

Lyric

Welcome to this introduction to **Running With Lions** by Sian Carter at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. It's been directed by Michael Buffong, and is a Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and Talawa Theatre Company production.

The audio described performance will be at 7.30 on Saturday 26 February. The performance lasts for two hours, and has a 20-minute interval. It will be described by Ruth James and Ali Clarke.

Please note that this performance features themes of mental health and grief that some people may find upsetting. This performance also features haze.

Following the death of a loved one, a British Caribbean family struggles to come to terms with their grief. Isolated by their generational beliefs and challenges to their faith and mental health, they live between the things they do and do not say.

When we enter the auditorium, the stage is open to us. Taking up almost the entire centre of the stage is a crescent shaped set of stairs, the open side of the crescent towards us, with the space in the middle set out as a living room.

Each step is longer than it is high, each one rising a foot above the last, until the eighth and highest step is eight feet above the stage floor. The stairs are covered with a carpet with an abstract pattern in browns, blues and greens, with the edges painted cream. Along the top few steps of the stairs on one side are cream-painted banisters. The floor inside is painted a light bluey green stippled with dots of warm red and yellow that darkens outside the crescent.

Both of the curved walls of the stairs are dark, pinpointed with tiny white dots of lights, and there are more lights set into the floor and covering the back wall like a galaxy of stars. The side walls of the space are painted black, with stands of lights standing against them.

The crescent revolves, sometimes only turning slightly, so that the lowest steps feel like a low wall, or turning entirely, so that the tallest step faces us. Underneath this step is an opening, like a doorway. Inset into both of its side walls are several shelves, on which are placed props, such as plates of food, or party decorations.

Outside the crescent are two sets of four steps, allowing characters to descend directly from the top of the steps, as well as descending the entire sequence.

Within the crescent's semi-circle is a slightly worn four-seater wooden-framed sofa in the style of the 1950s, with pointed legs and sharply angled arms, upholstered in button backed beige material. Beside it is a walnut cabinet, with a record player on top and records stored underneath. Outside the crescent is a matching 50s armchair, also button-backed but a darker brown, with a holder over one arm containing a newspaper and a bible. The well-worn leather bound bible is festooned with multi-coloured page markers, sticking out on all sides. A 50s transistor radio sits on a step to the left. Inset into the cream wood of the steps are a couple of drawers, which slide out. At one point there are several coloured bubble glasses set on the top of a drawer.

The first characters we meet are **Joshua** and **Gloria**. They are brother and sister and appear in a park in a prologue to the performance. Joshua and Gloria are dark skinned, young, both in their early 20s and brimming with life. Gloria is probably just a couple of years older than her brother. Both are casually dressed. Gloria wears stonewashed dungarees under a casual brown jacket. She has large bright eyes and a mass of neat black braids swept back from her face and secured by a multi-coloured scarf tied around her head in a big bow. She faces her brother with a wide smile, which he returns. He wears rolled up white jeans, with a multi-coloured hooded jacket over a long denim shirt. His hair is swept back from his face in tightly plaited short braids, a couple loose over his forehead, and his chin is lightly stubbled. Both wear hi-top

trainers – hers are bright red Converse, his a pearl grey. Joshua has large headphones clamped to his ears as he enters.

When the performance begins time has moved on and we are in the home of **Maxwell** and **Shirley**. They are Joshua and Gloria's parents, and grandparents to Gloria's daughter **Imani** who is currently living with them.

Gloria is a petite, slim and upright figure, very concerned with appearances and is always immaculately dressed. Her black dreadlocked hair is swept severely back from her expressive face and fastened in an updo at the back of her head. Her husband describes this as 'like a crown' and indeed she is the ruler of the house. She wears a purple patterned loose fitting dress and, initially, red slippers which she changes to matching, low heeled stylish court shoes before leaving the house, when she carries a capacious handbag.

Maxwell is a calm figure, his expression warm and gentle. Also in his 70s, he has close-cropped, crinkly greying hair, white at the front and sides, and a neatly trimmed grey beard and moustache. He is neatly and comfortably dressed in tweedy brown trousers with a pale checked shirt and patterned brown and orange knitted waistcoat. His brown shoes are polished and he adds a calf-length tailored jacket to his outfit. Later, Maxwell wears an elegant brown three-piece suit.

Imani, their 16 year old granddaughter, is currently living with her grandparents. She has long, thinly plaited black dreadlocks which cascade down her back and over her shoulders from a top knot secured on the top of her head. She wears a neat, almost outgrown school uniform of short pleated black skirt, with a white shirt and purple blazer with a school badge emblazoned on the pocket. Imani has sturdy Timberland tan boots, worn over thick black tights.

Imani is played by **Ruby Barker**

Maxwell by **Wil Johnson**

Joshua by **Nickcolia King N'da**

Shirley by **Suzette Llewellyn**

Gloria by **Velile Tshabalala**

Sound Design by **Tony Gayle**

Lighting Design by **Aideen Malone**

Set and Costume Design by **Soutra Gilmour**

Directed by **Michael Buffong**

Written by **Sian Carter**