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## Milwaukee Repertory Theater Unveils Inaugural Season of the New Associated Bank Theater Center

**12 Productions total across 3 New State-of-the-Art Theaters and the 50th Anniversary of *A Christmas Carol* in the historic Pabst theater**

**January 28, 2025 (Milwaukee, WI)** - Milwaukee Repertory Theater, one of the nation's first regional theaters and Wisconsin's largest performing arts organization, today announced the highly anticipated inaugural season of the Associated Bank Theater Center, its new home for entertaining, provoking, and engaging theater. The opening of the Associated Bank Theater Center is the culmination of Milwaukee Rep's \$80.1 million Powering Milwaukee Campaign, which drew support from nearly 600 individuals and institutional donors, including a 20 year, \$10 million Sponsorship from Associated Bank to name the center, and a \$1.9 million grant from the Wisconsin State Building Commission.

Marking a transformative milestone, the modernized and expanded 152,500 square-foot complex will host 11 productions across its three theaters - the Ellen & Joe Checota Powerhouse Theater, Herro-Franke Studio Theater, and Stackner Cabaret. With the state-of-the-art performance spaces for world-class, cutting-edge theater experiences, a dedicated facility to expand the theater's community-focused arts education programming, and new, accessible amenities that meet the needs of diverse audiences, Milwaukee Rep aims to make the Associated Bank Theater Center a cultural hub for generations.

The 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Season, which runs October – June, a one-time schedule shift from the typical September – May season to accommodate the completion of the Associated Bank Theater Center, celebrates Milwaukee Rep's storied past and dynamic future with an exceptional lineup, including award-winning titles, new works, and the 50th-anniversary production of the beloved holiday tradition, *A Christmas Carol* at the historic Pabst Theater.

The 2025/26 Season features:

- ***McNeal*** by Ayad Akhtar opens the new Herro-Franke Studio Theater in February 2026, making it the first American production of the play after its record-breaking Lincoln Center Broadway run.
- ***Come From Away***, a large scale Tony Award-winning musical directed by Mark Clements opens the Checota Powerhouse Theater November 2025.
- ***George & Gracie: A Love Story*** (World Premiere) by local favorite Tami Workentin in the Stackner Cabaret.
- ***And Then There Were None*** - Agatha Christie's bestselling novel brought to life.

- ***A Christmas Carol*** starring Matt Daniels as Scrooge celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

“The Associated Bank Theater Center redefines the standard for theater across the region, allowing Milwaukee Rep to expand the boundaries of storytelling and advance the art of theater,” said **Mark Clements**, Artistic Director. “Our updated theaters open up a new world of artistic possibilities to innovatively stage a surprising variety of works that explore our shared humanity, inspire meaningful dialogue and offer audiences hope. With our inaugural season in the new space, we rededicate ourselves to producing and commissioning work from both emerging and established voices that reflects our region’s rich diversity and addresses issues that are both important to the local community and nationally resonant.”

The first production in the **Ellen & Joe Checota Powerhouse Theater** is the Tony Award-winning hit musical ***Come From Away*** directed by Artistic Director Mark Clements November 4 – December 14, 2025. This exhilarating musical tells the uplifting true story of nearly 7,000 airline passengers stranded in a small Canadian town following 9/11, and the incredible kindness they received from the spirited locals. Following that is the 2022 Tony Award-winning Best Play, ***The Lehman Trilogy*** January 13 – February 2, 2026. This production which is performed entirely by three actors is a transfer from Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis, MN) in association with Shakespeare Theatre Company (Washington, DC). It’s an epic tale of one family’s passionate pursuit of the American Dream and the piercing cost of greed, excess and unbridled power. Next up, the celebrated director Lou Bellamy, who brought Milwaukee Rep audiences the acclaimed *August Wilson’s Fences*, returns to direct the Pulitzer prize-winning play, ***The Piano Lesson***, February 24- March 22, 2026, making it the ninth production in Wilson’s American Century Cycle presented at Milwaukee Rep. Rounding out the second half of the season are two plays that give a riveting 360 degree look at the life and work of the “Queen of Mystery” herself, Agatha Christie as part of the Agatha Christie Festival. First the effervescent, charming new comedy ***Mrs. Christie*** by Heidi Armbruster, April 14 – May 10, 2026, dives into the 11 days where Agatha Christie vanished in 1926 and how 100 years later a devoted superfan stumbles upon the clues that could crack the case. Followed by ***And Then There Were None***, the World’s #1 Best-Selling mystery by Agatha Christie May 26 – June 28, 2026, directed by Associate Artistic Director Laura Braza.

