

FEBRUARY 2025

FROM THE WINGS

PROJECT RESTOURATION PROGRESSES

As restoration efforts continue at the West Herr Performing Arts Center (WHPAC), we have some new pictures to share of the progress. Framing for the overhang has been installed and when complete, it will allow patrons to look over into the Floreano Room from the new second-floor lobby extension and bar area, as seen in the rendering below.



Additionally, those who enter the West Herr Auditorium Theatre via the WHPAC lobby will notice the newly restored ceiling, which has been freshly painted to make the floral decals pop.



RBTL's restoration efforts were recently featured on 13WHAM's Good Day Rochester. Check out the videos [here](#).

Remember to keep up-to-date on PROJECT RESTOURATION by following us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#). You can also see the latest progress on [WestHerrPAC.org](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DON QUIXOTE
March 8

RIVERDANCE
March 25-26

FUNNY GIRL
April 8-13

BRIT FLOYD
April 15

NARUTO: THE SYMPHONIC EXPERIENCE
May 10



WEST HERR
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
875 EAST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER, NY 14605
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2025-2026 M&T Bank
Broadway Season Announcement
Coming this Spring

THE WIZ ENGAGES WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY AT VARIOUS EVENTS WHILE IN ROCHESTER

It has been a busy three weeks in Rochester for the company of "The Wiz." Crew members first arrived at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre the week of February 10 with the set, costumes and props. Then came a week of technical rehearsals with the cast – utilizing both Theatre and West Herr Performing Arts Center spaces – prior to launching the First North American Tour on February 22. In total, the cast and crew of "The Wiz" will have been in town for three weeks following the final performance of the run this Friday, February 28. This means they have visited hotels, restaurants and other local businesses while here, creating a significant economic impact within the Rochester area.



Alan Mingo, Jr. and Joseph Joubert speak with students at GCSA's Celebration of Black Excellence event. Photo by Bill Guy.

Also, during these three weeks, members of the cast and creative team were out interacting at community events. First, on February 13, "The Wiz" himself, actor Alan Mingo, Jr. and Orchestrator/Music Supervisor/Arranger, Joseph Joubert, participated in Greece Central School District's (GCSA) Celebration of Black Excellence event. According to the district, the Celebration was created to honor and recognize the achievements and cultural contributions of Black students and community members and has become a powerful tradition rooted in GCSA's commitment to equity and excellence. It included student solos, spoken word and step dancing performances. Mingo and Joubert closed out the program by speaking to students and families about their experience as Black artists in America, their outlook on the future and what it means to create "The Wiz" for a new generation. Then, Mingo took the mic to sing "Meet the Wizard," followed by a special performance of "Home" from Greece students, accompanied by Joubert.

The next night, actors Kyla Jade (Aunt Em/Evillene) and Leon Ray (Swing, u/s Scarecrow, u/s Lion) made an appearance at the Urban League of Rochester's 60th Anniversary Gala. Jade wowed the crowd with her rendition of "No Bad News," while Ray performed the soulful "You Can't Win." Check out Jade's performance on Instagram [here](#), and Ray's [here](#).

Finally, on Tuesday, February 25, the City of Rochester Mayor, Malik D. Evans, welcomed the audience before a performance of "The Wiz" at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre. Joined on stage by "The Wiz" director, Schele Williams, Mayor Evans proclaimed February 25, 2025 as "The Wiz Day" in honor of the production launching its First North American Tour in Rochester.

"We're honored here in Rochester that the cast and creative team of 'The Wiz' have come to our city to rehearse before launching their new National Tour," said Mayor Evans. "As they lift their voices on stage, they also lift Rochester's reputation for nurturing the performing arts to a whole new level. I invite them to consider Rochester as a second home and to return when the tour is over. But in the meantime, we celebrate their contributions to the local and national arts scene by recognizing 'The Wiz Day' in the City of Rochester and encouraging all residents to celebrate this extraordinary production."



