The choreography for “The Lion King” mixes African, Caribbean, modern, hip-hop and ballet.

Wayne State alum helps bring circle of life to the stage in popular ‘Lion King’ musical

BY URSULA WATSON
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The Oscar-winning Disney film “The Lion King” won over moviegoers in 1994 with its wonderful storyline, rich animation and uplifting musical score.

The tale of a lion cub destined to be king was made into a Broadway musical three years later (it plays the Detroit Opera House starting Wednesday). And like the movie, it has enjoyed major success, winning six Tony Awards in 1998.

One of those coveted Tony Awards went to Garth Fagan for best choreography. He also earned a prestigious Laurence Olivier Award in 2000. The 72-year-old Jamaican native, who moved to the United States in the 1960s when he was 20, is a Wayne State University alum and went on to become director of Detroit’s All-City Dance Company. Fagan also was the principal soloist and choreographer for Detroit Contemporary Dance Company and Dance Theatre of Detroit.

He choreographed for renowned New York-based dance companies Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Dance Theatre of Harlem, earned a Guggenheim Fellowship and was a Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Fellow in 1996.

The founder of New York’s Garth Fagan Dance says he blended many styles of dance to tell the story of “The Lion King.” The choreography of the musical is a blend of African, Caribbean,