MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

2026 COMMUNITY UPDATE

Celebrating MPAC's impact and vision for the future



Photo Credit: Michaela Beal Photography





ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY UPDATE

Since our inception in 1969, the Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC) has stood as an anchor of creativity and connection in our region, captivating generations through world-class performances and community-centered cultural experiences. Over the last 57 years, the organization has grown and evolved into Milwaukee's gathering place for culture and inspiration.

This publication is meant to share the news about some amazing recent developments for MPAC. We invite you to celebrate the milestones we've achieved together, and envision the possibilities that lie ahead. With your continued support, MPAC will remain a vibrant anchor for the arts, a home for local performing arts organizations, and a cultural hub where creativity thrives and communities connect.

Thank you to our donors, subscribers, partners, and audiences for being an essential part of these achievements. Your support helps us take our mission to the next level while building a strong foundation for a more sustainable future. Together, may we continue to gather, inspire, innovate, and elevate the arts for generations to come.

Photo Credit: Front Room Studios & Michaela Beal Photography



BROADWAY DELIVERS IMPACT ON THE STAGE AND BEYOND

The Johnson Financial Group Broadway at the Marcus Center Series continues to make a substantial impact throughout our community beyond the stage in Uihlein Hall. The 2025/26 Broadway season marked the 30th anniversary of Broadway at the Marcus Center, gathering over 130,000 people and contributing an estimated $50 million in economic impact for the Milwaukee region!

Over recent years, we introduced Broadway Buzz pre-show conversations, Lunch & Load-In donor events, touch tours, Broadway Bridges, and post-show talkbacks to enhance engagement and further immerse audiences in the Broadway experience at MPAC.

NEW THIS SEASON: AN EXCITING NEW DINING OPTION TO PAIR WITH THIS EXPANDED BROADWAY SEASON... BROADWAY BITES!

- Our all-inclusive pre-show dining experience at the Marcus Performing Arts Center.
- A premium, fixed-price, four-course buffet on-site, curated to the theme of each show.
- Exclusive bar location and Happy Hour specials.
- Guaranteed to have patrons in their seats by showtime.
- A full evening out at a reasonable price.

2025/26 BROADWAY BY THE NUMBERS

9
PRODUCTIONS

130,000+
BROADWAY ATTENDEES

8,100+
SUBSCRIBERS

8,700+
GROUP TICKETS

1,574
STUDENT/EDUCATOR RUSH TICKETS

OVER $1 MILLION
SALES TAX GENERATED FOR MILWAUKEE AREA

CELEBRATED THE 3 MILLIONTH
BROADWAY GUEST

THIS 2026/27 SEASON, WE ARE EXPANDING THIS IMPACTFUL BROADWAY PROGRAMMING EVEN FURTHER.

- **More Broadway weeks:** An average of 9–11 weeks per year, up from 6–7 weeks.
- **11 productions:** MPAC's biggest Broadway season ever.
- **More choices for audiences** and greater economic impact for the region.

Photo Credit: Michaela Beal Photography, Erol Reyal Photography, & Steven Dawson



Broadway Buzz



Broadway Bites



Broadway Buzz


Broadway Bites

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Education Outreach and Broadway Bridges at the Marcus Center

At the Marcus Performing Arts Center, our mission extends beyond the stage. We're committed to **creating programming opportunities that foster the next generation of theatergoers, performers, and arts advocates.** Our current programming includes Family Nights, Community Outreach and Workshops, Student Matinees, Touch Tours, and Broadway Bridges!



Broadway Bridges Masterclass

> ***Watching live professional theater makes me want to do more theater. I love the craft even more than I did before watching the show. I had no idea what I was going to do two years ago. Now I want to pursue musical theater in college."***
>
> — Zavian Duong
> *Broadway Bridges Student*

MPAC's **Family Nights** invite students and families to share the experience of live performing arts over dinner, activities themed to the production, and free tickets. We also collaborate with touring productions to provide students free artist-led **Community Outreach and Workshops**, introducing them to a variety of technical, performance, and business skills within the arts.

- **786 total students served in the 2025/26 season**
- **86% identified as economically disadvantaged**
- **12% identified as having special education needs**
- **Participating groups also include Ronald McDonald House, Make a Wish, St. Augustine Schools, Pink Umbrella Theatre Company, and more.**



Photo Credit: Michaela Beal Photography & Lindsay Stayton Photography



Student Matinee

Student Matinees are a series of special daytime performances exclusively for K-12 students. The matinees introduce students and educators to internationally renowned artists, offering new perspectives that bring the arts to life for students in fun and memorable ways.

- **8,445 students from 180 schools in the 2025-2026 season**
- **79% students from Title One schools**

Touch Tours offer an accessible behind-the-scenes experience, providing low or no vision patrons and disabled students the chance to physically touch the Broadway sets, props, and costumes while talking with the touring experts. Participants and their companions are offered free tickets to attend the Broadway performance.

