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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****Former Print Editor of Automotive News Writes Comedy about Classic Cars for Purple Rose Theatre***

**CHELSEA, Mich.** (December 16, 2025) – [The Purple Rose Theatre Company \(PRTC\)](#) announces the winter production of their 35th season, “The Classic King” a world-premiere comedy by Richard Johnson. Tickets are on sale now.

In paying tribute to timeless automobiles, “The Classic King” paints a comic and heartbreaking portrait of three veteran used-car salesmen at a Metro Detroit dealership, struggling to cope with a changing industry and modern customers. When a sharp Gen Z salesman joins the team, he proposes a daring scheme to save the dealership — and its “dinosaur” salesmen — from extinction.

This production of “The Classic King” contains adult content and may not be suitable for children under the age of 13.

RICHARD JOHNSON (*Playwright*) is the retired print editor of Crain Communications’ *Automotive News*, the leading newspaper of the global automobile industry. He previously was the publication’s European Editor based in Frankfurt, Germany, and Asia Editor based in Tokyo, Japan. He later launched Crain’s *Automotive News Europe* in London, where he was editor for eight years. Following retirement, he worked on a play about the history of the Ford Motor Company after World War II and joined the Birmingham Village Players’ Playwrights@Work Group. “The Classic King” is his first play for the Purple Rose. He and his wife Alice raised four daughters around the world. Rick and Alice now live in Farmington Hills.

Directed by Jeff Daniels, the cast features Rico Bruce Wade\* (Lansing), Ryan Carlson\* (Clinton Township), Owen Squire Smith\* (Grand Rapids), and Dez Walker\* (Center Line). Set Design by Bart Bauer, Properties Design by Danna Segrest, Costume Design by Shelby Newport, Lighting Design by Stephen Sakowski, Sound Design by Brad Phillips. Stefanie Din\* is the Stage Manager and Mary Toth\* is the Assistant Stage Manager.

\*Appearing through an agreement with Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Production Sponsors include Chelsea State Bank, Chelsea Community Foundation and Golling Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram of Chelsea. 2025-2026 Season Underwriters include The Rabbithood Fund, The Shubert Foundation and The Matilda R. Wilson Fund.

## **Performance Schedule**

Performances of "The Classic King" at The Purple Rose run from Thursday, January 29 through Sunday, March 8, 2026. Previews, with reduced-price tickets, are available through Thursday, February 5, with talkbacks January 29 - February 1. The press opening is Friday, February 6 at 8:00pm.

## **Special Events and Partnerships**

On the Saturday evening performance of February 21, there will be a "30s & 40s Meetup Night," a mixer with discounted tickets for anyone age 30-49 to make new friends with a cocktail hour at Ugly Dog Distillery (Chelsea, MI), followed by the performance. Those interested can call the Box Office at (734) 433-7673 to reserve a ticket.

"College Night," in which students receive pizza, a ticket to the performance and a talkback with artists for a heavily discounted \$15 ticket price, will be on the evening performance of Saturday, February 28. Those interested can call the Box Office at (734) 433-7673 or use the code "COLLEGE" at [www.PurpleRoseTheatre.org](http://www.PurpleRoseTheatre.org) to reserve a ticket.

For more information about these special events, email [caitlin@purplerosetheatre.org](mailto:caitlin@purplerosetheatre.org).

## **Ticket Information**

Performances are Wednesday - Sunday at The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park Street, Chelsea, Michigan 48118. The performance calendar can be found [HERE](#).

Ticket prices start at \$30 with special discounts for seniors, patrons 30 years or younger, members of the military, teachers, and groups (12+).

For more information or to make reservations call (734) 433-7673 or go to [www.purplerosetheatre.org](http://www.purplerosetheatre.org).

## **About The Purple Rose Theatre Company**

Founded in 1991 by actor, director, playwright, musician, and Chelsea native Jeff Daniels, The Purple Rose Theatre Company is a professional, unionized theatre and creative home for local Michigan artists to produce original American plays. At the PRTC, patrons experience an intimate encounter with live theatre without breaking the bank. Broadway quality at Midwest prices.

Continuing this season, The Purple Rose is leading with smart comedy: plays that allow audiences to feel good, laugh, and just maybe get a message out of it too.

The Purple Rose also provides preview talk-backs, free play readings, and ticket donations to local fundraisers. It commissions new work from established and early-career playwrights. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit professional theatre, the PRTC operates under a Small Professional Theatre agreement with the Actors' Equity Association.

For more information contact PRTC Marketing Communications Specialist, Caitlin Cavannaugh at [caitlin@purplerosetheatre.org](mailto:caitlin@purplerosetheatre.org) or 734.210.1415.