



Disney PRESENTS

# THE LION KING

THE LANDMARK MUSICAL EVENT

CAPITOL THEATRE SYDNEY

OPENS DECEMBER 2013

# PRESS KIT MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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# INTRODUCTION

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Photo: Brinkenhoff/Mogenburg; © Disney

# INTRODUCTION

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As it enters its 16<sup>th</sup> year, THE LION KING remains ascendant, and one of the most popular stage musicals in the world. Since its Broadway premiere on November 13, 1997, 21 global productions have been seen by more than 68 million people and, cumulatively, run a staggering 96 years. Produced by Disney Theatrical Productions (under the direction of Thomas Schumacher), THE LION KING is only the second show in history to generate five productions worldwide running 10 or more years. Translated into seven different languages (Japanese, German, Korean, French, Dutch, Mandarin, Spanish and Portuguese), productions of THE LION KING can currently be seen on Broadway and on tour across North America, in Tokyo and on tour in Japan, in London's West End and on tour throughout the UK, and in Hamburg, Madrid and São Paulo. To date, THE LION KING has played 98 cities in 16 countries on every continent except Antarctica.

Among the most successful titles in entertainment history, with a cumulative gross in excess of \$5 billion, the stage production of THE LION KING has already earned more than the biggest hit films in movie history: more than the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy combined, more than the six *Star Wars* films combined, and more than *Avatar* and *Titanic*, the two highest-grossing films in movie history, combined.

The award-winning musical will celebrate a new milestone in December 2013 when it returns to Australia, making it the tenth worldwide production of THE LION KING, the highest number of concurrently running productions in the show's history.

# HOW THE LION KING MADE IT TO BROADWAY



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# HOW THE LION KING MADE IT TO BROADWAY

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**By Thomas Schumacher  
President, Disney Theatrical Productions**

The story of how THE LION KING got to Broadway has many beginnings. I believe I was there for all of them. The animated film THE LION KING opened on June 15, 1994, at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Its journey from conception to premiere was fraught with challenges. Several versions of the film had been developed, none of which resemble too closely the movie now playing daily on more than 40 million units on any number of televisions around the world.

In November 1990, Peter Schneider, former President of Feature Animation and producer of the theatrical production of THE LION KING, asked me to produce a film called *King of the Jungle*. I had just completed my first Disney assignment as producer of the animated film *The Rescuers Down Under* (that film did less box office business in its entire domestic run than THE LION KING did during its opening weekend in 1994). *King of the Jungle* was not a musical and bore more than a passing resemblance to an animated *National Geographic* special. Some of the now familiar characters were there, but the shape, style, tone, design, and sound were yet to be brought to life. During the next four years, literally hundreds of extraordinarily talented people touched the project on its journey from idea to finished film. Most notable among them were the film's directors, Rob Minkoff and Roger Allers; the brilliant Don Hahn, who replaced me as producer when I became Vice President of Development for Feature Animation and the Executive Producer of the film; the story artists, led by Brenda Chapman-Lima; the supervising animators, including Ruben Aquino, Andreas Deja, Tony Fucile, and Mark Henn; the principal voice cast, led by James Earl Jones, Jeremy Irons, and Nathan Lane; and the extraordinary music and lyrics created by Elton John, Tim Rice, Lebo M and Hans Zimmer.

THE LION KING was interpreted as many things: an allegory for our times, a spiritual journey, a broad comedy, a *Hamlet* knock-off, another story forwarding the patriarchal structure, a cash cow, a timeless myth, the next in the line of Disney animated classics. Not surprisingly, no one said it looked like a Broadway show in the making.

Also in 1994, Walt Disney Theatrical Productions came to life under the leadership of Robert McTyre and director Robert Jess Roth, who brought the animated film *Beauty and the Beast* to life on the stage and marked the beginning of a new Disney business.

Like any new venture built on the success of one product, the nascent theatrical division was in search of more options for stage productions. Walt Disney Feature Animation was called on for support. Peter Schneider and I met with Michael Eisner and created a plan that included new non-animated titles as well as staged versions of some of the old animated films. Eisner

# HOW THE LION KING MADE IT TO BROADWAY

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was most interested in translating THE LION KING to stage, which I promptly told him was the worst idea I had ever heard. He smiled and we moved on.

At our next theatrical development meeting, he asked how my adaptation of THE LION KING was coming along. I told him again it was the worst idea in the world and that it would be impossible to create a stage version of such inherently non-theatrical material. There was nothing about the film that called out to be theatricalized. Frank Rich in *The New York Times* called *Beauty and the Beast* an animated Broadway musical. No one ever said anything similar about THE LION KING. He smiled.

After a few more discussions, Michael grew weary of smiling and told me in no uncertain terms that I was going to work on an adaptation of THE LION KING. I quickly blurted that it was impossible, and he shot back even faster it wasn't impossible, all I needed was a brilliant idea. A brilliant idea, that's it. All I needed to do was find someone with a brilliant idea. This sleight of hand is known as "development" in many circles of Hollywood.

Allow me to digress a moment. In 1985, Julie Taymor was mounting *Liberty's Taken* at the Castle Hill Festival in Massachusetts. The extraordinary production, originally commissioned four years earlier by the American Place Theatre, was staged for only two weeks outdoors in Massachusetts. The production generated a great deal of buzz, although the buzz at the Castle Hill Festival was mostly that of a massive mosquito invasion.

Meanwhile, back in Los Angeles I was working as associate director of the Los Angeles Festival, a four-week bacchanal dedicated to bring the finest and most extraordinary theatre, dance, and music to Los Angeles. I heard about *Liberty's Taken* and its brilliant designer, director, and conceptualist, Julie Taymor. I reached Julie at home and asked if she would be interested in presenting the piece at the Los Angeles Festival. She said yes, but wanted to know how did I know about it? Had I seen it? Well, no, but I heard about it and would love to see it if it was going to be mounted again. When the photos, ground plans, budgets, and other details of the large-scale production arrived, it became clear that this was not the time for us to work together. Unfortunately, I didn't have the resources to present the piece, but now I knew the name.

During the next few years, I kept hearing about Julie's work. I would tell people about the missed opportunity with *Liberty's Taken*, and they would tell me about other productions, particularly her work on *The Haggadah*, *The King Stag*, and *Juan Darien*. I had my big chance to work with Julie and missed it. A few years later, the Executive Music Producer of the *Fantasia 2000* project, Peter Gelb, asked if I was familiar with Julie Taymor. He had just worked on a brilliant production of *Oedipus Rex* with her and Seiji Ozawa. Once again, I was reminded of my 1985 mistake.

# HOW THE LION KING MADE IT TO BROADWAY

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Finally, in 1995, when Michael Eisner wouldn't let up on my need to come up with a brilliant idea for staging THE LION KING on Broadway, the answer was quite simple - Julie Taymor.

When we met, I could see Julie had a new vision for the project. She was excited by the music, by the setting, and by the opportunities for staging. She was challenged by the task of re-creating something that theatregoers would know by heart, but she wanted them to once again feel in their heart. We urged her not to feel contained by the look of the movie and to create something wholly original from it.

The joy for me in bringing THE LION KING to the stage will always be the process. The journey of THE LION KING has surpassed any of our imaginations; where it will end only time and new audiences will tell.

Most important to me is that I finally got to work with that extraordinary woman, Julie Taymor.

-Thomas Schumacher

© Disney

# SYNOPSIS AND KEY CREATIVE TEAM

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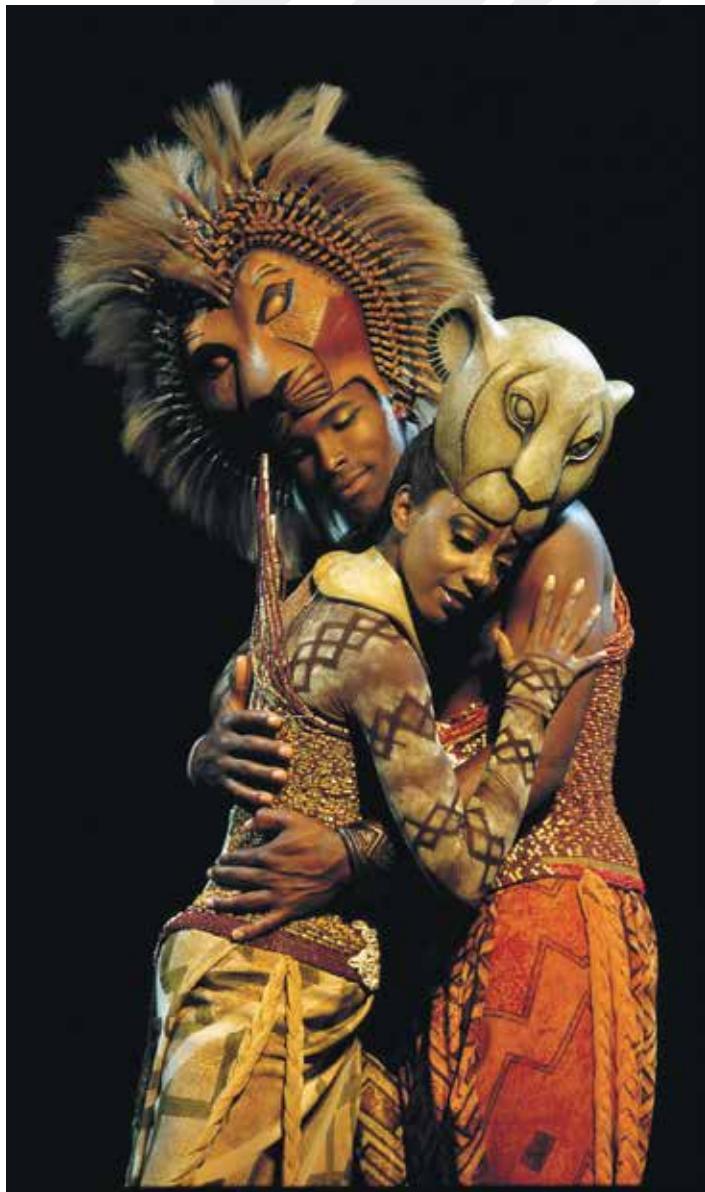


Rafiki in Tree, Buyi Zama, Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney

# SYNOPSIS

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Adapted from Disney's animated film of the same name, The Lion King follows lion cub prince, Simba, as he grows up in the African heartland until tragedy forces him into exile. After struggling with the responsibilities of manhood and his role as king, he returns to overthrow his wicked uncle Scar, taking his rightful place in the animal kingdom.



