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**THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE CELEBRATES THE MUSIC OF CHINA WITH
FREE PERFORMANCES FEB. 23 AND 24**

February 1, 2007, Chicago IL –The Silk Road Ensemble will return to Chicago in February, presenting a repertoire including traditional and contemporary music of China as part of *Silk Road Chicago*, a yearlong, citywide celebration inspired by the art and culture of the regions of the historic Silk Road. Under the artistic direction of world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the Ensemble will anchor this visit—the group’s fifth—with a free concert at the University of Chicago on February 23 and a morning of special gallery performances at the Art Institute of Chicago on February 24.

The highlight of this *Silk Road Chicago* journey is a free concert by the Silk Road Ensemble and Beijing-based quartet China Magpie at the University of Chicago. China Magpie, whose music blends ancient Chinese folk songs with Western styles ranging from classical to pop, was founded by Silk Road Ensemble member Wu Tong, a vocalist and virtuoso on the sheng, a Chinese mouth organ. Together these groups will perform a spirited selection of original works and arrangements of traditional music. The concert will take place on Friday, February 23 at 7:30 p.m. at the University of Chicago’s International House, 1414 E. 59th Street, Chicago. The performance is free and open to the public. For more information, call (773) 753-2274 or visit silkroadchicago.org.

The Silk Road Ensemble will return to the Art Institute of Chicago to perform throughout the museum, drawing inspiration from its diverse collections. In this intimate setting, small groups of Ensemble members will interact with museum visitors and present a wide range of musical styles and influences from lands along the historic Silk Road. Gallery performances will take place on Saturday, February 24 from 10:15 a.m. to 1 p.m., and are free with museum admission. The Art Institute of Chicago is located at 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago. For more information, call (312) 443-3600 or visit silkroadchicago.org.

As part of its activities at the University of Chicago, the Silk Road Ensemble will also hold a composer’s forum and a workshop for students. In addition, the Ensemble’s *Silk Road Chicago* residency will coincide with the release of a second edition of the Silk Road Chicago Express Passport. The original Express Passport, a free interactive guide created by the Silk Road Project to lead children and families on an exploration of local cultural institutions, was released in November. This second edition features new partners and additional activities, and will be announced in late February.

Silk Road Ensemble members participating in this Silk Road Chicago journey include Michael Block, *cello*; Nicholas Cords, *viola*; Jonathan Gandelsman, *violin*; Joseph

Gramley, *percussion*; Colin Jacobsen, *violin*; Shane Shanahan, *percussion*; Mark Suter, *percussion*; Kojiro Umezaki, *shakuhachi*; DaXun Zhang, *bass*; and Wu Tong, *sheng*, with fellow China Magpie members Xiang Gao, *violin*; Li Hui, *pipa*; and Liu Lin, *ruan*.

About *Silk Road Chicago*

Silk Road Chicago (www.silkroadchicago.org) is a unique collaborative effort among the Silk Road Project, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, the Chicago Office of Tourism, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC). From June 2006 to June 2007, Chicago is being transformed through performances, exhibitions, demonstrations and events that explore cross-cultural discovery and celebrate the artistic legacy of the Silk Road. With this initiative, Chicago becomes the first city in the world to collaborate in a yearlong partnership with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Project. *Silk Road Chicago* was initiated by Yo-Yo Ma, who dreamed of bringing the historic Silk Road, the ancient network of trading routes that connected the people and traditions of Asia with those of Europe, and the ideas it represents to life in one of the most diverse cities in the world. Inspired by this transmission of ideas and its modern-day manifestations, cultural organizations across Chicago are joining together as never before to offer a wide array of special concerts, exhibitions and other artistic programming exploring the themes of *Silk Road Chicago*.

The Silk Road Project's contributions to *Silk Road Chicago* include performances, master classes, workshops and educational programs featuring Ma and other Silk Road Ensemble members. Events will be presented in Chicago schools, universities and cultural institutions throughout the year, concluding with extended residencies with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

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.

Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of 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.

Other sponsors include Mikimoto and the U.S. Department of State. The Silk Road Project is affiliated with Harvard University and Rhode Island School of Design.

About the Silk Road Ensemble

The Silk Road Ensemble is a collective of musicians interested in 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 one of the artistic challenges 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 Massachusetts in 2000, under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma. Since then, various combinations of these artists, whose diverse careers encompass and often intermingle Western and non-Western classical, folk and popular music, have performed a variety of programs, both with and without Ma, in Silk Road Project concerts and festivals in Europe, Asia and North America.

Formed to bring new ideas, talent and energy into the world of music as well as to nurture musical and artistic creativity, the Silk Road Ensemble, made up of musicians from around the world, has traveled the globe with as many as 50 members bringing Eastern and Western music together with inspiring results. While the Ensemble is known for its series of interdisciplinary festivals and residencies presented in North America, Europe and Asia, *Silk Road Chicago* marks the first time that the Silk Road Project has undertaken a yearlong partnership in one city.