

BNS PRODUCTIONS

presents

Rory D. Sheriff's Award-Winning

BE A LION

The Generational Musical

Inspired by *The Wiz*



BNSPRODUCTIONS.ORG



BE A LION OFFICIAL VIP RECEPTION SPONSOR



Looking for a true Charlotte dining experience that captures the essence of Southern comfort? At Mert's Heart & Soul, we serve up love on a plate, with mouthwatering favorites, soulful hospitality, and a space that makes you feel right at home.

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Rory D. Sheriff's

BE A LION

Written, Produced & Directed
by
Rory D. Sheriff for BNS Productions

Music Director
Sound Design
Rob Bowser

Lyrics By
Chiletta Marie
Juan Sessoms
Naudia Harrison
TenNo Mack
Arsena
Rory D. Sheriff

Music By
Rob Bowser
Juan Sessoms
TenNo Mack

Costume Designer
Dee Abdullah

Choreographer
LaTanya Johnson

Makeup Artist
Rose Young

Scenic Design
Lighting Designer
Jennifer O'Kelly

Production Mgr.
Ericka Cornick

Education & Outreach Dir.
Asst. Choreographer
Jermaine Nakia Lee

Stage Manager
Aneesah Taylor

Props/Set Dressing
Chiletta Marie
Rory D. Sheriff

Production Assistants
SJ Swilley
Anissa Knight

Operations Manager
Music Coach
Chiletta Marie

Photographer
Châu Nguyễn

Videographer
Josh Sweat Nwakerendu

Graphic Design
Marketing
Olive Al
Chiletta Marie
Rory D. Sheriff
Jermaine Nakia Lee
Ericka Cornick

BNS
Ambassadors

Supported in part with funding from ASC

belk





RESTORE THE ROAR IN OZ!

In 1979, the whole world danced and sang along as Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, and a star-studded cast eased on down the road to see The Wiz - but no one ever questioned, "What happened next?"

With the Wiz exposed as a fraud and no one to rule over Oz, the once dazzling Emerald City is now filled with chaos and crime. To make matters worse, Eveline, the Wicked Witch of the West had a secret love child, Damneesha, who is hell-bent on avenging her mother's death.

What will become of the four friends, Lion, Dorothy, Tin Man, and Scarecrow? Who will step up to lead the people of Oz? Who better than the King of the Jungle?

We all face times in our lives when we question if we have the courage to lead. Be a Lion answers that question, and more. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the Land of Oz, as we continue the story in Rory D. Sheriff's Be a Lion.



MEET THE CAST OF RORY D. SHERIFF'S BE A LION!

(in order of appearance)



PJ Barnes
The Wiz



Chiletta Marie
Damneesha



Rae Styles
Cheetah/Nick



Cecilia McNeill
Crab #1/Agent/Leroy Crow/Poppy



Marsha Perry
Crab #2/Desiree/Agent/Judy Crow/Poppy



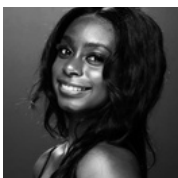
Nasha Shandri
Miles



Tim Bradley
Lion



Robert Rankin
Agent/Background Vocals



Angela Umoh
Agent/Smokey Joe Crow



Kellie Williams
Addapere/Squirrel



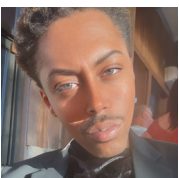
K. Alana Jones
Ladawn



Graham Williams
Tin Man



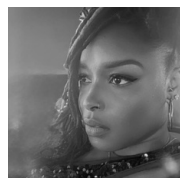
LaTonya Lewis
Teenie



Clay Stephenson
Scarecrow



Kina Thompson
Dorothy



Crystal Bristow
Background Vocals

CAST BIOS

(in order of appearance)

PJ Barnes (The Wiz) is the Co-Founder/ Co-Owner of ScrewUp TV, a film production company. For the past 17 years, PJ has focused on producing short films, sketch comedy, web series, and feature films. PJ's love for the arts and performance has allowed him to perform on stage in the form of plays, musicals, dance performances, stand-up comedy, and improv! He's always had a passion for teaching and helping others, which led him to teach Acting, Film, and Hip Hop dance classes for over a decade, as well as directing and choreographing over 25 musicals across the country PJ looks forward playing "The Wiz", and to working with such an amazingly talented group in "Be A Lion" and hopes to help bring to life an amazing story out to the world.

Chiletta Marie (Damneesha) Here is a version about half the length, still reflecting all key roles and impact: Chiletta Marie is a Certified Growth Coach, Life Coach, and Corporate Trainer with over 25 years of experience helping individuals and teams gain clarity, embrace technology, and grow with purpose. As the founder of Ignite HER Life, she has guided hundreds of women in reclaiming confidence and direction, bringing that same insight into organizational and creative environments. Her career spans Marketing, Leadership, Arts, Training & Development, and Project Management. She serves as Director of Creative Development for a Mental Health and Home Health Care company and as Operations Manager, Primary Songwriter, and Music Coach for Be A Lion, an award-winning musical by BNS Productions. Known for her communication, creativity, and problem-solving strengths, Chiletta is also an award-winning writer, speaker, and lifelong performer.

