

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS PROJECT



a play by

CHRISTOPHER CHEN

OCTOBER 16-NOVEMBER 23, 2014



Written by **Christopher Chen**
Directed by **Joanie Schultz**
The Midwest Premiere

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS PROJECT

Written by **Christopher Chen**
Directed by **Joanie Schultz**

Originally commissioned and produced by Crowded Fire Theater Company, San Francisco, CA | Marissa Wolf, Artistic Director and Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco, CA | Amy Mueller, Artistic Director.

Developed at The Lark Play Development Center, New York City

Silk Road Rising is a proud associate of:



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CAST LIST

Mia Park* | Mel
Karmann Bajuyo | Mike
Melissa Canciller | Julie/Journalist
Kroydell Galima | Sam
Joseph Sultani | Aidan
Hannah Toriumi | Lily
Jay España | Understudy for Mike
Miriam Lee | Understudy for Lily
Fin Coe | Understudy for Aidan/Sam
Stephanie Shum | Understudy for Julie/Journalist/Mel

DEDICATION

Silk Road Rising dedicates this production to the artists that our Chicago theatre community has lost over the last two months:
Daryl Blalock, Mark Bolan, Molly Campbell, Molly Glynn, Joel Lambie, Trinity Murdock, Sheldon Patinkin, Sati Word, Brenton Wright, and Bernie Yvon.
Thank you for enriching our world.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

** Member of United Scenic Artists, the union of professional designers, artists, and craftspeople.

*** The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Malik Gillani | Producer
Jamil Khoury | Producer
Christopher Chen | Playwright
Joanie Schultz*** | Director
Corey Pond | Production Manager
Helen Coleen Lattyak* | Stage Manager
Chelsea M. Warren | Set Designer
Izumi Inaba | Costume Designer
Sarah K. Hughey** | Lighting Designer
Peter J. Storms | Sound Design
Jesse Gaffney | Props Designer
Michael Stanfill | Video and Projections Designer
Neal Ryan Shaw | Dramaturg
Jason Pikscher | Technical Director
Becca McCracken and Claire Simon
Casting | Casting Director
Nick Sandys | Fight Choreographer
Helen Young | Assistant Director
Hana Kadoyama | Assistant Stage Manager
Kristof Janezic | Master Electrician
Paul Deziel | Video Technician
Sarah Ibis | Program Editor
Lindsay Byrne | House Manager
Al Gillani | Box Office Manager
Mary Nano | Social Media Coordinator
Deann Baker | Video Editor
Teletech Video | Video Services

ABOUT SILK ROAD RISING

Mission

Silk Road Rising advances citizenship and cultural understanding with theatre based work created through Asian American and Middle Eastern American lenses.

Core values

- Discovery
- Empathy
- Pluralism

Vision

Silk Road Rising recognizes that different cultures are inherently linked. We seek to illuminate the intersections of cultures without denying their specificity. We strive to foster a world that values art over ideology and inquiry over dogma. We provide a space for diverse voices to express their own distinct stories and, through this shared experience, facilitate much-needed cross-cultural dialogue and awareness.

Artistic Goals

- Advance the creation of and expand access to works of Asian American and Middle Eastern American artists
- Deepen understanding of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures within the broader community
- Increase access to resources and provide learning opportunities that allow individuals to explore, express, and embrace a broader worldview

Contact Silk Road Rising for information on how to get involved:

Administrative Offices
Silk Road Rising
6 East Monroe Street, Suite 801
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Tel: 312-857-1234
Fax: 312-577-0849

info@silkroadrising.org
www.silkroadrising.org

COMPANY LIST

Jamil Khoury | Founding Artistic Director
Malik Gillani | Founding Executive Director
Corey Pond | Production Manager
Ethan Grant | Development Associate
Maria Wagner | Finance Director
Al Gillani | I.T. & Box Office Manager
Alice Stanley | Teaching Artist
Lindsay Hopkins | Teaching Artist
David Henry Hwang | Artistic Ambassador
Steve Scott | Artistic Advisor
Dan Stratton | Resident Set Designer
Sarah Hughey | Resident Lighting Designer
Peter J. Storms | Resident Sound Designer
Jesse Gaffney | Resident Props Designer
Neal Ryan Shaw | Resident Dramaturg
Kareem Bandealy | Artistic Associate
Rebecca A. Barrett | Artistic Associate
Carol J. Blanchard | Artistic Associate
Lavina Jadhvani | Artistic Associate
Lee Keenan | Artistic Associate
Becca McCracken | Casting Director
Andrew Skwish | Poster Art Illustrator
Darrel Reese | Graphic Designer
Carol Goerne | Saints Coordinator
Sarah Ibis | Program Editor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Officers:

Jo Anne Davis | President
Deanna Nord | Secretary
Jon Harmon | Treasurer

Board Members:

Jeff Conlin | Board Member
Malik Gillani | Board Member
Jamil Khoury | Board Member
Ajay Mago | Board Member

Alumni Board:

Sheila Chapman | Alumni Board Chair
Karen Atwood | Alumni Board Member
Frank Buttitta | Alumni Board Member
Laura Meyer | Alumni Board Member
Vijay Murugappan | Alumni Board Member
Shirley Soo | Alumni Board Member

