



**Boys & Girls Clubs of  
Syracuse**

@boysandgirlsclubsofsyracuse · Youth Organization

FOLLOW US ON  
**FACEBOOK**



@boysandgirlsclubsofsyracuse

Thank you to Stacey Bailey and the entire team at The  
Central Valley Boys & Girls Club <3

**THANASIS**  
THEATRE COMPANY



proudly presents a **Youth Production** of

Disney  
**THE**  
**LION KING** ©Disney  
**JR**

Music & Lyrics by  
**Elton John & Tim Rice**

Additional Music & Lyrics by  
**Lebo M, Mark Mancina, Jay Rifkin, and Hans  
Zimmer**

Book by  
**Roger Allers & Irene Mecchi**

Based on the Broadway production directed by  
**Julie Taymor**

This project is made possible with funds from the City of Syracuse Arts & Cultural Recovery  
Fund Program, a regrant program of the City of Syracuse and administered by CNY Arts

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

Circle of Life with Nants' Ingonyama .....	Rafiki, Ensemble
Grasslands Chant .....	Ensemble
The Lioness Hunt.....	Lionesses
I Just Can't Wait to Be King.....	Young Simba, Young Nala, Zazu, Ensemble
Be Prepared.....	Scar, Shenzi, Banzai, Ed, Hyenas
They Live in You.....	Mufasa, Ensemble
The Stampede .....	Ensemble
The Mourning .....	Sarabi, Young Nala, Rafiki, Lionesses, Hyenas
Hakuna Matata.....	Timon, Pumbaa, Young Simba, Simba, Ensemble
Shadowland.....	Nala, Lionesses, Rafiki
Can You Feel the Love Tonight .....	Timon, Pumbaa, Simba, Nala, Ensemble
He Lives in You.....	Rafiki, Sarabi & Ensemble
Luau Hawaiian Treat .....	Timon & Pumbaa
Finale .....	Company

The show runs approximately 60 minutes with no intermission.

## CAST

Rafiki .....	Ne'Kayvia Bethea
Mufasa .....	Malichi Simmons
Sarabi .....	Jaden Hanniford
Zazu .....	Kate Fennessy
Scar .....	Tyren Johnson
Young Simba .....	Jojo Harper-McNeal
Young Nala.....	Aurora Davis
Sarafina .....	Sophia Pierce
Shenzi .....	Jewel Pierce/Sophia Furnell-Wick
Banzai .....	Micah Jones
Ed.....	Charlotte Halverson
Timon.....	Makayla Halverson
Pumbaa .....	Cartel Oliver
Simba .....	Malichi Simmons
Nala.....	Sophia Pierce

### **Shenzi will be played by**

Sophia Furnell-Wick on 2/9 and 2/11 (3pm)  
and Jewel Pierce on 2/10 & 2/11 (7pm)

### Ensemble Roles:

Elephant .....	Sophia Pierce
Giraffe .....	Makayla Halverson
Zebras.....	Cartel Oliver & Micah Jones
Gazelles.....	Sophia Furnell-Wick & Charlotte Halverson
Birds.....	Jewel Pierce & Jaden Hanniford
Hyenas.....	Makayla Halverson & Cartel Oliver
Lionesses.....	Sophia Furnell-Wick & Jewel Pierce
Wildebeests .....	Jaden Hanniford, Sophia Pierce, Cartel Oliver & Charlotte Halverson

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Directors..... Mookey Van Orden & Jordan Westfall  
Music Director ..... Ben Borenstein  
Choreographer..... Dominique Barr  
Producer ..... Blondean Young  
Costume Design..... Sonya Mangovski & Rosie Belcore  
Asst. Music Director ..... Tyler Eighmey  
Makeup & Wardrobe .....Destyne Raines  
Lighting Design ..... Audrey Flynn  
Set Design ..... Kristin Palazzoli & Harper Park  
Sound Design ..... Isaac Better & Trillium Holsopple  
Mask Designer ..... Debra Ritchey, CNY Costumes  
Asst. Stage Manager..... Jewel Pierce  
Set Construction..... Phillip Fraser

Special thanks to **The Central Valley Boys & Girls Club,**  
**The Community Folk Arts Center, Cicero-North**  
**Syracuse High School & all of the parents** who've made  
this production possible!

