

Wednesday, April 6, 2011, 7pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## The Silk Road Ensemble

Yo-Yo Ma, *Artistic Director*

Jeffrey Beecher *double bass*  
 Mike Block *cello*  
 Shanir Blumenkranz *oud*  
 Nicholas Cords *viola*  
 Jonathan Gandelman *violin*  
 Joseph Gramley *percussion*  
 Colin Jacobsen *violin*  
 Kayhan Kalhor *kamancheh*  
 Yo-Yo Ma *cello*  
 Cristina Pato *gaita (Galician bagpipes)*  
 Shane Shanahan *percussion*  
 Mark Suter *percussion*  
 Kojiro Umezaki *shakuhachi*  
 Wu Man *pipa*

### PROGRAM

#### Silk Road Suite

Persian traditional Ascending Bird  
(arr. Siamak Aghaei & Colin Jacobsen)  
 Wu Man (b. 1963) Night Thoughts  
 Joseph Gramley (b. 1970) Rionji  
 Traditional Muiñeiras from *Cancionero Musical de Galicia*  
(arr. Cristina Pato)  
 Rabih Abou-Khalil (b. 1957) Norma's Secret<sup>†</sup>  
 Giovanni Sollima (b. 1962) Taranta Project<sup>†</sup>

### INTERMISSION



Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972) ;Chayraq!: Rough Guide to a Modern Day Tawantinsuyu<sup>†</sup>

Kazakh/Chinese traditional Yanzi ("Swallow Song")  
(arr. Zhao Lin)

Oswaldo Golijov (b. 1960) Air to Air<sup>‡</sup>  
 Wah Habbibi  
 Aiini Taqtiru  
 K'in Sventa Ch'ul Me'tik Kwadalupe  
 Tancas Serradas a Muru

<sup>†</sup> Commissioned by the Silk Road Project.

<sup>‡</sup> Commissioned by Carnegie Hall through The Weill Music Institute in partnership with the Silk Road Project. The world premiere was given at Carnegie Hall on September 16, 2006.

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THE HISTORICAL SILK ROAD, a series of land and sea trade routes that crisscrossed Eurasia, enabled the exchange of goods and innovations from China to the Mediterranean Sea for nearly 2,000 years, until the 14th century.

Over the centuries, many important scientific and technological innovations migrated to the West along the Silk Road, including gunpowder, the magnetic compass, the printing press, silk, 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 a *Silk Road Suite* featuring works developed by members of the Silk Road Ensemble and representing a broad swath of history and cultures. *Santur* player Siamak Aghaei and violinist Colin Jacobsen arranged a traditional folk melody that was inspired by mythology. *Ascending Bird* tells the popular legend of a bird attempting to fly to the sun. After two failed attempts, the bird finally makes contact with the sun, losing its

physical body in fire, and in this way achieving a metaphorical spiritual transcendence.

The next piece, *Night Thoughts*, was inspired by a ninth-century Buddhist *pipa* tune and represented for *pipa* virtuoso and composer Wu Man a chance to rediscover the *pipa's* native, regional language. She was particularly drawn to its ancient tune scale, which is very different from today's mostly pentatonic *pipa* music, and to the peaceful, meditative sound of the *pipa* in the low register.

The title of the percussion trio that follows, *Rionji*, represents a fusion of two far-flung points on the globe that inspired composer and percussionist Joseph Gramley: the city of Rio de Janeiro and the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan. The rock garden at Ryoanji, which also inspired a composition by John Cage in the 1980s, famously displays a series of 15 stones. But viewers can never see more than 14 at a time—a Zen reminder of our imperfect enlightenment. In making music of this concept, Gramley reduced the 15 stones to 13 beats but followed the same principle: the players on the piece begin together on the same note, which represents the hidden rock. The scraping sound of bamboo *reco-reco*s intrigued Gramley when he studied samba music in Brazil. Other instruments include the *kanjira* and the *udu* drum, whose solos reveal small changes in pitch during short "hiccups" just before what would have been the 13th beat. In the second section, two seven-beat cycles are followed by a three-beat silence. "The interruptions are key," Gramley explains. "Just as in that rock garden, what you can't see is as important as what you can."

To complete the Suite, Spanish-born composer and performer Cristina Pato created *Muiñeiras* for the Ensemble. The *muiñeira* is the traditional dance of Galicia in fast 6/8 tempo, played at parties and social gatherings; everyone is welcome to join in and dance. Traditionally practiced with *gaita* (Galician bagpipes) and percussion, a dancer typically shares a move that is then learned and repeated by the rest of the dancers. This sense of connection and sharing is implicit in the *muiñeira* and is the basis of

tonight's arrangement. A medley of two popular *muiñeiras* from different regions of Galicia, the piece starts with a traditional percussion call that establishes the essential rhythmic pattern. Illustrating the importance of this dance as a social occasion, *shakuhachi*, strings and *gaita* progressively join voices, culminating in an all-play party that celebrates the joy of community.

Lebanese-born composer 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 techniques. But to Abou-Khalil, "tradition itself is a chimera, since today's tradition was yesterday's revolution. 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." *Norma's Secret* was written as a love song, exploring the emotional and sensual characteristics of a woman's secrets. Technically speaking, it was written in a style that has become typical for Abou-Khalil, with rapid rhythm changes and meandering melodic modulations that spin off one another. Silk Road Ensemble members, including arranger Ljova, developed an interpretation for today's performance that reflects the instrumentation and flavor of the Silk Road Ensemble.

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 dreamlike 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.

Gabriela Lena Frank drew on the Peruvian and Chinese influences of her richly mixed heritage and on her ethnomusicology research to create *Chayraq!: Rough Guide to a Modern Day Tawantinsuyu*. The fanciful title hints at the content of the piece. "Chayraq" is an Indian expression of excitement—"hooray!" Tawantinsuyu was the Indian name given to the pre-Conquest Incan Empire. "Rough Guide" alludes to field recordings gathered in researching music from a foreign culture, typically compilations of short tracks of music caught on the fly at indigenous events such as festivals, religious ceremonies and harvest fiestas. These examples were instrumental in Frank's own self-education as a composer, when she was a student looking for musical clues in her Latin American travels. In a similar spirit, she constructed this piece with more than a dozen short movements, which mix and match percussion, *pipa*, violin and cello, and which may be played individually or, as in this evening's concert, as a full series.

We travel next to rural China for *Yanzi* ("Swallow Song"), a well-known folk song, Kazakh in origin, arranged by Chinese composer Zhao Lin. In this traditional piece, the singer addresses a girl named Yanzi (Swallow), praising her bright eyes, graceful neck and long hair, and implores, "Please do not forget your promise and change your heart; I am yours, and you are my swallow." During recording sessions for *Silk Road Journeys: Beyond the Horizon* (Sony Classical 2004), Zhao Lin, a former classmate of Wu Tong at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, was moved to arrange *Yanzi* for voice and cello after hearing Wu Tong's *a cappella* rendition. Tonight's version is interpreted by *shakuhachi* and cello.

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, *Aiini Taqtiru* (“My Eyes Weep”), a traditional Christian-Arab Easter Song, is followed by *K’in Svanta 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 Project*  
Connecting traditions and celebrating  
innovation since 1998

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#### 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, Artistic 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, CEO & Executive Director*

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**T**HE 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 60 new musical and multimedia works from composers and arrangers around the world.

**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](http://www.silkroadproject.org).



Stephen Dandrian

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 Award-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 & Humanities, and a recipient of the 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom.