



Adam Gurczak, Alimnak Creative

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 7:30pm
Friday, March 20, 2026, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Silkroad Ensemble with Rhiannon Giddens *Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual*

FEATURED ARTISTS

Rhiannon Giddens, *artistic director, banjo, and voice*

Shawn Conley, *bass*

Sandeep Das, *tabla*

Haruka Fujii, *marimba and percussion*

Maeve Gilchrist, *harp*

Karen Ouzounian, *cello*

Mazz Swift, *violin and voice*

Niwel Tsumbu, *guitar and voice*

Francesco Turrisi, *frame drums and accordion*

Kaoru Watanabe, *Japanese flutes and percussion*

Mauro Durante, *tamburello, violin, and voice*

Mehdi Nassouli, *guembri and voice*

*The performance will last approximately 80 minutes
and be performed without intermission.*

Leadership support for this performance is provided by Nadine Tang.

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Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual explores humanity's enduring impulse to turn to music in moments of upheaval, grief, and transformation. Across cultures and throughout history, communal sound-making has served as a refuge and a way to process loss, forge connection, and restore balance in times of uncertainty. In *Sanctuary*, Silkroad invites audiences into this shared space, examining how ritual, trance, and resonance function not only as musical practices, but as deeply human responses to the challenges of living together in an unsettled world.

Drawing from a vast range of global traditions, including Southern Italian tarantella, Moroccan Gnawa, Indian classical music, Japanese farmers' song, and American folk practices, the program highlights music's ability to create presence, grounding, and collective meaning. Rather than presenting these traditions in isolation, *Sanctuary* weaves them into an ongoing dialogue, revealing unexpected connections across geography and history. The result is an evocative experience in which listeners are invited to participate as witnesses and partners in the act of listening itself.

At the heart of *Sanctuary* is a deeply collaborative creative process rooted in improvisation and shared musical storytelling.

Each artist brings their own cultural lineage and lived musical language into the room, an offering that is both a personal expression and a communal invitation.

Through attentive listening and trust, the members of the ensemble allow one another to "sit" within these traditions, learning, responding, and building new music together in real time, while honoring the integrity of each voice.

This program also marks the Silkroad debuts of guest artists Mehdi Nassouli and Mauro Durante, whose musical lineages bring powerful expressions of trance and communal rhythm into conversation with the core ensemble. Through spontaneous collaboration, layered grooves, and moments of quiet reflection, the musicians explore how repetition, pulse, and resonance can open pathways to healing and shared understanding.

At once intimate and expansive, *Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual* is not a retreat from the world in a time of unrest, but a response to it, offering music as a space of refuge, renewal, and connection. In a time when division and dissonance often dominate, Silkroad reminds us of music's capacity to hold complexity, honor and tradition, and to create moments of collective stillness and joy.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998, Silkroad is a global organization that uses collaborative music and art to spark cross-cultural understanding and creative exchange. The Silkroad Ensemble brings together master musicians from around the world, representing diverse traditions and artistic practices. The group's work breaks down cultural boundaries and demonstrates how shared artistic creation can foster empathy, connection, and social

change. Silkroad's music with purpose reflects its mission to build a more hopeful, inclusive world through the power of artistic collaboration.

Over more than two decades, Silkroad has built bridges across cultures, created new music through collective improvisation and deep listening, and engaged audiences worldwide in experiences that celebrate cultural diversity and human connection.

Rhiannon Giddens (*artistic director, banjo, and voice*) has made a singular, iconic career out of stretching her brand of folk music, with its miles-deep historical roots and contemporary sensibilities, into just about every field imaginable. A two-time Grammy Award-winning singer and multi-instrumentalist, MacArthur “Genius” grant recipient, Pulitzer Prize winner, and composer of opera, ballet, and film, Giddens has centered her work around the mission of lifting up people whose contributions to American musical history have previously been overlooked or erased, and advocating for a more accurate understanding of the country’s musical origins through art.

Giddens has released three albums under her own name and two in collaboration with Italian multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, all on Nonesuch Records. *American*

Railroad, her first album in collaboration with the Silkroad Ensemble, was released in November 2024, and her most recent album, a collaboration with Justin Robinson, *What Did the Blackbird Say to the Crow*, was released this in April 2025.