The **Herro-Franke Studio Theater** opens with Wisconsin native and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Ayad Akhtar’s new play ***McNeal*** directed by Mark Clements February 10 – March 22, 2026. Making this the play’s first American production after debuting on Broadway at Lincoln Center in 2024 with Robert Downey Jr. *McNeal* explores the price of greatness and raises vital questions about art, truth and originality in the not-too-distant future. The second play in the Herro-Franke Studio season is ***Frida...A Self Portrait*** written and performed by Vanessa Severo April 3 – May 17, 2026. Through music and movement, this irresistible production explores the breathtaking life of artist Frida Kahlo.

The **Stackner Cabaret** with its full-service restaurant and bar kicks-off with the holiday classic ***It’s A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*** October 31 – December 21, 2025. Deemed heartwarming, hilarious and delightfully retro, this uplifting classic comes to life as a high-energy radio play blending beloved characters, favorite songs, and lovable Christmas spirit. In the new year the heartwarming Wisconsin musical, ***The Fisherman’s Daughter*** by Katie Dahl runs January 9 – March 1, 2026, and is filled with

touching songs and home-grown humor that celebrates the connections we share with family, community and the land around us. Next, step into a jumpin' jazz joint where the legendary music of Fats Waller takes center stage in the Tony Award-winning favorite *Ain't Misbehavin' The FATS WALLER Musical Show* March 6 – April 26, 2026. The Stackner season concludes with the World Premiere by local favorite Tami Workentin *George & Gracie: A Love Story* directed by Laura Braza May 1 – June 14, 2026. Milwaukee's own power couple, Jim Pickering and Tami Workentin, also perform to bring the inspiring love story of Burns and Allen to life in this heartfelt tribute, filled with theatrical and showbiz magic, as part of World Premiere Wisconsin.

Subscriptions are now available for renewing. New Subscriptions will go on sale Monday, February 10. Subscription prices for the 2025/26 Season range from \$112-\$656. Packages available are the Ultimate 11-play package, which includes the entire season spanning all three of Milwaukee Rep's performance spaces; Powerhouse/Stackner Cabaret 9-play package; Powerhouse/Studio 7-play package; Powerhouse 5-play package; Stackner Cabaret 4-Play package as well as a Create Your Own Season package and Flex Passes. Single Tickets will go on sale later in the summer. For additional information on Subscription offerings, please contact Milwaukee Rep's Ticket Office at 414-224-9490 or visit [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com).

### **About The Associated Bank Theater Center**

Milwaukee Rep's enlarged downtown footprint encompasses the completely gutted and reimagined 1898 Oneida Street Station, a landmarked former powerplant that has been home to the theater since 1987, and a newly constructed glass building situated between the former powerplant and the historic Pabst Theater, another historic building constructed in 1895. The elegant glass volume, which sits above a newly enhanced main entrance on Wells Street, connects—for the first time—all theaters in the complex to the shared multi-level lobby. Engaging and activating the street, the transparent façade offers passersby a glimpse into the activity taking place inside the Center as patrons make their way to performances in the three theaters.

Milwaukee Rep's capital project provides critical infrastructure updates to the theater's more than a century old space, as well as updates to back-of-house and production technology to support increased performance capacity. The mainstage performance space, the Ellen & Joe Checota Powerhouse Theater, is reconfigured for improved sightlines with a new flexible stage that converts from a thrust to a proscenium, seating 568-671 patrons depending on the production's configuration. The flexible configurations also accommodate increased accessibility within the space, extending the theatergoing experience by up to ten years for older audiences. Finally, the mainstage theater also includes updated, cutting-edge technology with an advanced digital sound system, a laser projection system, scenic automation systems for the newly created fly loft, programmable intelligent lighting, and livestreaming capabilities.

The Herro-Franke Studio Theater, Milwaukee Rep's black box space for intimate productions, is reimagined with new modular platforms and seating that allows for audiences of 182 to 224 patrons, staging plays with larger casts, and greater production flexibility. The Stackner Cabaret, which was

renovated in 2018 by Uihlein-Wilson Architects in advance of the larger transformation project, also has state-of-the-art production capabilities, updated front- and back-of-house amenities including a full bar and kitchen for a pre-show dining experience, and increased seating capacity for audiences of up to 186 patrons.

The theaters can be accessed via the skylit three-floor Sandra & William Haack Lobby that occupies the space in the glass building. The open lobby includes inviting pre- and post-show gathering spaces, The Lubar Lounge, which can hold up to 100 people, restrooms, a gift shop, coat check, and bars with food and beverage offerings. It also offers access to the new 2,700-square-foot Herzfeld Foundation Education & Engagement Center, which includes classroom, rehearsal, and performance spaces, as well as an outdoor patio lounge. The dedicated education facility allows Milwaukee Rep to grow programming that deepens audience engagement; increases accessibility; and improves literacy, supports social-emotional growth, and creates school-to-career pipelines for more than 30,000 students each year. New programming enabled by the Center includes Connections, an audience engagement series with post-show TalkBacks and community nights, and the launch of a School of Theater that offers classes, workshops, seminars, and camps. Milwaukee Rep will also continue its successful student programs such as in-school workshops, the national Next Narrative Monologue Competition, and apprenticeships for the next generation of artists.

