

Wheelock Family Theatre Marks 45th Anniversary with Magic in the Wings Celebration and 2025 WHEEL Awards

Boston, MA – Wheelock Family Theatre is proud to announce its 45th anniversary, which will be celebrated at the milestone event, "Magic in the Wings: A Benefit Toasting 45 Years of Wheelock Family Theatre, taking place on Thursday, December 4, 2025. This event will bring together artists, educators, families, and champions of the arts to honor the theatre's extraordinary legacy of storytelling and to invest in its future.



For more than four decades, Wheelock Family Theatre has been a leader in inclusive, accessible, and affordable theatre for audiences of all ages. Since its founding in 1981, the theatre has staged over **100 professional productions**, welcomed **more than half a million audience members**, and **served tens of thousands of young people** through education programs in schools and on its Fenway stage.

Today, Wheelock reaches over 1,000 students annually through its theatre education programs and welcomes more than **10,000 students** from Greater Boston schools to its student matinees.

"For 45 years, Wheelock Family Theatre has been a space where families of every kind can gather, connect, and experience the transformative power of live theatre," said Nick Vargas, Executive Director of Wheelock Family Theatre. "With Magic in the Wings, we are honoring the vision of our founders and the generations of artists and educators who have brought stories to life on our stage, but also looking ahead to what is next. This celebration is about ensuring that Wheelock Family Theatre can continue this vital work for decades to come, expanding access, inspiring imagination, and creating life-changing theatre experiences for future generations."

The evening will feature live performances, behind-the-scenes experiences, festive fare, and inspiring stories from community members whose lives have been shaped by the theatre. Proceeds will directly support Wheelock Family Theatre's award-winning productions, education initiatives, and access programs.

Honoring the 2025 WHEEL Awardees

At this event, Wheelock Family Theatre will also present the 2025 WHEEL Awards (**Wheelock Heroes Enrich Every Life**), which recognize individuals whose work uplifts children, families, and communities through the arts and education. This year's distinguished honorees are **Jack Eldon, Lesley Ryan Miller, and Carly Johanson & Zack Hardy**.



Jack Eldon, Vice President of Domestic Touring and Regional Engagements at Disney Theatrical Group, has helped bring beloved Disney productions like *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, and *Frozen* to audiences across North America. Over his 29-year career, more than 42 million people have experienced the productions he has shepherded. His visionary leadership in making world-class theatre accessible to families nationwide mirrors Wheelock Family Theatre's mission to create inclusive, transformative theatrical experiences for all.



Lesley Ryan Miller, Chief of Staff at the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts and former Chief of Teaching & Learning for Boston Public Schools, has been a tireless advocate for expanding access to education and the arts. Under her leadership at BPS, weekly PreK–8 arts instruction grew from 67% to 96%. By ensuring that thousands of students had regular access to arts learning, she has advanced the same belief that drives Wheelock Family Theatre: that the arts are essential to fostering empathy, creativity, and confidence in young people.



Carly Johanson & Zack Hardy, longtime leaders at Cabot After School Program in Newton, MA, have dedicated more than 25 years to creating safe, enriching, and inclusive after-school opportunities. Through their leadership, thousands of children have discovered confidence, connection, and joy. Their annual student musicals encourage collaboration, risk-taking, and the thrill of live performance, echoing Wheelock Family Theatre's own commitment to education and the transformative power of storytelling. Zack's work as a musician in Boston theatre, including with Wheelock Family Theatre, further deepens this connection.

As Wheelock Family Theatre celebrates its history, Magic in the Wings also calls on individuals, corporate leaders, and community partners to invest in the next act. “This celebration is not only about honoring the past, it’s about ensuring that every child and family continues to have access to the transformative power of theatre for generations to come,” added Vargas.

EVENT DETAILS

Magic in the Wings: A Celebration of 45 Years of Wheelock Family Theatre

Date: Thursday, December 4, 2025

Location: Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University, 180 Riverway, Boston, MA

For tickets and more information, visit: www.wheelockfamilytheatre.org/magicinthewings

About Wheelock Family Theatre

Founded in 1981, Wheelock Family Theatre at Boston University creates professional theatre and educational experiences that are accessible, inclusive, and affordable for audiences of all ages and identities. Its productions, education programs, and community partnerships serve as catalysts for creativity, empathy, and social change, reaching thousands of children and families across Greater Boston each year.

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