



Esplanade
Presents

March On

AKRAM KHAN COMPANY

Engagement Pack

Jungle Book reimaged





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Introduction

The discussion starters and activities in this pack are an invitation to think about the themes in *Jungle Book reimagined*, and explore your own personal connections and responsibility to nature. It is an opportunity to reconnect with the natural world; present and future, and remember that we are within nature and not separated from it.

There are four different activities that encourage you to write, record, draw and move, using the same processes explored by Akram and the creative team to bring *Jungle Book reimagined* to life. So whether you consider yourself to be a writer, an actor, an artist, a dancer, neither, or all, we hope you enjoy exploring this pack and telling your own story.

We would love to see what you create through experimenting with these activities. Whether it be writing, performance, sound or drawings, please send your creations to legacy@akramkhancompany.net to share your story.

Akram Khan Company



About the Company

"Through the meeting of worlds, we invite people to see, dream and reflect on the beauty and complexity of being human." - Akram Khan

Founded in 1999 by Akram Khan and Farooq Chaudhry, Akram Khan Company is now in its 21st year and has grown into one of the most prominent and innovative dance companies in the world. Originally, the company found its artistic identity through drawing on Akram's classical kathak and modern dance training, together with his fascination in storytelling. Today the company's work transcends those origins to create art that is a universal exploration of what it means to be human, delving into stories that are often in the shadows and spotlighting the voices that we are not used to hearing. The productions range from kathak and modern solos to artist-to-artist collaborations and ensemble productions that reach out to many cultures and people across the globe to critical acclaim.

About *Jungle Book reimagined*

We are now living in unprecedented and uncertain times, not only for our species but for all species on this planet. And the root cause of this conundrum is because we have forgotten our connection to our home, our planet. We all inhabit it, we all take from it, and we all build on it, but we have forgotten to return our respect for it." - Akram Khan

We are thrilled to present Akram Khan's *Jungle Book reimagined*, a brand-new work based on the original story by Rudyard Kipling with an original score. With a new sense of urgency, Akram has reinterpreted this lovingly known story from another perspective, through the lens of today's children - those who will inherit our world and become our future storytellers.

Embedded in the roots of *Jungle Book* is the deep threat that mankind poses towards nature. Akram and his team have reimagined the journey of Mowgli through the eyes of a refugee caught in a world devastated by the impact of climate change. They tell the story of how this child can help us to listen again, not to our voices but to the voices of the natural world that we, the modern world, try to silence. *Jungle Book reimagined* speaks to all generations as a step to remind, to relearn, to reimagine a new world together.

A stellar creative team have worked on this reimagining of *Jungle Book*, with a script written by [Tariq Jordan](#), dramaturgy by [Sharon Clark](#), to an original score by [Jocelyn Pook](#). With sound design by [Gareth Fry](#), lighting by [Michael Hulls](#), visual stage design by [Miriam Buether](#), video design and animation by [YeastCulture](#), and the insight of film director Andy Serkis, the visual technology will turn the stage into a magical world that dives into the myths of today.

Jungle Book reimagined is performed by ten dancers: [Lucia Chocarro](#), [Tom Davis-Dunn](#), [Thomasin Gülgeç](#), [Max Revell](#), [Matthew Sandiford](#), [Pui Yung Shum](#), [Fukiko Takase](#), [Holly Vallis](#), [Vanessa Vince-Pang](#) and [Luke Watson](#).



Synopsis

Act I

Sea levels are rising; waters dominate land; and humans scramble for their survival in search for higher ground. A young child finds herself separated from her family and ends up in a flooded city, deserted by its human inhabitants. Monuments have been uprooted and rearranged, and animals of all shapes and sizes have congregated here and formed an uneasy alliance as they try to live with this new unreliable climate. They have claimed this cityscape as their own - marking their territories in libraries, supermarkets, governmental buildings, and even places of worship.

The child is discovered by the wolf pack led by Raksha and Rama. Raksha wants to keep the child, but Rama insists that humans bring danger, and they must destroy it. Raksha protects Mowgli and presents her to an animal council, led by Akela, a dog, and with the watchful eyes in the sky of Chil, the kite. The animals speak of a mysterious hunter, a human who has been cast out by his own kind. The hunter has returned to these lands and keeps the animals in constant fear. After much deliberation, the child is accepted by the council and the naming process begins: Mowgli. Mowgli is set to work straight away; she must prove her worth and help the animals in their search for food. Maybe human instincts are just what they need.

Mowgli finds herself in the company of Bagheera, a kidnapped albino panther who grew up in a palace, and Baloo, an escaped dancing bear. However, on their quest for food, Mowgli is taken by the Bandar-log; lab monkeys who have had all kinds of experiments done on them. Through cunning, the Bandar-log outwit Baloo and Bagheera and steal Mowgli. Bagheera and Baloo must now find an animal capable of striking fear into the Bandar-log. After all, they are not animals of the tree world. They seek out Kaa, a rock python, who has escaped from captivity but still lives with the traumas of a lifetime stuck behind a glass viewing screen.

