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**MILWAUKEE
BALLET**

MICHAEL PINK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

MILWAUKEE BALLET REACHES \$5 MILLION *NUTCRACKER* CAMPAIGN GOAL

- *The New Production Will Debut December 8 at Marcus Performing Arts Center-*

MILWAUKEE – September 28, 2023 – Milwaukee Ballet announced the completion of its \$5 million capital campaign supporting the world premiere of *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer’s Imaginarium*, a brand-new staging of the holiday classic. Over 375 individuals, together with many foundations and corporations, contributed to this campaign, the largest Milwaukee Ballet has undertaken since its 2018 campaign to build Baumgartner Center for Dance.

“We are deeply grateful to everyone who helped raise the money to bring this production to life,” says Managing Director & Chief Advancement Officer Tai Pauls. “Every time our donors see *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer’s Imaginarium*, they should know that they played a crucial role in continuing this legacy and tradition for generations to come.”

Raised funds will be allocated amongst the “Design and Build Fund” to support the creation of new costumes and sets for the production; the “Give Back to MKE Fund”, which supports outreach programming such as student matinees and sensory-friendly performances; and the “Legacy Fund”, which will provide a continuous source of investment income to sustain *The Nutcracker* in the future.

The campaign was originally launched in 2019 as an extension of the then \$26 million campaign for Milwaukee Ballet’s Third Ward home, Baumgartner Center for Dance. Efforts were suspended due to the onset of the pandemic. Fundraising efforts were officially relaunched as the Campaign for a New *Nutcracker* in winter 2022, with the support of campaign co-chairs Donna Baumgartner and Justin Mortara and the Ballet’s Board of Directors. The campaign goal was officially reached in September 2023.

“Our annual performance of *The Nutcracker* connects the Ballet with the community and is a holiday tradition for thousands of families,” says immediate past President & Board Chair Jan Pirozzolo-Mellowes. “The new production will enable this wonderful tradition to continue and surely bring smiles and joy to many.”

The Nutcracker is Milwaukee Ballet’s most-attended annual production and one of the most visible ways the Company accomplishes its goals to transform lives and connect communities. In its twenty-five-year run, the previous production served over 500,000 audience members from more than 600 zip codes. The Company’s goal is to reach even more people with *The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer’s Imaginarium*, spreading the magic of the season throughout southeastern Wisconsin and beyond.

Plans for the new production were first proposed and conceived by Artistic Director Michael Pink in 2018. Costumes, sets, and props from the previous production were showing significant wear after twenty-five years on stage. Pink's vision for a new, reimagined version of *The Nutcracker*, would feature all-new costumes and sets in addition to updates to the choreography and staging.

"Creating a new *Nutcracker* is no small undertaking," says Pink. "We've been careful to consider everything audiences loved about the old production while adding new elements that will fill them with even more awe and wonder. I want everyone to leave the theater smiling and filled with the joy of the holidays."

Pink assembled an award-winning team of designers to develop the new production. Scenic designs are courtesy of Todd Edward Ivins, who previously collaborated with Pink on productions such as 2018's *Beauty and the Beast*. Emmy-nominated designer Gregory A. Poplyk developed stunning new costumes being built by a team of talented artisans, including Milwaukee Ballet's own costume shop, led by Mary Piering. Lighting design is by Emmy Award-winning designer David Grill, another longtime collaborator with Pink and Milwaukee Ballet. VonOrthal Puppets created elaborate designs to bring key props to life.

The production will premiere on December 8, 2023 at Marcus Performing Arts Center with performances running through December 26.

Performance Information

The Nutcracker: Drosselmeyer's Imaginarium runs December 8-26, 2023, at Marcus Performing Arts Center, located at 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Tickets start at \$44 and are available online at milwaukeeballet.org or through the Milwaukee Ballet or Marcus Center Box Offices at 414.902.2103 and 414.273.7206.

The schedule is as follows:

- Friday, December 8 at 7:30 PM
- Saturday, December 9 at 2:00 PM
- Saturday, December 9 at 7:30 PM
- Sunday, December 10 at 1:00 PM
- Wednesday, December 13 at 7:00 PM (Sensory Friendly Performance)
- Friday, December 15 at 7:30 PM
- Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 PM
- Saturday, December 16 at 7:30 PM
- Sunday, December 17 at 1:00 PM
- Sunday, December 17 at 6:30 PM
- Thursday, December 21 at 7:30 PM
- Friday, December 22 at 7:30 PM

- Saturday, December 23 at 2:00 PM
- Saturday, December 23 at 7:30 PM
- Sunday, December 24 at 1:00 PM
- Tuesday, December 26 at 1:00 PM

Milwaukee Ballet's 2023/2024 Season is presented by Donald & Donna Baumgartner with support from United Performing Arts Fund, 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 thousands of 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.