

Directed by **Steve Scott**

**THE WORLD PREMIERE**

**March 2 – April 4, 2010**

Featuring plays by Philip Kan Gotanda, Velina Hasu Houston, David Henry Hwang, Jamil Khoury, Shishir Kurup, Lina Patel, and Elizabeth Wong



GLOBAL THEATRE FOR A GLOBAL CITY

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Be a part of the exciting things happening at Chicago's only theatre company dedicated to telling the stories of Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean peoples. Your tax-deductible contribution will support the production of our main stage season, as well as staged readings, new play commissions, community outreach, educational programs, and more. Check this program for a donation envelope, visit [www.srtp.org/](http://www.srtp.org/) support, or mail your donation to Silk Road Theatre Project, 680 S. Federal Street, Suite 301, Chicago, IL 60605. Thank you!

### VOLUNTEER

Want to be closer to the artists and artistry at Silk Road Theatre Project? A variety of volunteer opportunities afford patrons the chance to get involved at a grassroots level, from ushering through The Saints to offering pro bono professional services. Contact us today at [info@srtp.org](mailto:info@srtp.org) to find out how you can help.

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Silk Road Theatre Project's most active supporters can be found on our Board of Directors, a dynamic group of individuals dedicated to sustaining the mission and goals of this acclaimed young company. Others show their leadership by joining a steering committee or an honorary committee for our annual fund campaigns and benefit events. If you wish to discuss leadership opportunities at SRTP, please contact Executive Director Malik Gillani at [malik@srtp.org](mailto:malik@srtp.org).

### RECEIVE

Get advance news about SRTP's activities, productions and events from our e-newsletter. Send us an email at [info@srtp.org](mailto:info@srtp.org) or just stop by the Box Office—no spam or selling of lists, we promise!

## CONTACT SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT

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## PRODUCTION **TEAM**

Artistic Director | **Jamil Khoury**  
Executive Director | **Malik Gillani**  
Director | **Steve Scott**  
Stage Manager | **Michelle Dane**  
Set and Lighting Designer | **Rebecca A. Barrett**  
Set and Lighting Designer | **Lee Keenan**  
Costume Designer | **Amy Gabbert**  
Sound Designer | **Mikhail Fiksel**  
Props Master | **Jesse Gaffney**  
Dramaturg | **Tanya Palmer**  
Dramaturg | **Neena Arndt**  
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# the **DNA TRAIL**

## ENSEMBLE OF **ACTORS**

**Jennifer Shin\*** | Principal  
**Cora Vander Broek\*** | Principal  
**Melissa Kong** | Principal  
**Fawzia Mirza** | Principal  
**Khurram Mozaffar** | Principal  
**Anthony Peeples** | Principal  
**Clayton Stamper** | Principal  
**Anand Bhatia** | Understudy  
**Suzan Faycurry** | Understudy  
**Chie Isobe** | Understudy  
**Michael McCracken** | Understudy

\*Denotes member of Actors Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers

# PLAY LIST & CAST LIST

*The DNA Trail* is comprised of seven plays, listed below in the order in which they appear.

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1. ***Finding Your Inner Zulu***

by Elizabeth Wong

CRICKET | Jennifer Shin

EMMA | Melissa Kong

RABBI | Clayton Stamper

LOGISTICS | Cora Vander Broek

ZULU WARRIOR | Anthony Peeples

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2. ***Mother Road***

by Velina Hasu Houston

PERPETUA | Jennifer Shin

EVA | Fawzia Mirza

LUNA | Cora Vander Broek

---

3. ***That Could Be You***

by Lina Patel

SCIENTIST | Jennifer Shin

ADDY | Cora Vander Broek

TEDDY | Khurram Mozaffar

CYNDY | Melissa Kong

GENE | Clayton Stamper

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4. ***WASP: White Arab Slovak Pole***

by Jamil Khoury

JAMIL | Clayton Stamper

RANDOM PEOPLE | Melissa Kong,

Fawzia Mirza, Anthony Peeples,

Jennifer Shin, and Cora Vander Broek

ARAB MAN | Khurram Mozaffar

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5. ***Bolt from the Blue***

by Shishir Kurup

HARI | Clayton Stamper

RISHI | Khurram Mozaffar

MOTHER | Fawzia Mirza

PAUL | Anthony Peeples

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6. ***A Very DNA Reunion***

by David Henry Hwang

BOB | Clayton Stamper

CLEOPATRA | Fawzia Mirza

MOM | Cora Vander Broek

GENGHIS KHAN | Anthony Peeples

NINJA DUDE | Khurram Mozaffar

DAD | Khurram Mozaffar

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7. ***Child is Father to Man***

by Philip Kan Gotanda

MAN | Khurram Mozaffar

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# FINDING YOUR INNER ZULU ELIZABETH WONG

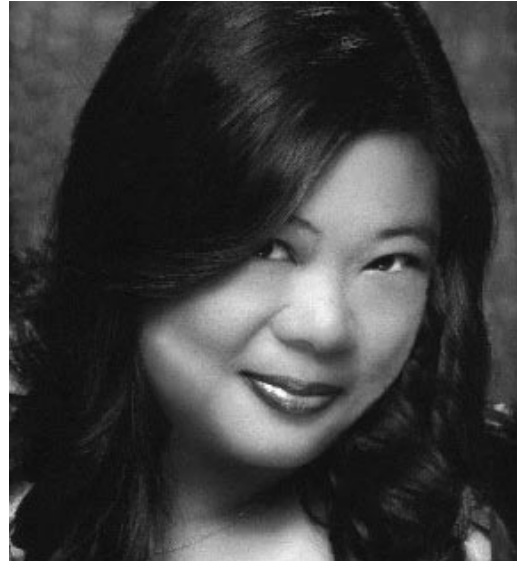
## SYNOPSIS

Cricket, an assassin on the b-ball court, has just led the high school team to sweet victory, and pro recruiters saw every moment of the record shattering game. But her little sister, Emma, finds Cricket in the locker room, deep in a post game funk. Just when life seems like a slam dunk, what's bringing Cricket down? Emma finds out then whips up an ingenious solution to Cricket's problem. In this fantastical journey, the siblings learn how their distant past affects their present day identities.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

I'm in the N9a haplogroup. On the human genome migration map, it's a brown line trekking eastward, one of the oldest lines out of Africa. With my parents and grandparents all born in mainland China, I just assumed I was a pureblood product. I thought the test results would verify me as a faded mimeograph of the first Peking woman, living proof for the argument that the early Chinese had developed independently of Africa, and that Peking Man was indeed my distant cousin. But to my surprise, my test results suggested otherwise. It's mind blowing to find myself connected to a female ancestor who made that long, arduous trek out of Africa several millennia ago, fleeing floods, following the herds, battling wits with wild lands, and even wilder men.

My play celebrates this epic journey with a 21<sup>st</sup> century twist, and examines how these genetic echoes contributed to make me and my three million base pairs into a thoroughly modern American girl of Chinese ancestry. To me, there is an elegant continuity in our very cells, relevant to the present, connecting us to the past, and giving us a glimpse of the future, if we dare to look.



## BIO

Elizabeth Wong is a recipient of the Tanne Foundation Award for artistic achievement. Her plays include *Letters to a Student Revolutionary*, *Dating & Mating in Modern Times*, *China Doll*, and *Kimchee & Chitlins*. She's received commissions from The Kennedy Center for a libretto of Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*; from Honolulu Theatre for Youth for an original musical *The Magical Bird*; and from Silk Road Theatre Project for *Dragon Sky*, a live-action videogame. Wong was a writer for the sitcom *All-American Girl*, an editorial columnist for *The Los Angeles Times*, and she holds an MFA from NYU'S Tisch School of the Arts. Currently, she is writing a play about FDR and his Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the woman who helped create social security.



MOTHER ROAD

# VELINA HASU HOUSTON



mining, excavation, and cultivation of re-invention. But one genetic issue provoked me beyond ethnicity: gene mutations that can lead to breast cancer. Many women who seek genetic risk assessments discover a fifty to eighty percent risk for breast cancer and opt for voluntary bilateral mastectomy.

