

SEPTEMBER 2023



FROM THE WINGS

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE WEST HERR PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

With the renaming of the West Herr Performing Arts Center, we are taking a look at the past, present and future of the building in a new video produced by Electronic Field Productions.

In 1928, the free Masons of Rochester began construction on their new headquarters and it was officially dedicated in 1930. 93 years later, after owning the Auditorium Theatre portion for nearly 20 of those, RBTL purchased the entirety of the complex.

RBTL's vision is to create a multi-stage performing arts center for downtown Rochester. It will be a vast undertaking, focusing on melding patron expectations of today's theatre experience, while preserving the amazing architecture of the ornate venue.

"Anytime you renovate a historic structure or building like this there are challenges," said Pike Construction Services Project Executive, Steve Savage. "A lot of them originate with the fact that we don't know how it was originally built. So, in this case, we happen to be fortunate. We have record documents showing the original construction and some of the renovations and we can use laser scanning to help fill in the blanks."

"For me, it's about historic preservation," said Dan Pieters, Architect at LaBella Associates. "I really appreciate trying to bring things back to their glory and how they once were. And that's really a big goal of ours here at LaBella to do for this building and to allow others to experience it."

Click the picture below to watch the full video and see floor plans, renderings and a look inside some of the ceremonial rooms.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

DISNEY'S FROZEN

September 26 - October 8

SPIDER-MAN:

INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE

October 12

MAGIC ROCKS!

October 21

BOB DYLAN

October 24

CINDERELLA BALLET

November 1



WEST HERR
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

875 EAST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER, NY 14605

RBTL.ORG



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GO BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF DISNEY'S *FROZEN*

The Rochester premier of Disney's "FROZEN" the Musical kicks off RBTL's 2023-2024 M&T Bank Broadway Season at the newly renamed West Herr Auditorium Theatre. FROZEN features the songs you know and love from the original Oscar®-winning film, plus an expanded score with a dozen new numbers. This production provides an unforgettable theatrical experience with The New Yorker calling it "thrilling" and "genuinely moving," while the LA Daily News says, "it's simply magical!"

It was a long process getting "FROZEN" to where it is today (two feature films and productions in London, Hamburg and touring throughout the U.S.). So how did it go from the screen to the stage? Here is some insight from behind-the-scenes of how this Tony®-nominated Best Musical came to be.

The Adaptation

While "FROZEN" is an original story, it is loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen." In the fairytale, which was published in 1845, a magic mirror created by a troll, shatters and two pieces lodge into a boy named Kai. One shard lands in his eye, the other in his heart – changing his personality for the worse. That's when the Snow Queen finds him and tricks him into coming to live with her. Knowing something is wrong, Kai's friend, Gerda, goes in search of him and after a long journey through various woods and forests, succeeds. She is so happy upon her discovery that she gives him multiple kisses, which melt the mirror-shards, therefore freeing Kai from the Snow Queen's influence.



Disney originally explored the possibility of a film based on "The Snow Queen" in the 1940s, but it was ultimately shelved. At one point, a Disneyland attraction based on the fairytale was proposed, but it wasn't until the early 2000s that "The Snow Queen" began its transformation into "FROZEN." While FROZEN largely strays from the original source material, the creators kept some elements, including the recurring theme throughout (having continuous faith), giving Elsa the Snow Queen's ice powers and making Gerda's travels through the mountains part of Anna's story. In fact, the character of Anna is a direct nod to Gerda, while Sven is a representation of the reindeer who helped Gerda find Kai towards the end of her journey.



Early on in development, it was decided to center the story around two sisters, but originally, they were the hero and villain. However, when the songwriters were in the process of writing "Let It Go," they realized that Elsa wasn't a villain, but someone who feared her powers and was misunderstood because of them. From there, "FROZEN" became the film we know today.

"FROZEN" premiered in 2013 and five years later made its Broadway debut. Since, "FROZEN" has embarked on a U.S. tour, premiered on London's West End and launched productions in Australia, Singapore, Japan and Germany with one slated for the Netherlands in 2024.

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The Inspiration

The creative team from "FROZEN" was inspired by the diverse geography, mythology and cultural traditions of the Nordic countries, which include Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. This is especially true when bringing the fictional kingdom of Arendelle to life – with its mountains and fjords resembling those of Norway. Also key to the setting is placing Arendelle in the far north where the summer months are almost entirely daylight, and the winters are nearly always dark. These extreme days and nights have inspired and been infused into Nordic mythology. Take for example Norway's iconic trolls. According to Visit Norway, the country's official travel guide, legend has it that at night, the trolls would roam throughout the mountains and forest. But, if they stayed out until sunrise, the light would turn them into stone. That's why their faces and bodies can be seen throughout the country carved into cliffs and rocks. These myths are what inspired "FROZEN" creators to include the rock trolls in the animated film. However, in the stage adaptation, the trolls have been transformed into the "Hidden Folk," who are more human-like and are based on the elfin "huldúfolk" mythology from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.



