THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative in Central Asia

Инициатива в области Музыкального Творчества в Центральной Азии
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INTRODUCTION

The Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA) was established in 2000 by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) to help ensure the preservation of Central Asia's musical heritage and its transmission to a new generation of artists and audiences, as well as to increase visibility and understanding of the region's unique musical traditions beyond its borders. The Music Initiative embodies His Highness the Aga Khan's recognition of music's vital role in the cultures of Central Eurasia and the Middle East. In these regions, music traditionally has served not only as entertainment, but as a form of symbolic knowledge that expresses the moral values and power of the spirit at the very centre of the great civilisations.

As with all of the Trust for Culture's activities, the Music Initiative takes a long-term, grassroots approach to cultural preservation and dissemination. Resources and expertise are made available to cultural institutions in the region to assist them in achieving sustainability and independence. Through its activities, the Music Initiative coordinates and links together education programmes, ethnographic research, archival conservation, publication of source materials and scholarly works, intra-regional exchange, and dissemination of music through live performance and mediated forms. Its major projects include the production of an audio and video anthology and digital archive of Central Asian music in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution, support for local music centres and schools in which master musicians train disciples through the time-honoured process of apprenticeship known as ustaz-shagird, and the organisation of concerts, master classes, and workshops featuring traditional musicians both within Central Asia and outside the region.

Music, unlike architecture or visual arts, embodies tradition not so much in objects as in living chains of transmission or lineages. In the Iranian-Turanian cultural realm that extends through West Asia, Central Asia, and northern regions of the subcontinent, the transmission of music from master to disciple has been rooted in oral tradition. During the last century, however, the rapid modernisation of traditional societies in these regions had a profound effect on musical life and
musical pedagogy. In Central Asia, musical genres and repertories of great antiquity are presently being transmitted by a handful of masters to small groups of students. The Music Initiative supports efforts to revitalize the process of oral transmission by assisting key musical tradition-bearers as they strive to pass on their knowledge and craft. At the same time, a central aim of the Music Initiative is to seed new approaches to performance style, musical form, repertory, and technique by encouraging musicians to explore their own history and traditions as well as by cultivating collaborations among musicians from different parts of Central Eurasia and beyond.

The Music Initiative collaborates closely with the Silk Road Project, founded and directed by renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. The Silk Road Project has taken a leading role in promoting the exploration of musical tradition as a resource for innovation and creativity. The Project’s commissioning programme has encouraged creative synergies between talented musicians from different cultural backgrounds, while its Partner Cities Festival Programme has brought the results of these synergies to audiences around the world. The work of the Silk Road Project exemplifies the Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s commitment to the values of pluralism and cultural diversity. In receiving the State Award for Peace and Progress from Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev in December 2002, His Highness the Aga Khan remarked, “I firmly believe that peace will be possible only when the pluralistic nature of human society is recognised, seen as a source of strength rather than weakness, and used as a basis for the formulation of policies and structures at all levels of governance.” The Music Initiative’s partnership with the Silk Road Project embodies both organisations’ commitment to the goal of ensuring the continuity and enrichment of Central Asia’s musical heritage by sustaining its venerable tradition of openness, tolerance, and cross-cultural exchange.

"I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT PEACE WILL BE POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN THE PLURALISTIC NATURE OF HUMAN SOCIETY IS RECOGNISED, SEEN AS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH RATHER THAN WEAKNESS, AND USED AS A BASIS FOR THE FORMULATION OF POLICIES AND STRUCTURES AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE."

His Highness the Aga Khan
THE MUSIC INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR LOCAL MUSIC CENTRES AND SCHOOLS IN WHICH MASTER MUSICIANS TRAIN DISCIPLES THROUGH THE TIME-HONOURED PROCESS OF APPRENTICESHIP KNOWN AS USTAZ-SHAGIRD, AND FOR THE ORGANISATION OF CONCERTS, MASTER CLASSES, AND WORKSHOPS.
AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

The Music Initiative is part of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network. AKTC focuses on culture as a means to enhance the physical, social and economic revitalisation of communities in the Islamic world. Its programmes include the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Historic Cities Support Programme, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the on-line resource ArchNet.org, the Music Initiative in Central Asia, the Humanities Project and the Museum Unit.

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private, international, non-denominational agencies working to improve living conditions and opportunities for people in the developing world. The Network’s organisations have individual mandates that range from the fields of health and education to architecture, rural development and the promotion of private-sector enterprise. They collaborate in working towards a common goal - to build institutions and programmes that can respond to the challenges of social, economic and cultural change on an ongoing basis.