Paulette Ivory (Nala) and Roger Wright (Simba), London Production; Photo: Catherine Ashmore; © Disney

# Disney Presents THE LION KING **KEY CREATIVE TEAM**

Music & Lyrics by  
**ELTON JOHN & TIM RICE**

Additional Music & Lyrics by  
**LEBO M, MARK MANCINA, JAY RIFKIN, JULIE TAYMOR, HANS ZIMMER**

Book by  
**ROGER ALLERS & IRENE MECCHI**

Adapted from the screenplay by  
**IRENE MECCHI & JONATHAN ROBERTS & LINDA WOOLVERTON**

Produced by  
**PETER SCHNEIDER & THOMAS SCHUMACHER**

Scenic Design  
**RICHARD HUDSON**

Hair & Makeup Design  
**MICHAEL WARD**

Mask & Puppet Design  
**JULIE TAYMOR &  
MICHAEL CURRY**

Orchestrators  
**ROBERT ELHAI  
DAVID METZGER**

Sound Design  
**STEVE CANYON  
KENNEDY**

Production Supervisor  
**DOC ZORTHIAN**

Associate  
Choreographer  
**MAREY GRIFFTH**

Casting  
**BINDER CASTINGS/  
MARK BRANDON,  
C.S.A.**

Associate Producer  
**ANNE QUART**

Lighting Design  
**DONALD HOLDER**

Music Produced for  
the Stage & Additional  
Score by  
**MARK MANCINA**

Fight Director  
**RICK SORDELET**

Costume Design  
**JULIE TAYMOR**

Associate Director  
**JOHN STEFANIUK**

Additional Vocal Score  
Vocal Arrangements  
and Choral Director  
**LEBO M**

Choreography by  
**GARTH FAGAN**

Directed by  
**JULIE TAYMOR**

# THE ART OF JULIE TAYMOR



Julie Taymor; Photo: Kenneth Van Sickle. © Disney

# RAFIKI

The narrator and spiritual guide Rafiki, is a female baboon shaman in the stage adaptation of *The Lion King*. Disturbed by the lack of a strong adult feminine presence in the story, Julie Taymor realized that this androgynous, comic yet soulful personality could easily be transformed into a female. What's more, she could be the one to sing "The Circle of Life" and the musical's other major anthem, "He Lives in You." She became the only character who never dons a mask or appears in puppet form, on or off the body, as Julie was intent on maintaining the absolute humanity of this character. Vibrant red, yellow, and blue make-up hints at the contours of a baboon's face, allowing the actress to reveal the character's whimsical nature through her own varied expressions. The costume humorously plays with a baboon's proportions, which accentuates the long arms and short legs by extending her fingers with bamboo tubes and embedding her feet in shoes that are topped with sculpted baboon feet. As Shaman, Rafiki is represented by the amulets and magical vessels that dangle from her shirt, the sort of totemic trinkets a medicine woman might well carry with her.

Mysterious and at times eccentric, Rafiki first appears to summon the animals of the Pridelands after the birth of Simba. She offers guidance to Simba when he questions the path he is meant to follow, and she reminds him of the link he plays between the past and the future. She views the action as an outsider while serving as the musical's spiritual centre.



C1 – Rafiki rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney

# RAFIKI



Buyisile Zama (Rafiki), Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney

# MUFASA

Mufasa was one of the first characters that Julie Taymor designed, starting with his distinctive mask which would portray him as an animal but also sit on his head like a crown.

"Mufasa is powerful, terrifying, compassionate, all of which I had to build into his face", she says. "The essence of Mufasa is symmetry; he is an extremely balanced and straightforward personality. I designed Mufasa's mane to form a circle around his head. He is like a sun god, the centre of the universe. His mane also symbolises the Circle of Life." His costume, swords, hair and make-up are based on traditional Maasai warrior dress with the swords also doubling as the front legs of the lion when he is on the prowl.



C3– Mufasa rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



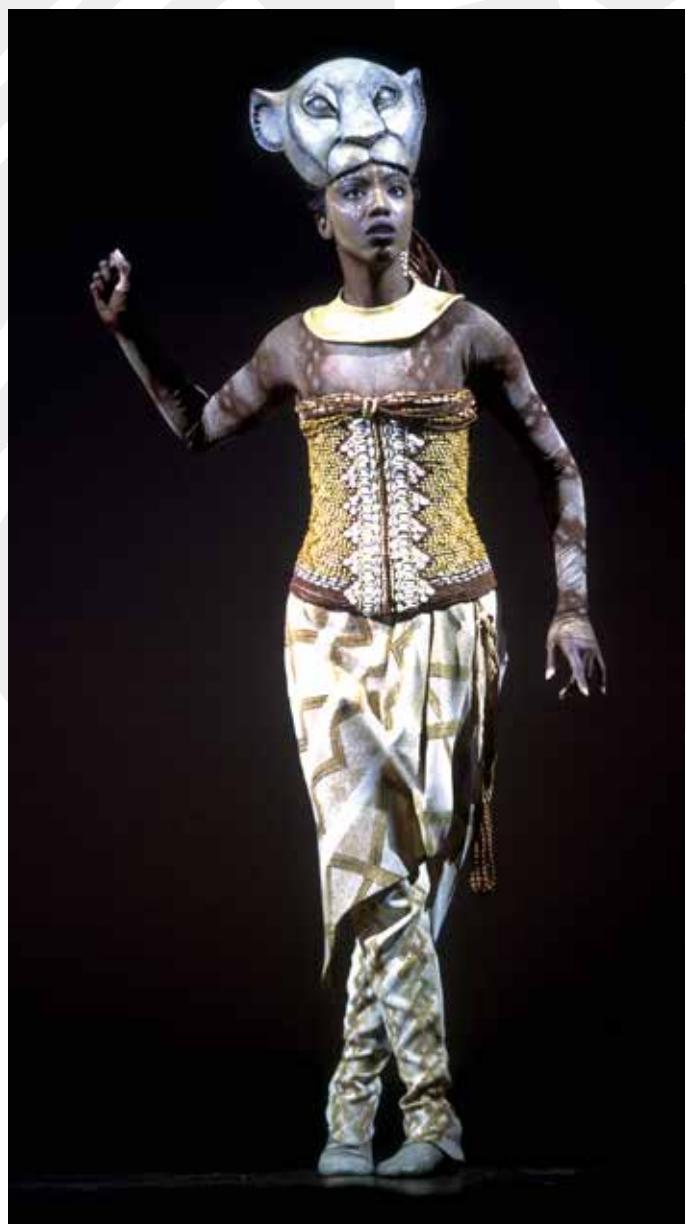
Geno Segers (Mufasa) in Australian Production; Photo James Morgan; © Disney

# NALA

In creating the look for Nala on stage, Julie Taymor used elements from both Africa and Asia to illustrate the many aspects of the character. Her corset is beaded in a pattern designed to echo a lion's white belly while the beaded 'harp' structure on her back is based on those worn by Maasai warriors, and the lion mask on top of her head is worn like a crown and carved in the African style; while her collar and movements are from Bali. This combination of elements perfectly encapsulates the character – a growing lioness with the grace, strength and fluidity of a Balinese dancer and the bravery of a Maasai warrior – all firmly rooted in Africa.



C4– Nala rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Credit photo: Heather Headley (Nala) in Original Broadway Production;  
Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# ZAZU

Zazu is a hornbill and the king's majordomo. The combination of his costume and puppet present the character in what Julie Taymor refers to as the 'double event', where the audience sees both actor and puppet simultaneously.

To represent the majordomo, the actor is dressed in western formal dress, but a version rendered in African tie-dyed fabric with geometric patterning based on Kuba cloth. While the puppet is a hornbill, the costume also reflects the bird's characteristics, with a distinctive curled tail and cravat formed to look like a bird's ruffle. A bowler hat completes the costume – showing again the majordomo and also acting as a perch for the bird.



C5– Zazu rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney

Geoff Hoyle (Zazu) in Original Broadway Production;  
Photo: Per Breiehagen; © Disney

# THE LIONESSES

Sketches and renderings illustrate the development of the lioness costumes which are designed to billow when the performers dance.

Subtle differences in fabric patterns and colour distinguish each lioness in the singing chorus.



C6 – Lioness rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C9 – Lioness rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# GIRAFFE

A maquette or miniature model showing stilt-like legs that are attached to the actor.



C10 – Giraffe marionette; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney

# ZEBRAS

The drawing illustrates how the zebra and dancer intersect so that the human being remains visible. The dancer wears a harness, and the zebra's back extends off the dancer's chest, while the rear parts extends off the dancer's back. The performer's legs form the animal's front legs.



C11 – Costume rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Mark Allan Davis, Levensky Smith, Iresol Cardona in Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# BIRDS

The drawings and maquettes explore ways to convey a flock of birds.



C12 – Rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C13 – Marquette rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney

# GAZELLES



C14 – Costume rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



A5 – Tsidii Le Loka (Rafiki) in the Original Broadway production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# GRASSLANDS



C17 – Grasslands rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

## CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND AWARDS



Nathaniel Stampley (Mufasa), Tshidi Manye (Rafiki) and Jean Michelle Greier (Sarabi), New York Production;  
Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"A major Broadway event...One of the most memorable, moving and original theatrical extravaganzas in years...It is told with a theatricality that frequently takes the breath away... Time and again Ms. Taymor seduces the audience into seeing what, in reality, isn't there. That is theatre."

Vincent Canby, **The New York Times**

"A deeply felt celebration of life that feels as fresh and soul-stirring as ever."

Dominic Cavendish, **The Daily Telegraph (London)**

"A primal paradise...breathtaking beauty and scenic ingenuity. You will gasp again and again at the inventive visual majesty of the show...Ms. Taymor has introduced a whole new vocabulary of images to the Broadway blockbuster...There is simply nothing else like it."

Ben Brantley, **The New York Times / WQXR Radio**

"In a night of constant surprises, the worlds of music and of theatre collide, shooting out explosive sparks of magic... Unforgettable triumphs of theatrical witchcraft and wonder."

John Shand, **Sydney Morning Herald**

"Scarcely a second when the eye isn't delighted... Why theatre can still give film a run for its money."

Deborah Jones, **The Australian**

"Breathtaking... the most visually captivating theatre you will ever see... Beyond brilliant (and reason enough) to see this amazing, gorgeous musical."

Michael Bodey, **The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)**

"A visual and musical hybrid, THE LION KING merges African inspired masks and prints (for the costumes and scenery) with Asian puppetry techniques and an ingenious use of scale and perspective that zooms out from a mouse to a sweeping view of the savanna. The show is rarely less than breathtaking to look at."

Colin Rose, **The Sun-Herald**

"It's like being in a dream awake."

John Lahr, **The New Yorker**

"Theatre to roar for. From the very first minutes of THE LION KING you feel yourself on a whole new ground – no – in a whole new world."

David Patrick Stearns, **USA Today**

"Awe-inspiring...Broadway theatre is alive again...It's gorgeous, gasp-inducing spectacle. The show appeals to our primal, childlike excitement in the power of theatre to make us see things afresh...One of the year's top ten."

Richard Zoglin, **TIME**

"You will be bombarded by some of the most beautiful and spectacular sights theatre can offer from before and behind, so eyes in the back of the head will come in handy...This is the one such show adults will feast on, too, mostly because of the wonders wrought by Julie Taymor, who designed and directed this cornucopia of dazzlingments."

John Simon, **New York Magazine**



"THE LION KING is enormous fantastic, riotous fun...It is extraordinary to look at and to experience...What is most extraordinary is what a wonderful, dazzling musical has been created – a work that stands up to the original not as the copy but as a brilliant development... What you will remember, cherish and (if it's not still running) tell your grandchildren about this Lion King is the total impression of the show: our renewed joy of amazement in the theatre of miracles."

Clive Barnes, **The New York Post**

"THE LION KING is a perfect marriage of entertainment and art. The experience of the show goes so far beyond its starting point that the title gives you no idea of how beautiful, inventive and even moving it really is...Gorgeous creativity...Great adventures in the theatre, like this one, leave all your senses singing."

Fintan O'Toole, **The New York Daily News**

"Right at the start, the whole building explodes into joyous life...Julie Taymor is our theatre's supreme wizard of spectacle."

Donald Lyons, **The Wall Street Journal**

"Julie Taymor's adaptation is a stunning visual feast."

Laurie Winer, **The Los Angeles Times**

"THE LION KING has riveted the New York theatre community."

**Vanity Fair**

"THE LION KING is an absolute triumph of visual imagination. Julie Taymor delivers visual coup after visual coup."

**The Financial Times (London)**

"THE LION KING works superbly. This most remarkable thing about this animal show, in fact, is its humanity."

Charles Spencer, **The Daily Telegraph "London"**

"Brilliant and irresistible...A thoroughly imagined stage show in its own right."