The notion of breasts lost out of fear or caution fascinates me, in part because my Japanese grandmother's death was complicated by breast cancer, but also because of the enigma of breasts in society as sources of nurture and also allure. They often, for better or for worse, define women in the eyes of many men. The entire brassiere industry exists to support (and sometimes flaunt) them. In *Mother Road*, I was compelled to separate the definition of a woman from the enigma of cleavage by exploring issues of loss, and by re-looking at oneself in the struggle to make sense of one's life and living.

## SYNOPSIS

A woman—Perpetua—ventures into the Mojave Desert to find another woman—Eva—with whom she shares a mother, the grief of loss, and perhaps even other things. Perpetua believes that blood ties are binding, while to Eva genetics mean very little. This intimate yet vast play explores the delicate, sometimes fragile dimensions of which family are made.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

The exploration of my DNA was a “mother road” for me, the revelation of my deep ethnic heritage. The “mother” in the title refers to creation and release, not only of our maternal sources, but also of mothering ourselves. The “road” refers to the journey of risk, assumption, action, challenge, and education that we must take in order to navigate the process of finding our identity and to the continual

## BIO

Velina Hasu Houston is Professor, Director of Dramatic Writing, Associate Dean, and Resident Playwright at the School of Theatre, University of Southern California. Her internationally acclaimed career includes commissions from Manhattan Theatre Club, LA Opera, Asia Society, Lila Wallace Readers Digest Foundation, Mark Taper Forum, Hawai'i Foundation on Culture & Arts, Jewish Women's Theatre Project, Mixed Blood Theatre, and others. Houston is a Commissioner for the Department of State's Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and a member of the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange. She is a member of the Writers Guild of America, west; the Dramatists Guild, and the Alliance of Los Angeles Playwrights. Houston served as Research Advisor for Tokyo-based *Studies on Modernization of Classic Greek Theatre and Myth in Contemporary British, Irish, and American Poetic Drama and Theatre*.

# THAT COULD BE YOU LINA PATEL

## SYNOPSIS

Meet Addy, Teddy, Cyndy and Gene. Are they products of their environments? Or are they products of their genes? If we switched roles with the person sitting next to us, would we be the same person or would our new environment change who we are? This thought provoking piece examines and subverts our expectations about genetics, parenthood, and identity.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

*That Could Be You* was the last of three plays I wrote. The gestation period of this play was the same as the gestation period of the adoption of my newborn baby: about a year. I was concurrently dealing with people whose reactions belied a belief (which I harbored, too) that an adopted child cannot be the same as your “own” child. As the adoption progressed, I thought, there is no way I can write about this! Besides, I was fascinated by the science and by the limitations of a cheek swab to determine identity. My swab showed that my ancestors, after a brief stop in Ukraine, have been reliably South Asian, whatever that meant twenty thousand years ago. I was hoping for something revelatory, like Scottish ancestry, which might explain my visceral and abiding love of bagpipes and scotch.

As our deadline approached, I sent in two different plays and then, furtively, this third play. It was perhaps inevitable that Silk Road Theatre Project chose the most personal play. I learned that DNA tells you *what*—hair color, say—but that nurture tells you *who*. Raising my baby also broke the blood-bond bias I had. Science cannot solve the riddle of who we are or explain our intense loves. Love is without boundary, defies logic, and slays fear. It makes me think of our ancestors who also knew no boundaries, defied the logic of staying in one place, and were fearless in their expansion out of Africa.



## BIO

Lina Patel is a writer and an actor. Her first play, *Sankalpan (Desire)* was a semifinalist for the Sundance Theatre Institute. Last year, Patel was invited by Center Theater Group to develop a new play over a nine-month writer's retreat; *The Ragged Claws* is being further developed at the Lark in New York. For more information about Patel's writing, visit [www.southasianplaywrights.org](http://www.southasianplaywrights.org). As a critically acclaimed actor, Patel has performed at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Taper, Pasadena Playhouse, and The Globe Theaters. She has also narrated books for Penguin and Random House. Television appearances include guest starring roles on *24*, *CSI*, *Numb3rs*, and *Medium*. Lina Patel thanks Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani for their vision, support, and unrivalled passion for the American theatre.

# WASP: WHITE ARAB SLOVAK POLE JAMIL KHOURY



physical doesn't always align with everything else. In writing *WASP: White Arab Slovak Pole*, I opted to navigate my mixed cultural heritage (Arab and Slav) in a manner that's playful and revealing. I also sought to confront the assumptions ascribed to my name, Jamil, and the confusion elicited by my white skin. For as long as I can remember, I have been asked to either contextualize myself or justify myself, in order to make sense to others. Although typically rooted in sincere curiosity and well intentioned disbelief, this line of questioning demands that I respond. I try to do so graciously. Sometimes I get frustrated, sometimes angry, but usually, "what are you?" makes for a good ice breaker and teachable moment. Writing *WASP* was like taking a stroll down identity politics lane. But it also forced me to recognize that underneath all my pat answers and automated defenses is a reservoir of estrangement from the communities I belong to and feel obligated to defend.

## SYNOPSIS

What does a person named Jamil look like? Swarthy? Mustached? African American? What if your name is Jamil and you're none of the above? And what if your origins are Arab and Slavic? Where then do you fall within the slippery slope of whiteness? Cultural confusion and comedy come together in this playfully provocative piece that takes a hard look at how we identify ourselves and how others perceive us.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

My interest in matters DNA has always been more sociological than scientific. While I appreciate what science tells us about the past, what excites me most is locating the past in our present day lives. It's the cultural rather than the physical, particularly as the

## BIO

Jamil Khoury conceived of and commissioned *The DNA Trail* and is honored to be working with such a distinguished group of playwrights. Khoury's creative work focuses largely on Middle Eastern themes and questions of Diaspora. He is particularly interested in the intersections of culture, national identity, sexuality, and class. In fall of 2009, Khoury conceived of and curated the highly successful *Silk Road Cabaret: Broadway Sings the Silk Road*, marking SRTTP's first foray into cabaret. His play *Precious Stones* won the 2003 After Dark Award for Outstanding New Work and has been performed in ten cities across the U.S. *Precious Stones* will be filmed as a cineplay in summer of 2010. Khoury's play *Fitna* was performed at University Theatre of The University of Chicago and his play *Azizati* was performed at Café Voltaire.



# BOLT FROM THE BLUE SHISHIR KURUP

## SYNOPSIS

For Rishi, whose family is scattered across the globe, conversations with loved ones take place over cell phones and the internet. They exist as snatches of disembodied voices and email messages that allow the illusion of intimacy and of staying in close touch. But when his young cousin, Hari, sends a message of despair from across the ocean, Rishi comes face to face with the crippling limitations of communicating over long distances as he attempts to release the unspoken truths that haunt his family.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

Identity, I believe, is fixed and mutable, of no consequence and of the utmost importance, and a core value that I find burdensome. Identity is both sacred and profane in that it creates an aura of belonging while concurrently asking us to plant totems and draw lines of absolutes. Opposing truths worthy of exploration? Absolutely. And so I thought, “A 12 minute musical! About genetic markers and identity! Something short yet shattering! Perhaps a modern day *Ruddigore*!” And since David Hwang and Philip Gotanda are also musicians, I had a funny little mental picture of us playwrights playing in the pit orchestra.

*Bolt from the Blue*, however, elbowed its way into my consciousness and rendered the question of opposing truths temporarily moot. I realized that a musical would have put me in a place of comfort and ease, and I chose, instead, to address this pressing matter which was weighing on me: an issue involving a close family member that was putting me in a place of personal dis-ease. I answered that call with this play. In terms of personal genetic identity, however, I am acutely aware of how disease binds me as firmly to my ancestry as any other “marker” of connection.



## BIO

Shishir Kurup is a member of the nationally renowned Cornerstone Theater Company. His dark comedy, *Merchant on Venice*, which deals with Hindu/Muslim tensions, has won California Arts Council, Kennedy Center, and TCG extended collaborations awards, and premiered at Silk Road Theatre Project to rave reviews and an extended run. Kurup is a Princess Grace Fellow and one of only six artists to receive the Audrey Skirball Kenis T.I.M.E. grant for his body of work. His feature film *Sharif Don't Like It*, which deals with the loss of Habeas Corpus, nears completion. Kurup has extensive film and television credits: *Lost*, *Sleeper Cell*, *Alias*, *NYPD Blue*, *Monk*, and recurring roles on *Surface* and *Heroes*. His most profound and instructive creation, however, is his daughter Tala.