The Aga Khan Foundation focuses on rural development, health, education and the enhancement of non-governmental organisations. Aga Khan Health Services, with 325 health centres, dispensaries, hospitals, diagnostic centres and community health outlets, is one of the largest private health networks in the world. Aga Khan Education Services operate more than 300 schools and advanced educational programmes at the pre-school, primary, secondary and higher secondary levels in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Tajikistan. The Aga Khan Planning and Building Services works to improve the built environment, particularly through design and construction, village planning, natural hazard mitigation, environmental sanitation and water supply systems. The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development works to strengthen the role of the private sector in developing countries by promoting entrepreneurial activity and supporting private sector initiatives. Two universities are also part of the Network: Aga Khan University, Pakistan’s first private, autonomous university, headquartered in Karachi; and the University of Central Asia (UCA), based in Khorog, Tajikistan, which is the world’s first university dedicated exclusively to education and research in mountain regions and societies.
FOR MANY YEARS I HAVE FELT THAT TRADITIONAL MUSIC PLAYED SUCH A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE CULTURES OF CENTRAL ASIA THAT IT DESERVED ATTENTION AND ASSISTANCE. THE NEED BECAME ALL THE MORE APPARENT AFTER THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE AND BEGAN THE PROCESS OF REDEFINING THEMSELVES. WHEN JIM WOLFENSOHN INTRODUCED ME TO YO-YO MA I REALISED THAT HERE WAS SOMEONE WHOSE WORK THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE COULD SUPPORT, AND ALSO USE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR ITS OWN INI-TIATIVE IN THE REGION. I LOOK FORWARD TO A WIDE RANGE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FROM THE SILK ROAD PROJECT AND THE AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA THAT WILL HELP REVITALISE TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF THE REGION, AND STIMULATE ARTISTIC EXCHANGES WITHIN CENTRAL ASIA, AND BETWEEN IT AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

His Highness the Aga Khan

IN 1998, I FOUNDED THE SILK ROAD PROJECT TO STUDY THE FLOW OF IDEAS AMONG DIFFERENT CULTURES ALONG THE SILK ROAD. THE PROJECT ACTS AS AN UMBRELLA ORGANISATION AND COMMON RESOURCE FOR A NUMBER OF ARTISTIC, CULTURAL, AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES. THROUGH THE SILK ROAD PROJECT, WE ARE STRIVING TO BRING NEW IDEAS, TALENT, AND ENERGY INTO THE WORLD OF CLASSICAL MUSIC, AND AT THE SAME TIME, NURTURE MUSICAL CREATIVITY DRAWING ON WONDERFULLY DIVERSE AND DISTINGUISHED SOURCES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AROUND THE WORLD, MY HOPE IS THAT OUR PROJECT WILL HELP TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG MUSICIANS, AUDIENCES, AND INSTITUTIONS WHO SHARE A FASCINATION WITH THE KIND OF TRANSCULTURAL ARTISTIC IMAGINATION SYMBOLISED BY THE SILK ROAD.

Yo-Yo Ma
THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE
AND
THE SILK ROAD PROJECT, INC.

PROUDLY PRESENT

YO-YO MA AND THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE
ON THEIR INAUGURAL CONCERT TOUR IN CENTRAL ASIA
AS PART OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA
even hundred years after Marco Polo, the Silk Road still evokes a nebulous geography that, like an ancient mariner's map, stretches between reality and fantasy. Indeed, these days the Silk Road is no less a product of imagination and metaphor than a legacy of actual historical events, and this very hybridity is what has made it such an enduring symbol of cultural discovery and exchange.

Both the symbolism and the reality of the Silk Road attracted Yo-Yo Ma, who created the Silk Road Project as a way to study the global circulation of music and musical ideas. One of the Project’s first activities was a programme to commission composers to write chamber music works that evoke the spirit of East-West cultural exchange symbolised by the Silk Road. Thus far, composers from the heartland of the Silk Road including China, Mongolia, Korea, Armenia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Korea, Turkey, and Azerbaijan have completed their commissions, and three of these works appear in the Silk Road Ensemble’s tour programme: Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur by Iranian composer Kayhan Kalhor, Dervish by Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, from Azerbaijan, and The Sufi and the Buddhist Monk by Tolib Shahidi from Tajikistan. These composed pieces are interwoven with some of the “roots” music that has inspired the musicians and composers working with the Silk Road Project. The Ensemble’s programme will feature Mongolian and Chinese traditional works as well as other newly arranged works developed by the Silk Road Ensemble. The programme also includes three works — one from Kazakhstan, one from France, and one from the United States — that resonate with the evening’s theme of cross-cultural musical exchange.