CAST BIOS



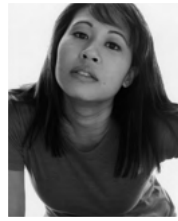
Mia Park (Mel) makes her Silk Road Rising debut. Local credits include *The World of Extreme Happiness* at Goodman Theatre, *Water By The Spoonful* (understudy) at Court Theatre, *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow* at

Collaboration, *Hana's Suitcase* at Chicago Children's Theatre, *The Big Tent* at About Face Theatre, and *My Asian Mom*, *The Wind Cries Mary*, and *Trial by Water* at A-Squared Theatre Workshop. Film credits include *The Lake House* and *The Other Guys*. Television credits include *Shameless*, *Boss*, *Chicago Fire*, and *Chic-a-Go-Go*. MiaPark.com



Karmann Bajuyo (Mike) is thrilled to be working on *The Hundred Flowers Project!* He was last seen at Silk Road Rising in 2012 in *Mahal*. Other Chicago area credits include work at Porchlight Music Theater,

Bailiwick Chicago, and TimberLake Playhouse. TV credits include *Powers* (F/X pilot). Film credits include *Critical Nexus*, *Bastard Son of a Thousand Fathers*, *Thanks Mom*, and *Grace on the Green Line*. Voiceover, on-camera, print, and trade show presenting comprise the rest of his work. Much thanks to Jamil, Malik, Corey, Joanie, Becca at Simon Casting, and Paonessa Talent for this wonderful opportunity. Also, thank you to family and friends, especially B.A.



Melissa Canciller (Julie/ Journalist) is honored and thrilled to return to Silk Road Rising, and anticipates endless hours of play (and serious growth!) both on stage and off. She has previously appeared at Chicago Dramatists and BoHo

Theatre, has dabbled in a few TV commercials, and has tickled audiences with the other members of *Stir-Friday Night!*, Chicago's Asian-American sketch comedy and improv troupe. She is thankful to her family and friends for their unwavering support. Like, really thankful. To Dad and Lola.



Kroydell Galima (Sam) is thrilled to work with Silk Road Rising again. He was last seen at SRR in *Paulus*. He has appeared with Halcyon Theatre, TimeLine Theatre, and understudied in Lookingglass' world premiere

of *Big Lake Big City*. He has also appeared in a number of shorts and commercials. Kroydell also serves as Executive Director of CUBE Ensemble, a lyric theatre and collaborative arts company specializing in devised theatre concepts. He will next appear in CUBE's *Faces of Eurydice* in the spring of 2015. Thanks to Hope, his friends and family, and everyone at Gray Talent Group for continued love, support, and generosity.



Joseph Sultani (Aidan) returns to Silk Road Rising, where he previously appeared in a staged reading of *The Translator*. Chicago credits include *Thou Proud Dream: Henry V*, *I Am No Bird*, *Make Me Love You*, and numerous

readings. He holds a BFA in performance from Virginia Commonwealth University and is an American Theatre Wing Springboard Alum. He would like to thank the cast and crew, and especially Joanie Schultz for this opportunity. Much love to his family, friends, and Gray Talent for their continued support.



Hannah Toriumi (Lily) is thrilled to be acting in her first Silk Road Rising show! She is immensely grateful for the opportunity to work with such an amazing director and cast. Hannah lives in Chicago and is represented by the

lovely ladies of Paonessa Talent. She is a graduate of the theatre program at North Central College and is a member of The Other Theatre Company collective. She would like to praise God, her family, and her friends for being an ever-present fan club and support system.



Jay España (Understudy for Mike) has had an evolving and cosmopolitan journey as actor, singer, and director. His career has led him to perform and collaborate in more than 70 productions with some of the most respected theater

companies in Asia, as well as dabbling in film and television. Recently he toured the US and Canada in the lead role of the King in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King And I*. Jay so enjoys studying that in the last six years he has acquired a musical theater degree, a yoga teacher's certificate, a Graduate Laban Certificate in Movement Analysis (GLCMA), and is currently a graduate student of cinema arts and science at Columbia College. Love to my family, 143DM.



Miriam Lee (Understudy for Lily) just graduated from the Theatre School at DePaul University. This is her first Silk Road Rising production and she is excited to see what the future has in store for her.



Fin Coe (Understudy for Sam/Aidan) is a theatre artist living and working in Chicago and is thrilled to be working on his first Silk Road Rising production. Fin is a company member

with Halcyon Theatre and with Pretty/Windy Theatre Company. He is also co-editor of The Sketch Review and an alumnus of Case Western Reserve University. He would like to thank his family for their tireless support, his friends for their endless inspiration, and all of you for coming out to share in this experience.



Stephanie Shum (Understudy for Mel/Julie) is thrilled to be working with Silk Road Rising for the first time! Past credits include *Mnemonic* (Red Tape Theatre), *reWILDing Genius* (The New Colony/

Steppenwolf Garage Rep 2014), *Kate and Sam Are Not Breaking Up* (The New Colony), *Alice* (Nothing Without a Company), *The Bacchae Revisited* (The Right Brain Project), and *Equivocation* (Victory Gardens). She is the managing director and an ensemble member of The New Colony, and an artistic associate with Nothing Without a Company. By day she is the marketing manager at Lookingglass Theatre Company, currently in her fifth season.