Act II

Mowgli is taken to the Bandar-log's lair, a ransacked governmental building. The Bandar-log are no strangers to humankind; they come from testing laboratories and regurgitate commercial jingles and political rants they heard from their cages. They listened, copied, and aped the humans, but now they want to become them. Mowgli is the missing piece of the puzzle. A human child to teach them how to fully become human.

With the help of Kaa, Baloo and Bagheera rescue Mowgli from the hands of the Bandar-log just at the moment she is about to help them create fire: the most feared possession of mankind. Animals can't control this. Mankind can.

When Mowgli is saved, the trio return to the council where Hathi, the leader of the elephants, tells them of their ancient tale, back to the time when the jungles they once knew were created.

But when the hunter finally breaches their territory, and shoots down Chil, the animals know that this spells the beginning of the end of the peace they have forged together. Mowgli, remembering her mother's words throughout her journey, decides to stand up and fight for her newfound friends and seeks out the hunter and end his savagery.



Discussion Starters

Introducing the themes of *Jungle Book reimagined*

Below are some discussion topics for you to explore before watching *Jungle Book reimagined*. The discussion points draw on some of the key themes in the performance so that they become recognisable when watching the show. Please have a read through the suggestions below and see if any topics would be of interest or meaning to your group before they watch the performance. Perhaps you might like to ask them the same questions before and after they watch the piece, to see how their answers compare.

Belonging

In *Jungle Book reimagined*, Mowgli is forced to leave her homeland, somewhere she felt like she belonged. She loses her family and finds a new animal family. The animals are unsure whether she belongs with them because she is human.

- What groups do you belong to? Can each person think of three different groups they belong to? E.g. their class at school, their family, their extended family, a team they support, a group of people that share their same hobby. What makes us belong to these different groups?
- How does belonging to these groups make us feel? Why is it important?
- Have you ever had an experience where you felt like you did not belong? E.g. starting a new school or job, having nobody to play with in the playground, being left out by friends, etc. How did it make you feel to not belong to a group?
- How can we help others feel like they belong? Do you have special things you do in your school to make new people feel welcome?
- Can you have family that you choose as well as family that you are born into? Does anyone have people that they are not related to that feel just as close to?

Migration

Mowgli has to leave her homeland because it isn't safe for her to live there anymore.

- Why do you think people around the world have to leave their homes? What reasons might there be? Do you know where and why people are leaving their homes right now?
- How might it feel to leave your house, friends and family behind?

Links to external sources that you may find helpful when talking about migration:

[BBC Bitesize- Short film about migration for KS1/KS2](#)

[British Red Cross- Short film explaining why people might have to leave their homes and how you might support them](#)

[National Geographic- An introduction to human migration for schools](#)

Connecting to Nature

- Do you have a special place that you like to go with your family or friends in nature? What do you like about it? What memories do you have there? What makes it special? Can each person in the class draw a picture of their special place in nature? Maybe they can also share a photo with the class.
- How does being in nature make you feel? What do you notice happens to your body and your mind?
- What did it feel like during lockdown when we couldn't go outside as much? What did we notice? How did that teach us to appreciate nature?

Respecting Nature

- What does it mean to live in balance with nature?
- Have humans forgotten how to respect nature? What examples can you think of?
- Do you have golden rules for the classroom? Can you imagine what the golden rules might be for our planet? What key principles could we live by to live better alongside nature?



Activities

1. The Inspiration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wmKfK1NZXU&t=4s>

Activity: A letter to tomorrow

Jungle Book reimaged is a letter to the future, a cautionary tale of the world we could pass on to future generations if we don't change the way humans live alongside nature. We would like to invite you to write your own letter to the future, thinking about what matters to you about our natural world and what your hopes are for its future inhabitants. This could be as short as a couple of lines, or as long as you would like it to be. It could be deeply personal and to a specific person or place, or it could be more universal, to the planet and/or humans as a whole. It could take the format of a letter, a poem, a story or any other way you can think of to express your feelings about what we should be doing now to preserve tomorrow.

Below is an example structure to inspire your letter

Dear...

Who is this letter for?

Your future self?

Your future family?

Your future homeland or a favourite place in nature?

The future planet?

- Introduce yourself, tell us something about you
- Tell us about something you love about the natural world (a place, a feeling, an experience, a memory)

What do you want to say?

What are your hopes?

What are your fears?

What could we lose?

What could we gain?

What do you care about?

What are your promises?

For schools and large groups

Instead of creating individual letters can you write a collective letter from your whole group? Younger children could share individual contributions on post-it notes, and then use these to create their letter as a group.



