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The Nutcracker is the gift that keeps giving
- Milwaukee’s magical holiday tradition returns to brighten the holiday season -

MILWAUKEE – Dec. 6, 2016 - Milwaukee Ballet’s The Nutcracker rings in the holiday season this Saturday with Tchaikovsky’s sumptuous score and Artistic Director Michael Pink’s enchanting choreography.

This festive classic, onstage Dec. 10-27 at Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, has been a staple of Wisconsin’s holiday celebrations for more than 40 years. Artistic Director Michael Pink’s interpretation is highly regarded for its lavish production design and creativity.

“The Nutcracker invites audiences to let go of the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives and escape into this wonderful story that celebrates everything we love about the holidays,” says Michael Pink. “That’s why so many people return year after year. They want to make new memories with this time-honored tradition. For many, The Nutcracker is the holiday magic they can count on.”

The Nutcracker is the city’s largest holiday spectacle, featuring a cast of more than 200 dancers, including students from Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy, lavish set pieces, period costumes, and special effects. The beauty onstage is enhanced by Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, who will play Tchaikovsky’s signature score in its entirety with a special appearance by the young artists of Milwaukee Children’s Choir.

Pink choreographed the classic with plenty of action to keep the audience enchanted whether they are seeing it for the first time, or the fiftieth time. Furthermore, The Nutcracker features four casts that change every performance, ensuring the audience sees a different show every time they come to the theater.

As the holidays are a time to come together, Milwaukee Ballet invited groups from local arts organizations to perform before the show, including Milwaukee Children’s Choir and Latino Arts String Program, as well as visits from Milwaukee Art Museum’s Kohl’s Color Wheel and Santa Claus.

Milwaukee’s favorite mascots, Bango (Milwaukee Bucks), Hank the Ballpark Pup (Milwaukee Brewers), Roscoe (Milwaukee Admirals), and Hubert the Lion (BMO Harris Bank) will also make guest appearances in the production.
Pictures with Milwaukee Ballet dancers are available in the Marcus Center Atrium after each performance for a suggested donation of $10. Proceeds benefit Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy.

_The Nutcracker_ is a gift to Milwaukee from BMO Harris Bank. This is the fourth year BMO Harris Bank has sponsored the production. _The Nutcracker_ is supported by the Joan, Jack, and Victor Stein Foundation. Milwaukee Ballet’s 2016-17 Season is presented by Donna and Donald Baumgartner, with operational support from the United Performing Arts Fund.

**Sensory-Friendly Performance**

Milwaukee Ballet will perform a sensory-friendly version of _The Nutcracker_ for the first time in its history for an audience of children and adults diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder or other sensitivity issues. In partnership with **Autism Speaks** and with support from **Marcus Center for the Performing Arts**, this adapted version of _The Nutcracker_ will be presented on December 21 at 6pm.

Tickets are available through the Marcus Center at 414-273-7121 ext. 213. Tickets can also be purchased online at marcuscenter.org/mcaccess using the group code AUTISMSPEAKS.

Patrons with questions about the sensory-friendly elements of the production can call Milwaukee Ballet's Community Engagement Department at (414) 902-2120.

**Special Appearances**

Earlier this season, Milwaukee Ballet invited mascots from local professional sports teams to audition for a chance to appear in _The Nutcracker_. Bango from the Milwaukee Bucks, Roscoe from the Milwaukee Admirals, and Hank the Ballpark Pup from the Milwaukee Brewers accepted the challenge, along with Hubert the Lion from BMO Harris Bank. Artistic Director Michael Pink invited all four to make an appearance in the production. Their performance schedule is as follows:

- **Hubert the Lion** (BMO Harris Bank) – Sunday, Dec. 11, 1:30pm
- **Roscoe** (Milwaukee Admirals) – Sunday, Dec. 11, 6pm
- **Hank the Ballpark Pup** (Milwaukee Brewers) – Saturday, Dec. 17, 1:30pm
- **Bango** (Milwaukee Bucks) – Tuesday, Dec. 27, 1:30pm

**Family Friendly Pre-Show Activities**

Milwaukee Ballet is happy to host complimentary activities for families to enjoy before select performances:

- **Saturday, Dec. 10** at 1:30pm - Art project from Kohl's Color Wheels and music from Milwaukee Children's Choir
- **Saturday, Dec. 10** at 7:30pm – Music from Latino Arts String Program
- **Sunday, Dec. 11** at 1:30pm – Music from Milwaukee Children's Choir
- **Sunday, Dec. 11** at 6pm - Holiday music from students of Barcel Suzuki String Academy
- **Saturday, Dec. 17** at 1:30pm – A visit from Santa Claus and music from Milwaukee Children’s Choir
Saturday, Dec. 17 at 1:30pm – A visit from Santa Claus and music from Milwaukee Children’s Choir

Sunday, Dec. 18 at 1:30pm – Music from Milwaukee Children’s Choir

Sunday, Dec. 18 at 6pm – Music from Milwaukee Children’s Choir

Friday, Dec. 23 at 1:30pm – Mini-Ballet class

Monday, Dec. 26 at 1:30pm - Mini-Ballet class

Monday, Dec. 26 at 6pm - Mini-Ballet class

Tuesday, Dec. 27 at 1:30pm - Mini-Ballet class

All activities will take place one hour before the performance time in the Marcus Center atrium. Patrons must have a ticket to the performance to participate.

About Milwaukee Ballet

Founded in 1970, Milwaukee Ballet celebrates its 47th season as a staple of Milwaukee’s arts and culture community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Pink, Milwaukee Ballet has become world-renowned for presenting both bold new interpretations of story ballets, and cutting-edge contemporary works. Milwaukee Ballet is the home to an international company of dancers, and is one of only a few companies in the nation to feature 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. Milwaukee Ballet’s award-winning Community Engagement department serves more than 30,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin through original, interactive programs. Learn more at milwaukeeballet.org.

About BMO Harris Bank

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