

## For Immediate Release

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## Dynamic dogs delight young audiences in musical mayhem at The Rose Theater

Classic children's book *Go, Dog. Go!* is a rollicking romp for kids

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater opens its 2019-20 season with *Go, Dog. Go!*, P. D. Eastman's classic children's book that explores movement, color and space. With gentle, bouncy humor and playful puns, *Go, Dog. Go!* is the perfect introduction to the theater for young audiences. The show runs August 30 - Sept. 15 at The Rose.

According to Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick, *Go, Dog. Go!* is a visual delight designed to ignite imaginations. "This is a classic book that teaches children about language, and its illustration and play with words provides a platform for imaginative -- and almost surrealist -- fun," he says.

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## ***Go, Dog. Go!***

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***Go, Dog. Go!*** references the original 1961 book in many ways, most notably in the scenic design by Lindsey Purvis. “The main concept for the stage picture is really a nod to the illustrations in the book,” says Rose technical director Greg Rishoi. “Lindsey came up with a really nice scene design that mimics the illustration style in the book. Everything has really bold outlines and bright colors.”

The show opens with the MC Dog leading an energetic pack of pups in a series of situations that introduced children to a variety of concepts: color, movement, friendship, work, rest and play. Through silly scenes that may seem on the surface to be nonsense, ***Go, Dog. Go!*** encourages young people to notice the importance and meaning of the small things in the world, while driving cars, rollerskating, swimming, riding a Ferris wheel, climbing trees, singing and dancing.

The original source material itself uses only 75 different words throughout the book, making it a favorite among early readers, but adding considerable challenges in adapting it for the stage. As the adaptors Allision Gregory and Steven Dietz explain, “This play is adapted from a book renowned for its ability to generate fun, learning, adventure and surprise with a minimum of text. It honors the joyous simplicity of the world around us. Therefore, in the making of this play, it is not our intention to ‘fill out’ or ‘open up’ the story in the style of many traditional adaptations. ‘Expanding the book’ in this way would, we believe, rob it of its essential wondrous and loopy anarchy. Instead, we hope to celebrate and explore the existing words and pictures; to look not ‘outside the book,’ but more closely ‘within in’ -- in the way that a child can page through Mr. Eastman’s book night after night and find something remarkable and new with each subsequent reading. We have chosen, therefore to play inside the story -- to explore the buckets of bliss, wonder, longing and discovery that are waiting for us, for all of us, there.”

Guest director Jess Jung recently discovered the magic of the story when sharing it with a young person in her life. “This is a really, really fun book,” she says. “I had the fortune of spending the summer with my niece, who is five and just learning to read. She loves that she can read ***Go, Dog. Go!***, and this script has that same simple charm that you find in the book. Even in the big song and dance numbers, you hear words repeated, you hear ‘Go Dog go’ over and over and over, but that’s part of the fun of the show and that’s how they connected it to the book.”

Jung describes ***Go, Dog. Go!*** as a frolicking musical dog party full of surprises, color, clowning, vaudeville, singing and barking, and loveable dogs. The concept of clowning is one that she has used for a basis of the actors’ movements. “I love clowning. I love physical storytelling,” she says. “The script is mostly stage directions, so we have been doing a lot of playing in the room and figuring out how to bring these stage directions to life.”

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As a nod to this clown-like atmosphere, Jung has chosen to incorporate a circus-esque atmosphere to the entire show. “There is a sense of magic and wonder, and specifically, rough magic and theatricality, in this circus-slash-carnival world,” she explains. “We’ve asked for some really fun things like juggling balls and unicycles and stilts, and it has been really fun to play with all of those circus elements. It will make for a wonderful show on stage.”

The result is madcap mayhem as the dogs weave through scenes of zooming cars, construction zone chaos, raucous rollerskating and more, a spectacle that even the tiniest theatergoers can appreciate. Lighting designer Craig S. Moxon plans to tie the various scenes together through lighting. “I love carnivals because it’s all about color,” he says. “This show is really for younger audiences, so we have to communicate the language of the show even through the lighting. The ideas of those bold colors and large gestures, those are the kinds of things we plan to bring out through lighting and relate everything to each other.”

A running joke throughout the show is a parade of creative hats and the repeated question, “Do you like my hat?”. Costume designer Sherri Geerdes has been tasked with creating not only the brightly-colored dogs, but also their various chapeaus. Bright, primary colors used in the costumes pop against the simple set and mimic the book’s illustrations.