Music Adapted & Arranged and  
Additional Music & Lyrics and  
“Luau Hawaiian Treat” written by **Will Van Dyke**

“It’s a Small World” written by  
**Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman**

Disney’s *The Lion King JR.* is presented through special arrangement with  
and all authorized materials are supplied by  
Music Theatre International.  
421 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10019  
Script, music, and all other material © 2015 Disney  
Broadway Junior and MTI’s Broadway Junior Collection are trademarks  
or registered trademarks of Music Theatre International. All rights reserved.

## CAST BIOS

**NE’KAYVIA BETHEA** (*Rafiki*): is a Sophomore at PSLA @Fowler High-school. She’s been singing and dancing and in plays and musicals since middle school. In the 6th grade she starred in her first Musicals, “Alice and Wonderland” and “Frozen Jr.” She has recently been seen in “Moana Jr”, “Once on This Island”, and “Ranked” At PSLA @ Fowler High. She is excited to play in her upcoming role as Rafiki in this production. Ne’Kayvia is grateful for her parents, family, her Drama teacher Mrs.Ham and her amazing friends.

**MALICHI SIMMONS** (*Mufasa/Adult Simba*) is a Senior at PSLA @Fowler High School. He’s been singing since he was a little kid, & starred in his first Musical (The Little Mermaid) when he was in 6th grade. He has recently been seen in “Jasper in Deadland” & “Young Voices” at Redhouse, and “Bring it on”, “Ranked”, & “Once on this Island” at His Highschool. He is excited to play his upcoming rolls as Mufasa and Adult Simba in this production. Malichi is grateful to his mother, his mentor Ms. Young, and his two best friends for their love and support.

**JADEN HANNIFORD** (*Sarabi*) is a 16 year old Sophomore. She currently attends PSLA @ Fowler high school. She started singing when she was 2 years old. She later joined her church’s youth choir at 5 years old. Her first musical was “Alice in Wonderland Jr.” at Clary Middle School. Where she played one of the three Cheshire Cats! The following year she performed in “Frozen Jr” at the same school. During her High school years, so far she has performed in “Moana Jr” where she played Tamatoa and a chief ancestor. In “Ranked, A Musical” she played Jacquie! She is grateful for the opportunity she has been given to play in “The Lion King Jr.” She is looking forward to performing in more shows in the future!

**KATE FENNESSY** (*Zazu*) is delighted to make her debut with the Thanasis Theatre Company. She's adored the performing arts for as long as she can remember. Her previous credits include Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Ruby in *Jingle Bell Jukebox*, Clown in *The Fifth Grade Circus*, and she is currently playing Maurice in Auburn Junior High School's production of *Beauty and the Beast*. While she is not on stage she spends her time singing, watching movies, taking care of pets, and making chaos with friends.

**TYREN JOHNSON** (*Scar*) is super excited to be performing as Scar in the *Lion King Jr*. This is his second show and can't wait to do more in the future. Tyren is a 12th grade student at PSLA @ Fowler. When Tyren is not on stage or at school, he is streaming on twitch as **bnlessjay** sometimes playing video games and sometimes talking about mental health and enjoys listening to music. Tyren attributes his performance to his mother and family who helped and encourage him to do better.

**JOJO HARPER-MCNEAL** (*Young Simba*) Jojo is eight years old. He loves to create, to sing, to dance, and to be on stage! He got his start in acting at The Redhouse Theater camps for kids. His favorite camp experience was playing Ladahlord in *James and the Giant Peach, the Musical!* Jojo has been dancing with Ballet and Dance of Upstate NY for 4 years. He recently danced in a Syracuse City Ballet production of *The Firebird*. He has danced for one season with the hip-hop group, Ascuad Arts. During the holiday season this past December, Jojo played Ralphie in *A Christmas Story, The Musical* at The Redhouse. Jojo would like to thank Thanasis Theatre for believing in him and giving him this opportunity! He is proud to work with such a talented group of young actors, dancers, and singers! He is grateful to his family and friends for their steadfast support, and he sends a special thank you to his amazing piano teacher and vocal coach, Gina, of Gina Marie Music Studio!

