose teaching artist can visit your classroom for one to five days in a one week time period to explore, through drama, a curriculum topic of your choice.

To register your class for a workshop that will take place at your school, please contact Melissa Richter at (402) 502-4625 or [melissar@rosetheater.org](mailto:melissar@rosetheater.org).

## Workshops at The Rose

A workshop AT THE ROSE is the perfect way to explore themes from a school field trip show or learn about the profession of theater. A professional teaching artist with a college degree in dramatic arts education will lead your class. To register your class for a Workshop at The Rose, please contact Melissa Richter at (402) 502-4625 or [melissar@rosetheater.org](mailto:melissar@rosetheater.org).

Visit [www.rosetheater.org](http://www.rosetheater.org) for more information!



**Free Funding Is Available for Field Trips!** We understand that budgets are tight. That's why we're offering two great solutions to help pay for your school's field trip expenses. Both Nebraska Arts Council and Target Stores are offering financial assistance to help underwrite the cost of providing your students with experiences such as those provided by The Rose Theater. For more information, please visit [www.nebraskartscouncil.org](http://www.nebraskartscouncil.org) (click "Grants" to see all categories) or [www.target.com/fieldtrips](http://www.target.com/fieldtrips).

### Write To Us!

Letters may be written to:  
Michael Miller, Literary Manager  
2001 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 68102

Emails may be sent to:  
Michael Miller at  
[michaelm@rosetheater.org](mailto:michaelm@rosetheater.org)

Facebook: Rose Theater - Omaha  
Twitter: @RoseTheaterCo



Performing Arts  
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

# Return to NIOBRARA

## Post-Show Activities

### Extra! Extra!

IN-CHAIR ACTIVITY • 30 MINUTES

**Objective:** Students will use their imaginations and written skills to persuade other classmates.

**Materials:** Paper and Pencil

**Discussion:** “During *Return to Niobrara*, journalists had an active role in making sure that both Chief Standing Bear and Steven’s stories would be heard. If you were to write your own column about Steven’s story, what would be some of the things you’d want to write about?”

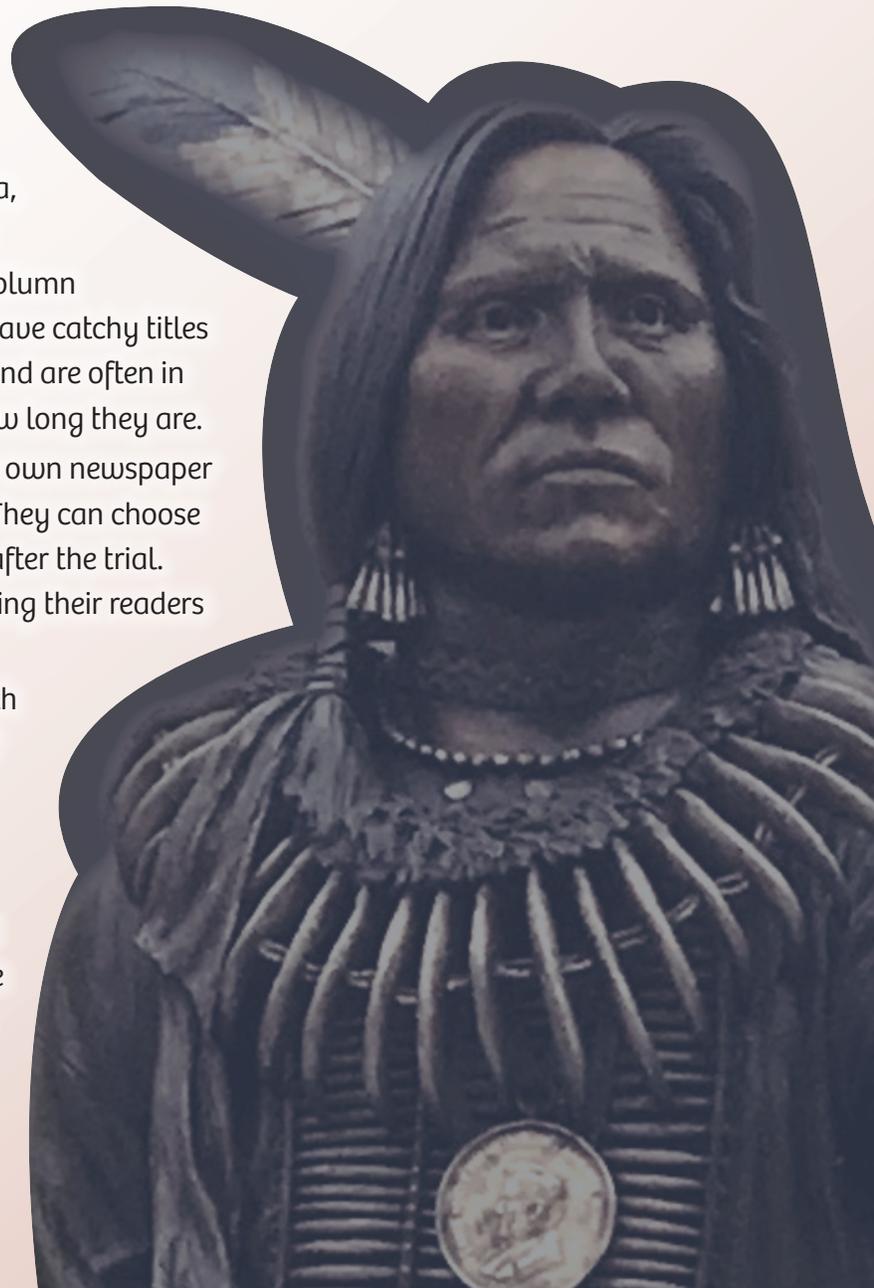
**Brainstorming:** “Journalists always ask for correct spelling of names before they write their articles. Let’s brainstorm some of the names or places we might find in our articles. I’ll spell them on the board.” [Niobrara, Chief Standing Bear, Steven, Ponca, Pocahontas, Principal McGovern]

