

Fall 2026

BACKSTAGE BULLETIN

A Note from our Artistic Director

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the incredible milestones Paramount celebrates this fall, I remember the early years of building up our Broadway Series shows. With the fresh vision of what Paramount could be from Tim Rater and Mayor Tom Weisner, we jumped into the world of producing our own high-quality musicals, right in the heart of downtown Aurora. It was the start of our own chapter in the now 95-year tenure of this historic theatre.

We celebrated 15 opening nights of our Broadway series with the regional premiere of *Mean Girls*! We hosted our annual TOAST event with select donors and special guests. A special toast from our very own Artistic Producer Trent Stork included a passed drink of lovely pink sparkling champagne. So Fetch!

This summer, our Paramount School of the Arts held special community events, including our second annual Juneteenth celebration (inside). We welcomed local legislators and their teams of interns to tour the theatre. Our development team introduced new donor benefits and partnered with our artistic team to create an exclusive staged reading of *A Christmas Carol* as the first Premiere Society event (back)!

Paramount was honored to receive 20 JEFF Award nominations this summer, including Best Production – Large Musical for all four of our Broadway shows in the 2025-2026 season, an honor that no other regional theatre can claim. Our incredible artists then went on to receive four awards across three productions from our 14th season, capturing 170 nominations and 35 awards since we became eligible. It's a true testament to the incredible artistic work found on our stages, powered by your philanthropy.

Thank you for your friendship throughout the years. Cheers to the next 15!

Big love,

Jim Corti
Artistic Director

PARAMOUNT THEATRE

Mark your Calendars

Million Dollar Quartet
Stolp Island Theatre
October 7, 2026 - January 3, 2027

Copley Comedy Series
Copley Theatre
October 24 & November 7

A Christmas Carol
Paramount Theatre
November 11 - January 3, 2027

The Second City:
Nut Cracking Holiday Revue
Copley Theatre
November 20, 2026 - December 23, 2026

Giving Tuesday
Honoring Paramount School of the Arts (PSA)
December 1

Student Cabaret -
Celebrating Female Voices in the Arts
Paramount Theatre
December 8

THE ART OF BUILDING COMMUNITY

Paramount's role in the community extends far beyond the stage. Throughout the summer, we continued to create meaningful opportunities for people to connect through the arts, celebrate our community and discover new possibilities.

During Aurora's PRIDE Parade, Paramount staff and students from Paramount School of the Arts joined together to celebrate alongside our neighbors. Paramount School of the Arts has long partnered with Aurora PRIDE, providing a welcoming place for parade volunteers and helping make the arts a visible part of the celebration. This year, the Paramount Fan even got a creative makeover using repurposed materials from our costume shop - a fun example of the talent and resourcefulness that exists throughout Paramount.

Paramount celebrated Juneteenth with an evening of local artistry and expression at Paramount School of the Arts. Featuring music, spoken word and original dance by local artists, the event provided a space to honor Black history and culture while celebrating the creative voices in our community. Attendance more than tripled from the previous year, and ASL interpretation helped make the performances more accessible to our neighbors.



Our commitment to community also means helping young people see themselves in careers in the arts. Through a partnership with KidsMatter, Paramount welcomed high school students from the **Springboard Series: Creativity in Careers: Innovation, AI, and the Arts** for an inside look at the many careers that make the arts possible. Students spent time with Paramount professionals across areas such as production, marketing and arts education, gaining a firsthand understanding of how creativity, technology and a career in the arts can intersect.







As both a municipality and nonprofit, Paramount has a unique responsibility to foster engagement in downtown Aurora and make the arts accessible to our community.

Behind the scenes, Paramount is building connections, expanding access and creating opportunities for our community to experience the arts in new ways. We are grateful to the DuPage Foundation's Arts DuPage initiative for helping make all of these community events possible.



PARAMOUNT ON TOUR

NEW YORK CITY

- June 4 - 7, 2027
- June 11 - 14, 2027

SAN DIEGO, CA

- **March 10 - 15, 2027**
- Small group experience to celebrate San Diego Theatre Month and see a World Premiere New Musical!

For more infomation, contact Paula Rae Brown at paularaeb@paramountarts.com

PARAMOUNT SPOTLIGHT

MEET PARAMOUNT'S VERY OWN DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION, YESENIA ESPARZA



How did your career at Paramount lead you to your current role as Director of Production?

I joined Paramount in 2016, so I've had the pretty unique experience of spending a large part of my career growing up alongside this company. I began work as a Production Associate supporting both the Production and Company Management teams with program expansion, and my path eventually led me to my current role as Director of Production. Each position gave me a little more responsibility and, honestly, a lot more to figure out. I learned that production is as much about people and problem-solving as it is about schedules, budgets, scenery, lights, sound, and all the other pieces that come together to get a show on its feet.

