

Northwestern | WIRTZ CENTER

# BENGAL TIGER

AT THE BAGHDAD ZOO



APRIL 22 – MAY 1, 2022

Northwestern University's  
Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts  
proudly presents

# BENGAL TIGER AT THE BAGHDAD ZOO

By Rajiv Joseph

Director  
HAMID DEGHANI

Scenic Design  
JOE JOHNSON

Costume Design  
DAVID AREVALO

Lighting Design  
MAXIMO GRANO DE ORO

Sound Design  
DEON CUSTARD

Production Stage Manager  
MIKAELA FENN

Stage Manager  
OLIVE FERGUSON

Arabic Language Coach  
HASSAN AL RAWAS

Dramaturg  
KEARY WATTS



The Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts is a member of  
Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for  
the American Theatre.

Program Editor: Yui Ginther

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Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo runs for 2 hours and 15 minutes including a 15 minute intermission

**Audience content warnings:** Fog/haze, smoking, nudity, strong language and disturbing content, loud and potentially disturbing sounds, adult language and slurs, racism, violence and murder, death, racial caricatures and gunshots.

COVID-19 GUIDELINES: The Wirtz Center complies with COVID-19 guidelines by Northwestern University, as well as local, state and federal governments. For more information, [please visit Northwestern University's Covid-19 site.](#)

**We are on sacred ground. Northwestern University is on the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires—the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa—as well as the Menominee, Miami, and Ho-Chunk nations. Before it was stolen from them through colonization and forced removal, this land was a site of trade, travel, gathering, and healing for more than a dozen other native tribes. The state of Illinois is still home to more than 100,000 tribal members. In the spirit of healing and making amends for the harm that was done, we acknowledge the native and indigenous peoples who called this land home. And we pledge ourselves as members of the Northwestern School of Communication to turn our statements into action and build better relationships with native and indigenous communities in Evanston, in Chicago, and throughout the region.**

# SETTING: IN AND AROUND BAGHDAD, IRAQ

## CAST

Eitan Pessah.....Tiger  
Theo Gyra.....Tom  
Abraham Deitz-Green.....Kev  
Rishi Varma.....Musa  
Gavin Shaub.....Uday/Iraqi Man  
Sophie Nassiri Morvillo.....Iraqi Woman 1 & 2  
Sophia Talwalkar.....Hadia/Iraqi Teenager  
Charlie Niccolini.....Understudy Tiger & Tom  
Jason Sekili.....Understudy Kev  
David Marquette.....Understudy Musa  
Augustus Saint Glick.....Understudy Uday/Iraqi Man  
Tallulah Noss.....Understudy Iraqi Woman 1 & 2  
Sydney Brenton.....Understudy Hadia/Iraqi Teenager

## SPECIAL THANKS

R&D Choreography, Barbara Butts, Zeinab Dehghani,  
Linda Gates, Joyce Pu, Jessica Thebus, Katy Walsh

**EITAN PESSAH (TIGER)** is a junior Theatre major and Business Institutions minor. He most recently played Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* and is so very excited to be playing the Tiger in this wonderful play. He would like to thank his family for their constant support and love, as well as the entire cast and crew of *Bengal Tiger* for all their guidance and hard work. He hopes you enjoy the show!

**THEO GYRA (TOM)** is a first-year from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He is studying Theatre, Economics, and Arabic at Northwestern. He would like to thank the entire *Bengal* artistic team, cast and crew and the Northwestern Theatre faculty, and his family and friends for their support.

يتمنى انكم تستمتعون بالمشرحية! Hope you enjoy the Show!

**ABRAHAM DEITZ-GREEN (KEV)** is thrilled to be making his Wirtz debut in *Bengal Tiger*! A first-year from New Jersey, he studies theater, psychology, and dance. Abraham's favorite shape is the trapezoid and he would like to know why glue doesn't stick to the inside of the bottle, if anyone has any ideas. He would like to thank his parents, Hamid, the brilliant creative team, wonderful dashers, and exceedingly snazzy cast for this life changing experience.

**RISHI VARMA (MUSA)** is thrilled to be returning to the Louis Theatre for his final performance at Northwestern. Before the pandemic, Rishi performed in *JULIUS CAESAR*

Hamid Dehghani.....Director  
Joe Johnson.....Set Designer  
David Arevalo.....Costume Designer  
Maximo Grano De Oro.....Lighting Designer  
Deon Custard.....Sound Designer  
Mikaela Fenn.....Production Stage Manager  
Olive Ferguson.....Stage Manager  
Hassan Al Rawas.....Arabic Language Coach  
Keary Watts.....Dramaturg  
Victor Bayona.....Fight and Violence Director  
Rick Gilbert.....Fight and Violence Director  
Courtney Abbott.....Intimacy Director  
Jonyca (Ruoyin) Jiao.....Assistant Director  
Ben Kress.....Assistant Costume Designer  
Craig Carroll.....Assistant Intimacy Choreographer  
Milo Bue.....MFA Run Crew Head

in the same space. Most recently, you could find Rishi in *LittleSpace or the Daddy Play*, where he scarred his parents for life. Rishi is a senior theatre and economics major.

