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STEPVA CAST SPOTLIGHT: ALEXANDER SIEGLING, MATTHEW RUFFALO & HANNAH WAGES

April 10, 2022 by Brigid O'Leary



FREDERICKSBURG, VA— With three weeks left until show, STEPVA's rehearsals for its upcoming *Disney's The Lion King, Kids!* show continue apace, with the cast ramping up their work to master song lyrics, lines and dances. STEPVA is a local 501(c)3 non-profit that "empower[s] people with disabilities through creative expression and sensory exploration," and the show is the organization's second musical in as many years, the first licensed piece, and the largest undertaking both by size of cast and scale of the production.



Alexander Siegling

Alexander Siegling joins STEPVA in a big way, figuratively speaking, taking on the ensemble role of baby rhino in *Disney's The Lion King, Kids!* New to the organization, Siegling stated confidently that, "Yes, I am!" excited to be part of the cast, most of whom have known each other for years through STEPVA summer programs.

Youngest, smallest, and one of the newest members of the organization though he may be, Siegling is confident in his role—in the musical and the organization. He joined the cast because, as he said, he "likes lions" and the story in *The Lion King* and he's jumped right in, holding his own with the rest of the cast, indicating that he hasn't found any part of the show process particularly challenging so far. He's brave, too. When queried about his favorite character in the show, he paused to think about his answer before replying with a steady gaze and big, slightly mischievous smile. "Scar," he said, before adding that Scar's villain song, "Be Prepared," is his favorite song in the show as well.



Matthew Ruffalo

While Siegling is in his first foray into STEPVA, Matthew Ruffalo has been with the organization for five years, but Disney's *The Lion King, Kids!* marks his first musical as well. He will be prowling the scenes as one of the savanna's hyenas.

"I'm excited to be part of [Disney's] *The Lion King, Kids!* musical," said Ruffalo, adding that his favorite part of the show is getting to "hang out with my friends and teachers."

Though he's found it challenging to learn choreography, the experience so far is living up to his expectations and Ruffalo, whose size belies a gentle heart, said his favorite song is "He Lives in You."

"It's astonishing," he said, breaking out a favorite phrase to describe his experience with the musical.



Hannah Wages

Rounding out Cast B is Hannah Wages, who has been with STEPVA for nine years now, and is the first cast member to have also been part of last year's *A Special Covid-19*.

"Both are stressful," Wages said with laugh, when asked how the experience of being in *Disney's The Lion King, Kids!* compares to *A Special Covid-19*. This time last year, the cast had only just begun in-person rehearsals, while the current cast has been working together, in person, for more than month. Last year, Wages said, learning choreography over Zoom was more challenging but she's dancing more in *Disney's The Lion King, Kids!* and, admittedly, "dancing is not my strong suit."

Dancing may not come easy for Wages, who, like Ruffalo, will be donning the hyena costume, but she enjoys singing and that's one of her favorite aspects of being in a musical. The other, she says, are her friends.

"I love hanging out with everyone. It's the best part of rehearsal. It's not the show itself, it's the people."

Those prepared to see an astonishing show can come watch Siegling, Ruffalo, Wages, and the rest of the STEPVA cast perform *Disney's The Lion King, Kids!* on Saturday, April 30 at 7 p.m., and Sunday, May 1 at 3 p.m. Performances will take place at Fredericksburg Christian School, 9400 Thornton Rolling Rd., Fredericksburg, VA 22408. Tickets are \$10; children 5 and younger are free.

To purchase tickets click [HERE](#).

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

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