- **57 students and family members served.**
- **5 Broadway Touch Tours in 2025/26**



Lion King Touch Tour

Broadway Bridges at the Marcus Center launched in the 2024/25 season as an exciting new initiative in partnership with The Broadway League and Broadway Across America. MPAC is one of only 24 venues across the country selected to participate in this immersive experience, which has grown to 80 students in only two years.

Through Broadway Bridges at the Marcus Center, participating high school students receive complimentary tickets to selected shows, exclusive workshops with cast members, and access to Q&As with the Broadway artists!

The annual program culminates with Broadway Bridges students having the once in a lifetime opportunity to perform with Broadway stars at MPAC's annual Broadway BASH.

Broadway Bridges students participated with the following 2025/26 productions:

- *Mrs. Doubtfire*
- *Les Misérables*
- *Hamilton*
- *Kimberly Akimbo*
- *The Wiz*
- *& Juliet*
- *Monty Python's Spamalot*

This new program is made possible through the generous support of our donors and demonstrates MPAC's commitment to fostering a lifelong love for the arts. By offering enrichment programs like Broadway Bridges, MPAC is investing in the creativity, confidence, and educational growth of our community's youth, ensuring that the arts remain a vibrant and integral part of their lives for years to come.



Joshua Henry and Broadway Bridges students perform at Broadway Bash 2025
Photo Credit: Lindsay Stayton Photography

EXPANDED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

TWO LOCAL STUDENT DRUM-LINES PARTICIPATED IN THE PRE-SHOW ENTERTAINMENT FOR DRUMLINE LIVE.

LATINO ARTS STRINGS PROGRAM PERFORMED WITH THE MARIACHI HERENCIA DE MEXICO.

THE NATIVE HERITAGE CELEBRATION AND HISPANIC HERITAGE CELEBRATION FEATURED STUDENTS FROM AREA SCHOOLS.

FREE ACTIVITIES AT THE ANNUAL RAINBOW SUMMER AND HISPANIC HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS.

WINNERS OF THE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION SPEECH COMPETITIONS PRESENTED THEIR SPEECHES ON STAGE DURING THE EVENT.

As a **KultureCity certified venue**, we are proud to offer patrons options to enhance the show experience further with braille & large print programs, audio description, ASL interpretation, sensory kits, and sensory friendly spaces within the venue.

"I want to thank you so much for giving this opportunity to every single one of these students...Because you as an individual are really helping this community thrive, you are bringing people together, and you are just making the whole world a better place."

— Quinn Bushmann
Broadway Bridges Student



Eva Noblezada and Broadway Bridges students perform at Broadway BASH 2026
Photo Credit: Linnea Koenigs

STRONG FUNDRAISING GROWTH

The Marcus Performing Arts Center is a mission-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, focused on being downtown Milwaukee's gathering place for all and bringing high-quality arts and cultural programming to Milwaukee and Southeastern Wisconsin. MPAC'S connection to the community as a cultural anchor and the community's support is vital to shaping our future work.

MAKING THE ARTS ACCESSIBLE

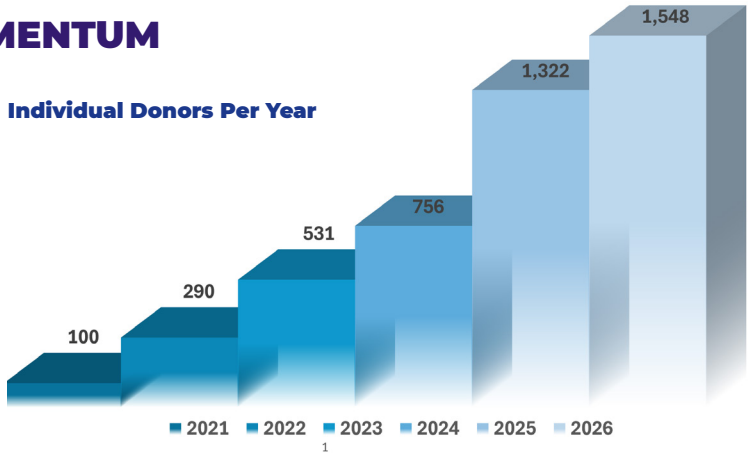
As a nonprofit arts organization, we believe that MPAC is a vital thread within the fabric of Milwaukee's cultural arts scene, and our role is to make exceptional arts experiences welcoming and accessible to everyone. By offering free and affordably priced tickets, we can bring more people together to experience the arts—even when ticket revenue does not cover the full cost of presenting an event. **This is where philanthropy and public funding shine:** generous supporters help bridge the gap and make it possible for MPAC to keep delivering joyful, inspiring experiences for our community.

