

**THE IMPACT OF THE LION KING  
ON BEHALF OF COUNTRY –  
SOUTH AFRICA.**

[info@lebomproductions.com](mailto:info@lebomproductions.com)



**2026**



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# PART. 01

## Introduction

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# OVERVIEW

## Introduction



The international success of Disney's The Lion King Broadway productions has been a cultural phenomenon.



Significant economic and social catalyst for South African artists.



Focus on music composed by Lebo M, integral to the production's identity.



Exploration of how South African artists have earned foreign currency, supported their families, uplifted communities, and contributed to South Africa's GDP.



# PART. 02

## SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS IN LION KING PRODUCTIONS WORLDWIDE

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# EMPLOYMENT AND ROLES



## Artists Employed

Over 600 South African artists hired across international productions since 1997.

Artists employed in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

Since its debut, **over 5 000 South Africans** have been hired to perform in various global productions of *The Lion King*

The show's music producer, composer, and arranger, **Lebo M**, established an agreement with Disney to ensure South African talent is integral to every production to maintain the show's authentic sound.

## South African Cast Presence

- **Global Integration:** Almost every production worldwide typically includes **8 to 12 South Africans** among a cast of approximately 50 performers.
- **Broadway Beginnings:** The original Broadway production started with **six South Africans** in 1997; today, some international companies feature more than **20 South African members**.
- **Fully Local Productions:** In 2007, the first-ever production with an **entirely South African cast (53 performers)** and crew opened at the Teatro at Montecasino in Johannesburg to mark the show's 10th anniversary.

# EMPLOYMENT AND ROLES

## Roles

- Lead and ensemble performers.
- Vocalists, musicians, and dancers.

## Earnings and Remittances

- Artists earn higher wages abroad compared to local earnings.
- Substantial remittances sent back home to South Africa.

## Key Reserved Roles

Certain characters in the musical are consistently or exclusively played by South Africans to preserve the show's cultural foundation:

- **Rafiki:** This central role is almost exclusively "kept for women from South Africa". **Tshidi Manye** recently concluded a record-breaking 25-year run in this role on Broadway.
- **Simba:** Several South Africans have played the lead, including **Andile Gumbi**, **Brian Temba**, and **Nicholas Nkuna**.
- **Ensemble:** South Africans frequently fill roles as "antelope" and other ensemble characters that require specific choral styles and languages like **Zulu**, **Xhosa**, and **Setswana**.





# PART. 03

## THE ROLE OF LEBO M'S MUSIC

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# INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

## Authentic South African Music

Lebo M's compositions and arrangements are central to The Lion King production.

Blending traditional Xhosa, Zulu, and a bit of Setswana harmonies and rhythms.

## Demand for South African Talent

Music's success has driven demand for South African talent.

Creation of pathways for many artists to be hired.

## Global Cultural Expression

Elevated South African cultural expression on a global stage.  
Enhanced marketability and employability of South African performers.



# PART. 04

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

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# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## Improved Living Standards

Artists provide improved living standards for their families.

Access to better education, healthcare, and housing.

## Community Upliftment

Income generated by artists circulates within home communities.

Stimulates local economies, creates jobs, and supports social initiatives.



# CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA'S GDP



## Foreign Exchange Inflows

Remittances contribute to foreign exchange inflows.  
Bolsters the national economy.



## Cultural Export

Cultural export exemplifies the potential of creative industries as a significant contributor to GDP.  
Enhances South Africa's cultural brand, attracting tourism and international investment.





# PART. 05

## DEMONSTRATION OF CHANGE

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# CASE EXAMPLE

## South African Performer on Broadway

Performer earns an average annual salary of \$60,000 USD.



Significant portion sent home, supporting up to 5 family members.



Direct improvement in quality of life, funding education and healthcare projects.



Indirectly creates additional local employment through increased spending.





# PART. 06

## CONCLUSION

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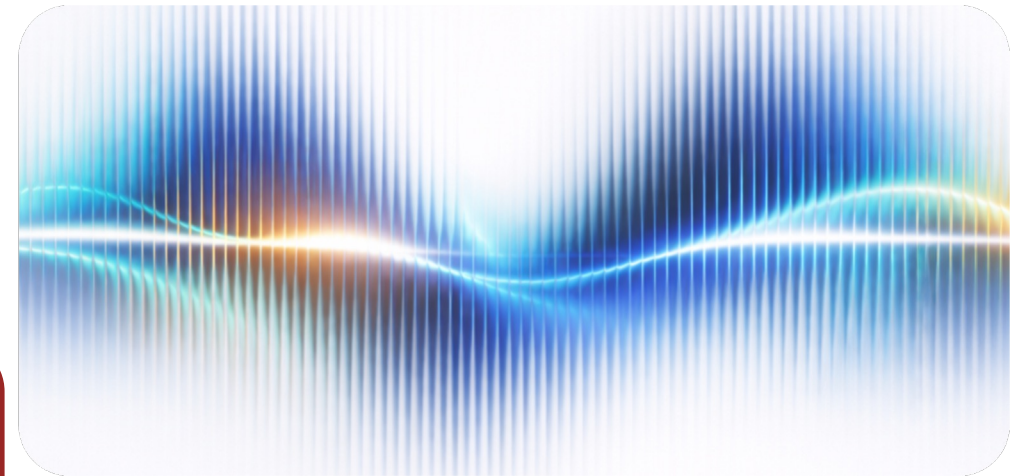
# SUMMARY

Employment of South African artists in The Lion King Broadway productions represents a powerful model of cultural export.

Artists earn foreign currency, enhancing lives of their families and communities.

Positive contribution to South Africa's economy.

Importance of investing in and promoting South African cultural assets for sustainable development.



**THANK YOU**

[info@lebomproductions.com](mailto:info@lebomproductions.com)



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