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Casting Announced for Disney's *The Lion King* Broadway's Award-Winning Best Musical

**Buffalo's Limited Return Engagement Plays Wednesday, December 18
through Sunday, January 5 at Shea's Buffalo Theatre**

Company Includes Buffalo Native Gabriel Croom

(BUFFALO, NY)—Casting has been announced for the Buffalo engagement of **Disney's *The Lion King***. Buffalo's most eagerly awaited stage production ever will leap onto the Shea's Buffalo Theatre stage from Wednesday, December 18, 2024 to Sunday, January 5, 2025.

The Buffalo engagement of **Disney's *The Lion King*** is presented by arrangement with Shea's Performing Arts Center and Broadway partner Albert Noccioolino and is a subscription offering of the 2023-24 Five Star Bank Broadway Season.

In Buffalo ***The Lion King*** will play for 24 performances over the three-week engagement. Tickets are available at Shea's Buffalo Theatre Box Office at 650 Main Street in Downtown Buffalo, and online at <https://www.sheas.org/performances/the-lion-king/>. Orders for groups of ten (10) or more may be placed by calling Mary Oshei at 716-829-1153.

The production features **Peter Hargrave** (Scar), **Darnell Abraham** (Mufasa), **Mukelisiwe Goba** (Rafiki), **Nick Cordileone** (Timon), **Nick LaMedica** (Zazu), **Danny Grumich** (Pumbaa), **Darian Sanders** (Simba), **Thembelihle Cele** (Nala), **Forest VanDyke** (Banzai), **Martina Sykes** (Shenzi), **Sam Linda** (Ed), **William John Austin** (Standby Scar, & Pumbaa) and **Thom Christopher Warren** (Standby Scar, Zazu, Timon & Pumbaa).

The role of “Young Simba” is alternated between **Bryce Christian Thompson** and **Julian Villela** and the role of “Young Nala” is alternated between **Ritisha Chakraborty** and **Leela Chopra**.

Rounding out the cast are **Kayla Rose Aimable**, **Ellen Akashi**, **Iman Ayana**, **Eric Bean, Jr.**, **Layla Brent**, **Vernon Brooks III**, **Sasha Caicedo**, **Lauren Carr**, **Shaquelle Charles**, **Reoagile Choabi**, **Lytic Danae**, **Maurice Dawkins**, **Cedrick Ekra**, **Marquis Floyd**, **Valériane Louisy Louis Joseph**, **Joel Karie**, **Gabisile Manana**, **Justin Mensah**, **Sakhile Mthembu**, **Sarita Amani Nash**, **Aaron Nelson**, **Jeremy Noel**, **Sicelo Ntshangase**, **Sayiga Eugene Peabody**, **Yael Pineda-Hall**, **Maurica Roland**, **Poseletso Sejosingoe**, **Courtney Thomas**, **Ben Toomer**, **Denzel Tsopnang**, **Brinie Wallace** and **Jordan Nicole Willis**.

Also joining ***The Lion King*** company is **Gabriel Croom**. Born and raised in Buffalo, Croom attended Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts high school and graduated from SUNY Fredonia with a BFA in Musical Theatre. At the age of 12 he played Reuben in August Wilson’s play *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* at Studio Arena Theatre, which is now Shea’s 710 Theatre.

Gabriel Croom (*Swing, Understudy Ed*) has performed in the 1st National Tour and Broadway productions of *The Lion King* and is thrilled to be joining the Rafiki Tour. Recent credits include: Live in Concert’s Hollywood Bowl productions of *The Little Mermaid* (2019) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2018). Other credits: Hollywood Fringe Festival’s *A Soldier’s Play*, *Sirens of Titan* (Sacred Fools Company), *Carmen* (La Jolla Playhouse), *West Side Story* (Trinity Repertory Company) and George C. Wolfe’s *Harlem Song* (Apollo Theatre).

