

the 2nd day of Christmas...

Jungle jinks

International Youth Theatre's young stars performing in the Jungle Book this month.

described as a "fast paced, rhythmic production" of Rudyard Kipling's classic, the play has been in production since September, with the young cast tirelessly squeezing in rehearsals between their packed school schedules. "We've made the jungle come alive on stage," enthuses ESF Island School student Alex Appel, who will be playing Akela, the wolf and jungle leader. "I think people love the diversity of the performance - the humour, action, sad bits. The stage production should be a particularly big hit." "With all actors full-time students, balancing school work with the demands of production schedules was tough at times. I think some of the older kids have had a really hard time to keep up with everything once we get to the show," admits another performer, an old Canadian International School student Lizzy Marland, who will be playing the mother wolf. "You just have to make sure you manage your time well. I think the first rehearsal was one of my favourites, simply because it was really cool to meet all of the cast and seeing the people you're going to work with," she says. "Generally, we have full cast rehearsals on Monday evenings and another two on Saturdays. There are also smaller dress rehearsals on Wednesdays and Thursdays." "I think the energy of the cast is magical."

All main characters are performing in all the shows, although the part of Mowgli is shared between twins Alex and John Hardy, who both attend Kellett School. Faust production veterans, they have previously performed in Fantastic Mr Fox and Treasure Island.

"We all get nervous before the performance," says Alex. "Before each show, I take a few deep breaths and think to myself, 'I can do this'."

"So far rehearsals have gone smoothly," admits John. "Although yesterday I fell down the stairs on the way back to the changing rooms and cut my leg. My favourite part is the relief and joy you feel when you bow during the curtain call! I think there's something for everyone in the show - the

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According to Appel, her part involves "speaking and movement, but no full dance number. I started with Faust two years ago and have since fallen in love with acting - my grandma says I've got the bug," she says.

"I love becoming different people with the roles I've taken on. As I work with the directors and cast, my character becomes more real and the lines start to stick in my mind. Then after a while, they just start to flow. In this production, I'm wearing a nice grey fur vest, but it's the face make-up that really makes the difference. I like how my face is changed, it makes me feel more intense."

Bagheera the panther will be played by ESF South Island School student, Poppy Conway. "I love everything about performing, it's such an adrenaline rush when you step on stage," she says. "I also love my costume so much! It's a long, burgundy, fluffy coat with red piping around the neck and sleeves. It helps me get into the role and I feel like a different person when I've got it on."

Conway is currently studying for her GCSEs, as well as attending three dance classes each week on top of rehearsals. "I'm very busy," she admits. "I'm not the best at learning lines, and need to go over them a lot. But I'm proud to say I've memorised them all now though!"

"I think the audience is going to love our unique take on the original story. It has some very funny moments which feature some amazing puns and also has some sad and touching moments. We're hoping to blow your socks off with our performance."

The Jungle Book will be performed on December 1 & 2, 10am & 7.30pm; and December 3, 2.30 & 7.30pm, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, 1 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai. Tickets available from hkticketing.com/events/WCTHEJU1216 - quote JB2016 for a 10% discount.

The Jungle Book cast raring to go - performances are on December 1, 2 and 3 at HKAPA.

