



Jamil Khoury
Artistic Director

Malik Gillani
Executive Director

proudly presents

BACK OF THE THROAT

By Yussef El Guindi

Directed by Stuart Carden

Featuring:

**Kareem Bandoaly, Tom Hickey, Elaine Robinson,
Madrid St. Angelo and Sean Sinitski**

<i>Producers</i>	Malik Gillani and Jamil Khoury
<i>Production Manager</i>	Jefferson Burns
<i>Scenic Designer</i>	Lee Keenan
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Kurt Ottinger
<i>Sound Designer & Original Music</i>	Robert Steele
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Janice Pytel, U.S.A
<i>Props Designer</i>	Dan Pellant
<i>Assistant Director & Fight Choreographer</i>	David Chrzanowski
<i>Dramaturg</i>	Jarrett Dapier
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Alexandra Herryman
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Jay Sangster
<i>Technical Direction</i>	Left Wing Scenic
<i>House Manager</i>	Dianna Driscoll
<i>Box Office Manager</i>	Carolyn Ziaja

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This production generously supported by:

The Joyce Foundation

This theater is a
proud member of the



Cast in order of appearance

Bartlett	Sean Sinitski
Khalid	Kareem Bandyaly
Carl	Tom Hickey
Asfoor	Madrid St. Angelo
Shelly/Beth/Jean	Elaine Robinson

Understudies in alphabetical order

Carl and Bartlett	Rob Biesenbach
Khalid and Asfoor	Adam Bute
Shelly/Beth/Jean	Stesha Merle

Production Staff

Director	Stuart Carden
Producers	Malik Gillani and Jamil Khoury
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Dedication

This production of *Back of the Throat* is dedicated to the congregation and staff of the First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple. Truly the most gracious and loving hosts a theatre company could ask for!

And to Al, Claudia and Sebastian Gillani for their abundant generosity, devotion, and support.

Condolences

We offer our deepest condolences to our esteemed colleague David Kipley on the death of his beloved wife Nancy. May her memory be eternal.

Special Thanks

To our Board of Directors: Mariam Alsikafi, Junaid Butt, Frank Buttitta, Malik Gillani, Ann Joachim, Ken Karlson, Jamil Khoury, Laura Meyer, and Lyrae Myxter.

To our friends and supporters at the First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple, and in particular, Rev. Philip Blackwell, Rev. Cheryl Magrini, Rev. Cerna Castro Rand, Rev. Darius F. Thomas, Marva Andrews, Chuck Andrews, Sally Blackwell, Rich Dugan, Carol Emmons, Jacquie Garrett, Betty Hillsman, Jann Ingmire, Terri Johnson, Tom Laidlaw, Roy Larson, Michael Leech, Erik Nussbaum, Kathy Shaeffer, Norris Smith, and Azucena Tressler.

To David Kipley of Construction Methods & Technologies, and Robin Whitehurst of Bailey Edward Design. To Gregg Herman for his architectural grace and vision.

To Kathy McClanathan of the Chicago Hotel Concierge Association and Sheryl Novak of the National Concierge Association – Chicago Chapter.

To Ed Yohnka, Adam Schwartz, KT Sullivan, Yesenia Sotelo and the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. To Paul Vena and Joey Marogil for further enlightening us about civil liberties and law enforcement.

To Lael Lanning and The Saints.

And where would we be without our two superstar movers and shakers? To Julie Burros and Claire Geall Sutton of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. You gals rock!



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Acknowledgements

The following foundations, businesses, and organizations have supported Silk Road Theatre Project and our production of *Back of the Throat*. We thank them for their continued generosity and their commitment to the mission of Silk Road Theatre Project.

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Mission of Silk Road Theatre Project

Silk Road Theatre Project showcases playwrights of Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean backgrounds, whose works address themes relevant to the peoples of the Silk Road and their Diaspora communities. Through the creation and presentation of outstanding theatre, we aim to promote discourse and dialogue among multi-cultural audiences in Chicago.

