

Two New Podcast Episodes and an Award for *American Griot*
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In-Dialogue with Dr. Michael Malek Najjar Continues

Episodes Three and Four



This week, Silk Road Rising is thrilled to release the next two episodes of *In-Dialogue*, a podcast dedicated to the lively exchange of ideas and experiences. These are the third and fourth episodes in our nine-part series with Dr. Michael Malek Najjar exploring the Arab American and Middle Eastern American theatre movements.



In-Dialogue

1967 Arab-Israeli War to the Attacks of September



00:00 | 26:20



In-Dialogue

September 11, 2001 to the Present



00:00 | 22:16

About Dr. Michael Malek Najjar

Dr. Michael Malek Najjar is an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts with the University of Oregon. He directed Silk Road Rising's inaugural production of Jamil Khoury's *Precious Stones*. He returned in 2010 to direct a staged reading of his play *Talib*. In 2018, Malek was our lead director for *Semitic Commonwealth*. Were it not for the COVID-19 Pandemic, Malek would now be directing Silk Road Rising's Fall 2020 Midwest Premiere production of Yussef El Guindi's *People of the Book*.

and *Creators and Arab American Drama, Film and Performance: A Critical Study, 1908 to the Present*. He edited Heather Raffo's *Iraq Plays: The Things That Can't Be Said*, *The Selected Works of Yussef El Guindi*, and *Four Arab American Plays: Works by Leila Buck, Jamil Houry, Yussef El Guindi, and Lameece Issaq & Jacob Kader*. Along with Jamil Houry and Corey Pond, Malek co-edited *Six Plays of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.

Malek is a founding steering committee member of the Middle Eastern and North African Theater Makers Alliance (MENATMA) and serves on the advisory boards for New Arab American Theatre Works and Arab Stages.

Listen to Episodes Three and Four

American Griot Receives The Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Award



In 2017, Silk Road Rising and Moraine Valley Community College co-commissioned Arab American composer and musician Ronnie Malley and African American playwright Reginald Edmunds to write a new play. The collaboration that ensued explored how the Islamic musical traditions of West Africa were brought to America via the slave trade and influenced the development of American musical forms such as the blues.

The play with music that emerged, *American Griot*, was workshopped at Silk Road Rising before receiving a full production, directed by Craig Rosen, at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois in early 2019. That production was selected by the Kennedy Center to be performed at the Region 3 American College Theatre Festival in Saginaw, Wisconsin in January 2020.

At the culmination of this extraordinary three-year artistic journey, Silk Road Rising and Moraine Valley Community College can proudly announce that *American Griot* has been selected to receive the Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Award! We could not be more honored and thrilled. History informs the present and *American Griot* is both a timely and timeless story that speaks to America's ongoing struggles for racial justice. For that, bravo to Ronnie Malley and Reginald Edmund and the entire cast and crew of *American Griot*.

The Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Awards recognize programs in higher education using theatrical production to promote long-term societal impact through artistic engagement, to encourage empathetic exploration of the complex cultural and physical world, and to advocate for justice on campus and throughout the world.

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