2. The Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vloL9IH4-4>

Activity: The Speaking Body

In *Jungle Book reimaged*, the dancers move to the sound of the script, following the rhythm and tone of their character's voice as if it were music. The dancers' bodies really inhabit the animal they are portraying and we can see them 'speaking' with their movements to tell the story. Can you create your own body-synching dance using the letter you created in the first activity as a soundtrack? Use the below guide to create the movement of your letter to tomorrow.

Step 1: Recording your soundtrack

Before you start moving, we need to create a soundtrack. Create a recording of yourself reading your letter to the future (Activity 1). You can record using a smartphone or a computer with a microphone.

Before you record, practice reading through your letter through a few times.

- What emotions do you feel when reading through your letter? Hopeful? Angry? Disappointed? Grateful? See if you can embody these emotions while you're reading, so that traces of them can be heard in your recording
- Speak slowly as if you are speaking in front of an audience
- Leave room for pauses and don't be afraid to let them be longer than if you were speaking normally

If you have not completed Activity 1, you can move to any recording of your choice. We recommend using one of the tracks from this playlist that has speeches made by Greta Thunberg. Don't worry if the track is long, you will not be moving to all of it, only two or three sentences.

Step 2: Creating movement from your soundtrack

Now it's time to think about how the recording can inspire you to move. Start by listening to your recording a few times until you can almost start to hear it as music rather than speech. If your recording is quite long, start by concentrating on one line or phrase that feels important to you. You may choose to slow your recording down to a slower speed so that you have a bit more time to move alongside your words.

- As you listen, can you imagine the recording as music instead of words? Can you think of your words as a melody?
- Can you identify a moment where the way that you speak inspires you to move a certain way? This could be an interesting **rhythm** in your recording, a **tone** that feels musical, a moment of **silence** that could encourage you to stop and then start moving. It doesn't need to be a sequence of complicated movements, but rather take the time to really focus on one or two sounds that you can hear and find a way for your body to interpret it. It could be as simple as a head movement, a hand gesture, or a change in **dynamic**.
- Think about **the rhythm** of your voice. Can you hear parts that are slower and parts that are faster? Can you pinpoint moments where the voice speeds up and slows down? Can you tap your hand to the moments when you here stresses? What pattern do the syllables create? How could you replicate this pattern with your body?
- Are there different **dynamics** in the way you are speaking? Are there moments when your voice sounds more percussive and sharp? These moments might suit a sudden, sharp dynamic like something snapping or cutting. Are there moments where your voice sounds more drawn out and lingering? Perhaps these would suit stretched out, sweeping movements like an elastic band or bow being extended.
- Think about the **tone**, are there changes in your voice as you read? You might want to play with the levels in your movement to represent different tones, for example higher levels for higher tones and lower levels closer to the ground for lower tones.
- Listen for **pauses**. These could be used to give you moments of stillness. Although you might be excited to find movements, the stillness in a dance can actually be very powerful. You don't need to find a movement for each sound that you hear, instead don't be afraid to have stillness.

For groups

Can you use one recording as a group? If you just focus on one line, do different people find different ways to move to the same recorded text? If working with multiple recordings, you may find it helpful to wear headphones.

For limited mobility and restricted space

You can create beautiful movement to go alongside text in any position that you are comfortable in and within whatever space you have available to you. If you are seated, how can you use your upper body to interpret the sounds? Think about how you can use your hands to find interesting ways of moving. How can your focus (where you are looking) make smaller movements exciting?

For younger children

Can you find a movement that represents each sentence you have recorded? It might be easier for younger children to 'act out' parts of their recording rather than listening to the tone, rhythm and dynamics of their voice. For example if you mention a house, a mountain, a river, the planet, how could you find gestures to represent these things, almost like actions to a nursery rhyme.



3. The Animation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcbw6e-aiAw>

Activity: Moving Drawings

In *Jungle Book reimaged*, animation is used to transport the audience into the world of the characters and immerse us in the telling of the story. Many of the animations used in the show have an elemental theme, incorporating water, fire, earth and air, to connect the audience to the natural world. The style of the animation is rooted in traditional methods of animating hand drawn pictures and these techniques have been used for hundreds of years to bring drawings to life.

Creating your own animation

We would like to invite you to create your own hand drawn animation in a flipbook to bring a simple drawing to life. Anybody can make a flipbook, even if you have no drawing experience. You just need an idea of something to draw and some simple drawing equipment.

You will need:

- A stack of paper or card. Small sizes like index cards or flashcards work best but you can use whatever you have to hand
- A bulldog clip or elastic band to secure the paper together
- A pen or pencil. You might find that it is easier to use something that creates a bold line, like a marker
- A light source that you can put the paper over the top of so that you can see through it. This could be the torch on your phone or anything that will help you to light up your drawing. You could even hold the paper up to a bright window. If you don't have a light source, use thinner paper instead.

