

For Immediate Release

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

About the cast and creators of *The Doll Maker's Gift*

Maddie Smith, Nora

Maddie is a seventh grader at Brownell-Talbot School. She is excited to be making her Rose Theater debut in ***The Doll Maker's Gift***. Her previous theater credits include productions at the Omaha Community Playhouse, including Little Fiona in *Shrek The Musical* (2018) , James Trotter in *James and the Giant Peach* (2018), Chip in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and *A Christmas Carol* (2015 – 2018) playing the roles of Girl with Sled, Belinda Cratchit and Fan.

Chloe Irwin, Rosa

Chloe is fifteen and a ninth grader at Gretna High School. She is a freshman class representative and is active in One Act and Speech as well as many clubs for social justice. Some of Chloe's favorite roles include: Mary Phagan in *Parade* at the Omaha Community Playhouse for which she won an Outstanding Youth Actor award from the Omaha Entertainment Arts Awards this year, Jessica in the world stage debut of *Prancer* at The Rose in 2016 (OEAA award), and Cordelia in *King Lear* (OEAA nominated) for Nebraska Shakespeare in 2017. Chloe has enjoyed many roles at The Rose Theater including: *Ramona Quimby* (Ramona) in 2014, *Wrinkle in Time* (Charlie - TAG nominated) in 2014, and *Honk!* (Downy) in 2016. Chloe has been in various shows throughout the community including: Creighton University, SNAP Productions, Nebraska Shakespeare, Bellevue Little Theater and Papillion/LaVista Community Theater.

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Annlynn Casey, Solder/Fairy Doll

Annlynn is a freshman at Duchesne Academy and is currently the freshman class president. She is on the Marian/Duchesne Trapshooting Team. She attended Gomez Heritage (K-4) and Marrs Magnet Center (5-8) in the Omaha Public Schools. Annlynn was part of the Dual Language Program (Spanish). She dances, sings, and plays the string bass, guitar, and piano. She played Camile in *Goosebumps the Musical* and Nana in *Peter Pan* at The Rose Theater. She has been fortunate to develop her skills through participation in many classes and opportunities at The Rose Theater, especially joining The Rose Brigade.

Chuck Sams, Solder/Captain Doll

Chuck is thrilled and honored to make his Rose Theater debut in ***The Doll Maker's Gift***. He is a freshman at Gretna High School where he recently played Benjamin in *Suffer Not*, an original one act play. He is actively involved in drama club and speech team, in which he recently won his first novice competition.

Noah Fowler, Mosche/Jacob/Boxer Doll

Noah is a teenage actor who also plays saxophone. He has taken part in one previous show at The Rose and plans to go into theater for his profession.

Dina Saltzman, Anna/School Girl Doll

Dina is thrilled to return to The Rose Theater after playing Elmer in last season's production of *Newsies*. Other 2018 credits include Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden* at the UNO Theater, and *West Side Story* at Stagedoor Manor in Loch Sheldrake, NY, where she received the award for Best Featured Actress. She recently performed with the New York Pop's at their gala at Carnegie Hall. Dina is a member of the award-winning Rose Brigade. She is a freshman at Central High School and studies dance, acting and voice. Dina is looking forward to studying musical theater at Oklahoma City University this summer.

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Abby Gerdts, Mama

Abby Gerdts is an actress, singer, and teaching artist recently relocated to the Midwest from New York City where she was based for 20 years. This will be Abby's first performance in Omaha but has performed in numerous productions in the United States and abroad during her career. She is a co-founder of Artists Striving to End Poverty (astep.org), a nonprofit organization that provides arts education and empowerment programs for under-served youth around the world. As the Program Director for ASTEP and as a consultant for other arts organizations, she has taught and created arts programming for students of all ages in the United States, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, India, China, and South Africa. Abby is a graduate of The Juilliard School's Drama Division.

