

# FROM THE WINGS

## WEST HERR GIVES AWAY 300 TURKEYS TO ROCHESTER RESIDENTS AT WEST HERR AUDITORIUM THEATRE

On November 20, outside of the West Herr Auditorium Theatre, the West Herr Automotive Group and RBTL staff were joined by City of Rochester Mayor Malik Evans to hand out 300 frozen turkeys and bags of Thanksgiving food sides. Representatives from Aeon Missionary Baptist Church, First Genesis Baptist Church, Helping Hand Missionary Baptist Church, Keeler Park Apartments, Refugees Helping Refugees and St. Andrew's Food Cupboard picked up the food to then deliver it to 300 Rochester-area families ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.



"During this Thanksgiving season, I hope that all who celebrate have the opportunity to gather with loved ones and enjoy one another's company," said Mayor Evans. "Thank you to West Herr for its donation that supports Thanksgiving dinner for 300 Rochester families and thank you to our partner organizations whose work with our community ensures that such aid can reach those in need."



"Rochester has been ranked the most neighborly city in America. It is because of that, that our customers and employees have made these donations possible," said West Herr Automotive Group President and CEO Scott Bieler. "We are so proud and grateful to be a part of this wonderful community and feel blessed to be in a position to help those who need it most."

\$100,000 worth of turkeys were donated by West Herr and over 5,000 bags of food items were collected by employees and customers across all West Herr locations. RBTL is proud to have been a part of this giveaway, helping to feed hundreds of Rochester residents for the coming holiday.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

PATTI LABELLE

November 25

JO KOY

November 26

GUITARS AND STARS

November 29

RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED

REINDEER: THE MUSICAL

December 1-2

THE IRISH TENORS

December 3



WEST HERR  
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
875 EAST MAIN STREET  
ROCHESTER, NY 14605

[RBTL.ORG](http://RBTL.ORG)



@RBTLAUD

# HOW ANNIE CAME TO BE: FROM THE BEGINNING TO ITS ROCHESTER RETURN AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

When “Annie” comes to Rochester as part of the M&T Bank Broadway Season December 12-17, it will be the seventh time the production has been presented on the Auditorium Theatre stage. But how did Little Orphan Annie, and all of her determination, come to be and continue to resonate with audiences after all these years?

Annie first appeared in 1885 in the form of a poem by James Whitcomb Riley called “Little Orphan Annie,” which was originally titled “The Elf Child.” However, it was in 1924 that Annie’s popularity took off with the debut of the “Little Orphan Annie” comic strip in the New York Daily News. It was created by cartoonist Harold Gray and captured the political and economic spirit of the time. Gray used the comic to comment on the state of the country, allowing the character of Annie to connect to readers at a time when people needed hope and an independent spirit. “Little Orphan Annie” offered optimism during some of the country’s darkest times, including the Great Depression, World War II and the stock market crash. It became one of the most widely read strips in the 30s and 40s.

In 1930, Little Orphan Annie was one of the first comic strips to be adapted for radio. It ran for nearly 10 years. Annie appeared on screen for the first time in 1932 and then again in 1938, but neither saw much success. Since the creation of the Broadway musical, there have been three movie adaptations (plus an NBC holiday primetime TV special). Probably the most well-known film version is from 1982, which starred Carol Burnett, Tim Curry and Bernadette Peters. Another movie version was released in 1999 starring Kathy Bates, Victor Garber, Kristin Chenoweth, Alan Cumming and Audra McDonald. In 2014, a remake of the movie, set in the present day, premiered starring Jamie Foxx, Rose Byrne, Cameron Diaz and Quvenzhané Wallis in the title role.



*The Orphans in the North American Tour of Annie.  
Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade*

Bringing Annie to the stage began in 1970, when lyricist Martin Charnin bought a coffee table book called “The Life and Hard Times of Little Orphan Annie” as a Christmas gift for a friend. According to the show’s producers, the clerk at the bookstore didn’t have time to wrap it, so Charnin took the book home to do it himself. Instead, he read it, loved it and immediately set out to secure its rights. The friend reportedly never received the gift.



*Christopher Swan & Rainier (Rainey) Treviño in the North American Tour of Annie.  
Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade*



*Stefanie Londino, Jeffrey T. Kelly & Samantha Stevens in the North American Tour of Annie.  
Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade*

Charnin enlisted Tony®-winning composer Charles Strouse and short story writer Thomas Meehan to help him adapt the comic strip for the stage. Annie’s story was then brought to life through song and follows her journey from the orphanage to the grand home of Oliver Warbucks. After it was completed, the musical was auditioned for 23 producers. All of them turned it down. But then in 1976, Michael Price took a chance on it and the production premiered at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut. It received mixed reviews and underwent multiple changes before transferring to Broadway in 1977.

