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MILWAUKEE BALLET
MICHAEL PINK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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MILWAUKEE BALLET BRINGS HOLIDAY MAGIC TO LIFE WITH *THE NUTCRACKER*

– Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium returns with 17 performances, including new experience for young families –

Milwaukee, WI – November 10, 2026 – Milwaukee Ballet's beloved holiday tradition returns December 5–26 as Michael Pink's *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium* takes the stage at Marcus Performing Arts Center. Hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* as "one of the grandest Nutcrackers of all," this imaginative production brings the classic holiday story to life through spectacular storytelling, theatrical magic, and a cast of professional dancers joined by 140 students from Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy.

"*The Nutcracker* holds a special place in the hearts of many families, and it is a privilege to bring the magic to life each year," said Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink. "Whether experiencing it for the first time or continuing a cherished holiday tradition, there is something extraordinary in seeing audiences of all ages swept up in the story."

One of Milwaukee's most cherished traditions brings together professional artists and the next generation of student dancers from Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy performing alongside the Company, giving young dancers the opportunity to experience the excitement and artistry of a full-scale professional production. For many, performing in *The Nutcracker* is a memorable milestone in their dance education and a holiday tradition shared with family and friends.

This season's *Nutcracker* production will include 17 public performances across four weekends, with several special performances and variations. Select performances will feature live accompaniment by the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, bringing the familiar melodies of Tchaikovsky's score to life.

New this season, Milwaukee Ballet introduces My First Ballet: *The Nutcracker,* a special performance designed to welcome young children and families experiencing ballet for the first time. The full-length performance, presented at an earlier start time on Tuesday, December 22 at 6:00 PM, features an adapted theater environment, including partially raised house lights, open doors, and flexibility for families to move in and out of the theater as needed. A special introduction will familiarize young audiences with the characters and costumes and set the stage for what they will see during the show. Reduced ticket prices and children's rates further encourage families to experience the magic of live ballet together.

The annual sensory-friendly performance is designed for individuals with sensory-processing sensitivities, those who identify as neurodivergent, or anyone who benefits from an enhanced-accessibility theater experience. The adapted production includes modifications to lighting and sound, flexible audience guidelines, and pre-show opportunities to become familiar with the characters and theater environment. This year's sensory-friendly performance will offer audio description services for the first time, providing spoken descriptions of visual elements on stage to help patrons who are blind or have low vision experience more of the production.

Beyond the public performances, Milwaukee Ballet will welcome more than 5,000 students from public, private, and homeschool groups across Wisconsin through three special student matinee performances. These educational opportunities introduce young audiences to professional ballet and the magic of live theater, with subsidized or free tickets helping remove financial barriers to participation. The program is supported in part by proceeds from Angel Ornaments sold during *The Nutcracker* performances.

Michael Pink's *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium* premiered in December 2023. This year's presentation 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.

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.

Production Information

The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium will be performed December 5–26, 2026, at Marcus Performing Arts Center. Tickets are on sale now at www.milwaukeeballet.org or through the Milwaukee Ballet Box Office at 414-902-2103.

Performance Schedule:

- Saturday, December 5 – 7:30* PM
- Sunday, December 6 – 1:00* PM
- Friday, December 11 – 7:30 PM
- Saturday, December 12 – 2:00* PM
- Saturday, December 12 – 7:30* PM
- Sunday, December 13 – 1:00* PM
- Thursday, December 17 – 6:00 PM (Sensory-Friendly)
- Friday, December 18 – 7:30 PM
- Saturday, December 19 – 2:00* PM
- Saturday, December 19 – 7:30* PM
- Sunday, December 20 – 1:00* PM

- Sunday, December 20 – 6:30* PM
- Tuesday, December 22 – 6:00 PM (My First Ballet: *The Nutcracker*)
- Wednesday, December 23 – 7:30 PM
- Thursday, December 24 – 1:00* PM
- Saturday, December 26 – 2:00 PM
- Saturday, December 26 – 7:30 PM

**Denotes performances featuring Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra.*

Milwaukee Ballet's 2026/27 Season is presented by Donald & Donna Baumgartner and the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF), with support from the Wisconsin Arts Board, CAMPAC, and Milwaukee Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About Milwaukee Ballet

Founded in 1970, Milwaukee Ballet creates a rich and diverse community through its inspiring dance performance, education and training, 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 beginners through pre-professional levels in three locations: Third Ward, Fox Point, and Brookfield. Milwaukee Ballet serves nearly 30,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin each year through original, interactive community engagement 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 Artistic Director Michael Pink and Company dancers, as well as high-resolution images and b-roll, are available upon request.

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