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**YO-YO MA ANNOUNCES GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO EXPLORE AND
CELEBRATE THE MUSIC AND CULTURES OF THE SILK ROAD AND THEIR
INFLUENCE ON THE WEST**

**Concerts and Recordings of Newly-Commissioned and Traditional Works, Artistic
Collaborations and Interactive Web Site to Encourage Worldwide Exchange
Highlighting the Impact of the Silk Road; Silk Road Project Festivals
Launch in 2001**

October 25, 2000, New York—The Silk Road Project, a new initiative aimed at exploring the cross-cultural influences among and between the lands comprising the legendary Silk Road and the West, is being launched in 2001 with an ambitious program of concerts, festivals and educational outreach activities in North America, Europe and Asia. Led by renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma in coordination with a distinguished team of scholars, musicians and artists from around the world, the Silk Road Project is designed to illuminate the historical contributions of the Silk Road; support innovative collaborations among artists from the East and West; and resituate classical music within a broader global context.

With trade routes extending to and through China, Japan, Mongolia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, among other nations, the historic Silk Road linked diverse cultures and peoples and promoted the unprecedented sharing of ideas, art, music, science and innovations. Artists and music from each of these countries will be featured in the Silk Road Project.

The not-for-profit Silk Road Project was founded in 1998 and has received wide support. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture is the lead funder and a key creative partner of the Project. Ford Motor Company is the first Global Corporate Partner of the Silk Road Project, Inc. Generous funding has been provided by The Starr Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Henry R. Kravis, Richard Li and William Rondina.

Sony Classical is a founding supporter and will collaborate on a series of recordings with the Silk Road Project.

"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," commented Yo-Yo Ma, who serves as Artistic Director of the Silk Road Project. "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 symbolized by the Silk Road," Ma continued.

At the center of the Silk Road Project is a two-year-long series of festivals premiering at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival in August 2001 and continuing in New York, Seattle, Berkeley, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Toronto in North America; Amsterdam, Milan, Cologne, Brussels, Paris, Lyon and cities in Italy in Europe; and cities in Japan and China in Asia. Co-produced with major presenting organizations and cultural institutions, the festivals will draw upon a new body of chamber works commissioned by the Silk Road Project as well as on existing works by composers from both East and West.

Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble—an international group of young musicians—will perform the new works, which include both Western and Eastern instruments, as well as traditional music on instruments from their respective lands. Concert and festival programming will also feature three new cello concertos based on Silk Road themes which were composed for Yo-Yo Ma. Masterpieces by Western composers such as Ravel, Debussy, and Rimski-Korsakov, who were inspired by the art and music of the East, will also be performed during the festivals and concerts.

The largest Silk Road Project Festival is the result of a collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution—the summer 2002 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. For the first time in its 34-year history, the Smithsonian Institution will feature a single-theme festival, which will be devoted to the cultures of the Silk Road. The Festival will involve some 400 musicians, artisans and other performers representing contemporary cultures along the entire breadth of the historic Silk Road as well as communities of émigrés from these cultures who now reside in the West.

Silk Road Project Executive Director Theodore Levin, an ethnomusicologist and Central Asia specialist at Dartmouth College, commented, "The Silk Road Project is creating opportunities for composers and performers from the East and West to embark on new musical explorations that draw both on the legacy of tradition and on modern musical ideas. Its goal is to illuminate contemporary culture in the lands of the Silk Road—many of which have only recently become accessible to outsiders—and to help musicians and artists from these lands integrate themselves into the global circulation of culture."