June 11, 2011 at 7pm  
Elm Street Stage,  
New Haven Green

**PROGRAM**

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| Arabian Waltz | Rabih Abou-Khalil  
Arr. Ljova |
| Taranta Project\(^1\) | Giovanni Sollima |
| Shristi | Sandeep Das |
| Blue as the Turquoise Night at Neyshabur\(^2\) | Kayhan Kalhor  
Arr. Kalhor, Prutsman |
| Air to Air\(^3\)  
Wah Habbibi  
Aiini Taqtiru  
K’in Sventa Ch’ul Me’tik Kwadalupe  
Tancas Serradas a Muru | Osvaldo Golijov |

\(^1\) Commissioned by the Silk Road Project.  
\(^2\) This piece was commissioned by the Silk Road Project and is dedicated to the life of Harrison Kravis.  
\(^3\) Commissioned by Carnegie Hall through The Weill Music Institute in partnership with the Silk Road Project. The world premiere was given at Carnegie Hall, New York City on September 16, 2006.

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PROGRAM NOTES

The historical Silk Road, a series of land and sea trade routes that crisscrossed Eurasia, enabled the exchange of goods and innovations from Japan to the Mediterranean Sea for nearly two thousand years, until the 14th century.

Over the centuries, many important scientific and technological innovations migrated to the West along the Silk Road, including the magnetic compass, the printing press, silk, gunpowder, mathematics, ceramic and lacquer crafts. In this way, the Silk Road created an intercontinental think tank of human ingenuity. Interactions among cultural groups spread knowledge, religious beliefs, artistic techniques and musical traditions, so much so that long after its decline, the Silk Road remains a powerful metaphor for cultural exchange.

This historic trade network provides a namesake-worthy metaphor for the Silk Road Project’s vision of connecting artists and audiences around the world. Yo-Yo Ma has called these routes, which resulted in the first global exchange of scientific and cultural traditions, the Internet of antiquity.

Both historic and symbolic elements are central to the work of the Silk Road Project, which takes inspiration from this age-old tradition of learning from other cultures and disciplines. The repertoire of the Silk Road Ensemble includes traditional music (both as an oral tradition—passed down from generation to generation—and in melodies arranged by and for members of the Ensemble) as well as newly commissioned works, many of which combine non-Western and Western instruments, creating a unique genre that transcends customary musical classification.

Tonight’s concert opens with Vojo, written in 2011 by Silk Road Ensemble members Cristina Pato and Kojiro Umezaki to explore the idea of connecting two sides of the world – Galicia (Spain) and Okinawa (Japan) – through a dialogue between the gaita (Galician bagpipes) and shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute). The composers were intrigued by the possibilities of creating a common second language through music, just as Esperanto tried to do with written and spoken language in the 19th Century; vojo means the way or the road in Esperanto. Using traditional melodic lines from both Spain and Japan, shakuhachi, gaita and percussion introduce the evening’s program in a conversation between traditional wind instruments from opposite sides of the world attempting to understand, connect and respect each others’ cultural roots.

The composer of the next piece, Lebanese-born Rabih Abou-Khalil, was classically trained on oud (Middle Eastern lute) as well as flute. His compositions seem to blend the musical traditions of the Arabic world with jazz improvisation and European classical motifs. But to Abou-Khalil, tradition itself is a chimera, since today’s tradition was yesterday’s revolution.

Rabih Abou-Khalil says, “Naturally, being Lebanese, my musical background will always be part of my language, but I am more concerned with the sensual than the stylistic expression of music. The dramatic Arabian Waltz is a propulsive work, driven by complex additive rhythms and improvisatory melodic lines. Multi-tradition musician Ljova, who often collaborates with the Silk Road Ensemble, developed an arrangement that reflects the instrumentation and flavor of the interpretation you will hear tonight.”
Cellist and composer Giovanni Sollima, born into a family of Sicilian musicians, reveals his fascination with all styles of music by combining elements of classical, rock and jazz, as well as ethnic musical traditions from Sicily and from other Mediterranean lands such as North Africa, Israel, the Middle East, the Balkan States, Turkey and Andalusia. Many of these influences are evident in Taranta Project, commissioned by the Silk Road Project for its 2008 workshop at Tanglewood Music Center. The dream-like entryway to the six-movement work is followed by sequences that alternately suggest feverish dances and reveal intricate interlocking rhythmic patterns. In an innovative duet, the cello part calls for scordatura to achieve power chords by tuning the C string an octave lower than normal, and the score calls for the percussionist to add vocalization and body rhythms to the instrumentation.

