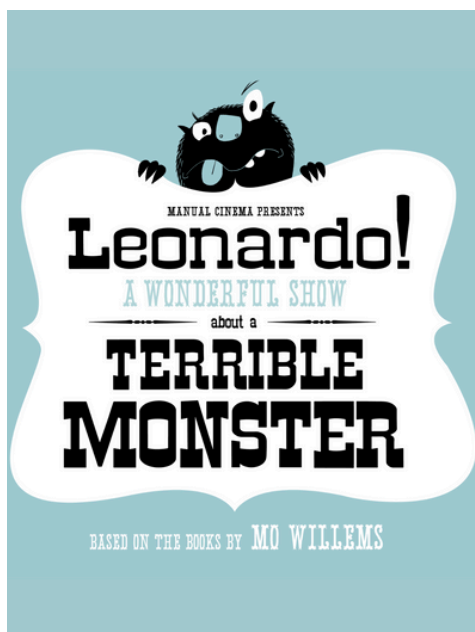


## **Wheelock Family Theatre Opens 2025/2026 Season with *Leonardo!* *A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster* by Manual Cinema**

**Showing October 9<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Boston, MA — Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University kicks off its 45<sup>th</sup> Season (2025/2026) with *Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster*. Opening night takes place on October 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm located at the theatre in the heart of Boston's Fenway neighborhood.



Continuing Wheelock Family Theatre's tradition of bringing beloved books from Page to Stage, this Manual Cinema production is inspired by the books *Leonardo*, *The Terrible Monster* & *Sam, The Most Scaredy-Cat Kid in the Whole World* by award-winning author and current Massachusetts resident, Mo Willems.

This inventive and heartwarming production by the Emmy Award-winning collective Manual Cinema brings Mo Willems' beloved characters to life through a dazzling blend of puppetry, live performance, and cinematic magic, bringing monsters to the stage just in time for Halloween!

"We are thrilled to welcome Manual Cinema to Boston and to open our 45th season with a production that captures the joy, humor, and heart of Mo Willems' books," said Nick Vargas, Executive Director of Wheelock Family Theatre.

Directed by Sarah Fornace, *Leonardo!* tells the story of a monster who just can't seem to be scary. When Leonardo meets Sam, the most scaredy-cat kid in the world, it seems like he's finally found his match, but what follows is an unexpected journey toward friendship, complete with new challenges when Kerry and her monster friend Frankenthaler join the story. "Manual Cinema's work is quite imaginative and unlike anything else," says Vargas.

Manual Cinema shares “(There is no wrong way to watch the show!)” using hundreds of illustrated paper puppets, oversized book pages, two-dimensional props, furry monsters, and live music to transform the stage into a living storybook. Audiences can choose to watch the action on the big screen, as in a movie, or follow the artists on stage as they bring the story to life in real time.

Wheelock Family Theatre believes that bringing literature to life on stage sparks a connection between reading and storytelling. And when children see a favorite book performed, it deepens their understanding of the story, ignites their imagination, and invites them to experience the magic of theatre in a whole new way.



Photography by  
Rebecca J Michelson

This season opener is sure to get the whole family in the Halloween spirit! Vargas shares, “Families will leave inspired not just by the story but by the artistry of watching it come together before their eyes.”

Tickets are on sale now with a range of affordable pricing — [\*\*Click here to view show times!\*\*](#)

### About Manual Cinema

Founded in 2010, Manual Cinema is an Emmy Award-winning performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company. The group combines handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques, innovative sound design, and live music to create immersive stories for stage and screen. Their acclaimed work includes adaptations of Mo Willems’ *Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster*, Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, and Edith Nesbit’s *The Magic City*, as well as collaborations with artists such as Iron & Wine.

### CAST

Kevin Michael Wesson (Leonardo, Puppeteer), Lily Emerson (Narrator, Character Voices, Vocals, Guitar), Shay Turnage (Kerry, Puppeteer), Karly Bergman (Sam, Puppeteer).

### CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Sarah Fornace (Director, Adaptation), Drew Dir (2D Paper Puppet and Prop Design, Adaptation), Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter (Music, Lyrics & Sound Design, Sound Engineer), Lizi Breit (Hand and Rod Puppet Design), Mieka Van der Ploeg (Costume & Wig Design), Trey Brazeal with Nick Chamernik (Lighting Design), Megan Alrutz (Dramaturgy), Maydi Díaz (Stage Manager, Board Operator, Company Manager), Mike Usrey (Technical Director for Original Production)

## FEATURE EXPERIENCES

Special events such as red carpets with the cast, a gallery exhibition, and following the 10:30 am and 2 pm performances of Leonardo! join Boston University art education students for make-it-and-take-it activities. This free event will allow audiences of all ages to create a unique visual art project inspired by the performance.

## RUN TIME & AGE RECOMMENDATION

Approximately 50 minutes without intermission. Recommended for Ages 3 and up

## ACCESSIBILITY

Access (ASL Interpretation/Audio Description) public performance dates are Thursday, October 16, at 10:30 am (Student Matinee) and Saturday, October 18, at 2 pm. For more information on Accessibility, [please click here.](#)

## LOCATION

Wheelock Family Theatre 180 Riverway, Boston, MA 02215.

Celebrating its 45th season, Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University (WFT) is the greater Boston area's only professional theater offering a shared experience for the entire family. Founded in 1981, WFT's longstanding commitment to equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion has garnered recognition and awards at the local and national levels. The theatre's productions have served over half a million audience members, and WFT's education programs have provided hands-on training to tens of thousands of students across the state of Massachusetts.



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