



"Arthur and Friends Make a Musical" is one of the productions at The Rose theater this fall. DW is played by Lux Tipton and Corbin Griffin plays Arthur.

AUDREY WARDIAN

As your family heads back-to-school, don't overlook a crucial component in your child's development: a plan to participate in the arts.

Omaha families are fortunate to have a variety of kid-friendly opportunities where young people can experience onstage performances. The arts season traditionally mirrors the school year, making back-to-school time the perfect opportunity to pick up an arts membership or some theater tickets while also loading up the backpacks and pencil cases.

"Since the beginning of the school year can be a stressful time of change for children, artistic outlets help them adjust to new grade levels, new schools and new friends," says Rose Artistic Director Matt Gutschick.

The Rose Theater offers some unique opportunities for young people during the 2023-24 school year. Shows like "Arthur and Friends Make a Musical" and "Charlotte's Web" encourage reading and literacy, while the upcoming world-

premiere production of "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" introduces young people to the poetry of Dr. Maya Angelou with a message of courage and perseverance. Likewise, "Bob Marley's Three Little Birds" helps young people develop resilience and personal strength amid a backdrop of classic reggae tunes. These shows — plus "Red Riding Hood" and "Night at the Farm: A Bedtime Story" — are included in The Rose's 2023-24 family membership, which provides four tickets to each of the six member event shows.

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Whether it's a day at the theater, a night at the symphony or any other onstage event, experts agree: the performing arts are an important tool in a child's development. Taking your child to a theater performance, helping them appreciate a concert or teaching them to enjoy the beauty of the ballet improves their performance in school, enhances their creativity and teaches them about other cultures.

"Theater, particularly theater for children, fires the imagination, giving children the skills and the creativity necessary to face the world, to understand it and perhaps to change it, too," says children's author Lyn Gardner.

When children share an onstage experience with others, they learn how to think creatively through imagination. Theater asks audiences to unplug, to expand their mindset and engage in imaginative thinking. The benefits of doing so transfers well beyond the auditorium, enhancing students' abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Plays and musicals can illustrate a variety of lessons for young people. A favorite holiday classic such as "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (playing this December at The Rose), with its message of friendship and being true to yourself, can take on added impact when experienced live on stage, surrounded by loved ones in a shared family experience. Families make lifelong memories together while learning lessons in a fun and interactive way.

Kids also learn to empathize with others by seeing perspectives from the characters on stage. They can safely experience difficult topics vicariously through the performers, helping them learn how to express and manage emotions and communicate their feelings. "They learn to put themselves in someone else's shoes," says Jessica Hoffman Davis, author of "Why Our Schools Need the Arts." "They learn what it's like to think like that other person."

For those young people who aren't content to sit in the auditorium, back-to-school time is also the ideal opportunity to sign up for performing arts classes. By enrolling at the beginning of the year, you ensure your student has a full and meaningful experience starting with the very beginning of classes. Whether your child is interested in acting, musical theater, dance, voice or other forms of performing arts, there are a variety of opportunities at The Rose and other organizations throughout the community to fit every family and every budget.

"The important thing is to engage your child and help them experience the magic of the performing arts," says Gutschick. "Once they find their place in the arts, once that magic takes hold, there are no limits to where they will go."

For more information about The Rose Theater's 2023-24 productions and class offerings, visit **www.rosetheater.org**.

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