



### About Silk Road Cultural Center

Silk Road Cultural Center is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary arts organization rooted in the modern communities of the historic Silk Roads, including our diaspora communities. We embrace the arts as a catalyst for connecting people, places, histories, and futures.

At Silk Road Cultural Center, we know that representation matters; it shapes perceptions, informs conversations, and influences policies. In our increasingly diverse American society, we view representation as key to having a "seat at the table."

We embrace storytelling in many forms including theatre, film, digital media, music, dance, literature, visual art, and food. At Silk Road Cultural Center, art is both a crossroads and a destination; a sanctuary for healing ourselves, healing our communities, and healing our world.

### The Silk Road

"Silk Road" refers to the great trade routes that originated in China and spread westward across Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and into Mediterranean Europe from the 2nd century B.C.E. until the 15th century C.E. These transcontinental caravans resulted not only in trade but also in tremendous cultural interchange among the peoples of the regions; interactions that fostered the sharing of ideas and the fusion of art and aesthetics.

The Silk Road spawned rich traditions of storytelling, primarily oral narrative and epic poetry. As we ourselves are storytellers, we understand the Silk Road as both a geographic polestar and a guiding metaphor for our polycultural worldview

### Chicago, The Capital of the North American Silk Road

As a crossroads in North America's vast cultural and commercial matrix, Chicago represents a modern-day Silk Road capital. The city's elaborate grid of railways, lake and river waterways, major highways, and well-connected airports echo the historic Silk Road's role in powering movement. Beyond being a conduit for commerce, Chicago stands as a hub of creative and intellectual dynamo. Its vibrant arts, education, and hospitality sectors make it a crucible for exchanging ideas and innovation, mirroring the Silk Road's legacy as a thoroughfare of knowledge that connected Asia, Africa, and Europe. In a similar vein, the internet represents today's global Silk Road, a technological freeway of ideas, stories, information, and beliefs.

### Our Supporters

Thank you to our generous philanthropic partners whose general operating support sustains our mission and work.

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- The Siragusa Family Foundation

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**Become a Part of Our Story and Donate Today!**

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**SCAN HERE TO VIEW  
THE DIGITAL  
PROGRAM**

"Full-On Cleopatra" was commissioned and developed by Seattle Repertory Theater, Seattle, Washington. Damaso Rodriguez, Artistic Director, Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director. Developed with support from the Vanguard Arts Fund at the Olney Center in Olney, MD

"Full-On Cleopatra" is presented by special arrangement with the Playwright and Elaine Devlin Literary, Inc.  
1115 Broadway, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10010

Photography and recording of any kind is prohibited.

## NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY STAGE CENTER THEATRE & SILK ROAD CULTURAL CENTER PRESENT A WORKSHOP PRODUCTION OF



**April 15-17 and 22-24 at 7:30pm**  
**April 18 and 25 at 3:00pm**

Northeastern Illinois University - Stage Center Theatre, Building F  
3601 West Bryn Mawr Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625

# A Note from the Director

To our community and our audience:

I'm proud to welcome you to Stage Center Theatre and to our collaborative workshop production of Yussef El Guindi's incredible play "Full-On Cleopatra." I'd like to wish a special thank you to our remarkable partners at Silk Road Cultural Center. We last came together for the thrilling "Black Bear Island" by Karissa Murrell Myers here on our stage. Our collaboration with Silk Road has grown from the seed of an idea to one of the core relationships of Stage Center. Jamil, Malik, Gordon, and Liz at Silk Road have redefined what a true professional partnership can be for a university. Silk Road shines a light on stories that bring vital questions of identity to our campus community. They seek to craft polycultural bridges through the work and to nurture representation and narratives that restore wholeness to history, vitality to the present, and optimism for the future. Thank you for your friendship and faith in us.

I have long been an admirer of Yussef El Guindi's work from the first time I read his searing "Back of the Throat" while in my apprenticeship at Hartford Stage Company way back when through my more recent encounter with his work "People of the Book." So when I read "Full-On Cleopatra," I was not surprised to love this piece. In spectacular El Guindi style, it clashes theatrical modes and gnaws at our collective view of "history" with a critical yet playful eye. I was taken aback, though, with how invested I became in this play's particular pursuit of reclamation: of Cleopatra, self, Egypt, and legacy.