**GAVIN SHAUB (UDAY/IRAQI MAN)** is a first-year theatre major from New York. His recent work includes the understudy for D in *Peerless*, and Balladeer in *Assassins the Musical*. He would love to thank Hamid for the wonderful opportunity to participate in such a thoughtful meditation on war, his castmates for their consistent support, and the designers for bringing the show to life.

**SOPHIE NASSIRI MORVILLO (IRAQI WOMAN 1 & 2)** is excited to be performing in her first show at Northwestern in *Bengal Tiger at The Baghdad Zoo*. She is a first-year student studying Theatre and Art History. Outside of classes, she has done design work for student productions and is also part of Extreme Measures Acapella. At the end of the year, she is looking forward to performing in *By Any Other Name*, an AMTP production.

**SOPHIA TALWALKAR (IRAQI TEENAGER/HADIA)** is thrilled to be in the Wirtz Center's production of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. She is a second-year studying theatre and cognitive science. She thanks Hamid and the entire team for their inexhaustible creativity and passion, the cast for their talent, dedication, and senses of humor, her family for their unconditional love, and her teachers, whose lessons she will never forget. She hopes you fall in love with this story as much as she has. Cast & Crew - Break a Leg!

## COMPANY BIOS

**CHARLIE NICCOLINI (UNDERSTUDY TIGER & TOM)** is a first-year theatre major at Northwestern and a member of THUNK a cappella. Credits include *Richard III* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. and *The Other Josh Cohen* at the Westside Theatre in NYC. He would like to thank Hamid and the entire cast and crew for their incredible work over the past few months.

**JASON SEKILI (UNDERSTUDY KEV)** is thrilled to be involved with *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*! He is a sophomore at Northwestern University studying theatre and psychology, and he is in the Music Theatre Certificate program. His most recent Northwestern credits include *Mamma Mia!* (Sky), *Our New Town* (Gabriel), *Theory of Relativity* (Ryan), and *Still Life with Iris* (Grotto Good/Elmer). He would like to thank his family and friends for their constant love and support.

**DAVID MARQUETTE (UNDERSTUDY MUSA)** is thrilled to be a part of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* as his final Northwestern production, some of his most recent credits include Ben in *Our New Town* and Ed Boone in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. He will be graduating this spring with a degree in Theatre and Computer Science, and is grateful for all the opportunities Northwestern has provided him. He wants to thank his Mom and Dad especially for their support the last four years.

**AUGUSTUS SAINT GLICK (UNDERSTUDY UDAY/ IRAQI MAN)** is entering his first Northwestern show of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* as Uday/Man understudy. Grew up in Simsbury, Connecticut but through and through a city boy. Previous member of the Atlantic Acting Company, honorary Northwestern Cherub, and committed performer at Simsbury High. Though a true film actor, he continuously returns to the stage for the energy of live theatre. Grateful to his family, mentors, friends, and the opportunity to learn from this experience.

**TALLULAH NOUSS (UNDERSTUDY IRAQI WOMAN 1 & 2)** is excited to be part of another amazing production with the Wirtz Center after her recent run in *Something Rotten*. She is a first year Theatre Major in the Music Theatre Certificate program, minoring in Business Institutions and Dance. Northwestern's Tonik

Tap and Graffiti dance companies keep her on her toes when she isn't rehearsing! Love to her friends and family for their constant support and the amazing cast for inspiring her everyday.

**SYDNEY BRENTON (UNDERSTUDY IRAQI TEENAGER/HADIA)** is thrilled to take part in her first Wirtz production, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. She is a first-year Theatre major from New Jersey and has previously performed regionally at the Paper Mill Playhouse and with Pixie Dust Players. Big thanks to her family and to the cast, crew, and production team!

**HAMID DEGHANI (DIRECTOR)** is an Iranian director and playwright. He has received several awards as a director, playwright, and actor from international festivals in Iran. His directing highlights in Iran include two original scripts, *From the Environs of Milad* and *Sohrab's Transgression*, *Nathan and Tabileth* by Barry Bermange, and *Leila* by Morteza Hossein Zadeh. Hamid moved to the United States in 2018 to continue his education at Northwestern University. Since then, he has directed *A Moment of Silence* by Mohammad Yaghoubi and *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl. Hamid also had the opportunity to assistant direct for Mary Zimmerman at the Met Opera for *Eurydice* and Shana Cooper during Court Theatre's production of *The Lady from the Sea*. During the 2020 pandemic when all theaters were closed, Hamid co-founded Grass Studio Theatre and performed three collectively devised pieces – *Picnic*, *Story in a Box*, and *Reportage of a Room* – at various outdoor locations. Hamid would like to thank Zeinab for all of her support.