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS



Malik Gillani (Producer) is the Founding Executive Director of Silk Road Rising. Malik is a recognized leader in the creation of innovative arts programming that expands artistic access. Most notably, he developed SRR's

model for creating online video plays, which are now being accessed across the globe. Malik also established SRR's arts integrated education program, Myths to Drama, which was heralded as one of the finest elementary school arts education programs in the Chicago Public Schools system. He also piloted a new arts education program for high school and elementary school students in partnership with San Diego's Playwrights Project called EPIC (Empathic Playwriting Intensive Course). Malik earned a Masters of Nonprofit Administration from North Park University and a BA in Liberal Arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, with an emphasis on the Great Books. He is a Kellogg Executive Scholar (Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University) and has been awarded a Certificate of Professional Achievement in Nonprofit Management. Malik Gillani is the recipient of the IBM Business and Technology Leadership Award (2003) and was honored by Changing Worlds for Outstanding Contributions to the Arts (2006). In 2009, he received the Chicago Community Trust Fellowship Award.



Jamil Khoury (Producer) is the Founding Artistic Director of Silk Road Rising. Recently named the 2014-2015 Playwright-in-Residence at Illinois' Knox College, he is currently writing the full-length version of his play

Mosque Alert which will be produced at Knox in February of 2015. *Mosque Alert* grows out of an online interactive new play development and civic

engagement project that was launched in 2011, exploring resistance to the building of mosques in communities across the U.S. Jamil has recently released both his latest video play, *Multi Meets Poly: Multiculturalism and Polyculturalism Go On a First Date*, and his second documentary film, *Sacred Stages: A Church, a Theatre, and a Story* which he co-directed with Malik Gillani. Jamil devised two critically acclaimed cabarets: *Re-Spiced: A Silk Road Cabaret* (2012) and *Silk Road Cabaret: Broadway Sings the Silk Road* (2009). He conceived of and was a featured playwright in SRR's production of *The DNA Trail: A Genealogy of Short Plays about Ancestry, Identity, and Utter Confusion* (2010). His short play *WASP: White Arab Slovak Pole* inspired the video play *both/and* (2011) and the documentary film *Not Quite White: Arabs, Slavs, and the Contours of Contested Whiteness* (2012). His video play *The Balancing Arab* (2012) was adapted from his short play *63rd and Kedzie*, originally produced as part of Theatre Seven's Chicago Landmark Project. Jamil is the 2013 recipient of the Actor's Equity Association's Kathryn V. Lamkey Award for promoting diversity and inclusion in theatre, and the 2010 recipient of the 3Arts Artist Award for Playwriting.



Christopher Chen (Playwright) has had full-length works produced and developed across the United States and abroad, including at the American Conservatory Theater, Asian American Theater Company, Bay Area

Playwrights Festival, Beijing Fringe, Central Works, Crowded Fire, Cutting Ball, Edinburgh Fringe, hotINK Festival, Impact Theatre, InterAct, Just Theatre, The Lark, Magic Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, Silk Road Rising, Sundance Theatre Lab, Theatre Mu, and The Vineyard. Honors include the Glickman Award, the Rella Lossy Award, shortlisted for the James Tait Black Award, nominated for the Steinberg Award, 2nd Place in the Belarus Free Theater International Playwriting Competition, PONY finalist, Jerome Finalist, and the 2013 Paula Vogel Playwriting Award through which he was

playwright-in-residence at The Vineyard Theatre. Chris is a graduate of UC Berkeley and holds an MFA in playwriting from San Francisco State.



Joanie Schultz (Director) is very excited to be working with Christopher Chen on this play, having workshopped his play *Into the Numbers* at Silk Road Rising in 2008. This season she is also directing *Rest* at Victory

Gardens Theatre and *Yankee Tavern* at American Blues Theatre. Last season she directed *Venus in Fur* at the Goodman Theatre, *Northanger Abbey* for Remy Bumppo Theatre, and *A Small Fire* at Steep Theatre. Recent work also includes *The Whale* at Victory Gardens, *fml: How Carson McCullers Saved My Life* at Steppenwolf for Young Adults, *Ask Aunt Susan* at the Goodman Theatre, *The Girl in the Yellow Dress* at Next Theatre, *The Kid Thing* for About Face Theatre and Chicago Dramatists, *Neighborhood 3* at Strawdog Theatre, and *Luther* at Steep Theatre. She has also directed operas including *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Carmen*. Joanie holds an MFA in directing from Northwestern University. She was a Drama League Fellow, Goodman Theatre's Michael Maggio Directing Fellow, SDCF Denham Fellow, Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab participant, 2013 Co-Artistic Curator for Theater on the Lake, and also teaches directing at Columbia College and University of Chicago. Joanie Schultz is a participant in the Leadership U, a one-on-one program, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group.