This pursuit of legacy, and most specifically, the battle to reclaim that legacy on our own terms, forms the center of this production and serves as the fuel to our storytelling. I think of legacy, my own legacy not in the history books way but in a very personal way, as the *impact* of the myth of me that I leave behind. For Cleopatra, or at least in my experience of learning about Cleopatra, that impact was always muted. Her mythology for me was a legacy shaped in defeat, expanded upon by Roman victors, and then objectified and amplified by exploitative and exoticizing pop culture. Such culture has shaped Cleopatra's as just one of the dying embers of a glorious nation and a naive victim of the glorious march to Elysium. Her story as we often see it is told as one of excess, an Egyptian "Camelot" populated by Liz Taylor, Richard Burton, and a queen's lust of love, blood, and superficial glory. Her human story, her life, became a myth defined by those who *imagined* Cleopatra, but perhaps failed to see her.

In seeking to task our room and our audience for this production with reclaiming a complicated legacy, I am inspired by the sometimes existence-shattering book, "SAPIENS: A Brief History of Humankind" by Yuval Noah Harari. In this work,

Harari establishes that our entire way of thinking and all of our ways of being are shaped by myths. For example, the fact that we are in a "city," a "room," or even a "civilization" is a myth that we've reinforced over time to make us feel safe in our self-location and identification. The same logic applies to narratives of history and identity. Myth over time morphs into reality until a crucial moment arrives where we individually and then collectively choose to change the myth. This theatre is now a "palace." This school is now a "Healing Path," Cleopatra, a "queen" is now... "Multitudes of Greatness."

Harari argues that such a mythic shift is terribly unsettling, unmooring, and uncomfortable. The beautiful thing though is that theatre... is all of those things. So that is our task. Here, now, through this miraculous play, we get to reclaim and rewrite Cleopatra, history, and so much more. I know it's a bit pie in the sky, but what's the point of playing pretend if we can't imagine what the world *could* be? I challenge us, and you, our audience, to view this work in the beautiful spirit of discomfort. What if one of the most famous love stories in human history was instead a story of a brilliant woman carrying the heart of a civilization? What if Cleopatra's legacy was not written by the conqueror and diminished, but by the woman herself and celebrated? What would Egypt be? What would our new collective myth be? Who might we be? Who could we *become*?

I am so excited to share in the journey of this work with all of you and so grateful as always to share this space of reclamation, definition, and purpose with our community here at NEIU. Lean in, look deeper into the work, and *enjoy*.

Adam Goldstein, Artistic Director of Stage Center Theatre

## Cast

<b>Mary Chlimon</b>	Kyky
<b>Aiden Mendoza</b>	Asim/Anubis
<b>Joan Nahid</b>	Cleopatra
<b>Josh Odor</b>	Antony/Pharoah
<b>Luke Steadman</b>	Thyrsus/Octavian/Pharoah
<b>Xavier Becerra</b>	Thyrsus/Octavian/Pharoah* <i>*performances April 23-25</i>
<b>Maribella Arguello</b>	u/s Kyky
<b>Xavier Becerra</b>	u/s Asim/Anubis, and Thyrsus/Octavian/Pharoah

**Run Time:** 2 hours with one 10-minute intermission

**Setting:** 30 BC, last days of Cleopatra VII. Alexandria, Egypt.

**Act I:** A courtyard in Cleopatra's palace.

**Act II:** The catacombs.

## Creative

<b>Yussef El Guindi</b>	Playwright
<b>Adam Goldstein</b>	Director
<b>Tristin Hall</b>	Intimacy & Violence Director
<b>Suzi Elnaggar</b>	Dramaturg
<b>Kelly Bork</b>	Production Stage Manager
<b>Kayla Mele</b>	Assistant Stage Manager
<b>Sarah J. Fabian</b>	Scenic Designer & Technical Director
<b>Susana Acevedo</b>	Props Designer
<b>Kotryna Hilko</b>	Costume Designer
<b>Zay'Enna Simmons</b>	Hair & Makeup Designer
<b>Becca Jeffords</b>	Lighting Designer
<b>Liz Gomez</b>	Associate Lighting Designer
<b>Andres Fiz</b>	Projections Designer
<b>Ricardo Guerrero</b>	Sound Designer
<b>Eva Abreu</b>	Run Crew
<b>McKayla Johnson</b>	Costume Shop Manager & Head of Wardrobe
<b>Nathan Borja</b>	Carpenter
<b>Gaby Molina</b>	Asst. Dramaturg & Front of House Manager
<b>Christina Webber</b>	Asst. Dramaturg
<b>Natalie Guzman &amp; Jojo Perez</b>	SCT Social Media
<b>CMT-T 339 &amp; Talent Scholars</b>	Crew

## Producers

**Stage Center Theatre**  
**Adam Goldstein**, Artistic Director  
**Sarah J. Fabian**, Managing Director

**Silk Road Cultural Center**  
**Jamil Khoury**, Founding Executive Artistic Director  
**Malik Gillani**, Founding Executive Director  
**Elizabeth Rosner**, Director of Development and Project Advancement  
**Gordon Chow**, Project Coordinator