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**MILWAUKEE  
BALLET**

MICHAEL PINK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**DOWNLOADABLE PHOTO + VIDEO**

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**MILWAUKEE BALLET PRESENTS HOLIDAY FAVORITE *THE NUTCRACKER***  
**- 20 performances will include three student matinees and a sensory-friendly adaptation -**

**Milwaukee, WI – November 12, 2025** – Milwaukee Ballet will stage its beloved production of *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium*, sponsored by BMO, from December 6-26 at Marcus Performing Arts Center. Praised as “the best [*Nutcracker*] in the world” by *Shepherd Express* and “equal parts smart and magical” by *Milwaukee Magazine*, this all-ages production highlights the talents of over 200 individuals on stage and behind the scenes.

“*The Nutcracker* is a whirlwind of artistic excellence and promise,” says Artistic Director Michael Pink. “From our youngest student to our most seasoned Company Leading Artist, and from our fantastic orchestra to the remarkable costumes and sets, the breadth of talent exhibited each holiday season is simply breathtaking.”

Due to its three-weekend run, *The Nutcracker* requires 4-5 casts each year, which allows an increased number of Company Artists to take the spotlight. This season, notable first-time casting includes new Leading Artist Jennifer Hackbarth dancing Snow Queen and Marie (Sugar Plum Fairy), third-year Artist Ben Zusi as Fritz, and second-year Artist Nanaho Nakajima as Clara.

The student cast consists of 142 children from Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy. The chance to perform alongside career Artists on the Marcus Center mainstage is a special and formative opportunity for these young dancers.

“Our Company Artists are heroes to these kids, which makes student cast opportunities a true delight for them,” says School Director Kristin Dimmer. “It’s a chance for them to gain not only onstage experience, but also observe and emulate their role models’ professionalism, dedication, and camaraderie, all of which are required to succeed in dance.”

Milwaukee Ballet’s Orchestra will perform Tchaikovsky’s beloved score at all performances thanks to generous support from an anonymous donor. The Company is one of the few in the nation to maintain its own group of talented musicians, valuing live music as a meaningful atmospheric element of ballet productions. To help ensure that live music is possible, the Company has established an ongoing Live Music Fund to raise money to underwrite live accompaniment.

*The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium* will be performed for the public 16 times across three weekends, plus three student matinees and one sensory-friendly performance.

Student matinees provide free or subsidized tickets for public, private, and homeschooled student groups from around the state. Proceeds from Angel Ornaments sold at *The Nutcracker* Ballet Boutique help to fund bringing these students to the theater, many of whom experience ballet for the first time. This year, all three performances are already virtually sold out, with very limited seating remaining for small groups.

The annual sensory-friendly performance is designed to welcome guests who have sensory-processing sensitivities, identify as neurodivergent, or benefit from greater accessibility. Production modifications include the removal of flashing lights, stage fog, and sudden sounds; relaxed house rules include house lights remaining on, doors remaining open, and the ability for attendees to move around the theater as needed. A pre-show meet & greet with dancers is also an opportunity for kids to familiarize themselves with characters who may otherwise be scary or unfamiliar onstage, such as the King Rat.

“During the holidays especially, we want to emphasize that dance is a gift for everyone to enjoy,” says Pink. “Programs like these that break down barriers to the theater hold a special place in all our hearts, providing great joy and inspiration to all of us, on stage and off.”

*The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer’s Imaginarium* was first brought to life in December 2023 through the generosity of over 375 individual and institutional donors. This year’s production is made possible thanks to Presenting Sponsor BMO, with additional support from Principal Sponsor Foley & Larder LLP, Artistic Sponsor Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, and Media Partner OnMilwaukee. The Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra is sponsored by an anonymous donor.

The Company looks forward to welcoming audiences of all ages this holiday season!

### **Synopsis**

On Christmas Eve, the Tannenbaum children eagerly await the arrival of their godfather Drosselmeyer, a mysterious toymaker. Upon his arrival, very strange things begin to happen...the Christmas tree grows, toys come to life to battle King Rat, and the children are ushered into the Imaginarium, a place where anyone can imagine anything they wish. There, they embark on a colorful and magical adventure that will leave them wondering if it was all real, or only just their imagination.

### **Performance Information**

*The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer’s Imaginarium* runs December 6-26 at Marcus Performing Arts Center. Tickets start at \$48 and are available for purchase via the Milwaukee Ballet Box Office at 414-902-2103 or online at [milwaukeeballet.org](http://milwaukeeballet.org).

The performance schedule is as follows:

- Saturday, December 6, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Sunday, December 7, 2025 – 1:00pm
- Thursday, December 11, 2025 – 6:00pm (Sensory-Friendly performance)
- Friday, December 12, 2025 – 7:30pm

- Saturday, December 13, 2025 – 2:00pm
- Saturday, December 13, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Sunday, December 14, 2025 – 1:00pm
- Friday, December 19, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Saturday, December 20, 2025 – 2:00pm
- Saturday, December 20, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Sunday, December 21, 2025 – 1:00pm
- Sunday, December 21, 2025 – 6:30pm
- Monday, December 22, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Tuesday, December 23, 2025 – 7:30pm
- Wednesday, December 24, 2025 – 1:00pm
- Friday, December 26, 2025 – 2:00pm
- Friday, December 26, 2025 – 7:30pm

Milwaukee Ballet's 2025/26 Season is presented by Donald & Donna Baumgartner and the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF), with support from Wisconsin Arts Board, CAMPAC, Milwaukee Arts Board, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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### **About Milwaukee Ballet**

Milwaukee Ballet was founded in 1970. Led by Artistic Director Michael Pink, Milwaukee Ballet creates a rich and diverse community through its inspiring dance performance, education, and outreach. Milwaukee Ballet hosts an international Company of dancers and maintains its own orchestra. Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy is the only professional dance school in the Midwest accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance, teaching beginner through pre-professional levels in three locations: Third Ward, Fox Point, and Brookfield. Milwaukee Ballet's award-winning Community Engagement department serves nearly 30,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin each year through original, interactive programs. Milwaukee Ballet is a proud cornerstone member of United Performing Arts Fund and holds a four-star rating from Charity Navigator.

*Note to Editors: Interviews with Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink and high-resolution images are available upon request.*