What to draw

The first step is to think of what you want to draw and animate. If you have completed Activity 1, A Letter to Tomorrow, is there a simple image in your letter that relates to the natural world that you could draw (a tree, a mountain, the sun, a bee?) or anything that you feel represents the thoughts in your letter? Is there a way that you might make the drawing move (e.g. a tree swaying in the wind, a mountain in a blizzard, the sun setting, a bee flying etc). Keep your drawing very simple, just a basic outline, so that it is easier to animate. If you haven't completed Activity 1, can you think of something from the natural world that you would like to draw? For example:

- Rain falling
- A sun setting over a mountain
- A flower growing

Practice drawing your still image on a spare piece of paper, remembering to keep it as simple as possible.

Storyboard your drawing so you have a clear idea about the sequence of your animation. For example if your image is of a flower growing, your book might start with just soil, then a shoot, then a shoot and a leaf, then a shoot a leaf and a bud and then a shoot, leaf and flower opening. It's helpful to only have one part of the drawing that moves, so is there a simple background that could stay the same throughout?

Creating your flipbook

Draw the first image in your sequence on your first piece of flipbook paper. Draw it slightly to the right of the page so that you don't obscure any of your drawing once you clip the paper together. Once you've drawn your first image, put the drawing against your light source (in front of a torch, against a window, etc) and put your next piece of card on top. You should still be able to see your original drawing through it to give you an outline for your next drawing. Using the light in this way allows you to see your previous drawing so that you can simply trace the objects that stay still and slightly change the part of your drawing that moves.

Continue repeating this process of drawing, holding your picture against a light and drawing the next image in your sequence using the last image as a template. The more slowly you alter the part of your drawing that is being animated, the smoother the animation will be, so the more drawings and pages in your flipbook, the better!

Once you've drawn out the sequence on each page of your flipbook, secure the pages together with either a bulldog clip or some elastic on the left hand side. There is only one way to test a flip book- Flip it! Hopefully you will see your beautiful hand drawn image coming to life.

For more information about how to create your flipbook, [look at this video](#).



4. The Movement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mU1TGvVxA4>

In the creation of *Jungle Book reimagined*, the dancers spent time researching how to embody their animal characters. Each dancer has a specific way of moving that is portraying not just their animal, but also the personality of that animal.

Watch [this video](#) of an animation from the show. It was created by drawing over footage of dancers in a studio moving like meerkats. Watch the footage of the dancers [here](#). What do you notice about how they have embodied the meerkats?

Anatomy: Paws created by bending their arms in front of their bodies and keeping their wrists limp. Posture is a straight back with bent legs when upright and clambering on all fours to run.

Character: Playful, alert and on the lookout!

Qualities: Sharp, bouncy, twitchy

Can you think of an animal that you would like to embody? This does not have to be an animal featured in *Jungle Book reimagined*, is there an animal that you feel speaks to your body and personality? What animal lies within you?

Research how this animal moves. Can you find video clips online? Have you seen this animal moving with your own eyes? What are the qualities of this animal?

To embody your animal, think about their anatomy, character and the dynamics (ways of moving) you might choose to represent them.

1. Anatomy: What does your animal have? What is their body like? What will their posture be like when they are still and when they are moving? Are they on all-fours or standing? Do they have paws to pad? A tail to swish? Feathers to ruffle? How can you use the anatomy of your body to morph into your animal? Can your hands become a tail or ears or wings? Can you hold your body up high or close to the ground?

2. Character: What is the personality of your animal? Are they regal, silly, timid, alert, powerful, dangerous? How might their personality change the way they move?

3. Qualities and dynamics: What movement qualities do the anatomy and character of your animal make you think of? What dynamics or action words can you think of to describe the movement of your animal? E.g. slow, gentle, heavy, sharp, smooth, creeping, fidgety, wriggly.

Choose one of your dynamics and explore how your animal would move. Can you take on the posture and anatomy of your animal and then try moving using some of your dynamic words?

In our project Animal Kingdom with Numeridance, you can see how people from around the world have explored their inner animal! Take a look [here](#) to get some inspiration for your own animal.

If you're in a group, can you create herds of different animals moving around the room at the same time? For example, could there be smaller groups of people moving around the room together as lions, flamingos, crocodiles and mice? Think about what each group needs to do to make their movement specific to their animal.

For younger children it might be helpful to just choose one animal to explore together with them. Can you imagine that you are an adult and baby version of that animal? How might you follow and interact with each other?

If you have reduced mobility and/or restricted space, can you really focus in on the dynamics (ways of moving) and choose one part of the anatomy of your animal to think about. For example, if you are seated, instead thinking about the whole body of a tiger creeping on a low level, can you focus on the way their front paws might move in a slinky, stealthy way? Your focus and head movements will also add a huge amount to the character of your animal.



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