Rae Styles (Cheetah/Nick) a proud Charlotte native, Rae Styles, known as the "Queen City Son," brings over 20 years of experience in entertainment to the stage. A multi-talented actor, music producer, comedian, and radio personality, Rae's dynamic presence and authentic storytelling have made him a standout voice in the Carolinas' creative scene. Whether behind the mic or under the spotlight, Rae continues to captivate audiences with his passion, humor, and hometown pride.

Cecilia McNeill (Crab #1/Agent/Leroy Crow/Poppy) is delighted to be a part of this amazing cast again as a part of the ensemble mainly as Crab 1. Previously starred in the film A World Alone that can be found on Patreon. She has also worked on several plays with BNS such as Speakeasy and Black Nativity. She won Best in the Nest for Best Actress in 2024 for Kudzu: A Story of Belonging with Mixed Metaphors Production. She hopes that you enjoy your journey back to Oz!

Marsha Perry (Crab#2/Desiree/Agent/Judy Crow/Poppy) is an accomplished actress and self-taught dancer with over 20 years of experience in the performing arts. Her journey began at a young age, driven by a passion for dance and a relentless dedication to mastering her craft. Over the years, she has developed a versatile dance style that seamlessly blends contemporary, hip-hop, and modern techniques—earning recognition and accolades through numerous performances and competitions. In addition to her dance career, Marsha has established herself as a dynamic actress known for bringing authenticity and emotional depth to every role she portrays. Her ability to embody diverse characters and connect with audiences has made her a standout talent both on stage and on screen. Committed to continuous growth, Marsha frequently collaborates with fellow artists and participates in workshops to expand her creative range. Outside of performing, she finds joy in teaching and mentoring aspiring dancers, sharing her passion for movement and expression.

CAST BIOS

(in order of appearance)

Nasha Shandri (Miles) is excited to rejoin the production, "Be A Lion". In 2022, she took on the role as Dorothy bringing a slight edginess to the character. Now she has taken on Miles. She states, "I love Miles' energy and unwavering belief in Lion. We all can use a friend like Miles in our lives." Nasha comes off the heels of Matthew's Playhouse production of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun" and Charlotte's Off Broadway, "The Hamilton Audition" by Suzanne Lambert. Some of her most recent stage credits include Joe Turner's Come and Gone (BNS Productions) where she was awarded MTA's 2024 Outstanding Supporting Actress, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical (Children's Theatre of Charlotte) and Shakin the Mess Outta of Misery (Rock Hill Theatre). When not on stage, on set, Nasha spends her time helping others remember stories by empowering them to gain control of their health through different modalities. Join her on IG @nashashandri to receive positive, empowering messages, tongue-in-cheek jokes, occasional health suggestions, and creative projects!

Tim Bradley (Lion) is a versatile actor and performer. Tim began singing as a young child and his talents have flourished over the years. His stage credits include roles in August Wilson's Jitney, Two Trains Running, Fences, and Ma Rainey's Black Bottom. He has done leading roles in Brand New Sheriff Productions' musical Be A Lion, Boys to Baghdad, and Purlie. A Walk In My Shoes, Unfinished Women Cry in No Man's Land While a Bird Dies in A Gilded Cage, and The Bluest Eye are a few other notable plays he has performed in. He has held leading roles in the musicals Ain't Misbehavin and For the Love of Harlem. His film credits include Athena: Goddess of War, Familiar Eyes, Innocent Victims, Case 26, and Dying To Live. There is so much more to come from his amazing talents. He is a native of South Carolina and a graduate of South Carolina State University.

Robert Rankin (Agent/Background Vocals) From 2004 to 2022, Robert has performed with the CPCC Opera Theater being cast in a number of productions as a chorus member and ensemble member as well as several principal roles some of which include the Father in "Seven Deadly Sins", Don Alphonso in "Cosi Fan Tutti", Spoletta in "Tosca", and El Remendado in "Carmen". Other theatre credits in the Charlotte area include Mike in CPCC's production of "Freaky Friday", Millie in Three Bone Theatre's production of "Toni Stone", Medgat Evers in Daye Light LLC production of "By Any Other Name: An Opus for James Baldwin". Robert has also gained stage managing credits for the CP Opera Theater productions of "Old Maid and a Thief", "The Medium", "Hansel & Gretel", and Three Bone Theatre's production of "The Glorious World of Crowns Kinks and Curls" as well as assistant stage manager credits for Three Bone Theatre's "Thoughts of a Colored Man", Don Hall's production of "The Big Hustle" and Theatre Charlotte's production of "Every Brilliant Thing". Additionally, Robert has worked as a production assistant with several local theater productions, most recently BNS Productions of "The Piano Lesson", "Clydes", "Boys of Bagdad", "Joe Turner's Come and Gone", Free Reign theatre's production of "A Soldiers Play", Rock Hill Theatre's production of "Shakin the Mess out of Misery" and Theatre Charlotte's production of "Mountain Top".