Support Silk Road Theatre Project

Make a Donation

The financial challenges of running an affordable, high quality, socially conscientious, multi-cultural theatre company are daunting! In order to continue producing such important works as *Back of the Throat*, we rely on the support and generosity of people like you. Support Silk Road Theatre Project! Send a donation today to: Silk Road Theatre Project, 77 W. Washington St., Pierce Hall, Chicago, IL 60602 or contribute on-line via Pay Pal at www.srtp.org/donate.html.

Join our Board of Directors

We are actively recruiting highly motivated individuals who believe in the mission and scope of Silk Road Theatre Project and can dedicate time and resources to raising money for the company. If you wish to discuss the possibility of joining our Board of Directors, please contact Malik Gillani at malik@srtp.org.

Volunteer

Your time and energy is extremely important to the success of our productions and operations. Volunteers are always needed. Contact us today at info@srtp.org to find out how you can help.

Sign up for our e-newsletters!

Want to be kept abreast of Silk Road's activities, productions and events? Sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter. To sign up, send us an email at info@srtp.org. No spam, no selling of lists, we promise!

Profiles



KAREEM BANDEALY (Khalid) Kareem returns to Silk Road Theatre Project after appearing this past fall as Tawfiq in Youssef El Guindi's *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. After receiving his B.F.A. from the University of Central Florida, he spent four seasons at the Orlando Shakespeare Festival before arriving in Chicago where his stage credits include: Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, Eclipse Theatre, Stage Left, Theater on the Lake, Prop Thtr, Village Players Theatre, and Talisman Theatre. Chicago workshop credits: American Theater Company, Famous Door, Rasaka Theatre Company, and Silk Road Theatre Project. Kareem is a company member of A Crew of Patches, a daytime theatre bringing full-length, uncut Shakespeare to Chicago area high schools. He is also an associate artist with Rasaka Theatre Company, Chicago's first South Asian theatre company.



ROB BIESENBACH (Carl/Bartlett Understudy) Rob is an actor, playwright and budding screenwriter. In March, he performed in Silk Road's staged reading of *Caravaggio*, and is thrilled to continue working with this wonderful company. He has also performed with Steep Theatre Company, the Side Project, at the Bailiwick Director's Festival and in many other theatrical, commercial and film productions around town. Last fall he produced and acted in his second self-written show, *The One-Eyed Cat and Other Tales of Need*, an evening of five one-act plays. More information can be found at www.RobBiesenbach.com.



ADAM BUTE (Khalid/Asfoor Understudy) Adam is honored to be working with Silk Road once again. He was recently seen in SRTP's *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* in the role of Murad. Adam holds an M.F.A. in performance from Roosevelt University and a B.A. in theatre arts from University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. Thank you Jamil, Stuart and Malik for another amazing opportunity.



TOM HICKEY (Carl) Tom has been a member of Strawdog Theatre Company for the last 5 years where he has some experience playing out-of-control law enforcement types having appeared as McLeod in *Detective Story*, which received four Joseph Jefferson Citations in 2004 including Outstanding Production and Ensemble. He also appeared at Strawdog in *Spring Awakening*, *Julius Caesar*, *Three Sisters*, *Toasting George* and *Measure for Measure* among others. Around Chicago he has also worked with Visions and Voices in *The Devil's Sonata* and *(the) Violent Sex*, Steep Theatre in *Book of Days*, Live Bait in *Paramount Girl* and, most recently, the House Theatre in *Valentine Victorious* where he played about five different characters, most of which were killed in various ways. He's told he may have set a record.



STESHA MERLE (Beth/Jean/Shelly Understudy) Stesha most recently appeared in *Museum with Appetite Theatre* and *Romeo and Juliet* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Other stage credits include *Sylvia in The Game of Love and Chance*, *Lisa in Private Eyes*, and *Renee Vain in Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. Films include *Men Don't Leave* and *Trance*.