**AURORA DAVIS** (*Young Nala*) is so excited for you all to see *The Lion King Jr* where she is playing Young Nala! Aurora is in 4th grade, and this is her second musical! You might have seen her in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at CNY Playhouse this past summer. When she's not onstage, Aurora loves science, watching YouTube and playing with her friends! She would like to thank her mom and the rest of her family for always supporting her and a special thanks everyone involved in *The Lion King* for giving her this opportunity and for making the process so much fun!

**SOPHIA PIERCE** (Adult Nala/Sarafina) is thrilled to be continuing theater with *The Lion King Jr*. She's currently in her first year at Onondaga Community College, majoring in Music. She has found a love for theater throughout middle and high school, both on the stage and behind the scenes. Her most recent shows were *The Addams Family* and *Suite Surrender* at Nottingham High School, playing Wednesday Addams and being Head of Lights. While not doing theater, she loves to sing and play ukulele, and hopes to continue playing flute. She wants to give special thanks to all the wonderful people working with us behind the scenes to make this show possible, and hopes you enjoy the show!

**JEWEL PIERCE** (*Shenzi & Asst. Stage Manager*) is so excited to be a part of *The Lion King Jr* with Thanasis Theater Company. She has previously been in *Hairspray Jr* and *Shrek Jr* at Ed Smith. As well as off stage performances, she took part in the production of *Murder on The Nile* and is currently in their production of *Bye, Bye Birdie* at Nottingham High School where she is currently a freshman. Jewel also loves running and playing music as well as singing. She wants to thank her family for always supporting her and she hopes you enjoy the show!

**SOPHIA FURNELL-WICK** (*Shenzi & Dance Captain*) With a background in dance and a love for all things Disney and music Sophia is so excited to be making her debut with Thanasis Theatre Company! From the time she could walk and talk, we knew she'd be on stage. Some of Sophia's other hobbies include reading, cooking, dancing and watching movies! Many thanks to Momma, Brother, Nani and Erik! "Hakuna Matata!"

**MICAH JONES** (*Banzai*) is very excited to make his acting debut in Thanasis Theatre Company's *Disney The Lion King Jr.* He loves being a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at Bellevue Elementary School. When he's not in school, Micah enjoys dancing, time with friends and family, loving on his Mom (Alexis) & Dad (Nitch) playing basketball and watching YouTube videos of his favorite singer, Michael Jackson. You'll find him on various baseball, basketball, and football teams throughout the city this spring. God is the center of Micah's life. He serves at the Bellegrove Missionary Baptist Church as Jr. Deacon & Joshua Generation Worship Team Member.

**CHARLOTTE HALVERSON** (Ed) is so excited to be in her first ever show! She loves getting to play different characters and making new friends – and she also enjoys playing football and doing cheerleading.

**CARTEL OLIVER** (*Pumbaa*) is making his stage debut in "The Lion King Jr" as Pumbaa! Cartel is 8 years old and attends Seymour Dual Language Academy Cartel is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and loves school. Cartel also participated in boxing with his Coach Curtis Grimes (Option Zero) Cartel also enjoys roller skating, video games, making Tik Tok videos, and spending time with his family and friends. Hoorays all around for Cartel!! <3

**MAKAYLA HALVERSON** (Timon) is thrilled to be in her first theatrical production! Besides theatre, she has a love of sewing, baking, cheerleading – and she is excited to begin modeling this spring!

**TRILLIUM HOLSOPPLE** (Apprentice) has grown up in the theatre, thanks to her older brother, fascinated by all the things that happen backstage. Though she's never considered herself a performer, Trillium is a master of making art happen from behind the scenes. She is thrilled to be helping out with *Lion King Jr.* Her other backstage credits include Drosselmeyer's *Nutcracker* at Oswego Players and Redhouse's fall Theatre Workshop. In her spare time, Trillium can be found at the piano, or crocheting.