**Modeling:** Share an example of column formatting. Columns sometimes have catchy titles in order to draw readers to them and are often in several columns depending on how long they are.

**Activity:** Students will write their own newspaper columns covering Steven’s story. They can choose to write about his story before or after the trial. Students should focus on persuading their readers to empathize with Steven.

**Side Coaching:** “Do you agree with Steven? Why is culture important? What would you want to make sure your peers knew about Steven’s story?”

**Extension:** In small groups, invite students to share what they wrote with one another. Students could also type their columns and properly format them using a computer.



## A Day in the Life (Trail of Tears)

IN CHAIR ACTIVITY • 30 MINUTES TO COMPLETE

**Objective:** Students will use their bodies and imaginations to empathize with Native Americans during the Trail of Tears.

**Materials:** An open space.

**Discussion:** “The Ponca Native Americans walked from Nebraska through Kansas into Oklahoma. Many of these Native Americans died along the way, one of them being Bear Shield, Standing Bear’s son. Many other tribes were also forced to walk the Trail of Tears. We are going to do an activity today that will encourage us to empathize with the people that walked the Trail of Tears.”

**Brainstorming:** “We are all going to choose a character that would be walking the Trail of Tears. You might choose to be a leader or chief of your tribe, a child, a mother with her children, or a character who has gone to school and knows English. Use your imagination and decide who this character is.”

**Modeling:** Instruct the students to walk around the open space whenever you say the word, “Go,” and when you clap your hands twice [or shake a tambourine, ring a bell, snap your fingers], they will freeze. Each time they freeze, add on to the situation with something new for students to think about.

**Activity:** Following the commands of “Go” and freeze claps, students will walk around the room as their Native American characters. Scaffolding situations:

- You’ve just left the only home you’ve ever known. What are you feeling? Curiosity? Anger? Sadness?
- You’ve been separated from your family. Do you look for them? Are you afraid of what the soldiers would do?
- U.S. soldiers are ordering you to keep walking. Do you understand what they’re saying?
- You’ve gotten very sick with malaria from mosquitoes along the route. How does this affect the way you walk? You have to keep going and how does that make you feel?
- A friend or family member has just died from illness and you can’t take them with you. How might you be feeling? Would this change the way you travel?

