

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

May 10, 2018

Asolo Rep Presents the World Premiere of *JUNGLE BOOK*; Family Friendly Theatrical Adventure Runs June 6 - 24

Photos are available by visiting <https://asolorep.smugmug.com/Jungle-Book/>

(SARASOTA, May 10, 2018) — Asolo Repertory Theatre proudly presents the final production of its 2017-18 season: the world premiere of ***JUNGLE BOOK***, a boldly re-imagined family friendly stage adaptation of Nobel Prize-winner Rudyard Kipling's beloved classic. From the creators of Asolo Rep's 2017 hit production of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, ***JUNGLE BOOK*** previews June 6 - 8, opens June 9 and runs through June 24 in the Mertz Theatre, located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts. It is recommended for ages 5 and up and will be presented by Kidoons and WYRD Productions in association with the 20K Collective, produced by Jeff Lord, co-created and co-directed by **Craig Francis** and **Rick Miller**.

JUNGLE BOOK takes the same multimedia theatrical approach as *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea* to re-imagine a classic story through modern eyes. The play will incorporate stories and poems from the book and, through the use of immersive video and interactive technology, will transport audiences to the jungles of India. From Mowgli the human-cub, Baloo the bear, Bagheera the panther, Kaa the snake, and more, ***JUNGLE BOOK*** will bring to life the characters audiences know and love, while also introducing some of the other colorful inhabitants of Kipling's books, and of today's urban jungle.

"We wanted to bring out the fact that Mowgli (like Captain Nemo last season) is disconnected from humanity. He is torn between the animal and human worlds, and between his two families. Kids and people of all ages can really relate to his search for belonging," said Craig Francis.

Rick Miller adds: "When Baloo the sloth bear teaches Mowgli the 'Law of the Jungle', it's a very clear echo of Kipling's poem 'If', which had a huge influence on me when I was a child. We hope this show helps us all gain perspective on how to live more respectfully with nature, and with each other."

Levin Valayil leads the cast as Mowgli. He originated the roles of Lottery in the new musical *Monsoon Wedding* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Dharun Ravi in the new musical *Poster Boy* at Williamstown Theatre Festival. **Miriam Fernandes** plays Shere Khan, Kaa, Maya and others. Her credits include *Prince Hamlet* (Why Not Theatre); *Dinner with the Gods* (Wolf and Wallflower, Sydney AU); the world premieres of *The Snow Queen* and *A Sunday Affair* (Theatre New Brunswick) and more.

Matt Lacas plays Akela, Baloo, Buldeo and more. An international performer, he has performed in Europe, Asia and in Canada. Roles include Ram (*Les Moutons*, Corpus); Gomez (*Addams Family Musical*, RCPA); Bob (*Fabulous Lipitones*, Miracle Theatre); and Demetrius (*Titus Andronicus*, MSTC). **Anita Majumdar** plays Raksha, Bagheera, Messua and others. She is an award-winning actress, playwright and dancer who was profiled in *Vogue India*. She was the only featured Canadian actress in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

JUNGLE BOOK will feature original music composed by Dora award-winning, JUNO-nominated world/fusion vocalist **Suba Sankaran**. The design team includes **Astrid Janson** and **Melanie McNeill** (Set, Props and Costume Design); multiple Dora Award winners **Debashis Sinha** (Sound Design) and **Rebecca Picherack** (Lighting Design); as well as **Irina Litvinenko** (Multimedia Design) whose work was seen at Asolo Rep in *Twenty Thousand Leagues*.

Asolo Rep will host Family Day at **JUNGLE BOOK** on Saturday, June 16 beginning at 12:30pm. Before the matinee performance, explore jungle life, ecology, and storytelling in the lobby, in partnership with South Florida Museum, Sarasota County Libraries, Big Cat Habitat, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, and Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. Family package pricing starts at \$15 per person (one person in the party must be 18 or younger).

“Our drive to present highly imaginative, innovative and fresh programming for all ages began in 2016 with *Hetty Feather*,” said Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director **Michael Donald Edwards**. “With the success of our June 2017 production of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, Asolo Rep’s annual family friendly production is well on its way to becoming a beloved staple for Sarasota families. I am thrilled to continue the momentum with the world premiere of **JUNGLE BOOK**, from the same brilliant team that brought our audiences aboard the Nautilus submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*. This stunning production takes Rudyard Kipling’s beloved stories and brings them to life with a jaw dropping multi-media twist.”

