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Funder Spotlight: Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art



Building Bridges Program

This week, we want to tell you about one of the funders that make our "Crescent and Star" series possible. In 2018, we were thrilled to receive a grant from the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. Their mission to promote Muslim artists and social cohesion couldn't be more beautifully aligned with our mission.

About the Building Bridges Program

Based in New York, the Building Bridges Program is the national grant-making program of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art (DDFIA), an extension of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Since 2007, the Building Bridges Program has supported endeavors that engage US-based Muslims and their neighbors in arts experiences that increase understanding and advance relationships between communities.

[Learn More about DDFIA](#)

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Grant to Silk Road Rising



In May of 2018, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art granted Silk Road Rising a multi-year grant to support our 2019 and 2020 seasons which we collectively call "Crescent and Star." The grant also supports our commitment to co-producing each play with a local theatre company that has no history of presenting works from Muslim artists.

About "Crescent and Star"

Silk Road Rising designed "Crescent and Star" to challenge popular narratives about Muslim and Middle Eastern Americans. Because our communities are unfairly represented in the public consciousness, we have committed to working with playwrights who strive to alter that consciousness. With "Crescent and Star" we enable the creation of complicated and complex stories rarely seen on America's stages.

"Crescent and Star" began with Karim Nagi's *Detour Guide* in the spring of 2019, which we co-produced with Stage Left Theater. It was followed in the fall of 2019 with Fouad Teymour's *Twice, Thrice, Frice...*, co-produced with International Voices Project. The series continues this spring with Nahal Navidar's *My Dear Hussein*, co-produced with Momentary Theatre, and ends this fall with Yussef El Guindi's *People of the Book*.

American Griot Would Not Have Been Possible Without Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art



In addition to our live stage work at the Chicago Temple, DDFIA made possible our co-commission with Moraine Valley Community College of a new play by Arab American composer and musician Ronnie Malley and African American playwright Reginald Edmunds. Funding from DDFIA enabled the Association of Performing Arts Professionals to develop "Mosaics: Muslim Voices in America."

American Griot tells the story of a Mamadou, a Muslim scholar and

slavery in Colonial America. By holding tight to his faith and musical tradition, Mamadou is able to lead his fellow slaves to freedom.

American Griot received its college premiere at Moraine Valley Community College in the spring of 2019. The production was selected by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival and went on to be performed in Saginaw, Wisconsin. Read the full story [here](#).

A Look at Other Groups and Projects Funded by DDFIA

Cleveland Public Theatre

Our friends at Cleveland Public Theatre received a DDFIA grant to partner with Cleveland-based Arab and Muslim community organizations to create a permanent ensemble dedicated to Arabic language productions called Masrah Cleveland Al-Arabi.



Through Masrah Cleveland Al-Arabi, Arabic-speaking communities of Cleveland share vital, life-affirming stories celebrating family, dignity, and freedom of expression. These stories affirm a rich heritage and seek to promote greater empathy and understanding between diverse communities in Greater Cleveland.

[Learn more about Masrah Cleveland Al-Arabi.](#)

The International Writing Program at the University of Iowa



The University of Iowa received a DDFIA grant to support the growth of "Between the Lines: Identity & Belonging," a creative writing and cultural exchange between Muslim and non-Muslim youth from vulnerable communities.

In addition to creative writing workshops led by esteemed Muslim and non-Muslim faculty, participants engage in discussions designed to unpack cultural biases and promote team-building and collaboration.

[Learn more about "Between the Lines: Identity & Belonging."](#)

TheatreSquared

TheatreSquared received a DDFIA grant to support the development, production, and touring of *10,000 Balconies*, a reimagined *Romeo and*

well as ancillary programming about the contemporary Syrian Muslim context in which it is set.

10,000 Balconies received a workshop production at TheatreSquared in Arkansas. The play—conceived, created, and directed by Kholoud Sawaf (pictured above)—is centered around a love story in modern Damascus and offers an intimate window into the oldest continuously-inhabited city in the world, suffused with its poetry, music, dance, and movement. In addition to the production, TheatreSquared also hosted a community workshop with director Kholoud Sawaf and composer Hadi Eldebek where audience members learned more about the music, movement, dance, and Arabic language used in the show, and got a chance to try some of it themselves.



[Learn more about *10,000 Balconies*.](#)

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