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

JUNE 11 – AUGUST 9, 2025

TUESDAY, JUNE 24 AT 7:30 PM

THURSDAY, JUNE 26 AT 7:30 PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 28 AT 2:00 PM

SUNDAY, JUNE 29 AT 2:00 PM

MAHABHARATA: KARMA (PART I)

The Life We Inherit

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
Head of Lighting Mikael Kangas
Lighting Associate Jeff Pybus
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 Part One:
Karma: The Life We Inherit***

King Janamejaya is holding a ritual sacrifice in which he will kill all the snakes in the world to avenge his father's death. In hopes of ending this cycle of revenge, a storyteller is summoned to tell King Janamejaya the tale of The Mahabharata. The storyteller tells of the rival Pandava and Kaurava clans, and the choices that lead to their infamous Game of Dice. Through playful narration, shadow play, classical Indian dance, and a live band, the ensemble tells the stories of humans struggling to build a just world in the face of competition, jealousy, and rage. Exploring the themes of storytelling, ecocide, and dharma (empathy), Part I begins Mahabharata's epic journey that asks, "When everyone believes they are right and their opponents wrong, how can one end a spiral of revenge?"

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

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. Whynottheatre

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

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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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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

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

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