**HARPER PARK** (Apprentice) is thrilled to be doing set design for The Lion King Jr. This is her first production, but she has shown interest in set design for a very long time. She is looking forward to more opportunities to learn about set design in future productions, including at her school. She is in sixth grade at Liverpool Middle School. Some of her favorite things are musical theatre, doing crafts, playing violin, and pickles.

**ROSIE BELCORE** (Apprentice) is niece to costumer, Sonya. She a student at Onondaga Hill Middle School. She loves all things creative - art, design and cooking! She a great helper and is very innovative.

## DIRECTORS' NOTE

Thank you so much for attending our production of *Disney's Lion King Jr.*! As Thanasis' first ever Youth Production, we hope the joy of our young performers is not only visible, but contagious!

Much like Thanasis' other productions, it was essential to choose a piece that offered unique and exciting opportunities for performers – especially performers of color. With *The Lion King Jr.*, these kids have had the chance to tackle epic, iconic roles, and sing music that has been beloved for the last thirty years. And as this is the first time many of them have ever performed on stage, what a better welcome than something so cherished and classic?

But beyond even the cast, we have had three amazing Youth Apprentices working on this production, helping craft the set, sound, lighting and costumes to fully breathe life into this gigantic, “little” show.

And throughout our process we have had the pleasure of rehearsing at four different locations across Syracuse, including here at SALTSpace, The Community Folk Arts Center, The Dance Studio in Camillus, as well as our

original home base for this show: The Central Valley Boys and Girls Club, where we spent five of our eight weeks of rehearsal.

It was while working at the Boys and Girls Club that we learned of the passing of Brexialee Torres Ortiz, whose tragic loss was mere feet from where we were rehearsing on Van Buren Street. Because of this, as well as Brexialee's connection to several members of our company, we have dedicated this show to honor her radiant memory.

Moreover, we hope that safe spaces for creativity, love and learning can continue to be fostered across the city of Syracuse, especially for the arts – and in turn, we hope to have created a magical, memorable, creatively fulfilling experience for every youth participant involved in this production of *Disney's Lion King Jr.*

Thank you so much for your love and support. We hope you enjoy the show!