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The original production ran at the Alvin Theatre (now renamed the Neil Simon Theatre) for 2,377 performances. The show won seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, Best Original Score and Best Choreography. The original Broadway cast included Reid Shelton (Oliver Warbucks), Dorothy Loudon (Miss Hannigan), Sandy Faison (Grace Farrell) and Andrea McArdle (Annie). Sarah Jessica Parker also starred in the title role during the original Broadway run.

Of course, the cast of "Annie" can't be mentioned without highlighting Sandy! According to producers, the original dog that portrayed Sandy became the "longest running dog on Broadway," never missing a performance. The original Sandy was found, adopted and trained by Tony Award Honoree and Animal Trainer, William (Bill) Berloni. Since, all the dogs cast in every production have been rescue dogs. In fact, the two dogs who portray Sandy in the current National Tour were also rescued by Berloni.

Since the original production, "Annie" has been revived twice on Broadway - once in 1997 and a second time in 2012. The show has been translated into 28 languages and has played in 34 different countries. "Annie" first toured to Rochester in November 1981 and made returns in 1982, 1997, 2000, 2007 and 2015. The current tour launched in 2022 and is set to end in the Spring of 2024, just three months before the 100th anniversary of the first "Little Orphan Annie" comic strip.

For generations, "Annie" has reminded theatergoers that sunshine is always right around the corner. It's a celebration of family, hope, optimism and the American spirit and remains the ultimate cure for all the hard knocks life throws your way. Tickets for "Annie" at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre are available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) and the Auditorium Box Office.



*Rainier (Rainey) Treviño & Georgie in the North American Tour of Annie.  
Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade*

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## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE NORTH AMERICAN TOUR OF ANNIE

(Photos by Richard Bowditch)



# RBTL ANNOUNCES SPECIAL ENGAGEMENTS AS PART OF THE 2023-2024 M&T BANK BROADWAY SEASON

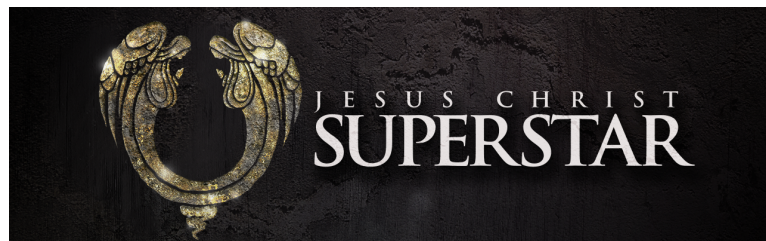
RBTL is bringing audiences four Special Engagements as part of the 2023-2024 M&T Bank Broadway Season! The first arrives just in time for the holidays. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical" will play four performances December 1-2. Then, in the spring, "Jesus Christ Superstar" returns to Rochester April 8-10. Also making returns are "The Book of Mormon" for five performances May 3-5, followed by "Shrek – The Musical" May 11-12.

Here's a little more about each of this Season's Special Engagements:



Photo by Timothy Norris

The beloved TV classic "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical" soars off the screen and onto the stage this holiday season. Come see all your favorite characters from the special including Santa and Mrs. Claus, Hermey the Elf, Bumble the Abominable Snow Monster, Clarice, Yukon Cornelius and, of course, Rudolph, as they come to life in "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical." It's an adventure that teaches us that what makes you different can be what makes you special. Don't miss this wonderful holiday tradition that speaks to the misfit in all of us. Based on the animated television special "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and the stage production directed and conceived by Jeff Frank and First Stage, this Special is presented at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre by RBTL and Albert Nocciolino. Script adaptation by Robert Penola, with arrangements by Timothy Splain and orchestration by William C. White.



In 2024, a new mesmerizing production of the iconic musical phenomenon returns to the stage. Originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre and helmed by the acclaimed director Timothy Shearer ("Crazy for You," "Into the Woods") and cutting-edge choreographer Drew McOnie ("King Kong," "Strictly Ballroom"), this production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" won the 2017 Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival garnering unprecedented reviews and accolades. Appealing to both theater audiences and concert music fans, it pays tribute to the historic 1971 Billboard Album of the Year while creating a modern, theatrical world that is uniquely fresh and inspiring. With lyrics and music by Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony winners Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, "Jesus Christ Superstar" is set against the backdrop of an extraordinary series of events during the final weeks in the life of Jesus Christ as seen through the eyes of Judas. Reflecting the rock roots that defined a generation, the legendary score includes 'I Don't Know How to Love Him', 'Gethsemane' and 'Superstar'.

