



Disney Theatrical Productions Announces



To Launch North American Tour

Following Premiere at Paper Mill Playhouse

February 4 – March 7, 2021

*Re-Imagined New Production Directed by Schele Williams
and Choreographed by Camille A Brown*

New York, NY - Disney Theatrical Productions (under the direction of Thomas Schumacher) proudly announces the launch of a new North American tour of Elton John and Tim Rice's Tony®-winning Broadway smash *Aida*, following the premiere at Paper Mill Playhouse, February 4 – March 7, 2021.

The production will play Charlotte, Chicago, Fort Worth, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Nashville, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., among other cities to be announced.

To receive news about the *Aida* North American tour, please sign-up for email alerts at AidaOnTour.com. For information on the Paper Mill run, visit PaperMill.org.

The new production, updated and re-imagined, retains the beloved Tony and Grammy®-winning score and features a book revised by David Henry Hwang, who co-authored the acclaimed original production with Linda Woolverton and Robert Falls.

The new *Aida* is directed by Schele Williams (a member of the original Broadway cast) and choreographed by Tony-nominee Camille A. Brown. Sets and costumes are by seven-time Tony winner Bob Crowley, and lighting is by six-time Tony winner Natasha Katz, who both won Tonys for their work on *Aida* in 2000. The music department includes Tony Award-recipient Jason Michael Webb (musical supervision), Tony Honor recipient Michael McElroy (vocal arrangements and co-incidental arranger), Jim Abbott (orchestrations) and Tony-winner Zane Mark (dance arrangements).

Casting will be announced later this year.

A passionate and timeless story for today's audiences, *Aida* is the compelling tale of star-crossed lovers belonging to feuding nations, torn between their conflicted loyalties to their countries and to each other. With its stirring contemporary score and its powerful love story, *Aida* reveals that we have the power to change history, but only when we make brave choices and embrace our destiny.

Aida, which opened at the Palace Theatre on March 23, 2000, went on to become one of the biggest hits of its decade, closing in its 5th year on Broadway on September 5, 2004 after nearly 2000 performances. It received five Tony nominations, winning for Score, Set, Lighting and Actress. A tour played 53 North American cities from 2001 to 2003.

Its worldwide reach is greater still. Nine replica productions played 20 countries in 14 languages.

"Aida is in my DNA in ways I had never imagined until I began the journey for this production," said Schele Williams. "I have a rich history with the show that I am very proud of, but when I recently made some discoveries about the history of its time period, the show broke open for me. It truly is the butterfly effect; subtle shifts have taken a story I love and turned it into an adventure I can't wait for audiences to discover. David Henry Hwang has crafted a book that truly shapes this journey and Elton John and Tim Rice's score is the glorious foundation we have built upon. I am thrilled to be in collaboration with David Henry Hwang, Camille Brown, Jason Michael Webb, Bob Crowley, Natasha Katz, Michael McElroy, Zane Mark, Jim Abbott and the Sirs, Tim Rice and Elton John. All extraordinary storytellers unified in vision to revive a musical that is deeply meaningful to all of us."

"The classic tale of *Aida* has touched audiences across cultures and time," said David Henry Hwang. "I'm thrilled to revisit the show we created twenty years ago, so this epic love story can speak even more powerfully to audiences today."

The show's producer Thomas Schumacher, President & Producer Disney Theatrical Productions said, "Schele Williams, David Henry Hwang and the team have cracked the show open in new ways to bring the story into today's world while honoring what fans have cherished for 20 years: rich characters, gorgeous designs and those extraordinary songs."

In re-visiting the work, the *Aida* creative team saw an opportunity to allow history to more fully inform the story and, by doing so, to be more of today.

Director Williams researched *Aida's* time period extensively, making discoveries about the musical's setting that have fueled the work in new

ways. These revelations have allowed for subtle changes to the show's plot while retaining the beloved score, characters and iconic imagery.