The Costumes

Like the story, inspiration for the costumes was also drawn from the Nordic region. The Ensemble clothes are primarily based on "bunad," the folk costumes of Norway. Whereas Kristoff and Olaf's costumes resemble the traditional clothing of the Sami, the indigenous people of Scandinavia. Because the Sami culture revolves around reindeer herding, the costume designers decided to take this route with Kristoff, as his companion is the reindeer, Sven. There is even a nod to Vikings in the production. The King and Queen wear large buckles, which are based off Viking jewelry pieces from around 900 AD.

The fabrics used for costumes throughout the musical are sourced from 17 countries, and every item of clothing onstage is custom made for the show (except for socks, a few pairs of shoes and the men's gloves). Overall, there are 154 costumes in the entirety of the show and swings and understudies have an additional 144 costumes.

The costumes incorporate elements of hand crafting – something that would have been common at the time. That includes head beading, knitting, crochet and needlepoint. Many authentic natural materials are also used, such as wool and linen, resulting in a rich, natural palette. There is also no real fur in the show. Instead, the production uses nearly 30 different kinds of faux fur.



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The Costumes (Continued)

Speaking of fur, the character of Sven is the most technically challenging and it's because of the costume. It stands over 7 feet tall and weighs about 50 pounds. Inside, the actor is on all fours on stilts. Because of this, two actors have been cast in the role for the tour – each doing four shows a week. There's a screen hidden in the neck of the costume, allowing the actor to see. However, the field of vision is still limited, so much so that according to the New York Times, "Sven has the de facto right of way on stage." As for controlling Sven's movements, a linkage system connects his head to the actor's head and body and a cable in the performer's right hand allows the animal to blink, while a cable in the left hand moves the ears. Sven's mouth is only able to move when another character rubs his throat.



Collin Baja as Sven & Jeremy Davis as Olaf.
Photo by Matthew Murphy ©Disney

Diving into a closer look at Elsa's iconic "Ice Dress," which takes one person 41 days to make and is custom made for each actress, it's bedazzled with over 44,000 Swarovski crystals and beads and weighs about 17 pounds. According to Disney, Elsa's clothes are designed to follow her character's journey. "She begins in stiff clothes, fully covered, and always with gloves. This reflects her fear of her own power and the way in which she closes herself off from everyone around her, including her sister. As she becomes more confident in her magic, she sheds these constricting garments and we see her in a dress made of ice that appears to be growing organically from her skin. The curling motifs of ice in this dress reflect her newfound joy. When the story takes a darker turn, Elsa's ice motifs become sharper and jagged, while she gains independence and moves further from society's expectations, even putting on pants!"



Caroline Bowman as Elsa & Lauren Nicole Chapman as Anna.
Photo by Matthew Murphy ©Disney



Caroline Bowman as Elsa & the Company of Frozen North American Tour.
Photo by Deen van Meer

The Production

"FROZEN" is the first Disney animated feature to have a woman director. That also makes Jennifer Lee the first female director of a feature film that grossed more than \$1 billion. While she didn't direct the Broadway production, Lee still wrote the book for the show. Another milestone on the creative team – songwriter Robert Lopez is the only person to be a double EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony) winner. He has won all four honors twice and is the youngest to achieve EGOT status, when he was 39 years old.

Getting the production to travel across the country takes 16 moving trucks (three are for merchandise alone) and includes 76 traveling company members. 37 of them are actors, four of whom are children.

As for the set, the video wall is 30 feet wide and 24 feet tall and has almost 5 million individual LEDs. It travels in 16 parts and takes two hours to assemble. And when the production is over, it takes about 15 hours to break down the whole show to be moved to the next city on the tour.

"FROZEN" takes the stage at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre for two weeks September 26-October 8. Tickets are available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) and the Auditorium Box Office. Experience everything you want in a musical: It's moving, it's spectacular and above all, it's pure Broadway joy.

THE 2023-2024 M&T BANK BROADWAY SEASON

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FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENTERTAINMENT CONTINUES THROUGHOUT OCTOBER

After "FROZEN" the family fun continues! On October 12, fans can experience an Academy Award®-winning movie in a whole new way. "[Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse Live in Concert](#)" pairs a screening of the animated film with musicians and turntables featuring a DJ scratcher live on stage. This is the first time a show of this kind will be presented at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre and the first of two this Season.