A founding member of the landmark Black string band Carolina Chocolate Drops, and the all-female banjo supergroup Our Native Daughters, Giddens is as much a curator as a creator. She is the current Artistic Director of the Yo-Yo Ma-founded Silkroad Ensemble; hosts a television show on PBS, *My Music with Rhiannon Giddens*; and has hosted two podcasts (*Aria Code* from New York City’s NPR affiliate station WQXR, which ran for three seasons, and *American Railroad* from Silkroad). Giddens has published two children’s books and written and performed music for the sound-

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track of *Red Dead Redemption II*, one of the best-selling video games of all time. She appeared as a recurring cast member on ABC's hit drama *Nashville* and as a music history expert on Ken Burns' *Country Music* series on PBS. In April 20025, she launched her own music festival in Durham, NC called Biscuits & Banjos, to celebrate Black culture outside the mainstream.

As *Pitchfork* once said, "few artists are so fearless and so ravenous in their exploration"—a journey that has led to NPR naming Giddens one of its "25 Most Influential Women Musicians of the 21st Century" and to *American Songwriter* calling her "one of the most important musical minds currently walking the planet."

Shawn Conley (*bass*) is a Hawaii-born bass player and composer who grew up enjoying all types of music. This love of diversity of sound developed into a career that straddles many genres. Conley has been a member of the Silk Road Ensemble for 10 years and is also a member of the Brooklyn-based chamber orchestra The Knights. Recently, he won the principal bass position in the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. Conley will be releasing his first solo bass recording this year, exploring the connection between Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 and freely improvised pieces.

You can hear Conley on the Grammy Award-winning CD *Sing Me Home* with Silk Road and Yo-Yo Ma as well as the 2024 album with Rhiannon Giddens and the Silkroad Ensemble based on the American railroad and the overlooked Indigenous and immigrant communities who built it. He can also be heard on several recordings by The Knights, including the album *Azul* and a new recordings of composer Anna Clyne's music, both featuring Yo-Yo Ma, and in the Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos featuring Gil Shaham.

As a studio musician, Conley has performed on soundtracks including *True Grit*,

Moonrise Kingdom, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Ken Burns' Vietnam War documentary, and the Amazon series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

Conley studied at Rice University with Paul Ellison and in Paris with Francois Rabath. He currently lives in Honolulu with his wife Megan and their son Osian.

Sandeep Das (*tabla*), a Guggenheim Fellow, is one of today's leading *tabla* virtuosos. Since his concert debut at the age of 17 with legendary *sitar* player Ravi Shankar, Das has built a prolific international reputation and a career that now spans more than three decades. He has collaborated with top musicians, ensembles, and orchestras from all over the world, and his original compositions have been performed in more than 50 countries. Das is the founder of Harmony and Universality through Music (HUM), a nonprofit organization in India that has promoted global understanding through music performance and provided learning opportunities and scholarships for visually impaired children with artistic potential since 2009. His most recent project, *Transcending Borders One Note at a Time*, launched in 2020 to widespread international acclaim and seeks to harness the power of music to create positive social change.

Haruka Fujii (*marimba and percussion*), a multi-percussionist, has become one of the most prominent solo percussionists and marimbists of her generation. She has won international acclaim for her interpretations of contemporary music, having performed numerous premieres of works by important composers.

Fujii has performed with the Silkroad Ensemble since 2010, serving as Associate Artistic Director alongside Rhiannon Giddens, and her passion for introducing audiences to new percussion music has led to performances with diverse orchestras and

ensembles. She has appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Nationale de Lyon, and the NHK Symphony Orchestra. She is also a member of San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Line C3 Percussion Group, and Utari Percussion Duo, a duet project with her sister Rika that actively commissions new compositions from young composers. In addition to her career as a performing artist, Fujii is a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and has been a frequent guest instructor at the Juilliard Summer Percussion Seminar and several international percussion festivals. She is the founder and creative director of the nonprofit organization Nippon Kobo, a new cultural event series introducing music and culture from contemporary Japan.

Maeve Gilchrist (*harp*), an Edinburgh-born harpist and composer, has been credited as an innovator on her native instrument and has taken the Celtic (lever) harp to new levels of performance and visibility. Currently based in Kingston, NY, she tours internationally as a solo artist and composer as well as with Silkroad Ensemble, Arooj Aftab's Grammy winning Vulture Prince Ensemble, and the multi-disciplinary quartet Edges of Light.

