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**THE SILK ROAD PROJECT, INC. AND K. MIKIMOTO & CO., LTD.
ANNOUNCE NEW CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Silk Road Founder and Artistic Director, Yo-Yo Ma, and Mikimoto President,
Yoshimi Ito, Discuss Multi-Year Partnership**

July 18, 2005, Providence, RI and Tokyo – The Silk Road Project, Inc. and K. Mikimoto & Co., Ltd. announced today that Mikimoto would become a corporate sponsor of The Silk Road Project International Museum Residency Program, 2005 - 2008, featuring artists in residencies at museums throughout the world.

The Silk Road Project's first 2005 museum residency supported by the Mikimoto sponsorship will be held at the Nara National Museum, in Japan October 8-12, 2005. In conjunction with the Nara National Museum residency, The Silk Road Ensemble will perform at the gala opening of the new Kyushu National Museum, in Japan on October 16-17, 2005. Additional scheduled Silk Road Project residencies are planned for The Art Institute of Chicago in the U.S.A., The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England, and The Reitberg Museum in Zurich, Switzerland.

The three-year Mikimoto sponsorship agreement was announced by Silk Road Project founder and artistic director, Yo-Yo Ma, and Mikimoto president, Yoshimi Ito, at The Okura Hotel in Tokyo. Mr. Ma, said, "I think of the ancient Silk Road as the Internet of antiquity. It was the path that brought innovations from East to West and West to East and has been an inspiration to thousands of creative people. How wonderful that the rich cultural traditions of the Silk Road have inspired yet another artistic creation."

Mr. Ito said, "We are delighted to partner with such a premier organization to support our joint cause of preservation of the world's great treasures. The historical path of the Silk Road weaves its way into history just as Mikimoto has for over 112 years. The new collection of jewelry by Mr. Tomohiro Yajima will continue this tradition as he explores the various cultures along the Silk Road."

The Silk Road Project International Museum Residency Program brings great works of art together with traditions of oral literature and music to increase awareness of both the diverse peoples and the interactions of rich cultural traditions in the lands along the historic Silk Road. The Silk Road was a vast network of trade routes that linked the people of Asia with those of Europe. For more than 2,500 years these land and sea routes presented an unprecedented opportunity for people to meet and share information about their cultures.

The sponsorship announcement was made in advance of a series of concerts by Mr. Ma and The Silk Road Ensemble to be held from July 22 - 31, 2005 at the Aichi World Expo 2005 in Nagoya, Japan.

In conjunction with Mikimoto's Silk Road sponsorship, Mr. Ito also announced it is launching a new Silk Road Collection of luxury jewelry.

The new Silk Road Collection designed by Mikimoto designer, Mr. Tomohiro Yajima, will highlight the history of the Silk Road. Following the path of Alexander the Great, and starting in Greece, Mr. Yajima incorporates many historical significant items from the Silk Road into jewelry. The jewelry features many one-of-a-kind pieces such as a necklace featuring Keshi pearls simulating fabric with 18kt yellow gold and diamonds.

Wu Man, Pipa Virtuoso Performs

Following The Silk Road Project - Mikimoto sponsorship announcement, Wu Man, a Silk Road Ensemble member, presented a brief performance on the classical Chinese instrument, the pipa (PEE pah) (sometimes called the Chinese lute), a pear-shaped plucking instrument that has been in existence for over two thousand years.

Ms. Wu Man has been recognized internationally as an extraordinary exponent of the traditional repertoire of Chinese classical music and as a leading interpreter of contemporary pipa music. She began her music training at the age of nine and later studied at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing. A pupil of Lin Shicheng and Liu Dehai, she has learned the 'Pudong' school of pipa playing, one of the classical styles of imperial China. The Los Angeles Times proclaimed her as, "the artist most responsible for bringing pipa to the Western world." Nominated by Yo-Yo Ma, she was awarded the 1999 City of Toronto Glenn Gould Protege Prize. She was also awarded a Bunting Fellowship at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College. Raised in China, she currently resides in California.

About The Silk Road Project, Inc.

Founded in 1998 by cellist and artistic director, Yo-Yo Ma, and led by CEO and executive director, Laura Freid, the Silk Road Project strives to bring new ideas, talent, and energy into the world of classical music, while nurturing artistic creativity that draws on the diverse and distinguished sources of cultural heritage around the world. Since its founding, the Silk Road Project has produced three CDs, published one book, commissioned 20 new chamber works, created an education kit entitled Silk Road Encounters, co-produced a major cultural festival with the Smithsonian Institution, and presented concerts worldwide. The Silk Road Project promotes collaboration and a sense of community among musicians, audiences, and institutions who share a fascination with the trans-cultural artistic imagination symbolized by the legendary Silk Road. Ford Motor Company is continuing as a Global Corporate Partner to The Silk Road Project, as part of its long-standing tradition of arts education support.

About K. Mikimoto & Co., Ltd.

K. Mikimoto & Co., Ltd. is the world-renowned Japanese jewelry company. In 1893, company founder Kokichi Mikimoto was the first person to develop a technique for the cultivation of pearls. In 1899, he opened the K. Mikimoto retail store in the Ginza district of Tokyo. As Japan's first specialty store for pearls, this laid the foundation for Japan's modern jewelry industry. Mr. Mikimoto then began to expand internationally, opening his first overseas branch in London in 1913; branches in New York and Paris soon followed. As these pearls spread worldwide, "Mikimoto" became synonymous with cultured pearls and even Japanese culture. Today Mikimoto has stores throughout Asia, The Americas and Europe. The newest location is planned for Bangkok, Thailand opening in the Fall of 2005.

For more information and store locations please visit <http://www.mikimoto.com>.