Michael Coveney, **The Daily Mail (London)**

"Indeed, the whole experience left me with the strangest feeling. I was proud to be a theatre critic."

"Stunning proof of the unmatchable potency of live theatre."

Benedict Nightingale, **The Times (London)**

"The most gratifying sound of all comes from the audience, the swelling murmur of astonishment for a spectacle that is pure theatre...THE LION KING make its claims as a work of exuberant theatrical imagination."

Steven Winn, **The San Francisco Chronicle**

"THE LION KING is a rare theatre experience...The musical is intelligent spectacle, extravagance with a purpose – and a heart...The wonderment never stops."

Michael Kuchwara, **Associated Press**

# CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"They're saying that what The Beatles did for music, THE LION KING will do for Broadway."  
Howard Stern, **WXRK Radio**

"This is a wonderful, wonderful musical: thrilling, warm-hearted, inventive and original. THE LION KING will touch a deep chord in everybody."

John Peter, **Sunday Times**

"A blockbuster musical with beauty & brains."

Sarah Hemming, **Financial Times**

"This gorgeous carnival of hybrid creatures is emphatically, triumphantly theatrical."

Susannah Clapp, **Observer**

"An indisputable triumph...superlative entertainment; puts most other mega-musicals in the shade."

John Gross, **Sunday Telegraph**

"My jaw hit my knees."

"Is THE LION KING as good as they say it is? – dammit yes!"

Robert Gore-Langton, **The Express**

"THE LION KING has roared and conquered London's West End in one of the most joyous and spectacular musicals in years.

"You hope all nights in the theatre will be like this. Potent, popular, primitive and perennial, THE LION KING restores true magic to the West End."

"This is the ideal show for all children, from eight to 80."

Michael Coveney, **Daily Mail (London)**

"This is theatre at its potent best."

"This is a dazzling show with the heart of a lion."

"The triumph of Julie Taymor often inspirational staging is that she constantly stimulates the imagination."

Charles Spencer, **The Daily Telegraph (London)**

"In a beautiful dazzle of invention and imagination, the true star of THE LION KING, director Julie Taymor, has dreamed up a way of bringing an entire African jungle and its menagerie of animals thrillingly to the stage: eastern and western styles meet and merge."

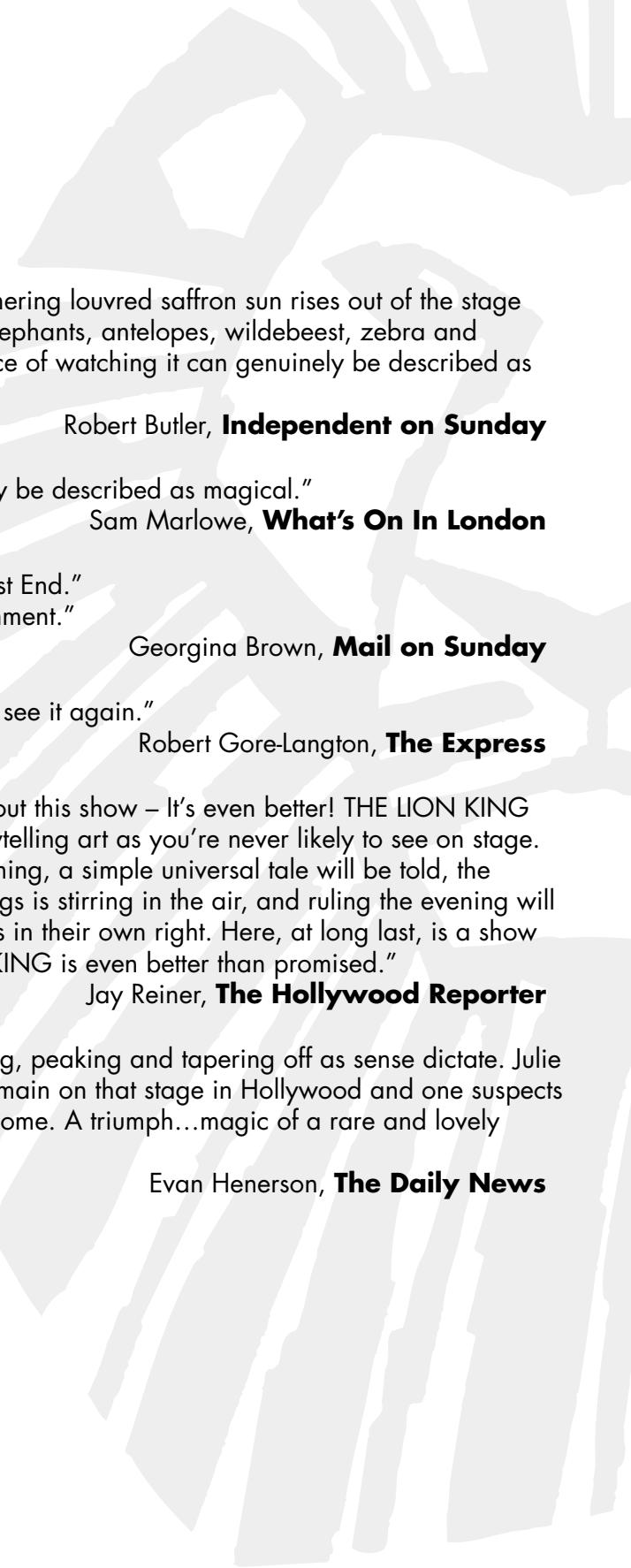
"It lights up the West End with the blaze of Taymor's fabulous imagination."

"With intricate mobile masks, puppets, exotic costumes and even stilts, which are all Taymor's own creation, these jungle creatures, capture a fresh dynamic theatricality."

Nicholas de Jongh, **Evening Standard**

"This is a wonderful, wonderful musical: thrilling, warm-hearted, inventive and original. It has a pulsating, teeming sense of animal life effortlessly at home in its rich, dangerous natural habitat, and a seamless blend of story and spectacle."

John Peter, **The Sunday Times**



"As dawn breaks and the mists lift – a shimmering louvred saffron sun rises out of the stage – the lyceum fills with a gorgeous array of elephants, antelopes, wildebeest, zebra and birds. We burst into applause. The experience of watching it can genuinely be described as magical."

Robert Butler, **Independent on Sunday**

"The experience of watching it can genuinely be described as magical."

Sam Marlowe, **What's On In London**

"THE LION KING is the best thing in the West End."

"As spectacles go, this is top family entertainment."

Georgina Brown, **Mail on Sunday**

"A ravishing spectacle...I can hardly wait to see it again."

Robert Gore-Langton, **The Express**

"Never mind what you may have heard about this show – It's even better! THE LION KING is a stunning piece of visual poetry and storytelling art as you're never likely to see on stage. Astonishment will be our passport to the evening, a simple universal tale will be told, the mysterious connection between all living things is stirring in the air, and ruling the evening will be Taymor's style and imagination, lion kings in their own right. Here, at long last, is a show that manages to outrun its hype. THE LION KING is even better than promised."

Jay Reiner, **The Hollywood Reporter**

"THE LION KING's visual splendor is ongoing, peaking and tapering off as sense dictate. Julie Taymor, it's her distinctive imprint that will remain on that stage in Hollywood and one suspects on the American Theatre for many years to come. A triumph...magic of a rare and lovely order."

Evan Henerson, **The Daily News**

# AWARDS

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THE LION KING has earned more than 70 major arts awards including:

## **Broadway, New York**

6 TONY® AWARDS Including BEST MUSICAL  
8 DRAMA DESK AWARDS  
6 OUTER CRITICS CIRCLE AWARDS  
2 DRAMA LEAGUE AWARDS  
NEW YORK DRAMA CRITICS AWARD for BEST MUSICAL  
GRAMMY® AWARD for BEST MUSICAL SHOW ALBUM  
ASTAIRE AWARD for OUTSTANDING CHOREOGRAPHY

## **London**

EVENING STANDARD AWARD for THEATRICAL EVENT OF THE YEAR  
2 LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARDS  
IVOR NOVELLO MUSIC AWARDS  
CRITICS' CIRCLE THEATRE AWARD

## **Australia**

4 HELPMANN AWARDS Including BEST MUSICAL

## SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES



# JULIE TAYMOR

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## Director, Costume Designer, Mask/Puppet Co-Designer, Additional Lyrics

In 1998, Julie Taymor became the first woman to win the Tony® Award for Best Direction of a Musical, and won a Tony® for Best Costumes, for her production of *THE LION KING*. The musical has gone on to become Broadway's all-time highest grossing show and the fifth longest-running show in Broadway history. Her 1996 Broadway debut, *Juan Darién: A Carnival Mass*, earned five Tony® nominations. Other theatre credits include *The Green Bird*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Transposed Heads* and *Liberty's Taken*. Taymor is currently preparing for the stage a new adaptation of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which will premiere in Fall 2013 as the inaugural production at Theatre for a New Audience's permanent new home in downtown Brooklyn, New York. Taymor's feature films include *Titus*, starring Anthony Hopkins, Jessica Lange and Alan Cumming; the biographical film *Frida*, starring Salma Hayek and Alfred Molina, which earned six Academy Award® nominations, winning two; the Beatles-inspired *Across the Universe*, nominated for a Golden Globe® for Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy; and her Helen Mirren- starring adaptation of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which had its North American premiere at the New York Film Festival following a world premiere at the Venice International Film Festival. Beyond the theatre and screen, Taymor has directed five operas internationally, including *Oedipus Rex* with Jessye Norman, for which she earned the International Classical Music Award for Best Opera Production and an Emmy® for a subsequent film version; as well as *Salomé*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Die Zauberflöte* (in repertory at The Met), *The Magic Flute* (the abridged English version, which inaugurated a PBS series entitled "Great Performances at The Met") and Elliot Goldenthal's *Grendel*. Taymor is a 1991 recipient of the MacArthur "genius" Fellowship.

## Music

The monumental career of international singer/songwriter and performer Elton John has spanned more than three decades. He is one of the top-selling solo artists of all time, with 35 gold and 25 platinum albums and more than 250 million records sold worldwide. The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences has awarded Elton multiple GRAMMY® Awards, including the Grammy Legend Award. In the early 1990s, Elton collaborated with lyricist Tim Rice on the soundtrack for *THE LION KING*, winning him an Academy Award. The album produced two top-selling, award-winning singles: "*Can You Feel the Love Tonight?*" and "*Circle of Life*." The Tony® Award-winning Broadway productions of *THE LION KING* and *Aida* both awarded Elton with GRAMMY® Awards for Best Musical Show Album. *Billy Elliot* was nominated for a record-tying 15 Tony® Awards and won ten including Best Musical. In 1992, Elton established the Elton John AIDS Foundation, which today is one of the leading nonprofit HIV/AIDS organizations. In 1998, the Queen of England knighted him Sir Elton John, CBE. In 2004, Elton received the Kennedy Center Honor for his lifetime contributions to American culture and excellence through the performing arts.

## Lyrics

Tim Rice has worked in music, theatre and films since 1965 when he met Andrew Lloyd Webber, a fellow struggling songwriter. Rather than pursue Tim's ambitions to write rock or pop songs they turned their attention to Andrew's obsession – musical theatre. Their first collaboration (lyrics by Tim, music by Andrew) was an unsuccessful show based on the life of Dr. Barnardo, the Victorian philanthropist, *The Likes Of Us*. Their next three works together were much more successful – *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*. Tim has also worked with other distinguished popular composers such as Elton John (THE LION KING, *Aida*), Alan Menken (*Aladdin*, *King David*, *Beauty and the Beast*) and Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson (*Chess*).

His first new show for ten years, *From Here To Eternity*, with music by newcomer Stuart Brayson, co-produced with Lee Menzies, directed by Tamara Harvey, and with book by Bill Oakes, opens in the West End at the Shaftesbury Theatre in October 2013.