Rochester Mayor, Malik D. Evans, presents "The Wiz" Director, Schele Williams, with "The Wiz Day" proclamation.

Tickets for the remaining performances of "The Wiz" on February 26, 27 and 28 are available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) or the Auditorium Box Office.

RIVERDANCE RETURNS TO ROCHESTER WITH TWO PERFORMANCES THIS MARCH

"Riverdance" is returning to Rochester with its 30th anniversary celebrations. Since it first emerged on the world stage, its fusion of Irish and international dance has captured the hearts of millions worldwide. The Grammy Award®-winning music and the infectious energy of its mesmerizing choreography and breathtaking performances have left audiences in awe and established "Riverdance" as a global cultural sensation.

To highlight its 30-year milestone, "Riverdance" has rejuvenated the much-loved original show with new innovative choreography and costumes and state-of-the-art lighting, projection and motion graphics. This special anniversary production also welcomes an entirely new generation of dancers, as every member of the touring cast was not born when "Riverdance" first premiered 30 years ago. When "Riverdance 30 – The New Generation" tour comes to town for two performances only on March 25 and 26, it will mark the show's eighth appearance at the Auditorium Theatre.

Ahead of this Special Engagement, we're looking back at some of the highlights of the show's last 30 years.

In 1994, "Riverdance" made its first appearance at the Eurovision Song Contest, held in Dublin, Ireland. According to "Riverdance's" creative team, the theme of the contest was "The River," which Composer Bill Whelan took as a starting point when developing the music for this Interval Act. The invocation sung at the start is called "Cloudsong." It is the rain falling and feeding the river, which springs to life and flows through the land and out to sea. There, the cloud reforms and returns to the land, nourishing, renewing and refreshing it. The constant refrain 'uisce beatha' translates as 'water of life'. The number builds from the gentle song to the dancers' feet rhythmically recalling a river gathering force and rushing to the sea.



The river, from cloud to sea to cloud again, symbolizes the life cycle, and echoes the Irish experience of emigration and renewal. People who had left their homeland and travelled across the sea, returned in the 1990s to enrich Ireland with their talents and experiences gained abroad. "Riverdance 30 – The New Generation" builds on this idea and explores the way people from different lands enrich the countries they emigrate to, bringing with them their own culture, music and dance.



Following Eurovision, Whelan, Producer Moya Doherty and Director John McColgan took what was a seven-minute dance piece and turned it into a full-length stage show. It premiered in Dublin in 1995 and broke box office records. From there, it transferred to London, followed by a hugely successful tour starting at Radio City Music Hall in New York City in 1996. This heralded the start of three decades of touring "Riverdance" companies. That includes its Rochester debut in 1998, followed by return engagements in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2017 and most recently, 2022. Rochester audiences have truly supported "Riverdance" as a show for all generations.

In 1997, Whelan's "Riverdance" album won the Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album, and has since sold 3 million copies world-wide. Then, in 2000, it opened as a new production on Broadway at the Gershwin Theatre, running for 18 months.

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"Riverdance" also holds a Guinness World Record for the "Longest Riverdance Line." In 2003, "Riverdance" participated in the Special Olympics World Games Opening Ceremony with a performance featuring 100 dancers lined up on the stage. Ten years later, it broke its own record, when 1,693 dancers from 44 countries formed the longest "Riverdance" line on the banks of the River Liffey in Dublin.

In 2022, "Riverdance The Animated Adventure" was released on Netflix and swiftly landed a spot on the streamer's Global Top 10 list. The animated musical comedy featured the incredible craft and skill of the "Riverdance" troupe by utilizing motion capture of their performances to create the animated dancing in the film. Tour lead dancers Maggie Darlington and Anna Mai Fitzpatrick and Executive Producer/Associate Director Padraic Moyles were involved with the dance production for the film, while tour drummer Mark Alfred played on the film score.



