

## For Immediate Release

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### ***Charlotte's Web* weaves a heartwarming tale at The Rose**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater will weave a tale of a beloved children's story about love, friendship and the ever-changing cycle of life in its upcoming production of ***Charlotte's Web***, April 24 - May 10, 2015. Based on the classic book by E.B. White and adapted by Joseph Robinette, the show tells the story of a runty pig, Wilbur, and his unlikely friendship with a wise spider, Charlotte.

***Charlotte's Web*** introduces us to Wilbur, the runt of the latest litter of pigs on Zuckerman's Farm. Adopted by a kind-hearted farm girl named Fern, Wilbur loves his life in the barn, but knows that a pig's future more likely lies on the breakfast table than with his animal friends. Wilbur is befriended by a spider named Charlotte who has taken up residence in the barn. When it appears that Wilbur's life is in imminent danger, Charlotte begins weaving words into her web to describe Wilbur, transforming the little piglet into the overnight sensation "Zuckerman's Famous Pig" and demonstrating that even the smallest among us can have a big impact.

Charlotte (played by Miriam Gutierrez) will actually create the webs on stage in full view of the audience. Properties Master Liz Spray, as The Rose's own version of a "web master," has masterfully woven together webs using ropes and jute ribbon that are stretched on the set, designed by Christopher DePriest, that the actor will use to create the spider's famous messages.

Director Stephanie Jacobson believes strongly in the script's philosophy of helping others. "At one point in the script, Charlotte explains that her helping Wilbur is a way for her to lift up her life by helping others," she says. "Even when you are in your lowest place, if you turn to others and help them -- put that energy out there -- it changes you for the better."

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### **The Rose Theater**

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Written in 1952, Newberry Honor award winner ***Charlotte's Web*** has had a huge impact on millions of readers spanning three generations. The Children's Literature Association named ***Charlotte's Web*** "the best American children's book of the past two hundred years." Dramatic Publishing calls Joseph Robinette's adaptation "a play that captures this work in a thrilling theatrical presentation." It is a favorite among Rose audiences, and this year's production already has a number of sold-out performances. More than 12,000 students from schools across Nebraska and Iowa will see the show as a part of spring field trips to the theater this spring.

"It is an honor to share ***Charlotte's Web***," says Jacobson. "It is a beautiful, meaningful show to share with children and their families, to show kids that you can continue to rise and that you need to fight for what you want. It is just a beautiful script."

Jacobson will lead an ensemble cast of adult and youth actors, with 13-year-old Austin Lempke taking on the lead role of Wilbur. "It was important to me to have a cast that was an ensemble first, with an all for one and one for all attitude," says Jacobson.

The cast will showcase their skills on a simple but elegant set that evokes the barnyard setting while still allowing the characters and their interactions to be the focal point. The costumes by Sherri Geerdes feature understated designs that hint at the animal nature of the characters without being overly cartoonish. Upbeat folk music with a modern twist provides a soundtrack to the story and gives a strong ambiance to the show. "The production team has done a beautiful job bringing this world to life," says Jacobson.

One of Jacobson's favorite moments in the show is a scene when hundreds of baby spiders hatch and gleefully make their way into the world, an effect created by lighting designer Kate Bashore. To give voice to the young arachnids, Jacobson turned to The Rose's own education department (where Jacobson is a teaching artist) and recorded the first and second grade drama students speaking the parts. "Hearing their little voices is just such a special moment, and it is just so adorable," she says.

While the show does deal with death, dying and loss, the cast and crew is quick to point out that ***Charlotte's Web*** is actually a positive story with a feel-good message. "The show is about life. It is beautiful, very warm, and very loving. Under Stephanie's direction, ***Charlotte's Web*** has become a show about life, and the result is a very upbeat, uplifting story that families are going to love," says stage manager Angel Emerson.

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***Charlotte's Web*** will weave its magic with families with children ages 5 and up. The show runs April 24 - May 10, 2015, with performances Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm.

The 2 pm performance on Saturday, May 2 will be interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing. Sign language interpretation is provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. For information on this performance, contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849.

Tickets are \$18 per person. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores for \$14 each. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production.

***Charlotte's Web*** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Opening night activities are sponsored by Kids Love Stickers, Powered by MediBadge.

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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. 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.

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