ELAINE ROBINSON (Beth/Jean/Shelly) Elaine is delighted to be working with the folks at Silk Road Theatre Project again! She was most recently seen as Kitty Lake in *Aren't We All* with Remy Bumpo. Other Chicago credits include *Recent Tragic Events*, *Enter Alice* and *Why They Invented Dancing* with Uma Productions, *Nickel and Dime* (Naked Eye Theatre Company), *Abingdon Square* (Piven Theatre Workshop), *The Winter Pageant* (Redmoon), *Clowns and Cotton Candy* and *Cats and Dogs and Other Tails*, both with Greta Mae Productions. Elaine's film/TV credits include *The Break Up*, *What About Joan*, *Change of Plans*, and *Ad Hoc*. Elaine is a graduate of Butler University where she earned a B.A. in theatre performance.



MADRID ST. ANGELO (As-foor) Madrid is a graduate of New York's Neighborhood Playhouse – New School of Acting where he studied under the direction of William Alderson and privately under Sandy Meisner. He is a founding member of Chicago's UrbanTheater Company and currently serves as the company's associate artistic Director. Recently he was seen in UTC's production of Miguel Pinero's *Short Eyes* and has just completed directing duty for UTC's production of Miguel Pinero's *The Sun Always Shines for the Cool*. St. Angelo would like to thank Yussef for his play and Jamil and Stuart for giving him Asfoor.



SEAN SINITSKI (Bartlett) Sean was a member of the late Defiant Theatre where he performed such roles as Hamlet, Macduff, and Marcus Andronicus. He received a Jeff Citation for best original music for its production of *Red Dragon*. Other Chicago credits include: Shylock in the *Merchant of*

Venice and Detective Brody in the Jeff Award winning *Detective Story* at Strawdog Theater, *Winter's Tale* at Chicago Shakespeare, *The Doctor's Dilemma* at Writers' Theater, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer* at Next Theatre, *Henry V* and *Balm and Gilead* at The Hypocrites, *Human Interest Story* at Walkabout Theater, *Fellow Travelers* at Stage Left, *The Living* at Famous Door, and *Buying Time* at Northlight. In his spare time he is a Gunslinger.

YUSSEF EL GUINDI (Playwright) Yussef is a playwright living in Seattle. This past fall, Silk Road Theatre Project produced the world premiere of El Guindi's Arab-American family dramedy *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* to great critical acclaim. His play *Back of the Throat* is winner of the 2004 Northwest Playwright's Competition. It was also nominated for the 2006 American Theatre Critics Association's Steinberg/New Play Award, and was voted Best New Play of 2005 by the Seattle Times. It was first staged by San Francisco's Thick Description and Golden Thread Productions; then later presented by Theater Schmeater in Seattle; Manbites Dog Theater in Durham, North Carolina; the Eccentric Theater Co. in Anchor-

age, Alaska; and the Flea Theater in New York. His two-related one-acts, *Acts of Desire*, were staged by the Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles. Other recent productions: *Karima's City* (in San Francisco and as part of 2004's Cairo International Experimental Theater Festival, both presented by Golden Thread Productions), *Murder in the Mirror* (a radio play presented by Stage Shadows at the Museum of Television and Radio in New York), and *Men On Mars* (another radio play aired in 2004 by Shoestring Radio Theater in San Francisco). His adaptation of Chekhov's *A Marriage Proposal* into an Arab-American setting was staged by the Arab Theatrical Arts Guild in Dearborn, Michigan and was nominated for several awards including Outstanding Achievement in Original Play or Adaptation. His short film, *Love Stalks*, won an award for best short narrative film at the Seattle Underground Film Festival and was aired on KTEH. His short story *Ohio* was recently published in Mizna; and another short story, *Stage Directions for an Extended Conversation*, was published in Dinarzad's Children, an anthology of Arab-American Fiction. Yussef holds an M.F.A. from Carnegie-Mellon University and was playwright-in-residence at Duke University.

