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LINCOLN CENTER'S  
**SUMMER  
FOR THE  
CITY**

JUNE 11 –AUGUST 9, 2025

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25 AT 7:30 PM**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 27 AT 7:30 PM**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 28 AT 7:30 PM**

**SUNDAY, JUNE 29 AT 7:30 PM**

# **MAHABHARATA: DHARMA (PART 2)**

## **The Life We Choose**

ROSE THEATER

Created and written by Miriam Fernandes & Ravi Jain

Using poetry from Carole Satyamurti's *Mahabharata: A Modern Retelling*

Directed by Ravi Jain with Associate Director Miriam Fernandes

A Why Not Theatre Production

In association with Barbican, London

Originally commissioned and presented by the Shaw Festival

**Director** Ravi Jain

**Associate Director** Miriam Fernandes

**Set Designer** Lorenzo Savoini

**Costume Designer** Gillian Gallow

**Lighting Designer** Kevin Lamotte

**Associate Lighting Designer** Mikael Kangas

**Projection Designer** Hana S. Kim

**Associate Projection Designer** Ann Slote

**Original Music & Sound Designer** John Gzowski & Suba Sankaran

**Traditional Music Consultant** Hasheel Lodhia

**Choreographer** Brandy Leary with contributions from Jay Emmanuel & Ellora Patnaik

**Kathakali Advisor** Kalamandalam ThulasiKumar

**Original concept developed with** Jenny Koons

**Creative Associate** Sharada K Eswar

**Lead Production Manager** Crystal Lee\*

**Lead Producer** Kevin Matthew Wong\*

\*TD Leadership Fellow

## Cast

Shawn Ahmed (Yudhishtira)  
Neil D'Souza (Krishna)  
Jay Emmanuel (Shiva/Amba/Eklavya/Drupada)  
Miriam Fernandes (Storyteller)  
Ravin J. Ganatra (Dhritarashtra)  
Darren Kuppan (Duryodhana)  
Anaka Maharaj-Sandhu (Arjuna)  
Goldy Notay (Draupadi/Gandhari)  
Ellora Patnaik (Kunti/Drona)  
Meher Pavri (Voice of Krishna)  
Sakuntala Ramanee (Shakuni/Sanjaya)  
Ronica Sajnani (Standby - Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona/Kunti)  
Ishan Sandhu (Standby - Shakuni/Sanjaya, Krishna, Arjuna)  
Navtej Sandhu (Karna/Satyavati)  
Munish Sharma (Bhima)  
Arun Varma (Standby - Karna, Bhima, Yudhishtira, Duryodhana)  
Sukania Venugopal (Bhishma)

## Musicians

John Gzowski (Conductor, Co-Composer, Co-Sound Designer, Guitar)  
Suba Sankaran (Band Leader, Co-Composer, Co-Sound Designer, Voice)  
Dylan Bell (Bass, Keyboard, Music Contributions)  
Gurtej Singh Hunjan (Percussion, Music Contributions)  
Zaheer-Abbas Janmohamed (Tabla, Music Contributions)  
Hasheel Lodhia (Bansuri, Voice, Music Contributions)

## Production Team

**Stage Manager** Neha Ross  
**Assistant Stage Managers** Victoria Wang & May Nemat Allah  
**Technical Director** Daniel Bennett  
**Lighting Associate** Jeff Pybus after Mikael Kangas  
**Head of Video & Video Op** Matthew Mellinger  
**Head of Sound** Brandon Wells  
**Music Coordinator** Zaheer-Abbas Janhommed  
**Head of Wardrobe** Chanti Laliberte  
**Consulting Producer** Rebecca Desmarais  
**Consulting Producer** Naomi Campbell  
**Assistant Producer and Company Manager** Nika Jalali\*\*  
**Production Finance** Sarah Newkirk  
**Production Marketing** Mary Anderson  
**Touring Agent** David Lieberman Artists' Representatives  
**Executive Producer** Karen Tisch

\*\*TD Emerging Leader

***Mahabharata: Dharma (Part 2), The Life We Choose***

King Janamejaya is told of the war fought by his ancestors — its devastating destruction of the planet, the mass extinction that followed, and of the survivors left behind to rebuild. Using captivating projections, dynamic soundscapes, and poetic stage design, Part 2: Dharma includes a 15-minute Sanskrit opera adaptation of the Bhagavad Gita. King Janamejaya is confronted with the battle of Kurukshetra, and the battle inside his own heart. Are we destined to repeat the mistakes of our ancestors?