Since its inception, "Riverdance" has packed theatres in over 49 countries throughout North America, Oceania, Asia, Europe, Africa and South America. It has been seen by over 30 million people and has played over 16,000 performances, featuring 1,500 Irish dancers. The various casts have produced 72 marriages and 134 "Riverdance babies" – three of whom have now performed in the show.

With this 30th anniversary celebration, audiences will enjoy a unique and memorable performance that blends the traditional and the contemporary, showcasing the skill and passion of the world-class dancers, musicians and singers in the "Riverdance" ensemble.

"It is both a privilege and a delight to celebrate 30 years of 'Riverdance' and the unique journey it has taken us on," said McColgan. "In those 30 years, the show has transformed from a spectacle into a global cultural phenomenon – continuously evolving yet remaining true to its Irish roots. On this tour, we look forward to welcoming 'The New Generation' of artists while paying tribute to the talented performers, creators, dedicated crew and the millions of fans who have made 'Riverdance' a worldwide celebration of music and dance."

Tickets to "Riverdance" at the West Herr Auditorium Theatre March 25-26 are available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) and the Auditorium Box Office. Reserve your seats now for what The Washington Times calls "A phenomenon of historic proportions!"

HISTORY OF BROADWAY MUSICALS AT THE OSCARS

The 97th Academy Awards® will be presented on March 2, and among the nominees is the box office hit and a Broadway favorite, "Wicked." It's up for 10 Oscars, including Best Picture, and earned its stars, Broadway veterans, Cynthia Erivo ("The Color Purple") and Ariana Grande ("13"), nods for Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress, respectively. But this isn't the first musical-turned-movie adaptation to bring in major Oscars buzz. In fact, dating back to the 7th Academy Awards in 1935, when "The Gay Divorcee" starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers received five nominations, including Best Picture. It was based on the 1932 Broadway musical, "The Gay Divorce," and according to the New York Times, only one song from the original source material was carried over onto the silver screen. That's much unlike "Wicked," which has been split into two films, to include all the fan-favorite elements from the stage version, and then some.

Throughout the decades, the Oscars have seen a steady stream of musical pictures come across for consideration. While many movies later turned into Broadway hits, including "Sunset Boulevard," "42nd Street," "Finding Neverland," "An American in Paris" and "The Color Purple," to name a few, numerous musical movies originated on the stage.

Here's a look at musicals that first captured audiences at a theatre, before doing so at a cinema, which then went on to be nominated – or win – the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' top award of the night at their respective ceremonies:

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| 1935 – "The Gay Divorcee" | 1969 – "Funny Girl" |
| 1936 – "Naughty Marietta" | 1969 – "Oliver!" (Winner) |
| 1937 – "The Great Ziegfeld" (Winner) | 1970 – "Hello, Dolly!" |
| 1940 – "The Wizard of Oz" | 1972 – "Fiddler on the Roof" |
| 1957 – "The King and I" | 1973 – "Cabaret" |
| 1962 – "Fanny" | 2003 – "Chicago" (Winner) |
| 1962 – "West Side Story" (Winner) | 2013 – "Les Misérables" |
| 1963 – "The Music Man" | 2022 – "West Side Story" |
| 1965 – "My Fair Lady" (Winner) | 2025 – "Wicked" (Pending) |
| 1966 – "The Sound of Music" (Winner) | |



And that's not all for some of these Best Picture winners, as some of the productions were also honored with a Tony Award® for Best Musical, or Best Revival of a Musical. That includes "My Fair Lady" (1957), "The Sound of Music" (1960) and "Chicago" (1997).

These top honors for Broadway musicals and their evolution to the big screen certainly proves that the industry continues to have a viable and vital future. Tune into the Academy Awards on Sunday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. on ABC. And save the date for this year's Tony's on Sunday, June 8 at 8:00 p.m. on CBS.

Save the Date!

RBTL'S ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Monday, August 4th

Registration opens soon. For more information, including sponsorship opportunities, visit RBTL.org.