STUART CARDEN (Director) Stuart is honored to return to SRTP after directing last fall's *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. Recent regional credits include the U.S. premiere of Martin Crimp's adaptation of Marivaux's *The False Servant* and the critically acclaimed remount of Marie Jones's *Stones in his Pockets* for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre (where he serves as artistic associate), the regional premiere of Tristine Skyles's *The Moonlight Room* and the 2004 & 2005 Young Playwrights Festival for The City Theatre and Charles Mee's *Big Love* for the No Name Players which garnered Pittsburgh's Ten Best Award of 2004. In Chicago and surrounding areas recent productions include *The Crucible*, *The Game of Love and Chance*, *Life is a Dream*, *Ring Round the Moon*, *Private Eyes* and *Spring Awakening*. Stuart received his M.F.A. in directing from Carnegie Mellon University (where he teaches each summer). In Chicago he teaches movement and viewpoints theory for Act One Studios' Two Year Acting Conservatory. Upcoming projects include Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre and *Stones in his Pockets* for Madison Repertory Theatre.

JEFFERSON BURNS (Production Manager) Jefferson is honored to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project again for *Back of the Throat*. In addition to production managing on the side, Jefferson is also the

managing director for the Free Associates Theatre Company where he began as a stage manager more than five years ago. His last Production Managing position was with Silk Road's world premiere of *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. Jefferson is eagerly looking forward to his next venture with the Free Associates, co-creating and assistant directing the upcoming improvised parody, *Law & Order: CTA*, scheduled to premiere in September 2006. Jefferson extends his thanks to the cast and crew of *Back of the Throat* and to all of his friends for generally putting up with and tolerating him. He additionally wants to extend his love to his best friend in the world, his TiVo.

LEE KEENAN (Scenic Designer) Lee holds an M.F.A. in lighting and scenic design from Northwestern where he designed the scenery for *The Elephant Man* and *Miscreate* and lit *Juvenalia*, *Parade*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Falsettos*, *Even Stephen*, *Hello Jerry*, *Broadway Babies*, *The Birds*, and *Closer*. Local scenic designs include *I Dream in Blues* and *Still Life with Iris* for Vitum Theatre. Chicago area lighting credits include *The Misanthrope* and *The God of Hell* for Next Theatre, *Time and the Conways* for the Griffin Theatre, *The Home Project* for About Face Youth Theatre, *Nathan the Wise* for Chicago Festival of the Arts, *Top Ten People of the Millennium Sing Their Favorite Schubert Lieder* for Illinois Humanities Council at Victory Gardens, *A Polish Diva from Milwaukee* for Milwaukee Rep and *Ellen Under Glass* for House Theatre. Lee is production designer for the upcoming *Can you spot me?* a site specific Sandbox Theatre Project in a gym. He is thrilled to be inaugurating the new theatre space with Silk Road.

KURT OTTINGER (Lighting Designer) Kurt is pleased to return for his third show at Silk Road, having designed lighting for *Tea* and *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. His most recent project was the lighting design for Pine Box Theatre's production of *Life and Limb*. Kurt was season lighting designer for Circle theatre for two years where he designed lighting for such productions as: *Fool for Love* (Jeff citation nomination), *Steel Magnolias*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *The Shape of Things* and *What's Wrong with Angry*. He has also designed lighting for Bailiwick Repertory, York High School, Highland Park Players, Actors Theatre of Glencoe and Triton College. Kurt is the resident designer and technical director for the Northbrook Theatre where he has designed lighting for over 100 productions.