He formed his own cricket team in 1973 and was President of the MCC in 2002. He recently wrote and presented a 52-part series for BBC Radio 2, *American Pie*, a trawl through the music and musicians of every American State. He has won several awards, mainly for the wrong thing or for simply turning up.

# LEBO M

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## Additional Music & Lyrics, Additional Vocal Score, Vocal Arrangements, Choral Director

Lebo M is known as the "voice and spirit of THE LION KING." Once a teenage singer in Soweto, the GRAMMY® Award winner and Tony® nominee's music brings audiences to tears with hauntingly inspiring African rhythms and melodies. Lebo's talents have been hailed by the worldwide press in superlatives that might describe the most delightfully poetic of musical deities. Since his arrival in America, Lebo has attracted music industry giants such as Quincy Jones, Jimmy Cliff and Hans Zimmer as mentors, allies and collaborators. Lebo has performed and produced four albums, *Rhythm of the Pride Lands* (Disney), *Deeper Meaning* (Gallo) and THE LION KING (Japanese and Hamburg cast recordings). Other credits include *The Power of One*, *Back on the Block* and *Listen Up* with Quincy Jones; the feature films *Outbreak* (Warner Bros.), *Congo* (Warner Bros.) and *Born to Be Wild* (Paramount); and the Disney television special "People." He has performed on the Academy Awards® and the Essence Awards Show, with Vanessa Redgrave at *Kthimi: The Return* in Kosovo and been honored by Artists for a Free South Africa.

# GARTH FAGAN

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## Choreographer

Garth Fagan is the recipient of the 1998 Tony® Award for Best Choreography and the 2000 Laurence Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreographer (London, UK) as well as the Drama Desk Award, the Astaire Award and the Outer Critics Circle Award for his work with THE LION KING. Mr. Fagan was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and for more than 33 years has toured the world with Garth Fagan Dance.

On television the company has appeared on "Great Performances," "The Tonight Show" and the Academy Awards®. Mr. Fagan forged his own dance language and technique, drawing from modern dance, Afro-Caribbean and ballet, and has choreographed for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Jose Limon Company, the New York City Ballet's 50th anniversary and others. In addition, he choreographed Joseph Papp's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Duke Ellington street opera, *Queenie Pie*, at the Kennedy Center.

A distinguished university professor at SUNY Brockport, he has received numerous awards and fellowships, including the 2001 Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award, a Bessie Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Fellow. He has also been inducted into the American Academy of Achievement.

# THOMAS SCHUMACHER

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## Producer and President, Disney Theatrical Group

Since 1988, Thomas Schumacher has worked with The Walt Disney Company setting new standards of excellence in film, television and theatre. Currently, he serves as President of Disney Theatrical Group where he oversees the development, creation and execution of all Disney live entertainment around the globe including Broadway, touring and licensed productions, as well as *Disney on Ice* and *Disney Live!* shows produced in partnership with Feld Entertainment. His Broadway, West End, touring and international production credits include *Beauty and the Beast*, *King David*, *THE LION KING*, *Der Glockner von Notre Dame*, Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida*, *On the Record*, *High School Musical*, *TARZAN*®, *Mary Poppins*, *The Little Mermaid*, along with several new projects currently in development. His most recent Broadway successes *Newsies* and *Peter and the Starcatcher* won a combined seven 2012 Tony® Awards. Disney Theatrical Group has an unprecedented global reach with numerous productions currently produced or licensed, a Disney musical is being performed professionally somewhere on the planet virtually every hour of the day."

Intensely passionate about theatre from an early age, Schumacher recognized the impact that theatre has on the lives of young people and developed a licensing program with Music Theatre International to make select Disney theatrical titles available for performance in schools and amateur theatres throughout the world.

Schumacher's career at Disney began in Walt Disney Feature Animation producing the animated classic *The Rescuers Down Under*. He was ultimately named President and oversaw some 21 animated features including *THE LION KING*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Mulan*, *Tarzan*, and *Lilo & Stitch*, as well as working closely with Pixar on their first five films.

Prior to joining Disney, he was associate director of the 1987 Los Angeles Festival of Arts, presenting the American premiere of *Cirque du Soleil* and the English-language premiere of Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata*. Previously, he spent five years on staff at the Mark Taper Forum, served as a line producer on the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, and served as assistant general manager of the Los Angeles Ballet.

Mr. Schumacher is the author of the book "*How Does the Show Go On? An Introduction to the Theater*" as well as a member of the Board of Trustees for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, the Tony® Administration Committee and the Advisory Committee of the American Theatre Wing. He is a mentor for the TDF Open Doors program and serves as an adjunct professor at Columbia University.

# MICHAEL CURRY

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## Mask and Puppet Co-Designer

Michael Curry has collaborated with Julie Taymor on many stage and opera shows. On Broadway, he has worked on numerous productions, including *Crazy For You* and *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*. He has been awarded the 1998 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Puppet Design for *THE LION KING*, several Emmys, and the 1999 Eddy Award for Outstanding Puppet Design for Outstanding Contribution in the Technical and Design Field. Michael is one of the country's leading production design consultants and works widely in both conceptual and technical development for some of the world's foremost entertainment companies. He owns and operates Michael Curry Design Inc. in St Helens, Oregon, which produces such large, live-performance oriented production designs as those seen at the 1996 Olympic opening ceremonies, Superbowl 2000, and New York City's Times Square 2000 Millennium event.

# DISNEY THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney

# DISNEY THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS

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Disney Theatrical Productions, a division of The Walt Disney Studios, was formed in 1994 and operates under the direction of Thomas Schumacher. Worldwide, its eight Broadway titles have been seen by over 124 million theatregoers, grossed over \$8.9 billion and have cumulatively run a staggering 195 years.

The company's inaugural production, *Beauty and the Beast*, opened in 1994. It played a remarkable 13 year run on Broadway and has been produced in 28 countries worldwide. In November 1997, Disney opened *THE LION KING*, which received six 1998 Tony® Awards including Best Musical and is now the highest grossing show in Broadway history. The show continues in its 16<sup>th</sup> smash year, having welcomed over 68 million visitors worldwide. *THE LION KING* can also currently be seen on tour across North America, the U.K., and Japan, and in London's West End, Hamburg, Tokyo, Madrid, and Sao Paulo.

Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida* opened on Broadway next, winning four 2000 Tony® Awards, and spawning productions around the world. *Mary Poppins*, a co-production with Cameron Mackintosh, opened in London in 2004 and established itself as one of the biggest stage musical successes to emerge in recent years. The Tony® Award-winning Broadway production played more than six years at Disney's New Amsterdam Theatre and can now be seen on tour across North America and in Mexico City.

*Tarzan*®, which opened on Broadway in 2006, is now an international hit with an award-winning production in its 6<sup>th</sup> year in Germany. In January 2008, *The Little Mermaid* opened on Broadway and was the #1-selling new musical of that year. Its success continues with three new productions around the world: Holland, Russia and Japan.

Two new critically acclaimed productions opened on Broadway in 2012, receiving seven Tony® Awards between them: *Newsies*, in its second year at the Nederlander Theatre, and *Peter and the Starcatcher*, now playing at New World Stages.

Other successful stage musical ventures have included *King David* in concert, the national tour of *On The Record*, several touring versions of Disney's *High School Musical*, and *Der Glöckner Von Notre Dame* in Berlin.

In addition, DTP licenses stage performance rights to more than a dozen Disney musicals around the world through Music Theatre International.

Its new musical, *Aladdin*, will open in Toronto in Fall 2013.

# CURRENT PRODUCTIONS

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With numerous productions currently produced or licensed, a Disney musical is being performed professionally somewhere on the planet virtually every hour of the day.

## **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

Spain Tour  
Sapporo  
North American Tour

## **THE LION KING**

New York  
London  
Tokyo  
Japanese National Tour  
Hamburg  
North American Tour  
Madrid  
UK Tour  
Sao Paulo  
Sydney – opens December 15, 2013

## **Elton John and Tim Rice's AIDA**

Seoul

## **TARZAN**

Hamburg

## **MARY POPPINS**

North American Tour  
Mexico City

## **THE LITTLE MERMAID**

Holland Tour  
Moscow  
Tokyo

## **NEWSIES**

New York

## **PETER AND THE STARCATCHER**

New York

## **ALADDIN**

Toronto – opens December 5, 2013

# THE LION KING



- THE LION KING has been seen by more than **68 million** people in **16** different **countries**, on **every continent except Antarctica**.
- Since its 1997 Broadway premiere, **21 global productions** have grossed over **\$5 billion** to date and have **cumulatively run 96 years**.
- THE LION KING is the **fifth longest-running musical** in Broadway history and one of only five productions in theatre history to play for ten years or more, both on Broadway and in the West End.

## MASKS & PUPPETS

- Tony® Award-winning director and designer Julie Taymor, along with designer Michael Curry, hand sculpted and painted every prototype mask that now appears in the iconic "Circle of Life" opening of the show. Their department of skilled mask makers, sculptors, puppeteers and artisans spent **17,000 hours** to build the anthropomorphic animal characters for the original Broadway production.
- With the masks, Taymor created what she calls "**the double event**" which enables the audience to see the characters as animal and human at the same time.
- Mufasa's mask weighs **312 grams**, Scar's mask weighs **198 grams** and Sarabi's mask is just **113 grams**. The masks, along with many others used in the show, are extremely lightweight (just under 28 grams) and are comprised of silicone rubber (to form the mask imprint) with carbon graphite overlay - the same durable material used to build airplanes. Over **340 kilograms** of silicone rubber were used to make the masks.
- Scar and Mufasa each wear **two different masks**: one moves and one is a stationary headdress.
- The **tallest** animals in the show are the four, **5.5 metre** high exotic giraffes from "I Just Can't Wait to Be King." The two giraffes in "Circle of Life" are **4.3 metres** high. Two actors trained in stilt-walking, climb 1.8 metre adders to fit inside the puppets, mount stilts and enter stage left to cross the stage.
- The **largest and longest** animal in the show is the Elephant (nicknamed "Bertha" by the back stage crew when the show premiered in 1997). At **3.9 metres** long and **2.7 metres** wide, the puppet requires four actors to carefully walk her down the orchestra aisle. When not occupied by the actors, the puppet can collapse down flat for convenient backstage storage.
- The **smallest** animal is the trick mouse at the end of Scar's cane at just **12.7 centimetres**.

# THE LION KING

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- Zazu is the **last** animal to make his entrance on stage in the “Circle of Life” opening number.
- The Timon meerkat puppet weighs **6.8 kilograms**.

## COSTUMES

- Worn like a backpack, Pumba the Warthog is the heaviest costume weighing in at **20.4 kilograms**
- Scar uses **three** different walking sticks.
- The yearly upkeep and maintenance of the **20 Grasslands headresses** requires over **3,000 stalks of grass** (roughly 27 kilograms).
- Every ensemble member plays both a hyena and a Grassland head.
- The Bird Lady and Bird Man costumes represent a flock of birds.

## LIGHTING

- Lighting Designer Donald Holder used nearly 700 lighting instruments to create the show’s lighting plot.

