

## For Immediate Release

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### **The jungle arises at The Rose with *The Jungle Book***

(OMAHA, Nebr.) In an original take on a classic story, The Rose Theater will transform into the jungles of India in their upcoming production of **The Jungle Book**. This thrilling adventure story follows the story of Mowgli, a baby in India who wanders away from his village and into the jungle where he is raised by wolves. The 70-minute production opens at The Rose on Oct. 28 and continues through Nov. 13.

Playwright Greg Banks says that while people may be familiar with the 1967 Disney animated version of “The Jungle Book,” this work goes back to the original source: the 1894 book by Rudyard Kipling. The characters and story are recognizable, but the ending is different. “I wanted to find an original take on the story,” he told Minnesota Public Radio. “One that would reinvent the story for audiences that thought they knew it. And so I hope that’s what we’ve done.” Banks weaves several different stories together to create a cohesive story that families will adore.

In **The Jungle Book**, Mowgli (Aaron Ellis) is raised by wolves, and by Baloo the sloth bear (Kevin Ehrhart) and Bagheera the panther (Joshua Lloyd Parker). Despite Mowgli’s penchant for getting into trouble, they do their best to protect Mowgli from Shere Khan, the hungry tiger who wants to eat Mowgli. Throughout Mowgli’s adventure in the jungle, his impulsive side gets the best of him -- he encounters monkeys who want to trick him and imprison him in a well, vultures who carry news of his plight, and Kaa (Stephanie Jacobson), a snake with a hypnotizing personality.

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## **The Jungle Book at**

### **The Rose Theater**

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Banks' version of **The Jungle Book** uses a unique storytelling technique that features a small cast that plays many characters, often transforming from one character to another right on stage. (Rose Theater audiences will remember the 2013 production of *Robin Hood* that used a similar framework.) Sherri Geerdes' costume designs facilitates these quick transformations very well, with costumes that hint at the animal being portrayed while allowing each actor's performance to convey their beastly spirit.

Guest director John Hardy explains that it isn't an easy endeavor. "This is a very difficult play," he says. "But the cast is up to the task."

Throughout the play, cast members will portray a menagerie of animals, including wolves, a bear, a panther, monkeys, snakes, vultures, a tiger and more.

One of the unique challenges of **The Jungle Book** is the enormous jungle gym set that the actors maneuver throughout the performance. Designed by Christopher Dills, the set is a multitude of platforms, ladders, poles, steps and levels that allow performers to reach from the lowest points of the stage to the top of the theater. Lighting designer Laura Hensley saw the various levels as an opportunity to use different lighting techniques and colors to accentuate the action on stage. A variety of lighting textures, cross beams, haze, directional light and more will breathe life into the jungle.

The result is an original set unlike most seen at the theater. "We aren't hiding the fact that we are doing a play," says Hardy. "The set is built to look like it was a man-made structure left to weather."

**The Jungle Book** is recommended for children ages 8 and up, due in part to some darker moments and the complexity of the storyline. The fast-paced re-telling promises to keep audiences perched on the edge of their seats. Families can expect intense moments with sneaky monkeys, noisy vultures and Mowgli's mortal enemy, the tiger Shere Khan.

**The Jungle Book** is approximately 70 minutes long without an intermission.

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The show runs Oct. 28 - Nov. 13, 2016, with performances on Fridays at 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 5 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. The 2 pm show on Saturday, Nov. 5 will be interpreted for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; the 2 pm show on Saturday, Nov. 12 will feature audio description services for audiences who are blind. Contact The Rose Box Office at (402) 345-4849 for more information.

Tickets for **The Jungle Book** are \$20. Discount ticket vouchers are available at all area Hy-Vee stores. Members of The Rose receive four free tickets to the production.

**The Jungle Book** is sponsored by Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Furniture Mart, Security National Bank, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special opening night activities are sponsored by Kiewit Companies.

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### **About The Rose**

The Rose Theater is one of the largest and most accomplished children's theaters in the nation, with a reputation for enriching the lives of children and families through top-quality professional productions and arts education. In 2016, *American Theatre* magazine named The Rose one of the 20 top children's theaters in the United States. The Rose is committed to making the arts accessible to all children, providing opportunities for thousands of children throughout the community to attend shows and participate in classes each year. Over the course of a year, approximately 70,000 people attend the public performances held at the theater, and nearly 30,000 students attend field trip shows annually. The theater strives to introduce young people to a mix of both traditional favorites and ground-breaking original productions. A number of plays and musicals have made their world premiere on The Rose stage, including *Pete the Cat: The Musical*, *Sherlock Holmes & the First Baker Street Irregular*, *Zen Ties*, *Buffalo Bill's Cowboy Band*, and *The Grocer's Goblin & The Little Mermaid*. We take pride knowing that The Rose is the place where children of all ages experience theater for the first time, and we are dedicated to helping them appreciate theater for a lifetime.

### **About John Hardy (Director)**

John Hardy is an Associate Artist with The Barter Theatre. He has been working around the country as a playwright, actor, director for over thirty years. Over the course of his career John has directed over one hundred professional productions including *MACBETH*, *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, *HENRY V*, *JULIUS CAESAR*, *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, *TARTUFFE*, *OEDIPUS THE KING*, *MAN OF LA MANCHA* and others. As an actor John has played many of the great roles including Hamlet, MacBeth, Tom Wingfield in *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*, Oberon in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, Teach in *AMERICAN BUFFALO* and many others. John has recently returned from a national tour, playing George in *OF MICE AND MEN*. As an playwright he has had over forty productions of fifteen plays produced across the country and overseas. John recently received the Sara Spencer Award, for lifetime achievement, from the Southeastern Theatre Conference.

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### **About Greg Banks (Playwright)**

Greg Banks' work as an actor, writer and director has taken him all over the world from Singapore to Seattle via the Arctic Circle. Greg's plays include Tir Na N'og (Travelling Light/West End, Broadway, Touring/ Winner of Samuel Beckett Award/TMA nominee for best play for young people 1998), Why The Whales Came (Plymouth Theatre Royal/ Theatre Alibi/West End) Dorian Grey (American Drama Group/International touring) Too Many Cooks( Travelling Light) Huck Finn, Pinnochio, Robin Hood, Antigone (Minneapolis Children's Theatre) Me and My Shadow (Theatre Alibi) Snow Queen (Norden farm) Arabian Nights, Hansel and Gretel, Keep on Moving, (Fair Game Theatre) He has directed for many companies including The Bristol Old Vic (Endgame), The Unicorn Children's Theatre London (The Wizard of Oz), Minneapolis Children's Theatre (Romeo and Juliet. Winner of the 2009 Ivey award for Direction and voted best play of 2009 by Twin Cities.com, Antigone, Huck Finn, Pinnochio, Robin Hood) Vedogon Theatre, Moscow (Comedy Of Errors) American Drama Group (The Great Gatsby)The Birmingham Stage Company (Kensukes Kingdom; nominated for a 2006 T.M.A. award, Treasure Island, Why The Whales Came), Polka Children's Theatre, (Just So by Jamila Gavin)New Perspectives, Travelling Light (Stones, Tir Na N'og, Too Many Cooks), M6 Theatre Company (Forever, Peacemaker, Trouble), 1157 Performance Company, Seattle Children's Theatre and The New York State Theatre (Tempest, King of Shadows by Adrian Mitchell). He is currently writing an adaptation of The Jungle Book for the The Minneapolis Children's Theatre. Learn more about Greg at [www.gregbankstheatredirector.co.uk](http://www.gregbankstheatredirector.co.uk)

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