**Content Advisories for *Mahabharata***

Discussions and non-graphic depictions of sexual activity, warfare, and political violence, gendered violence, cycles of revenge, sexual violence, and self-harm. Loud noises, bright and occasionally intense video design.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE: RAVI JAIN

*Mahabharata* was a story that played in the background of my childhood. I caught glimpses of it through a popular television series, a set of comic books, and in the paintings and sculptures of ancient temples I'd visited in India. The characters infiltrated my imagination, but I never really *knew* the story – only pieces, episodes, the television theme song.

I also knew *Mahabharata* through different styles of traditional dance. I watched numerous friends' "dance graduations" where 9 of 10 dances would inevitably be stories from *Mahabharata*. For thousands of years it has been told over and over, in many different ways. How could we tell *Mahabharata* today and have its messages resonate with modern audiences?

Our team felt that exploring *how* this story has been told over the centuries was just as important as the story's plot. Our telling blends traditional and modern, east and west, and includes various forms of Indian dance, storytelling, live music and even a Sanskrit opera! We've also tried to mimic many peoples' real life experience – receiving these stories, through an interpretation and lesson, over a meal. Each of these forms of storytelling help to unlock *Mahabharata's* meanings – they help us reach beyond words and narrative to access its spiritual and philosophical underpinnings.

It's rare to experience *Mahabharata* from beginning to end in one day. It needs time. It requires perspective. Its stories stay with you – their contradictions become the subject of conversations and debates, and as we age those meanings change.

Now, two years after its premiere at the Shaw Festival in 2023, our *Mahabharata* has toured to The Barbican Centre in London UK and, we are currently in the midst of the most ambitious international tour our company has ever produced, making Canadian theatre history. It has been a moving experience to share this story with audiences around the world and to witness how, as the world changes, the story continues to unravel its ancient wisdom for us.

Miriam and I have sat with this story for 8 years. The best advice I can give to you is a line from our play's Storyteller: "Don't be confused by plots. Within the river of stories flows the infinite wisdom. That is your true inheritance."

— Ravi Jain, Director of *Mahabharata*

## PLAYWRIGHTS NOTE: MIRIAM FERNANDES & RAVI JAIN

*Mahabharata* was once described to us as a dense forest of stories that one needs to carve one's own path through. That act of carving, ploughing, and weeding, feels true to the journey we've been on over these past eight years. Which trees to start from? Which branches to trim so that others can enjoy the light? When to take the most direct path through, and when to choose the winding scenic route?

At times, adapting this epic has felt equivalent to wrestling the wind. In one moment the story is unbelievably powerful and clear in its intentions. In the next moment its intentions slip through your fingers, impossible to grasp. It is vast and complex, constantly surprising you and contradicting itself.

One of the greatest respites during our journey has been spending time with past tellers of the epic. For thousands of years before the story was written down, it was passed from generation to generation orally, and so, there are as many *Mahabharatas* as there are storytellers. Assembling this version has been an enormous task of compilation. In compiling *Mahabharata*, we turned to many *sutradhaars*, which translates from Sanskrit to "the person that weaves the threads." We want to express gratitude to a few key storytellers who have held up lanterns to help us see in the sometimes dark forest. Our love and respect to Sharada K Eswar, Devdutt Pattanaik, Rustom Bharucha, Peter Brook and Jean-Claude Carrière, Rabindranath Tagore, B.R. Chopra, Amar Chitra Katha, and our deepest thanks to Carole Satyamurti, whose poetry and imagination have anchored our journey. We are humbled to be part of this lineage of storytellers, passing the baton of this story on to the next generation.

Having spent nearly a decade with this story we have found the revelation of the *Mahabharata* is to learn not to become distracted by the forest, or concerned with the wind, but to immerse oneself ever deeper into the earth, travelling into the labyrinth of its roots.

— Miriam Fernandes, Co-creator and writer of *Mahabharata*

— Ravi Jain, Co-creator and writer of *Mahabharata*

## MEET THE ARTISTS

### WHY NOT THEATRE

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Founded in 2007, Why Not Theatre is a Toronto-based theatre company with an international scope. Why Not's work exists at the intersection of art, innovation and social change. For 18 years, Why Not has developed and supported 55 new works which have toured to 83 stops across 40 cities and 11 countries, including the world-wide hit *A Brimful of Asha*, performed more than 300 times around the world, and the critically acclaimed *Mahabharata*. Why Not has an international reputation for creating cutting-edge, cross-cultural theatre, and for facilitating opportunities for underrepresented artists across Canada. [Whynot.theatre](http://Whynot.theatre)

For more about the cast and creative team, please scan the QR code.



