



Press Contact: Amy Wentz, Ruder Finn
Phone: (212) 715-1551; wentza@ruderfinn.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE SILK ROAD PROJECT LAUNCHES SILK ROAD CHICAGO
EXPRESS PASSPORT**

Passports encourage kids to explore the Silk Road through The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Children's Museum, Field Museum and Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum

October 24, 2006, Chicago, IL – The Silk Road Project, under the direction of acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, announces the launch of the *Silk Road Chicago Express Passport* for kids ages 6-12. “The Passport invites young voyagers and their families to explore the Silk Road by visiting a variety of Chicago’s cultural institutions,” said Dr. Laura Freid, CEO and Executive Director of the Silk Road Project. The new Passport will be available at all Chicago Public Library branches beginning in November 2006.

The *Silk Road Chicago Express Passport* is a free tool to help the children of Chicago navigate the metaphorical Silk Road in their own city: a travel guide with incentives and activities encouraging families to visit local museums and venues offering *Silk Road Chicago* programming. Participating cultural institutions in the Passport program include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), the Chicago Children’s Museum, the Field Museum and the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum. Each Passport includes a place for the traveler’s photo, a map of Passport stations, a reading list prepared by the Chicago Public Library, and a travel story written by Grammy-nominated storyteller Bill Harley.

Much like a traditional passport, *Silk Road Chicago Express Passports* are a log of each child’s journey. *Silk Road Chicago* voyagers will collect stamps as they learn about the art and culture of the Silk Road by completing activities at each of the five Passport stations. Children can find and draw artifacts from the AIC’s *Silk Road and Beyond: Travel, Trade and Transformation* exhibition, climb a giant sailboat or drive a kid-sized CTA bus at the Chicago Children’s Museum, navigate using the constellations at the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, explore the Africa Exhibition at the Field Museum, and attend a CSO family concert on Saturday, November 18th. All museum activities are offered on an ongoing basis.

When each journey is finished, voyagers are encouraged to return a Passport postcard to the Silk Road Project, sharing reactions to their travels through drawings or words. Five voyagers from each Express Passport edition will be randomly selected to win a family four pack of tickets to the April 21st Family Concert featuring Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at Symphony Center.

Two more Passports will be released throughout the year, both with different themes. Participants can download Passports from the Silk Road Chicago Express Passport website, www.silkroadchicago.org/passport, or pick them up at Chicago Public Library branches and participating cultural institutions. Passports will guide exploration during the yearlong *Silk Road Chicago* celebration, and will be keepsakes to help children recall and be enriched by their experiences for years to come.

In addition to the *Silk Road Express Passport* program, the Silk Road Project will present performances, master classes, workshops and educational programs featuring Ma and other Silk Road Ensemble members as part of *Silk Road Chicago*. Events will be presented in Chicago schools, universities and cultural institutions throughout the year, concluding with extended residencies at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in April 2007.

For more information on the *Silk Road Chicago Express Passport* or any Silk Road Chicago programming, please visit www.silkroadchicago.org.

About the Silk Road Project

The Silk Road Project is a not-for-profit arts organization founded in 1998 by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who serves as its artistic director, and led by Laura Freid, executive director and CEO. The Project has a vision of connecting the world's neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe. Inspired by the cultural traditions of the historic Silk Road, the Silk Road Project is a catalyst promoting innovation and learning through the arts.

The Silk Road Project is affiliated with Harvard University and Rhode Island School of Design. Ford Motor Company is a global corporate partner of the Silk Road Project. Other sponsors include Mikimoto and the U.S. Department of State.