## LANGUAGE

There are **six** indigenous African languages spoken in the show:

- Swahili
- Zulu
- Xhosa (the click language)
- Sotho
- Tswana
- Congolese

THE LION KING has been translated into **seven** languages:

- Japanese
- German
- Korean
- French
- Dutch
- Mandarin
- Spanish

# THE LION KING

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## BY THE NUMBERS

- Puppets including rod puppets, shadow puppets and full-sized puppets: **232**
- Ants on the Ant-Hill Lady costume: **100**
- Wigs: **45**
- Wildebeests: **52**
- Hyenas: **39**
- Types of animals, birds, fish and insects represented in the show: **25**
- Gazelles: **15**, five actors each wear a gazelle puppet on both arms and one affixed to their head.
- Gazelles on the gazelle wheel prop: **6**
- Lionesses: **14** (Nala, Young Nala and 12 ensemble in the 'Lioness hunt').
- Bird Kites: **12**, featured in "One By One," the opening number of Act II.
- Bird Ladies: **5**
- Bird Man: **1**, he appears in "Circle of Life" opening number and in the "Circle of Life" reprise in the final scene.
- Simba representations: **6** (Baby Simba puppet, Young Simba-actor, Young Simba puppet, Simba Shadow puppet, Rafiki's Simba painting-Act I & II, Adult Simba-actor).
- Zebras: **3**
- Elephants: **2** (they are "Bertha" and the Baby Elephant who is operated by the child actresses alternating the role of Young Nala).
- Antelope: **2** (In the opening number, the low and high antelope are the first animals Rafiki calls out to in Swahili – the 'NGONYAMA' call & response choral chant. The antelope are portrayed by two South African male ensemble singers.)
- Rhinoceros: **1**
- Cheetah: **1**

## PRODUCTION STAFF

- Worldwide, nearly **1100** people are directly employed by THE LION KING, including 20 whose sole mission is artistic upkeep of the show.
- Since THE LION KING's Broadway premiere, well over **200** South Africans have been employed in one or more of the global productions as lead actors, ensemble dancers/singers, musicians or members of the crew.

# THE LION KING

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On Broadway, there are **142 people** directly involved with the daily production of the show:

- 51 cast members – eight of whom are South African
- 24 musicians
- 19 wardrobe staff
- 2 wig/hairdressers + 3 make-up artists
- 3 puppet craftspeople
- 13 carpenters
- 10 electricians
- 3 sound people
- 4 props people
- 6 creative associates
- 5 stage managers + 2 administrative/company managers
- 1 child guardian
- 1 physical therapist

## SELECTED ARTICLES

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Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney

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# The Lion King

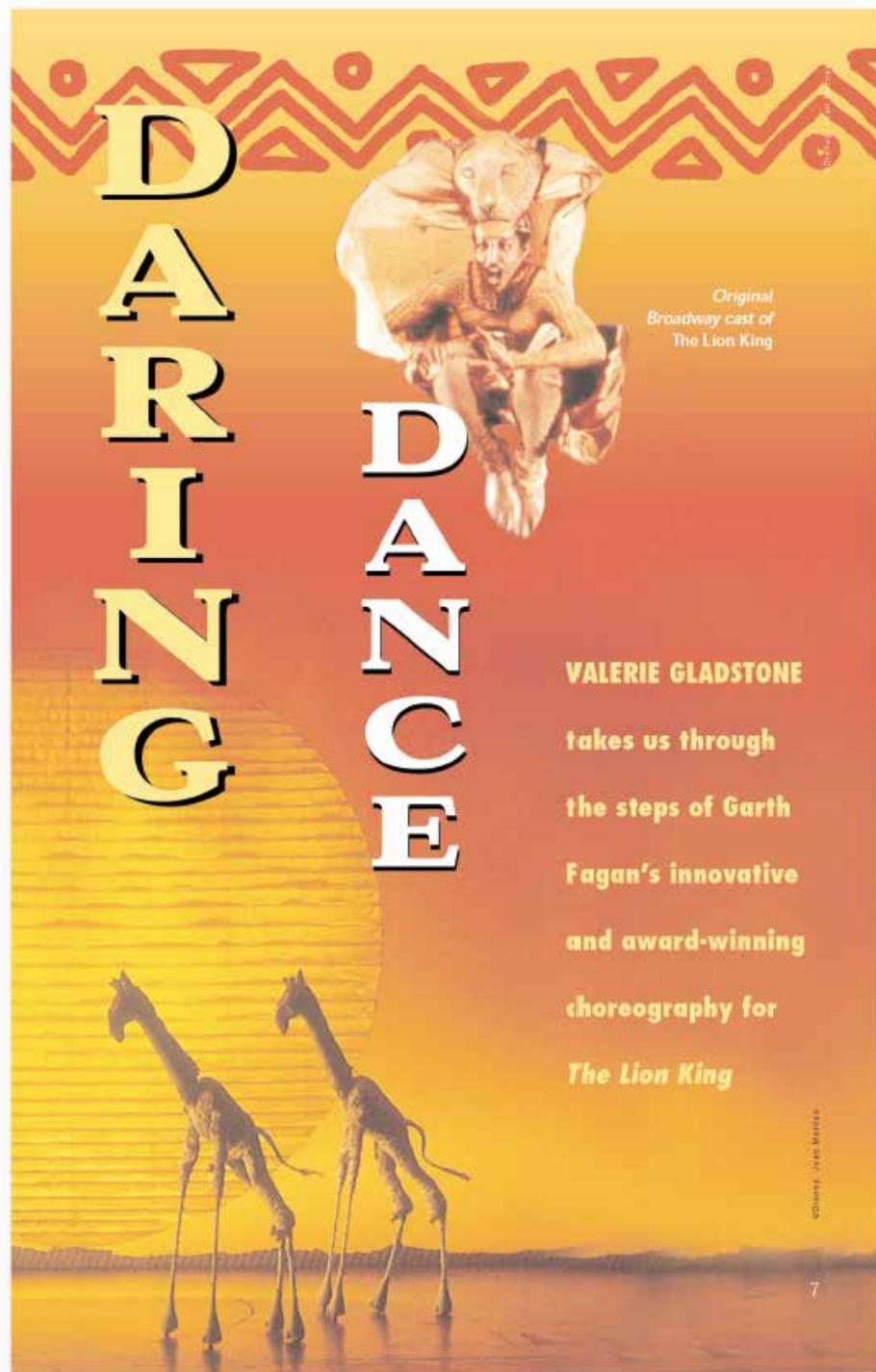
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“One child counted down the seconds until the 2 o’clock matinee began. A little girl stared, as did her mother, at the walls and ceiling of The New Amsterdam Theater, whose ornaments intertwined like a jungle of architecture marzipan...But then the lights fell, and within moments the aisles and stage had filled with the animals of invention. Adults gasped, and every child in the audience began to reread an old, familiar text – the one inscribed on worn videos of Disney’s animated Lion King – now brought to life by Julie Taymor on Broadway demonstrates something even more striking – the Walt Disney Company’s willingness, in this case, to reinvent a known and fabulously profitable, product, not by dumbing it down to live action, but by allowing Ms. Taymor to test the limits of representation and theatricality...What a miracle it would be if the corporations those icons represent were to conclude, as Disney in this one case has, that commercial prosperity licenses—even obliges—cultural risk.”

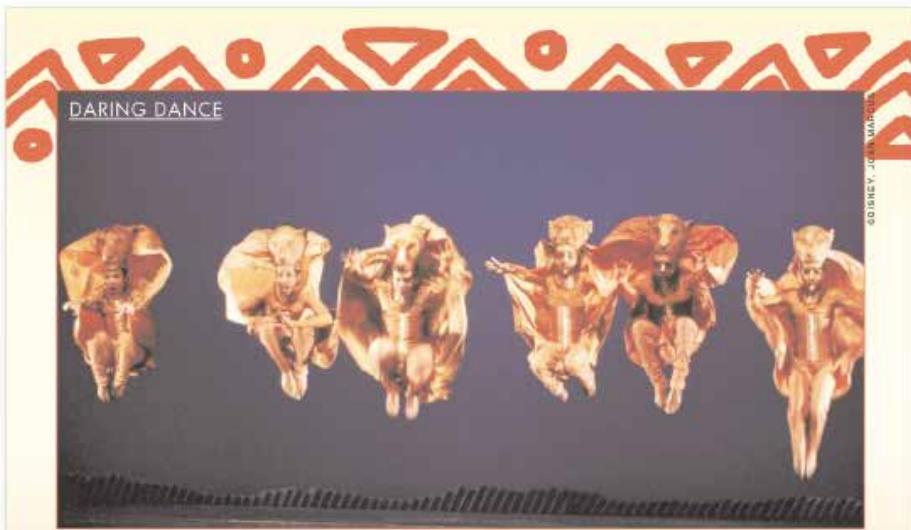
*New York Times Editorial  
17 December 1997.*

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# DARING DANCE



# DARING DANCE



Above: "The Lioness Dance," the original Broadway cast

Below: *Lana Gordon*, the original Broadway cast

**B**

ig corporations usually stay with the tried and true. Risk isn't their game. But in 1997, in an inspired act of hiring, Disney asked the choreographer Garth Fagan to take on *The Lion King*. Until that point, Fagan had choreographed only two other theater works, the Duke Ellington opera, *Queenie Pie*, in 1986 at the Kennedy Center, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1988. His name was hardly synonymous with the glitzy, high-kicking numbers associated with the Broadway musicals. Bob Fosse he was not. In fact, he won his distinguished reputation in a whole other ballgame, the modern dance concert world, by creating subtle, sensuous, highly idiosyncratic works for his popular company, Garth Fagan Dance, a mainstay at the Joyce Theater for years.

While many experienced Broadway choreographers vied for the job, the Disney producers saw something in Fagan even more valuable than familiarity with musicals. They saw daring. It had already been decided to break the mold when they selected as director Emmy- and Obie-award winning Julie Taymor, famed for her strikingly different theatrical approach. Now they needed an equally imaginative choreographer. Fagan, they sensed, could turn Broadway dance on its head. Although pleased by their trust in him, Fagan let the producers know where he stood. "They'd seen my work," he says in his musical Jamaican accent, "and they knew what they were getting. I told them that if I'd be able to do innovative stuff — not terribly cutesy-pie — then we'd have a match. And they said 'absolutely.'"

Fagan is definitely his own man. His outfit — a particularly snazzy combination pairs black corduroy pants with a tan leather

Disney - Jan Marvin

# DARING DANCE

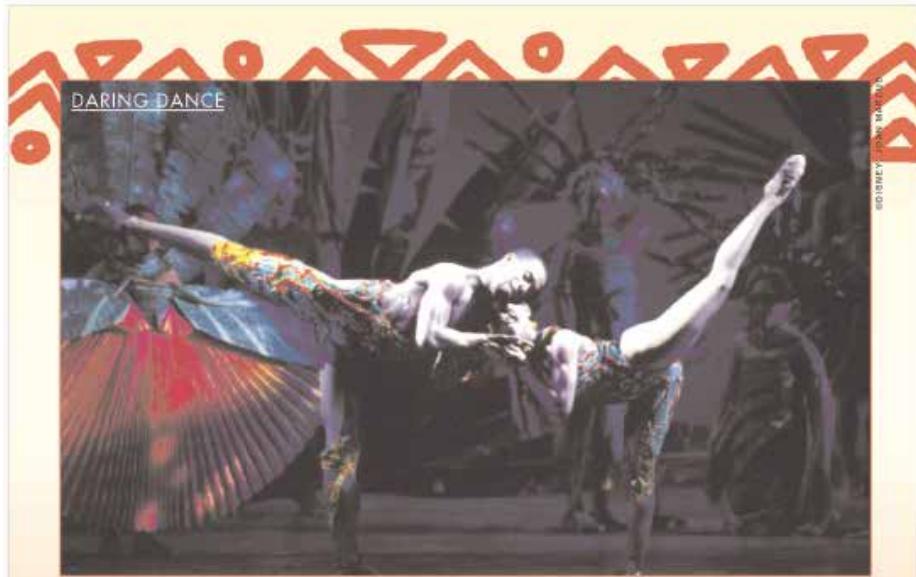
**Tsidii Le Loka and the original Broadway cast in the "Circle of Life"**

vest and black shirt — obtain some of their individuality from his favorite jewelry: an emerald earring and his grandmother's amber amulet with a carved Buddha which he wears on a string around his neck. His wide variety of headgear, from baseball hats to brightly colored African caps, never hides his ponytail, now tinged with gray like his unmistakable mustache. His distinct personal style is a pretty good indicator of how he choreographs — humorously, innovatively, and with a respect for tradition. But it hardly lets on how much emotion he pours into every dance. That you learn when he talks about his work.