# A VERY DNA REUNION

# DAVID HENRY HWANG



## SYNOPSIS

Bob is annoyed with his parents, who keep bugging him to get a job. Luckily, Bob has finally found his real family: a DNA test shows that he comes from the same haplogroup as Cleopatra and Genghis Khan! Bob's illustrious ancestors pay him a visit and assure him that his lineage makes him worthy of royal treatment. But how will Bob handle his pesky parents? This hilarious family reunion gleefully skewers the imprecise science of DNA testing.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

Jamil Khoury came up with the coolest idea ever for a play commission: gather a group of Asian American playwrights to take DNA ancestry tests and definitively answer the question virtually all

Asian Americans are asked with annoying regularity: "Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?" I imagined resolving mysterious stories from my family's past. Did I indeed have a great-great grandfather who was British? Could I have some Filipino blood? Would that explain the texture of my hair?

The actual results were a grave disappointment. Science today, at least in commercial DNA testing, can reveal only the broadest outlines of one's ancestral past. I came to see DNA testing as the pseudoscientific stepchild of the past lives craze from earlier decades. As Shishir Kurup remembers, everyone thought they were reincarnated from Cleopatra.

*A Very DNA Reunion* grew out of my frustration with the pathetic vagaries of my test results and the unrealistic expectations raised by today's peddlers of DNA ancestry testing. It is also an affectionate nod to Act I of Caryl Churchill's great play *Top Girls*. Using DNA to solve the riddle of identity turned out to be an empty fantasy. It was also a lazy one. I can hope to know myself better by doing the hard work of self examination—not by swabbing a Q-tip along the inside of my cheek.

## BIO

David Henry Hwang is a Tony Award winner (and three time Tony Award nominee), a three time Obie Award winner, and a two time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. His work includes the plays *M. Butterfly*, *Golden Child*, *Yellow Face*, and *FOB*; the Broadway musicals *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida* (coauthor), the revised *Flower Drum Song*, and *Disney's Tarzan*; and the operas *The Voyage* (music by Philip Glass), *Ainadamar* (music by Osvaldo Golijo and winner of two 2007 Grammy Awards), *The Silver River* (music by Bright Sheng), and *The Fly* (music by Howard Shore).

# CHILD IS FATHER TO MAN PHILIP KAN GOTANDA

## SYNOPSIS

While his father lay dying, a son reflects. Emotionally distanced from his father and yet inextricably tethered to him, the son rediscovers what it means to be a child, a parent, and a man. This poetic, expansive piece explores both the intimacy and remoteness of family.

## PLAYWRIGHT REFLECTIONS

During periods of my life I would have the urge to take on a new name. I have been Paolo, Pablo, Joaquim, and Felix. What prompted this curious activity, I've no clue; it was an impulse. But why choose these types of names, and why have such an impulse to begin with? It was one of those unanswered mysteries...until I was approached by Jamil and Malik and they uttered the words, *The DNA Trail*. Finally, my suspicions about living past lives in the greater continent of "Hispania" or Portugal (where I'm sure I spent many a past life sipping cups of bica, throwing back glasses of ginjinha) would be confirmed. Certainly I could not just be from Japan but rather from some place exotic, sexy, virile—yup, Portugal.

Nope.

My tribe started in Africa, stopped in Japan...and stayed Japanese. So there I was with not much more than I already knew about my lineage. How, then, to feed the imagination and come up with a play? I waited. Others turned in inspired drafts. Final deadlines loomed and still nothing. Then, during the flight in for a recent meeting, something began to take shape. The image was of a grown son standing next to his father's body in a funereal setting. The rest followed quickly. But what of Joaquim, Paolo, and the others? Part of the continuing mystery.



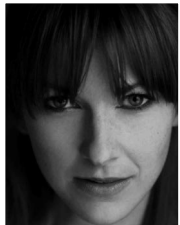
## BIO

Philip Kan Gotanda is the creator of one of the largest bodies of Asian American themed work, produced and studied throughout the world. Gotanda is known for experimenting with a range of aesthetic styles. He wrote the text and directed the production of Maestro Kent Nagano's *Manzanar: An American Story*, an original symphonic work with narration. He is in collaboration with noted opera singer John Duykers and composer Max Gitech Duykers on a new opera, *The Apricots of Andujar*. Philip Kan Gotanda is also an independent filmmaker. His film, *Life Tastes Good*, was presented at the Sundance Film Festival. He is currently developing *Living J-Town* with his production company, Joe Ozu Films. Gotanda is the recipient of the Guggenheim as well as other awards and honors.

# CAST BIOS



**Jennifer Shin** (principal) is happy to work with Silk Road Theatre Project. Shin was last seen as Ra in Victory Gardens' production of *Year Zero*. Shin was also seen as Jen Marcus in Collaboraction's long running production of *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow*. Other favorite roles include Sayoko in Frank Galati's production of *After the Quake* at Berkeley Rep. Heartfelt love and thanks to Jamil, Malik, and Steve Scott for this opportunity.



**Cora Vander Broek** (principal) is thrilled to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project. Recent credits: *All My Sons* (TimeLine), *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* (Northlight), *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (Steppenwolf, U/S

with performance), *Doubt* and *A Christmas Carol* (Indiana Repertory), *Dead End* (Griffin Theatre), and *Book of Days* (Raven Theatre). Featured by the Chicago Tribune as one of the top five actors to watch now, Vander Broek has received a Jeff Citation Nomination and an After Dark Award.



**Melissa Kong** (principal) made her professional debut at Silk Road Theatre Project and is happy to be back for *The DNA Trail*. She has her B.A. in Theater from University of Illinois at Chicago, and studied abroad at LAMDA in London. Credits include *Golden Child* (Silk Road Theater Project) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Varna International Theater Festival in Bulgaria). She'd like to thank SRTTP and her family for their love and support.



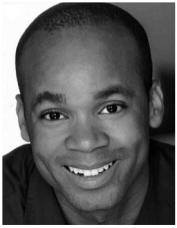
**Fawzia Mirza** (principal) is a Pakistani-Canadian-American who loves her Silk Road adventures. Favorite work includes: Scheherezade/Dahna in *1001* (Mixed Blood Theatre, Minneapolis), *Yoni Ki Baat* (Rasaka & Profiles Theatre), *The Refugee Girls: A Musical Parody*, and *The Piano Tuner* (Lifeline Theatre). She's studied at IO, tours the world with the show, *Sex Signals*, and produced the documentary *Fish out of Water* with her partner. Shukria to Jamil, Malik, Steve, SRTTP, and all the playwrights for this opportunity.



**Khurram Mozaffar** (principal) is an attorney by day, an actor by night, and a writer during his lunch breaks. He is honored to be working with the Silk Road Theatre Project on *The DNA Trail*. Mozaffar is currently

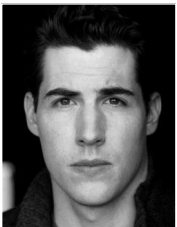
deep in pre-production on *Scary Muslim Dudes*, an independent film project he authored. He is profoundly grateful to his family, particularly his brilliant and supportive wife, and monstrosly adorable three sons.





**Anthony Peeples** (principal) is overjoyed to make his debut with Silk Road Theatre Project. Thank you to Steve, Jamil, Malik, and Becca. Peeples is an actor and artist educator whose Chicago credits include

ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Next Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Victory Gardens, Studio One Dance Theatre, EMPAACT, Raven Theatre, and First Folio Shakespeare. Regional credits include The Cleveland Play House, The Phoenix Theatre Circle for Children, CATCO, Actors' Theatre, The Red Herring Ensemble, and The St. Louis Black Rep.