As part of the capital project, the theater's production shop is relocated off-site and expanded to a 35,000-square-foot facility that employs nearly 100 local artisans, advancing Milwaukee Rep's role in supporting the region's arts economy. The new Herzfeld Foundation Education & Engagement Center is housed in the space previously occupied by the shop.

More information, including production dates and details for the inaugural 2025/26 Season in the Associated Bank Theater Center, can be found below.



**2025/26 Season**

**Inaugural Season of the Associated Bank Theater Center**

### ***It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play***

Adapted by Joe Landry

Based on the story "The Greatest Gift" by Philip Van Doren Stern

Directed by Jonathan Hetler

October 31 – December 21, 2025

Stackner Cabaret

Experience the magic of Christmas like never before! This uplifting holiday classic comes to life as a high-energy radio play, blending 1940s retro charm with hilarious theatrical hijinks, as five multi-talented actors portray dozens of characters with vintage sound effects, favorite songs and lovable Christmas spirit, right in front of your eyes (and ears). A mix of humor, heart and hope, this enchanting show has captivated audiences across the country and delivers a nostalgic treat that's gift wrapped for you and your loved ones of all ages.

### ***Come From Away***

Book, Music and Lyrics by Irene Sankoff and David Hein

Directed by Mark Clements

November 4 – December 14, 2025

Checota Powerhouse Theater

Sponsored by PNC

This exhilarating Tony Award-winning musical shares the remarkable true story of nearly 7,000 air passengers from all over the world who were grounded in the small Canadian town of Gander during the wake of 9/11. Experience this joyous story, with a dynamic score and a vibrant, fast-paced narrative, as spirited locals and global passengers come together to forge friendships that will stay with them forever. This breathtaking production opens the new Checota Powerhouse Theater and will leave you cheering for the power of community.

### ***The Fisherman's Daughters***

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Katie Dahl

Directed by Molly Rhode

January 9 – March 1, 2026

Stackner Cabaret

This heartwarming Wisconsin musical is a testament to the power of sisterhood and self-discovery. When a governor's order uproots the small village of Fish Creek to make way for Peninsula State Park, two sisters — one practical, level-headed the other spirited and adventurous — must confront their fears and fight for the home they love. This charming show comes direct from a sold-out run at Northern Sky Theater and celebrates the deep connections we share with our family, community and the land around us. With touching songs and home-grown humor, you'll treasure this funny, fitting love letter to a slice of our great state's history.

## ***The Lehman Trilogy***

By Stefano Massini

Adapted by Ben Power

Directed by Arin Arbus

January 13 – February 8, 2026

Checota Powerhouse Theater

Winner of five Tony Awards, including Best Play, *The Lehman Trilogy* is a riveting tour-de-force that is sure to captivate the imagination. In 1844, a young man from Germany stands on a New York dockside dreaming of a new life in the new world. He is joined by his two brothers, and an American epic begins. Over the next 163 years, the Lehmans transformed a small storefront into an unstoppable investment superpower – until a collapse that pushed the global economy to the brink of destruction. With three extraordinary actors portraying over 50 characters, this universally acclaimed play tests the bounds of the American dream and the limits of epic theatricality with a one-of-a-kind event you won't want to miss! This production of *The Lehman Trilogy* is a transfer from Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis, MN) in association with Shakespeare Theatre Company (Washington, DC).

## ***McNeal***

By Ayad Akhtar

Directed by Mark Clements

February 10 – March 22, 2026

Herro-Franke Studio Theater

*A John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program Production*

Direct from a sold-out Broadway run, Pulitzer Prize-winner Ayad Akhtar's thrilling and darkly comic new work follows Jacob McNeal — a brilliant yet dangerously charming novelist obsessed with his own genius. On the eve of his greatest achievement, his thirst for whiskey, fractured relationships, and curious fascination with artificial intelligence threatens to unravel everything. You'll experience jaw-dropping projections and special effects at this opening production in the new Herro-Franke Studio Theater, as *McNeal* explores the price of greatness and raises vital questions about art, truth and originality in the not-too-distant future.

