



## Starlight Theatre History

Construction of Starlight Theatre began in December 1949. This landmark outdoor theatre opened in the summer of 1950 with the "Thrills of the Century" pageant gracing the stage in celebration of the City of Kansas City, Missouri's Centennial. The Starlight Theatre Association of Kansas City, Inc. was formed that same year as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The association began programming and operating the theatre in 1951, when *Desert Song* opened Starlight's inaugural season.

In the early years, Starlight's season consisted of 10 shows that included a

mixture of operettas, light opera and new musical comedies written for the Broadway stage. In recent years, the season has evolved to feature five Broadway-style

shows, both self-produced and national tours. Contemporary concerts are a part of each summer season as well.

In the early 1980s, the Starlight stage was extended over the orchestra pit, bringing on-stage action closer to the audience. Today's 10-story, climate-controlled Jeannette and Jerome Cohen Community Stage opened in 2000. The \$10.5 million stage enables Starlight to host nationally touring mega-hits.



Starlight Theatre remains a staple of Kansas City's performing arts community and a favorite destination for summer-time family entertainment. Recent additions to Starlight, thanks to a successful capital

campaign, include indoor rehearsal halls, a gift store, expanded concessions and restrooms, and an administrative office building. In 2007, Starlight introduces all new seats, group party pavilions and a new north facade.



## Starlight Theatre Facts

- Starlight Theatre Association of Kansas City, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization with a 30-member board of directors.
- Starlight Theatre's architect was Edward Buehler Delk.
- Starlight Theatre is the second-largest theatre of its kind in the United States and the largest and oldest performing arts organization in Kansas City.
- In 1997, the Shirley Bush Helzberg Garden of the Stars was unveiled, completing a new east entrance to Starlight, which includes a Box Office and expanded Applause Club restaurant.
- In 2001, Starlight introduced its Walk of Stars, and 24 famous performers who have entertained audiences throughout the years have been inducted so far.
- Ticket purchasers in 2006 hailed from all 50 states, a few Canadian provinces and Great Britain.
- In an effort to expand the reach of performing arts in the Kansas City community, Starlight initiated formal educational programming in 1984 with the creation of an internship program. College-age students have the opportunity to work alongside professionals in the fields of directing, choreography, musical direction, stage management, costume design, lighting, sound, marketing, accounting and other related fields.
- Starlight in 1995 altered its mission statement to confirm that "education shares center stage" with its musical theatre productions. Since that time, several educational programs have been created and implemented, including the Blue Star program recognizing excellence in high school musical theatre, Starlight STARS, scholarships, youth classes and a summer camp in collaboration with the Kansas City Zoo.