**Khongorzul Ganbaatar** is one of the most outstanding performers of the Mongolian vocal genre called urtiin duu, literally “long song.” Long song is a genre unique to Mongolia, and might well be considered the trademark style of authentic Mongolian folk music. Long song singers are specially trained to project their voice over enormous distances — typically, the vast open spaces of the Gobi Desert — and this highly embellished form of song-cum-communication arguably represents one of the world’s most archaic musical styles. To perform
long song, singers must take hugely long breaths in order to sustain loud, extended, and highly ornamented melodic phrases. Long song singer Khongorzul represents a new generation of urbanised Mongolians who are exploring different elements of their musical tradition. Like many of her contemporaries, she is equally as comfortable performing in one of Ulaanbaatar’s many discothèques and Internet cafés as in a ger, the round felt tent of Mongolian herders.

Long songs are so called not because they are long, but because each syllable of text is extended for a long duration. The texts offer miniature narratives typically centred around an image of nature. In this extemporised performance of a long song, Khongorzul is accompanied by a diverse set of string instruments played by members of the Silk Road Ensemble.

Over the last few years, the Silk Road Project has organised workshops and informal rehearsal sessions as a way of encouraging members of the Silk Road Ensemble to improvise and experiment together to create new works. These works often reflect the unique bicultural perspectives of the participants. For example, a Chinese performer classically trained on the sheng (Chinese mouth organ) might draw on what he also knows about jazz and rock idioms to create an arrangement of a Chinese folksong that he shares with a Western-trained violinist or Indian percussionist. In Mahur Orientale, the Silk Road Ensemble improvises on a Turkish traditional melody arranged by American percussionist Shane Shanahan (b. 1972). Such improvised works are essentially dialogues and conversations among artists from different backgrounds that represent the Silk Road’s legacy of cross-cultural contact and innovation. “Essentially we are creating a collective art,” explains Yo-Yo Ma, “where the result is hopefully stronger than anything we might have come up with as individuals. Part of being an artist is being prepared to ask questions to which you don’t have the answers. It’s sharing something that happens inside you — something that’s very private, very intimate. If you locate your question and make it come alive within another person, you can create a connection. I think that’s a beautiful way to communicate and an essential way we can contribute.”
Wu Man symbolises a new generation of musicians from the Silk Road diaspora who are dismantling the boundaries between indigenous and imported music. Her mastery of the pipa, a Chinese lute with a history of more than two thousand years, has won her audiences around the world. Equally adept at performing court music from eighth-century China and improvising with jazz musicians in the downtown clubs of New York and Hong Kong, Wu Man has been recognised as one of the most versatile performers of Chinese traditional music of her generation. After receiving her degree at Central Conservatory in Beijing, Wu Man immigrated to the United States. Historically the pipa was strung with silk strings and played by horseback-riding “barbarians,” according to early Chinese sources. Today’s instrument has nylon strings and requires intricate preparation on the part of the performer, including taping plastic picks to each finger to substitute for the unimaginably long fingernails sported by players of earlier times.

Neyshabur, one of the oldest cities on the Silk Road, was a major cultural crossroads that boasted one of the ancient world’s first universities. It produced many of Iran’s greatest poets, including Omar Khayyam and At’ar, and was also known for its turquoise. In Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur, Kayhan Kalhor (b. 1963) draws inspiration from traditional Iranian modal melodies, which he supports with an ensemble of Western strings. Featured instruments include the kemancheh (spike fiddle), santur (struck zither), and ney (bamboo flute). Born in Tehran, Kalhor began studying classical violin at age 6, but found his own musical voice in its Persian analog, the kemancheh. Explains Kalhor, “It is a misunderstanding that Persian classical music is the same as Arab music. At the height of the Persian Empire, the music, poetry, and literature of Persia spread to India, Central Asia, Turkey, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Persian music can still be heard today in the music of Andalusia and the Spanish flamenco.” A passionate advocate for the musical traditions of his homeland, Kalhor spends half his year teaching Persian classical music to conservatory-trained students in Tehran.