Corey Pond (Production Manager) is the resident production manager for Silk Road Rising. Previous work at SRR includes director for *Yasmina's Necklace*, assistant director for *Re-Spiced* and *The Lake Effect*, and stage manager for various staged readings. Corey holds a BA in Theatre from Illinois State University. Other directing credits include *Lady Lazarus* (Gorilla Tango), *Flash* (KCACTF Region III, Best Director), *Doubt* (FreeStage, ISU), and *Going Nowhere* and *Double Feature* (Heartland Theater, 10-Minute Play Festivals in Normal, IL). Corey

also enjoys adapting from sources like short stories ("The Lottery"), albums (Everybody), and autobiographies (*Stranger at the Gates*).

Helen Colleen Lattyak (Stage Manager) is glad to be returning to Silk Road Rising after stage managing *Brahman/i*. Helen is a company member and current production manager at TUTA Theater Chicago. Some of the shows she has stage managed with TUTA are *Baal*, *The Wedding*, and *Uncle Vanya*. A few other credits include *We Three Lizas* with About Face Theatre, *Failure: A Love Story* at Victory Gardens Theatre, *Freedom, NY* at Teatro Vista, and *Betrayal* at Oak Park Festival Theater. Helen is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago and a member of the Actors Equity Association.

Chelsea M. Warren (Set Designer) focuses on scenery, puppetry, and devised theatre. Scenic projects include *Rest* and *The Whale* (Victory Gardens Theatre), *First Look Rep* 2014 and 2011, *fml: how Carson McCullers Saved my Life* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *A Small Fire* and *If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet* (Steep Theatre), *Stranded on Earth* (Geva Theatre), and *Il Viaggio a Reims* (Roosevelt University Opera). Puppet design includes *Puppet Peter and the Wolf* (Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra) and the Dragon for *Shrek the Musical* (Chicago Shakespeare). Chelsea received the 2012 Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award and holds an MFA from Northwestern University and is a Lecturer at Columbia College. www.chelseaMwarren.com

Izumi Inaba (Costume Designer) is very excited to be working with Silk Road Rising for the first time. Her recent costume design credits include *Madam Barker* (Red Tape), *Spelling Bee* (Griffin), *Ghost Bike* (Buzz 22), *The Jewels* (TUTA), *Good Boys and True* (Raven), and *God's Work* (Albany Park Theatre Project). She is a proud company member at Red Tape, and was honored to receive the 2014 Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award. Izumi Inaba holds an MFA in Stage Design from Northwestern University.

Sarah K. Hughey (Lighting Designer) has many previous Silk Road Rising credits, including *Brahmanli*, *Invasion!*, *The Lake Effect*, *Yellow Face*, and *Scorched* (Jeff Award for lighting design). Recent Chicago credits include *Othello* (The Gift Theatre), *Women Beware Women* (Two Pence Theatre), *Grounded*, *Collected Stories* (American Blues Theater), the 2014 Garage Rep series (Steppenwolf), *Tom Jones* (Northlight Theatre), *Port Authority* (Writers' Theatre), *Motortown* (Steep Theatre), and *The Mountaintop* (Court Theatre). Sarah was the 2013 recipient of Chicago's Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award. She holds an MFA from Northwestern University and teaches at NU and Columbia College Chicago.

Peter J. Storms (Sound Design and Original Music) is the resident sound designer for Silk Road Rising; his work on *Scorched* received a Joseph Jefferson Equity Award for Outstanding Sound Design. Peter has worked with a number of Chicago theaters and is thrilled for another opportunity to work with Joanie Schultz. He serves as the accompanist for Unity Temple in Oak Park, has toured with Michael Londra and Beyond Celtic, and spends his days developing and fixing software and composing film scores. Special thanks to Juliana for her love and support. www.peterstorms.com

Jesse Gaffney (Props Designer) is a resident designer at Silk Road Rising, where she has worked on props in eight productions since 2009. In Chicago, her work has been seen at 16th Street, Victory Gardens, Remy Bumppo, Lifeline, Route 66, and Congo Square Theatre Companies, among others. Outside Chicago, Jesse worked for Allenberry Playhouse (PA), Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival (IN), Peninsula Players (WI), The Arrow Rock Lyceum (MO) and Stage St. Louis (MO). Jesse is a St. Louis native and an Illinois Wesleyan graduate. You can learn more at theatreprojects.blogspot.com.

Michael Stanfill (Video and Projections Designer) is happy returning to Silk Road Rising (*Re-Spiced: A Silk Road Cabaret*, lighting design). Other Video/Projection Design credits around the region include *Hotel Cassiopeia* (Wheaton College), *Pool*

(*No Water*) (Vitalist Theater), *The Gingerbread House* (Red Tape), *The Life and Times of Tulsa Lovechild* (Roosevelt University), *Enola*, *The Promise* (Side Project), ... *Things I Found on Craigslist* (University of Illinois, Chicago), *Thinner Than Water* (The Gift), *Completeness* (Theater Wit, Jeff Nominated), *The Normal Heart* (TimeLine), *The Whaleship Essex* (Shattered Globe), and *Cats* (Paramount Theater) He holds an MFA in lighting design from Northwestern University. www.michaelstanfilldesign.com

Neal Ryan Shaw (Dramaturg) is resident Dramaturg at Silk Road Rising. He has had the pleasure of working on such productions as *Invasion!*, *The Lake Effect*, and *Night Over Erzinga*, among others, as well as numerous staged readings and workshops. Recently, Neal also dramaturged *Outside/Inside*, a new play by Jenny Seidelman, for Polarity Ensemble Theatre's Dionysos Cup Festival. This summer he also developed a new work of his own, *Tierra, Tierra!*, with The Plagiarists and Saint Sebastian Players. Neal received his MA from Illinois State University and is a member of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas.