Angela Umoh (Agent/Smokey Joe Crab) portrays Smokey Joe and a CIA agent in this production. After first discovering her love for theater as a freshman in high school, she is thrilled to return to the stage as a senior to continue the journey she once began. Though not in a lead role, Angela finds great fulfillment in being part of the ensemble—an opportunity that allows her to reenter the acting world, explore new sides of herself, and build confidence on stage. At just sixteen, she feels deeply grateful to perform alongside such talented individuals, whose artistry has inspired her personal and creative growth.

CAST BIOS

(in order of appearance)

Kellie Williams (Addapearl/Squirrel) is Charlotte-based actor, singer, songwriter, poet. Kel is a graduate of Northwest School of the Arts in Charlotte, Central Piedmont Community College, and Queens University of Charlotte (BA Music). Favorite credits include Mrs. Lovett in Sweeney Todd (QUC); Miriam in Jaja's African Hair Braiding (Three Bone Theatre); Carmen in Carmen (CPCC); Julius Win-field in Bard Fiction (Shakespeare Carolina). This is her first BNS production. Kel wants to thank BNS for this opportunity, and her family and friends for their love and support!

K. Alana Jones (LaDawn) originally from Huntsville, Alabama by way of Columbia, SC. Involved in the arts from a young age. She sang in church from age 6 to 18 and went on to major in vocal performance at South Carolina State University. 2016 she started in ensemble work for stage plays and continues to grow as an actress. She's been in shows like Jacques Brel is alive and well and living in Paris, Be a Lion, Sistas, Speakeasy, Leaving Watermaine, For the Love of Harlem, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, A Raisin in the Sun to name a few. From singing, to dancing, acting, to modeling, activism ,to creating Alana lives for entertaining and giving a message. Her motto is "the hardest decisions in life are deciding which bridge to burn and which to cross. While you debate keep giving your magic.

Graham Williams (Tinman) is a thrilled to reprise his role as the Tin Man in Rory D. Sheriff's Be a Lion. He has worked on numerous plays at many theaters over his career, including: August Wilson's The Piano Lesson (BNS Productions), Speakeasy (BNS Productions), A Soldier's Play (Free Reign Theatre), Detroit 67 (Theatre Charlotte), Ma Rainey's Black Bottom - Slow Drag (BNS Productions), Fences - Lyons (BNS Productions), Jitney - Booster (BNS Productions), Be A Lion - Tin Man (BNS Productions), Boys to Baghdad - McClain (BNS Productions); Pipeline - Xavier (Three Bone Theatre); The Meeting -Malcolm X (W. Group Productions); Blood Ties - Bishop (Legacy Theatre Productions).Graham would like to thank his family for loving and supporting him. Motivational Quote: "Excellence Must Be Pursued." -Vince Lombardi.

Latonya Lewis (Teenie) humbly credits her theatre and singing ability to her parents Deborah and Grady for seeing her light and supporting her dreams, and to her son Reginald and grandchildren Skyler and Kyle for being her inspiration to continue pursuing her dreams. She also credits and thanks BNS Productions for allowing her to use her talents on major platforms. Much Love to her cast mates for supporting her in this production. Peace, Love, and Blessings to everyone involved.

Clayton Stephenson (Scarecrow) is delighted to be performing in this amazing BNS Production of "Be A Lion." Clayton is an aspiring Singing artist/performer and is no stranger to the stage, he has performed in and around the Charlotte & triad area including the Holton (Cpcc), Blumenthal, the Booth PH, Duke energy theatre, the National thespian festival, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Theatre Charlotte.

CAST BIOS

(in order of appearance)

Kina Thompson (Dorothy) Seasoned vocalist, actress, and live performer with 35 + years of professional experience across diverse musical genres and theatrical productions. Award-winning artist with proven ability to connect authentically with audiences in both intimate venues and large-scale productions. Experienced songwriter and musical storyteller who brings depth and versatility to solo concerts, ensemble work, musical theater, and dramatic acting. Known for compelling performance choices and effective collaboration with directors, musicians, and fellow performers throughout the creative process.

Crystal Bristow (Background Vocals) Seasoned vocalist, actress, and live performer with 35 + years of professional experience across diverse musical genres and theatrical productions. Award-winning artist with proven ability to connect authentically with audiences in both intimate venues and large-scale productions. Experienced songwriter and musical storyteller who brings depth and versatility to solo concerts, ensemble work, musical theater, and dramatic acting. Known for compelling performance choices and effective collaboration with directors, musicians, and fellow performers throughout the creative process.