ROBERT STEEL (Sound Designer and Original Music). Rob designed sound and original music for *A Festival of Jewish Stories* at Piven, *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* at Silk Road Theatre Project, *Stones in His Pockets* at Apple Tree, *Seascape* at City Lit, *Scarrie with Hell in a Handbag*, *Great Expectations* at Piven, *Dead Man Walking* and *Arcadia* at the University of Notre Dame, *Vincent in Brixton* at Apple Tree Theatre, *Our Country's Good* at Piven, *Camp Nimrod for Girls* at Live Bait, *How Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Happened?* with Hell in a Handbag, *Drink Me* with Seanachai, *Necessary Targets* at Apple Tree, *The Golem* with Chicago Jewish, *Human Interest Story* with Walkabout, *Skyscraper* at Piven, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* with Shakespeare on the Green, *The Sign of the Four* at Apple Tree, *The Bumblinni Brothers Show* at the Actors Gymnasium, *The Rivals* at City Lit, and *America Hurrah!*, *Another Day*, *Coyote Ugly*, *Schadenfreude*, *Raggedy Ann and Andy*, *Angels in America* and *Mad Forest* at the DePaul University/Barat Campus. With European Rep: *Tiebele and Her Demon*, *Warriors*, *Black Milk*, *Madame DeSade*, and *Woyzeck*. He also composes for video and film. He is a recipient of an After Dark Award and awards from ASCAP and the Illinois Arts Council.

JANICE PYTEL (Costume Designer) Janice designed costumes for the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning production of *I Am My Own Wife*, which is currently on a world tour. Recent design credits include *A Number* with Next Theatre, *Fences* with Court Theatre, *Aren't We All* with Remy Bumppo Theatre, *The Last of the Boys*, and *The Pain and the Itch* with Steppenwolf Theatre, *Rembrandt's Gift* with Madison Repertory Theatre, *Red Herring* with Northlight Theatre, *Suburban Motel* with Famous Door Theatre, and *Take Me Out* with About Face Theatre. Additional Chicago credits include: Steppenwolf – *Tennessee Williams' Once Arm*; *Our Lady of 121st Street*; *The Drawer Boy*; and *The Infidel*; Court Theatre – *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*; About Face Theatre – *Winesburg, Ohio*; *Pulp*; *Fascination*; *I Am My Own Wife*; and *Theatre District*; and Famous Door Theatre – *Speaking in Tongues*; *Great Society*; and *The Ciderhouse Rules* Parts 1 and 2. She has also worked with Piven Theatre Workshop, L'Opera Piccola, Apple Tree Theatre and Indian Repertory Theatre, among others. For more information, please visit her website at www.janicepytel.com.

DAN PELLANT (Props Designer) Dan is very excited to be working with Silk Road for the first time. A Chicago suburban native and graduate of the University of Illinois in Urbana, he has worked on props de-

sign for several Chicago productions, including Greasy Joan's upcoming rendition of *The Oresteia, God of Hell* at Next Theatre and *A True Ballad of Fall's Blessings* with Strawdog Theatre. Special thanks to his parents for the support and health insurance.

DAVID CHRZANOWSKI (Assistant Director/ Fight Choreographer) David is truly honored to be working on this piece, *Back of the Throat*, with the many fine talents associated with the Silk Road Theatre Project. Directing credits include: *Picnic* at Wittenberg University, *Suddenly Last Summer, The Haunting of Hill House* at the Boulevard Ensemble Theater, *Milwaukee, Romeo and Juliet, The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival, where he is an artistic associate. As an actor he has worked for: the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Lifeline Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, The Irish American Heritage Center, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks (three seasons) and the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival. David is also very proud of his educational outreach work throughout the country.

ALEXANDRA HERRYMAN (Stage Manager) Alexandra returns to Silk Road after the exciting and wonderful experience of stage managing *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. A native of Buffalo, New York, she graduated from St. Bonaventure University with a major in English and minor in theatre, and did most of her stage management training over three years at the Chautauqua Theatre Company in upstate New York. Locally, Allie stage managed *A Lesson Before Dying* for Overflow Ensemble and assistant stage managed *A New Brain, Falsettos* and *Closer than Ever* with Porchlight Music Theatre.

JAY SANGSTER (Assistant Stage Manager) Jay is delighted to be onboard with SRTP. Hailing from Little Rock, Arkansas, he has spent the last three years with Arkansas Repertory Theatre. There, he had the pleasure of working on the world premiere of Catherine Butterfield's *The Sleeper*, a post 9/11 romantic comedy. Also in Arkansas, he has worked with AAC Children's Theatre, Murry's Center for the Performing Arts, and several independent projects. "Thanks for supporting live theatre!"

