

For Immediate Release

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***Pete The Cat* offers a 'groovy' back-to-school experience at The Rose Theater**

(OMAHA, Nebr.) Pete, the groovy blue cat beloved by elementary school students far and wide, eases his way into The Rose Theater in the world premiere of ***Pete The Cat: The Musical***, playing Sept. 11-27. Featuring energetic music, colorful themes and a story perfect for easing any back-to-school blues, ***Pete The Cat*** finds the very chill blue cat stepping in everything from blueberry juice to paint as he navigates his way through the first day of school.

"This show is a celebration of color, and the entire show is in one word - FUN!" says guest director Rob Urbanati.

Pete The Cat will make its world premiere on The Rose stage. Rose Artistic Director Matthew Gutschick says the theater has been working for several years to feature the popular feline, who regularly finds himself on the top-selling lists of children's books. "Ultimately, we have ended up with a piece that is a ton of fun, incredibly energetic and delightful to watch," he says.

Adapted for the stage by New York playwright Suzanne Miller, whose work was recently featured in The Rose's production of Leo Lionni's *Frederick*, this hour-long production of ***Pete The Cat*** is recommended for ages three and up. It features music by Allison Leyton-Brown, an award-winning composer, pianist, and musical director based in New York City, who worked closely with Miller to expand the simple stories of the ***Pete The Cat*** books into a dynamic production that speaks directly to children, their everyday concerns and the ways they find success.

"For children, something as simple as learning how to tie a shoe and not being incredibly successful at it can have really epic stakes to it, and that was the point of view from which we wanted to compose this piece," says Gutschick. "We commissioned a playwright-composer team that made these simple books into something that is expanded, with very inventive characters, and the result is truly fantastic."

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Pete The Cat opens on the first day of kindergarten. At the school, Pete meets his fellow classmates Bibi, Olive, Andrew and Sasha. Together, they encounter many colorful adventures as they learn about each other and the world around them. “As the show goes on, they learn to work through their fears about the first day, and in the process, they become friends,” says Urbanati.

Throughout the show, Pete can’t seem to stop stepping into everything from blueberry juice to paint, each one sparking a new discovery of color, emotion and song. Choreographer Sue Gillespie Booton gives each musical number its own unique flavor, ranging from a *West Side Story*-inspired mambo, to a bright and friendly folk song, to a jazz number that will have all cool cats crooning.

Urbanati explains that the songs and the colors used on stage tie into Pete’s attitude. “As Pete’s sneakers turn colors, the entire set changes to reflect their emotions and the characters sing as a celebration of the color.”

Lighting design will play a big role in communicating the feel of each number. Designer Kyle L. Toth explains that the show will incorporate a unique kind of liquid light show featuring swirls of color in water projected onto the stage, giving a vintage but current vibe to the events on stage. Oversized props, gigantic balls of yarn, and of course, shoes of exaggerated proportions, give the production a whimsical feel worthy of the original storybooks.

“This show is probably the most fun I have ever had working at The Rose,” says Booton. “That’s the best word I have for ***Pete The Cat***. It is just plain fun!”

Pete The Cat: The Musical is recommended for families with children ages 3 and up, and is 60 minutes long without an intermission.

Pete The Cat runs Sept. 11 - 27, 2015, with performances on Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Interpretation for audience members who are deaf or hard of hearing will be offered at the 2 p.m. show on Saturday, Sept. 19.

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.

Pete The Cat: The Musical is sponsored by Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Wells Fargo, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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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.

About James Dean, Illustrator

James Dean's art has sold in more than ninety galleries and shops across the United States. He has devoted his paintings to *Pete the Cat* for ten years and has turned his natural love for cats into his life's work. James published his first adult book, [The Misadventures of Pete the Cat](#), a history of his art work, in 2006. He illustrated his first self-published children's book, [Pete the Cat: I Love my White Shoes](#), in 2008, and the follow-up book, [Pete the Cat: Rocking In My School Shoes](#), in 2011.

About Eric Litwin, Book Author

Eric Litwin is a guitar-strumming, song-singing, banjo-picking, tale-telling, song-writing, national-award-winning, music-producing, fun, folksy type of guy. He loves to blend song and story together and is inspired by the depth and simplicity of folk songs and folktales. Eric is a popular performer, delighting thousands of children and families every year. He has recorded two award-winning children's music CDs.

Suzanne Miller, Playwright

Suzanne Miller's plays include *Young Love*; *Flirting with the Deep End*; *Beatrice*; *The Handwriting*, *The Soup and The Hats*; and *Abigail's Atlas*. Her work has been seen in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Providence, New Haven and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Her projects also include a musical stage adaptation of Leo Lionni's *Frederick* which made its world premiere at The Rose Theater. Miller is on the faculty of the English Department at the New York City College of Technology/CUNY. In the past, she has taught writing and theater courses at Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Hunter College/CUNY. After graduating from University of Pennsylvania, Miller went on to receive her MFA in playwriting from Brown University. Miller was an original company member of Annex Theater in Seattle, and a founding member of the Seattle Playwrights Alliance.

Allison Leyton-Brown, Composer

Allison Leyton-Brown is an award-winning composer, pianist, and musical director based in New York City. Born in Toronto, Canada, Allison began her musical career at a very young age as a classical pianist. Allison studied Music Composition and Jazz Improvisation at Montreal's Concordia University, where she began performing with various jazz, pop & rock groups. In 2001 she moved to New York City on a scholarship to earn a Masters in Musical Theater Writing (composition) from NYU's prestigious Tisch School of the Arts. Allison went on to compose dozens of original music and sound scores for theater, dance, opera & film productions across the U.S. and Canada. Allison can be seen performing with various groups across New York City and the country, at venues from the gritty Mercury Lounge to the legendary Birdland.

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