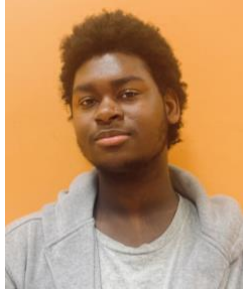
*Hakuna Matata,*

Mookey Van Orden & Jordan Westfall

## CAST



Ne'Kayvia Bethea



Malichi Simmons



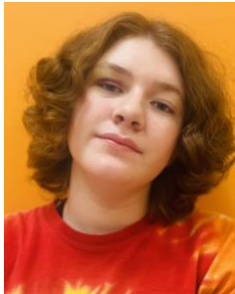
Sophia Pierce



Tyren Johnson



Jaden Hanniford



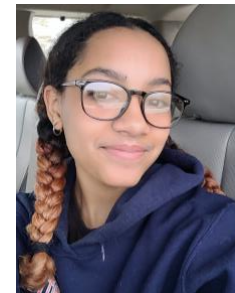
Kate Fennessy



Jojo Harper-McNeal

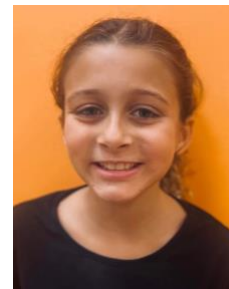


Aurora Davis



Jewel Pierce

## CAST & YOUTH APPRENTICES



Sophia Furnell-Wick



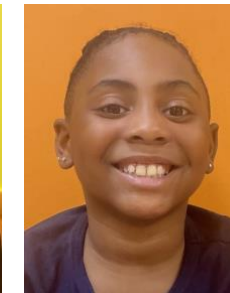
Micah Jones



Charlotte Halverson



Makayla Halverson



Cartel Oliver



Trillium Holsopple



Harper Park



Rosie Belcore



# CREATIVE TEAM



Mookey Van Orden



Jordan Westfall



Benjamin Borenstein



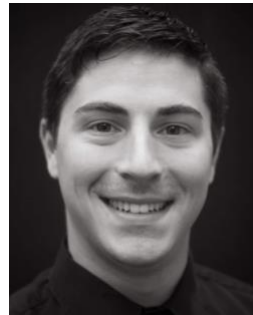
Blondean Young



Dominique Barr



Sonya Mangovski



Tyler Eighmey



Destynee Raines



Isaac Betters

To Know Her Was To Love Her 💙💙💙

It is with heavy hearts that we offer our dedication of *The Lion King Jr.* to Brexialee Torres-Ortiz.



My name is Mookey Van Oden-I am one of the co-directors of *The Lion King Jr.* and Brexi was a student of mine at Seymour Dual Language Academy. What I loved the most and will miss the most about her is the light she carried within her at all times and her ability to share it with everyone so easily.

Brexi was bright. Brexi was kind. Brexi was eager. Brexi was determined. Brexi was inspirational. And Brexi loved music and dance. I actually met Brexi in a musical theater class.

Brexi enjoyed time at the Boys and Girls Club of Syracuse where our production held its early rehearsals. All of us feel this resounding loss, in some way, and Brexialee should still be here with us today.

We dedicate this show to our children.  
To the hope that one day the kids of our city can and will be safe.  
To the hope that her memory will not be in vain.

We dedicate this show to Brexi.  
Always keep dancing, baby girl 💙💙💙







**STEP  
LIVELY  
KATE!**

WE ARE SO  
PROUD OF  
YOU!  
LOVE MOM,  
DAD, ROSE,  
AND  
GRANDMA



**BREAK A LEG, RORI!  
WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU!  
LOVE, MOMMY, DADDY & NANA <3**



## CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

**MOOKEY VAN ORDEN (Co-Director)** is an artist, writer, educator and activist in the Syracuse area. This past summer she directed *Jesus Christ Superstar* at CNY Playhouse with a cast of predominately women of color, set in 2020 during the George Floyd protests. Her next project after *Lion King Jr* is CNY Playhouse's *The Wolves*, which she is producing. During the day Mookey works for Promise Zone as a social emotional learning coach in the Lyncourt School district. She is INCREDIBLY grateful for the children in this production and for the production team. She hopes you enjoy *Lion King Jr.* as much as we enjoyed creating this story for you!

**JORDAN WESTFALL (Co-Director)** has proudly directed all five of Thanasis' first theatrical projects, which have included *Jesus, Son of Man* at The Everson Museum of Art, *The Eve of Divas & Reaching for the Stars* at Drumlins Country Club, *Highlights from Fugitive Songs Captured* at SubCat Studios, as well as the full production of Miller & Tysen's *Fugitive Songs* at the NYS Fairgrounds, which garnered *five* BroadwayWorld Regional Theatre Awards, including Best Musical, Production of the Year & Best Direction of a Musical – in the *Professional*, CNY division. Other directing credits include *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues* (Theatre Du Jour, seven SALT nominations including Best Director); The NYC premiere of *Best Beware My Sting* (5<sup>th</sup> Floor Theatre); and *Godspell* (Westhill High School). As an actor, his professional credits include Bernstein in *Dogfight* (5<sup>th</sup> Floor Theatre); Smee in *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Bristol Valley Theatre, BroadwayWorld Award nomination); Grandpa and others in *Pits! The Unauthorized Holes Musical* (Peoples Improv Theatre); William Barfée in *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual...Spelling Bee* (5<sup>th</sup> Floor Theatre); Standby for Jonah in *Jonah* (Sight & Sound Theatres); and Snail in *A Year With Frog & Toad* (Surflight Theatre) Jordan holds his B.F.A. in Acting from Marymount Manhattan College. Unyielding thanks to Mookey, Ben, Alex,

Sonya, Kim, Dominique, Tyler, Blondean, Lauren, Danny, Stacey, Carley, Josh, Auntie, Sam & Keith, along with everyone else who helped make this show possible! [www.jrwestfall.com](http://www.jrwestfall.com)

