



Hon. George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 7 February, 2012

THE KING PREMIERES IN SYDNEY

NSW Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, George Souris, today announced that one of the most popular musicals in history, THE LION KING, will play Sydney's Capitol Theatre from December 2013.

"THE LION KING is a worldwide phenomenon. Since its Broadway premiere on November 13, 1997, 19 productions around the globe have been seen by more than 63 million people and grossed more than \$4.7 billion.

"Lion King is premiering its Australian season in Sydney.

"Last year the Premier and I had the pleasure of meeting with Thomas Schumacher, President of Disney Theatrical Group and Vice President /Manager Director Disney Theatrical Productions Australia James Thane, to discuss the opportunity.

"We wanted to ensure that Sydney would host one of the world's most enduring musical events," he said.

"Having world-class musicals like this open in Sydney is part of the NSW Government's strategy to have one of the world's leading events calendars.

"What we are seeing is that Sydney is fast becoming a city that producers worldwide are choosing to premiere their musicals.

"Audiences are responding incredibly well and there is certainly a demand for high quality productions that capture people's imagination."

Thomas Schumacher, Producer and President Disney Theatrical Productions said: "Australia – and Sydney in particular – have embraced our Disney stage musicals as warmly as audiences anywhere in the world and we are thrilled that THE LION KING is being invited back.

"We look forward to re-introducing Sydney to Julie Taymor's singular, captivating vision."

THE LION KING is an established tourism magnet internationally and here in Sydney. The last season ran for almost two years and played to 1.35 million people.

Mr Souris said that the 2013 production was expected to attract 50,000 visitors from interstate and overseas generating \$36 million in new money for NSW.

"Securing THE LION KING marks the seventh consecutive win for Sydney and ensures that from 2012-2014, Sydney theatres are full of high quality, first run West End, Broadway and world premiere productions," he said.

ABOUT THE LION KING

In its 15th year, THE LION KING remains ascendant, continuing to reign as a cultural phenomenon and one of the most popular stage musicals in the world. Since its Broadway premiere on November 13, 1997, 19 productions around the globe have been seen by more than 63 million people, grossed over \$4.7 billion and cumulatively have run a staggering 89 years. Produced by Disney Theatrical Productions (under the direction of Thomas Schumacher), THE LION KING is the seventh longest-running musical in Broadway history and one of only six productions in theatre history to play for ten years or more both on Broadway and in the West End. Translated into seven different languages (Japanese, German, Korean, French, Dutch, Mandarin, Spanish), the show has been performed in 15 different countries on five continents. THE LION KING can currently be seen on Broadway, on stages across North America, and in Tokyo, London's West End, Hamburg, Madrid and Sapporo.

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, making Taymor the first woman in theatrical history bestowed with the honor. 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.

On stage, Taymor's creative vision blends elements of African art and Broadway artisanship to depict anthropomorphic animal characters. Taymor, along with designer Michael Curry, has created hundreds of masks and puppets for THE LION KING. The book has been adapted by Roger Allers, who co-directed *The Lion King* animated feature, and Irene Mecchi, who co-wrote the film's screenplay. Other members of the creative team include: Steve Canyon Kennedy (sound design), Michael Ward (hair and makeup design), John Stefaniuk (associate director), Marey Griffith (associate choreographer), Clement Ishmael (music supervisor). Anne Quart serves as associate producer.

The Broadway score features Elton John and Tim Rice's music 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 the haunting ballad "Shadowland."
