

## For Immediate Release

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## Rose Theater production reminds community that *It's a Wonderful Life*

### Rose Theater holiday show offered exclusively online

(OMAHA, Nebr.) Inspired by the classic film, The Rose Theater reprises the first show ever produced on its iconic stage, *It's a Wonderful Life*. The show follows the life of George Bailey, an “everyman” character whose guardian angel descends on Christmas Eve to save him from despair and to remind him that his has been, after all, a wonderful life.

While the show was performed on The Rose’s stage, the production finds a new life online. Due to COVID levels in the community, the show is being presented exclusively online. Videographer Mike Machian filmed the show with a professional three-camera set up to give at-home audiences a high-quality viewing experience from the comfort and safety of their home.

Digital tickets are available at The Rose website, by calling the box office at (402) 345-4849 or on The Rose’s Facebook page. The link will be available for viewing through January 3, 2021.

**=MORE=**

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***It's a Wonderful Life***  
**at The Rose Theater**

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***It's a Wonderful Life*** tells the story of George Bailey, a young man growing up in the small town of Bedford Falls. Throughout his life, he looks forward to leaving the town and seeing the world -- but fate continually intervenes and keeps him from his dreams. George watches friends and family leave to make their fortune, while he stays behind to hold down the fort -- the family building and loan business. When an inopportune mix-up with a deposit leaves George short \$8000, he begins to question his life and if it has all been worth it.

Marcel Daly plays George Bailey. "It's such a heavy time in this world right now," he says. "This show tells people that, you know, things are going to be hard, but at the same time, there are so many things that you have. You have family. You have opportunity. You have friends. And whether you are at a high or a low on that field, you're going to have a connection."

As George finds himself on a bridge, contemplating ending his life, his guardian angel Clarence enters the picture and decides to show George what the world would be like if he had never been born. High school senior Wayne Hudson III plays George, a stark change from the original source material.

Director and script adapter Sarah Brown explains that she changed the character of Clarence to make the show more accessible to younger audiences. "I think my biggest challenge was knowing the audience I'm speaking to. How could I take this classic story and make it exciting for a younger audience? And so, I discovered the two characters of Clarence and Joseph, the two angel characters. They were played by older men in the movie. As I was working through how I could make this story more accessible to young people, and I decided to make both Joseph and Clarence young adult actors, and expanding their roles quite a bit. Clarence and Joseph are our guides through the story, and they have a fun, sort of playful, sibling relationship," she says.

Brown adapted the script from the Lux Theater Radio script that was taken from the original film, a holiday classic starring James Stewart.

Brown's script highlights the relevance of the story in today's world by giving the show "bookends" where the cast speaks directly to the audience, acknowledging the unprecedented times of 2020, where masks are mandatory and Zoom meetings are pervasive parts of our lives.

"The prologue and epilogue prepares the audience and then sends them away with something to hold onto," says Hudson. "I think it gives them little prompts for the story they are about to witness. When they leave at the end, it's like everything has been tied together so beautifully."

Most actors in the cast play multiple roles, and most are on stage for the entire show. Each performer has their own "home base" on stage where they keep their props, costumes -- and because we are living in the time of COVID -- their own bottle of hand sanitizer.

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As cast member Maddie Smith explains, "There were a lot of steps we had to take, from first rehearsals to the performance. Usually in rehearsal, you get into a room and can interact with people as you please, but because of everything going on, we had to give people little bit more space. We practiced a lot of owning our own space within that socially distant parameter. There was a lot of hand sanitizing and cleaning of surfaces and breaks -- a lot of extra breaks."

Cast members are masked throughout the show, and extra care was taken to minimize shared props and touching of other actors. "The result is a beautifully stylized physical language that makes perfect sense within the show," says Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick.

Digital tickets to ***It's a Wonderful Life*** are available for \$30 at The Rose Box Office or \$34.99 on Facebook. Tickets are good for an entire household, and links are valid for 48 hours after the first click. ***It's a Wonderful Life*** is available online until January 3, 2021.

***It's a Wonderful Life*** is recommended for families with children of all ages and is 75 minutes long. A special 20-minute post-performance by two of The Rose Brigade student musical theater troupes follows the show.

***It's a Wonderful Life*** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Hy-Vee, Omaha Steaks, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Union Pacific serves as the video sponsor.

**About The Rose**

For more than 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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