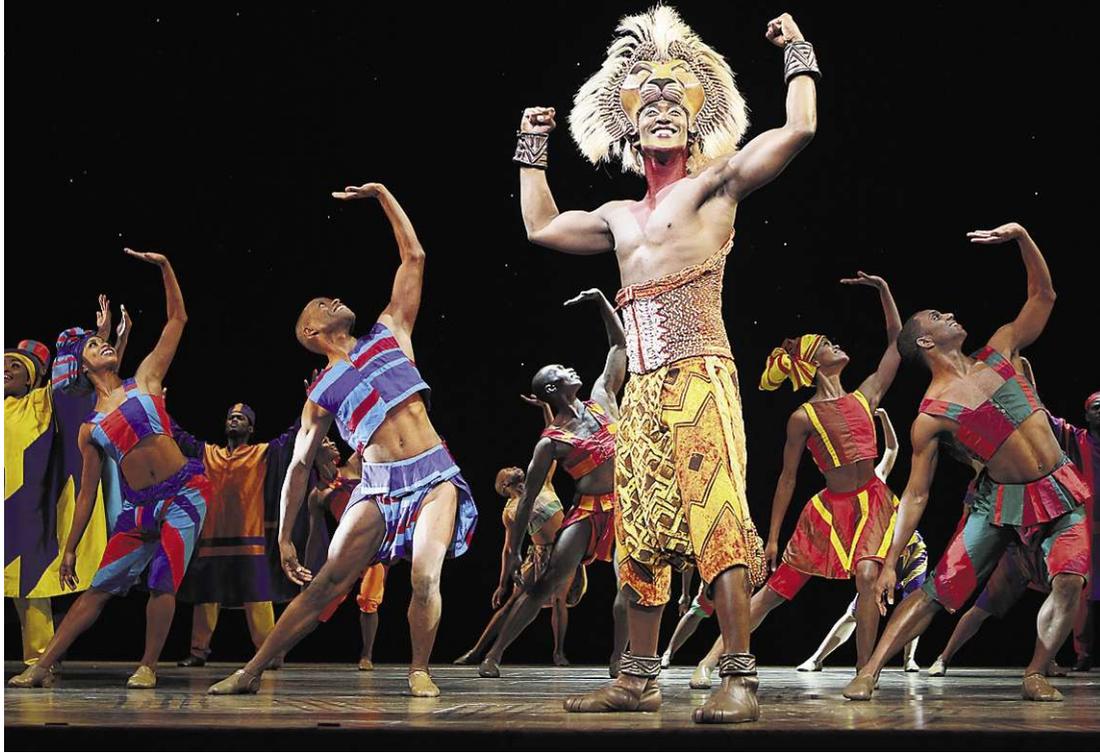


FEEL THE ROAR



Joan Marcus

The choreography for "The Lion King" mixes African, Caribbean, modern, hip-hop and ballet.

Wayne State alum helps bring circle of life to the stage in popular 'Lion King' musical

BY URSULA WATSON
The Detroit News

The Oscar-winning Disney film "The Lion King" won over moviegoers in 1994 with its wonderful storyline, rich animation and uplifting musical score.

The tale of a lion cub destined to be king was made into a Broadway musical three years later (it plays the Detroit Opera House starting Wednesday). And like the movie, it has enjoyed major success, winning six Tony Awards in 1998.

One of those coveted Tony Awards went to Garth Fagan for best choreography. He also earned a prestigious Laurence Olivier Award in 2000. The 72-year-old Jamaica native, who moved to the United States in the 1960s when he was 20, is a Wayne State University alum and went on to become director of Detroit's All-City Dance Company. Fagan also was the principal soloist and choreographer for Detroit Contemporary Dance Company and Dance Theatre of Detroit.

He choreographed for renowned New York-based dance companies Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Dance Theatre of Harlem, earned a Guggenheim Fellowship and was a Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Fellow in 1996.

The founder of New York's Garth Fagan Dance says he blended many styles of dance to tell the story of "The Lion King." The choreography of the musical is a blend of African, Caribbean,

modern, hip-hop and ballet, he says.

"While they had songs that could tell the story and the actors could speak," says Fagan, "dance is something not as obvious to the public. I made sure that there was a wide variety so that the audience could enjoy these dances and their beauty."

He says dancers performing in "The Lion King" find the colorful masks and puppets they must wear and operate challenging.

'The Lion King'

7:30 p.m. Wednesday
Through March 10
Detroit Opera House,
1526 Broadway, Detroit
Tickets \$25-\$150
(866) 870-2717
www.ticketmaster.com

Kendra Moore, female dance captain for "The Lion King" on tour, knows these difficulties well. Her job is to cover 11 parts of the female ensemble, teach parts and ensure the show is going correctly and

the choreography is true to its original concept.

"Everyone goes through the challenge of learning the puppetry," says Moore, who joined the show in 2003. "Dancers are used to showing our bodies. Dancers are used to dancing, not worrying about puppets. In this show, you have the challenge of being a character."

Fagan says the masks and puppets are made as light as humanly possible. And through it all, the cast and crew focus on delivering a top-notch performance each night.

"You will feel uplifted after seeing the show," says Fagan. "There's a level of positivity in this show that some shows don't offer."

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Fagan



Moore

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