*Mahabharata* includes text with permission from Carole Satyamurti's *Mahabharata: A Modern Retelling*, published by W. W. Norton & Company; Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya, An Illustrated Retelling Of The Mahabharata*, published by Penguin Random House India; and the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

*Mahabharata* was developed with support from Canada's National Arts Centre and its National Creation Fund and remounted with the support of Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity through a theatre residency in January 2025.

Why Not Theatre engages professional Artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the terms of the Independent Theatre Agreement.

### **Why Not Theatre Team**

**Founder and Co-Artistic Director** Ravi Jain

**Co-Artistic Director** Miriam Fernandes

**Executive Director** Karen Tisch

**Director of Production and Technical** Crystal Lee

**Director of Producing and Creative Associate** Kevin Matthew Wong

**Producer, Special Projects** Mary Anderson

**Artistic Associate** Michelle Mohammed

**Finance Director** Sarah Newkirk

**Administrative and Development Manager** Karishma Bristy

**Grants Manager** Erin Brandenburg

**Senior Development Advisor and Interim Director of Development** Jessica Kamphorst

**Events and Development Manager** Haley Depasqua

**ThisGen Artistic Producer** Intisar Awisse

**Social Media** Ishan Sandhu

**Web Design** Amanda Davy

**Communications Consultant** Katherine McCabe

### **Why Not Theatre Board of Directors**

Upkar Arora, Parmod Jain, Seema Lakhani, Chris Lorway, Paul Nagpal, Nan Oldroyd, Max Rosenfeld, Joyce Sou

Why Not Theatre is grateful to the National Arts Centre and its National Creation Fund, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, the Azrieli Foundation and the Government of Canada for making its tour of Mahabharata possible.

### **Special Thanks**

Why Not Theatre would like to warmly thank: Deborah Barrett & Jim Leech, Kendra Bator, Nadia Bello, Tim Carroll, Tom Clark (Consul General of Canada in New York), Coach House Books, Jeff Cummings, Christopher Deacon, Chris Dearlove, Bradley Dunn, Cory Dunn, Robert Foster, Karen Fricker, Amiel Gladstone, Mengtong Guan, Richard & Nancy Hamm, Humble Raja, Elisheba Ittoop, Tim Jennings, Kalamandalam Adhityan (Chenda), Kalamandalam Roopesh (Maddalam), Kalamandalam Abhijit Pillai (Thalam), Kalamandalam Mithun, Kalamandalam Abhijeet, Jenny Koons, Raj Kothari, Michel Lestréhan, David Lieberman, Owais Lightwala, Juniper Locilento, Chris Lorway, Yvonne Lu Trinh, Zoe McKeown, Allen Moon, Jon Nakagawa, Amy Page, Devdutt Pattanaik, Andrew & Valerie Pringle, Bill Rauch, Kelly Read, June Rhee, Josephine Ridge, Lindsey Sag, Emma Satyamurti, Natasha Sinha, Zachary Spitzer, Siobhan Sung, Lawrence Switzky, Michelle Tabnick, Shanta Thake, Alana Wilcox, and all the generous staff and crew at Lincoln Center.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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*Lead support for Choose-What-You-Pay is provided by the Family of Robert Wood Johnson III*

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### **Lincoln Center's *Summer for the City***

*Summer for the City* welcomes all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world to a season grounded in the city's global cultural traditions, innovative spirit, and deep sense of community—all for free or Choose-What-You-Pay. Now in its fourth year, this highly anticipated summer tradition has served more than 1 million people since launching in 2022. The 2025 festival offers a bold lineup of multidisciplinary performances across the Lincoln Center campus, including world and New York premieres, participatory events, and more—all within transformed outdoor spaces that are destinations for a range of artistic experiences and spaces for respite for New Yorkers during the summer months. [SummerfortheCity.org](https://www.summerforthecity.org)

### **About Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) is a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring the Lincoln Center campus is a destination that welcomes all—where every visitor, whether a native New Yorker or New Yorker for a day, can find inspiration, artistic innovation, inspiration, and community in the creative achievements realized on campus. Year-round, we offer robust seasons of programming, representing a broad spectrum of performing arts disciplines and complementing the artistic and educational activities of the 10 fellow resident arts organizations with whom we share a home. LCPA presents hundreds of programs each year, offered primarily for free and Choose-What-You-Pay, helping ensure that the arts are at the center of civic life for all. [LincolnCenter.org](https://www.LincolnCenter.org)

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# FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA OF LINCOLN CENTER

JULY 19–AUGUST 9



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