Elton John (Music) The monumental career of international singer/songwriter and performer, Elton John, has spanned more than three decades. Since launching his first tour in 1970, Elton has delivered over 4,000 performances in more than 80 countries. He is one of the top-selling solo artists of all time, with 1 diamond, 40 platinum or multi-platinum, and 23 gold albums and more than 300 million records sold worldwide. The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences had awarded Elton multiple Grammy Awards, including the Grammy Legend Award. In the early 1990s, Elton collaborated with lyricist Tim Rice on the soundtrack for *The Lion King*, winning him an Academy Award. The album produced two top-selling, award-winning singles: "Can You Feel The Love Tonight" and "Circle of Life." The Tony Award-winning Broadway productions of *The Lion King* and *Aida* both awarded Elton with Grammy Awards for Best Musical Show Album. *Billy Elliot* was nominated for a record-tying 15 Tony Awards and won 10, including Best Musical. In 1992, Elton established the Elton John AIDS Foundation, which today is one of the leading nonprofit HIV/AIDS organizations. In 1998, the Queen of England knighted him Sir Elton John, CBE. In 2004, Elton received the Kennedy Center Honor for his lifetime contributions to American culture and excellence through the performing arts. In 2003, Elton was honored as the first recipient of the prestigious BRITs Icon Award. Elton announced the 'Farewell Yellow Brick Road' tour at New York's Gotham Hall in January 2018. Encompassing 5 continents, and over 350 dates, this 3-year-long tour started in September 2018 and marks his retirement from touring after more than 50 years on the road. In May 2019 it was named Billboard's Top Rock Tour. 2019 also saw the release of the critically acclaimed 'Rocketman' and global bestselling autobiography, 'Me'. An epic fantasy musical motion picture of Elton's life 'Rocketman' has been a box office smash, taking close to \$200m at the box office, and has already won two Golden Globe Awards including Best

Original Song. It has also garnered nominations for three Critics' Choice Awards, four BAFTA nominations, an Oscar nomination for Best Original Song and its soundtrack has also been nominated for a GRAMMY Award.

Tim Rice (Lyrics) has worked in music, theatre and films since 1965 when he met Andrew Lloyd Webber, a fellow struggling songwriter. Rather than pursue Tim's ambitions to write rock or pop songs they turned their attention to Andrew's obsession – musical theatre. Their first collaboration (lyrics by Tim, music by Andrew) was based on the life of Dr. Thomas Barnardo, the Victorian philanthropist, *The Likes Of Us*. Their next three works together were much more successful – *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*. Tim has since worked with other distinguished popular composers such as Elton John (*The Lion King*, *Aida*), Alan Menken (*Aladdin*, *King David*, *Beauty and the Beast*), Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson (*Chess*), and Stuart Brayson (*From Here To Eternity*). He also wrote two songs with the late Freddie Mercury, featured on Freddie's album *Barcelona* with Montserrat Caballé. He has recently written new material with Sir Elton for the 2019 release of *The Lion King* as he did with Alan Menken for the 2017 release of *Beauty and the Beast*. He has won several awards (an EGOT, etc.), mainly for the wrong thing or for simply turning up.

David Henry Hwang (Book) Stage works include the plays *M. Butterfly*, *Yellow Face*, *Chinglish*, *Golden Child*, *The Dance and the Railroad*, and *FOB*, as well as books for the Broadway musicals *Aida* (co-author), *Flower Drum Song* (2002 revival) and *Disney's Tarzan*. His latest show, *Soft Power*, written with composer Jeanine Tesori, premiered at Center Theatre Group and the Public Theater, and was named Best Musical of 2019 by the *Wall Street Journal*. Hwang is a Tony Award winner and three-time nominee, a three-time OBIE Award winner, a two-time Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and was inducted in 2018 into the Theatre Hall of Fame. He is America's most-produced living opera librettist, whose works have been honored with two Grammy Awards, and was a Writer/Producer for four seasons on the Golden Globe-

winning television series *The Affair*. Hwang serves as Head of Playwriting at Columbia University School of the Arts.

