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## **BLUE MAN GROUP**

ALSO PLAYING...

A CHRISTMAS CAROL





# Those blue guys are not aliens; they're members of Blue Man Group, bringing their energy and enigma to Denver

It's 10 minutes to show time at a performance of Blue Man Group, and the noise in the theatre is so loud that the audience seems more like a group of revelers at a party than spectators in a theatre. People are boisterous, anticipation is high, the buzz is electric. By the time the Blue Men appear, the audience is screaming with delight.

It's a scene repeated most nights in New York, Boston, Chicago, Orlando, Vegas and wherever Blue Man Group is appearing. How often do you see theatre audiences so revved up at the end of most shows, let alone *before one has even begun*? The decibel level rises as the evening goes on. By the end, the atmosphere is euphoric.

The Blue Man Group experience is unique and not confined to the United States. There are or have been productions in Tokyo, Toronto, and numerous European cities including Berlin,

London, and Amsterdam.

Millions of people of all ages and nationalities have seen the show, and countless numbers are repeat visitors.

Although the off-Broadway produc-

tion has been

around since 1991, the demand for it is still strong and Blue Man Group has heeded the call with this, its first national tour—a tour that features a combination of the Blue Men's most popular pieces with fresh material created exclusively for this iteration.

Why all the excitement?

It's impossible to say exactly. Blue Man Group is totally off the grid—a contemporary comedic piece, performed by three silent, baldand-blue characters who engage in a variety of set pieces ranging from primitive to sophisticated that combine music, comedy, science, technology and mind-boggling creativity. Just as in old-time vaudeville, they have something for everyone.

e've done surveys to figure out who our audience is, and we've found that our demographic ranges from eight to 85 years old," says Puck Quinn, creative director of character development and appearances. "That's when we know we're doing something right. A kid can come to the show and just enjoy the rhythm or the mess or the colors or the spectacle. Adults can come and do the exact same thing, but they might also come away with something to think about. When we do our work well, the show succeeds on multiple levels."

Amid the riot of colors and music, the eating and flying food, are the LED screens displaying sometimes silly, sometimes witty, sometimes thought-provoking messages. There also is a sonorous pre-recorded voice guiding the audience through clever set pieces about a variety of topics such as modern plumbing, technology and choreography.

ut the Blue Man Group show is mostly visual and aural—as opposed to oral. The Men are mute by choice. Language is not an issue, so the show travels well to other countries. Beating paint-covered drums and creating cascades of color has visceral appeal in any culture, and the "feast"—in which a member of the audience joins the Blue Men onstage to dine on... a Twinkie retains its humor and sweetness wherever it plays.

"I think the reason the show works goes back to our ideas about the character," says Phil Stanton, co-founder of Blue Man Group with Matt Goldman and Chris Wink all those years ago. "It might sound heady to talk about it this way, but the Blue Man is a kernel of humanity or a kind of Everyman. The blue paint gets rid of race and nationality."

Adds Quinn: "The show deals with topics and issues that are common to every culture: Communication. Sensory overload. Beating music and heavy rhythm. Dancing. All of that crosses every border. We have things that we want to say, and the message is there if you want to hear it, but we don't care if you don't. We just want everyone to have fun."

The relationship between the Blue Men and the audience is the most intriguing part of this phenomenon. The audience could be considered an additional—and unpredictable—character. It's not just that a woman from the audience is selected to appear onstage each night to partake in the "feast," or that a man is chosen to get

"Jelloed" (a new verb?) or that viewers in the first few rows are so close to the action that they're given ponchos to wear in case paint or other stuff lands on them. It's that the audience

> response catalyzes the Blue Men. That symbiosis is what fuels the passions of the show's devoted fans. "The relationship with the audience



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is everything," underscores Matt Goldman, "because at the end of the day, the Blue Man is really just trying to connect. He knows, either intellectually or at gut level, that in order to get to that ecstatic, heightened moment, he must connect with these strangers. That's why the Blue Man is so respectful [of his viewers]. He wants their trust. It's all about connection."

learly, Blue Man Group is connecting. Stanton recalls a man who saw the show 70 times ("he wasn't a weirdo") and others who've seen it 20 or 30 times. "Usually, if people see a play they liked, they'll tell their friends to go see it," says Quinn, "but with our show, people want the experience of seeing it with their friends. And that creates energy and intensity from the start.... It's not a passive experience. It's more like going to a sporting event.

"I tell people that you don't really start seeing the layers of the onion peeled back until you see the show for the second or third time. I also think people come back for very specific reasons: they want to really listen to the music or pay attention to a particular moment because they couldn't quite figure out how it was done. And they come back because they want to see how the show is different from night

to night. The other thing is, we change the show. Every couple of years we swap out a whole bunch of material. We want it to be relevant to time and period."

