

For Immediate Release

DATE: December 2014

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***Balloonacy* sparks the spirit of play once again at The Rose Theater**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) A playful balloon revives an old man's spirit of play in The Rose Theater's production of ***Balloonacy***, playing Jan. 10 - 31, 2015 in the Hitchcock Auditorium. The show returns to The Rose after a limited run in January 2014, giving audiences a chance to see the popular production once again. The one-man show written by Barry Kornhauser explores the power of friendship through a sweet (and often silly) tale of a balloon determined to bring a smile to a friend in need.

"I really believe that audiences, young and old alike, will engage with this play's sense of fun," says Kevin Ehrhart, the featured actor in the one-man show. "There are moments in the play for every audience to let go and laugh a little. That is a gift I can't wait to offer all viewers."

The winner of the American Association of Theatre in Education Distinguished Play Award, ***Balloonacy*** introduces audiences to a solitary old man, steadfast in his silent routine, quietly noting the passing of yet another birthday spent alone. A mischievous balloon finds him and insists on becoming his friend through a series of comic hijinks that is sure to entertain audiences of all ages.

"***Balloonacy*** captures a sense of what children understand and adults sometimes forget, which is that play is an essential ingredient to a fulfilling life," says director Matt Gutschick.

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Although the show features only one actor, the star of the production is really the fun-loving balloon who playfully interrupts the old man's life. Gutschick explains, "Audiences will be surprised to care for this red balloon as if it is a good friend or a trusted pet. By the end of the show, we don't want the balloon to leave the stage."

Perhaps most intriguing, **Balloonacy** communicates its heart-warming message with very little dialogue, utilizing a helpful story guide to verbalize only a few key messages to the audience.

"The story draws heavily on the traditions of pantomime and clowning, which makes it a thoroughly funny piece, though I can promise that nobody is wearing face makeup in this production for those children who have a fear of clowns. It just draws on the tradition of clowning," says Gutschick.

"This is probably what appeals to me most about this show as an actor. This show allows me to reconnect with my inner clown," says Ehrhart. "In the past, I had the privilege of working with Jean Taylor, a master teacher who studied with David Shiner of *Cirque Du Soleil* fame. She passed on many aspects of theatrical clowning that really struck a chord with me. This work allows me to connect with an honest part of myself as an actor."

Balloonacy is packed with physical comedy that is especially suited for very young audiences. The silent nature of the play allows children to follow the action because it is highly physical and visually appealing.

"This is a small play designed for small audiences. It is the perfect introduction to theater for preschoolers, but it is also a show that parents will love," says Gutschick. "**Balloonacy** does all the sensory things very young children want. The music is gentle, there are no blackouts or other kinds of darkness. The story is fun and involves a lot of audience participation. In our current scene plan, children also will get the best seats in the house, front and center!"

And best of all, children in the audience will impact the show itself. According to Gutschick, children will give suggestions that genuinely affect the outcome of the play. "The main character needs ideas for games to play with the balloon, and those ideas come directly from the audience," he says.

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Playwright Barry Kornhauser relates the show to another similarly-themed production. “I’ve always imagined him as the little French boy from the movie *The Red Balloon*, now grown up and grown old, having forgotten all about his youthful adventure,” he says in the script’s introduction.

In light of this connection, Film Streams is collaborating with The Rose and will offer screenings of *The Red Balloon*, during **Balloonacy’s** run as a part of their Winter Forever Young Family & Children’s Series. Rose members will receive discounted admission of \$7 to screenings of *The Red Balloon* at the Ruth Sokolof Theater, and Film Streams members will receive \$2 off their admission to **Balloonacy**.

Ehrhart adds, “This is a time when many people feel disconnected in the world. For me, **Balloonacy** is an exploration of taking the steps necessary to re-connect to the world around them. Even when you plan to avoid it, the world will come knocking.”

“**Balloonacy** reminds us that we are all, as adults, capable of recapturing the best parts of childhood. We adults must work very hard to help our children retain those same traits -- generosity, imagination and silliness,” says Gutschick.

Balloonacy will be staged in The Rose Theater’s Hitchcock Stage. “The Hitchcock is a smaller space, which means we can do the show for deliberately smaller audiences,” explains Gutschick. “It should make for an extremely comfortable experience without all the bustling activity that sometimes comes with seeing a show on our mainstage. Taking bathroom breaks and cry breaks is more than okay in an audience full of other families with very young children.”

“In the end, we just hope that **Balloonacy** lifts your spirit and draws a big smile on your face,” Gutschick says.

The show is recommended for families with children over age 2 and is 30 minutes long.

Balloonacy runs January 10 - 31, 2015. Details on times and dates can be found at www.rosetheater.org.

Tickets are \$10 and everyone attending must have a ticket. For more information or to make reservations, call the Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or online at www.rosetheater.org.

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