

For Immediate Release

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**Ella
Enchanted**
A NEW MUSICAL***Ella Enchanted* offers
delightful musical twist at The Rose Theater****Modern-day take on a Cinderella story will delight families of all ages**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater will present a twist on the classic fairy tale in its upcoming musical production, ***Ella Enchanted***, a musical with a meaningful message about girl power, using your brain and standing up for what is right, playing Oct. 25 to Nov. 10.

The story of airy enchantment, ogres, giants and medieval magic is based on the 1997 Newbery novel by Gail Carson Levine. ***Ella Enchanted*** tells the story of a medieval maiden named Ella (played by Aguel Lual) who lives in the Kingdom of Frell. When she is born, Ella's misguided fairy godmother Lucinda (played by Lauren Krupski) bestows the gift of obedience upon her when Ella will not stop crying. It doesn't take long for Ella's mother to realize the burden this so-called "gift" that prevents Ella from saying, "no," will become. She tries to teach Ella how to resist the curse, but the magic is too strong. Instead, Ella is instructed to keep the curse under wraps in order to protect Ella from being controlled and manipulated by others.

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“I think ***Ella Enchanted*** is a very important story. Yes, it’s a fairy tale. But what does it mean to have to obey orders and do whatever someone says, especially today,” asks guest director Nik Whitcomb. “What does it mean to have your own autonomy, and what does it look like when that is taken away, and the world is moving around you, but you don’t have control over your own choices?”

In classic fairy tale form, Ella’s mother dies and her father (LaDareon “LD” Copeland) remarries a cruel woman with two daughters, Dame Olga (played by Joey Hartshorn). Ella’s stepsisters, Olive (Carina DuMarce) and Hattie (Shannon Duke) soon learn her secret and use its power to torment and abuse her mercilessly, motivating Ella to go on a quest to rid herself of the spell and find her own free will. Along the way, she also discovers her own inner strength, bravery, intelligence and selflessness.

“***Ella Enchanted*** is a fun and frolicking musical,” says writer Karen Zacarías. “But it also carries a powerful message about each child’s responsibility to discover his or her own unique voice and use it to make the world a better and more inclusive place. It’s a play that encourages children to resist bullies, to resist oppression, and to find the true magic of common language and common ground.”

Whitcomb has decided to twist the story of ***Ella Enchanted*** beyond just the storyline. “The show is definitely in a fairy tale world, but it is also very contemporary in the way the story is told,” he says. “Because of that, as I read it, I thought, ‘what does a fairy tale world look like through an Instagram filter?’ That’s what I landed on to make this show accessible, exciting and interesting to kids.

The result is a show designed with creative juxtapositions inserted throughout. Whitcomb describes some of the costumes as “medieval meets Coachella.” Costume designer Zach Kloppenborg explains that while the silhouettes may be familiar conical, pointed hats and long, drape-y sleeves, the fabrics and textures have a more modern sensibility: leopard print, buffalo plaid and nods to current culture.

A significant challenge in the production came in the form of a scene where Ella encounters a land of giants. Whitcomb wasn’t happy with how other theaters had approached the scene and instead devised a new idea using shadow and lighting. “I was watching all these videos with the giants. I knew I didn’t want to do puppets, so instead we are doing these shadow play segments. The entire set is designed around it, and Sue Gillespie Booton has created this great choreography that plays with the shadows and really makes the giants feel menacing,” he says.

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Along her journey, Ella encounters a menagerie of mythical creatures: hungry ogres, enormous giants, a magical bird – and even a new best friend. Gallant and down-to-earth Prince Charmont (played by Marcel Daly) sees Ella for who she really is. He appreciates her love of languages and the emphasis on the power of words. The pair become close friends who challenge each other intellectually and appreciate each other's unique gifts. Over time, Prince Char helps Ella find the confidence in herself necessary to become her own hero.

“At its core, ***Ella Enchanted*** is about a young person realizing that she has a voice... and that she can make choices. Kids have a lot less power than adults, but that does not mean they don't have values and opinions, and they don't have the right to have a say,” says composer Deborah Wicks La Puma about the show.

The end result is a show that teaches children about learning to communicate with one another, appreciating their differences, being true to oneself, exploring the world and never giving up.

Ella Enchanted is recommended for families with children of all ages and is 75 minutes long without an intermission.

Ella Enchanted runs Oct. 25 – Nov. 10, 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, Nov. 2. 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, Nov. 2.

Audiences attending the opening night of ***Ella Enchanted*** on Friday, Oct. 25 at 7 pm are invited to come in costume to participate in an on-stage costume parade before the show begins; families are advised to arrive prior to 6:40 if they want to participate. Picture-taking opportunities with princesses, knights and other medieval characters will be available throughout The Rose lobby, and a horse and carriage will be on display outside the theater for the evening.

Tickets for ***Ella Enchanted*** are available for \$20 by calling The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or online at www.rosetheater.org. Rose members receive free tickets to the production.

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Ella Enchanted is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Security National Bank, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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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