**BENJAMIN BORENSTEIN** (Music Director) is elated to continue his work with Thanasis Theatre Company as they expand with youth theatrical productions after the tremendous success of *Fugitive Songs*! Ben has music directed many youth productions across CNY and is currently the Director and Musical Director for the Lincoln Middle School production of *The Wiz*. After completing his master's degree in Arts Administration Ben became the new Education Department Coordinator at Red House Arts Center in downtown Syracuse where he oversees all educational programming in-house and offsite. He is also set to Music Direct the summer production of *Rock of Ages* for the Advanced Teen camp there. Ben has performed and music directed locally for over ten years and looks forward to each opportunity. While he would love to be here for the *Lion King* performances, he is simultaneously Music Directing and playing for *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* at the Museum of Intrigue. Thank you parents for providing transportation to and from rehearsals, it has been a joy to meet and work with your talented kids! As always, thank you Jordan, coincidentally my best friend and partner in theater. Enjoy the show!

**DOMINIQUE BARR** (Choreographer) is ecstatic to be choreographing again and incredibly blessed that *Lion King Jr* is the show that made that happen! Dominique grew up in Pasadena, CA and was apart of local children's theater, dance and her high school productions, which gave her a foundation for theatre that she carries with her to this day . The best part of being involved in this project is getting to share the magic of theatre with her daughter, Aurora (Young Nala) Dominique is currently the Assistant Director of School Age Child Care and Camp Evergreen at the Hal Welsh East Area YMCA. Thank you to Jordan and Thanasis Theatre for making our dreams a reality.

**BLONDEAN YOUNG** (Producer) is an actress, singer, writer, and director. Born and raised in Syracuse NY she graduated from Syracuse University with her Bachelor's in Fine Arts. She has appeared in Many plays in her hometown as well as in Off-Broadway shows. Right now she resides in Syracuse NY where she writes, teaches, and owns her own production company, BLAAC.

**DESTYNEE RAINES** (Makeup) Destynee is an actress/singer-songwriter who is determined to leave her mark on the world in the form of art. She debuted her first SAMMY nominated album back in 2020 titled "LOVE & ART " with some recent singles to follow presently in 2022. Her music is available to stream on all platforms. Destynee however is a Jack of all genres and master of none. While her pop/rnb career is a budding flower, she is dipping her toes back into her rock roots and has a new project punk called "NO BLUSH" which is also available to stream on all platforms. Now she is back digging into even deeper roots— musical theater and stage performance as well as stage makeup and (hopefully) directing soon. Now affiliated with BLAAC, she looks forward to a very creative future.

**TYLER EIGHMEY** (Asst. Music Director) is a classically trained tenor currently living in Syracuse, NY. Praised for his versatile voice, Tyler has sung in many venues and concerts, including musical theater, opera, recitals, and in churches around the country. Recently, he has focused on teaching as the choral director at Manlius Pebble Hill School and cantoring for churches around Syracuse. Tyler spends his time performing, directing, and stage managing when he's not teaching. Recent directing credits include *How to hug a Cactus*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Box* with MPH, *Aladdin KIDS* with Round Top Elementary, Miami Classical Music Festival's Pop-Up Concert Series and Opera Scenes concerts, an adaptation of Heinrich Marschner's *Der Vampyr* (2019) with Columbia Operatic Laboratory, *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* (2018), *Le 66* (2018), and *The Impresario* (2017) with Opera at USC.

**SONYA MANGOVSKI** (Costume Designer) graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC and Polimoda in Florence Italy. She went on to work in the fashion industry as a stylist, designer and consultant. After years in NYC, she returned to Syracuse where she was born and raised. She is currently a clinical social worker, after obtaining her master's degree from Syracuse University. She enjoys designing and working on local productions. She currently resides in Syracuse.







Special thanks to the Oneida Indian Nation for its support.

It is our privilege to be able to perform this production of *Disney's Lion King Jr.* on the indigenous land of the Haudenosaunee, specifically the Onondaga Tribe, firekeepers and the central base of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

