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Jungalbook

By

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Based on the Mowgli stories of

RUDYARD KIPLING



Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(JUNGALBOOK)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-891-7

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For Carmen

Jungalbook was first presented by Seattle Project on June 26, 1982, at the Broadway Performance Hall in Seattle. It was directed by Jim Ballantine, with movement direction by Carmen Paris, set design by Jon Ostrove and costumes by Ruth Loes.

CAST

Baloo	Ted Senecal
Grab/Hathi.....	William Stiles
Grey/Kaa.....	Raymond Houla
Akela.....	Jamie Angell
Bagheera	Larry Knappert
Skerakhan.....	Carmen Roman
Mowgli.....	Mark Johnson
Monkey/Vulture/Hyena.....	Steve Kummerer

Jungalbook has also been produced at Stage One in Louisville, Ky. (Moses Goldberg, director), The Coterie in Kansas City, Mo. (Jim Tibbs, director), and the Honolulu Theater for Youth (John Kaufman, director). The play has also been performed by children at high schools and at the Portland Civic Theater in Portland, Ore.

THE SET

Jungle bars.

Not a jungle, but a jungle-gym: an arch of monkey bars, say eight feet tall at apex, spreading sideways across the stage. These can be straight and businesslike, real jungle-gym bars; or they can be tangled and intertwined at odd angles. The structure is fully naked, not decorated by vine or leaf or painted ornament, not representing jungle in any pictorial way.

The other item of scenery is a long frail piece of light blue fabric, which is absent at rise. This fabric will be unfurled at the proper time by two offstage actors to become the River.

THE ANIMALS

Only humans wear masks, excluding Mowgli. Different animals are suggested by posture and voice. Costumes are clothing, grade-school level, with suggestions of jungle: shorts, tennis shoes, etc., with maybe a claw or two.

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CHARACTERS

(Groupings are suggested doubling for eight actors)

BALOO: the bear

BAGHEERA: the panther

SHERAKHAN: the tiger

MOWGLI: the human boy

AKELA: the leader of the wolf pack

GRAB: a wolf

HATHI: the elephant

GREY: a wolf

KAA: the python

PERCHY: the monkey

CHIL: the vulture

HYENA

BUFFALO

Also, several actors can play HUMANS as well as part of the Elephant. Even the characters are all referred to as “him’s,” most of them can be played either man or woman, with pronouns changed to match. Mowgli is a boy, and Bagheera seems to me more moving as a man; but Sherakhan, for example, was played by a woman in our original production, and the effect was striking. Akela might be a she-wolf, as well, especially since wolf packs are sometimes led by the female.

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(Jungal sounds in the darkness. Roar; monkey's chatter; snarl. Increasing, louder and louder, till the jungal is close and loud. Lights up on the playground of the jungal. Kid-dressed animals, all shapes and sizes, changing shape, all playing childrens' games. Not jump rope or jacks; rather, chasing, tossing, surrounding, scuffling, attacking and defending. One large animal doesn't move quickly. Lumbers toward us, speaks.)

BALOO. To eat in the jungal ya must kill.

Therefore it's law in the jungal:

Never kill for pleasure.

The Law uv the Jungal is older than I am
and I'm pretty old.

I'm Bahloo the baare.

I teach the Law uv the Jungal to baarcubs, wulfcubs,
all uv'em.

if yoo live as long as me,

yoo will see

none uv these animals survive

without

the Law uv the Jungal.

(A fight breaks out over a prize. BALOO steps over, breaks it up.)

BALOO *(cont'd, to the fighters)*. Law uv the Jungal:

The meat belongs to the killer.

Steal it from him, yoo die.

(Two wolves fight, BALOO breaks them up.)

BALOO *(cont'd)*. Fight if yoo must,
but cat may not kill cat,
nor wulf kill wulf.

(The two wolves obey silently, move apart. A big creature is lurking around. BALOO faces it.)

BALOO *(cont'd)*. Hunt on your own ground.
Otherwise some may go hungry.

(A human—masked, with robot movements—walks across the stage. Animals hide.)

BALOO *(cont'd, to audience)*. Stay clear uv Man.
if yoo kill one man,
men and men and men will return to murder your people.
seven times over.
Never kill Man,
and never kill for the pleasure uv killing .

(Two wolves—who will later be GRAB and GREY—are tussling over a small bundle. As they toss and snatch it from each other, it emits baby cries—made by MOWGLI offstage.)

BALOO *(cont'd)*. Wulfs may not—*(they're not listening; BALOO shakes head wearily.)*
Wulfs are slow learners ... *(Turns to another wulf who's playing elsewhere.)*
Akela!

(AKELA looks at him. BALOO gestures toward the fight. AKELA leaps down, breaks up the scuffle.)

AKELA. Hey ! Break it up! Cut it!

