

## TELLING OUR STORY

The Performing Arts Foundation ENTERTAINS, EDUCATES and ENRICHES the community by offering world-class programming, which develops a lifelong appreciation for the arts in its citizens and enhances the quality of life in the region.

A cornerstone for our community for nearly a century, The Grand Theater's story is unlike any other. Our stage has been the home for culture and the arts not only for Wausau, but for all of North Central Wisconsin. It has been graced with the talents of so many musicians, comedians, and dancers...both nationally-acclaimed and local.

With a mission to educate and enrich the lives of members of our community, The Grand Theater offers more than shows. In addition to our Performing Arts Season, our programming features the Arts In Education Series, bringing curriculum-based performances to over 18,000 of our area's students. Likewise, artist residencies and outreach programs allow the community to connect with arts and performances in new and powerful ways.

The theater is home to over 200 events per year including performances, weddings, concerts, and parties; bringing people together from all over the state of Wisconsin and investing \$3.4 million in our

community with an overall economic impact of \$4.7 million.

90 years after our opening night, our story is still growing and adapting to the changing times. Through different names, leaders, and decades... one thing has stayed the same: truly, The Grand Theater is an extraordinary place in which to come together and experience the arts.

The Grand Theater's story is not merely our own, but shared by all of our patrons and supporters. Become a part of our story today.

Community support allows us to continue our work to engage the best artists, to create meaningful engagement opportunities, to keep ticket prices reasonable, and to create memorable experiences for the entire community. With your help, we can continue this tradition of excellence for generations to come.



# CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

THE GRAND THEATER | 1927-2017



Total Sold-Out Shows

18

top 150

Of Reported Worldwide Ticket Sales in Pollstar's 2017 Annual Report.



Total Tickets Sold

61,186



Number of Volunteers

210

\$120,087

Saved Community Partners

\$15,570

Donated to Local Charities



Access to the Arts Scholarships Awarded

889



An Economic Impact of \$4.7 million



The Grand serves

67 COUNTIES

all over the state, from Bayfield to Rock, and Polk to Brown

# A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

Over 100 Years as an "Arts Block"

For over 100 years, the land bounded by 4th and Jefferson, 5th and Scott Streets has been a block for the arts; tracing its origins back to the Grand Opera House. The 890-seat opera house was a popular venue for musical and theatrical acts, making Wausau a stop on the theatrical circuit. Built in the same location of the current-day Grand Theater in 1899, the block where it stood has been considered an "arts block" ever since.

Almost 30 years later, on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1927, the new 1470-seat Grand Theater opened its doors to a full house with music, and the screening of *Dress Parade*, featuring actor William Boyd.

The Grand Theater was a front-runner of the era in theater engineering and technologies. The silent films were accompanied by the Kilgen Wonder Organ, with its ten ranks of pipes rising two stories in height; while "talkies" such as *The Jazz Singer* were welcomed with perfect acoustics, designed for the theater's live performances.

Except for a brief period in the 1930s when the Great Depression affected audience attendance,

The Grand Theater remained the focal point of entertainment in the Wausau area, bringing in Hollywood Blockbusters such as *Gone with the Wind*, Disney's *Fantasia*, and *Star Wars* as well as the performing arts including vaudeville, local talent nights, and more.

In 1987 a \$2.2 million project restored The Grand Theater's original luster and upgraded technical systems for the big sound and bright lights required by the touring shows of the modern era. The Grand Theater re-opened in May of 1987 with five nights of music and dance including performances by *The Legends of Bluegrass*, Banu Gibson featuring the *New Orleans Hot Jazz Orchestra*, and the musical *One Mo' Time*.

With the formation of the Performing Arts Foundation in 1972, The Grand Theater was reborn, the stage enlivened with music, theater, and dance from around the world. Including esteemed acts such as BB King, The Tokyo String Quartet, Broadway's *JERSEY BOYS*, Itzhak Perlman, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Aretha Franklin, Little Big Town, Rosanne Cash, Kelsea Ballerini, and so many more.

# GRAND WELCOMING A NEW ERA

90 Years and Just Getting Started

Ninety years of vaudeville, films, concerts, theater and more have led us to a record-breaking year of **18 sold-out shows** and a ranking as one of the **Top 150 Theaters in the World**, according to Pollstar's 2017 Annual Report. We are proud to be Central Wisconsin's arts destination.

**New Needs of New Audiences** - As we remember the rich history of The Grand Theater, we also recognize that the needs of our audiences are ever-evolving. In 2017, we expanded our efforts to build engagement through the arts, with **over 3,400** impacted by our Community Engagement Series. The Grand is proud to continue the **10x10 Series**, which gives audiences a chance to see local and emerging artists on the historic Grand Theater stage for just \$10. In addition to recognizing the region's superb high school musical theatre talent by facilitating the Tommy Awards in North Central Wisconsin, this year we expanded the program to include the **Central Wisconsin Tommy Ensemble**, a premier performance ensemble featuring student performers from across the region.

**Accessible Arts for Everyone** - We have continued our efforts to make sure that individuals of all ages and walks of life are able to experience the transformative power of the arts. The Arts In Education Series featured **14 daytime performances for students**, and **889 scholarships** were granted for students who could not afford tickets. Through the Access For All program, we've collaborated with community partners to ensure that all families are able to experience the wonders of the arts, regardless of economic status.

**The Next Ninety Years** - We have come a long way since 1927, transforming and evolving with the times that have passed. As the world continues to change we hope to uphold the role as the leading performing arts center in North Central Wisconsin. It is our community that drives The Grand to excellence, and, with your help, we look forward to another 90 years.