Once he had the assignment, it didn't take Fagan long to figure out his general concept for the show. Specifically, he wanted to make sure that it would resemble a concert dance. "I told them," he says, "that I wanted to include all kinds of dancing — modern, ballet, African and hip hop — so that any child coming to the theater would be able to connect with something. So I put modern and African styles all over the place, ballet in the pas de deux in the section, 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight,' and hip-hop in the hyena dance. Too often a show's choreography only uses one particular vocabulary. But because I choreographed the show in so many different styles, I had to have intelligent dancers who could switch quickly from one to the other. They were going to have to roll with a lot of punches, from cumbersome costumes to split second changes."

Since *The Lion King* takes place in Africa, his choice of African-based movement was only natural. It was also something he had been using for years with his own company. Between growing up in Jamaica and visiting Africa often, he feels strongly tied to every

# DARING DANCE



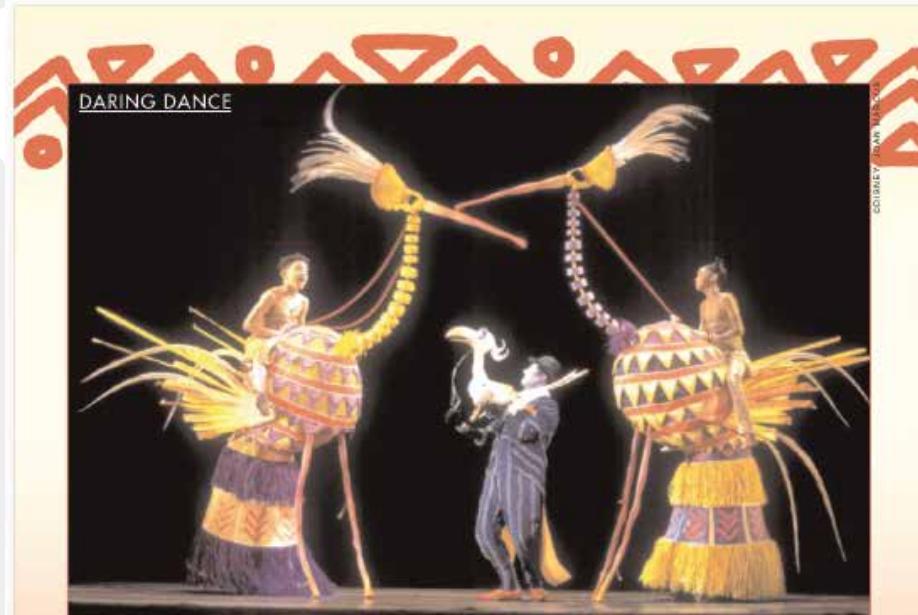
*"Can You Feel the Love Tonight," Michael Joy and Endalyn Taylor-Shellman from the original Broadway cast*

aspect of Caribbean and African cultures. What he didn't reckon on were the costumes. "When I saw the drawings for the puppets," he says, "it was love at first sight. But I didn't know how I'd integrate them into the dance. I thought the dancers might go into a state of shock when they saw they'd be heavily laden. All their lives they wear as skimpy clothes as possible because they like to be free. Now they'd have gazelles on their arms; grass on their heads, all the while they're leaping and turning. The natural instinct would be to stiffen up and act robotic."

Working with his longtime company members, Norwood J. Pennewell and Natalie Rogers, he devised movements that wouldn't be hindered by the costumes. "The trick was to get the essence of the animals," he says, "but also to keep an awareness of the human body. I wasn't going to do the furry suit thing where someone portrays the shaggy whatever. I wanted you to think lioness but also think woman, who is hunting to eat. While you're seeing the lionesses hunting, you're still getting the feeling of softness and femaleness. They're strong women and if they don't hunt, the lazy men don't eat. All these human things I wanted to get in there. I'm very proud of all my dances but I'm particularly proud of the lioness dance."

The dances, of course, had to complement the narrative. To each one, Fagan hoped to elicit the most fantastic response. As he has done before, he searched his past to come up with ideas. For "Can You Feel the Love Tonight," he insisted on having dancers flying. It all came out of a recollection from his teen years. "When I first fell in love," he says laughing, "I felt the whole world knew

# DARING DANCE



*Left to right, Scott Irby-Ranniar, Geoff Hoyle and Kajuana Shuford in "I Just Can't Wait to Be King," the original Broadway cast*

about my grand love affair and had nothing better to do than to think about it." He created a ballet on three levels, with a couple swinging near the ceiling, another mid-level and on the floor the balletic pas de deux. "You have three couples to watch," he says, "and you miss a lot but when it works, you make a circle with your eyes and it is the circle of love — perhaps a little dizzying but, after all, that's how love is."

Fagan came away from *The Lion King* not only with a Tony Award in 1997 for his choreography but with major new insights. "I learned how to create dances in hardly any space, like the hyena dance," he says, "and how to devise movement that would be vibrant and big enough not to be overpowered by all the beautiful scenery and costumes while also keeping in mind that the dancers have to do eight shows a week, and couldn't be totally exhausted." He paused, evaluating his life-changing experience. "But the most important thing I learned," he says, "was how to adapt when something didn't work. We were going for a masterpiece, and everyone involved knew the collaboration counted for more than any one particular point of view. That's why *The Lion King* is a masterpiece."



## THE MUSIC - ELTON JOHN & TIM RICE



B5 – Elton John and Tim Rice, Photo: Tony Russell; © Disney

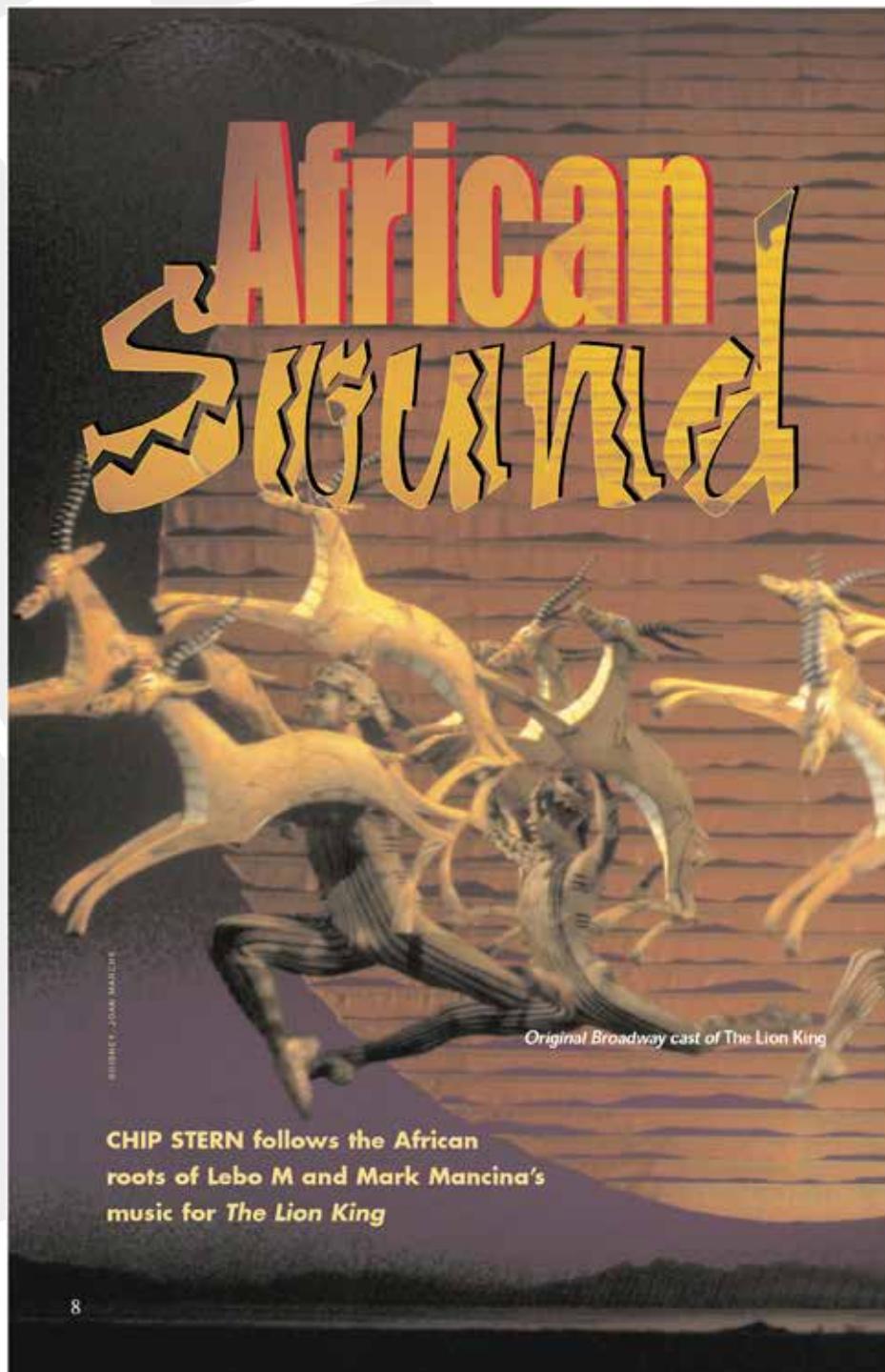
"I actually jumped at the chance [to work on *THE LION KING*] because I knew that Disney was a class act and I like the story line and the people immediately. The Disney films last forever and children watch them and adults watch them and get just as much fun out of them..."