“This is my third time doing this show, and I am excited because we will be reusing some of the costumes that we used before, although in some new ways,” says Geerdes. “All the dogs wear a variety of hats, from baseball hats to construction hats, party hats, night camps and more.”

Adding to the overall carnival ambiance is a pre-show featuring The Rose’s antique Wurlitzer organ. Sound designer Christy Hernandez recently received new instructions on how to operate the self-playing functions of the organ and, for the first time in many years, audience members will be able to see the keys moving on their own as the organ plays the pre-show music.

“People don’t always realize how important The Rose’s organ is to our house,” says music director Jerry Brabec.” “So many of the organs like the one we have remain, and even fewer remain in playable condition. That instrument is truly a treasure.”

***Go, Dog. Go!*** brings a legacy of entertaining early readers for almost six decades of pedal-pushing pups and perpetual motion. The spectacularly silly story runs approximately 65 minutes and will be enjoyed most by families with younger children.

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***Go, Dog. Go!*** runs August 30 - September 15, 2019 on The Rose Theater mainstage, with performances on Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. American Sign Language interpretation and captioning services for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing will be offered at the 2 p.m. show on Saturday, September 7. Audio description services for audiences who are blind or have low vision will also be available at this performance. A sensory-friendly performance will be presented at the 5 pm performance on Saturday, September 7.

Tickets for ***Go, Dog. Go!*** are available for \$20 by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or online at [www.rosetheater.org](http://www.rosetheater.org). Rose members receive four free tickets to the production.

***Go, Dog. Go!*** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Baird Holm, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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### **About the Author**

***Go, Dog. Go!*** is based on the best-selling children's book by the same name, written by Philip Dey (P. D.) Eastman. Eastman was a children's author, animator, illustrator, and screenwriter. He was born in 1909, in Amherst, Massachusetts. He studied at Amherst College, graduating in 1936, and later at the National Academy of Design in New York City. He began his career at Walt Disney Studios where he worked as an Assistant Animator and in production design and story. In, 1942, he began working for Leon Schelsinger Productions (now known as Warner Brothers Cartoons). Eastman was inducted into the army in 1943 and was assigned to the Signal Corps Film Unit. It was there that he met Ted Geisel (later known as Dr. Seuss) who was the head of his unit. He began his freelancing career in 1952, working on comic books and later as a writer and storyboard artist. His first children's book, *Sam and the Firefly*, was published in 1958 by Random House. ***Go, Dog. Go!*** was written and illustrated by Eastman and published in 1961. By his death in 1986, P.D. Eastman had written or illustrated over 18 children's books. Some of his most popular children's books include: *Are You My Mother?*, *Big Dog...Little Dog*, *The Best Dog Nest*, and ***Go, Dog. Go!***

### **About the Playwrights**

Allison Gregory is an American playwright whose plays have been produced across the country and received numerous awards. She has written and adapted many plays for young audiences including *Junie B. is Not a Crook*, *Ronia: the Robber's Daughter*, and *Judy Moody & Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt*. Gregory is the co-founder of the Marthas, a playwright collective, located in Austin, Texas.

Steven Dietz is an American playwright and director who has produced more than 30 plays regionally, off Broadway, and internationally. His works have won several awards, including the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award. Along with writing, Dietz has also directed premiere productions of plays at several of America's leading regional theatres. He writes plays for all ages. Some of his most famous works include: *Dracula*, *Halcyon Days*, *Lonely Planet*, and *Go, Dog. Go!* (cowritten with Allison Gregory)

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### **About The Rose**

For 70 years, The Rose Theater has been providing Omaha-area families with the best in live theater and arts education. The Omaha Theater Company was one of the first in Omaha to offer classes in the theater arts, and today The Rose stands as a leading program and training ground for young artists interested in pursuing a career in theater.

Students enrolled in classes at The Rose learn from some of the best educators in the region. Rose teachers include professional actors, accomplished dancers, award-winning playwrights, highly-decorated directors, renowned choreographers and more. Rose classes encourage creativity and imagination while enriching the understanding and enjoyment of theater. Many classes offer performance opportunities, and all classes promote ensemble work and skill development. Dance, acting and voice classes emphasize technique and professionalism, giving students the tools they need to succeed in the classroom, their schools, in the community, and on stages around the world.

Onstage, The Rose 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. 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.

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