Asolo Rep is committed to making the month of June a time for families, so much so that its board of directors voted to designate a gift of \$84,000 that the theatre received in fall 2016 as a beneficiary of the Joy McCann Culverhouse Charitable Remainder Trust, to producing a family-oriented show in June 2017, 2018 and 2019. These funds, as well as major gifts received from Edie Winston and The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, made it possible for Asolo Rep to develop **JUNGLE BOOK** for the stage. These gifts, along with significant support from a range of corporate sponsors, foundations, and individual donors, are helping to underwrite production costs, keeping ticket prices affordable for area families, and a range of enrichment activities.

With donor support, Asolo Rep is providing more than 1,600 youth and family members with free tickets to **JUNGLE BOOK**, as well as souvenir knapsacks, each stuffed with a book, activity sheets, and more. Partner organizations include ALSO Youth; Boys and Girls Clubs of Manatee and Sarasota Counties; Girls, Inc.; Jewish Family and Children’s Services; Prism Youth Initiative; Visible Men Academy, Sarasota Summer Learning Academies at Tuttle, Emma E. Booker, Gocio, and Alta Vista Elementary Schools, Sarasota County Libraries and Sarasota and Hardee County YMCAs.

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

LEVIN VALAYIL*Mowgli
MATT LACAS*Akela/Baloo/Buldeo/Others
ANITA MAJUMDAR*Raksha/Bagheera/Messua/Others
MIRIAM FERNANDES*Shere Khan/Kaa/Maya/Others

*Kidoons and WYRD Productions engage, under the terms of the Independent Theatre Agreement, professional Artists who are members of Canadian Actors’ Equity Association. Presented under the Reciprocal Agreement between Actors’ Equity Association of the United States and Canadian Actors’ Equity Association.

SELECTED CREATIVE TEAM MEMBERS

Directors/Co-creators.....CRAIG FRANCIS & RICK MILLER
Scenic, Prop & Costume Designers.....ASTRID JANSON &
MELANIE MCNEILL

-more-

Lighting Designer.....REBECCA PICHERACK
Sound Designer.....DEBASHIS SINHA
Multimedia Designer.....IRINA LITVINENKO
Composer.....SUBA SANKARAN

Community Partner *JUNGLE BOOK* Events

SOUTH FLORIDA MUSEUM
MAY 12, 2018 - IQUEST

“Welcome to the Jungle.” What makes a jungle? Is there really such a thing as an “Urban Jungle”? How would you live there? If you’re ready to take on the challenge, join us to unravel the real world and mythical stories of these mysterious habitats. More information: www.southfloridamuseum.org

CONSERVATION FOUNDATION OF THE GULF COAST AT BAY PRESERVE
JUNE 9, 2018 – The Jungle in Your Backyard

Join us for a morning of exploration and creativity, including a nature scavenger hunt in the woods at Bay Preserve and an art project. More information: www.conservationfoundation.com

SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTY LIBRARIES
Jungle Book Adventure Workshops

Using Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book* as inspiration, Asolo Rep’s theatrical workshops provide the opportunity for participants to create their own storytelling jungle adventure. Please contact individual libraries for further information.

May 19: Shannon Staub Library, 11:00am
May 30: Palmetto Library, 2:00pm
May 31: South Manatee Library, 3:00pm
June 1: North Sarasota Library, 2:00pm
June 2: Island Library, 11:00am
June 2: Jacaranda Library, 2:00pm
June 4: Fruitville Library, 2:00pm
June 5: Venice Library, 2:00pm
June 5: Gulf Gate Library, 5:00pm
June 6: Braden River Library, 10:15am

June 7: North Port Library, 1:00pm

June 8: Selby Library, 2:30pm

June 9: Rocky Bluff Library, 10:30am

June 9 :Elsie Quirk Library, 1:30pm

June 11: Manatee Downtown Central Library, 10:30am

Event listings current as of May 7, 2018. | For most current listings please visit www.asolorep.org/education/family-programs

SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOS

MIRIAM FERNANDES* (Shere Khan/Kaa/Maya/Others) is an international actor, director, and theatre-maker. Acting credits include *Prince Hamlet* (Why Not Theatre); *Dinner with the Gods* (Wolf and Wallflower, Sydney AU); the world premieres of *The Snow Queen* and *A Sunday Affair* (Theatre New Brunswick); *The Living* (Summerworks Performance Festival); *Soliciting Temptation* (Tarragon Theatre); *The Biographer* (Tango Co). She has trained with the SITI Company, and is a graduate of L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Miriam is the co-artistic director of YVA Theatre, an international company of artists from France, Norway and Canada. In 2017 she directed their inaugural production *Nesen* in the MiniMidiMaxi Festival in Bergen, Norway. Miriam is the recipient of the Canada Council's JPC Watkins award, the Imasco Performing Arts Award, and a Chalmers Professional Development grant.