The Lion King has been touring North America for more than 22 years, and during that time has welcomed over 23 million theatergoers, making it North America’s longest-running and most-attended Broadway tour. Having already played more than 10,000 performances in over 90 cities across North America, ***The Lion King*** now proudly returns to Shea’s Buffalo Theatre after making its last stop in Buffalo in 2017.

ABOUT THE LION KING

Celebrating 27 landmark years on Broadway, ***The Lion King*** continues ascendant as one of the most popular stage musicals of all time. Since its premiere on November 13, 1997, 29 global productions have been seen by over 120 million people. Produced by Disney Theatrical Group, under the direction of **Andrew Flatt**, **Anne Quart**, and **Thomas**

Schumacher, *The Lion King* has made theatrical history with two productions worldwide running 20 or more years and three others running 25 or more years.

Performed over its lifetime in nine different languages (English, Japanese, German, Korean, French, Dutch, Spanish, Mandarin and Portuguese), there are currently eight productions of ***The Lion King*** around the world: Broadway, London, Paris, Hamburg, Madrid, Tokyo, Toronto, and on tour across North America. ***The Lion King*** has played over 100 cities in 24 countries on every continent except Antarctica; its worldwide gross exceeds that of any film, Broadway show or other entertainment title in box office history.

The Lion King won six 1998 Tony Awards®: Best Musical, Best Scenic Design (**Richard Hudson**), Best Costume Design (**Julie Taymor**), Best Lighting Design (**Donald Holder**), Best Choreography (**Garth Fagan**) and Best Direction of a Musical. ***The Lion King*** has also earned more than 70 major arts awards including the 1998 NY Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, the 1999 Grammy® for Best Musical Show Album, the 1999 Evening Standard Award for Theatrical Event of the Year and the 1999 Laurence Olivier Awards for Best Choreography and Best Costume Design.

Director, costume designer and mask co-designer **Julie Taymor**, the first woman to win a Tony Award for Best Director of a Musical, remains actively involved in the show, launching new productions and maintaining the flagship Broadway production.

The Broadway score features **Elton John** and **Tim Rice**'s songs from the *Lion King* animated film along with three new songs by John and Rice; additional musical material by South African **Lebo M**, **Mark Mancina**, **Jay Rifkin**, **Julie Taymor** and **Hans Zimmer**; and music from "Rhythm of the Pride Lands," an album inspired by the original music in the film, written by Lebo M, Mark Mancina and Hans Zimmer. The resulting sound of ***The Lion King*** is a fusion of Western popular music and the distinctive sounds and rhythms of Africa, ranging from the Academy Award®-winning song "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" to Lebo M's rich choral numbers.

Elton John, Lebo M, and Hans Zimmer all collaborated on the 2019 version of the film, executive produced by Julie Taymor and Thomas Schumacher, which has gone onto extraordinary worldwide success.

The book has been adapted by **Roger Allers**, who co-directed the animated *The Lion King* feature, and **Irene Mecchi**, who co-wrote the film's screenplay. Other members of the creative team include: **Michael Curry**, who designed the masks and puppets with Taymor, **Steve Canyon Kennedy** (sound design), **Michael Ward** (hair and makeup design), **Anthony Lyn** (associate director), **Marey Griffith** (associate choreographer), **Clement Ishmael** (music supervisor), **Lisa Dawn Cave** (production supervisor), **Thomas Schlenk** (general manager) and **ARC/Mark Brandon, CSA** (casting). **Anne Quart** serves as executive producer.

For more information worldwide, visit LionKing.com, www.facebook.com/thelionkingusa and www.instagram.com/thelionking.

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Photos:

[Gabriel Croom.jpg](#)

[S1 Darian Sanders as Simba. The Lion King North American Tour ©Disney. Photo by Deen van Meer.jpg](#)

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[S10-Lionesses-Dance.-The-Lion-King-North-American-Tour-C2A9Disney.-Photo-by-Deen-van-Meer.jpg](#)

Video: <https://youtu.be/ZMMNnZK5o7o>

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