Steve Hydeen, Papa/Guard

Steve Hydeen is thrilled to be returning to the stage of musical theater. For the last 15 years of his professional artistic career, he has been performing as an improv actor and teacher with 88improv and the 402 Arts Collective. Steve is passionate about teaching improvisation to others, young and old, for the foundational life skills learned through the art-form. After obtaining a theater degree from Northwestern College (Orange City IA) in 2002, Steve and his wife moved to the Omaha area to assist in the founding of 88improv, and stayed to raise their three children. He feels incredibly blessed to have this opportunity to join the The Rose Theater and the ensemble of ***The Doll Maker's Gift*** in the sharing of this precious story.

Patrick Wolfe, Zalushka/Uncle Abraham

Patrick is honored to be on The Rose stage again after appearing in *Newsies* where he was exhausted watching those kids tap their hearts out! Other favorite roles include Colonel Mustard in *Clue: the Musical* and Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. His most beloved role is as father and husband to an active family of 4 kids that is just as likely to be on a ball field as on stage. Patrick is grateful for how hard they work to "hold everything together" and is proud to be part of the team that brought this story to life for you!

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Sue Gillespie Booton, Choreographer/Pola/Aunt Rebecca/Ticket Doll

Sue Gillespie Booton's national tour credits include *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Beehive*, and *Grease*. Her latest Rose Theater credits include *Elf the Musical* (Sam, Mrs. Santa Claus), *Madagascar* (Gloria), *Shrek* (Dragon, Mama Bear), *Cat in the Hat* (Thing #1), *Diary of a Worm*, *a Spider and a Fly* (Mrs. McBee), *Pinkalicious - The Musical* (Dr. Wink/Allison), *Charlotte's Web* (Templeton/Narrator/Goose), *Cinderella* (Fairy Godmother), and *Miss Nelson is Missing* (Miss Nelson/Viola Swamp). Other regional credits: *Rocky Horror* (Columbia), *Ring of Fire* (Ensemble) and *Always, Patsy Cline* (Louise,) for Artist Repertory Theater. She was an original cast member in Omaha's longest running musical, *Beehive* (Brenda Lee, Petula Clark, Janis Joplin), and appeared in shows on Royal Caribbean, Carnival, Royal Viking and Europe's Sally Cruise Lines. Choreographic credits include *Disney's Elf the Musical*, *Newsies*, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *Madagascar*, *Mary Poppins*, *A Christmas Story*, *Tarzan*, *Madeline's Christmas*, *High School Musical*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *HONK!* and *Annie - The Musical*. She was the 2018 Omaha Arts Entertainment Awards "Best Choreographer" recipient for *Newsies*, 2015 Theater Arts Guild Best Choreographer nominee for *Tarzan*, the 2014 National Freddy G recipient for outstanding musical theater educators, and awarded the 2014 Theater Arts Guild Education Award. She is The Rose Theater's Resident Choreographer and Director of BROADWAY at the Rose and The Rose Brigades.

Fran Sillau, Director/Book Writer

Mr. Sillau serves as the Accessibility Coordinator at The Omaha Theater Company (The Rose), where he coordinates educational opportunities for students with disabilities and ensures that every individual who passes through the doors of The Rose can access all programming equally. He also directs MainStage productions and some of his credits at The Rose include *Shrek: The Musical*, *TYA, Go, Dog. Go!*, and *Hanna's Suitcase*.

Sillau serves as Artistic Director of Circle Theatre, a company dedicated to creating theater that includes artists with disabilities.(www.circletheatreomaha.org). Circle Theatre has produced several TYA plays. Under Sillau's leadership, the Circle co-commissioned *My Broken Doll*, a play based on the life of holocaust survivor Beatrice Karp, adapted by Ernie Nolan, and *Over The River*, a play about friendship by Ellen Struve. Both plays are currently touring the state of Nebraska. In December of 2016, Sillau directed a regional premiere of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. This particular production incorporated American Sign Language, Shadow interpreting, Audio Description, as well as actors with various physical and developmental disabilities.