**Extension:** Invite students to be interviewed as their characters. Encourage them to stay in character and answer questions as if they really were that person. Remind them to be empathetic actors.

## Hold Out Your Hand

IN CHAIR ACTIVITY • 15-20 MINUTES TO COMPLETE

**Objective:** Students will create visual artwork to represent individuality.

**Materials:** Construction Paper, Scissors, Markers

**Discussion:** “When Chief Standing Bear stood up in court, he said, *“This hand is not the same color as your hand. But if I pierce it I will feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you will also feel pain. The blood that flows from my hand is the same color as yours. I am a man. God made us both.”* Standing Bear reminded others that though people may appear to be different, they are all people. During *Return to Niobrara*, Steven fought for others to recognize his cultural identity and individuality. It is important that we treat others similarly, but we must also recognize our differences and heritage. The shape of our own hands reminds us that we are all people, but there are lots of things about each of us that make us truly unique.”

**Modeling:** Create your own version before the activity to show a completed example. Share the five facts you wrote down about yourself!

**Activity:** Students will trace their hands onto a piece of construction paper and cut out the shape. On the palm, they will write their name. On each of the fingers, students will write facts about themselves. Encourage creative facts and designs.

**Extension:** Have students share their facts with others around them. Display everyone’s hands on a bulletin board in your classroom!

# Behind the Scenes Spotlight: The Playwright!

## Meet the Artist, Mary Kathryn Nagle!

Mary Kathryn Nagle is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She is 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. Nagle graduated Summa Cum Laude from Tulane Law School. Her articles have been published in law review journals including the Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, Yale Law Journal (online forum), Tulsa Law Review, and Tulane Law Review, among others. Her plays have been produced by Amerinda (*Miss Lead*), Native Voices at the Atrium (*Fairly Traceable*), Arena Stage (*Sovereignty*), Oregon Shakespeare Festival (*Manahatta*), and The Rose Theater (*Return to Niobrara*).



**Q: Can you tell us about the job of a playwright? How did you become a playwright?**

**Did you have to take special classes?**

**A:** I have never taken a class on playwriting. I began writing plays in college, but perhaps I was not a “real” playwright until I had my first professional production, in January 2014, when Amerinda produced my play *Miss Lead*. The key to being a successful playwright is the ability to ensure rejection. I would be hard pressed to identify a successful playwright who has never faced rejection, and sometimes it takes years of rejection before a professional theater will agree to produce your play. Don’t give up.

**Q: What is something you're excited about for the audience to experience in *Return to Niobrara*?**

**A:** I am very excited for audiences in Nebraska to experience a story that originates from the land they live on. So often today we are disconnected from the stories that explain how or why the original caretakers of the lands we live on were forcibly removed, or how they returned. Most theaters in the United States have never produced a single play by a Native playwright. But now, in Omaha, contemporary Nebraskan citizens will learn about the Ponca who-in the 1870s-were forcibly removed at gunpoint, but have now returned and restored much of their culture and sovereignty as a Nation.

**Q: How did you come up with the idea for *Return to Niobrara*?**

**A:** When I was clerking at the United States District Court, District of Nebraska, I wrote and produced a play titled *Waaxe’s Law*. We performed this play on the 130th anniversary of Judge Dundy’s ruling that Indians are “persons” on the law (May 12, 2009). Matt Gutschick, the Artistic Director at The Rose Theater, read the play and asked me if I could write this play as a children’s play—a task I was excited to take on.

**Q: What are some other plays you have written? Do you have a favorite?**

**A:** Asking a playwright which of her plays is her “favorite” is like asking a mother to pick her favorite child! I love them all. *Sovereignty* is of course near and dear to my heart since it is the story of my family and my Nation. Looking forward, I’m very excited to bring *Crossing Mnisose* to life at Portland Center Stage later this spring!