Bakhtiyar Amanjol (b. 1952) is a composer, musicologist and musical innovator who has long worked at the intersection of European classical music and traditional Kazakh music. He received a degree in composition from Moscow Conservatory in 1977, and since 1980 has taught composition and theory at the Almaty State Conservatory. In

“ESSENTIALLY WE ARE CREATING A COLLECTIVE ART, WHERE THE RESULT IS HOPEFULLY STRONGER THAN ANYTHING WE MIGHT HAVE COME UP WITH AS INDIVIDUALS. PART OF BEING AN ARTIST IS BEING PREPARED TO ASK QUESTIONS TO WHICH YOU DON’T HAVE THE ANSWERS.”

Yo-Yo Ma
“Two Pieces for Cello and Piano,” Bakhtiyar Amanjol imaginatively represents the unique colours and rhythms of Kazakh oral epic recitation accompanied by the two-stringed dombra. In the poem, a beautiful girl (Bayan-Sulu) falls in love with a poor shepherd (Qozy-Kurpesh) while engaged against her will to marry a wealthy but evil man. Qozy-Kurpesh and Bayan-Sulu elope, but are hunted down and Qozy-Kurpesh is killed. After lamenting her dying lover, Bayan-Sulu kills herself by jumping from a mountain into a lake. In the first piece of Amanjol’s composition (not performed on tonight’s programme), the piano represents the distinctively accented rhythmic strumming of the dombra against the “vocal” melody performed on the cello. The second piece, “The Lamentation of Bayan-Sulu,” represents the distinctive rhythmic form of the Kazakh lament, called zhoqtau, a folk genre which epic performers appropriate to dramatise the performance of their narrative (see text below):

**The Lamentation of Bayan-Sulu**

Translation of introductory lines of epic texts
(recited prior to performance)

I will sing about powerful heroes and their suffering.  
I will sing about the suffering and great courage of people  
About selfish people with callous hearts  
They were greedy to get livestock  
The souls of the innocents were more white than milk,  
more pure than water  
I will sing about some pure hearts  
I will sing about the lovers.

Oh, my dear! You are lying on the cold ground.  
You were suffering terribly from your wounds before your death.  
Your Bayan-Sulu came to you....

**Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)** was one of a number of 19th- and 20th-century French composers who were influenced by the music of the East. In 1889, like his younger contemporary Ravel, Debussy visited the World’s Fair then taking place in Paris which featured, among other exotic wonders, the performance of a gamelan (gong and xylophone) orchestra from Java. Oriental music would remain a constant source of musical inspiration. In 1913, Debussy befriended the Sufi musician Inayat Khan, who with his cousin and two brothers,
made a number of tours to Europe and America. Sufism, a form of mystical Islam, captivated the composer’s imagination. Upon receiving Inayat Khan’s musicians at his home in Paris, Debussy wrote: “Composers alone have the privilege of capturing all the poetry of night and day, of earth and sky, of recreating their atmosphere and of setting their mighty pulsations within a rhythmic framework.” From such encounters, Debussy built a reservoir of timbres, sounds, and colours that nourished and sustained him throughout his musical career.

With the outbreak of World War I, Debussy ceased his travels and remained in Paris, where he completed the Sonata in D minor for Cello (1915). The sonata features a diverse palette of sounds. In the first movement, the cello opens with a sunny, flamenco-like flourish with the cello playing arco throughout. In the second movement, the composer treats the cello like a giant guitar with nearly half of the movement notated in pizzicato. Viewing the cello as a plucked instrument was a dramatic departure from the dominant 19th century idiom of legato bowing. The third movement represents a rapprochement between the plucked and bowed qualities of the instrument.

The virtuosic fiddle traditions of the East have their counterparts in the West. For example, American composer Mark O’Connor (b. 1961) began his career as a “fiddle” prodigy and has arranged American folk tunes as well as original concert works for the fiddle. Through his friendship with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, O’Connor composed a new work for solo cello entitled “Appalachia Waltz” based on the fiddling traditions of Appalachia, a mountainous region in the Southeastern United States with a strong tradition of folk music. The folk music of Appalachia was originally brought over by immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, and England. As Ma points out, “At first, it may seem that there is little common ground between the repertoires of a North Carolina fiddler and a fiddler from Ireland, yet these two traditions reveal an unmistakable kinship. I am fascinated not only by the oral traditions in which this music was transmitted, but also the aspect of emigration and diaspora. In the nineteenth century, immigrants from the Anglo-Celtic lands brought their jigs, reels, and hornpipes to the New World, where successive generations of musicians transformed them into a range of different styles and repertoires.”