(GRAB and GREY kneel, bend heads to ground.)

GRAB. Sorry Akela.

GREY *(points at GRAB)*. He stole my meat!

AKELA *(to GRAB)*. Put it down. Yoo hear me?

BALOO. Law uv the Jungal:

Obey the leader of the Pack.

(GRAB sets bundle down.)

AKELA *(sniffing at bundle)*. What kind uv meat is it?

GRAB. Mancub.

AKELA *(recoils)*. Human meat?

GREY. Still alive.

(AKELA sniffs at the bundle, nudges it with his paw. A loud baby cry comes from it, making all of them jump back.)

GREY *(cont'd)*. I saw it first.

GRAB. Nun-uh. I saw it.

GREY. I did!

GRAB. I did!

GREY. Me!

GRAB. Me!

(They jump together; AKELA shoves them apart. He stares at the bundle, puzzled.)

BALOO. Word uv the Leader of the Pack is law,
but the law also says

seven times over, never kill Man.

AKELA . Yeah, yeah.

GRAB. So who gets it, me or him?

AKELA (*annoyed, confused. Cuffs him*). Shuddup for a minute, willya?

(*BAGHEERA appears.*)

BAGHEERA. Akela.

(*GRAB and GREY huddle behind AKELA as BAGHEERA approaches, powerful and polite.*)

BAGHEERA (*cont'd*). Good hunting, Akela.

AKELA. Good hunting, Bagheera.

BAGHEERA (*calm, smooth*). I am a panther and have no right to meddle in wulf business.

But Jungal Law states that a hunter's meat may be bought for a price.

Am I right, Baloo?

BALOO. Bagheera knows the Law.

AKELA. You wanna buy this mancub meat from us?

BAGHEERA. Close by here is a fresh killed bullllll, fatter and juicier than this little bundle. For this price will the wulfpack let the mancub live?

AKELA. Trade a whole big bull for a little mancub? Sure. Right?

GRAB. Sure! Bull's better than mancub.

GREY. Yoo bet !

AKELA. Yoo got a deal, Bagheera ...

BAGHEERA. Will yoo also let the mancub run with yoor pack?

AKELA (*puzzled again*). Yoo want us to raise the cub?

BAGHEERA. I want the cub to live.

A panther is no animal to

nurse

a cub. You have motherwulfs in your pack

who will care for a humancub.

Will you raise the mancub?

AKELA (*looks at GRAB and GREY, who grumble*).

I dunno about that part—

(Snarl offstage.)

SHERAKHAN (*off*). Wheeere's my meeeet !

(BAGHEERA steps back slightly; wolves pack up behind Akela as SHERAKHAN springs on)

SHERAKHAN (*cont'd*). Where is it?!

BAGHEERA. Where is what, Sherakhan?

(SHERAKHAN stops, crouches to fight when he sees BAGHEERA. But then he sees the bundle.)

SHERAKHAN . That's my kill. Get away from it.

AKE LA. We're makin a deal here—

SHERAKHAN (*shoves him away*). Outta my way.

AKELA (*standing firm before the bundle*).

Hey!

We don't take orders from tigers.

We're makin a deal with the panther

so yoo go mind yoor own

tigerbusiness.

(SHERAKHAN is wary of BAGHEERA, who also takes a stance of defense.)

SHERAKHAN. That meet is mine, Bagheera.

That mancub's mother and father
arr in my stomach.

BAGHEERA *(angry)*. You killed the parents?

(Stops himself; calm.)

Shouldn't eat Man, Sherakhan.

You 'll lose your teeth.

SHERAKHAN. You just back away, Panther.

AKELA. The mancubb belongs to the Freepeople Wulfpack,
Sherakhan.

Back away yourself.

SHERAKHAN. Yooo

watch yoor tail, Bushyface.

That meet belongs to me.

AKELA. Bushyface? Bushyface, huh?

Well I

Akela

Leader uv the Freepeople Wulfpack

have accepted Bagheera's bargain

and will take this mancub

to grow up part uv my pack.

That's my word;

my teeth defend it.

And also: *(Snaps fingers.)*

GRAB. My teeth!

GREY. My teeth!

BAGHEERA. And mine, oh mighty tiger.

SHERAKHAN *(looks at them all together)*. Eeeeeeeasy talk,

One by one yoor not so brave.

BAGHEERA. Sneak up behind them one by one:
that's yoor way,
brave tiger.

SHERAKHAN. Oooooooh, unbeaten panther.
Afraid for yoor little baby mancub?
Mommy? MommyMommyMommyMommy

*(BAGHEERA's back coils to spring, but the fight is stopped
by BALOO's words.)*

BALOO. Cat my not kill cat
nor wulf kill wulf,
Law uv the Jungal.