Gilchrist has performed and recorded with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Frankie Gavin, Esperanza Spalding, Bruce Molsky, Ambrose Akinmusire, and Solas. As a composer, she straddles the worlds of folk and classical music with pieces including her original concerto for symphony orchestra and harp (a co-commission with Luke Benton); a three-movement Samuel Beckett-inspired piece for harp; a string quartet with sound samples, which was premiered at the 2018 Edinburgh International Harp Festival; and other pieces for harp ensemble and

strings. She is a regular visiting artist at the Berklee College of Music and has had several instructional books published by Hal Leonard and 80 Days Publishing. Gilchrist has released a number of albums under her name on the Adventure Music Record Label as well as being a featured soloist on the Dreamworks soundtrack for *How to Tame Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. Her most recent album, *The Harpweaver*, has won international acclaim including a five-star review from the *Irish Times*, which described it as “buoyant, sprightly and utterly beguiling a snapshot of a musician at the top of her game.”

Gilchrist is the co-music director of the WGBH holiday show *A Christmas Celtic Sojourn* and the co-artistic director of the new Rockport Celtic Music Festival, an innovative new venture focused on cross-curation and the outer-fringes of Celtic music.

Karen Ouzounian (*cello*). Sought after for her “radiant” (*The New York Times*) performances full of “tremendous heart, bringing joy and a captivating sound to the stage” (*The Strad*), Karen Ouzounian is an acclaimed cellist and composer who creates music that springs from a deeply personal place. She has appeared as a soloist with the Konzerthaus Berlin, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Kölner Philharmonie, and Tonhalle Düsseldorf, as well as at Carnegie Hall, championing a remarkable breadth of music with fierce emotional commitment. She has appeared at the Marlboro, Ojai, Caramoor, and Ravinia festivals and was the founding cellist of the Aizuri Quartet for 11 years, earning a Grammy nomination and major chamber music prizes on three continents.

Ouzounian is currently touring *Mayrig* (“mother” in Armenian), an intimate show for cello with electronics, piano, and vocals, and in 2024 premiered *Dear Mountains*, her co-composed work with Lembit Beecher

for solo cello, *oud*, percussion and chorus. www.karenouzounian.com.

Mazz Swift (*violin and voice*) is a composer, conductor, singer, bandleader, educator, and Juilliard-trained violinist, with improvisation as a thorough line in their practice across genres and instrumental configurations.

As violinist and singer, Swift is no stranger to most of the world's greatest stages, including the Royal Albert Hall, Walt Disney Hall, Carnegie Hall, Müpa Budapest, David Geffen Hall, the Paris Philharmonie, and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. As composer, Swift's works include commissions from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, Kronos Quartet, and the International Contemporary Ensemble. As an educator, Swift has taught workshops in free improvisation and "conduction" (conducted improvisation) on six continents.

A 2021 United States Artist and 2019 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, Swift continually creates orchestral compositions that involve conduction, small ensemble works, and solo works that are centered around protest and freedom songs, spirituals, and the Ghanaian concept of *sankofa*: looking back to learn how to move forward.

Niwel Tsumbu (*guitar and voice*) is a guitarist and singer who grew up with the swinging *soukous* music from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Strongly influenced by guitarists such as Paco de Lucía, Luambo Makiadi, Baden Powell, and Joe Pass, he has combined these different styles and blurred the boundaries of African, classical, and jazz music with his amazingly virtuosic, passionate, and graceful guitar playing.

Francesco Turrisi (*frame drums and accordion*) has been defined as a "musical alchemist" and a "musical polyglot." He has released five critically acclaimed albums as a leader and two as co-leader (*Tarab*, a

cross-boundary innovative ensemble recording that blends Irish and Mediterranean traditional music, and *Zahr*, a project that looks at connections between southern Italian traditional music and Arabic music).

Kaoru Watanabe (*Japanese flutes and percussion*). Acclaimed composer and instrumentalist Kaoru Watanabe's work is grounded in traditional Japanese music while also being imbued with jazz, improvisation, and experimental music elements. His signature skill of merging the music, literature, and aesthetic philosophies of Japan with disparate styles and mediums has made him a much-in-demand collaborator, working with such iconic artists as André 3000, Yo-Yo Ma, Wes Anderson, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Laurie Anderson, Jason Moran, and Japanese National Living Treasure Bando Tamasaburo. A trained jazz musician, he became the first American to become a performer and artistic director of Kodo, the ground-breaking Japanese *taiko* performing arts ensemble. In 2024, Watanabe launched Bloodlines Interwoven, a multifaceted commissioning project, festival, and ensemble celebrating heritage, immigration, and diaspora through music, cuisine, and storytelling.