CRAIG FRANCIS* (Co-Author/Co-Director/Stage Manager) is a renowned Canadian writer, illustrator, performer, and multi-disciplinary creator, whose works are enjoyed by millions of people worldwide. As a founding member of the 20K Collective, he is the co-author and co-director with Rick Miller of the theatrical productions *Jungle Book* and *Game of Clones*, as well as their stage manager. Craig is also the co-author and stage manager of the hit touring production *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea* (directed by Miller), and a producer and designer on Miller's solo productions *BOOM* and *BOOM X*. He is co-creating *Frankenstein* (with Miller and Paul Van Dyck), and writing *Wizard of Oz* and *Rose Red*. Craig illustrates the animated cartoons for the Kidoons Network, as well as writing and voicing the characters. The videos are on display at museums in 4 provinces, with millions of views. Craig has co-developed performing arts software; created award-winning marketing designs and brands;

illustrated several books; appeared as a comedian on CBC, CTV, and Showtime; and his voices can be heard in animated series and games.

MATT LACAS* (Akela/Baloo/Buldeo/Others) is ecstatic to be returning to the jungle with this wonderful team, having been part of the development process for *Jungle Book* since its conception. Matt is an international performer having been on stages all over Europe, Asia and across Canada. Selected credits: Ram (*Les Moutons*, Corpus); Gomez (*Addams Family Musical*, RCPA); Bob (*Fabulous Lipitones*, Miracle Theatre); Demetrius (*Titus Andronicus*, MSTC). Matt is also the founder of We Are Here Productions, a theatre company that attempts to turn art into tangible aid for communities worldwide.

ANITA MAJUMDAR* (Raksha/Bagheera/Messua/Others) is an award-winning actress, playwright and dancer profiled in magazines such as *Vogue India*. She attended the National Theatre School of Canada. With formal training in kathak, bharatanatyam and odissi dances, Anita has danced and choreographed for 20 years. Her acting debut in the film *Murder Unveiled* won Best Actress award at the Asian Festival of First Films in Singapore. Anita was also the only featured Canadian actress in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival where she was shortlisted for the TIFF Rising Stars. Anita was awarded Canada's Governor General's Protégé Prize in playwriting, and was nominated for the Betty Mitchell Award for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Performance for *Same Same But Different*. Her *Fish Eyes Trilogy* was published with graphic illustrations by Playwrights Canada Press, and she received Dora Awards for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Performance (*Boys With Cars*). In 2017 she completed her Masters of Arts in Theatre and Performance Studies, was nominated for Critics' Pick Outstanding Solo Performance (*Fish Eyes Trilogy*), and has a solo comedy YouTube series called Yes We Candice.

RICK MILLER* (Co-Author/Co-Director/Outreach Director) is a Dora and Gemini award-winning writer/director/actor/ musician/educator who has performed in five languages on five continents and who Entertainment Weekly called "one of the 100 most creative people alive today." He has created and toured solo shows such as the hit sensation *BOOM*, *MacHomer*, and (with Daniel Brooks) *Bigger Than Jesus* and *HARDSELL*. With Robert Lepage, he has collaborated on *Geometry of Miracles*, *Zulu Time*, *Lipsynch*, and on the film *Possible Worlds*. As the artistic director of WYRD Productions and co-creative director of the Kidoons Network, Rick has most recently developed *BOOM* and its forthcoming

sequel *BOOM X*, and (with Craig Francis) *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*, *GAME of CLONES*, and *Jungle Book*; as well as animated series that educate, enlighten, empower and entertain young people. He teaches an interdisciplinary class at the University of Toronto called “The Architecture of Creativity.” Rick is from Montreal, and lives in Toronto with his wife Stephanie Baptist and their two daughters.