Bob Crowley (Scenic & Costume Design) Designs for the National Theatre include *The History Boys* and *Carousel* (Tony Awards); for the RSC over twenty-five productions including *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*; for Broadway *Disney's Aladdin*, *Aida* (Tony Award), *Tarzan*, *Mary Poppins* (Tony Award), *The Year of Magical Thinking*, *Coast of Utopia* (Tony Award) and *Once* (Tony Award). Other designs include *My Name is Lucy Barton*, *The Inheritance*, *An American in Paris* (Broadway/London/Paris/Tony Award/Olivier Award), *The Audience* (West End/Broadway), *Skylight* (West End/Broadway), *Sing Street* (Broadway). He received The Royal Designer for Industry Award and the Robert L.B. Tobin Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatrical Design.

Natasha Katz (Lighting Design) has designed extensively for theatre, opera, dance, concerts and permanent lighting installations around the world. She is a six-time Tony Award winner whose recent Broadway credits include: *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, *All My Sons*, *Burn This*, *The Prom*, *Frozen*, *Meteor Shower*, *Springsteen on Broadway*, *Hello, Dolly!* (starring Bette Midler), *Cats*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *School of Rock*, *An American in Paris*, *Aladdin*, *Skylight*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Once*, *Follies*, *The Coast of Utopia: Salvage*, and *Aida*. Recent dance designs include: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Tryst* for The Royal Ballet, all choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon.

Schele Williams (Director) is a Brooklyn-based director committed to cultivating new musicals, as well as directing and producing devised work. She has directed at numerous regional theatres across the country and New Works festivals including NAMT, NYMTF and Theatreworks Palo Alto. Schele re-conceived and directed the 2017/2018 *Motown* national tour. Her Broadway credits include *Motown The Musical* (Associate director), *Rent* (associate choreographer and actress) Broadway, National and International touring companies. Passionate about pairing social justice

with the arts, Schele has directed numerous Broadway events including: *The People's State of the Union* (starring Common, Andra Day, Mark Ruffalo, John Legiuzamo, Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes), *Uprising of Love* (starring Sting and Patti LuPone) for global equality, *Defying Inequality*, and *From Broadway to Bourbon Street*. She is the director for the NYU Center of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging's devised plays and workshops for Fortune 500 companies. In addition, Schele is a 19-year member of the Broadway Inspirational Voices and serves as Chairman of the Board. Fun fact, when Schele was an actress she was Nehebka in the original Broadway cast of *Aida*.

Camille A. Brown (Choreographer) is an award-winning choreographer, director, and dance educator. Her Broadway credits include *Choir Boy* (nominee: Tony and Drama Desk Awards), *Once on This Island* (nominee: Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and Chita Rivera Awards), and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Her other theatre and opera credits include *For Colored Girls* (The Public Theater), *Porgy & Bess* (Metropolitan Opera), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare in the Park, Audelco Award Winner), *Toni Stone* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *tick, tick...BOOM!* (Encores!) *Bella* (Lucille Lortel Nominee, Audelco Award Winner), *Fortress of Solitude* (Lucille Lortel Nominee) and *ink* at The Kennedy Center (Camille A. Brown & Dancers). She made her television debut with "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert" (NBC) and her feature film debut in the soon-to-be-released *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Netflix). Upcoming projects include *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (City Center Encores!) and *Soul Train The Musical* (2021). Brown will make her directorial debut with *Ain't Misbehavin'* at Westport Country Playhouse in July 2020.

Jason Michael Webb (Musical Supervision) is a composer, lyricist, musical director, producer and arranger. Webb served as Musical Director of the six-time Grammy Award-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle and his arrangement of BTC's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was featured at the 2013

inauguration of President Barack Obama. Mr. Webb wrote music and lyrics for Kenny Leon's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (The Public Theater). His writing can also be heard on the hit TV series "Empire" (FOX), Netflix film *Juanita*, recording projects and original musicals, including the new South African musical *WiLDFLOWER* (currently in development with NBT/Apollo Theater). For his work on the play *Choir Boy* (MTC), Mr. Webb received a 2019 Special Tony Award and a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Original Music. Webb served as Musical Director of the Tony, Emmy and Grammy-winning 2016 Broadway Revival of *The Color Purple* and is now currently Music Director/Arranger for Cynthia Erivo. Other credits include Associate Production Music Supervisor for *The Greatest Showman* (20th Century FOX); Musical Director and Arranger/Adaptor for *Disney's Frozen: Live at the Hyperion* (Anaheim, CA); and Associate Musical Director of Broadway shows including *Motown*, *Leap of Faith* and *Violet*.