– Elton John

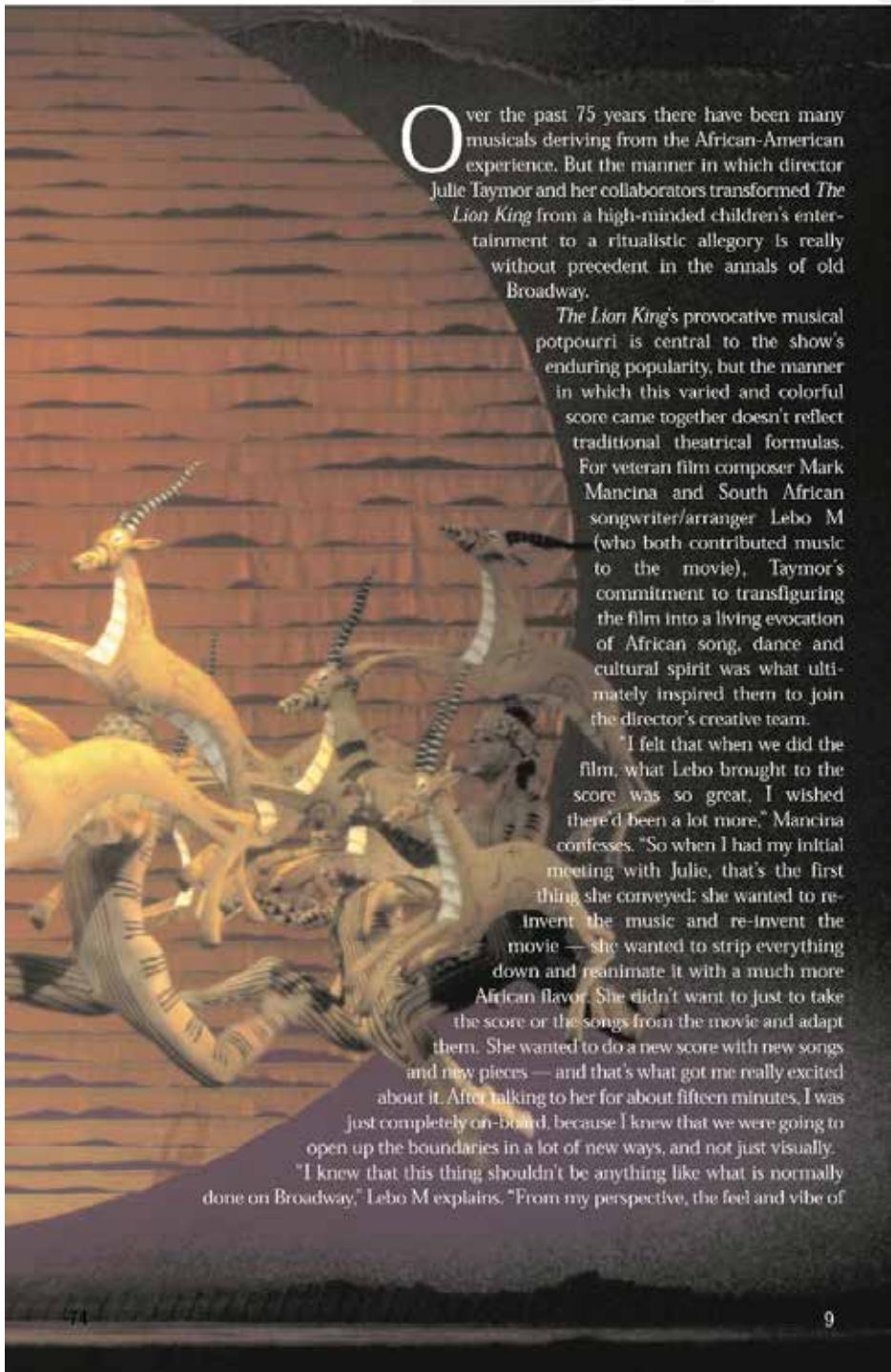
"Up until now about 95 percent of the lyrics I've written have been done to a tune. Elton is one of those rare examples of a composer who actually likes to get the words first. In the case of... *THE LION KING* that proved to be quite useful because the key thing...is to get the story line dead right. Everything flows from the story."

– Tim Rice

## AFRICAN SOUNDS



# AFRICAN SOUNDS



Over the past 75 years there have been many musicals deriving from the African-American experience. But the manner in which director Julie Taymor and her collaborators transformed *The Lion King* from a high-minded children's entertainment to a ritualistic allegory is really without precedent in the annals of old Broadway.

*The Lion King's* provocative musical potpourri is central to the show's enduring popularity, but the manner in which this varied and colorful score came together doesn't reflect traditional theatrical formulas. For veteran film composer Mark Mancina and South African songwriter/arranger Lebo M (who both contributed music to the movie), Taymor's commitment to transfiguring the film into a living evocation of African song, dance and cultural spirit was what ultimately inspired them to join the director's creative team.

"I felt that when we did the film, what Lebo brought to the score was so great. I wished there'd been a lot more," Mancina confesses. "So when I had my initial meeting with Julie, that's the first thing she conveyed: she wanted to reinvent the music and re-invent the movie — she wanted to strip everything down and reanimate it with a much more African flavor. She didn't want to just take the score or the songs from the movie and adapt them. She wanted to do a new score with new songs and new pieces — and that's what got me really excited about it. After talking to her for about fifteen minutes, I was just completely on-board, because I knew that we were going to open up the boundaries in a lot of new ways, and not just visually."

"I knew that this thing shouldn't be anything like what is normally done on Broadway," Lebo M explains. "From my perspective, the feel and vibe of

# AFRICAN SOUNDS

AFRICAN SOUNSCAPES

Left to right: Tom Alan Robbins (Pumbaa), Jason Raize (Simba) and Max Casella (Timon), from the original Broadway cast, sing "Hakuna Matata"

Below: Lebo M. from the original Broadway cast, performs "One by One"

DISNEY / JOAN MARCUS

Lebo M. from the original Broadway cast, performs "One by One"

DISNEY / JOAN MARCUS

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“This whole show had to be organic — to be as realistic and true to African music and the African creative experience as possible. And that's why I enjoyed working so closely with Julie on the choreography and design of the show, including the visual and musical aspects of the drums, because it was not a strange concept to me — so I was able to arrange the rest of the music, and especially the vocal ensembles, around that.”

The sense of community which *The Lion King* engenders is enthralling. The music serves not only to advance the story-line in the traditional Broadway manner, but to amplify the grandeur, dignity and nobility of the African experience, as portrayed by Taymor's innovative staging and Garth Fagan's choreography. Drawing upon the symbolism that defines the African's way of viewing the universe, from the opening number the theater-goer is no longer simply an observer but a

# AFRICAN SOUNDS

## AFRICAN SOUNDSCAPES

*Sheila Gibbs, from the Broadway cast.*



participant; surrounded by dancers and musicians and singers, as an elaborate series of puppets and masks serve not to conceal, but to reveal something ethereal and universal about young Simba's rite of passage. And in a sense, the way we experience this heady theatrical gumbo of living sculpture and music is analogous to the way it came together between Mancina, Lebo and Taymor — a collective encounter in which they would sit around a piano as the director bounced ideas off of them, helping to crystallize her visions about lighting and staging.

"She would just bubble over with ideas," Mancina explains. "For me this was a brand new challenge and a brand new world, so winging it at the piano with Julie and Lebo was the only way to do this kind of score, and it was a really fun way to work.

And for a composer, it's just wonderful to have that kind of enthusiasm when you're sitting at an old upright piano and somebody is telling you that the ghost of Mufasa is actually going to be a mask that comes together on sticks with dancers...I mean, that just sends you in directions musically you wouldn't have gotten to otherwise."

"The creative exchange was so dynamic," Lebo enthuses. There were certain things that Julie said and suggested that automatically made sense to me. There was a communal feel and understanding — spiritually and psychologically — that just took over the environment and made things so easy."

"Do you remember the vocal piece at the beginning of Act Two?" Mancina asks by way of illustrating Taymor's indelible influence on

©Disney. Joan Marcus

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# AFRICAN SOUNDS

## AFRICAN SOUNDSCAPES

*continued from page 12*

the music. "One By One" is a piece that Lebo wrote before the musical. But Julie just had this wonderful idea of orchestrating that with kite birds, and having the kite birds right in the audience, making the audience a part of the performance. Just like how she put the African drummers in the parquet boxes to the left and right of the orchestra. It's not only visually striking, but it gives the audience a sense that this is being created live, right this instant, especially for you. People don't get enough of that in the theater anymore, and they really respond to it."

"Speaking of that *a cappella* piece," Lebo adds, "most of the chorale music was not written at the piano. Several weeks ago I had the hardest time explaining something that we have been doing in the show, because it has never been written down. So it is a feel thing. I would basically put five to eight singers in a room, give them notes and give them a structure; give them lyrics and give them a melody. I

represents who I am and the  
sense, part of my job  
singers, show them  
style, and then  
to show others  
that style.

"You  
many  
aspects of  
music —  
West  
Zaire, to  
to South  
the  
structures  
necessarily  
And the  
South African  
much more vocal  
or percussive. The most  
example is a Ladysmith Black

loved working on that because it  
way I work with singers. In a  
was to find the best  
how to sing in that  
teach them how  
how to sing in

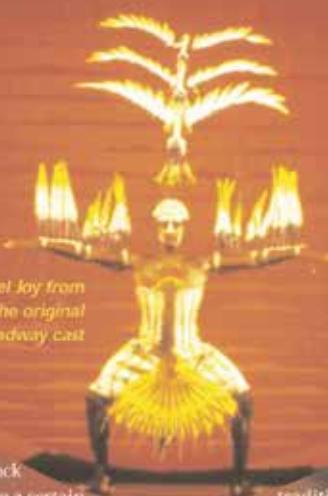
see, in the  
various  
African  
from  
Africa to  
Senegal  
Africa —  
harmonic

are not  
all the same.  
history of  
music is very  
than instrumental  
commonly known

Mambazo-Zulu style of

music, and again, they have a certain  
tradition of harmonic structures  
that are not to my knowledge written down anywhere. That is the choral style referred to as  
*isicathamiya*. So the arrangement that I did of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" was inspired by the original melody of that song from a South African perspective, done in the *isicathamiya* style. Which is predominantly a call-and-response system with a melody against a chord progression. There is a set way that I employ this as an arranger, particularly as a vocal arranger. You see, if you have an open chord, a spread chord, and you have a contradicting chord in the middle of that, it is not major, but rather major against minor. That is a lot more common in our culture than in western music, which is part of what makes the South African chorale sound slightly edgy and different."

Which is why, given the metaphorical, representational manner in which Taymor recast the original film, Mancina and Lebo M were challenged to re-arrange and embellish the movie's sundry songs (such as the signature showstoppers by Elton John and Tim Rice, "Circle Of Life,"



Michael Joy from  
the original  
Broadway cast

© 2019 Disney

# AFRICAN SOUNDS

## AFRICAN SOUNDSCAPES

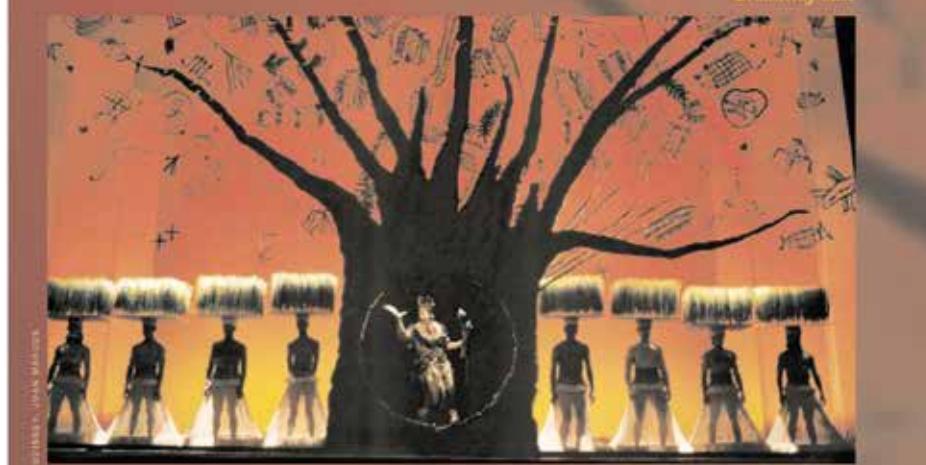
"Hakuna Matata" and "Can You Feel The Love Tonight"), with an ear towards creating an overall sense of cohesion, while giving added prominence to the diverse, exotic pallet of rhythms and melodies which define the African experience. In the process, they convey the ecstatic quality of these varied musical traditions to an American audience, while illustrating how closely linked African and American sounds have really become. As if to say...which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Lebo is most amused by this analogy. "You have just hit upon the conflict of what I call the great marriage of western and African music. That's what I love about music: one minute you can define it, another minute you can't. And my excitement with *The Lion King's* music is that while it is inspired by African music, it is still part of this greater global language."

"It's not just a marriage between African and western; but between so many cultures," Mancina points out, and in truth, this listener discerned a profusion of elements sprinkled through the polyglot score by Mancina and Lebo (with orchestrations by Robert Elhai, David Metzger and Bruce Fowler) that one would be hard pressed to imagine in any other Broadway musical. At various times I heard echoes of reggae and country, surf music and New Orleans R&B, tango and high life, hard rock and hip hop, Gustav Mahler and James Bond, Germanic chorales and Chinese opera.

