



Our Mission: Empower people with disabilities and their families through creative expression and sensory exploration.

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STEPVA CAST SPOTLIGHT: IMANI

April 30, 2022 by Brigid O'Leary



FREDERICKSBURG, VA—No royal lineage would exist if it weren't for the Queen Mum, and in Disney's *The Lion King*, that's Sarabi. Imani steps into that role for STEPVA, the local 501(c)3 non-profit that "empower people with disabilities and their families through creative expression and sensory exploration," as the organization stages Disney's *The Lion King, Kids!* this weekend.

Imani started singing as part of her middle school choir and has always enjoyed it, even though she hasn't had as many opportunities lately. The opportunity to audition for STEPVA's show provided her the chance not only to sing again but to do so with a movie for which she has an affinity.

"I wanted to audition because I really love to sing and I wanted to go back to my African roots," she said.

It's not hard to understand, then, why her favorite songs in the show are "One by one" and "He Lives in You." The songs allow her to blend her love of singing with her interest in her heritage.

“I enjoy singing in a different language. It really helps me picture myself in this African savanna,” she continued. “I enjoy singing in zulu for ‘One by One,’ ‘He lives in You,’ ‘Finale’ and ‘Bows,’ and in Swahili for ‘Hakuna Matata.’”

While she went into the experience thinking she might be cast as either Nala or Rafiki, Imani has connected with her character.

“It was surprising I got Sarabi, Simba’s mother,” she said, adding that, “I am kind of a mother figure because I like to take care of kids. I have been volunteering in SPRED for kids with disabilities and in my job exploration in high school I worked at Children of America and Headstart and I like to take care of kids. I want to study childcare and music in college.”

Until then, Imani’s able to continue with a cherished hobby. She describes her favorite part of the experience on being in the cast of Disney’s Lion King, Kids!, saying “I am really grateful that I am featured as a dancer as an african bird and being able to sing on stage again.”

Though the Sunday matinee is sold out, there are a few tickets remaining to see Imani take the stage on Saturday, April 30 at 7pm. The show is being staged at Fredericksburg Christian School, 9400 Thornton Rolling Road, Fredericksburg, Va., and there is a (virtual) live stream option is available for those who were unable to get tickets for the shows.

To purchase tickets for tonight’s show, click [HERE](#).

To purchase access to the live stream, click [HERE](#).

For more information or to donate, visit www.stepva.org.

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