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The Rose Theater's 2019-20 season celebrates 70 years with new friends and old favorites

(Omaha, NE) If the 2019-20 season at The Rose Theater feels familiar, that's because it is chock-full of some of the most popular productions the theater has staged over its 70-year history. These familiar favorites will share the spotlight with a celebrity guest, a world premiere, and a new ticket package for preschool families.

Among the shows returning to The Rose stage is *Elf the Musical*, which will again feature the talents of actor Dan Chevalier as Buddy the Elf. *Elf* proved to be the hit of the holiday season in 2018 with a sold-out four-week run. Other revivals in the 2019-20 season include *Go, Dog. Go!*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Little Engine That Could* and *The Sound of Music*. Shows rounding out the season include *Ella Enchanted*; *Howie D: Back in the Day*; *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience*; *Corduroy*; and *A Bucket of Blessings*.

In a highlight of the new season, The Rose will feature a special appearance by Backstreet Boy Howie Dorough (or Howie D., as he is known to his fans.) Dorough will debut a script he has co-written with Tor Hyams and Lisa St. Lou that gives a semi-biographical account of his middle school years, his first introductions to music and finding his voice. Dorough will star in the world-premiere production, which will feature never-before-heard music written by the creative team specifically for *Howie D: Back in the Day*.

The Rose's popular First Stage series is back with a new twist. Designed specifically for very young audiences and children with special needs, the 2019-20 season will feature the regional debut of *A Bucket of Blessings* and the return of *The Little Engine That Could*, adapted by Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick.

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New this year, for the first time, families will be able to purchase a ticket package that includes the First Stage series. Dubbed the “First Stage+ Package,” this option gives families four tickets to each of the two First Stage shows. After they have experienced theater in this smaller, friendly space, young audiences can graduate to the mainstage with 4 tickets to the 2020 production of *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience*. In addition, families have the opportunity to participate in two dance and drama classes, highlighting the educational offerings available at The Rose.

From its early days in 1949 as Omaha’s Junior Theatre, to its time as the Emmy Gifford Children’s Theater, to its current home at The Rose, the Omaha Theater Company has been dedicated to enriching the lives of children and families through live theater and arts education. This continues to be evident as they launch the 2019-20 season with a collection of plays and musicals that inspires young audiences to find the strength and courage within themselves to change the world and find their voice.

“The Rose is a place where parents can bring their children and know that they will not only have a special time set aside for their family -- a time that will resonate in their memory for a lifetime -- but they will also receive a real benefit in the lessons that they will learn through the stories being told onstage,” says Matt Gutschick, artistic director of The Rose.

Gutschick has crafted a season that offers a range of shows and activities that will inspire, educate and, of course, entertain children of all ages. Whether inspiring children to think creatively, to stretch their horizons, to face the world bravely or do a little self-reflection, Gutschick hopes the topics addressed in the 2019-20 season will encourage families to see the world through new eyes, to delve further into educational topics and to enjoy the magic of the arts.

The Rose also renews its commitment to accommodate audience members with special needs. The Rose will offer one sensory-friendly performance of each mainstage production. These shows designated as “sensory-friendly” will feature special accommodations made for families attending with a child on the autism spectrum or with other special needs. New sensory bags are available at every performance. These bags include noise-canceling headphones, fidget devices and other materials intended to help those on the autism spectrum.

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The Rose will now also provide captioning services for all mainstage shows through a closed-circuit iPad network. Captioning will be available at select shows throughout the season. American Sign Language interpreters will continue to be available for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing and audio description services for the blind during one showing of every mainstage production. Contact the Box Office for information on services for people with special needs.

The theater's mainstage season will consist of nine main stage shows, including:

- **Go, Dog. Go!**
- **The Cat in the Hat**
- **Ella Enchanted**
- **Elf: The Musical**
- **Howie D: Back in the Day**
- **The Diary of Anne Frank**
- **Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience**
- **Corduroy**
- **The Sound of Music**

Six shows are included with Rose membership; non-members may purchase tickets for member event shows for \$20 per ticket. The Rose's two premium event shows, *Elf the Musical* and *The Sound of Music* are \$27 main floor, \$22 balcony. Tickets to the special event, *Howie D: Back in the Day*, are \$25 for both main floor and balcony. Rose members receive discounts and priority booking for all non-member events. See The Rose website, www.rosetheater.org, for more information.

"Our entire organization is focused on helping young people ask meaningful questions about the world, and we encourage that curiosity to start at a very early age," says Gutschick. "We want all our audiences, no matter their age, to ask questions, to love being curious, and to experience the transformative power of live theater."

Rose memberships are on sale now, with options starting at \$105. Memberships may be purchased online at www.rosetheater.org or by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849.

The Rose's 2019-20 season is sponsored by Children's Hospital and Medical Center and Nebraska Furniture Mart.

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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 groundbreaking 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.

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