**Clayton Stamper** (principal), a Kentucky artist, has contributed as an actor, assistant director, dramaturg, and producer on many great stages. Favorites include Chicago Shakespeare, Roundabout Theatre, Marriott

Theatre, Little Colonel Playhouse, Joe's Pub, Provision, Oraboras, Bohemian Theatre, Theatre Hikes, and Wilmette Theatre. Film credits include Michael Mann's *The Insider*. Clayton attended Roosevelt University, North Carolina School for the Arts, and Second City. Big love to family and friends! Play!



**Anand Bhatia** (understudy) came to Chicago after graduating from the University of Iowa in Industrial Engineering. He was most recently seen as Gravy in Rasaka Theatre Company's production of *Culture/Clash* and

understudied for Lookingglass Theatre Company's fall production of *Fedra*. Bhatia is excited to be part of *The DNA Trail* cast. Many thanks to all of those that continue to support his acting endeavors.



**Suzan Faycurry** (understudy) is happy to be part of *The DNA Trail* and is excited to work with Silk Road Theatre Project. She holds a degree in theatre from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has worked with

Raven Theatre; television credits include a guest starring role on an episode of *The Beast*.



**Chie Isobe** (understudy) is very honored to be a part of this exciting project. Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Isobe graduated with a Musical Theatre degree from Columbia College Chicago in May, 2009. Chicago

Credits include *Miss Saigon* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), *Spelling Bee* (Marriott Theatre Lincolnshire), *Hopera: A Fallen Hero* (Hopera World Productions), and *Year Zero* and *The Snow Queen* (Victory Gardens Theatre). Isobe would like to thank Silk Road Theatre Project and her beautiful family in Japan.



**Michael McCracken** (understudy) is thrilled to work with Silk Road Theatre Project. New to the Chicago theatre scene, he was last on stage with Route 66's production of *High Fidelity*. Before moving to Chicago, he

spent four years at the state theater of North Carolina as apprentice director and actor performing in numerous productions including *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Foxfire*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and most recently *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.



# PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS



**Jamil Khoury** (Producer) is Founding Artistic Director of Silk Road Theatre Project. *The DNA Trail* marks the 13<sup>th</sup> production that Khoury has co-produced, along with 28 staged readings, a national college tour, and the Saving Face Theatre Festival. He

helped establish Middle East America: A National New Plays Commission, Looks Like Chicago: A Diversity-Through-Theatre subscription series, and SouthAsianPlaywrights.org. Khoury holds a M.A. in Religious Studies from The University of Chicago Divinity School, a B.S. in International Relations from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and is currently enrolled in the Non Profit Management Executive Scholars Program at the Kellogg School of Management.



**Malik Gillani** (Producer) is Founding Executive Director of Silk Road Theatre Project, a position to which he brings 18 years of experience in management, marketing, and business development. He conceived of and established SRTTP's arts integrated

education program, Myths to Drama, heralded as one of the finest elementary school arts education programs. Gillani earned a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, and recently completed the Non Profit Management Executive Scholars Program at the Kellogg School of Management. He is the recipient of the IBM Business and Technology Leadership Award and was honored by Changing Worlds for Outstanding Contributions to the Arts. Recently, he received the Chicago Community Trust Fellowship Award.



**Steve Scott** (Director) is the Associate Producer at the Goodman Theatre. He has directed productions at the Goodman, Shattered Globe, Silk Road Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, Next Theatre Company, Porchlight, Theatre Wit, Theatre

at the Center, Organic Touchstone, Lifeline, Lyric Opera Center for American Artists, Redtwist, and Eclipse, where he is a company member. He is a faculty member of Act One Studio and the Theatre Conservatory at the College of Performing Arts of Roosevelt University. Scott has received five Jeff nominations, an After Dark Award, and the Award of Honor from the Illinois Theatre Association.

**Michelle Dane** (Stage Manager) is excited about working on *The DNA Trail* as well as recently becoming the production manager for SRTTP. She holds a B.S. in Education in English, Speech and Theatre; and she holds a B.F.A. in Theatre Management from Missouri State University. She has worked throughout the country as a stage manager, box office manager, accountant, HR manager, and production manager. Thanks to Becca for being a most agreeable partner.

**Rebecca A. Barrett** (Set and Lighting Designer) is pleased to be part of *The DNA Trail*, marking her 7th production with Silk Road Theatre Project. Barrett is currently the Assistant Lighting & Sound supervisor for Northwestern University. She graduated from Ithaca College in upstate New York with a B.F.A. in Theatrical Production Arts. In her free time she enjoys spending time in the great outdoors.

**Lee Keenan** (Set and Lighting Designer) is Instructor of Lighting Design at Loyola University Chicago. Keenan has designed lights for The House Theatre of Chicago (company member), Looking-glass Theatre, Next Theatre, 500 Clown, Silk Road Theatre Project (Artistic Associate), Circle Theatre, Centerstage Baltimore, Kansas City Rep, The Griffin Theatre, The Building Stage, Apple Tree, and Milwaukee Repertory. Keenan's scenic designs have been seen at Silk Road Theatre Project, Collaboration, Adventure Stage, Infamous Commonwealth, and The Hyopcrites.

**Amy Gabbert** (Costume Director) is pleased to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project. She is a professional freelance costume designer and art instructor in Chicago. She holds her MFA from Northwestern University, her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is a Fulbright Memorial Fund Scholar. She has designed costumes at the Next Theatre, Infusion Theatre Company, Griffin Theatre, Sandbox Theater Project, Steep Theater, and American Theater Company.

**Mikhail Fiksel** (Sound Designer) is a member of Serendipity and Strawdog Theatre Company, and an Artistic Associate with Collaboration and Teatro Vista. Recent projects include Victory Gardens, Lifeline, Northlight, Redmoon, About Face, ATC, The House, The Goodman, and The Hypocrites. Fiksel has received four Jeff Awards, two Jeff Nominations, and an After Dark Award. He is a resident designer at Adventure Stage Chicago, and a part time faculty member of the Loyola University Theatre Department.

**Jesse Gaffney** (Props Master) is happy to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project again after designing props for *Pangs of the Messiah*. Chicago credits include Marriot Lincolnshire, First Folio, Apple Tree, Steep, 16th Street, Provision Theatre, and Polarity Theatre Companies. Outside of Chicago, Gaffney has worked for Allenberry Playhouse in Boiling Springs, PA; Stages St. Louis; and The Arrow Rock Lyceum in Arrow Rock, Missouri. She is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University.

**Tanya Palmer** (Dramaturg) is a playwright and dramaturg, currently serving as the Literary Manager at The Goodman Theatre in Chicago. Prior to moving to the big city, she was the Director of New Play Development at Actors Theatre of Louisville. She has written articles on theatre and new play development for *American Theatre*, *Theatre Topics* and *Parabasis*. Originally from Calgary, Alberta, she holds an M.F.A. in Playwriting from York University in Toronto.

**Neena Arndt** (Dramaturg) is the Literary Associate at Goodman Theatre, where her dramaturgy credits include *Animal Crackers*, *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, *Ghostwritten*, and *Desire Under the Elms*.

At other theatres: *The Onion Cellar* and *The Keening* at American Repertory Theatre, *True West* and *The Sunshine Boys* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater and *Macbeth* at Actors Shakespeare Project in Boston. She holds an MFA in dramaturgy from the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training at Harvard University.

**Jason Pikscher** (Technical Director) is thrilled to be joining Silk Road Theatre Project for the sixth time. Recent shows include *Yohen*, *Pangs of the Messiah*, and *Durango*. Pikscher's fabrications can be seen all over the country, including the Kennedy Center, Florida Grand Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, the Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Provision Theatre, First Folio, Wilclaw, and Harper College. He would like to send his love and gratitude to his fiancée, Andrea.

**Lavina Jadhvani** (Assistant Director) is an Associate Artist at Silk Road Theatre Project, where she worked on *Caravaggio*, *Durango*, *Golden Child*, *Merchant on Venice*, and *Yohen*. Jadhvani is the artistic director of Rasaka Theatre Company. She has also directed for Apple Tree, Chicago Dramatists, Remy Bumpo, the Side Project, and Victory Gardens. She has assisted Jeremy B. Cohen, Barbara Gaines, and Frank Galati. She is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.