(The two cats freeze; slowly BAGHEERA pulls away.)

BAGHEERA. Yoo kill defenseless dangerous Man
and make trouble for the whole Jungal.

I can't punish yoo myself
but I will live to see yoo pay the price.
Go feed on rats and porcupines, Tiger.

SHERAKHAN. I am Sherakhan
and I feed wherever I choose.
That mancub will come to my teeth in the end
when yoo bushtailed thieves grow tired uv toying with it.
Take good care uv him,
mommy Bagheera.

(Tiger springs away and off.)

AKELA. Showed that Tiger.

GREY. Do we eat the mancub now?

AKELA *(punches him)*. No, stupid. We get the bull.

GREY. Oh. Yah.

BAGHEERA. What will you name the mancub?

AKELA. Name? Oh, right.

We'll call him

uh

let's see .

He's got no fur on his skin

so we'll call him

Mowgli.

(Wolves laugh.)

BALOO *(to audience)*. Means Little Frog.

BAGHEERA. Keep him safe.

AKELA. He's safe as long as I'm leader.

BAGHEERA. Nobody's leader forever.

(AKELA stares at him, silent. Then turns away, uncomfortable.)

AKELA. So where's this bull?

BAGHEERA. Top uv the hill. Over there.

AKELA *(tosses his head in gesture to the wolves)*. Let's go.

(The wolves leave. BAGHEERA stops AKELA.)

BAGHEERA. Akela!

(AKELA stops. BAGHEERA points to bundle.)

AKELA. Oh. Yeah.

(AKELA picks up bundle awkwardly, leaves to follow wolves.)

BALOO. If I were you, Bagheera,
I'd keep one eye on that wulfpack
and that little frog.

BAGHEERA. I'm not a mother for cubs! *(Pause.)*

But I will watch.

Will you teach him the Law?

BALOO. I'll teach him, till he grows and returns to Man.

Time will come, if I know humans,

for that little Frog Mowgli

to teach that tiger some manners.

He may even be some help to yoooo

someday.

BAGHEERA. Nobody helps Bagheera.

(BAGHEERA springs away. BALOO, alone, turns to the audience.)

BALOO. Seasons pass by quick

to an old baare

like me.

As many years as *(Holds up hand.)*

toes on my paws

pass by me like nothin.

But this many years

are plenty

for a prime wulf

even a wulf leader

to get old and get slow.

(GRAB and GREY enter; hunting. AKELA enters with them; but when GRAB and GREY scurry across and off, AKELA stops, panting and tired. He walks after them.)

BALOO (*cont'd*). And this many years to a
little human kid
well
that's his whole life,
enuff years to grow up from baby frog to
Mowgli the Mancubb,
walkin on two feet like a human
or a baare.
Nuff years for him to learn
all the special ways uv the Jungal,
all the language uv
batsplash, grassrustle, footprint,
all the slow secret signals uv the Jungal—

(MOWGLI has entered behind BALOO, silent and crouching; he now jumps up, screeching "CAW" in BALOO's ear. BALOO whirls around ready for battle with some great pterodactyl. MOWGLI laughs uproariously.)

BALOO (*cont'd*). Mowgli!
How many times have I tooooold yooo
the Jungal is no place for playing at danger?
MOWGLI. As many times as there are nutts on the palm tree.
BALOO. I've squashed bigger creatures than yoo
for less uv a scare.
MOWGLI. Yoo deserve it
for making me,
King uv the Jungal,
spend all morning listening to yoor silly old
junnnnngalll Laaaaaaws.

(Enter PERCHY the monkey, chased by GRAB and GREY. MOWGLI leaps to join them. MOWGLI and the three

wolves surround PERCHY, who tries to escape, but the delighted wolves and MOWGLI taunt him fiercely, dancing 'round in a ring.)

BALOO. Mowgli—*(Sighs. To audience.)*

And of course,
he has plenty of time to play with his packmates
the wulfs.

GRAB, GREY & MOWGLI. Monkeeface Monkeeface
uggllee you !
Bull butt stinks
and yoo doo too !

(PERCHY tries to get away, but GREY blocks him and MOWGLI imitates his funny walk. Wolves laugh. PERCHY tries to run. MOWGLI imitates.)

GRAB, GREY & MOWGLI *(cont'd)*. Monkeeface Monkeeface
ugggleee yoo
Snakes are skinny
and yoo arr too!
Monkeeface Monkeeface
ugggggleeee yoo
Spiders got long arms
and yoo doo too !

(PERCHY waves arms and shouts, trying to scare them; wolves recoil slightly, but MOWGLI imitates and the wolves scream with laughter. BALOO shakes head wearily, lumbers toward them.)

BALOO. Awwwwwwlllllright.

Leave him alooooooone.

MOWGLI. We're just havin fun!