Azerbaijani composer and concert pianist Franghiz Ali-Zadeh (b. 1947) received her doctorate in musicology from Baku Conservatory and
exemplifies the challenge of forging a bicultural career. As Ali-Zadeh explains, “After I completed my formal studies at the Conservatory, it was as if there had been some sort of misunderstanding. While I had studied Western music by day, I would come home every night to listen to a very different kind of music — the mugham (a complex collection of modal suites based upon traditional models).” Inspired by the rhythmic similarities between the musical liturgy of Sufism (a form of mystical Islam) and mugham, Ali-Zadeh recorded an authentic dervish in her native Baku as part of her research for a new Silk Road Project commission. The following text emphasizes the dervish’s ecstatic devotion to faith and seeking truth, and is based on the life of the martyred 14th century poet Nasimi, who was skinned alive for his Sufi beliefs. Ali-Zadeh artfully couples the rapturous musings of the dervish (performed here by legendary Azerbaijani bard Alim Qasimov) with a sextet of traditional Azerbaijani and Western instruments, including the tutek (wooden flute), qanun (plucked zither), gosha nagara (kettle drums), and Western string trio. In so doing, she creates a unique contemporary musical language that evokes the traditional rhythms and melodies of the mugham.

I am a dervish, it is strange;
I have nothing, but I am the king of the universe;
I am invisible, my body is transparent;
When I am in a good temper, my spirit begins to shine;
I am nowhere and I am everywhere;
I combine all forces of nature: fire, water, air, earth.

I am a messenger;
I was sent here by God and he speaks through me;
I am beyond the law of the common people;
I will not be dismayed if they do not let me into Paradise,
Because Paradise is within me;

Eh Nasimi! It is you who were chosen by God.

Through the chance meeting of strangers along the historic Silk Road, new innovations were often born. Similarly in the first meeting between Tajik composer Tolib Shahidi (b. 1946) and cellist Yo-Yo Ma which took place at the Silk Road New Works Commissioning Workshop at the Tanglewood Music Festival in the United States in July 2000 a new composition was created called Silk Road Dreams.
Dancing. In 2001, Shahidi wrote a second Silk Road Project chamber commission, The Sufi and the Buddhist Monk. In this most recent work, Shahidi takes the notion of encounter one step further by casting an imaginary dialogue between a Sufi and a Buddhist monk who encounter each other for the first time on the historic Silk Road. Supplementing his studies at the Moscow Conservatory with famed Russian-Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian, Shahidi continued to maintain a keen interest in and curiosity about the rich musical traditions of Tajikistan.

Drawing on his bicultural musical heritage, Shahidi here brings together European instruments with the sato-tanbur (Tajik plucked/bowed lute) and uses the Tajik maqam Irâq-i Bukhara to create a lively musical framework.

Sandeep Das (b. 1971) who plays the tabla in the Silk Road Ensemble created a new work for the Ensemble during their residency in summer 2002 at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. Based on the exchange of improvised and extemporaneous solos between four non-Western percussion instruments and a Western string trio, Das explains: “I imagined that the merchants or early travellers of the Silk Road may have interacted at first very simply — for example, through rhythm. When composing this piece I wanted to bring common elements of rhythm from the Silk Road countries such as a 6-beat cycle (dada) and 16-beat cycle (TeenTaal).” The string trio provides a drone as well as a melodic line to support these rhythmic weavings.

As a metaphor for cultural exchange, the Silk Road might at first suggest linear connections between East and West. Yet the works and lives of the composers represented in tonight’s programme demonstrate that the process of cross-cultural innovation is exquisitely circuitous. For Yo-Yo Ma and his partners in the Silk Road Project, illuminating both the diversity and the unifying elements of this process is a primary aim. Said Mr. Ma, “As we interact with unfamiliar musical traditions, we encounter voices that are not exclusive to one community. We discover transnational voices that belong to one world.”