Jason Pikscher (Technical Director) is thrilled to be rejoining Silk Road Rising where he has served as technical director or production manager for numerous previous productions. Jason's fabrications have been seen across the country: at Houston Grand Opera, The Kennedy Center, Florida Grand Opera, Ford's Theatre, and Michigan Opera Theatre. In Chicago he has worked with Victory Gardens, Wildclaw Theatre, First Folio, Chicago Shakespeare, Marriott, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Harper College, North Central College, Rivendell, and Aboutface. Corporate displays include TLC, Animal Planet, Walgreens, and Microsoft. He is the resident technical director for the Broadway Series at the Paramount Theatre in Aurora, IL. Jason thanks his wife, Andrea, for her undying support, love, and tolerance of his work schedule. Jason is a proud Bradley University Alum.

Becca McCracken and Claire Simon (Casting Director) are happy to be part of the Silk Road Rising family. Theatrical credits include Actors Theater of Louisville, Fox Valley

Rep, Indiana Festival, Indiana Rep, Lyric Opera, Milwaukee Rep, New Theatre, Paramount, Writers, DreamWorks' *How To Train Your Dragon*, Broadway in Chicago's *Working* and *Peter Pan*, *Doyle & Debbie Show*, the Tony Award-winning *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *Old Jews Telling Jokes*. TV credits include *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago PD*, and *Crisis* (NBC); *Betrayal* and *Detroit 1-8-7* (ABC); *Boss* (Starz); *Mob Doctor* and *Chicago Code* (FOX). Film credits include *Divergent* and *Contagion*. Simon Casting won an Artios Award for casting season one of Fox's *Prison Break*.

Helen Young (Assistant Director) is an actor and director who shares with Silk Road Rising the passion to engage and challenge Chicago (and at the world, for that matter) with the "polycultural worldview." Other directing credits include *Tiny Dynamite* (Halcyon), *Water Fight* (Artistic Home), *The Ball* (Broken Nose), *My Asian Mom* (A Squared), *Beaten* (Artistic Home, AD), *Outside Inside* (Polarity Ensemble, Staged Reading), *Green Whales* (Artemesia, Staged Reading), *Ghost Girl* (Artemesia, Staged Reading), *Rumi: Love, Madness and Ecstasy* (Silk Road Rising, Staged Reading), and the upcoming *She Plays in Darkness* (Polarity Ensemble, Synopsis Adaptation and Staged reading).

Hana Kadoyama (Assistant Stage Manager) is thrilled to join the Silk Road Rising team. A recent Chicago transplant from the West Coast, Hana most recently worked with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Berkeley Repertory Theater as a stage manager, dramaturg, and assistant director. Her Chicago credits include productions with American Blues Theater, Buzz22, and The Poor Theater. She holds a BA in theatre and sociology from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Kristof Jenezic (Master Electrician) graduated from Ithaca College with a BFA in theatrical production arts and a concentration in lighting design. He is pursuing his career as a theatrical designer in Chicago. Kristof recently opened his design for *Twelfth Night* with The Foundlings Theatre Company at The BoHo Theatre (Heartland Studio). www.janezic-design.com

Paul Deziel (Video Technician) is from Oak Park, Illinois. His broad interest in theatre has led him to being an actor, stage manager, carpenter, electrician, and playwright. He has had experience working with a variety of theatre companies, including Adventure Stage Chicago, American Blues Theater, Cold Basement Dramatics, The Mercury Theater, and Steppenwolf. Outside of theater, Paul enjoys watching films, playing board games, and long walks not on the beach.

Sarah Ibis (Program Editor) is happy to continue her work with Silk Road Rising! She sends love and thanks to Jamil and Malik, with whom she maintains such a wonderful working relationship, even from far away California. Sarah is a native of Illinois and has appeared in many Chicago productions, including *Pangs of the Messiah* (understudy) at Silk Road Rising.

Lindsay Byrne (House Manager) is thrilled to be back at Silk Road Rising, after house managing for *Paulus* last year. Lindsay is also a professional stage manager and trained director, and can be seen around town working at Chicago Opera Theater, The International Voices Project, and volunteering for various animal rescues.

Al Gillani (Box Office Coordinator) is proud to assist Malik and Jamil in managing Silk Road Rising's information technology needs and box office functions. Al loves talking to patrons and hopes you'll be calling soon to buy a pass to the upcoming *Silk Road Solos* series!