The next work, Shristi, was composed for the Silk Road Ensemble by Sandeep Das, one of the most accomplished tabla players of his generation. About Shristi, Das explains, The title means creation or birth and was inspired by the Silk Road Ensemble's first residency at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2005. The RISD students had a huge canvas on which they had to splash colors and portray their interpretation of a Nataraja statue. I wondered what would happen if I gave my percussion friends in the Ensemble a huge rhythmic canvas to fill with their musical colors while imagining the creation of the universe by Shiva and his drum, and Shristi was born. The piece begins with the basic and pure sound of the conch shell, which is integral to Indian tradition. Other sounds and beat patterns slowly emerge, and by the end, Das explains, the musical canvas is full of colors of joy and oneness – the whole universe is there for us to live and re-live!

As both kamancheh artist and composer, Kayhan Kalhor applies Persian classical music principles to the folk modes and melodies of Northern Khorasan (present day northeast Iran), the cultural heart of historic Persia. Commissioned for the Silk Road Project, Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur pays tribute to one of the cities along the Silk Road, Neyshabur, a seat of Persian culture located in northeast Iran. Famous for turquoise, it was also the home of the great poet Omar Khayyam. Kalhor wrote this piece for a Western string ensemble combined with kamancheh, ney, santur and tabla, and composed it in the Persian nocturne form called the chahargah, a melodic formula that belongs to the “fourth time of the day,” the time between deep night and the beginning of dawn. The opening sections of the piece are unmeasured and semi-improvisatory in the style of a ghazal (an improvisation form in Persian music that corresponds to the unmeasured opening sections of an Indian raga performance). When the tabla enters, the rhythmic pulse of the piece quickens, though without compromising the mood – that of a magical evening in a far-away land.

Completing tonight’s program is Air to Air by Osvaldo Golijov, developed in 2006 at a workshop that challenged composers to write for indigenous Silk Road instruments with varying combinations of strings and percussion. Golijov describes Air to Air as music borne from community. To him, both the music and the musicians of the Silk Road Ensemble exemplify this concept. Golijov felt that, because of the extraordinary sensibility of the Ensemble musicians, for them the connection between Western and non-Western is now almost a mutation; they’ve opened the gates of communication. This is good
for music. The first movement, Wah Habbibi (My Beloved), juxtaposes a sacred song with violent contemporary music through the use of traditional Christian-Arab and Muslim-Arab melodies. It is a blurry changing frontier between Christian and Arab music, where one note or inflection can make the music Christian or Arab, Golijov notes. The second movement, Aini Taqtiru (My Eyes Weep), a traditional Christian-Arab Easter Song, is followed by K’in Sventa Ch’ul Me’tik Kwadalupe (Ritual for the Holy Mother of Guadalupe), a direct reference to prayers in Chiapas, Mexico, in which the instruments blend with a recording of actual indigenous voices. About the final movement, Tancas Serradas a Muru (Walls are Encircling the Land), a protest song from 18th century Sardinia, Golijov notes, The sentiment of oppressed people struggling to overthrow power can be applied to all persecuted people today.

The Silk Road Ensemble
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The Silk Road Project
Connecting traditions and celebrating innovation since 1998

ABOUT THE SILK ROAD PROJECT

The Silk Road Project is a nonprofit arts and educational organization with a vision of connecting the world’s neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around
the globe. Founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998 as a catalyst to promote innovation and learning through the arts, the Silk Road Project takes inspiration from the historic Silk Road trading routes as a modern metaphor for multicultural and interdisciplinary exchange.

Under the artistic direction of Mr. Ma and the leadership of CEO and Executive Director Laura Freid, the Silk Road Project presents performances by the acclaimed Silk Road Ensemble, engages in cross-cultural exchanges and residencies, leads workshops for students and partners with leading cultural institutions to create educational materials and programs. Developing new music is a central undertaking of the Silk Road Project, which has been involved in commissioning and performing more than 65 new musical and multimedia works from composers and arrangers around the world.

About the Silk Road Ensemble
The Silk Road Ensemble is a collective of internationally renowned performers and composers from more than 20 countries. Each Ensemble member’s career responds to one of the preeminent artistic challenges of our times: to maintain the integrity of art rooted in authentic traditions while nourishing global connections.

Many of the musicians first came together under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma at a workshop at Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts in 2000. Since then, in various configurations, Ensemble artists have collaborated on a diverse range of musical and multimedia projects, presenting innovative performances that spring from Eastern and Western traditions and contemporary musical crossroads.

The Silk Road Ensemble has performed to critical acclaim throughout Asia, Europe and North America and has recorded five albums. The Ensemble’s most recent recording, Off the Map (2009 In a Circle Records; 2009 World Village), was nominated for a Grammy award. It explores uncharted territory with globe-spanning music commissioned from Osvaldo Golijov, Gabriela Lena Frank, Evan Ziporyn and Angel Lam.

For more information on the Silk Road Project and the Silk Road Ensemble, please visit www.silkroadproject.org.

ABOUT YO-YO MA

Whether performing a new concerto, revisiting a familiar work from the cello repertoire, coming together with colleagues for chamber music, reaching out to young audiences and student musicians, or exploring cultures and musical forms outside the Western classical tradition, Yo-Yo Ma seeks connections that stimulate the imagination.