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Authors: Theodore Levin and Esther Won
THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE:
2003 TOUR TO CENTRAL ASIA

Yo-Yo Ma, Artistic Director

Siamak Aghaei, Santur
Tarana Aliyeva, Qanun
Nicholas Cords, Viola 1
Sandeep Das, Tabla
Jason Duckles, Cello
Joel Fan, Piano
Khongorzul Ganbaatar, Mongolian Long Song Singer
Joseph Gramley, Percussion
Colin Jacobsen, Violin 1
Siamak Jahangiri, Ney
Kayhan Kalhor, Kemancheh
Anthea Kreston, Violin 2
Yo-Yo Ma, Cello
Max Mandel, Viola 2
Ilham Najafov, Tutek
Alim Qasimov, Vocal
Shane Shanahan, Percussion
Mark Suter, Percussion
Michel Taddei, Bass
Wu Man, Pipa
Abduvali Abdurashidov, Sato-tanbur
YO-YO MA, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Yo-Yo Ma is the founder and Artistic Director of the Silk Road Project. His many-faceted career is a testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences. Whether performing a new concerto, coming together with colleagues for chamber music, reaching out to young audiences and student musicians, or exploring cultures and musical forms outside of the Western classical tradition, Yo-Yo Ma strives to find connections that stimulate the imagination. One of his goals is to explore music as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the migration of ideas across cultures. To that end, he has taken time to immerse himself in subjects as diverse as native Chinese music and its distinctive instruments and the music of the Kalahari people in Africa.

Mr. Ma is an exclusive Sony Classical artist, and his discography of nearly fifty albums (including fourteen Grammy winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. In addition to the standard concerto repertoire, Mr. Ma has recorded many of the works he has commissioned or premiered. He has also made several successful recordings that defy categorization, among them “Hush” with Bobby McFerrin, “Appalachia Waltz” and “Appalachian Journey” with Mark O’Connor and Edgar Meyer, “Piazzolla: Soul of the Tango,” and “Solo,” an album of unaccompanied works that serves as a prelude to the Silk Road Project. “Solo” features works by Zoltán Kodály, David Wilde, Alexander Tcherepnin, Mark O’Connor, and Bright Sheng, all of which address from a different cultural perspective the relationship of wandering and roots, innovation and tradition.

Yo-Yo Ma was born to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age four, and soon after came with his family to New York, where he enrolled in the Juilliard School. He sought out a traditional liberal arts education to build on his conservatory training, and graduated from Harvard University in 1976.
THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE

The Silk Road Ensemble is not a fixed collective, but rather a collection of like-minded musicians dedicated to exploring the relationship between tradition and innovation in music from the East and West. Each musician’s career illustrates a unique response to what is arguably the paramount artistic challenge of our times: nourishing global connections while maintaining the integrity of art rooted in an authentic tradition. Most of the Ensemble musicians first came together at a Silk Road Project workshop at the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts in July 2000 under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma. During the next two seasons, various combinations of these artists, whose diverse careers encompass and often intermingle Western classical music, non-Western classical musics, folk musics, and popular music, will perform a variety of programmes, both with and without Mr. Ma, in Silk Road Project concerts and festivals in Europe, Asia, and North America.

THE SILK ROAD PROJECT, INC.

The Silk Road Project, a not-for-profit arts organisation, was founded in 1998 by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who serves as its artistic director. The purpose of the Silk Road Project is to illuminate the Silk Road’s historical contribution to the cross-cultural diffusion of arts, technologies, and musical traditions, identify the voices that best represent its cultural legacy today, and support innovative collaborations among outstanding artists from the lands of the Silk Road and the West.

At the centre of the Silk Road Project is a two-year-long series of festivals in North America, Europe, Central Asia, China, and Japan which began in summer 2001. Co-produced with major presenting organisations and cultural institutions, the festivals draw upon a new body of chamber works commissioned by the Silk Road Project as well as on traditional music from the lands of the Silk Road and existing
works by Western composers such as Ravel and Debussy who were profoundly influenced by Eastern traditions. In an unprecedented partnership with the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Silk Road Project presented an outdoor festival on the National Mall in summer 2002 in Washington, D.C. that celebrated the cultural traditions of Silk Road communities from around the world. This festival celebrated the living traditions of the historic Silk Road lands by bringing together over 400 artisans, craftspeople, musicians, and dancers — silk weavers from China, Central Asia, and India; Japanese and Turkish porcelain makers; paper makers from Italy; and courtly music ensembles from Azerbaijan, Iran, and Uzbekistan — to explore the shared roots of their creative heritage with one another and over a million festival visitors.

The Project’s work has been documented through recordings and an interactive website. Support for the Silk Road Project comes from private and institutional sources including The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Ford Motor Company, Siemens, and Sony Classical.

For more information, consult the Silk Road Project website: http://www.silkroadproject.org
FLUTES

SHAKUHACHI  [SHA koo ha chee]  
Japan

The shakuhachi is made from the base of a bamboo stalk. A hole is drilled down the centre of the stalk and finger and thumb holes are drilled into the side. The shakuhachi is played by blowing air across the end of the instrument while covering and uncovering the holes with fingertips.