JARRETT DAPIER (Dramaturg) Jarrett is happy to be working with Silk Road on such an important piece of theatre. This is Jarrett's second time serving as a dramaturg, having worked on Dog & Pony Theatre's recent production of *Osama the Hero*. Primarily a director, Jarrett has directed work for the side project, *Faces Like Swords*,

Circle Theatre, St. Croix Festival Theatre, Celebration Company at The Station Theatre, and Dog & Pony Theatre Co. Jarrett assistant directed two productions at Stepwolf and is currently the literary manager for Dog & Pony Theatre Co. By day, Jarrett works for the ACLU of Illinois as a legal assistant. Thanks to Stuart, Jamil, and Malik. Love to Elizabeth and Franny.

LEFT WING SCENIC (Technical Direction) Left Wing Scenic provides comprehensive technical and design services to theatres and theatrical companies of all sizes, as well as retail stores, photographic studios, and nightclubs. Contracts range from single shows to entire seasons and include technical direction, set construction, electrical installation, painting, and lighting and scenic design. Having worked with more than 25 theatres and production houses all over Chicago, Left Wing brings a team of artists and technicians that works quickly and efficiently to fulfill all of your needs. (www.leftwingscenic.com).

DIANNA DRISCOLL (House Manager) Dianna has worked professionally with the Free Associates, Red Wolf Theatre, Victory Gardens, and About Face. She is also a company member with Speaking Ring Theatre Company, where she most recently was atage manager & production manager for the fall production of Tony Kushner's *A Bright Room Called Day*. After a 12-year absence from the stage, she was also seen in 2005's *Around the Coyote Festival*, in the hilarious *Young Mr. Ryan's Ambition*.

CAROLYN ZIAJA (Box Office Manager) Carolyn is originally from Dallas, Texas, and is currently attending Loyola University Chicago as a theater and journalism major. In Texas she was greatly involved in the Irving Community Theater as a stage manager and actress, and at her high school, the Canterbury Episcopal School, as a student director and performer.

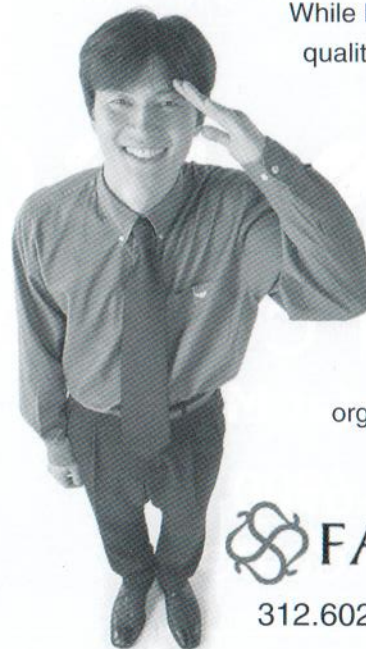
JAMIL KHOURY (Artistic Director) Jamil is co-founder and artistic director of Silk Road Theatre Project, a position to which he brings extensive experience as a producer, playwright, and cross-cultural consultant. He is honored to be promoting the cultural production of Silk Road peoples and to be fostering the exchange of ideas within Chicago's theatre community. Khoury's vocation as a playwright lends a valuable currency to fulfilling our mission as a playwright driven theatre. His plays focus on Middle Eastern themes and questions of Diaspora. He is particularly interested in the intersections of culture, national identity, sexuality, and class. Khoury holds an M.A. degree in

religious studies from the University of Chicago Divinity School and a B.S. degree in International Relations from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is an occasional instructor for The University of Chicago Graham School of General Studies, where he develops courses in Middle East studies. Khoury's play *Precious Stones* won Gay Chicago Magazine's 2003 After Dark Award for Outstanding New Work and has been performed in ten cities across the U.S. His play *Fitna* was produced at University Theatre of the University of Chicago.

