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CONTACTS:

Ellen McDonald, Publicist
ellen@mershonandmcdonald.com
816-213-4355

Rachel Bliss, Starlight
rachel.bliss@kcstarlight.com
816-997-1151



Starlight Receives \$150,000 Grant from Disney to Fund Theater Education Program



Kansas City Metro Schools can apply to participate and produce a Disney musical at no cost.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Starlight was awarded a \$150,000 from Disney to bring the Disney Musicals in Schools (DMIS) program to Kansas City. Disney Musicals in Schools is an initiative developed by Disney Theatrical Group to create enduring theater programs in public elementary schools. The grant funds two years of programming. Joining a network of 22 affiliate organizations, Starlight is one of only two organizations in the country launching the program during the 2025-26 school year. Starlight will select up to five area public elementary schools to participate during the first year and up to five additional schools will be selected the following year.

The selected schools will participate in a 17-week musical theater residency led by a team of teaching artists trained by Starlight and Disney Theatrical Group at no cost. Each school will receive performance rights, education support materials, and guidance from the teaching artists. The program focuses on professional development, through which participating school teachers partner with Starlight's teaching artists to learn how to produce, direct, choreograph and music direct, culminating in their first 30-minute Disney KIDS musical at their school. As a capstone to the experience, Starlight will host a Student Share Celebration in which each school performs one number from their show on the Jeannette and Jerome Cohen Community Stage at Starlight for an audience of students, teachers, family, and community members.

Using the unique world of musical theatre, Disney Musicals in Schools helps to foster positive relationships between students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community.

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Students and teachers work in teams, developing the wide spectrum of skills needed when producing a piece of musical theatre, including: critical thinking, problem solving, ensemble building, communication, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills.

“School theatre programs have the unique ability to bring entire communities together,” said Alex Jones, V.P. of Community Engagement at Starlight. “Through our collaboration with Disney, we are excited to help Kansas City schools create sustainable arts programs that inspire students and teachers, engage families, and build stronger bonds between schools, neighborhoods, and Starlight.

For more information, or to submit an application to participate, please visit kcstarlight.com/dmis or contact dmis@kcstarlight.com.

About Disney Musicals in Schools

Disney Musicals in Schools was launched in 2009 in response to Disney Theatrical Group’s concern that public elementary schools were not afforded equitable access to the arts. After successfully offering the program in New York City schools, Disney Theatrical Group began partnering with organizations in other communities across the United States. To learn more, visit DisneyMusicalsInSchools.com.

Disney Musicals in Schools is part of Disney’s commitment to inspiring the next generation of storytellers. To learn more, visit Impact.Disney.com.

Disney KIDS musicals, created in partnership with Music Theater International (MTI), are 30-minute musicals designed for elementary school performers and have been adapted from the classic Disney films *101 Dalmatians*, *Aladdin*, *Finding Nemo*, *Frozen*, *The Aristocats*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Lion King*, and *Winnie the Pooh*.

About Disney Theatrical Group

DISNEY THEATRICAL GROUP, a division of The Walt Disney Studios, was formed in 1994 and operates under the direction of Andrew Platt, Anne Quart and Thomas Schumacher. Worldwide, its ten Broadway titles have been seen by more than 200 million theatregoers and have been nominated for 62 Tony® Awards, winning Broadway’s highest honor 20 times. The company’s inaugural production, *Beauty and the Beast*, opened in 1994, playing a remarkable 13-year run on Broadway and continues to be produced in replica productions around the world over four decades. In November 1997, Disney made theatrical history with the opening of *The Lion King*, which received six 1998 Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Director, Julie Taymor, who became the first woman in Broadway history to win the award. Approaching 30 landmark years on Broadway, it has welcomed over 124 million visitors worldwide to date and has multiple productions currently running worldwide. *The Lion King* has played over 100 cities in 24 countries on every continent except Antarctica and its worldwide gross exceeds that of any film, Broadway show or entertainment title

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in box office history. Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida* opened on Broadway next, winning four 2000 Tony Awards. It was followed by *Mary Poppins*, a co-production with Cameron Mackintosh, which opened in London in 2004 and went on to enjoy a six-year Tony-winning Broadway run. *Tarzan*®, Tony-nominated for its 2006 Broadway premiere, went on to become an international hit with an award-winning production enjoying a ten-year run in Germany. In January 2008, *The Little Mermaid* opened on Broadway and was the best-selling new musical of that year. Disney Theatrical Group opened two critically acclaimed productions on Broadway in 2012, winning seven Tony Awards between them: *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *Newsies*, each of which enjoyed a two-year run and launched North American tours, with *Newsies* playing a record-breaking Fathom Events in-cinema release. Disney Theatrical Group's 2014 hit, *Aladdin*, continues its smash Broadway run. It has launched eleven productions on four continents and has been seen by more than 21 million guests. Disney Theatrical Group's newest hit, the 2018 Tony-nominated Best Musical *Frozen* has launched eight productions around the world. Other stage ventures include the Olivier-nominated West End hit *Shakespeare in Love*, stage productions of Disney's *High School Musical*, *Der Glöckner Von Notre Dame* in Berlin and *King David* in concert on Broadway. Disney Theatrical Group has collaborated with preeminent theatres in the US to develop new stage musicals including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Freaky Friday*. As a part of the recent acquisition of 21st Century Fox, Disney Theatrical Group also heads the Buena Vista Theatrical banner, which licenses Fox titles for stage adaptations including *Anastasia*, *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*. Next on the Disney Theatrical schedule: The premiere of *Hercules* in London's West End, the North American tour of the first Disney-produced *Beauty and the Beast* in 25 years, and the ongoing development of the smash film *The Greatest Showman* as a stage musical. With dozens of productions currently produced or licensed, a Disney musical is being performed professionally somewhere on the planet virtually every hour of the day.

About Music Theatre International

Music Theatre International (MTI) is one of the world's leading theatrical licensing agencies, granting theatres from around the world the rights to perform the greatest selection of musicals from Broadway and beyond. Founded in 1952 by composer Frank Loesser and orchestrator Don Walker, MTI is a driving force in advancing musical theatre as a vibrant and engaging art form.

MTI works directly with the composers, lyricists and book writers of these musicals to provide official scripts, musical materials and dynamic theatrical resources to over 100,000 professional, community and school theatres in the US and in over 150 countries worldwide.

MTI is particularly dedicated to educational theatre, and has created special collections to meet the needs of various types of performers and audiences. MTI's Broadway Junior® shows are 30- and 60-minute musicals for performance by elementary and middle school-aged performers, while MTI's School Editions are musicals annotated for performance by high school students.

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MTI maintains its global headquarters in New York City with additional offices in London (MTI Europe) and Melbourne (MTI Australia).

About Starlight

Opened as a theatre in 1950 and a nonprofit organization in 1951, Starlight is the largest and oldest performing arts organization in Kansas City, Missouri, and connects our community through live arts experiences that entertain, inspire, and engage audiences of all ages. Offering diverse programming year-round, Starlight presents Broadway musicals, concert events, and extensive community engagement programming, including arts access initiatives, scholarships, school partnerships, and one of the most well-regarded high school musical theatre award programs in the nation. Located on 16 acres in Swope Park, the historic, city-owned venue is the second-largest outdoor producing theatre in the country with almost 8,000 seats.

Follow Starlight on social media @kcstarlight and visit kcstarlight.com for more information.

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