What feels especially meaningful to me is that I haven't just watched Paramount grow, I've grown with it. I've watched us expand our programming, open new spaces, add the School of the Arts, develop education programs, and become an even bigger part of the cultural life of Aurora. Being able to experience that growth from the inside has been one of the great privileges of my career.

What's a favorite memory of your time at Paramount?

It's difficult to point to a single memory because so many of them center around the people I've had the privilege to work alongside.

I frequently like to sneak into our student matinees to see the reactions of the students, and I vividly remember watching young audiences experience our production of *Disney's Frozen*. That story has personal meaning for me, because I grew up watching *Frozen* countless times with my sister, so seeing children in the audience react with such excitement and joy was incredibly moving. Watching them go wild for those last notes brought me to tears, and it reminded me how powerful theatre can be when it reaches young people in a meaningful way.

What are your hopes for the future of the work produced at Paramount over the next 15 years?

I've been at Paramount long enough to remember when the organization looked very different than it does today. So when I think about the next 15 years, I'm really excited about what we haven't even imagined yet. I hope we keep taking chances, trying new things, and making work that we're genuinely proud of, while still holding onto the humanity, quality and care that people have come to expect from Paramount.

I also hope we continue to grow alongside Aurora. This is a community that has changed a lot, and I think there is a real opportunity for Paramount to keep building that relationship and to make the theatre feel like an even bigger part of the community's story.

> *"Most of all, I hope we never lose the sense of possibility that comes with live theatre. I hope we keep making that kind of magic for a very long time - and that 15 years from now, we're still surprising ourselves with what we can create."*

What would you want Paramount donors to know about the impact of their support?

When you support Paramount, you're supporting so much more than what happens on stage.

Every production you see on stage is the result of hundreds of people working together behind the scenes. Our donors are part of that team, too. Your support helps make all of those moments possible, from the first concept meeting to the final curtain call.

The thing about theatre is that, at its heart, it's a communal art form. Your generosity is a meaningful part of that process, and it allows us to keep creating the kind of live, in-the-moment magic that only theatre can provide.

Thank you for believing in the value of the arts and for believing in the work we do here at Paramount. You allow artists to create, students to discover the arts, and audiences to experience stories together. From my perspective, I get to see just how much goes into every production and I also get to see the incredible moments that come out of it. I see the early mornings, late nights, problem-solving, creativity, and the camaraderie to make it happen. And then I get to stand in the back of the theatre after it's all put together and watch you enjoy it.

I'm incredibly grateful to be part of that work, and even more grateful to the people who help make it possible.

From everyone on and offstage, and from me personally, thank you for believing in Paramount and for helping us continue to make something special together.

TOAST 2026

SEASON KICK OFF PARTY

This year, Paramount celebrated 15 Broadway Season openings with our annual kickoff event, TOAST! With select donors and special guests in attendance, attendees enjoyed classy bites and a passed pink sparkling rosé in celebration of *Mean Girls.*

Paramount's Chief Development Officer, Amy Kaczmarek, gave reflections on the urgent call that "arts are not a luxury," but rather a critical economic engine and that the experiences Paramount brings to the community are possible because of philanthropy.





Trent Stork, Artistic Producer and Casting Director, echoed sentiments of the difference that you, our trusted donors, make, emphasizing that our work is possible because of you. You are the heart of this theatre, and your belief in our mission allows us to dream bigger, reach further, and keep telling stories that move people.

Thank you for making Paramount possible!





A SPIRITED LOOK AT *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

New donor benefits launched this year gave our Premiere Society members — those who give $1,000 or more annually — opportunities to experience Paramount in unique and intimate ways.

The first Premiere Society event was a special staged reading of Paramount's new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, hosted at McKee Theatre in Paramount School of the Arts. Following three days of rehearsals, donors were among the very first to experience the new vocals by Matt Deitchman and book arrangement by Trent Stork. Paired with an intimate reception, the evening offered a behind-the-scenes glimpse of a production still taking shape — and a chance to visit and experience Paramount School of the Arts in a whole new way.

For these donors, it was more than a performance. It was an invitation to get closer to the creative process and see firsthand the talent and imagination that bring Paramount productions to life.

Interested in joining us for future Premiere Society events? Become a Spotlight Monthly donor at $84 per month, or make an annual gift of $1,000 or more, to receive exclusive invitations and benefits that bring you closer to the arts you love. To learn more, contact Mary Pat Griswold at **marypatg@paramountarts.com**.

