

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT: Kori Radloff, korir@rosetheater.org, 402-502-4641

Triple-dog-dare you to see *A Christmas Story: The Musical* live on stage at The Rose Theater

(OMAHA, Nebr.) The Rose Theater triple-dog-dares you to see its holiday production of ***A Christmas Story: The Musical***, playing Dec. 5-28. The fun-filled musical adaptation of the classic Yuletide film offers a stocking full of good, old-fashioned laughs sure to please the entire family.

A Christmas Story: The Musical invites audiences to join nine-year-old Ralphie Parker on his quest for the Holy Grail of Christmas gifts – a Red Ryder air rifle. The show is based off the popular 1983 movie adapted from the writings of radio humorist Jean Shepherd and includes all the favorite moments of its source: Flick getting his tongue stuck to a flagpole, Dad receiving his major award, a disastrous visit to Santa, and of course, Ralphie's pink bunny pajamas Christmas present.

A Christmas Story offers a hilarious account of one child's quest to make sure the most perfect of gifts ends up under his tree," says Rose artistic director Matthew Gutschick, who is also directing ***A Christmas Story: The Musical***. "In the process, he learns some universal truths that will stick with him for a lifetime."

Ralphie is played by eleven-year-old Friedell Jewish Academy student Danny Deneberg, last seen in The Rose's production of *Ramona Quimby*. "Danny is an extraordinary young performer," says Gutschick, noting that Deneberg was recently flown to New York City for a callback to be Ralphie for the national tour of the show.

Like the original movie, playwright Joseph Robinette's stage version of ***A Christmas Story*** is narrated by the character of Jean Shepherd (played by local radio personality Dave Wingert), who looks back fondly on his childhood in 1940s Indiana. The character explains that one particular Christmas was, in fact, his most important Yuletide season.

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The Rose
2001 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

t (402) 345-4849
f (402) 344-7255
www.rosetheater.org



**the
Rose**
Performing Arts
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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“This particular version of Jean Shepherd’s story is deeper and richer than one might imagine,” says Gutshick. “Something subtle and beautiful happens when we actually see the narrator and understand how the story of this specific Christmas in 1940 changed his life forever. Dave is a true stand-out in this role, bringing something completely different to the stage than what he has played before.”

Robinette’s script remains faithful to its source, while adding several inventive twists. The stage adaptation adds a collection of charming musical numbers featuring tapping gangsters, boot-scootin’ Western hoe-downers, and a bevy of dancing leg lamps, all set to memorable and catchy music composed by the Tony Award-nominated team of Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. The music will be performed by the Omaha Big Band under the direction of Rose musical director Jerry Brabec.

A bespectacled grade-schooler growing up on Cleveland Street in Hohman, Indiana, Ralphie’s eyes light up when he sees the perfect gift in the window of Higbee’s Department Store: a Red Ryder Action Air Rifle BB Gun. In the days leading up to Christmas, he encounters a number of mishaps and a good bit of mayhem while trying to ensure the toy will be his. Despite the fact that every adult he tells about the gun immediately responds with, “You’ll shoot your eye out!,” Ralphie’s Christmas spirit persists as he hopes against hope for his special present.

Life presents a variety of hurdles that Ralphie fears will keep him off Santa’s “Nice” list. In addition to the typical sibling squabbles with his younger brother Randy (played by nine-year-old Jude Glaser), Ralphie must navigate schoolyard bullies, the utterance of his first curse word (and subsequent mouth-washing-out), and an all-important school essay. Ralphie finds himself in a real pickle when his best friend Flick is triple-dog-dared to stick his tongue to a flagpole on the last day of school before Christmas vacation – leaving Ralphie with the tough decision to either help his friend or go to class and pretend he wasn’t part of the dare.

“We honor the iconic scenes from the film, but since this is a musical, many of those sequences receive a lot of comic attention. The flagpole scene is a good example; it’s likely funnier to see that scene in this musical than in the film because Flick has to sing an entire song with his tongue stuck to the pole,” says Gutshick.

