

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Milwaukee Ballet hosts a book drive benefitting Next Door during
*Beauty and the Beast***

-Dance company invites patrons to bring books to the show, April 12-15-

MILWAUKEE – April 10, 2018 – Milwaukee Ballet invites patrons attending the world premiere of Michael Pink’s *Beauty and the Beast* to bring children’s books to donate to Next Door. *Beauty and the Beast* runs April 12-15, 2018 at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts.

Milwaukee Ballet was inspired to host the book drive in celebration of the story’s central character, Belle, who is an avid reader.

“One of Belle’s most memorable characteristics is her passion for stories. This inspired us to share the joy of reading with as many children as possible,” explained Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink, who choreographed this production. “Partnering with Next Door to support their Books for Kids program accomplishes this goal and we couldn’t be more pleased to work with an agency of such stellar reputation.”

Next Door is a nearly 50-year-old nonprofit organization in Milwaukee providing high quality early childhood education programs for central city families. One of its programs is Books for Kids, which distributes close to 6,000 donated books per month for free to its own students and children in the community.

“To partner with Milwaukee Ballet on such a beloved children’s tale is a huge honor for Next Door,” said Dr. Tracey Sparrow, President of Next Door. “The support for our Books for Kids program is so important because the families we serve don’t often have the resources to provide books for their children at home. The books collected through this performance will enable a child in Milwaukee to build their home library and enjoy story time with family.”

Milwaukee Ballet is asking their patrons to bring new or gently-used children’s board and picture books to the show. Next Door especially welcomes multi-lingual and multi-racial books. Books for children 0 to 5 are preferred but books for older children will also be accepted. Last year, Books for Kids gave away more than 80,000 books in the community.

Pink’s production is inspired by Jeanne-Marie LePrince de Beaumont’s 1756 adaptation of the original folktale. Belle is the hero of her own story and uses her love of literature to guide her on her adventure with the Beast.

“Belle’s imagination is her strength. It gives her the knowledge and confidence to take on the Beast, his world, and her destiny,” said Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director Michael Pink. “The audience can easily escape into the beauty of this production, which will please ballet lovers and newcomers alike.”

Beauty and the Beast features the professional Company, Milwaukee Ballet II, and nearly 80 students of Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy.

Pink is widely praised for his interpretations on the world's best loved stories. *Beauty and the Beast* is the most recent full-length ballet Pink has premiered in Milwaukee, joining *Dorian Gray* (2016), *Mirror Mirror* (2014), *La Bohème* (2012), and *Peter Pan* (2010).

Pink commissioned a score from British composer Philip Feeney, which will be played by Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra for this engagement under the direction of Milwaukee Ballet Music Director Andrews Sill. With *Beauty and the Beast*, Pink and Feeney celebrate a 30-year collaboration, which began with their first ballet, *Memoire Imaginaire*, in 1987.

The creative team is rounded out by Emmy Award-winning lighting designer David Grill, Canadian costume designer Paul Daigle (*La Bohème*), and New York City-based scenic designer Todd Edward Ivins (*Mirror Mirror*).

Book Drive Details

Next Door's Book Bins will be in the Atrium level at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Anyone who would like to donate but does not have tickets to *Beauty and the Beast* can make their donation in the Book Bin just inside the Marcus Center Stage Door.

Story Summary

A handsome Prince rules his kingdom with a cold heart. He is a product of his entitled upbringing: callous and selfish, with little regard for the welfare of his people. An Enchantress strips him of his looks and transforms him into a Beast. He meets Belle who gives him a new sense of hope and a reason to become a better version of himself.

Belle is bright with an unquenchable love of literature, destined to write her own adventure. When her father is captured by the Beast, she bravely offers to take his place. Now, a prisoner in the enchanted castle, she uses her generous spirit and intelligence to help the Beast discover his humanity.

Tickets and Performance Schedule

Beauty and the Beast runs April 12-15, 2018 at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee. The performance schedule is as follows:

Thursday, April 12 | 7:30pm

Friday, April 13 | 7:30pm

Saturday, Apr 14 | 1:30pm

Saturday, Apr 14 | 7:30pm

Sunday, April 15 | 1:30pm

Tickets available at (414) 902-2103 or visit milwaukeeballet.org.

Pre-Performance Activities

Milwaukee Ballet hosts activities before each performance. Each event starts one hour before the performance in the atrium of the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. All activities are complimentary with ticket purchase.

Thursday, April 12 | 6:30pm

Composer Philip Feeney has arrived from England and will discuss his partnership with Michael Pink and how he translates Pink's vision to music.

Friday, April 13 | 6:30pm

Todd Edward Ivins, Scenic Designer, will discuss how he created the masterpieces you'll see on stage including the giant rose, Belle's magic books, and more.

Saturday, Apr 14 | 1:30pm

A *Beauty and the Beast* themed craft for children of all ages will be in the Atrium. A special guest will also be on hand to read the story of *Beauty and the Beast* aloud for children.

Saturday, Apr 14 | 6:30pm

Artistic Director Michael Pink discusses the music, movement, the creative process, and how everything came together for his world premiere. TMJ4's Katie Crowther will join us to do a special reading of *Beauty and the Beast* before the show.

Sunday, April 15 | 1:30pm

First Stage Theater's Ensemble will perform excerpts from a few of their upcoming shows. It will include songs from *Matilda*, *Girls in the Boat*, and *Tinkerbell*.

Sponsors

Beauty and the Beast is presented by Sue and Allan "Bud" Selig, through their support of the Campaign for New Work, as well as Donna and Donald Baumgartner and Nita Soref. Philip Feeney's score was commissioned by Susanna and Justin Mortara. Paul Daigle's costume designs were commissioned by the Ettinger Family Foundation.

The 2017-18 season is presented by Donna and Donald Baumgartner, with operational support from the United Performing Arts Fund.

About Milwaukee Ballet

Founded in 1970, Milwaukee Ballet celebrates its 48th season as a staple of Milwaukee's arts and culture scene. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Pink, Milwaukee Ballet has become world-renowned for presenting 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 maintain 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 (NASD). Milwaukee Ballet's award-winning Community Engagement Department serves more than 30,000 people in Southeastern Wisconsin through original, interactive programs.

About Next Door

Next Door supports the intellectual, physical and emotional development of children by partnering with their

families for success in school and the community. We serve nearly 2,000 children, from birth to five years old, with three locations and 11 partnership sites in Milwaukee's central city. Through home- and center-based programs, Next Door strives to create a long-term foundation for success by closing the achievement gap for children living in poverty. Our highly qualified team provides critical educational support during a child's most important developmental years with a focus on academic achievement, building social-emotional skills, and helping children become better prepared for school.

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Note to editors: Hi-res images, video clips, and interviews with Milwaukee Ballet and Next Door staff available upon request.