



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **RARE Theatricals Brings *Rag Dolly: The Raggedy Ann Musical* Back to Life with Historic Staged Reading**

#### **The First Authorized Performance Since the Original Broadway Run in 1986**

**Athens, OH – February 9, 2025** – RARE Theatricals proudly presented a staged reading of *Rag Dolly: The Raggedy Ann Musical* from February 6-8, 2025, in four sold-out performances at Ohio University's School of Theater Lab Show Program. The performances featured a talented cast of emerging theater artists, bringing the rich, colorful characters and memorable music back to the stage. This historic event marked the first authorized performance of the musical since its original Broadway debut in 1986, and was part of RARE Theatricals' ongoing mission to revise and revive the show.

In *Rag Dolly*, a little girl Marcella is dying of a mysterious illness. Her father makes her a rag doll to comfort her, and his stories of the doll come to life in her dreams to guide her through her grief and fear. Marcella and her new friends confront wolves, witches, and incompetent doctors on their way to outwit death and mend her broken heart. Featuring the witty and absurdly poignant writing of *Miracle Worker* playwright William Gibson, and the charming score of *Sesame St.* composer Joe Raposo, including songs such as "Mexico," "Rag Dolly," and "What Did I Lose".

The show explores how grief and isolation create guilt and anxiety, and how we must open ourselves up to the upsetting truths in the lives of our loved ones in order to connect with them and provide real care and hope. Raggedy Ann wishes nothing more than to make Marcella happy again, but it's going to take more than a few cheery songs to face the despair that has made its home in her heart.

Despite a short-lived Broadway run in 1986, *Raggedy Ann* has cultivated a growing cult following over the years, with devoted fans who appreciate the musical's sincere approach to a child's experience with loss.

"After four years of hard work and four decades of obscurity, it's a dream come true that this show is finally making a comeback," said Gwyneth Gaunt, director of the staged reading. "Something about this show is healing— it certainly healed me— and I think it's especially relevant right now at a time when hope seems scarce. Many of our friends and neighbors are struggling to find security— both emotionally and financially. The news is bleak, and it can be hard to feel a sense of safety— but love and earnestness are extremely powerful, and that's what this show is about."

Before each performance, Gwyneth stood onstage to introduce the project to the audience, calling it the first "legal English production of the show since Broadway." The distinction of "legal"

and “English” hides a little-known history to this cryptic piece— the fact that *Rag Dolly* has been performed without license in Russia for the nearly forty years following its Broadway “disappearance.” Therefore, RARE Theatricals has not been working from scratch, but taking inspiration from a rich history of smaller, more intimate *Rag Dolly* productions which embrace the rag-tag fairy tale.

This reading is a significant step in RARE Theatricals’ ongoing efforts to continue celebrating this musical, with hopes for a regional revival in the future. RARE considers this show “lost” not only for the lack of recorded material, but the inability for companies to license and perform it. Their end goal is to make the show accessible to anyone— especially regional, community, and youth theaters— to perform.

“Stories talk back, they tell you other people’s troubles, they make you laugh— share a few tears, get it all out of your system—”

- *Raggedy Ann, Rag Dolly: The Raggedy Ann Musical*

About RARE:

The Raggedy Ann Revival Effort (or R.A.R.E.) is an online volunteer effort dedicated to preserving, archiving, and eventually reviving the 1986 Broadway musical *Raggedy Ann*. RARE Theatricals is a company formed by a select group of theater artists to achieve this goal.

**Contact:**

[theraggedyannrevivaleffort@gmail.com](mailto:theraggedyannrevivaleffort@gmail.com)

**Photos:**

**Press photos taken by Sarah Comer:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F0XT2pFygf5SUQGs3KpGzS\\_RLaScIS9i?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F0XT2pFygf5SUQGs3KpGzS_RLaScIS9i?usp=drive_link)

**Show poster provided by RARE Theatricals, art by November Gorrell:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w7mmq99razXm-gly2STw6dATRnmZqnz4/view?usp=sharing>

**For Immediate Release: February 16, 2025**

**RARE Theatricals | <https://raggedy-ann-revival-effort.neocities.org/AboutUs>**