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Sillau is a former Aurand Harris Fellowship recipient and a former winner of The Access Grant from The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He served as a Teaching Artist Fellow for VSA: The International Association for Arts and Disability and is a frequent contractor for The Kennedy Center. He is frequently called upon to facilitate on the subject of theater and disability, and has conducted workshops on theater and inclusion in Iowa, Nebraska, Kentucky, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Florida, Tennessee, New York State, Washington State, Connecticut, and at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. He holds an MFA in Directing and Inclusion from Goddard College. His professional activities can be found at www.Fransillau.com.

EllaRose Chary, Book Writer

EllaRose Chary is an award-winning New York based writer. Musicals: *Cotton Candy and Cocaine* (Theater C Workshop Production), TL;DR: *Thelma Louise; Dyke Remix* (The Tank PrideFest), *Patchwork* (Prospect Theater Commission; Democracy Prep High School Production), *Queer People. Time.* (Catwalk Residency), *The Doll Maker's Gift* (The Rose Theater), *The Lorikeet* (The Flea Theater commission), and the Malaysian musical *Marrying Me* (BOH Cameronian Arts Award Winner). Other projects: *Patriettes* (The #Fword Finalist), *The Lake and Mill* (Drama League; Judson; Finalist, Kernodle New Play Award) and The Civilians' *Songs For A New World* Lobby Project at City Center (Encores! Off-Center). EllaRose is an advocate for inclusion in musical theater both on and off stage, and to that end wrote *Is The Pipeline A Pipe Dream For Emerging Women In Musical Theater?* (Lilly Awards Blog), *Women Making Musical Theatre: Institutions Hold the Power to Effect Change* (HowlRound), *You Might Make A Killing'...If You Don't Starve First* (Musical Theater Today), was on NYMF's 2017 Expanding Representations of Gender Identity and Sexuality on Stage panel and co-curates Tank-aret. She frequently writes songs for Honest Accomplice Theatre. EllaRose is an Ars Nova Uncharted resident, Dramatists Guild Fellow, The Civilians R & D Group alum (and former coordinator), Music Theater Today Contributing Editor NYFA Fellowship Playwriting/Screenwriting Finalist, a BOH Cameronian Arts Award Nominee (Best Lyrics), recipient of the Anna Sosenko Grant and a NAMT grant, and a proud member of ASCAP and the Dramatists Guild. BA: Brown University; MFA: NYU Tisch. www.ellarosechary.com

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Makulumy Alexander-Hills, Orchestrator

Makulumy Alexander-Hills is a music director, arranger, and orchestrator based in New York City. He has worked throughout the country, collaborating with Rhizome Theater Company (*Nice Town Normal People*), The American Repertory Theater (*Finding Neverland, Violet*), and TheatreWorks (*Triangle*). New York-based projects have included *Ragtime on Ellis Island* and several NYMF performances. He is currently pursuing graduate studies in Music Theory at Columbia University.

Sammy Buck, Lyricist

Sammy Buck's shows have been performed on five continents. With composer Daniel S. Acquisto, he wrote the book and lyrics for *Like You Like It* (Playscripts/Broadway Licensing, Broadway Records Studio Cast RADcording) and *StinkyKids® The Musical* (TRW, Off-Broadway Alliance Award: Best Family Show, Vital Theatre). Bookwriter/co-lyricist: *Small Town Story* (American Theater Group/SOPAC, NYTB commission, Richard Rodgers Award Finalist, Village Originals, NAMT Writers Residency Grant). Book: Leonard Bernstein's *Cast Party* (Roundabout). Lyrics: *The Doll Maker's Gift* (Rose Theater) and *And Then I Wrote A Song About It* (Luna, Diversionary). Film: *Red Hook* (eOne Films, on Netflix/Showtime/Amazon Prime), *Fade to White* (Free Range Humans, on Amazon Prime). Emmy® winner with TVLand digital and creator of *Structure! The Musical, Or Everything You Need To Know About Musicals You Can Learn from Star Wars*. Winner, MAC Dottie Burman Award. Member of BMI and The Dramatists Guild, Inc. www.sammybuck.com