Joining the tour is the Broadway Sinfonietta, an all-women and majority women-of-color orchestra. Ithaca College graduate Emily Marshall serves as the tour's conductor. The score was composed by Emmy®-winner Daniel Pemberton and features boundary-pushing original music that is complimented with song contributions by Post Malone, Lil Wayne, Jaden Smith and Nicki Minaj.



Credit: Lightroom Zen



Credit: Lightroom Zen

"[Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse](#)" introduces Brooklyn teen Miles Morales, and the limitless possibilities of the Spider-Verse, where more than one can wear the mask. A superhero classic for a new generation, Miles is an Afro-Latinx teen who is bitten by a radioactive spider in the subway and gains mysterious powers. Joined by spider-heroes from parallel universes, Miles must master his new powers to save his city from a villain who could destroy it all.

Then on October 21, a family-friendly illusion spectacular takes over the stage. Illusionist Leon Etienne is bringing his show "[Magic Rocks!](#)" to Rochester. It features the world's best grand illusions, award-winning sleight of hand, and hilarious comedy, in an immersive experience that brings joy, laughter, and wonder when the world needs it most.



You may have seen Etienne on "America's Got Talent," "Penn & Teller: Fool Us!" or "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon." But now, he's bringing his interactive show around the world – in true rock n' roll fashion.

"I am so excited to bring "[Magic Rocks!](#)" to Rochester," said Etienne. "We cannot wait to perform for the incredible RBTL audience we've heard about. They are going to experience some of the best grand illusions in the world. This world needs magic now more than ever. I'm on

a mission to bring magic, joy, and wonder to as many communities as I can. We can't wait to rock Rochester!"

Tickets for "[Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse Live in Concert](#)" and "[Magic Rocks!](#)" are available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) and the Box Office.

RBTL NOW ACCEPTING SCHOOLS & SEEKING ADJUDICATORS FOR STARS OF TOMORROW EDUCATION PROGRAM

RBTL's annual Stars of Tomorrow program is now in its 26th year and we're currently accepting schools with fall and spring productions to participate. Stars of Tomorrow was established with the intent of bringing recognition to high school musicals and performing arts students in Monroe and surrounding counties. Trained adjudicators evaluate each school's musical performance and provide students and directors with written feedback and rubric scores in a variety of production areas. Then, at the annual Stars of Tomorrow Gala, recognition is given to schools with consistently excellent and outstanding scores in each of the adjudicated categories. Participating schools also have the opportunity to perform a selection from their musical on the West Herr Auditorium stage. This Season's gala will be on May 10, 2024.



Registration for schools is open through October 15. A finite number of schools will be accepted per production weekend, due to adjudicator availability. Weekends will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis based on when the registration form was submitted. The month of March sees the most school musical productions, therefore if this is when your show is scheduled, this will be most relevant. As a result, some weekends are already closed, but please reach out for more information.

 **Register [Here](#)**

 **Deadline: October 15**

RBTL is also seeking Stars of Tomorrow adjudicators. The adjudication season will begin in October and end in the beginning of April. The deadline to register is October 6. Throughout the season, adjudicators will evaluate each production against itself, rather than against all other school productions. This encourages schools to create the best possible work for their unique circumstances and environment.

Applicants will be reviewed by a panel of RBTL staff, who are looking for those not only with musical/theatrical experience, but also who have an understanding as they critique productions, that this is an educational program. Adjudicators will also need to commit to being impartial, confidential and objective. For more information on becoming a Stars of Tomorrow adjudicator, go to rbtl.org/stars-of-tomorrow-adjudicators.

 **Apply [Here](#)**

 **Deadline: October 6**

The goal of Stars of Tomorrow is to honor and encourage the incredible work being done in local schools, while also providing constructive feedback for growth within both individual students and the entire production. The program also celebrates diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in all areas of the performing arts. Through Stars of Tomorrow, students and directors will have networking and professional and personal development opportunities.

For more information or questions about Stars of Tomorrow and other RBTL arts education programs, contact Director of Education, Holly Valentine, at holly@rbtl.org or 585-277-3338.

VOLUNTEER WITH RBTL!

Are you an energetic middle school, high school or college student, who is a Broadway fan and in need of volunteer hours for school?

Volunteer for one hour before a Broadway performance at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre this Season and then see the show (pending ticket availability)!

[CLICK HERE](#) to Apply.