**Amanda Vevers** (Assistant Stage Manager and House Manager), a 2008 graduate of Loyola University's Department of Theatre, returns to Silk Road Theatre Project for her second season as house manager. She would like to thank Malik and Jamil for their generosity of spirit, and Michelle for helping her take a step in the right direction. A big thank you to her grandparents who have been her constant support and champions. Go Cubs!

**Maggie Kovalcik** (Box Office and P.R. Coordinator) is a native of Pennsylvania and graduated from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY with a degree in Theatre Arts Management in December of 2008. She moved to the Windy City in August and almost immediately found a home at Silk Road. She would like to thank Malik for giving a recent graduate such a wonderful opportunity.

# ARTISTIC RUMINATIONS **THE DNA TRAIL: FROM SWAB TO STAGE**

by Jamil Khoury, Artistic Director

The idea of commissioning seven playwrights—Philip Kan Gotanda, Velina Hasu Houston, David Henry Hwang, Shishir Kurup, Lina Patel, Elizabeth Wong, and me—to each take a genealogical DNA test and write short plays in response to the results of these tests, occurred to me while having lunch with a colleague back in 2007. What began as an industry standard “how can we collaborate?” conversation, segued into a lively repartee about science, art, genetics, and pop culture’s growing fascination with the phenomena of DNA. Concurrent to our riffing over Cobb salad were conversations at Silk Road Theatre Project about the commissioning of new plays. That these streams would somehow intersect is the miracle of artistic ecology, spawning what I would later call *The DNA Trail: A Genealogy of Short Plays about Ancestry, Identity, and Utter Confusion*. Seeing that such a distinguished group of playwrights agreed to take this journey with me (responding affirmatively to my invitation typically within the number of seconds it took to explain the concept) is testimony both to the power of ancestry and our innate desire to discover something new and unexpected about ourselves.

In this age of shifting boundaries and fluctuating identities, perhaps science and art have more to say to each other than meets the eye. Conversely, American identity politics and race narratives have historically eschewed science. Thus, in enlisting the support of genealogical DNA testing, a highly contested, sometimes controversial field of scientific inquiry (not to be confused with medical and criminal DNA testing or paternity testing), I wanted to uncover new language for addressing our national obsession with hyphens and ethnic categories. It wasn’t any particular scientific idea about DNA that inspired me, but rather curiosity as to how ancestry and genetics inform our socially constructed selves. The tests were simply a means to an end. I knew the accuracy of the tests was subject to scientific skepticism and ethical debate. And I was troubled by the many companies selling ancestral

DNA tests online using language that sounds oddly therapeutic or biologically determinist, pandering to insecurities while stoking hopes of noble lineage.

But consumerist anxieties aside, the cultural and political tend to trump the scientific, particularly when ascribing meaning to race and ethnicity. And if the underlying hypothesis of the “ancestry industry” is correct, then we all originated in east Africa from whence we scattered ourselves across the globe in search of food, water, and habitable land, acquiring racial characteristics across time and space. Armed with said arguments, I set out to incite a conversation between culture and science that would indulge us as playwrights to explore personal identity. All that was required was an exchange of bodily fluids. A swab of saliva from the cheek would be sent to a lab yielding colorful yet seemingly indecipherable diagrams charting migratory patterns of generations past—as in thousands of years past! Whether valid or a sham, hard science or the pseudoscientific equivalent of a psychic reading, ancestral DNA was merely the spring board, the spark that would inspire new and utterly original pieces of theatre. That the commissioned playwrights all wrestle with the perennial “who am I?” question, and are forced to challenge the colonial and touristy images of Asians and Middle Easterners bequeathed to us, is what would render the seven short plays Silk Road Theatre Project plays.

To our astonishment, the journey from swab to stage proved remarkably smooth. First came the commissioning of the seven playwrights, all of diverse Silk Road backgrounds, setting to text a uniform contract agreeable to all parties. Everyone signed on the dotted line. SRTP then ordered the DNA tests, which were mailed to the playwrights’ homes. We scraped the insides of our cheeks with something resembling a Q-Tip and returned to sender a swab of our saliva (the “sender” being a Houston based company called Family Tree DNA. I figured if they’re good enough for Oprah and *National Geographic*, they’re good enough

for me!) Within six weeks we received our test results. In July of 2008, we brought the playwrights to Chicago for the first of three weekend meetings, at which time we had the opportunity to interface with geneticists, genealogists, DNA counselors, and a DNA ethicist. The experts helped us decipher and comprehend our test results, spawning fascinating conversations around a range of topics, including the role of genetics in society's on-going nature-versus-nurture debates.

The playwrights returned to their respective hometowns and months later began sending me first drafts of their plays. In August 2009, the playwrights flew back to Chicago for a workshop of the seven plays. Finally, in February 2010, three weeks into rehearsals for the actual production of *The DNA Trail*, the playwrights returned once again, this time to see the plays on their feet and to work on final rewrites, revisions, and changes. It gives me great pleasure to report that what began as seven individual playwrights with varying degrees of connectedness to one another has, over the course of the project, become a family of colleagues, friends, and, I suspect, future collaborators.

Not a weak link in the chain, each playwright contributed generously and brilliantly to *The DNA Trail*. The fruit of our labor is seven solid and unique plays that stand firmly on their own yet work beautifully, orchestrally even, as a whole. This is not a festival of short plays, although I would have been satisfied if it turned out as such. *The DNA Trail* is, instead, what I had most wanted, a cohesive, unified piece of theatre with strong thematic through lines and an identifiable narrative arc; distinct genres and styles and voices all marshaled to serve one grand tale. Individually and collectively, overtly or subtly, we are exploring what it means to be both American citizens *and* global citizens. By unpeeling the layers of past and present, us and them, we are contributing to our difficult, often contentious, public discourse about citizenship and nationality.

Perhaps the greatest realization for me in this whole endeavor has been the recognition that artists and scientists tread on common ground. Allowing for the fact that I'm a layman when it comes to science, and an unabashed social constructionist at that, I discovered along the trail an affinity for scientists somehow analogous to the affinities that propel me as an artist. This newfound kinship was rooted in the elusively obvious. Artists and scientists are questioners

and seekers, explorers and discoverers, dissenters and non-conformists who are rarely satisfied with convention, the status quo, or established "truths." We create art and science because we must. We view the human condition as evolutionary, a work-in-progress, and full of mystery. We doubt, we challenge, we re-imagine, and in so doing, we often upset people. Thus, artists and scientists are easily deemed suspect, relegated to the margins of society, scapegoated, ostracized, and sometimes persecuted. It's no coincidence that the enemies of art (like religious absolutists and political reactionaries) are also often the enemies of science. In materializing *The DNA Trail*, I learned that the same populist fears and anxieties that have historically been directed against artists have also taken aim at scientists. I started to understand that artists and scientists are, in many respects, mirror reflections of each other.

Producing *The DNA Trail* has affirmed for me the old adage that "where there's a will, there's a way." It demonstrates that a small, relatively young company like Silk Road Theatre Project can attract a stellar group of highly accomplished artists to create an original piece of theatre that is groundbreaking and exciting. It reminds me that despite the myriad of challenges facing the American theatre today, unique and important theatre is being created across the country 24/7, often merging large ambition with modest resources and wielding astonishing results. It also reminds me that when it comes to matters of importance, matters that affect us all, the theatre does indeed have a lot to say and a lot to offer. My, what extraordinary DNA the theatre has!

So, from the silk road to the DNA trail, we thank you for taking this trek with us. In the greater scheme of history, we've only just begun.

# FAQ ABOUT DNA

by Peter N. Gray

Humans continue to wonder how existing traits are transferred to the next generation and how one may explain the appearance of new traits. Discoveries by Gregor Mendel in the 1860s indicated that there are recessive traits (which need the gene on both chromosomes to be expressed) and dominant traits (which only need the gene on one chromosome to be expressed.) We have, until relatively recently, considered gene expression to be equally simple: humans have a single normal genome (the sum of all the genetic material in the cell nucleus) and mutations are deviations from that norm. Now, DNA sequencing analysis shows that there are many small discrepancies between each of our DNA sequences that have no known effect on function or reproduction. These differences, called single nucleotide polymorphisms, or SNPs, appear in only one of the bases in the DNA. Some of these SNPs are conserved over generations. Scientists believe SNP maps will help them identify the multiple genes associated with complex ailments such as cancer, diabetes, vascular disease, and some forms of mental illness.