DRAMATURGICAL NOTES

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS PROJECT

By Neal Ryan Shaw

Some plays are so complex and elusive that it would be a crime for one person to try to explain all its intentions and messages. *The Hundred Flowers Project* is one such play. Still, the history of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party is long and complex; rather than attempt to describe the relevance of this history to *The Hundred Flowers Project*, this essay will instead outline that history, so you may draw such conclusions for yourself.

The Cult of Mao and the Communist Revolution (1949)

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, during an effort to bring itself into the modern age, China found itself amidst a turbulent series of events. Once an imperial dynasty, the country withstood numerous incursions by foreign powers—the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, the Opium Wars with Britain, and the First Sino-Japanese War in the nineteenth century. While warlords and infighting divided China, two groups sought to reunite the country: the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-Shek and the Chinese Communist Party headed by Mao Zedong. The intense and bloody war between these two parties, made worse by the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 to 1945), ended in the CCP's favor.

I think it is safe to say that the Chinese Communist Party's military success is overwhelmingly owed to the cult of personality around Mao Zedong. Depictions in countless propaganda posters portray Mao as a "great helmsman," a splendid father figure. Millions of Chinese bought into this image of Mao, even if they didn't fully comprehend his vision. As a young man Mao became enthralled with the Marxist-Leninist movement that swept turn-of-the-century Russia, and he developed his own brand of communism for China's sake. Whereas Marx believed that a proletarian revolution could only be accomplished by an already advanced capitalist society, Mao contended that a rural peasantry could lead the way to social revolution. Much was made of Mao's upbringing; his childhood as a peasant in the Hunan province of China caused him to identify with the very class that he wished to lead.

It was clear even before the party's victory against the Nationalists that Mao was a relentless and ruthless leader. He contended not only with the Nationalists but also with many in his own party, even driving some to suicide. In light of this history, Mao's love for the people of China coupled with his pathological fear of opposition describes a tantalizing contradiction.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956)

By 1956, the revolution had already seen some successes, successes won with force and suppression. In 1956 Chairman Mao attempted to slow down the progression of political reform by calling for a sort of "airing of grievances." The Chinese Communist Party inaugurated this campaign with a new slogan: *Let a hundred flowers bloom/Let a hundred schools of thought contend*. The Hundred Flowers Campaign was ostensibly about, in Mao's words, "promoting progress in the arts and sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land." The idea was that no progress could be made if Mao's administration held up one school of thought and banned another. The effort ultimately failed, making the Hundred Flowers

Campaign such a contradiction, such an ironic failure. Some intellectuals did end up speaking out, many against their will, and for a time real discussions seemed to occur. But the campaign shifted its focus from encouraging dialogue to rooting out dissidents. Those intellectuals who had been encouraged to voice their disagreements with the Party were gathered up and sent to prison labor camps in a so-called Anti-Rightist Movement the following year.

The Great Leap Forward (1958–1961)

Not wishing to focus too much on punishing the outspoken, Mao and the CCP turned their attention to more positive and substantive reforms. Thus was born the Great Leap Forward, a grand economic and industrial vision that the party hoped would not only catapult China into a new industrial age but also prove that the Soviet economic model was inferior to his own. Propaganda posters for the movement certainly demonstrated Mao's optimistic vision. Proud Chinese workers smile as they toil in gloriously cloudy or oceanic fields, the filtered sunlight illuminating the fruits of their labor. In practice, the Great Leap involved reorganizing China's rural communities into new communes, where all shared equally in day-to-day duties as well as in the industrial work. Some of this work, such as the building of roads and bridges, succeeded. More numerous and infamous were the projects that failed, like those involving unskilled workers smelting steel in poorly constructed and highly inefficient smelters; workers couldn't make quota and were forced to break down their own cookware to sustain production.

It is no understatement to say that the Great Leap Forward was a disaster, no matter what little progress it did make in infrastructure. And despite Mao's attempt to inspire optimism and pride in his people, they were unable to deliver. Many local officials felt the pressure to hide their failures, falsely reporting success in their sectors instead. Because communes shifted their focus from agricultural to industrial work, food production plummeted, resulting in a famine that caused tens of millions of Chinese citizens to die.

The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)

As his vision of a truly Sino-Marxist society failed to materialize, Mao doubled down on his efforts to rid China of its impurities and rebuild society anew. He set about starting a new movement in 1966 that would eradicate the "four olds" of China: Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. The instruments of this eradication were Mao's Red Guards, students and other youths who devoted themselves wholeheartedly to maintaining his cult of personality. The Red Guards went about Beijing ransacking homes and schools, burning books, and assaulting anyone considered disloyal to Mao.

The remaining years of the Cultural Revolution were marked by a failing economy and intense political paranoia. Simultaneously, Mao's health waned. Premier Zhou Enlai and other top officials oversaw the daily administration of the country. When Mao died on September 9, 1976, China, the country he spent his life trying to unify, was as divided as ever.