Michael McElroy (Vocal Arrangements and Co-Incidental Arrangements) is a 2019 Special Tony Honor Winner as Founder/Director of Broadway Inspirational Voices. Broadway credits: *Sunday in the Park with George* (2017 revival with Jake Gyllenhaal), *Next to Normal*, *RENT*, *The Wild Party*, *Big River* (Tony nomination 2004), *The Who's Tommy*, *Miss Saigon*, *Patti LuPone on Broadway*, *High Roller Social Pleasure Club*, *HAIR* (Encores). Vocal Arr: Broadway: *Disaster!*, *Street Corner Symphony*. Off-Broadway: *Three Mo' Tenors*, *Our Lady of Kibeho*. Regionally: *Man in the Ring* (Huntington Theater), *Being Alive* (Westbury and Philadelphia Stage). 2004 Grammy nomination for Broadway Inspirational Voices CD "Great Joy: A Gospel Christmas" performed at The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, PBS Specials and concert halls in Italy, Australia, England, Finland, and Canada. Vocal arrangements to TV: "America's Got Talent," "Smash," "Why Did I Get Married," "Preachin' to the Choir" and The Tony Awards. Recordings: Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland, Billy Porter, Leslie Odom, Clay Aiken, Vanessa Williams and many others. Michael teaches full time at New York University in Tisch School of the Arts Undergraduate Drama and is Director of Diversity Initiatives for the department.

Jim Abbott (Orchestrations) Jim's 30-year Broadway career has included positions as Musical Director for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Rent*, *Aida*, *Bombay Dreams*, *Women on the Verge*, *Let it Be*, Disney's *Tarzan* and the world premiere of *Venice* at the Public Theater. Dance Arrangements for *Tarzan*, *Aida*, *Bombay Dreams*, *Sweet Charity*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Footloose* and *Wicked*; Synthesizer Design for *Spamalot*, *The Boy From Oz*, *Avenue Q*, *The Addams Family*, *Big Fish*, *Something Rotten*, *Halftime* and *The Prom*. He has contributed orchestrations to *Aida*, *Bombay Dreams*, *Wicked*, *The Addams Family*, *On The 20th Century* and *Women On The Verge* (Drama Desk Nom). He is the co-producer of the *Aida* and *Tarzan* international cast recordings (Gold), and recordings with Adam Pascal, Adam Jacobs and Alton Fitzgerald White. Broadway playing credits include *Footloose*, *Cats*, *Miss Saigon*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Starlight Express* and *The Who's Tommy*. Performances with Aretha Franklin, Dennis DeYoung of Styx, Shirley Bassey, Bob Hope, Vanessa Williams, Phil Collins, Melissa Manchester and with Elton John in "Greatest Hits Live" at Madison Square Garden. As Musical Supervisor he has overseen *Tarzan* in Europe and *Disney's Broadway Hits* performing with orchestras around the world including the Boston Pops and the BBC Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall. Upcoming projects include synthesizer design for *Mrs. Doubtfire* (coming to Broadway spring 2020) and composer/arranger for a new musical based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Zane Mark (Dance Arrangements) is a composer, orchestrator and arranger with credits that include his co-writing *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*, for which he received Tony and Grammy award nominations. Some of his other Broadway credits include *Mrs. Doubtfire The Musical*, *The Cher Show*, *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, *Motown The Musical*, *Pippin*, *Leap of Faith*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Never Gonna Dance* and *The Full Monty*. His Off-Broadway credits include *Smart People*, *Harlem Song*, *The Brother/Sister Plays* and *Radiant Baby*.

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