The national tour should only expand Blue Man Group's fan base and recidivists will discover a performance quite different from its predecessors.

Te are going to be in large theatres, and that was one of the main impulses for finding another way to deliver a lot of the content," says Stanton. "We have a new set design, with LED surfaces and LED curtains. It gives the show a completely different look. And we've found that we can use the technology to help people focus more."

The finale—one of Blue Man Group's most celebrated hallmarks-is now completely new; replacing it, its creators say, took guts.

"We always wanted the show to feel like it was working toward that moment, that ending, when all the things that make us fragmented in the modern world go away and we become one group," says Stanton. "It's hinted at in certain places during the show, and that's what the arc of the evening is about: two cultures encountering each other and realizing by the end that there are no barriers between them....

"There aren't many places where you can be with strangers and have this shared experience. The new finale has a similar concept, and the same goal: to make the audience look around and encounter other people. Visually, we're taking it to another level. We hope audiences will find it even more powerful."

Material for this article is courtesy of the Blue Man Group website.

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## **Denver Post Season To Share**



## Making A Difference

The Denver Post is proud to support The Denver Center for the Performing Arts, both through sponsorship of its acclaimed theatre productions as well as through a Denver Post Charities' grant supporting the Center's Arts in Education programs for low-income students.

Our partnership is founded on our mutual mission to improve and enrich the quality of life in our community. While The Denver Center does that through the performing arts, The Denver Post does it through its Denver Post Community programs which support nonprofit organizations and events in four focus areas: arts and culture, children and youth, literacy and education, and the provision of basic human services.

During this season of giving, the *Post* focuses on basic human services by continuing its legacy of raising and distributing funds to local nonprofit agencies through Denver Post Season To Share, a McCormick Foundation Fund.

Since 1992, more than \$26,700,000 has been distributed through Season To Share to help some of Colorado's most needy citizens. All contributions are matched at 50% by the McCormick Foundation, and 100% of all donations (plus the match) go directly to Denver-area charities that serve disadvantaged children, as well as people who are hungry, homeless or in need of medical care. The Denver Post and the McCormick Foundation pay all administrative expenses.

Last year, more than 7,000 generous donors contributed \$1,688,000. With the match from the McCormick Foundation, grants totaling a record \$2,532,000 were distributed to 74 local nonprofits including Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Denver Rescue Mission, Food Bank of the Rockies, Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation and many more.

Here's what just a few of the agencies receiving Season To Share funding have to say about the program:

#### "Lives are changed by the Season To Share program."

- Jim Hiner, President and Chief Executive Officer, YMCA of Metropolitan Denver

#### "Season To Share funding means that there is a solution to hunger all year long."

- Tammy Mulligan, Executive Director, Denver **Urban Ministries** 

#### "Together, we are making a positive impact on our community by creating lasting solutions to homelessness."

- John Parvensky, President, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

Thanks to the generosity of thousands of donors and the hard work of the recipient agencies, millions of meals were provided, hundreds of nights of shelter were used and thousands of medical visits were completed last year.

Many have been helped, but more remains to be done. A donation of any size can make a difference. Will you consider making a contribution after the show? ■

To learn more about Season To Share or to make a donation:

- ★ Look for the daily donation coupon in *The Denver Post*
- ★ Call 800.518.3972
- ★ Visit www.seasontoshare.com

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Through Season To Share, more than \$26.7 million has been provided to local nonprofits serving our neighbors in need, including the organizations whose constituents are featured in these photos (clockwise from top left): Anchor Center for Blind Children, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Denver Rescue Mission, Food Bank of the Rockies (bottom), The Children's Hospital Foundation (top), Denver Rescue Mission and Food Bank of the Rockies











## HealthONE

## A World of Make Believe

"We have seen the healing power that art and music can have on our patients.... While children freely engage in creative play, nobody is ever too old to believe in happy endings."

 Jeff Dorsey, President and CEO of HealthONE

he world of make-believe is very real to children and plays a pivotal role in a child's cognitive and physical development. Creative imaginations foster healthy problem-solving skills and help children overcome fears. Unstructured creative play in which children use art supplies, dress-up clothes, puppets, building blocks or other interactive toys provides children with an outlet for selfexpression. Encouraging children to sing, dance, and be silly not only promotes healthy lifestyles and physical exercise, but exposes children to the healing powers that come from the gift of art and creativity. Similarly, theatre, dance, music and art enhance ordinary development and serve as a tonic that allows children to transform the ordinary into something extraordinary.

HealthONE advocates the healing power and well-being that can be experienced through participation in the arts.

