

Press Release: January 7, 2020

the jungle book

Adapted by Anita Menon, Sarah Jane Hardy and Pat Moran

The Jungle Book returns to the NWCT Stage!

The original adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling classic comes to life through traditional Indian dance and a dash of “Bollywood!”



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*Our mission—
to educate, entertain
and enrich the lives
of young audiences*

Managing Director
Judy Kafoury

Artistic Director
Sarah Jane Hardy

Associate Artistic Director
John Ellingson

**Donor & Patron
Relations Director**
Nick Fenster

Education Director
Leigh Mallonee

Release Date

Jan. 7, 2020

End Date

Mar. 1, 2020

Media Contact

To set up interviews
or discuss other
possibilities for stories,
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NWCT journeys deep into the heart of the jungle to tell the story of a mischievous young Mowgli and her adventures in India. In collaboration with award-winning choreographer Anita Menon and the Anjali School of Dance, *The Jungle Book* tells its story through a mixture of traditional dialogue, a classical Indian dance form called Bharatanatyam, and even a little bit of Bollywood. “In the original book, Mowgli learns the language of the jungle from each of the animals through words. In our version, dance is the language of the jungle. Each animal communicates through a different movement style, and through dance is how Mowgli learns,” says Menon. “Dance and movement are universal languages, and stories of animals are common ground across all cultures.”

NWCT first staged *The Jungle Book* five years ago, kicking off a partnership with Menon that would bring traditional Indian stories like *Chitra: The Girl Prince* and *Tenali: The Royal Trickster* to the Mainstage. These successful productions have opened up the opportunity for Indian and Southeast Asian artists to authentically showcase a two-thousand-year-old art form while telling stories that resonate with an American audience. In fact, that is how Menon started on this journey. “Raising Indian-American children, I wanted to find a way to tell familiar stories while maintaining our traditional culture. So I started using Bharatanatyam dance vocabulary to tell stories like *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Wizard of Oz*,” Menon says.

Staging a remount provides a unique opportunity to refresh and improve. Helping to bring *The Jungle Book* to life through fresh eyes is new-to-NWCT director Tamara Carroll. “We are using the 2015 production as a starting place, but the script has undergone a fairly significant

rewrite, which opens up new opportunities,” states Carroll. “This includes new and re-imagined characters, resulting in new music, choreography, and production design.”

Carroll was drawn to work with NWCT on *The Jungle Book* after seeing past collaborations using Indian dance as a foundational element. “Everything about these productions appeals to me as a director of theater for young people: they intentionally promote cultural exchange and broaden understanding of different forms of traditional storytelling, they are a model for authentic partnership and cross-cultural collaboration, and these new works are actively diversifying who is on our stages, and who is in our audience,” declares Carroll.

In addition, Carroll has always been impressed with NWCT’s innovation, creativity, and ability to showcase young talent. “In particular, I appreciate that NWCT focuses on female protagonists. This show is no different, featuring a young woman, Gowri Ganesh, in the role of Mowgli.”

Ganesh, an eighth-grader at Stoller Middle School, started dancing at the age of five and hasn’t stopped since. She made her first appearance on the NWCT stage in *Chitra: The Girl Prince*, after learning from Menon, her dance instructor, about the opportunity. From there, she found her calling. “Right after working with NWCT, I felt this amazing sense of belonging there that made me never want to leave,” expresses Ganesh. She immersed herself into acting, and is doing double duty this year, performing on the Mainstage and participating in NWCT’s Second Stage program, Studio NW.

Why should audiences be excited for *The Jungle Book*? “NWCT’s cast and creative teams have

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a special talent for bringing productions to life with culture,” says Ganesh. “NWCT creates truly unforgettable experiences for every audience member.”

NWCT’s 2019-20 season offers sensory friendly performances for all productions, free of charge. Featuring shorter run times, no intermission, reduced or removed lighting and sound cues, and the constant presence of house lights, these performances are specially designed for children on the autism spectrum or with other sensory sensitivities. Each production also includes audio-described and American Sign Language interpreted performances.

The Jungle Book is produced in part through the support of the Regional Arts and Culture Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, Kafoury McDougal, Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt, the Oregon Arts Commission, The Oregonian, and NWCT’s donor families. More than 4,000 school children will experience this original adaptation of a classic story during ten school matinee performances.

SHOW TIMES

Noon & 4:00 pm

**FEB. 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29
MAR. 1**

 **SENSORY FRIENDLY SHOW**
FEB. 16 @ 4:00 pm

 **ASL INTERPRETED SHOW**
FEB. 22 @ Noon

 **AUDIO DESCRIBED SHOW**
FEB. 22 @ 4:00 pm

Most Enjoyed by Ages 5 & Up

TICKETS & INFORMATION
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