GUEST ARTISTS

Mauro Durante (*tamburello, violin, and voice*), a violinist, percussionist, and composer, is a visionary inheritor of the folk roots of his native Salento, in Italy's Puglia region. He leads the internationally acclaimed and award-winning Canzoniere Greco Salentino (founded in 1975 by Durante's family), playing in all major world music festivals.

Durante is considered a key figure in re-inventing pizzica music for today's audiences making taranta (or more broadly



Photos of Silkroad Ensemble by David Bazemore and Rhiannon Giddens by Ebru Yildiz



tarantella) music the most vibrant and relevant form of Italian roots music.

Besides leading CGS, Durante's duo project with British guitarist and producer Justin Adams has earned international praise and many awards, demonstrating the musicians' ability to turn a fusion project into a fully realized and unique unit.

Durante toured the world for many years with Ludovico Einaudi, and has collaborated with Piers Faccini, Ibrahim Maalouf, Ballake Sissoko, Jovanotti, Stewart Copeland, Sam Lee, Enzo Avitabile, Nickodemus, and Red Baraat, bringing a contemporary edge along with his deep feel for tradition.

Mehdi Nassouli (*guembri and voice*), a *guembri* specialist, learned from a family steeped in Gnawa culture, after which he explored Morocco for more than 20 years, completing his journey of initiation with several *maâlems* (masters of Gnawa tradition).

Open to the fusion of musical genres, Nassouli has traveled the continents, working with renowned world music figures including Titi Robin, Benjamin Taubkin, NNeka, Karim Ziad, Hindi Zahra, Andy Emler, Justin Adams, and Alpha Blondy.

CREATIVE AND CREW

Anna Drozdowski (*production stage manager*) instigates extraordinary cultural experiences and builds structures in which wildness can grow. Delivery systems include international exchange, cups of tea, gently coiffed conversations, retreats, festivals, and *belles lettres*. She led the adaptive re-use of Neighborhood House, was on the faculty at the Socially Engaged MFA program at Moore, facilitated with ArtistsU, and began the Headlong Performance Institute. Drozdowski co-founded thinkingdance.net and Thirdbird. Recent projects include tours to

Koorbienale, Helsinki Opera, David Lang's *Symphony for a Broken Orchestra*, a new opera with Philip Glass, public art with Roberto Lugo and Wanda Raimundi Ortiz, a retrospective of Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, and a sound-sculpture with Immanuel Wilkins, Jenn Kidwell, and Rachael Elliott. Her scholarship and curatorial work have been recognized with Fulbright, NEA Dance Criticism, and DAAD fellowships with support from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, William Penn, and Knight Funds. She holds master's degree in performance studies from NYU. Come visit ABIGAIL, her hinterland homestead for artists, activists, and academics.

Rachel Dickstein (*stage director and designer*) is thrilled to be a part of the *Sanctuary* company. She is a director, writer, and choreographer of opera, theater, new music, and dance-based performance. Dickstein founded the Obie-winning theater company Ripe Time in 2000 to develop and produce ensemble-based, embodied adaptations from literature and documentary-based theater about women+ lives. Recent work includes *Compass* (ASU Gammage), Haruki Murakami's *Sleep* (BAM Next Wave Festival), *The World is Round* (BAM-Fisher), and *Septimus and Clarissa* (Drama Desk, Drama League nominations, BPAC). Dickstein also directs new plays, chamber opera, and new music-theater works including *Blood Moon* (BMP Prototype), *Thumbprint* (LA Opera/Prototype), and the upcoming *Star Singer* (LA Opera, BMP/Prototype). Other upcoming projects include *In[Finite] Time*, *Salvaged Pages* (as writer), and *Womenwaterrising*. Dickstein is Associate Professor and Co-Chair of Theater and Performance at Purchase College, SUNY and the author of *Towards Embodied Performance: Directing and the Art of Composition* (Routledge 2024).