The information in our DNA, while interesting and somewhat informative, is creating social and psychological concerns because we do not fully comprehend the information and its role, let alone its expression or its response to external factors such as the environment, infection, nutrition, and stress. The populist view, “If it’s genetic, it must be science; if it’s science, it must be true” has led to commercial services including genetic tests that attempt to relate genetic information to social behaviors, athletic prowess, intelligence, appearance, and other desired traits. Some major personal health decisions are being made as well. We tend to attach quasi religious significance to our DNA, inclining to be more deterministic than we should be. Gathering knowledge and understanding is a good thing but we need to gain more perspective and humility in the process. We are more than a collection of genes.

## What is genetic material?

Genetic material contains the information that enables an organism to execute the synthetic and metabolic reactions necessary to reproduce. The information is carried in the components of DNA. These components are a polymer of bases known as adenine, thymine, guanine, and cytosine. A functional sequence of these bases is called a gene. The DNA in a cell is tightly packaged with proteins in a structure called a chromosome. If it was not, the DNA could be easily damaged and also would have difficulty fitting inside the cell. The entire sum of DNA in a cell is the genome.

## Where is your DNA?

A full copy of your DNA is located in each of your cells (except for your red blood cells, which lack a nucleus.) Nearly all your DNA is in the nucleus; a small amount is in each cell’s mitochondria (mtDNA.) Human DNA is packaged into 46 chromosomes, which have other components that enable the protection and expression of the DNA. Mitochondrial DNA is the most conserved DNA, with the fewest changes throughout time. Any changes that have occurred in mtDNA are conserved as well, even though they have little functional consequence. This enables us to trace our ancient ancestral migrations from eastern Africa over 100,000 years ago.

## What is a gene?

A gene is a unit of function encoded in the DNA, usually divided into expressed and non-expressed sections. Typically, there is one copy of each gene on each chromosome, but only one is active; therefore, traits may be expressed from one or the other parent. Unless a gene is turned on, it should not have any effect.

## What is genetic testing?

Genetic testing analyzes your DNA in order to detect and predict the risk of disease and to identify disease carriers. Tests for metabolites are of value only when



there is a high probability that either an excess or a deficiency of the metabolite indicates the presence of heritable mutations in single genes and some type of corrective action can be taken. For example, Phenylketonuria (PKU) is a rare condition in which a baby is born without the ability to properly break down an amino acid called phenylalanine, which is why people with this disorder need to avoid the artificial sweetener aspartame.

## **How is genetic testing done?**

Small samples of cells are taken with a swab, usually from your cheek. The DNA is extracted from these cells and cut into small pieces using enzymes that recognize specific base sequences in the DNA. Millions of copies of the sequences can be made in a laboratory. These sequences can be analyzed using several techniques. Short synthetic sequences (probes) known to be associated with a disease, a trait, or chromosome location such as the sex chromosomes, determine the results of the test.

## **How does one determine biological relatedness of relatives or ancestors?**

Samples of DNA are isolated from the mtDNA (which is specific to maternal inheritance) and from the Y-chromosome (which is specific to paternal inheritance). Genetic testing identifies some unique sequences between individuals that are not commonly found in the general population. Different techniques and statistical calculations are used to calculate the probability of a biological relationship.

## **What is DNA profiling?**

A DNA profile is a permanent record of your genetic identity. Your DNA is tested for markers in sixteen locations useful for human identification. Every person inherits a unique combination of genetic markers from their biological parents; thus the DNA profile can serve as a permanent biological record of identity. People choose to have a record of their or their children's DNA profile for different reasons: to use in future paternity tests should parties contest their estate; to help solve cases of missing children; to serve as reference in the event that human remains need to be identified.

## **Can we diagnose diseases with genetic testing?**

The rapid pace of discovery of genetic factors associated with disease has improved our ability to predict risks of disease in asymptomatic individuals. We have learned how to prevent the manifestations of a few of these diseases and treat a few others after symptoms appear. Gene therapy (the addition of genes to appropriate cells in order to produce a correct or missing protein) is being investigated for several diseases that may involve only one or two genes, such as cystic fibrosis and adenosine deaminase deficiency.

## **So what does one do with the information from your entire genome?**

Getting to know your personal genome probably will not empower you or provide you with a road map to improve your health. Negative or normal test results might not rule out future occurrence of disease. Positive test results might not mean that development of the disease is inevitable. Currently, few effective interventions are available that improve the outcome of inherited diseases. This doesn't mean genetic tests are worthless, but one must be fully aware of the foundation of the particular test and the consequences of the results obtained.

## **Should DNA tests be used to test for traits like intelligence, athletic aptitude, or artistic talent?**

With today's knowledge, a DNA test for any of these reasons does not seem valid. We should not fall into the trap of believing in genetic determinism: all of these traits develop as a result of genetic *and* environmental factors. There are no nationality genes, no religion genes, no innate talent gene, no race gene, no specific intelligence gene, and no athletic prowess gene. DNA sequence information should not be used in any way that could pigeonhole a person's potential or desires, or prevent them from having the same opportunities that others have.

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**Peter N. Gray** is an artist and scientist whose recent works focus on the genographic mapping of human ancient ancestry.

# MARVEL AND MYSTERY A CLOSER LOOK AT ART AND SCIENCE

by Dennis Foster Mickley

Science and art are often thought of as contrary, even oppositional. Science involves men in crisp white coats observing phenomena, creating systematic explanatory rules, determining immutable fact. Art is...well, *not that*.

But that's too simple.

Look at the chair you're sitting in: two outcroppings for your arms, a cushion to cushion. Look closer. The cushion is a densely connected set of polymers; the polymers are interlinked molecules; and the molecules are protons, electrons, and neutrons. And between the spiraling electrons and the nuclei of neutrons and protons is a mysterious, vacuous space. And the person sitting next to you? A friend, a lover. Theater attire, good posture. Perhaps a smile, that chosen vehicle of all ambiguities. But what of the hidden yearnings, internal contradictions, and human nuances that defy categorization?

Science and art share an integral role: to unveil the world in its breathtaking complexity. Both can be defamiliarizing, destabilizing, rejuvenating, and revelatory. And both are filled with messy epiphanies. Art reveals the human element in the unexpected, the strange, and the alien. And as for science, as Isaac Asimov said, "The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!', but 'That's funny...'"

Nor are the two necessarily separate. The European Renaissance, a blossoming of virtuosity, stemmed from the merging of art and science. Leonardo DaVinci studied the two disciplines side by side, and his work integrated them into a whole. His *Vitruvian Man*, based on the work of architect Vitruvius Pollio, is a celebrated work of art. Its depiction of a man in perfect proportional harmony is dually recognized for its artistic vision

and its attention to the scientific details of the human form. Also, almost a decade before he wrote *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov was the curator of lepidoptery (a branch of entomology focusing on moths and butterflies) at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Butterflies, with their exquisite detail and endless variation, their distinctions in color and pattern which reveal themselves only with careful inspection, mirror the form and function of his extraordinary literary works.

The two also mingle methodology. Scientific advancements led to the synthetic creation of ultramarine blue paint, previously made with crushed lapis lazuli, which had made the color nearly as expensive as gold. Its newfound availability allowed for Claude Monet's dreamlike, ethereal landscapes. Here in Chicago, Jason Salavon uses his personal Google searches as source material, and projects blocks of shifting text over rhythmically fluctuating colors. He "paints" these images on a facade inside the Hyde Park Art Center using custom software running through ten projectors and stretched across five separate computerized work stations. This hybrid of art and technology breaks down old conceptions of an artist's canvas or palette, and suggests the expansion of artistic possibility through science.