**JOE JOHNSON (SCENIC DESIGNER)** is in his final year as a set designer at Northwestern. Past productions at Northwestern have been *Legally Blonde*, *Glass Menagerie*, and *Peerless*. Joe was selected to exhibit his set design for Karel Capek's *The White Plague* as part of the Prague Quadrennial Common Design Project in 2020, an online exhibition of 16 other schools from around the world. [www.joethomasjohnson.com](http://www.joethomasjohnson.com)

**DAVID AREVALO (COSTUME DESIGNER)** is a Texas born, Chicago based, Mexican costume designer, maker and artist. Costume Designs at NU include: *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Eurydice*, and *Machinal*. Outside of NU: *El Cóndor Mágico*

(2021, The Civilians R&D), *Pinocchio*, *Rapunzel* (2018, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park). Associate: *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2017, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra). Assistant: *Quixote Nuevo* (2019, Hartford Stage). Prior to his work as a costume designer, he was a freelance Tailor and Draper at the Santa Fe Opera, among other venues. He holds a BA from the University of Texas at Austin and is currently an MFA candidate in Northwestern University's Stage Design program. David is the recipient of Northwestern's 2021 Merritt Academic Prize for Collaborative Design.

**MAXIMO GRANO DE ORO (LIGHTING DESIGNER)** is a Lighting Designer for theater, opera, and dance originally from New Jersey. He received his BFA in Lighting Design from Rutgers Mason Gross and is currently an MFA candidate at Northwestern University studying Lighting Design, expected in June 2023. Recent design credits include *In His Hands* (Northwestern), *The Medium* (Northwestern Opera), *The Tempest* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company), *Nothing is Possible*, and *Resiliencia* (Northwestern Dance).

**DEON CUSTARD (SOUND DESIGNER)** is a Ph.D. student in Northwestern's theatre department, dramaturg, and freelance sound designer who is excited to be designing his first show for the university! Current research interests are focused on race, sex/gender, and comedy in Shakespeare's plays. Recent and forthcoming sound/design work has been with the Goodman, Steppenwolf, Santa Fe Stage and Trap Door Theatre — as well as a number of other storefront companies in the wonderful city of Chicago!

**MIKAELA FENN (PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER)** is a third-year theatre major with minors in dance and French. She has had the honor to act in, stage manage, produce, and light design for many productions both at and outside of Northwestern and hopes to continue doing so in the future. She is grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of this project and she hopes you enjoy watching it as much as she has enjoyed working on it.

**OLIVE FERGUSON (STAGE MANAGER)** is a Chicago-area stage manager and this is her first production at the Wirtz Center! Olive is originally from Michigan and received her BFA in Acting from Oakland University. She is delighted

to join this fabulous group of artists to create this piece. Her previous credits include *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and *Home* at Fleetwood Jourdain Theatre in Evanston and *Collected Stories* at Redtwist Theatre in Chicago.

**HASSAN AL RAWAS (ARABIC LANGUAGE COACH)** is an alum of the MFA in directing program at Northwestern, where he directed *The Cherry Orchard* in 2019 and *The Orange Garden* in 2018. Navigating the intricacies of the Arabic language and Iraqi dialect with this tremendously talented cast has been a true pleasure.

**KEARY WATTS (DRAMATURG)** is a Ph.D. candidate in Theatre and Drama (IPTD), a Franke Graduate Fellow at the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, and a Graduate Teaching Fellow at the Searle Center for Advanced Learning and Teaching. He previously served as dramaturg for Lydia Diamond's *Voyeurs De Venus* (dir. Tasia Jones).

**R&D CHOREOGRAPHY (VICTOR BAYONA AND RICK GILBERT) - VIOLENCE DESIGN** is filled with the joys of spring to be working on Bengal Tiger at the Wirtz! Founded in 1997, R&D has designed violence for over three hundred productions at dozens of Chicago area theatres, including ATC, Griffin, Goodman, Lifeline, Metropolis, Oak Park Festival Theater, Pegasus, Steep, Strawdog, Theatre at the Center, Theo Ubiq, Trapdoor, and Vitalist. We have taught and designed at universities including Lewis, Loyola, North Park, Purdue, and University of Chicago.

**COURTNEY ABBOTT (INTIMACY DIRECTOR)** has lead Intimacy for student and professional actors, directors and stage managers; university faculty; and the world-renowned SITI company. Prior to this work, they taught consent and bystander intervention to the United States Armed Forces. They are a proud alum of Northwestern and Ohio University. Recent projects include Writers Theatre's *Wife of a Salesman*, and Victory Garden's *In Every Generation*. Next up at NU, *Water* by the Spoonful and *Waa-Mu*.

**JONYCA (RUOYIN) JIAO (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR)** is a Junior studying Theatre and Music Theatre here at Northwestern. She is very honored to be the assistant director of this show and to work with the amazing director Hamid Dehghani, the talented actors, and other awesome artists.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We thank our donors who make it possible to develop and sustain the quality of productions at Northwestern University. The following individuals and institutions have made gifts to one or more of the following areas: the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, American Music Theatre Project, and the Music Theatre Funds. All gifts were made between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021.

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