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Statement from Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani Co-Founders of Silk Road Rising

There are collaborations of convenience and collaborations of necessity. But rarely does collaboration emerge as organically and complimentary as the one that's made possible the US Premiere of Tanika Gupta's adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Call it mission alignment meets mission synergy: Remy Bumppo Theatre's commitment to the Anglo and American canons, and Silk Road Rising's commitment to Asian and Middle Eastern stories. Together, we have a unique opportunity to harness our respective strengths and leverage our differences in the service of an excellent play.

**“Call it mission alignment
meets mission synergy...”**

We were intrigued when Remy Bumppo's Producing Artistic Director, Nick Sandys, first shared with us Gupta's masterful reimagining of Dickens' classic, now set in 19th century Calcutta India, under the British Raj. That he pitched it as a potential co-production, one that he hoped to co-direct with Silk Road Rising Artistic Associate Lavina Jadhvani, moved it to the top of our reading list (a one-sitting read, as it happened, so captivated were we.) Suddenly, Dickens' poignant indictment of the entrenched class politics of his native England converged with racism, colonialism, and empire. The story's central question, "Is it worth losing who you are for who you might become?" took on a slew of new meanings.



If the script had us at "hello," then the proposed co-pro with Remy Bumppo sealed the deal. The union was further blessed by an inspiring meeting in London with playwright Tanika Gupta herself. It seemed that *A Tale of Two Theatres* was about to be written! And now, here we are: living out the polycultural act of interchange, allowing both parties to grow and gain new knowledge. Our approach to telling this story has not been one of "East meets West," with its incumbent Orientalist baggage, but rather a skillful undoing of the barriers and dichotomies that keep peoples divided and at each other's throats. In our read, Gupta never set out to superimpose or blur cultural contexts. She wanted to honor the genius of Dickens' 19th century narrative by re-centering it within her own Bengali heritage. And she wanted to allow the politics of the story to bloom again, to bear new fruit, in an altogether different garden.

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Working on *Great Expectations* with such a distinguished company as Remy Bumpo has been an extraordinary experience, one that we've already discussed repeating. Co-producing with theatre companies that excite us is an integral part of our growth strategy in the coming years. We believe that thoughtful co-productions based on mission compatibility and aesthetic alignment are the ultimate win-win for theatre companies. While pooling resources, personnel, audiences, and expertise are, of course, the most obvious gains of partnering, it's the ability to expand and extend a story's reach that ultimately yields the richest rewards. Theatre makers tell stories that we feel passionate about. And telling them through collaboration is the best way to honor that passion. *Great Expectations* should make that abundantly clear.

Performances Begin in 9 Days!

May 11th - July 2nd

The U.S. Premiere

Co-Produced with Remy Bumpo Theatre

Written by Charles Dickens

Adapted by Tanika Gupta

Co-Directed by Lavina Jadhvani and Nick Sandys

"A compelling adaptation...the message rings clearly." —*The Independent*

Dickens' beloved tale of aspiration, intrigue, and romance is thrillingly transplanted to a colonized India by award-winning British Bengali playwright Tanika Gupta. When Indian orphan Pip receives a mysterious inheritance, he must choose between his humble rural life and the city life of an English "gentleman." In a vibrant clash of cultures, classes, and conscience, Gupta's brilliant adaptation expands Dickens' enduring question: Is it worth losing who you are for who you might become?



All performances take place at Silk Road Rising
(77 W. Washington St., Lower Level, Chicago, IL)



Buy tickets [online](#) or by calling 312.857.1234 ext. 201.

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