Ralphie’s vivid imagination offers an escape from his troubles, and it is in these flights of fancy that some of the most memorable musical numbers are staged. Whether he is fantasizing about rescuing his teacher from a melodramatic, mustachioed villain or saving his classmates from a gang of evil bank robbers, Ralphie is certain his Christmas wish will help him make a difference in his small-town world.

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“These fantasy sequences are fleshed out with big, show-stopping musical numbers,” says Gutschick. “We have a leg lamp kick line that should make the Rockettes nervous. There is a show-stopping tap number called ‘You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out,’ with seven minutes of pure artistic athleticism on display. The music is simply stunning – by turns it sounds like a classic, golden-age Broadway musical and the best kind of contemporary fare.”

When Ralphie’s “old man”(played by Konrad Case) receives a “major award” (a kooky leg-lamp complete with fishnet stockings and fringe skirt lampshade) that he places in the window on display to all of Cleveland Street, the entire neighborhood can’t stop talking about the Parker family, much to Ralphie’s mother’s (Angela Jenson-Frey) consternation. Through a series of events, the lamp leads to a major family situation that completely shakes Ralphie’s world and eventually changes his vision of his parents forever.

“Ralphie embodies those elements in childhood that we most admire – unbridled optimism, a sense of drama in small pursuits, and a really relatable family,” Gutschick explains. “As adults, we understand the subtext of what is happening with his parents and Ralphie’s relationship with them, which deepens the sense of appreciation for time spent with loved ones. In some ways, Ralphie’s story is about trying to get a BB gun and discovering a relationship with his father along the way.”

In a last ditch effort to receive the gift of his dreams, Ralphie visits Higbee’s Department Store on Christmas Eve to face the world’s crankiest Santa. The visit ends with Claus repeating the same words as every adult in Ralphie’s life, “You’ll shoot yer eye out, kid!”

As Christmas arrives, Ralphie holds fast to his dream of the perfect present. What will be under the tree? One thing Ralphie knows for certain: even with all their imperfections, his parents love him – and that is the greatest gift he could ever receive.

“This show reminds us that we can choose to love unconditionally regardless of how imperfect we have been in sharing love in the past,” says Gutschick.

A Christmas Story: The Musical is the perfect holiday treat for families with children ages five and up. The show runs Dec. 5-28, 2014, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and Sundays at 2 pm. There will be an additional performance on Saturday, Dec. 27 at 7 pm.

Interpretation for the hearing impaired will be offered at the 2 pm show on Saturday, Dec. 20. Interpretation for the hearing impaired is provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

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Ticket reservations are required, with prices from \$20-\$25. Discount ticket vouchers and a Kid Cuisine special purchase voucher for main floor seating are available at all area Hy-Vee stores. For information or to make reservations, call The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 or visit www.rosetheater.org.

A Christmas Story: The Musical is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Kid Cuisine, Hy-Vee, Q98-Five, the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and WOWT NBC Omaha. Opening night activities are sponsored by Kids Love Stickers, Powered by MediBadge.

About the motion picture *A Christmas Story*

Based on short autobiographical stories by Jean Shepherd, *A Christmas Story* premiered in 1983 and has now joined the likes of *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street* as one of the staples of the holiday season. After more than 30 years, *A Christmas Story* is now considered America's #1 Christmas movie, making an illuminated leg lamp and pink bunny suit synonymous with the holiday season. *A Christmas Story* was written by Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown and Bob Clark, and was distributed by Warner Bros.

About *A Christmas Story: The Musical*

Adapted by Joseph Robinette with music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, *A Christmas Story: The Musical* premiered at Kansas City Repertory Theatre in 2009 and was further developed at the 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle before going to Broadway in 2012. It had its premier Broadway production at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre in New York under the direction of James M. Nederlander and James L. Nederlander with opening previews on Nov. 5, 2012. Opening night was held on Nov. 19, 2012 and the show ran until Dec. 30, 2012, breaking box office records for the theater during its run. The show was honored with three 2013 Tony Award nominations for Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical and Best Original Score.

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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