

THE LION



By Benjamin Scheuer
Directed by Sean Daniels & Alex Stenhouse



2022/2023
PLAY GUIDE



ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY

SEAN DANIELS 

THE KASSER FAMILY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GERI WRIGHT 

MANAGING DIRECTOR

ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY IN ASSOCIATION WITH DANIELLE TARENTO
PRESENTS

THE LION

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY
BENJAMIN SCHEUER

CO-PRODUCED WITH CINCINNATI PLAYHOUSE IN THE PARK

STAGE MANAGER
DOM RUGGIERO*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
MYKEL MARIE HALL

SCENIC & COSTUME DESIGNER
SIMON KENNY

LIGHTING DESIGNER
EMMA CHAPMAN

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER
WILLIAM KIRKHAM 

SOUND DESIGNER
ANDREW JOHNSON

ADDITIONAL CASTING
JUDY BOWMAN, CSA

DIRECTED BY
SEAN DANIELS AND ALEX STENHOUSE

Special thanks to Goodspeed Opera House, Weston Playhouse, the Johnny Mercer Foundation, and Geffen Playhouse.

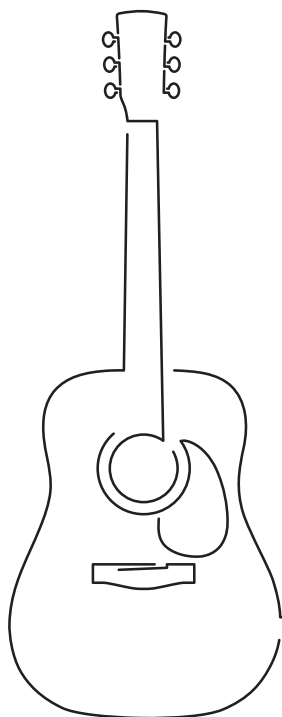
Originally Produced in the United States by the Manhattan Theatre Club on June 10, 2014
Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director Barry Grove, Executive Producer

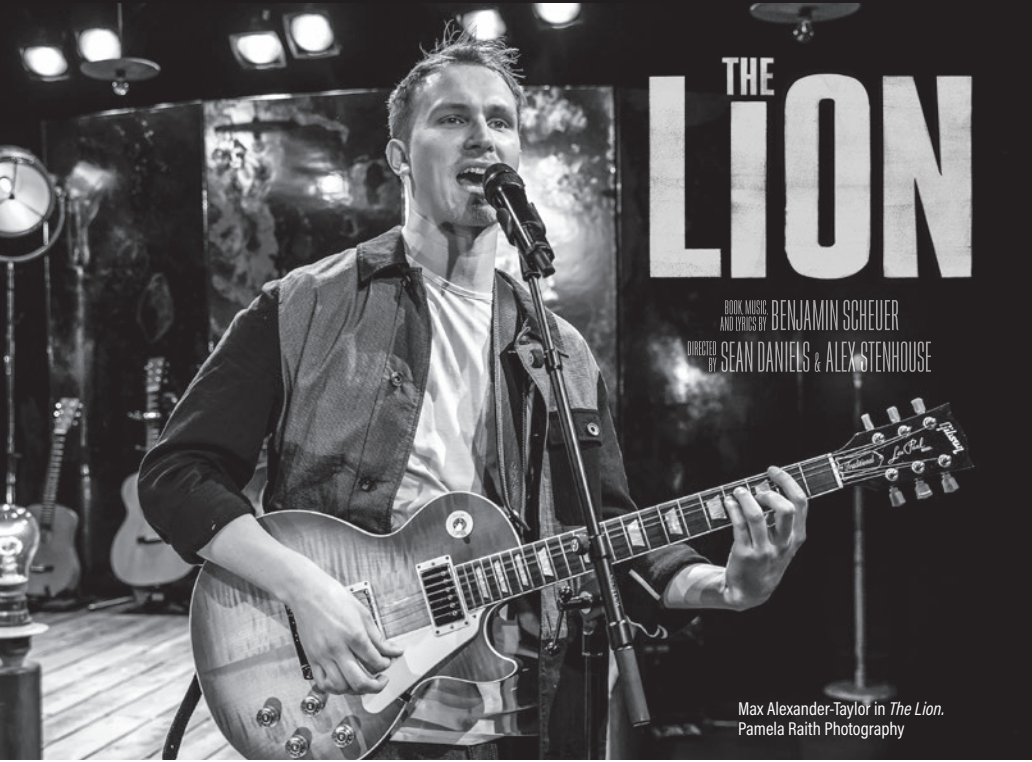
**Denotes members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