"We have seen the healing power that art and music can have on our patients. Fostering partnerships with organizations that bring art and culture to Denver residents is critical to the health and well-being of our community," says Jeff Dorsey, President and CEO of HealthONE. "While children freely engage in creative play, nobody is ever too old to believe in happy endings." The HealthONE family of hospitals is proud to partner with The Denver Center for Performing Arts (DCPA) to bring family productions such as *Shrek the Musical* to the Denver community. Many adults recall their happiest memories as time spent playing make-believe so why not bring the whole family and experience a HealthONE Family Production night out at the theatre?

HealthONE, with 8,500 employees and more than 3,000 affiliated physicians across six acute care hospitals and one rehabilitation hospital, Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children's network of care, eight emergency departments, 12 surgery centers, and 30 outpatient care sites, is as eclectic as the ogre, feisty princess, loquacious donkey and cast of fairy-tale misfits that make *Shrek the Musical* a family favorite.

The DCPA brings a collection of HealthONE Family Productions to Denver each year. Do not miss out on a holiday favorite, the classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge in the upcoming performance A Christmas Carol playing in The Stage Theatre now – December 24. For a full schedule of HealthONE Family Productions, visit www.denvercenter.org.



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# LARIMER SQUARE: A Commitment to Creative Minds

"It's about creating a meaningful relationship on multiple levels with our different merchants and with all the different programs and areas of The Denver Center."

— Jeff Hermanson, CEO, Larimer Associates

LARIMER SQUARE

Proud sponsor of the Denver Center Theatre Company 2010/11 Season arimer Square, recognized as Denver's most "historic block" is also popularly known as downtown Denver's premier shopping and dining district. Larimer Square and Larimer Associates, the Denver-based real estate investment and management firm that operates Larimer Square, takes great pride in supporting its neighbor, The Denver Center for the Performing Arts (DCPA).

"Larimer Square has not only found a special organization to support, but [it has] found the perfect partner," said Jeff Hermanson, Larimer Associates' CEO. "It's about creating a meaningful relationship on multiple levels with our different merchants and with all the different programs and areas of The Denver Center."

Larimer Square and the DCPA share a strong commitment to the arts. The Square has distinguished itself from other districts by creating a place for independently minded shops and restaurants, giving entrepreneurs the artistic freedom and support they need to make their business dreams a reality. At the same time, the Square offers a shopping and dining experience that embodies and complements artistic and creative sensibilities.

"We are so honored to support the many talented, creative and entrepreneurial minds that fill the theatres of The Denver Center every night," said Hermanson. "And I'd like to think that similarly we support the many artists we have on Larimer Square. Our chefs, cocktail mixologists and retail tenants are some of the most artistic minds in the city."

In addition to The Denver Center, Larimer Square is a proud supporter of the Denver Film Society, the Downtown Denver Partnership, the LoDo District, the Colorado Symphony and the Larimer Arts Association. For the past eight years, Larimer Square has hosted the Denver Chalk Art Festival, which benefits Larimer Arts in its mission to promote arts awareness and education in Denver.

"Denver is in the middle of a cultural transformation," Hermanson said. "It has been amazing to witness, and an honor to be a part of with the Larimer Arts Association and our partners at The Denver Center."









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Proud Sponsor of Saturday Night Alive and Arts in Education at The Denver Center for the Performing Arts hile MDC Holdings, Inc. and its Richmond American Homes subsidiaries are committed to building quality homes, the MDC/Richmond American Homes Foundation is committed to building a better future.

The Foundation was established in 1999 to reflect MDC's dedication to giving. MDC's founder, Chairman and CEO, Larry A. Mizel, wanted to find opportunities for the company to make more substantial contributions in order to make an even greater impact and so the Foundation was born. To date, the Foundation has donated more than \$6.4 million to charitable organizations that are working to make a difference.

It's all about commitment—a commitment to the community that, in turn, supports the very culture that creates an exciting place to live. The Foundation has grown into a pattern of giving that generates powerful stories told by those benefiting from its work. While highly involved in Denver, the Foundation's arms reach well beyond the borders of Colorado. Whether rebuilding hope for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, providing muchneeded medical care to children, supporting young adults in their pursuit of a college education or supporting the arts, the Foundation values the people of this community and beyond.

"It's not just about giving," says Foundation Chairman Mizel. "It's about a commitment to the people. Our contribution to The Denver Center for the Performing Arts is just another way we support a diverse culture."

The MDC/Richmond American Homes Foundation knows that action creates impact and that's the driving force behind its contributions. Through continued philanthropic activities, the Foundation will keep reaching out and working to make tomorrow a better place.

Arts in Education at The Denver Center for the Performing Arts