## ***August Wilson's***

### ***The Piano Lesson***

Directed by Lou Bellamy

February 24 – March 22, 2026

Checota Powerhouse Theater

August Wilson's explosive, award-winning play is a gripping story of family, legacy and the choices that define us. During the Great Depression, the Charles household reaches a boiling point over a decision that will define them: sell the family's cherished heirloom piano to secure their fortune or preserve it as a testament to their ancestor's spirit and struggle. The ghosts of the past collide with the promise of the future in this Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning masterpiece. From the celebrated director Lou Bellamy, who brought Milwaukee Rep audiences the acclaimed *August Wilson's Fences*, *The Piano Lesson* marks our ninth production in Wilson's American Century Cycle.

## ***Ain't Misbehavin'***

### ***The FATS WALLER Musical Show***

Created and Originally Directed by Richard Maltby Jr

Conceived by Richard Maltby Jr & Murray Horwitz

March 6 – April 26, 2026

Stackner Cabaret

Step into a jumpin' jazz joint where the legendary music of Fats Waller takes center stage. Five extraordinary actor-musicians transform into a jubilant swing band for the ages in this Tony Award-winning musical — last seen in our 2013/14 Season — that brings the razzle-dazzle spirit of the Roaring Twenties to the 2020s. Get ready to sing, dance and let loose with this brilliant celebration of an iconic trailblazer and his lasting legacy.

## ***Frida...A Self Portrait***

Written and Performed by Vanessa Severo

Directed by Joanie Schultz

April 3 – May 17, 2026

Herro-Franke Studio Theater

Live boldly, love wildly, paint passionately — this was the uncompromising life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Through music, movement and irresistible charm, acclaimed writer and actor Vanessa Severo crafts a poetic performance that explores Frida's breathtaking life and astonishing genius. This sizzling play plunges into the brilliant, nuanced world of Kahlo's tumultuous, extraordinary life, offering a vivid exploration of how we shape ourselves through the art that we love.

## ***Mrs. Christie***

By Heidi Armbruster

Directed by Joanie Schultz

April 14 – May 10, 2026

Checota Powerhouse Theater

*A John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program Production*

This effervescent, charming new comedy celebrates writers, womanhood, and the stories that shape our lives. In 1926, famed author Agatha Christie vanished for 11 days, reappearing without explanation. The real-life case of the "Missing Mrs. Christie" became a tabloid sensation, but the reasons behind her disappearance remain unknown. Now, 100 years later, a devoted superfan stumbles upon the clues that could finally crack the case, launching a coming-of-age journey of memory and self-discovery — with the thrill of a good old-fashioned mystery.

***World Premiere***

***George & Gracie: A Love Story***

By Tami Workentin

Directed by Laura Braza

May 1 – June 14, 2026

Stackner Cabaret

*A John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program Production*

For nearly 40 years, George Burns and Gracie Allen delighted millions as entertainment's original power couple, sharing love and laughter through their comedic brilliance. Now, Milwaukee's own power couple, Jim Pickering and Tami Workentin, bring the inspiring love story of Burns and Allen to life in this heartfelt tribute, filled with theatrical and showbiz magic. Trace George and Gracie's rise from a struggling vaudeville act to the height of stardom during the golden age of radio, television, and film and celebrate their legacy and devotion in this World Premiere that's sure to captivate and inspire.

***And Then There Were None***

By Agatha Christie

By Laura Braza

May 26 – June 28, 2026

Checota Powerhouse Theater

Agatha Christie's heart-pounding thriller takes us to a secluded island full of intrigue, as ten strangers with dark secrets find themselves marooned at a grand estate, trapped in a deadly game where no one can be trusted. Christie's own acclaimed adaptation of her most famous masterpiece – the world's #1 best-selling mystery novel – is filled with suspicious twists, surprising turns and memorable characters that will keep you on the edge of your seat until the shocking end.

*Presented by Jay Franke & David Herro*

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Production**

***A Christmas Carol***

By Charles Dickens

Adapted and Directed by Mark Clements

November 25 – December 24, 2025

Pabst Theater

*Presented by West Bend Insurance*

For decades Wisconsinites have enjoyed *A Christmas Carol* as their favorite holiday tradition. Now join us as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production of this Dickens' classic. Experience the magic of this beloved tale as Ebenezer Scrooge's heartwarming transformation inspires holiday cheer with the timeless message of peace, hope and joy. With beautiful music, lively dancing, stunning sets and eye-popping special effects, it's a dazzling Christmas feast with enough theatrical goodies to fill any sized stocking hung by the chimney with care.



## **About Milwaukee Repertory Theater**

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin with its new artistic home in the Associated Bank Theater Center opening Fall 2025 with three unique performance venues – the Ellen & Joe Checota Powerhouse Theater, Herro-Franke Studio Theater and Stackner Cabaret. For over seven decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece of Milwaukee’s vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining, inclusive and impactful. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Executive Director Chad Bauman, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural, social and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee’s rich diversity. More information is available at [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com)

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