The shakuhachi has been used since the 15th century in Japan to create music for Zen Buddhist meditation. The sounds produced by the shakuhachi range from feather-soft whispers to strong piercing tones. They are intended to reflect sounds from nature such as bird calls, wind, and water. Today the shakuhachi is also played in jazz, orchestral, and popular music ensembles.

NEY  [ney]  
Turkey, Iran, Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa

The name ney is derived from the ancient Persian word for “reed” or “bamboo.” Instruments called ney or nai include end-blown and side-blown “flutes. The end-blown ney of Turkey and Iran is always made from the stem of a bamboo plant, and is played using a unique technique. The player rests the end of the instrument against his teeth at the side of his mouth and blows across the top. He uses his teeth and tongue to shape the sound. This is a very difficult technique to master. Side-blownneys are played by blowing over a hole in the side of the instrument. They may be made from wood, brass, or copper.

Like the shakuhachi (see above), the ney is often used to create religious music that exalts the listener’s state of mind. The ney is used to play music in the Islamic tradition of Sufism. Sufi musicians aim to create heavenly sounds through abstract rhythms and patterns of notes, in contrast to the shakuhachi, which typically mimics sounds from nature. The beautifully rich, airy sound of the ney has also made it a favorite instrument for folk and classical music.
**DOUBLE REED WOODWINDS**

**DUDUK** [doo DOOK]
Caucasus (particularly Armenia and Azerbaijan), northern Iran, and north-east Iraq

The duduk is a short tube of wood attached to a large flattened reed. It is played by holding the reed between the lips and blowing, while covering and uncovering the holes with the fingertips. It is known by several names including balaban in Azerbaijan. The duduk’s velvety sound and wide dynamic range have made it popular for a variety of musical genres. Traditionally it is used in small ensembles, often played in duet with kettledrums such as the gosha nagara or frame drums such as the daira (see below), in lyric songs and dances. Today it is also played in larger professional ensembles and in urban clubs.

Recordings by innovative musicians such as Djivan Gasparyan feature the duduk in musical genres not previously associated with the instrument, such as jazz. He has collaborated with famous classical ensembles such as the Kronos Quartet and with other musicians including Lionel Ritchie and Peter Gabriel. He has also been featured on the soundtracks of feature films including The Crow and Dead Man Walking.

**ORGANS**

**SHENG** [sheng]
China

The sheng is a mouth organ. Its body is a bowl made of metal, wood, or gourd. It has a blowpipe and seventeen or more bamboo or metal pipes of varying length that extend from the top of the bowl. The elegant symmetrical arrangement of the pipes represents the two folded wings of the mythical phoenix bird. Each pipe has a side hole covered by a metal tongue that interrupts the air current like an oboe reed (see above). The sheng produces a strikingly clear, metallic sound. One interesting characteristic of the sheng is that, unlike many other wind instruments, it is played by both blowing and inhaling.

Mouth organs similar to the sheng are first mentioned in Chinese texts dating from the 14th to 12th century B.C.E. Today the sheng is mainly
used to play Chinese classical music in small and large ensembles with other Chinese instruments such as the pipa (see below) and erhu (see below). However, innovative musicians such as Wu Tong, of the successful Chinese hard rock band Again, also use the sheng in popular music.

**DRUMS**

**TABLA** [TAH blah]  
India

The tabla is a pair of small drums. The treble drum called the dahina (“right” in Hindi) sits on the floor in front of the player. Its body is a wooden cylinder. To the left of the dahina sits a bass kettledrum made of clay or copper. It is called the bayan (“left” in Hindi). The player hits the centre of the skin on the top of each drum with his fingers while pressing down to alter the pitch of the sound. A virtuoso player may produce so many different sounds and inflections from the tabla that the instrument seems to speak. In India, the process of learning to play the tabla begins at an early age, when a master adopts a six or seven-year-old child as his student. The student will study with the master every day for a decade or more.

The pairing of drums called the tabla was first used in India in the 1700s. Today it is the main percussive instrument of North Indian music. It is used with all varieties of instrumental music and is the primary accompanying instrument for the kathak dance style.