Science and art do not just inform technique and style. Both disciplines also awaken and inform one's inner life. Art provides access to foreign thought and to unknown cultures, and allows human beings to see something alien and feel fundamentally changed. With the advent of genetic testing, science delves into similar internal reconfigurations. Ethnicity, previously roughly assembled from genealogy and physical appearance, can now be assessed down to the genetic marker. Chromosomal revelations

uncover, and suddenly, an invisible identity made manifest. Newton's theory of motion, the foundation of theoretical physics for centuries, logically sound and continually confirmed, was proved inadequate when Einstein revealed that there were realms of physics that denied Newton's laws and linear simplicity. Like art, science led to the expansion of Truth to deeper truths, and the opening of a new realm of meaning and possibility. Even with its capacity for deductive precision, science, like art, can lead to deeper truths, opening a new realm of meaning and possibility.

Art and science expand our perceptions of the world and the ways we choose to live within it. A tourist gazes up at Michelangelo's *David* in one part of the world, while in another a young girl learns of her Cherokee ancestry. And so amidst the fluidity of time, space, and life's inevitable inconsistencies, a certainty: through art and science we become entwined in ways we never imagined. The most meaningful connections come not through isolated identity, but through connections despite differences. Human beings always appreciate familiar reflections in paintings or in plays, but if viewers move beyond considering a work of art their own and start to respond to it as art, the experience is deeper, richer, more unifying, and more nourishing. And so, too, science and biology can make the body new again, responding to and learning from atomic loyalties, advancing beyond the previously foreign and unknown.

Art and science are not only disciplines, but transactions. They both impart an experience from creator to viewer. When engaging with art or science, rather than muddling in the morass of boundary and definition, a better question might be, has art just happened? Has there been a kind of internal reconfiguration? If this is so, why can't art do science, and science do art? Both cause interior movement, actualization, or reformation, something apart from regular experience. Both can send us spiraling into wonder.

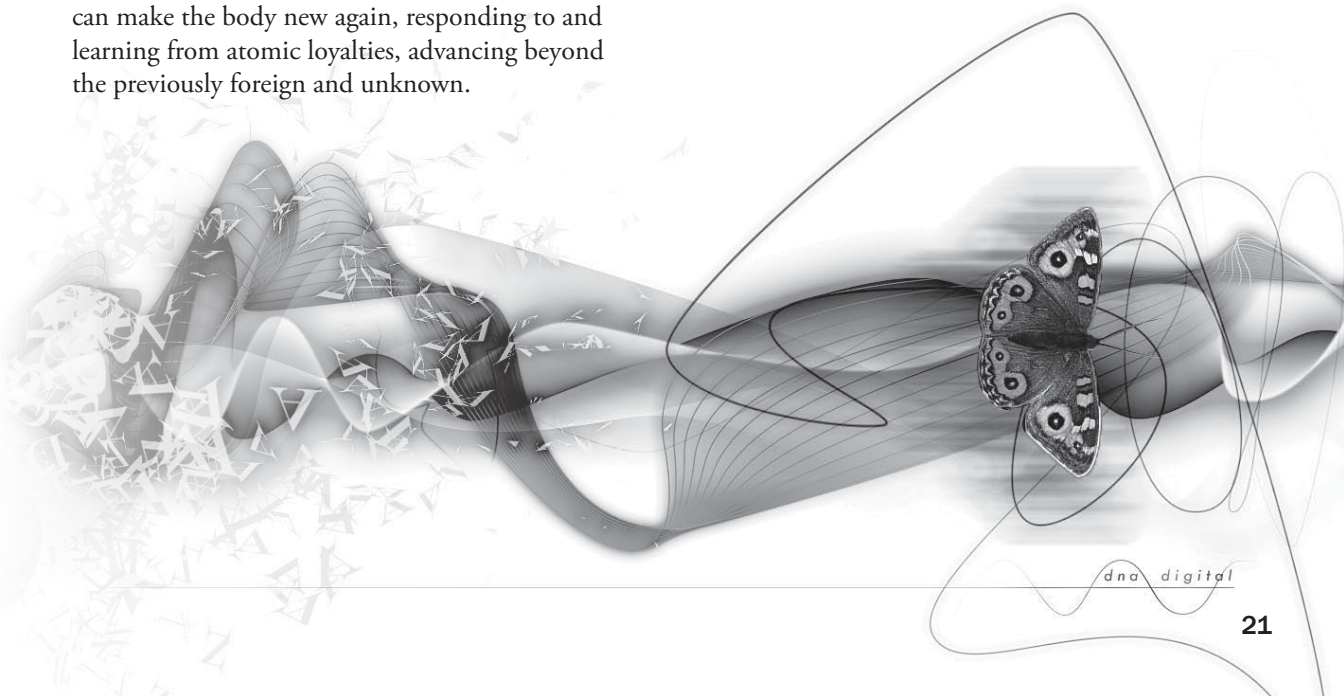
Does life's mystery flatten as theorems and science progress, as the body becomes more of a specimen and less of a temple? Can the divine mystery that sustains art remain under microscopic examination? Nabokov and his butterflies suggest that certainty is not a matter of exhausted mystery, but exhausted perception. In artistic endeavor, as in cellular composition, there exists the same avenue into the grand human canon.

Look closer.

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**Dennis Foster Mickley** is a freelance writer, and Master of Science in Journalism candidate at Medill.

Public domain artwork provided by Dylan O'Donnell (*Digital Smoke*, 2010).



# GENETIC GENEALOGY AND **THE BASSETT Y-CHROMOSOME PROJECT**

by Jeffrey Bassett

I began working on my family genealogy 32 years ago when my great grandmother left me a booklet and a picture from the 1912 Bassett family reunion held in Shelbyville, Indiana. My first task was to update the 1912 reunion booklet and get a list of all descendants of my fourth great grandfather, Nymphas Bassett. The project expanded to include all descendants of my oldest known ancestor, William Bassett, who died in 1667. As I began to document William's family, I kept running across other Bassetts, and saved that material as well. This project has grown over the years to include research on anyone with the Bassett surname, worldwide. I now have more than 12,000 pages of Bassett material representing more than 435 different Bassett family lines, most with roots in England, Wales, or Ireland. I publish a monthly newsletter documenting my research and the results of DNA testing; old newsletters can be found on our Bassett website at [www.bassettbranches.org](http://www.bassettbranches.org).

I first began DNA testing in an effort to find out more about my Bassett ancestry and to see if William Bassett, who arrived in America on the *Fortune* in 1621, was related to any of the other Bassett families of New England. I found three male Bassetts, each a descendent of one of William's three sons, to take part in y-chromosome testing. The y-chromosome is passed from father to son virtually unchanged, so the three modern male Bassetts matched on 12 out of 12 markers. What this tells us is that our common ancestor, William Bassett, also had these same 12 markers.

I next expanded the project to include at least one male Bassett from the other four New England Bassett families that arrived before 1650. Initial results showed us that none of the five families

were related within a genealogical time frame. I have since grown the project to include any male Bassett around the globe and now have more than 240 test results from Bassetts living in over a dozen countries. These test results form more than a dozen distinct groups, called haplogroups.

A haplogroup is a cluster of similar haplotypes that share a common ancestor. One group of Bassetts from the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon belongs to the haplogroup J2, a group found mainly in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey. Another interesting group of Bassetts belongs to the haplogroup Q, which originated in Siberia and central Asia. This group of Bassetts can trace their ancestry back to the 1500s in northern England, and include descendants of immigrants John Bassett and William Bassett of New Haven, Connecticut. My ancestor is thought to be from England, but so far his descendants have not matched any of the other 150 or so participants in the Bassett DNA project. For this reason, I constantly seek out those with the Bassett surname in non English speaking countries like Italy, Lebanon, Switzerland, and France. I hope to one day find a match to tell me more about the origins of William Bassett.

The y-chromosome is passed from father to son virtually unchanged, but every so often a mutation at a certain marker may occur. By looking at the mutated markers, I have successfully placed several people on their correct family tree. I have also been able to use DNA testing to help determine the ancestral home of many different Bassett lines. As I find participants from British families whose members stayed in the same geographic area for hundreds of years, I can determine which area of England a Bassett family is from just from the results of a DNA test.