MALIK GILLANI (Executive Director) Malik is co-founder and executive director of Silk Road Theatre Project, a position to which he brings extensive experience in producing, management, and business de-

velopment. He is thrilled to be promoting both the rich cultural legacy of the Silk Road and greater visibility for Silk Road artists. Gillani nurtured Silk Road Theatre Project from its embryonic stage into a celebrated theatre company, integrating business acumen and fiscal responsibility within an artistic mission. He studied at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business majoring in marketing and small business management and earned a bachelor's in liberal arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, with an emphasis on the Great Books. Gillani has ten years experience operating technology consulting firms where at various points in his career he was responsible for sales, marketing, negotiations, contract management, and human resources. Gillani is the recipient of the 2003 IBM Business and Technology Leadership Award.

Falkor Group Salutes Silk Road Theatre Project!



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Letter *from the Founders*

Welcome to Silk Road Theatre Project at the historic Chicago Temple Building! In less than four years we have gone from an "idea" to the proud occupants of this beautiful new theatre. And what an amazing journey it has been. Adding a multi-cultural not-for-profit theatre company into the mix of Chicago's Loop Theatre District has been a dream we've shared for over two years now with our partners at First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple; a partnership destined to appear in the annals of theatre history.

This new theatre is testimony to the enormous generosity and support of the First United Methodist community, and to the vision and intellectual acumen of Senior Pastor Philip Blackwell. In recognizing that both parties are in the business of telling stories, and that both share a belief in the transformative power of such stories, Rev. Blackwell set the stage for extending unprecedented levels of hospitality to a theatre company that is neither Methodist nor bound to any specific tradition or creed. When a Christian community provides a home to a theatre headed by same-sex life partners named Jamil and Malik, you know they are living their faith!

Thus we are honored to be Theatre-in-Residence at this distinguished institution, and we are humbled to be part of such an extraordinary community of people. It was a fusion of artistic integrity and activist passion that "birthed" Silk Road; so in many ways, this is a perfect fit.

And what better way with which to inaugurate the new theatre than with the amazing work of Yusef El Guindi! Yusef is Arab-America's preeminent theatrical scribe. His is a unique and important voice in the American theatre. Silk Road had the privilege of first introducing Yusef to Chicago audiences with our world premiere production of *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. We are thrilled to continue the collaboration with this Midwest premiere of *Back of the Throat*.

Thank you for joining Silk Road on this exciting journey. Let's see where it takes us. Here's to many more stories to come!

Sincerely,



Jamil Khoury
Artistic Director



Malik Gillani
Executive Director

Letter from Pastor Philip Blackwell

Dear Friends,

Welcome to First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple!

As a congregation we are deeply proud to claim the Silk Road Theatre Project as our Theatre-in-Residence. Ours is an old congregation, started in 1831 in a log cabin at Wolf Point, but it's a church that is hospitable to new ideas, new people, and imaginative new projects.

As we see it, the relationship between the Temple and the Silk Road Theatre Project is a "natural fit."

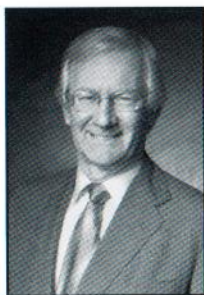
The Chicago Temple is a cosmopolitan urban church in the heart of the city with a congregation and a staff that are enormously rich in their diversity. We welcome all people – white and black, Hispanic and Asian, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, married and single, children, youth and adults, "cradle Christians" and contemporary seekers.

Naturally and instinctively, we were delighted when the opportunity came to extend our hospitality and provide a home for a fresh new theatre project, especially one like Silk Road that is committed to showcasing the work of playwrights who reflect the rich, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic diversity of our 21st Century world.

Now we are pleased that this year's Silk Road productions will be presented in our newly renovated Pierce Hall, a project completed in March at a cost of \$1.4 million.

We look forward to a long and productive relationship with Silk Road. And to a wonderful 2006 season.

Sincerely,



Philip Blackwell
Senior Pastor
First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple

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Subhkamna! Mobarake!**

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