**Q: What is your advice for young people who would like to write plays?**

**A:** Do it. Don’t ask permission. Don’t wait for someone to tell you should do it, or that you’re smart enough to do it. If you want to write plays, make yourself do it. The first one will be challenging, but writing is more about re-writing than writing. And you can’t re-write or revise a script if you don’t get the first draft completed. Once you write your first draft, ask for feedback from someone you trust. But do not be dismayed if others do not initially see what you see in your work. The trick is to keep writing and never give up. If you continue to write and challenge yourself to grow, inevitably, the disconnect between what you write and what others see in your work will disappear.

**Thanks for sharing your work with us, Mary Kathryn!**

# Explore More!

If you enjoyed *Return to Niobrara*, be sure to check out these other great resources!

## Books to Read:

- 1.) ***I Am Not A Number*** by **Jenny Kay Dupuis, Kathy Kacer** and illustrated by **Gillian Newland**

When the Canadian government removes Irene and her siblings from their home on Nipissing First Nation, the children are forced to attend a boarding school miles away. There, Irene's hair is cut and she is told that names are not allowed and that instead, she is number 759. But Irene refuses to give up everything that she is: she knows that she will always be Irene.

- 2.) ***Soft Rain: A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears*** by **Cornelia Cornelissen**

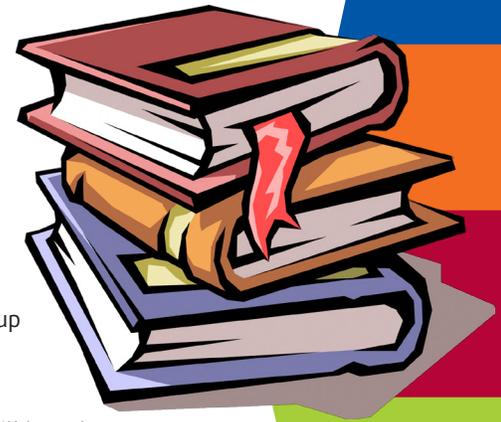
9-year-old Soft Rain refuses to believe the letter her teacher reads saying that all Cherokee people will have to leave their homes to go to "the land of darkness" in the west. To her shock, soldiers soon arrive and send her and her mother to walk the Trail of Tears, leaving the rest of her family behind. This book provides an excellent introduction to the painful realities of the Trail of Tears.

- 3.) ***Standing Bear of the Ponca*** by **Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve**

This 56-page book tells the story of Standing Bear, from his childhood education in the ways and traditions of his people, to his trials and triumphs as chief of the Bear Clan of the Ponca tribe.

- 4.) ***Fatty Legs: A True Story*** by **Christy Jordan-Fenton, Margaret Pokiak-Fenton** and illustrated by **Liz Amini-Holmes**

In the late 19th and early 20th century, residential schools were formed in the US and Canada to "assimilate" children — what Canada's Assembly of First Nations has called "killing the Indian in the child." Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and her daughter-in-law, Christy Jordan-Fenton, share the story of her residential school experience in the 1940s in this book.



## Websites to Check Out:

- 1.) ***Chief Standing Bear: The Trail Ahead*** - <http://chiefstandingbear.org/>

This website's mission is to gain designation of a national Chief Standing Bear trail spanning from Chief Standing Bear's homeland in Nebraska through Kansas and into Oklahoma. You can find primary source material from Chief Standing Bear's trial, videos of legislators speaking about the importance of such a trail, a trail map, and photos along the trail route!

- 2.) ***Ponca Oklahoma: Ten War Dances, Quilting Song*** (1975) - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg9eCzr\\_wp8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg9eCzr_wp8)

Eighteen minutes of Ponca war dance songs. This could be great background music for a writing or artwork activity!

- 3.) ***Ponca Tribe Pow Wow Niobrara*** (August 2017) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9R-IA7HVRV>

This video is a compilation of the 2017 Ponca Pow Wow in Niobrara, complete with pictures of traditional attire and videos of dancing and singing. This resource is a great example of how the Ponca continue to remember and celebrate their culture!

## Places to Visit:

- 1.) **Joslyn Art Museum, 2200 Dodge Street, Omaha NE 68102**

The Joslyn has a collection of American Indian artwork: clothing, paintings, and sculptures. Further explore different Native American tribes and the visual artwork of their cultures!

# Return to NIOBRARA

Season Sponsors



Show Sponsors



Opening night sponsor

