



Greg Hildreth
(CFA'05) operates
the 12-pound Olaf
puppet in *Frozen*, the
Broadway Musical.

D I S N E Y ' S

"If you asked me in high school or college to describe my perfect job, this is actually it," Greg Hildreth says of the role he is playing on Broadway these days.

And why not?

Boston native Hildreth (CFA'05) is the preternaturally cheery snowman who loves warm hugs in Disney's \$30 million production of *Frozen, the Broadway Musical*.

"I get to sing, I get to be funny, I get to puppeteer," he says. "And it's a little out of the box, which I like."

That might be an understatement.

Whenever Hildreth makes his bumbling stage entrance with the cumbersome Olaf puppet tethered to his body, children in the audience go wild. And all ages enjoy Olaf's signature anthem about yearning for a beach vacation.

"Bees'll buzz, kids'll blow dandelion fuzz, and I'll be

S N O W M A N

doing whatever snow does in summer. A drink in my hand, my snow up against the burning sand, prob'ly getting gorgeously tanned in summer."

Hildreth may be a veteran of the stage in the prime of his career, but operating the Olaf puppet, a four-foot-tall contraption that weighs 12 pounds, is harder than it seems. Identical to the animated character in the blockbuster Disney movie, the Olaf rig takes the help of two people to put it on. Hildreth's right hand operates levers in the snowman's foam head that make him talk, blink, or wiggle his eyebrows, while his left hand controls the twiggy arms.

Hildreth says that early on it felt like learning to spin plates, but now, with more than 300 performances under his belt, it comes more naturally. "It's a physical strain, but it's also this extreme mental challenge as well," he says. "It's a

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full-body experience."

It's not Hildreth's first time performing on Broadway. Before Olaf, he played the rebel Jean-Michel in the 2013 production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. Among his other Broadway credits: roles as Alf, the lady-loving seafarer in *Peter and the Starcatcher*, and a university president in the 2010 hit *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*.



Between Broadway appearances, Hildreth has landed roles on television and film, including Gary, an angry IT guy in the long-running hit CBS series *The Good Wife*, and Altheon employee Evan Urquardt in the smash FX series *The Americans*.

Jim Petosa, director of the School of Theatre and a professor of directing and dramatic criticism, says Hildreth's success comes as little surprise. "Greg is an authentic character actor," Petosa says. "His humanity is palpable, appealing, and accessible. Like all exceptional actors, he combines generous use of his own persona with a set of refined skills and savvy instincts that make for a genuine theatricality."

Former BU acting professor Eve Muson, now an associate professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, says Hildreth is adept at "the happy-go-lucky guy, the best friend guy," but he's also funny, smart, and versatile. "This is a man who is going to do musicals, but he also plays Shakespearean roles and television roles," Muson says. "He's going to play everything."

Hildreth says he is still getting used to a part that means he has to "step out from the sides" and take center stage. "I get to bring that wealth of knowledge and experience to something like *Frozen*," he says. "Olaf is this joyful object of love."

**CFA alum Greg Hildreth
acts, sings, and puppeteers
as Olaf in *Frozen, the
Broadway Musical***

By Megan Woolhouse