A CHANGING FUNDING LANDSCAPE

- Over MPAC's 57 years, Milwaukee County's "cultural funding" provided an outsized share of contributed revenue.
- In recent years, the County has intentionally reduced its annual giving to arts organizations.
- To build a stronger financial future, MPAC is introducing new fundraising initiatives and a new financial structure—with individual and corporate contributions now more important than ever.

CREATING FUNDRAISING MOMENTUM

- Since launching formal fundraising in 2021, MPAC's donor base has grown from our earliest visionaries to more than 1,500.
- Annual contributed revenue has tripled in only five years.
- Stronger donor and partner relationships position MPAC to pursue long-term philanthropic investment and greater financial independence.





Rainbow Summer
Photo Credit: Front Room Studios

FEATURED FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL BROADWAY BASH BECAME THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING EVENT IN MPAC HISTORY, RAISING $474,280.

MPAC LAUNCHED THE "BIRTHDAY CAMPAIGN" FOR ITS FIFTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY, INVITING SUPPORTERS TO GIVE $57 DOLLARS TO CELEBRATE THE ORGANIZATION'S IMPACT.

MPAC PARTICIPATES IN EMPLOYER MATCHING PROGRAMS, GIVING EXTRA IMPACT FROM EMPLOYEES OF CERTAIN COMPANIES. (ASK YOUR EMPLOYER IF THEY PARTICIPATE)

THE NEW DONOR LOUNGE, OPENED IN THE FALL OF 2025, PROVIDES AN ENERGIZED-YET-RELAXING PRE-SHOW AND INTERMISSION SPOT FOR SUPPORTERS TO ENJOY BEVERAGES, SNACKS, AND SOCIALIZING.

MPAC extends a heartfelt **thank you** to our donors. Through their generosity, MPAC has been able to grow its operating budget by 67% and close a nearly $3 Million deficit gap in only 3 years.



Broadway Bash



Donor Lounge



Broadway Bash



NYC Donor Trip

Photo Credit: Lindsay Stayton Photography & Linnea Koenigs



Broadway Bash



Lunch and Load In

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Since 2021, the Marcus Performing Arts Center has been intentionally reshaping its business model to strengthen the organization's long-term financial health. At that time, MPAC faced a nearly $3 million annual operating deficit driven by a convergence of challenges:

- Declining Milwaukee County operating support.
- The lingering effects of an 18-month pandemic closure.
- The departure of long time resident partner MSO
- The rising costs associated with aging facilities.

In response, MPAC used this pivotal moment to fundamentally reposition the organization. New leadership implemented an aggressive, multi-pronged strategy to rebalance the revenue model, reduce reliance on single funding sources, control expenses, and build a more sustainable foundation for the future.

These efforts have moved the organization **from a nearly $3 million annual operating loss to a break-even operating budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026.**

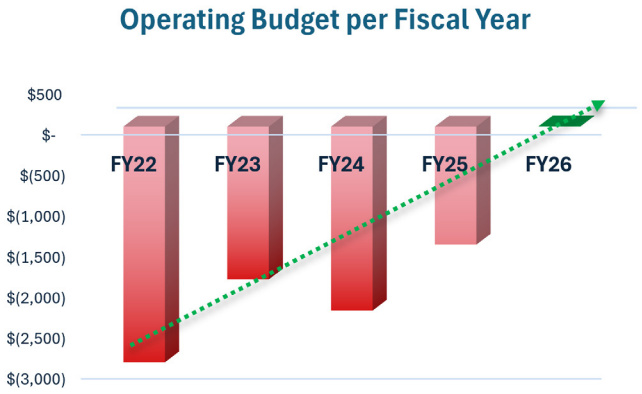




Photo Credit: Michaela Beal Photography

Ovation Stand For The Arts Award

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES TO TRANSFORM OUR INSTITUTION

Grow contributed revenue with new fundraising strategies

Increase the number of Broadway shows

Increase cultural programming content and sales

Commitment to grow facility rentals

New approach to MPAC's food and beverage service

Improve parking operations

Negotiate sustainable contracts

Optimize administrative services

These annual strategies are essential and will continue to reflect a **sustained shift in MPAC's business model to maintain long-term stability**.



Photo Credit: Lindsay Stayton Photography

LOOKING AHEAD:

Because of you, the future of the performing arts in Milwaukee is bright.

Your support makes it possible for MPAC to continue bringing people together through extraordinary performances, meaningful arts education, and welcoming community experiences.

Together, we are building a future where:

- More young people experience the power of the performing arts.
- Artists and audiences continue to connect through unforgettable experiences.
- Our spaces remain welcoming and accessible to our entire community.
- MPAC remains a vibrant cultural gathering place for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of what comes next.

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Rainbow Summer
Photo Credit: Michaela Beal Photography