

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 11, 2025

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Starlight Announces Five Schools Selected for Disney Musicals in Schools Program



Five Kansas City Metro Elementary Schools will produce a Disney musical at no cost.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Starlight is pleased to announce the five schools that have been selected to participate in the inaugural year of its **Disney Musicals in Schools** program. The program is an initiative developed by Disney Theatrical Group to create sustainable theater programs in under-resourced elementary schools. The five Kansas City metro schools include Garfield Elementary School, George Washington Carver Dual Language School, Gladstone Elementary School, Phillis Wheatley Elementary, and Warford Elementary School.

The selected schools will begin a 17-week musical theater residency in the winter. Each school will receive free performance rights, education support materials and guidance from two teaching artists. The program features a professional development focus, through which participating school teachers partner with **Starlight** 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 on May 20, 2026, in which each school performs one number from their show on **Starlight's** stage for an audience of students, teachers, family, and community members.

Using the unique world of musical theater, **Disney Musicals in Schools** helps to foster positive relationships between students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community. Students and teachers work in teams, developing the wide spectrum of skills needed when producing a piece of musical theater, including: critical thinking, problem solving, ensemble building, communication, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills.

MORE

Disney Musicals in Schools was launched in 2010 in response to Disney Theatrical Group's concern that under-resourced 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. 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.

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*, *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 and Anne Quart. 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. 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. Within Disney Theatrical Group's first three decades, under the leadership of Thomas Schumacher, *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 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, having launched eleven productions on four continents and 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 and a filmed version of the stage musical currently available on Disney+. Other stage ventures include *King David* in concert

MORE

on Broadway, *Der Glöckner Von Notre Dame* in Berlin, stage productions of Disney's *High School Musical* and the Olivier-nominated West End hit *Shakespeare in Love*. 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 20th Century Studios, 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*. Disney Theatrical recently premiered *Hercules* in London's West End and a North American tour production of *Beauty and the Beast*. Next up: The premiere of the stage musical *The Greatest Showman* in Bristol, England in Spring 2026. In addition to theatrical stage productions, Disney Theatrical Group licenses and manages Location-Based Entertainment (LBE) experiences for The Walt Disney Company, including *Disney On Ice*, *Mundo Pixar*, *Disney Junior Live On Tour*, and *The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail*, expanding the magic of Disney storytelling into immersive environments worldwide. With dozens of stage productions and live ticketed events currently being produced or licensed, a Disney live experience is taking place somewhere around the globe 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.

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,

MORE

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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