"I can say that was one hundred percent intentional on our part," Lebo concludes. "From the time before this play was born, our goal was to take the inspiration of African music, which is eighty percent of who I am, but to globalize it by bringing in the spirit that you feel in Cuban music or jazz or Euro-centric music. There's a universality to *The Lion King* that appeals to everyone."

*The Pridelands,  
with the original  
Broadway cast*



# VARIETY

VARIETY.COM THE INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY FEBRUARY 4-10, 2013



## Market forces



Berlin-bound buyers are pumped up by the recent success of independently produced pics and adult-skewing hits. However, some are sweating: The ever-shrinking DVD market is making it harder for lower-budget projects to nab a theatrical deal.

**Page 14**



## THE 'LION' & THE MOUSE

The 15-year-old "Lion King" has seen an extraordinary rise in attendance over the past few years, thanks to savvy marketing, strategic ticket pricing and a film-theater synergy. Disney dishes on its methods for keeping the tuner fresh.

**Page 10**





# MOUSE MINTS 'KING'S' RANSOM

Savvy strategy, B'way trends give venerable Disney tuner a sense of *hakuna matata*

By Gordon Cox

**T**he *Lion King* is roaring, and all of Broadway can hear it.

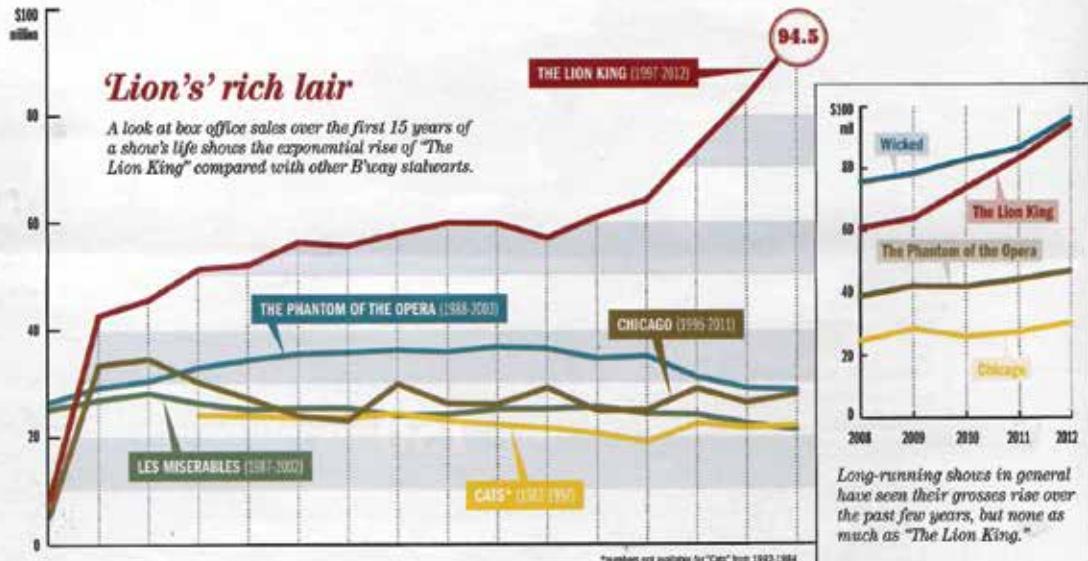
The 15-year-old tuner has seen an extraordinary rise in box office and attendance over the past few years, even more remarkable for a show that is the third oldest currently on the Rialto and the fifth longest-running title in Broadway history.

So what's Disney doing right?

There are a number of factors at play, from Broadway-wide trends such as dynamic pricing to the theater's location to consistent marketing and creative maintenance. It all adds up to a continuously feeding loop that has propelled an enduring property from strength to strength.

For a reminder of the show's B.O. potency, legiters need look no further than the weekly sales charts, where *Lion King* consistently grapples with habitual top dog *Wicked* — as well as newer tuners like *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* and the *The Book of Mormon* — for pole position.

Annual figures are even more telling. The \$94.5 million that *Lion King* minted in 2012 was about \$10 million more than its 2011 cume of \$83.4 million — which was around \$10 million better than the 2010 number, itself nearly \$10 million higher than the 2009 tally. When held up against the box office trends of other long-running shows in



frames of *Lion King* stands out.

It's not just rising ticket prices contributing to the growth — annual attendance has grown every year since 2009 as well. The approximately 700,000 folks who saw the Broadway production in 2012 represent 50,000 more than the show's 2008 tally.

The boom can be attributed in part to dynamic ticket pricing, which has had a major impact on Broadway in the decade-plus since *The Producers* rocked the box office with premium-price tickets aimed at taking back the big money that

has accepted the value in adjusting prices to match demand, while the dominance of Internet ticket sales, as well as the Web's increasing agility in allowing ticket-buyers to view exactly which seats are available at specific perfs, adds to a show's bottom line.

So while the rise at *Lion King* still stands out when compared with the contemporary sales of current offerings, it's also clearly in keeping with a concomitant rise at all well-established shows, fueled by savvy pricing that shifts the needle higher in high-demand frames (such as holiday weeks and summer seshes) and lower in periods of lesser demand (including the annual dollar-drums of January and September). For instance, *Wicked*,

grow its annual cume by \$10 million last year.

To some degree, then, Disney Theatrical is setting prices at *Lion King* with strategies similar to the producers of many other shows. Company exec VP David Schrader describes the process as one with two dynamic layers. First, the range of prices across the theater is set according to an estimate of the demand for a particular performance, based on the 15 years of past B.O. from which to extrapolate annual trends. Second, after tickets go on sale, Disney re-examines each perf to see how demand is shaping up in reality, and then tweaks pricing accordingly.

At the same time, the company attempts the tricky balance of maximizing revenue while avoiding price gouging.

Prices of other Rialto fare, execs say Disney tries never to set the bar. The show, for instance, has never logged the highest average ticket price of any production on the boards.

The overall upswing in New York City tourism is another factor that has influenced *Lion King* in particular and Broadway overall. Tourists, domestic and international, are key to keeping afloat long-running shows that over time exhaust the area's supply of locals, and recent years have been banner ones for numbers of theatergoers out-of-towners. Tourism in the city has been up year-to-year since 2000, with 2012 numbers hitting a record 52 million.

Adding to these broader trends are the specific factors that contribute to the rise at *Lion King* alone. First there

## 'KING'S' RANSOM

◀ page 10

on the list: Location, location, location.

In 2006, "Lion King" moved out of the New Amsterdam on 42nd Street, in part to make way for Disney's production of "Mary Poppins." The show's new home, the Minskoff, was smaller — about 1,600 seats vs. the New Amsterdam's 1,800 — but because of the venue's layout (particularly its lack of a second balcony, where seats tend to be lower priced), more seat locations could sustain higher pricetags; therefore, the gross potential turned out to be slightly higher at the Minskoff.

But Disney and others in the industry believe the biggest benefit of the venue is its highly visible perch — smack in the middle of Times Square. The Minskoff commands second-story frontage on the square that's nearly a block long, an unmatched patch of marketing real estate that since 2006 has

been occupied by the big, bold, black-and-yellow title treatment of "Lion King."

It's something tourists can't miss when they make their inevitable stop at Times Square; nor can viewers when exterior shots of the landmark intersection show up on TV and in other media.

Schrader speculates that the production's presence in other tourist-magnet cities around the world — including London and Madrid, among the eight international and touring incarnations now running — also keeps the property front-and-center in the minds of world travelers, including the international visitors to New York who represent a growing segment of the Broadway ticket-buying demo.

In this, "Lion King" follows the legit model for international expansion first built by Cameron Mackintosh with Brit megamusicals including "Phantom of the Opera," which just had its 25th birthday on the Rialto.

There are also the obvious benefits of the show's link to a 1994 pic that's joined the pantheon of animated standards for tyke auds. The \$30 million opening weekend of the film's 2011 3D theatrical release took Hollywood by surprise, and that return to the spotlight seems likely to have propelled new sales to the stage version.

Changes in the TV advertising landscape have also aided Broadway. Television spots have become more frequent, in part because the smallscreen has become a more affordable advertising option for the Rialto as the proliferation of channels has pushed down ad rates and allowed for more efficient and targeted buys.

"They spend consistently, not just in weak periods," says Nancy Coyne, topper of Serino Coyne, the ad agency that has worked with Disney on "Lion King" from the beginning. "In the tourist season, you'll see a lot more outdoor, and in the winter you'll see more television."

That's not to say the company hasn't shown some special love for the show. Two head-turning promotional efforts included a takeover of part of Penn Station and, for 16 days in tourist-clogged December, a free exhibit near Bryant Park where visitors could see some of the show's design elements up close. According to Disney, the latter logged close to 80,000 visitors.

"The notion is to keep doing things that dominate the area to stay in the public eye," Schrader says.

It hasn't hurt that the company maintains worldwide quality control. The effort involves 22 creatives overseeing all the musical's global outposts — a team led by associate director John Stefański, associate choreographer Marcy Griffith and music supervisor Clement Ishmael. Director Julie Taymor stops in to spot-check each production at various stages of rehearsals or performances.

Even as Disney types and others involved in the show contemplate the multiple factors that have pushed the production to its current high, they all eventually point back to the musical itself — a family-friendly story that, thanks to a narrative that touches on all stages of life and to Taymor's imaginative design and staging, holds as much appeal for adults as it does for kids.

Disney execs wish they could take credit for the show's current boom, but to hear them tell it, the surge is as much of a surprise to them as it is to the rest of Broadway. It's a show, they say, that has grown in unexpected ways from the beginning.

"First, it was a surprise that we were even able to do it at all," says Thomas Schumacher, prezzy and producer at Disney Theatrical. "But Julie did a really good job, and one of the strengths of her idea turns out to be that it's totally replicable. That was a surprise too. It's been a surprise all along." ■

# PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS



Photo: Brinkenhoff/Mogenburg; © Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



Rafiki in Tree, Buyi Zama, Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney



Paulette Ivory (Nala) and Roger Wright (Simba), London Production; Photo: Catherine Ashmore; © Disney



Julie Taymor; Photo: Kenneth Van Sickle. © Disney



C1 – Rafiki rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Buyisile Zama (Rafiki), Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney



C3 – Mufasa rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Geno Segers (Mufasa) in Australian Production; Photo James Morgan; © Disney



C4 – Nala rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Credit photo: Heather Headley (Nala) in Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



C5 – Zazu rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Geoff Hoyle (Zazu) in Original Broadway Production; Photo: Per Breiehagen; © Disney



C6 – Lioness rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C9 – Lioness rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



C10 – Giraffe marionette; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C11 – Costume rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney

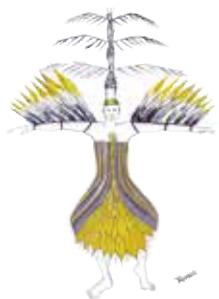
# PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS



Australian Production; Photo: James Morgan; © Disney



Mark Allan Davis, Levensky Smith, Iresol Cardona in Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



C12 – Rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C13 – Marquette rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



C14 – Costume rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



A5 – Tsidii Le Loka (Rafiki) in the Original Broadway production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



C17 – Grasslands rendering; Sketch: Julie Taymor; ©Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



Nathaniel Stampley (Mufasa), Tshidi Manye (Rafiki) and Jean Michelle Greier (Sarabi), New York Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



Original Broadway Production; Photo: Joan Marcus; © Disney



B5 – Elton John and Tim Rice, Photo: Tony Russell; © Disney