LEVIN VALAYIL* (Mowgli) is thrilled to be making his Asolo Rep debut as Mowgli! Levin hails from Sugar Land, TX and has just been seen playing Beethoven in *Dog Sees God* in NYC. Levin also recently originated the role of Lottery in the new musical *Monsoon Wedding* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and also originated the role of Dharun Ravi in the new musical *Poster Boy* at Williamstown Theatre Festival. Levin has also played Bob in the musical *The Fabulous Lipitones* at the New Theatre, Virginia Repertory Theatre, and at Florida Studio Theatre.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

The Scoop

One hour prior to every performance of *JUNGLE BOOK*

Arrive one hour before curtain to hear the ideas and inspirations that contributed to the making of *JUNGLE BOOK* (Opening Night, June 9, is excluded.)

Family Day at *JUNGLE BOOK*

Asolo Repertory Theatre

June 16, 2pm performance, with pre-show activities beginning at 12:30pm, and post-show activities

Before the matinee performance, explore jungle life, ecology, and storytelling in the lobby, in partnership with South Florida Museum, Sarasota County Libraries, Big Cat Habitat, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, and Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast.

Family package pricing starts at \$15 per person (one person in the party must be 18 or younger).

Meet the Actors

Sunday, June 17

Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre

Immediately following the 2pm matinee, ask questions and learn more from members of the cast in a facilitated discussion.

JUNGLE BOOK PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

- Wednesdays at 1:30pm and 7pm (excluding June 6 and June 20, which only have an evening performance at 7pm)
 - Thursdays at 7pm
 - Fridays at 7pm
 - Saturdays at 2pm and 7pm (excluding opening night June 9, which only has an evening performance at 7pm)
 - Sundays at 2pm
-

TICKETS

Tickets for **JUNGLE BOOK** are on sale now.

JUNGLE BOOK FAMILY PACKAGES:

**For Family Day on June 16 and the Saturday, June 23 matinee performance:
(\$15 per ticket)**

4 tickets for \$60

3 tickets for \$45

2 tickets for \$30

One person in the party must be 18 or younger.

Family Packages for all other JUNGLE BOOK performances: (\$17 per ticket)

4 tickets for \$68

3 tickets for \$51

2 tickets for \$34

At least one person in the party must be 18 or younger in order to receive Family Package pricing.

To purchase tickets, call 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388, visit www.asolorep.org,

or visit the Asolo Repertory Theatre Box Office, located in the lobby of the theatre. Asolo Repertory Theatre is located at 5555 North Tamiami Trail in the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts.

The Box Office is open Monday 10am – 5pm, Tuesday – Thursday 10am - 7:30pm, Friday – Saturday 10am – 8pm, and Sunday 10am – 2pm. The box office closes at 5pm when there are no evening performances and phone lines close one hour prior to the start of any performance. Season subscription packages are also available online and by visiting or calling the box office.

SPONSORS

Asolo Rep is able to present the world premiere of **JUNGLE BOOK**, Family Day, and related programs and outreach with generous support from the community. Sponsors for **JUNGLE BOOK** are Cool Today, Ian Black Real Estate, 530 Burns Gallery, Joy McCann Culverhouse Charitable Trust, Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Linnie E. Dalbeck Memorial Foundation Trust, SunTrust Foundation, SRQ Media, Visit Sarasota, The Muse, Hilton Garden Inn, and 107.9 WSRQ. Asolo Rep 2017-18 Major Season Sponsors are Florida State University, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Huisking Foundation, The William H. Donner Foundation, Designing Women Boutique, The Exchange, and Sunset Cadillac of Bradenton. Asolo Rep is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.

JUNGLE BOOK outreach activities are made possible with support from the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Manatee Community Foundation, Our Sarasota Fund and McCauley-Brown Fund of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, SunTrust Foundation, Koski Family Foundation Fund for New Audiences, 530 Burns Gallery, and through gifts from individual donors.

ABOUT ASOLO REP

Now in its 59th season, Asolo Repertory Theatre is recognized as one of the premier professional theatres in America and one of the largest in the Southeastern United States. One of the few select theatres in the nation that performs in true rotating repertory, Asolo Rep's highly skilled acting company and extensive craftsmanship bring to life this unique performance method that gives audiences the opportunity to see multiple productions in the span of a few days. Asolo Rep presents up to 10 productions each season including contemporary and classic works and provocative musical theatre experiences. A theatre district in and of itself, Asolo Rep is committed to expanding its reach into the community, furthering its collaboration with the best theatre artists working in the industry today and cultivating new artists through its affiliation with the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Managing Director Linda DiGabriele, Asolo Rep's ambitious theatrical offerings and ground-breaking education and community programming engage audiences and ensure its lasting legacy for future generations.

For more information, visit www.asolorep.org



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