

Lion King Jr.' roars at the Montessori School in Wilton

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by Lynandro Simmons

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The Montessori School Elementary students put on a production of the Lion King Jr. on May 2-3.

Students ranging from 6 to 12, with the guidance of teachers and staff, worked together to plan, produce and perform the production. The shows were a success with both nights being sold out.

Elementary Academic Leader Lisbeth Harrison said additional programming, beyond foundational classroom work, is vital to the growth and development of each child.



“We are fortunate to offer a program that provides both a strong academic foundation through experiential and personalized learning, is rich in diversity, and provides the opportunity for students to explore and experiment in a safe and nurturing environment,” Harrison said. She said the play offered an opportunity outside the classroom for the children to explore their talents and interests.

A theatrical production is a grand creative and academic pursuit, Harrison said. This includes working on set design, lighting and sound, prop sourcing, auditioning, preparing and performing songs and more. It also requires the children to use organizational skills, engineering for sets and collaborative teamwork, she said.

“The very essence of this challenging work is a practical application of a myriad of skills,” Harrison said. Students had a variety of roles in the production. Since the fall they all were involved in creating the animal masks worn by the characters in the show.



Montessori student Victoria Makarov played a young Nala in the play. As the day of the production approached students got more and more excited, she said.

“As we learned all the details, the costumes and more it got really exciting,” Victoria said. She said one of her favorite things was seeing people go from their normal clothing to embracing their roles.

“Over the course of 15 minutes to half-an-hour you would see people in costumes and face-painting,” she said.

Haldan Dickinson, who played Pumbaa, said students had to practice choreography and singing for the auditions. Some students’ initial roles changed throughout auditions, he said. “It just depended on if our director saw something special during the callback instead of the audition,” Haldan said.

He said his favorite part of the production was eating grub like young Simba, Pumbaa and Timon did in the movie. Happily, students didn’t have to eat insects like the movie characters. “In our play we ate Gummi worms,” he said.

Diego Brasher oversaw the stage crew and set design. He also made a lot of the backgrounds used in the production, which included Scar’s cave and elephant graveyard. “My favorite part was making Pride Rock,” he said. “That was fun.”

Diego said he made Pride Rock using wood and brown paper. He drew inspiration from the movie to put the work together. He also had another important role. "I really enjoyed raising the sun up and down," he said.

Tanvi Rajangam played Timon for the play. She used her imagination and art tools to make the mask she wore in the play.

Following the final performance of the show, the students' animal masks were moved to the Rene Soto Gallery in Norwalk. The masks will be on display for the public to view through the month of May.

Tanvi said she was excited to have her, and her fellow students work on display. "It really is cool," she said.



dj.simmons@hearstmediact.com