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

By Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani



Jamil Khoury
Founding Artistic Director



Malik Gillani
Founding Executive Director

How fitting to be sharing *The Hundred Flowers Project* with Chicago audiences as we continue to explore the contours of what constitutes theatre. In playwright Christopher Chen we have discovered a kindred spirit; an artist eager to experiment with form and function and unafraid to challenge the “well-made play.” Embracing digital technology, social media, cell phones, and the Internet as distinctly theatrical devices is to honor an ancient art form. Theatre adapts and reinvents, reflects and reinterprets; its lasting rule is that rules exist to be broken. We believe it is Chen’s love of live theatre and his skillful playwriting that empower him to technologize this story. It is, uniquely, his way to own and rewrite today’s hyper visualized, intensely digitized modes of communicating. By appropriating today’s tools, Chen gets to mine their theatricality in wildly authentic ways.

But what happens on stage doesn’t necessarily stay on stage. Online at Silk Road Rising, a similar evolution prevails. In our Letter from the Founders a few shows back, we first broached the idea of the video play. We now have a few of those under our belt, and the process of defining and refining this new hybrid experience continues. It’s an exciting learning curve that you can participate in. Just visit our website, enjoy our latest release *Multi Meets Poly: Multiculturalism and Polyculturalism Go On a First Date*, and share any questions or thoughts, or answer our questions. Americans need to be discussing multiculturalism and polyculturalism. Big time. Our video play helps make that happen.

The function of the video play is not “art for art’s sake.” It is to dramatize ideas and discursive argument with the intent of creating conversation and dialogue. It is an artistic medium specifically designed to facilitate intellectual inquiry and civic engagement, narrative theatre inscribed with pedagogical and political intent. Live plays and video plays comprise a continuum for us, a dialogue-in-progress. The video play is neither a filmed play nor a feature film, neither a stage play nor a live performance, but rather a marriage of mediums. It is a hybrid of theatrical language and design aesthetics enacted on a theatrical stage yet conveyed through a decidedly cinematic lens and engaged on a monitor or screen. It is conceived for the stage, interpreted filmically, and then rendered online. Video plays leverage the unique and distinct strengths of both theatre and film, employing those strengths as demanded by the story being told. The onus is placed on embracing “the best of both worlds” while eschewing perceived limits and pitfalls. Ideally, the video play rejects dichotomies of stage and screen and strives to create an experience that approximates that of viewing live theatre and cinema as well as the experience of surfing YouTube.

All too often we are reminded that there exists a hunger to experience the work we do well beyond the boundaries of Chicagoland. Individuals that have happened upon our website, many of whom live outside the U.S. and are unable to travel to Chicago, have requested from us a point of entry, a virtual visa. They want *in* on the stories we tell, the issues we ponder, the politics we confront, much as we’re seeking new audiences, new allies, and new sparring partners. The online video play facilitates that engagement. For us, “season planning” is no longer about a sequence of plays spanning arbitrary dates. It’s about content and themes, conversations and causes; “seasons” suddenly span multiple years. Case in point: *Mosque Alert*, our ongoing, multi-year, online new play development and civic engagement project. We’re exploring resistance to the building of mosques in communities across the U.S. Ultimately, we’re asking what it means to be American. Ours is a body of engaged work: evolving, debating, and changing, without expiration dates. Against that backdrop, *The Hundred Flowers Project* becomes a fascinating metaphor. Interpret it for yourselves. On stage/online never rang more true.

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ARTISTIC RUMINATIONS

BLESSED UNION: RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES/SECULAR THEATRES

By **Jamil Khoury**, Founding Artistic Director of Silk Road Rising

Blessed are the storytellers, for they shall interpret the earth. The line may not appear in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, but it is there in the subtext, and now it's on film. Our latest documentary, *Sacred Stages: A Church, a Theatre, and a Story* (28 minutes, 36 seconds), tells the unique and inspiring story of Silk Road Rising's partnership with the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, Chicago's oldest Christian congregation. In 2002, Founding Executive Director Malik Gillani and I felt galvanized to develop a proactive, artistic response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and to the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim backlash that quickly ensued. Drawing upon Malik's Pakistani Muslim heritage and my Syrian Christian heritage, we found ourselves connecting with and connected to the historic Silk Road, viewing it as both a metaphor for polyculturalism and as a remarkable geographic guide for stories yet untold on Chicago's stages. If Americans of Silk Road backgrounds, our stories and selves, were largely absent from the canon of American theatre, then we would work to change that. And it was through storytelling that we would challenge the fear, racism, and Islamophobia that had so profoundly invaded our seemingly blissful worlds. It was a given from the get-go that our endeavor would blend artistic and activist impulses—we are activists and artists after all! What we didn't anticipate was that our vision of a theatre company showcasing Asian American and Middle Eastern American playwrights would come to fruition in the basement of a Methodist church. Hence, *Sacred Stages*.

What seemed an unlikely alliance at first soon revealed itself in mission alignment: a religious community and a secular arts organization sharing commitments to storytelling, racial and economic justice, and LGBT inclusion. Inadvertently, they and we happened upon something inspiring in the overlap. Cut from a similar narrative cloth, we co-authored a theatrical storyline—one in which a horrific tragedy in New York begets a beautiful marriage in Chicago. Call it a blessed union and a civil union. For if the genealogy of Western theatre is storied with church basements, then we would write a whole new chapter, one that illuminates the many intersections of art and religion. Who knew that a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies from The University of Chicago Divinity School would prove invaluable to producing theatre? Yet it has, in more ways than I ever imagined.

