RASHADA DAWAN

“Passionate...Soulful...Powerhouse! “

These are just a few words to describe the voice of this down-to-earth, triple threat performer.

Born and raised in the windy city of Chicago, IL, she started with her first ballet class at the notable Southside YMCA at four years old. Upon graduating from Beasley Academic Center, Rashada decided to leave her good friends and go on to Curie Metropolitan High School (which was then deemed as a performing arts high school), where she became the first female conductor for the Curie High School Gospel Choir. In her senior year, she was bit by the “acting bug” and performed in her first leading role as Deena in the high school’s production of Dreamgirls. Little did she know, a few months shy of graduating from Florida A&M University, she would return to play the role of Deena again in college. While majoring in psychology with a theatre minor, Rashada served as lead vocalist of at least four bands, toured with the Tom Joyner’s Fantastic Voyage Cruise, sang in the FAMU Gospel Choir, joined Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and served on the University’s Royal Court as Senior Attendant all before graduating with her degree. After graduating from FAMU, Rashada returned home to look for work. She eventually got a call from her best friend to audition for a children’s show at Chicago’s eta Theatre. From there, she quickly got casted in productions with some of Chicago’s finest theatre companies including: Bailiwick Chicago, Chicago Shakes and the Black Ensemble Theatre. By day, she worked in a mental health community center as a Training Director; by night, she was a star.

Rashada went on to receive her graduate degree in Human Performance and Training Consulting while starting her own production company to later showcase her two original pieces- Israel’s Daughter and For Colored Girls Who Dance Instead. After deciding to pursue acting full time, Miss Dawan received a Black Theatre Alliance Award for Best Leading Actress in a Musical for her portrayal of Aida in Bailiwick Chicago’s Aida. After Aida closed, she and over 500 hopefuls auditioned for Disney’s The Lion King. After waiting for at least 5 hours as #407, Rashada auditioned and was asked to come back to read for the role of principal character “Shenzi.” 2 months later, she was asked to join the Lion King Las Vegas cast and eventually to join the Lion King Gazelle National Tour.

She is currently portraying the role of Shenzi in Disney’s The Lion King Gazelle National Touring company.
Critically Acclaimed:

“... the terrific Rashada Dawan...”
Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune

“...powerhouse...”
Hedy Weiss, Chicago Sun Times

“...delivers what is unequivocally a tour-de-force performance...”
Alissa Norby, HollywoodChicago.com

“...earthy...powerful...”
John Beer, TimeOut Chicago

“...reaches into the emotions of her numbers deftly. Dawan is a talent.”
Tom Williams, Chicagocritic.com

“... handles this role with the spirit it was intended to be.”
Alan Bresloff, Around The Town Chicago

“...Jeff Award-worthy performance...”
Misha Davenport, Chicago Sun Times

“...a regal force that commands the stage. Her physical presence is one of stately elegance. Her singing voice is a powerful authority beckoning adoration.”
Katy Walsh, Chicago Theatre Beat

“...captivated the audience... with her rich, strong, and soulful vocals. To say that she could sing is an understatement and an insult to this talented songstress. She had me at the first note and when she was done, somehow I felt cheated.”
Larry D. Wayne, So-laze.com

“Rashada Dawan... a mesmerizing voice that takes your breath away.”
Venus Harris, Chicago Stage review

“She’s able to capture the dignity, refinement, and prideful will of a princess, but also beautifully gives a very modern, pretty fierce, edge. This is one chick who you know from the outset will not bow down to any man, and who will, and who can, fight it out to the death with the best of them. And Dawan sings magically, sensually, powerfully. Discovering the immense talent of someone like Rashada Dawan is one of the pleasures of theatergoing in Chicago.”
W. Byron, FromtheLedge.com

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Rashada Dawan’s Testimony