COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REAFFIRMING THE HUMANITY THAT CONNECTS US ALL

Thanks to your support, we continue to enrich conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion in the arts sector.

This August, Silk Road Rising co-founder Malik Gillani was invited to speak at a new monthly salon, organized by Chicago’s Black Lives, Black Words, called “The Artist Speaks.”

At this event, Malik spoke of the storyteller’s role in revealing universal human truths. He invoked both Western wisdom, like Aristotle’s idea of relationships within a city, and Eastern philosophies, like the Buddhist symbolism of the lotus flower.

Listen to Malik’s full speech online: http://bit.ly/MalikTalk

Audiences were especially moved by his depiction of the lotus as a symbol of human resilience. “It is the struggle of the human soul to be better,” he said. “It blooms in mud, it rises through water.”

The flower, like human beings, must fight to transcend itself—to reach the air and its potential. With your support, Silk Road Rising’s stories continue to reveal this transcendent quality of the human spirit. However specific the story, others may yet find a piece of themselves reflected within.
At EPIC’s kick-off meeting, held this summer prior to start of the school year, goals were shared and refined in order to ensure the success of our partnership. These meetings between education coordinator, teaching artist, and classroom teacher are central to each residency’s success.

Your gifts play an important role in ensuring that we’re able to hire and retain highly qualified teaching artists who have experience integrating arts learning programs in public school settings. The result? Teachers receive valuable insights into new ways of weaving playwriting, empathy, and civic engagement into their curricula—courtesy of some of the city’s brightest arts educators.

While many Chicagoans were having fun in the sun, one Morgan Park High School teacher was hard at work this summer planning for the school year. Brenna Reilly is responsible for teaching an International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Theatre course, and was looking for a program to help students explore original theatre and play texts. This is where Silk Road Rising stepped in.

Our in-school arts education program, EPIC (Empathic Playwriting Intensive Course), was a slam dunk at boosting Brenna’s curriculum. Its emphasis on clear learning objectives and its process-based approach aligned perfectly with her goals and the I.B. standards.
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Stories change minds; minds choose actions; actions change the world. And stories like “Twice, Thrice, Frice” reveal the humanity we all share.

In August, Silk Road Rising hosted a staged reading of a new comedy by Fouad Teymour, “Twice, Thrice, Frice,” as part of our ongoing series, “Crescent and Star: Arab and Muslim Journeys.”

Fouad’s playwriting journey was one aided by our theatre. Inspired by years of friendly debates surrounding religion and politics, a draft of the play was first committed to paper in early 2016.

From there, Silk Road Rising hosted workshops and reading groups. Kareem Fahmy was selected as a director (also of Egyptian heritage) to breathe life into the inaugural performance. That’s where you came in.

You attended the reading. You helped ensure that the play will grow even stronger by participating in talkbacks.

The crisis of Islamophobia in response to increased global migration shows no sign of slowing. Cultural interchange is a reality of 21st century life, and we must learn to live and love one another despite fear. Fouad’s play presents three Muslim women as more than stereotypes, going beyond typical representations of Islam in entertainment.

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“These talkbacks were very helpful and enlightening,” said Fouad. “One couple told me they’ve been discussing [my play] constantly for the past two weeks. That’s very satisfying as this is what we aim to generate with our art, audience engagement and societal discourse.”
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YOU CONTRIBUTED TO NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Silk Road Rising co-founders Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani recently traveled to Portland, OR to attend this year’s national conference of the Theatre Communications Group. As session leaders they were able to contribute to national conversations about theatre making during this divisive time in America’s history.

Your input as audience members and supporters was paramount in allowing Jamil and Malik to share important takeaways of producing work by Asian American and Middle Eastern Americans intended for all communities.

At the conference, Khoury organized and helped facilitate a convening of Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim American theatre artists, producers, and scholars, sharing insights he has gained from audience members and Silk Road’s fifteen year history of producing theatre. He also contributed to conversations about building an alliance of theatres of color and helped craft a Bill of Rights for Middle Eastern American theatre artists.

Throughout each conversation, Jamil drew upon the knowledge, insights, and opinions provided by patrons like you. Your continuous support and the discourse you help create, be it during talkbacks, by filling out surveys, and through private correspondence, guides us in our work to craft national dialogues about expanding representation and creating a more global American theatre.

Thank you for playing a vital role in Silk Road Rising’s history, and for equipping us with the insights necessary to be national leaders in a theatrical landscape that is determined to help our nation heal.

The 2017 TCG National Conference was held in Portland. Your voice was heard at the conference.

Will you help us reach $100,000?

The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust has given Silk Road Rising a $100,000 challenge grant, and you can play a part in helping us reach our goal. When you increase your gift to Silk Road Rising, you double your impact dollar-for-dollar, helping Silk Road Rising continue to make major contributions to the fields of theatre, education, and community engagement. Give today to support a season that is courageous, thoughtful, and responsive.

www.SilkRoadRising.org/donate