Anna Kiraly (*designer*) is a Hungarian-born visual artist and scenic and projection designer based in New York City. Recent collaborations include set design for the Barrymore-nominated *Franklin's Key* with the Pig Iron Theater Company, The Play Company, the Talking Band, RipeTime, and immersive environment design for Nichole Canuso Dance Company. Kiraly frequently collaborates with universities such as Barnard/Columbia, Fordham, The New School, Montclair, Smith, and Colgate. She has designed visuals for operas and concerts with the NYP, American Opera Projects, Peter Sellars, and the Hungarian National Opera. Kiraly is a recipient of a 2021 and 2025 NYSCA grant, the Soros Arts Link Grant, the NEA/TCG Program for Designers, TCG New Generations, and the Jim Henson Foundation's project grant. She has taught set design and media at Barnard College/Columbia University, SUNY Purchase, and the Hungarian School of Theater and Film. Find out more about her work at www.anna-kiraly.com.

Christopher Gilmore (*lighting designer*). Lighting Design: Resident Lighting Designer of Fort Greene Orchestra (2024–current), Broken Theater (Aarhus, DK), *American Railroad*: 2025 Tour (Silkroad Ensemble), Luke Hickey's *A Swing Suite* (New Victory Dance Festival 2025, current tours with Dorrance Dance), *Book of Sounds* and *Zarabanda Variations* (American Modern Opera Company's Lincoln Center Festival 2025), *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered* (AMOC*: 2023 Tour, St. John the Divine 2023–24), Boston Ballet School: Next Generation 2023 (Boston Ballet), Ensemble Connect Up Close: Through Movement (Carnegie Hall), *CAGE* (AMOC*). Associate: *The Seasons* (Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Philadelphia), *B E N D* (Pomegranate Arts: Northrop UMN, TO Live), Taylor Mac's *Bark of Millions* (Pomegranate Arts: BAM,

Cal Performances), *Only an Octave Apart* (Spoleto Festival USA, Gate Theatre Dublin), *La bohème* (BLO, OP), *Harawi* (AMOC* US and European tour), Broken Theater (AMOC*: CPA, OZ Arts Nashville, La MaMa), *Trevor: A New Musical* (Stage42). Proud graduate of Emerson College.

Paul Vazquez (*monitors*) has provided audio recording, sound design, and live sound needs for clients such as the Philadelphia-based professional chamber choir The Crossing, Silk Road Ensemble, Westminster Choir College, and Jason Max Ferdinand Singer. Always passionate about sound, he founded Digital Mission Audio Services to address the unique needs of the classical and new-music community. Recent projects have included David Lang's Grammy-nominated *Poor Hymnal*, Ted Hearne's premiere of *Farming*, and a working farm in Bucks County, PA. Vazquez's work can be heard on WNYC and WRTI, as well as The Crossing's CD releases including Grammy-winning albums *The Fifth Century*, *Zealot Canticles*, *Born*, and *Ochre*. A native of Long Island, NY, he now resides in Madison, NJ with his wife, Jennifer, and children, Emma and Christopher. Vazquez is a voting member of NARAS and the local NY AES chapter. dmasrecording@gmail.com.

Dave Harris (*Front of House*) has been the Front of House Audio Engineer for Silkroad Ensemble since 2023. When he isn't busy with Silkroad, he works with the Boston Symphony as Head of Live Audio at Tanglewood, where he will be celebrating his 20th summer this year.

Katie Harvey (*tour manager*). Since studying anthropology, music, and religion at the University of Virginia and receiving a master's degree in ethnomusicology from Tufts University, Katie Harvey has dedicated



her career to facilitating creatives in live music settings. She began touring in 2011 and tour managing in 2013. Currently, her work supports the Silk Road Ensemble, Christian McBride, and Oteil Burbridge. With pride, Harvey lives in New Orleans and participates in the ongoing music making and street performance communities centered there. She believes in the power of music to connect people through bridges of empathy and joy.

Hilarie Spangler (*Silkroad Artist Programs Manager and Assistant Tour Manager*) is an arts producer, art therapist, and creative manager whose work lives at the intersection of storytelling, care, and collective

making. With a background in community-based arts, mental health, and project leadership, she brings both emotional intelligence and logistical precision to all her work. As a producer, she shepherds projects from first inspiration to final performance, centering artists' voices while building structures in which creative risk can thrive. As an art therapist, she uses music, visual art, and embodied practices to support healing, resilience, and self-expression, which is why she's so excited to collaborate on *Sanctuary*. Whether facilitating a group, coordinating a tour, or shaping a new project, Spangler is driven by a belief that creativity is a vital force for connection, transformation, and care.