DNA testing on lines from my other ancestors also included interesting results. Testing on the James Israel family (my great-great grandmother's brother) shows that this family belonged to a haplogroup with roots in the Fertile Crescent. We have also matched one family (with the surname Pardo) who originally came from Spain, but more recently resided in Puerto Rico. Testing on the Henry Bass family (my great grandmother's brother) showed this family belonged to haplogroup A. This Bass family was English and settled in Virginia on a plantation known as Basse's Choice in 1617. Haplogroup A is usually found in males from the Southern Nile and Southern Africa but is also found in very small occurrences in Caucasian males from England.

DNA testing is available for the maternal family line as well. Mitochondrial DNA (or mtDNA) is passed from a mother to her children. While this is similar to y-chromosome testing, mtDNA testing is not as useful for two reasons: first, in many cultures the wife adopts the surname of her husband's family, and second, the mtDNA does not mutate as quickly as the y-chromosome. Nonetheless, using mtDNA testing, I found that my wife matches exactly to a member of the Pardo family, the same Pardo male that matched with my Israel ancestor. What an interesting coincidence that my wife and I both share DNA with someone from Puerto Rico!

Whether you are interested in your deep ancestry going back thousands of years, looking for confirmation of your paper trail research, have come against a brick wall in your investigations, or are seeking to determine your ancestral home, y-chromosome DNA testing may be the route you want to take. We have dozens of success stories from the Bassett family alone.

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**Jeffrey Bassett** can be reached at  
bassettgenealogy@hotmail.com.

## MORE FACTS ABOUT DNA

Facts provided by Peter N. Gray

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Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is the blueprint of life, and part of our definition of a living organism.

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DNA is structured like a double helix, often compared to a twisted ladder.

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The rungs of the ladder are made up of bases pairs: adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C). Adenine always pairs with thymine, while cytosine always pairs with guanine.

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There are an estimated 3 billion DNA base pairs in our genome. One chromosome can have as few as 50 million base pairs or as many as 250 million base pairs.

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Humans have 46 chromosomes: 44 autosomal chromosomes and 2 sex chromosomes, X and Y.

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Over 99% of your DNA sequence is the same as in other humans.

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mtDNA is passed only from the mother to the child since egg cells have mitochondria. The mitochondria from sperm cells do not enter the egg and do not contribute genes to the embryo.

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DNA is transcribed into RNA, which is translated by cellular mechanisms into proteins. Proteins give us the structure (enzymes, skin, organs, tissues, etc.) that make us function.

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Changes in the DNA sequence are called mutations. Many things can cause mutations, such as UV rays from the sun, chemicals, and drugs.

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Mutations can involve changes in just one DNA base, can involve more than one DNA base, or can involve entire segments of chromosomes.

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There are many ways you can analyze your DNA using commercial tests: paternity tests, tests for disease risks, and tests to understand ethnic makeup.

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We eat DNA every day.



# ABOUT **SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT**

## **MISSION**

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 mediums of theatre, video, education, and advocacy, we aim to deepen and expand representation in American culture.

### **The Silk Road Stretched From Japan to Italy. So Does Our Theatre.**

The term “Silk Road” refers to the great trade routes that originated in China and extended across Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and into Europe, from the 2nd century B.C. until about the 16th century A.D. The dominant land routes connected China to Syria, and adjoined to sea routes, creating an East-West corridor linking Japan to Italy. These transcontinental caravans resulted not only in trade, of which silk was an important commodity, but also in tremendous cross-cultural interaction among the peoples of the regions; interaction that fostered the exchange of ideas and the fusion of art and aesthetics.

The Silk Road is a legacy associated with rich traditions of oral narrative, epic poetry, and storytelling. Thus, the celebrated trade routes serve Silk Road Theatre Project both as a geographic guide as well as a metaphor for intercultural dialogue.

## **SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT IS A PROUD MEMBER OF**



## COMPANY LIST

Founding Artistic Director | **Jamil Khoury**  
Founding Executive Director | **Malik Gillani**  
Production & Facilities Manager | **Michelle Dane**  
Artistic Ambassador | **David Henry Hwang**  
Artistic Associate | **Kareem Bandealy**  
Artistic Associate | **Rebecca A. Barrett**  
Artistic Associate | **Carol J. Blanchard**  
Artistic Associate | **Lavina Jadhvani**  
Artistic Associate | **Lee Keenan**  
Technical Director | **Jason Pikscher**  
Casting Coordinator | **Becca Knights**  
Finance Director | **Maria Wagner**  
Education Coordinator | **Sarah Baughman**  
Lead Arts Educator | **David Chrzanowski**  
Arts Educator | **Jamie Abelson**  
Arts Educator | **Jasmin Cardenas**  
Arts Educator | **Minita Gandhi**  
Arts Educator | **Carol Ng-He**  
Video & Broadcast Coordinator | **Stephen Combs**  
Video & Broadcast Coordinator | **James Fiester**  
Video & Broadcast Coordinator | **Alicia Healy**  
Poster Art Illustrator | **Andrew Skwish**  
Graphic Designer | **Darrel Reese**  
Social Networking Volunteer | **Tammy Reed**  
Internet Marketing Volunteer | **Gary Roll**  
Arts Education  
Community Volunteer | **Olivia Liddell**  
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Web Volunteer | **Eralee Rivera**  
Web Volunteer | **Jenny Yu**  
Production Management Intern | **Janna Webber**  
The Saints Coordinator | **Richard Goerne**

## SPECIAL THANKS

To our gracious hosts at the **First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple**, who exhibit hospitality and generosity towards us on a daily basis, and provide us a space in which we can flourish and grow.

To **Loyola University Chicago Theatre, Paramount Theatre in Aurora, Peter Anderson, and Melissa Mercado**. Happy 14th birthday to **Lara Bellone**!

## IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE GOODMAN THEATRE

*The DNA Trail* marks Silk Road Theatre Project's second collaboration with our esteemed Loop neighbors at the Goodman Theatre, building upon a partnership model both companies created for our 2008 production of Philip Kan Gotanda's *Yohen*. In addition to receiving production, marketing, and PR support from the Goodman, we have the good fortune of working again with director Steve Scott, Associate Producer at the Goodman, and with dramaturgs Tanya Palmer and Neena Arndt, respectively Literary Manager and Literary Associate at the Goodman. May the relationship between our two companies continue to broaden and prosper!

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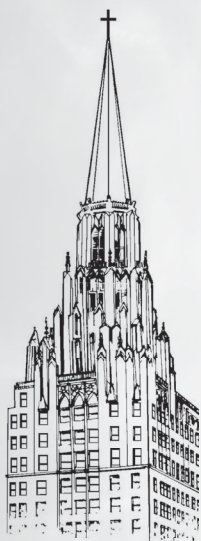
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**Philip Blackwell**

Senior Pastor

First United Methodist Church  
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## SCORCHED

by Wajdi Mouawad  
Directed by Dale Heinen

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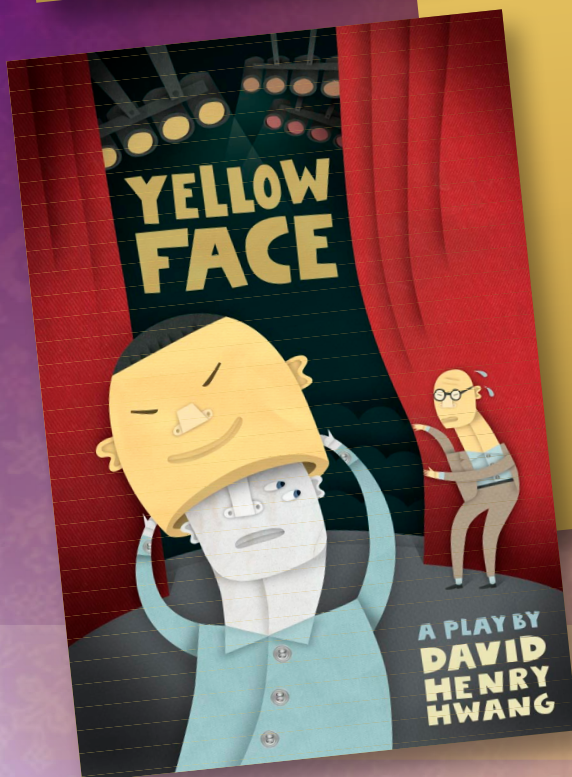
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