**FRAME DRUMS:**

**DAIRA** [DYE ra], **DAF** [daf], and **RIQ** [rik]  
Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East, North Africa, and Iran

The daira is a frame drum. It consists of a thin membrane of animal skin that has been stretched and glued over a wooden hoop. Metal jingles such as rings, coins, or pairs of cymbals are usually attached to the hoop. The daira is held in one hand and is struck with the fingers, thumb, palm and heel of the other hand. The pitch is tuned by tightening the skin with heat or loosening it with water.
Singers of maqam, the highly challenging genre of improvised music of the Islamic world, use frame drums like the daira to accompany themselves as they create songs based on religious poetic texts. The daira is also played solo or in small ensembles to accompany dances and ritual processions at important events.

**LUTES**

**PIPA [PEE pah]**
China

The pipa is a short-necked plucked wooden lute. The head of the pipa is usually carved in a symbolic form such as a bat’s head, often used because the word for “bat” in Chinese sounds similar to the word for “luck.” The strings, once made of twisted silk, are now usually synthetic.

The first text reference to the pipa is in a 3rd century Chinese encyclopedia, which notes that it originally arose “among barbarians,” who played it while riding horseback. Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.), the pipa has been one of the most popular instruments in China. The playing technique is characterised by spectacular finger dexterity and by virtuosic effects including rolls and percussive slaps. Pipa repertoire includes extensive tone poems vividly describing famous battles and other exciting stories.

**FIDDLES**

**KEMANCHEH [ke MAHN cheh]**
Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia

The kemancheh is a spike fiddle. It has a small round wooden body with a spike protruding from the base, a sound table made of animal skin, and a cone-shaped neck. The kemancheh rests on the player’s knee or on the ground and the instrument is twisted on the spike to meet a bow.

The kemancheh may be played as a solo instrument, or in small ensembles. It is played in the tradition of improvised music known as maqam. The elegant, warm sound of the kemancheh calls to mind the
sound of a human voice. Therefore the instrument lends itself to solo virtuoso playing. The first known written reference to the kemancheh dates from the 12th century C.E. For centuries the kemancheh has been revered as an exceptional instrument for use in courtly, folk, religious, and secular settings.

**MORIN KHUUR [MOO rin HOOR]**
Mongolia

The Mongolian words morin khuur translate literally to mean “horsehead fiddle”. The morin khuur is instantly recognisable by the distinctive scroll carved in the shape of a horse’s head. The tuning pegs on either side of the scroll are known as the “horse’s ears”. The strings of the instrument and its bow were traditionally made of horse hair, although they are now often made of synthetic material.

The morin khuur is used to accompany folk singers and less frequently as a solo instrument and in small ensembles. Traditionally the people of Mongolia are nomadic shepherds and love of the horse is an important aspect of Mongolian national identity. The horse on the scroll of the morin khuur and the galloping rhythms known as tatлага that are produced on the instrument reflect this love. Therefore, the morin khuur plays a prominent role in Mongolian music and culture.

**ERHU [AR hoo]**
China

The erhu is a fiddle with two strings. It has a long neck and a round hexagonal, octagonal or tubular body made of wood. The face of the body is usually covered by the skin of a python or other snake. The bow used to play the erhu is made of horsehair on a stick of bamboo. In performance, the erhu is supported on the left thigh of the player and held with the left hand while the right hand moves the bow. The fine, lyrically expressive sound of the erhu has led to its use as a solo instrument in small folk and classical ensembles and in Chinese orchestras.

The erhu is part of a group of Chinese bowed instruments known as huqin, which translates to mean “barbarian string instrument,” suggesting that these types of instruments were introduced to China. Instruments similar to the erhu have been prevalent in Chinese music since the 12th century C.E.
ZITHERS

QANUN [KAH noon]
Caucasus, Middle East

The qanun is a plucked zither with a flat trapezoid-shaped body. It has 75 strings arranged so that three strings are plucked at the same time to make each pitch. It is plucked with a plectrum that resembles a thimble with a metal barb on one end.

The qanun is a classical instrument of the Arab world, widely described in both oral and written traditions. In Turkey it is called the kanun. Like other instruments of the Islamic world, including the ney and daira (see above), it is played in the remarkable improvisatory musical tradition known as maqam.

SANTUR [SAN toor]
Iran

The santur is a struck zither, also known as a hammer dulcimer. It has a flat trapezoid-shaped body with seventy two strings. The player strikes the strings with two delicate felt-covered hammers called mezrab. These strings are arranged so that three strings are struck at the same time to make each pitch. The virtuoso santur player produces light, glistening tones by striking the instrument with blinding speed and precision.

The earliest predecessors of the modern santur may date back to 1600 B.C.E. and it is one of the main instruments of Iranian music. It is played solo and in ensembles in the improvisatory musical tradition of maqam.