Mr. Ma maintains a balance between his engagements as soloist with orchestras throughout the world, his recital and chamber music activities, and his recording projects. In each he works to expand the cello repertoire through both performances of lesser-known 20th-century music and the commissioning of new works. Mr. Ma has made over 70 albums, including over 15 Grammy winners, reflecting his wide-ranging interests. Besides the standard concerto repertoire, he has recorded many of the works he has commissioned or premiered and has made several successful crossover discs.

Mr. Ma serves as the artistic director of the Silk Road Project. He is also a creative consultant to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a member of the President’s Committee on the Arts.
A MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

A Musical Model

Over several decades, my travels have given me the opportunity to learn from a wealth of different voices—from the immense compassion and grace of Bach’s Cello Suites, to the ancient Celtic fiddle traditions alive in Appalachia, to the soulful strains of the bandoneón of Argentina’s tango cafés. I have met and been guided by musicians who share my wonder at the creative potential that exists where cultures intersect.

The Silk Road Ensemble is a musical model that requires curiosity, collaboration and wholehearted enthusiasm from all the participants. The music we play does not belong to just one culture or even to only the Silk Road region. Ensemble members are united in their demonstration of virtuosity and generosity, and that combination has led us to perform in an astonishing range of locations, from the premier forum for global conversation, the United Nations General Assembly Hall, to the hushed, sacred space of Todai-ji Temple in Nara, Japan.

Bringing together much of the world on one stage requires music that Chinese pipa, Persian kamancheh, Indian tabla and Western strings can play together. For this we rely on the readiness of composers to write and arrange for our distinctive group. Perhaps because they support experimentation and innovation, our commissioning workshops have a remarkable record of producing successful works for our repertoire. Our creativity begins with play—exploring sounds, testing ideas—and I am delighted that this has allowed several of our performers to compose and arrange music for us as well. Above all, I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to undertake this work and for the abiding friendships we have developed along the way.

-Yo-Yo Ma

A Message from the CEO and Executive Director

A Silk Road for Our Time

It is difficult to comprehend the scope of the Silk Road, the ancient trade network that connected Asia to the Mediterranean. For centuries this primary route for the exchange of goods, arts and scientific discoveries also enabled the spread of religions, the growth of languages, and the migrations of people and their ideas. Historically, the Silk Road offers unparalleled insight into how ancient societies intersected. As metaphor, it speaks to our ongoing fascination with cultural exchange.

It is in this broad sense that the Silk Road has captivated the imaginations of not only scholars and artists but people the world over. This living Silk Road reveals the truth that nothing, and no one, exists in isolation.

The Silk Road Project takes inspiration from this crossroads as a model for constant exchange. While we often focus on the Silk Road region, our approach to music, and to education as well, embraces knowledge from many sources, enriching our understanding of our complex and interconnected world.

At its heart, the Silk Road Project is a catalytic organization. Since the Project was incorporated in 1998,
audiences on three continents have embraced the multinational Silk Road Ensemble. The Silk Road metaphor continues to encourage artists, educators and institutions to collaborate in new ways. We hope that you are similarly inspired.

-Laura Freid

SOME SILK ROAD INSTRUMENTS

Gaita - Spain

The bagpipe is found in many cultures around the world. Known as the gaita in Galicia, an autonomous region in the northwest of Spain, the instrument was popularized there during the 15th century, and has recently enjoyed resurgence in both folk and contemporary music. With probable ancient origins in the Mediterranean, the bagpipe consists of a bag in which air is trapped and manipulated to produce prolonged tones with various effects. Once made from animal skins, the bags are now more commonly made from synthetic materials. The Galician bagpipe features a blowpipe and a chanter, or melody pipe, which contains two reeds and is played by covering and uncovering the holes with the hands. Up to three wooden drone pipes rest on the player’s shoulder or arm. The instrument is frequently played in folk dances and is also often accompanied by a drum or vocalist.

Kamancheh - Iran

The kamancheh is a small fiddle with a long conical neck, a round wooden body covered in animal skin, and a spike protruding from the base. The instrument rests on the player’s knee or on the ground and is swiveled on the spike to meet the bow as it is played. Traditionally played in the improvised Islamic music known as mugham, the kamancheh’s warm, elegant sound is reminiscent of the human voice, making it conducive to solo-virtuoso or small-ensemble playing. With early written references dating to the 12th century C.E., the kamancheh has been featured in courtly, folk, religious and secular settings for centuries.

Shakuhachi - Japan

The shakuhachi is made from the base of a bamboo stalk with holes drilled into the center and the sides. The instrument is played by blowing air across the beveled edge at the top end while covering and uncovering the holes with fingertips. The shakuhachi has been used in Japanese Zen Buddhist meditation since the 15th century. The sounds produced by the instrument range from soft whispers to strong piercing tones. They are
intended to reflect sounds in nature, such as birdcalls, wind and water. Today the shakuhachi is also often played in jazz, orchestral and popular music ensembles.

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