The North American Tour company of Jesus Christ Superstar.  
Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade



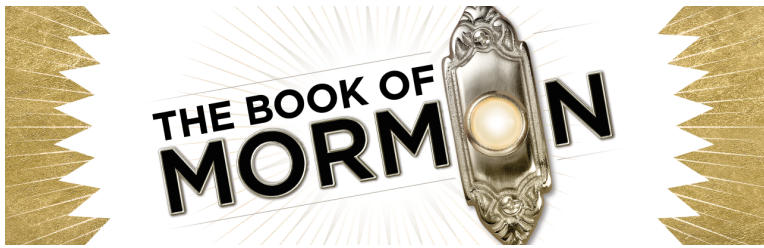
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Sam McLellan & company in *The Book of Mormon* North American tour.  
Photo by Julieta Cervantes

Next, the New York Times calls it "the best musical of this century." The Washington Post says, "It is the kind of evening that restores your faith in musicals." And Entertainment Weekly says, "Grade A: the funniest musical of all time." Jimmy Fallon of The Tonight Show calls it "Genius. Brilliant. Phenomenal." It's "The Book of Mormon," the nine-time Tony Award® winning Best Musical. This outrageous musical comedy follows the adventures of a mismatched pair of missionaries, sent halfway across the world to spread the Good Word. With standing room only productions in London, on Broadway and across North America, "The Book of Mormon" has truly become an international sensation. (Contains explicit language.)



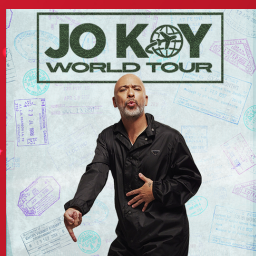
Finally, "once upon a time, there was a little ogre named Shrek..." And thus begins the tale of an unlikely hero who finds himself on a life-changing journey alongside a wisecracking Donkey and a feisty princess who resists her rescue. Yes, your favorite ogre is back in the hilarious stage spectacle, "Shrek – The Musical," based on the Oscar®-winning, smash hit, DreamWorks animated film. This Tony Award®-winning fairy tale musical adventure features songs from Jeanine Tesori ("Kimberly Akimbo;" "Caroline, or Change"), a sidesplitting book by Pulitzer Prize winner David Lindsay-Abaire ("Kimberly Akimbo") and brings all the beloved characters you know from the film to life. USA Today raves, "Altogether irresistible!" You'll be a "believer" too as there's more to the story than meets the ears.



Tickets are on sale now for "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical" at [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com) and the Auditorium Box Office. Tickets for "The Book of Mormon" go on sale December 4. Tickets for "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Shrek – The Musical" will be available at a later date. Right now, Season Subscribers do have the opportunity to purchase tickets for all four Specials in advance of the general public, via Account Manager, by calling 585-222-5000 or by visiting the Auditorium Box Office.

## GIVE THE GIFT OF ENTERTAINMENT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

THESE ONE-NIGHT-ONLY SHOWS AT WEST HERR AUDITORIUM THEATRE ON SALE NOW  
TICKETS & GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE AT [RBTL.ORG](http://RBTL.ORG) & THE BOX OFFICE



# ENSURING SAFETY & SECURITY AT WEST HERR PERFORMING ARTS CENTER & AUDITORIUM THEATRE

Ensuring everyone's safety when they're visiting the West Herr Performing Arts Center and Auditorium Theatre is among RBTL's top priorities. To that end, the event and security staff at the venue strive to ensure a safe and welcoming environment. In this issue of From the Wings, we're highlighting this team, led by Matt Klim and Steve Hemmingway, who are some of the first faces you see when you enter the parking lots and the venue.

Some of the security and event staff have worked as part of this team, which consists of dozens of part-time employees, for decades. They come with a variety of skills, which have been honed through their experiences as security/corrections officers, teachers, managers, nurses and bus/truck drivers, to name a few of their occupations. In addition to working closely with each other, they also coordinate with the company of the touring productions and RBTL's House Managers.

It's RBTL's goal to make patrons feel safe, secure and comfortable even before entering the building. That means the event and security staff are stationed at all four RBTL-owned and operated parking lots, the entrances and exits to the venue, and of course, all areas inside the Theatre. They maintain their posts starting before the first patrons arrive, staying for the duration of the performance and until the last patrons leave. Those stationed inside the Theatre assist in scanning tickets and processing each patron through our walk-through metal detectors. In addition, they help with any ticketing and seating questions and needs.

RBTL feels fortunate and lucky to have the event and security staff full of people who are dedicated to the safety of our patrons and who have a love for live theatre. Please don't hesitate to approach one of our security team members if you need assistance. For more information about safety and security at the West Herr Performing Arts Center and Auditorium Theatre, visit [www.rbtl.org/safety](http://www.rbtl.org/safety).



## ROC THE DAY FOR RBTL AND ARTS EDUCATION

Join RBTL for 24 hours of giving!

On November 28, the Greater Rochester community will come together to ROC the Day. It's a chance to make a real difference right here in the region. Donations to RBTL will go directly to arts education programs, including A.R.T.S. Partners, Stars of Tomorrow and Broadway Boost.

With your help, RBTL is able to provide free materials and affordable tickets to students in our area.

Join us in supporting our community and ROC the Day!  
Find out more and get ready to ROC at [ROCtheDay.org/RBTL](http://ROCtheDay.org/RBTL).