PRODUCTION SPONSOR: **SHIRLEY ESTES**

2022/2023 SEASON SPONSOR: **I. MICHAEL AND BETH KASSER**

1. Cookie-tin Banjo
2. When We Get Big
3. Three Little Cubs
4. Weather The Storm
5. White Underwear
6. Saint Rick
7. Lovin' You Will Be Easy
8. Laugh
9. Build A Bridge
10. A Surprising Phone-call
11. Invisible Cities
12. When This Thing's Over
13. Golden Castle Town
14. Dear Dad
15. The Lion
16. Cookie-tin Banjo reprise





Traditional music theater scores are said to need a good old-fashioned “I want” song – remember “Wouldn’t it be Lovely” from *My Fair Lady*:

All I want is a room somewhere
Far away from the cold night air
With one enormous chair
Oh, wouldn’t it be lovely?

Or maybe you are more familiar with “If I Were a Rich Man” from *Fiddler on the Roof*:

I’d build a big, tall house with rooms by the dozen
Right in the middle of the town
A fine tin roof with real wooden floors below
There would be one long staircase just going up
And one even longer coming down
And one more leading nowhere, just for show

Finally, Walt Disney gave us Snow White and her “I’m Wishing”:

I’m wishing
 (I’m wishing)
 For the one I love
 To find me
 (To find me)
 Today

These are all wonderful examples; historic, for sure and classic. But maybe what is needed in the midst of a slightly more ... nuanced ... world is something akin to what Benjamin Scheuer gives us in *The Lion*. Scheuer tells us “Ben’s” wish in the third line, “There is nothing I want more than to play like him.” The “him” in question is his father, who, “in another life would have been a musician.” Young Ben, age 11, adores his father, especially when they are making music together. But, like so many other stories of fathers and sons, these wants and adorations change, and sometimes disappear. And, so when Ben’s father gets angry and walks away from him after a bad report card when he is 14, Ben’s want changes: he doesn’t want to be like his father anymore.

Unlike Eliza Doolittle, Teyve, or Snow White, who only have one opportunity to articulate their desires, Ben articulates his evolving wants throughout *The Lion*. He wants to be a better communicator, he wants to make noise, he wants to disappear, he wants to go away, and, ultimately, he wants “this thing” to go away.

We won’t give away the plot details, but the want at the heart of Scheuer’s play is timeless. As Ben grapples with his family (including his mother and brothers), his new love, and eventually himself, his path is not straightforward. What we experience as the journey unfolds is joy and grief, intimate and universal. While there is tragedy in Ben’s life, as there is in all lives, he discovers that great things can come from awful things, and that to heal devastating scars, it takes self-discovery and the unquestioning love from family.

The classic musical gives the central character an opportunity to clearly announce what their want is, usually in the first act. After this pronouncement, the character spends the rest of the evening in pursuit; obstacles abound, but by the end, we usually hear another version: the want achieved and a happy ending. In the case of *The Lion*, we do not experience that usual cycle. The foundation of the piece is one character, surrounded by guitars, telling us a story. In the midst of Ben trying to figure out his wants, we are privy to the representation of the many kinds of wants we also might have experienced: hope, honesty, sadness, grief, and happiness. We lean in to listen closely, to discover our own selves in his journey. No razzle dazzle big numbers here – instead we receive Ben’s life as we would that of a close friend whispering to us their fears about the future. As you listen to the “I Want” songs and needs expressed throughout *The Lion*, take a minute to consider your own desires. What are you doing to make them become a reality?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

1. Ben used family, community, and music to get through this difficult time in his life. What helps you "Weather the Storm"? Who has been there for you through the darkest time of your life?
2. Have you ever had a time in your life when you struggled to communicate with someone? What strategies did you use to overcome these obstacles?
3. Music is a powerful tool. What songs or types of music are therapeutic to you? What's your go-to song when you're feeling down? What song pumps you up and makes you feel powerful?
4. Ben's determination resulted in him learning to play the guitar and becoming a musician. What's something in your life that you're determined to do regardless of the challenge?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Ben's dad lashes out the way he does early in the show?
2. How do Ben's attempts at communication with his dad evolve through the show? Can you think of someone in your life with whom your communication has evolved over time?
3. What do you think is meant by "It's not the roar that makes the lion, it's the pride?"
4. Are there moments in the show where Ben's musical choices surprise you?
5. How would you describe Ben's storytelling style? How do you think this style serves the material of the show?
6. *The Lion* reminds us that great things can come from challenging times. Do you agree with this statement? Have you found that there have been moments in your life where you look back and find this statement to be true? Are there other things you think *The Lion* is about?