I like to think there is a theology to our relationship with the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple. There are through lines to this work-in-progress, and our church/theatre relationship is one that predates either institution, arguably by a few millennia! Churches and theatres share a common origin. We are both on a quest for transcendence. We are both in the business of storytelling. We both use stories to discover and uncover truths, evoke empathy, create change, and elevate the human condition. And we are awestruck by the power of representation. We believe that when the narrative succeeds, the heart, mind, and soul can be changed, and for the better. Churches and theatres offer hope and salvation. We exist to inspire and unleash dreams. We strive to be students as well as teachers, acolytes as well as celebrants. Ours is an eternal journey towards knowledge and wisdom, catharsis and renewal. We are sinners and we are holy men. Both hats fit perfectly.

Churches and theatres both love text. We ascribe great meaning to words, narrative, parable, fable, and myth. We are as liturgical as we are theatrical. We stage ritual and we dramatize passion. We have a penchant for pageantry. We're performers and drama queens. We both love production. We crave an audience, forever coveting those venerated butts-in-seats. For us, it's about characters and staging, transitions and plot points, conflict and resolution. We rely heavily on sets and costumes, lighting and sound, props and paraphernalia. Accused of being liars and manipulators all too often ("never trust an actor or a preacher"), we both need to remind ourselves constantly that we are most authentic when we pose questions, not dictate answers.

At the beginning and end of the day, altars are stages and stages are altars; both are about building community, sharing a collective experience, and communing with the Divine (however we imagine the Divine). Evangelism and discipleship reside in our shared DNA. We're missionaries. We seek converts. And yes, we will preach to the choir till we're blue in the face. We both strive to be relevant, to matter, to make a difference, to affect people's lives, to help people heal. We work to be timely yet timeless. We cry for justice, battle for redemption, and speak truth to power. We're not afraid to reimagine and reinvent ourselves, recontextualize, and respond to the 21st Century with its myriad of new technologies and degrees of connectedness (and disconnectedness) previously unheard of. Silk Road Rising and the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple have constructed, figuratively, a Sacred Stage. Watch the film then come for the blessings!

 SILK ROAD RISING

View online productions



To view *Sacred Stages: A Church, A Theatre, and A Story* please visit the Silk Road Rising website at www.silkroadrising.org and click on **Sacred Stages**

Or type-in online the following URL address:
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This project is partially supported by a CityArts grant from the **City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events**.

This program is partially supported by a grant from the **Illinois Arts Council**, a state agency.

SPECIAL THANKS

To our gracious hosts at the **First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple**, who exhibit hospitality and generosity towards us on a daily basis, and provide us a space in which we can flourish and grow.

Also, special thanks to **Dana Black, Libby Chiu, Allie Herriman, Kevin Kreja, Joe Klug, Theatre Wit, TimeLine Theater, and Aria Designs**.

Finally, the playwright would like to thank the original co-commissioners/co-producers: at **Crowded Fire, Marissa Wolf, Tiffany Cothran**, and staff; at **Playwrights Foundation, Amy Mueller** and staff; the original cast, design team, and crew, helmed by director **Desdemona Chiang**; and other organizations that have helped in the play's development: **The Lark, American Conservatory Theater, The Magic**; and special thanks to **Antje Oegel**.

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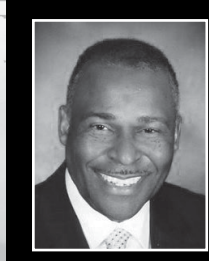
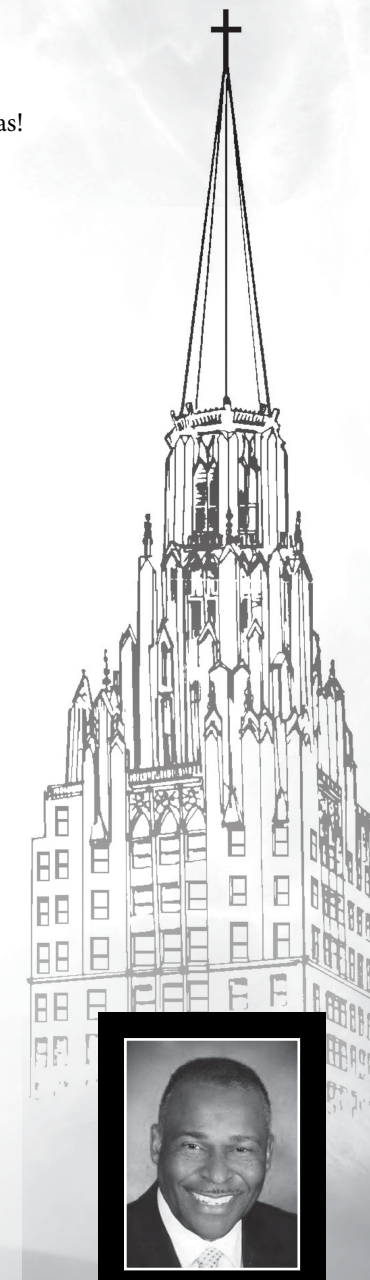
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