Brian Feinstein, Composer

Brian Feinstein began his career in entertainment at the USC School of Cinema & Television and completed his master's degree at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. His original compositions have since earned him rave reviews in The New York Times, six ASCAP Plus Awards, a Jonathan Larson Fellowship and the Anna Sosenko Trust Award. His original musical *Girlstar*, directed by two-time Tony Award nominee Eric Schaeffer, recently premiered at the prestigious Signature Theatre in DC. Other credits include: *Mimi LeDuck* starring the legendary Eartha Kitt (Off-Broadway), *The Top Job* (licensed throughout the US), *The Circus Is Coming To Town* (awarded best family musical in Southern California), among others. Brian's compositions have been performed by the Boston Pops, the Indianapolis Philharmonic and a wide array of musicians and vocalists across the country, in Europe and on television. Brian is currently the resident composer and Program Associate for the 92Y's Musical Theater Department in NYC. He also enjoys volunteering with the Tri-State Basset Hound Rescue League. www.BrianFeinsteinMusic.com

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Jerry Brabec, Music Director

Jerry Brabec, tenor, is an Ordained Deacon on the clergy staff at Omaha St. Paul United Methodist Church where he serves as Minister of Worship. His responsibilities include the overseeing of liturgical preparation for the congregation of 500. He also serves as choral director for Temple Israel's Kol Rina. Awarded the Master of Music degree from the University of Nebraska, he studied choral conducting with Dr. Cina Crisara and Dr. Z. Randall Stroope. As a chorister of the acclaimed Robert Shaw Festival Chorus at Carnegie Hall, he sang for five years under the baton of the late Robert Shaw, was twice selected one of six participants in the Alice Parker Melodius Accord Fellowship Program and frequently continues his conducting studies with Ms. Parker during January in New York. At the Rose for the past ten seasons, ***The Doll Maker's Gift*** marks his 36th show as a visiting music director/vocal coach. He also serves as music director for the nationally acclaimed Rose Brigade, one of the award winning offerings of the "Broadway at The Rose" program. Formerly, Jerry taught at the high school level for Council Bluffs Community Schools, served as associate artistic director of the Omaha Clarion Chorale, and as artistic director for the Kaneshville Chorus and Renaissance Faire of the Midlands.

Deborah Denenberg, Co-Producer

Deborah grew up at the Omaha Community Playhouse, watching her actress mother. She performed in *Aladdin's Lamp* at Omaha Junior Theater—a predecessor of The Rose. (She is grateful no video exists).

Deborah began her career at the Upstairs Dinner Theater as Producer/General Manager of this live, professional theater. In 1984, the Upstairs' turnaround became the subject of a Harvard Business School case study, Lyric, Inc, still taught in business curriculums nationwide.

In 1987, Deborah moved to New York City. She worked for off-Broadway's Second Stage Theater for one year. In 1989, Deborah joined the Broadway producers Dodger Productions. There she created and built Big League Theatricals, an industry leader that produces, books and general manages national tours of Broadway shows. Representative productions included: *Guys and Dolls*, *The Secret Garden*, *Into the Woods*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and *The Who's Tommy*, the most profitable production of this multimedia Broadway musical.

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Deborah left Big League Theatricals after nine years, but she still partners with the company as producer on specific national tours. Recent offerings include *Dreamgirls*, *Hair*, and *The Producers*, and *A Christmas Story—The Musical* by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*La La Land*, *Dear Evan Hansen*). This holiday musical is in its fourth year of seasonal touring.

Deborah enthusiastically thanks her collaborators on ***The Doll Maker's Gift***. Grateful appreciation to Shani Katzman of Chabad, for the idea, to Howard Kooper and Larry Kelberg, our Executive Producers, and to Sammy Buck, Brian Feinstein, and EllaRose Chary, New Yorkers who took the call and signed on for this adventure in Omaha. Thanks to the beautiful Rose Theater, a treasure. Most of all, thanks to the champion of this project, who brought our story to life, Fran Sillau.

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