You’re building bridges across religious divides

Christmas Mubarak brings communities together

Earlier this month, you brought audiences together for a one-of-a-kind new play.

Christmas Mubarak narrows the gap between Christian and Muslim faith, featuring stories of Jesus and the Virgin Mary as told in the Quran and in other Islamic sources.

One Catholic patron remarked “each story upon story builds our appreciation for Jesus, Mary, and the apostles. It’s a warm hug from the Muslim community.”

He continued, “They are showing us a Jesus who makes our appreciation of him even greater.”

Silk Road actors shared the stage with the choir of the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, our hosts since 2008.

In selecting Christmas hymns and carols for the play, adaptor and director Corey Pond says he chose songs that “challenge us to be better, give us new perspectives, and remind us of what is truly important.”

Your support for Silk Road Rising challenges us all to be better and remember what is truly important.

Thank you for bringing Chicago audiences new perspectives and opening our hearts to one another, during the holidays and year round.
How do you share a play in a format where the magic of storytelling remains vibrant and accessible beyond its performance run?

We go to theatre knowing that no two performances will be alike. Many of us remark on the ephemeral quality of the artform and ruefully regret missing a live performance.

But aren’t some stories so urgent that they should be accessible forever?

For several years now, with your investment in art that has permanence, we’ve been developing video plays. Video plays are short plays designed to be seen online and on TV. They live on our website (www.silkroadrising.org/media-arts) where they can be accessed for free anytime, anywhere.

They are also shown on TV by Chicago Access Network Television (CAN-TV) reaching one million viewers.

At our recent meeting with CAN-TV we learned that video plays we submitted over five years ago continue to be screened on their channel to this day.

“Your work is significant,” said Lesley Johnson, Program Director at CAN-TV. “The need for these stories doesn’t go away after you’ve told them once!”

We just want to say thank you to YOU. Look at how you are helping us express complex stories and urgent ideas that have resonance and permanence.
This summer, John Hope College Prep in Englewood graduated its final class. The sophomores who were in Keith Givens’s 10th grade history class are now dispersed to surrounding schools.

But, thanks to your investment in our arts education program Empathic Playwriting Intensive Course (EPIC), the final year before their neighborhood school closed its doors was one they will never forget.

This spring, veteran teaching artist Lindsay Hopkins visited Mr. Givens’s class to meet the students and to design an EPIC program that would engage students who might otherwise give up on a school that seemed to be giving up on them.

Mr. Givens was mystified that anyone would want to help his students. They have been overlooked for so long that your generosity came as a surprise to him.

The teens were hesitant, even fearful, at first and acted out—challenging Lindsay. But EPIC’s focus on building empathy helped them learn to open up, communicate their hopes and fears for the future, and unleash their creative voices.

On the last day, when professional actors read students’ plays on stage, the class stood with tears in their eyes to thank Lindsay for not giving up on them.

We cannot thank you enough for giving hope to Hope.
The stories on Chicago stages don’t always reflect the full range of people and lived experiences of this great international city. Why is that?

This past fall, we conducted interviews with more than a dozen industry leaders to understand the obstacles theatres face when producing diverse work. We learned that many producers fear audiences won’t buy tickets to see stories by and about Asian and Middle Eastern Americans.

We know that is not true, thanks to your sixteen years of commitment to Silk Road Rising.

You are leading a movement to bring diverse stories and multi-dimensional characters to Chicago stages.

Each gift you make and each play you attend demonstrates that you believe stories have the power to challenge stereotypes and promote empathy.

Your gifts allow us to collaborate with other companies and develop services that make it possible for Silk Road stories to be told on stages all across the city. Because of your commitment to authentic storytelling, other theatre leaders trust us to help them tell these stories honestly and with cultural humility.

Imagine Silk Road stories all across Chicago. It’s a real possibility thanks to your support.