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**SILK ROAD PROJECT AND HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ENCOURAGE ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL COLLABORATION
DURING FALL RESIDENCY
November 26-30, 2007**

**Residency includes presentations and workshops by
Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble;
Harvard launches Silk Road-inspired interdisciplinary courses**

November 5, 2007, Providence, R.I. — Harvard University will host the acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble for a residency this fall that will engage musicians, students and faculty in creative and intellectual discourse focusing on *Layla and Majnun*, a classic Azerbaijani opera and Arabic love story. The residency, taking place November 26 through November 30, is part of a five-year collaboration initiated in 2005 between Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Silk Road Project, a not-for-profit arts and educational organization inspired by the interchange of culture and ideas along the historic Silk Road. The residency, an affiliate program of the Office for the Arts at Harvard and the Department of Music, coincides with related interdisciplinary courses at Harvard that have developed during the partnership with the Silk Road Project through a shared aim to ignite a passion for learning and teaching through new collaborative approaches to education.

During the residency, the Silk Road Ensemble will concentrate on developing a chamber arrangement of the classic Azerbaijani opera *Layla and Majnun*, composed by Uzeyir Hajibeyov in 1908. The Silk Road Ensemble arrangement of "Layla and Majnun" was made possible in part by the generous support of the Académie Musicale de Villecroze. The new work features Ensemble member Alim Qasimov, a renowned Azeri vocalist, leading performer of *Layla and Majnun* and proponent of mugham, a traditional form of poetry and music in Azerbaijan. As part of the creative process, the musicians will invite Harvard faculty and students to workshops, presentations and performances. Under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma, the musicians will present work-in-progress performances of their chamber arrangement of *Layla and Majnun* at Harvard's recently renovated New College Theatre on Thursday, November 29 and Friday, November 30. The University's Arthur M. Sackler Museum has also mounted an installation of paintings illustrating the story of Layla and Majnun by artists from greater Iran, the Ottoman Empire and India, dating from c.1500-1850, that will be on view through February 10, 2008.

"2008 marks the 100th anniversary of the first performance of the Hajibeyov opera *Layla and Majnun* and provides an appropriate time for us to bring this ancient story to a wider audience," stated Yo-Yo Ma founder and artistic director of the Silk Road Project. "We

look forward to exploring the work with the students and faculty at Harvard and hope it will inspire further interest in the timeless Arabic story, the art of mugham and other rich cultural traditions of the Silk Road.”

Layla and Majnun is a classic Arabic love story dating back to the seventh century that has influenced Central Asian music and literature as deeply and permanently as the tragic fate of Romeo and Juliet has permeated western literature.

In its third year of affiliation with Harvard University, the Silk Road Project is working with Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences to develop interdisciplinary curricula in the arts, literature, history and music of the Silk Road region. Complementing the residency are two interdisciplinary Silk Road-inspired courses: Travel and Transformation on the High Seas: An Imaginary Journey in Early 17th Century, an ongoing course about global mobility, encounter and exchange taught by Stephen J. Greenblatt, Cogan University Professor of English and Historical and Musical Paths on the Silk Road, an exploration of the interconnectedness of the historical cultures of Eurasia taught by Mark C. Elliott, Mark Schwartz Professor of Chinese and Inner Asian History and Richard Kent Wolf, Harris K. Weston Associate Professor of the Humanities, during the spring semester.

“The Silk Road Project’s collaboration with Harvard has brought to campus its unique mix of artistic excellence, intellectual excitement, and ethical commitment to cultural exchange and cultural difference,” stated Diana Sorensen, dean for the humanities in Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences. “Our Silk Road courses are characterized by interdisciplinary collaboration and by the conviction that cultural mobility and exchange have always been at the heart of creativity and innovation. We are thrilled with this collaboration and its results.”

Visit the homepage of the Silk Road Project at Harvard for more information on the Silk Road Ensemble’s residency, November events and the story and development of *Layla and Majnun*: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~silkroad/>.

Following the residency at Harvard University in November, the Silk Road Ensemble will be in residence at Rhode Island School of Design in spring 2008; Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble will travel to Japan for a nationwide tour in April 2008.

THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE RESIDENCY AT HARVARD

Public Performances

Work-in-Progress Performance of *Layla and Majnun*
November 29, 2007 7:30 pm

Work-in Progress Performance of *Layla and Majnun*
November 30, 2007 7:30 pm

The Silk Road Ensemble presents a work-in-progress performance of its new chamber arrangement of the classic Azerbaijani opera *Layla and Majnun*, featuring mugham performer and Azerbaijani Living National Treasure Alim Qasimov.

Other Public Presentations

Other programs during the residency—including presentations on the role of mugham in Azerbaijan, the cultural and literary significance of *Layla and Majnun* and the global journey of indigo—are interactive and informal, and include musical demonstrations by members of the Silk Road Ensemble:

The Revival and Reinvention of Azerbaijani Mugham

November 26, 2007 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Led by Dr. Aida Huseynova, ethnomusicologist, teacher and Fulbright scholar

Layla and Majnun: A Classic Arabian “Romeo and Juliet”

November 28, 2007 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Led by Ali Asani, Professor of the Practice of Indo-Muslim Languages and Cultures

Indigo: The Story of a Silk Road Dye

November 30, 2007 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Led by Ingrid Monson, Quincy Jones Professor of African-American Music

For a full listing and descriptions of residency programs, visit
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~silkroad/events.html>.

Admission is free to all events, which take place at New College Theatre, 10-12 Holyoke Street, Cambridge. Tickets to the Thursday and Friday evening performances will be available in advance through the Harvard Box Office, 1350 Mass. Ave in Holyoke Center, starting on November 13. For the afternoon presentations, tickets are available at the door on a first-come first-served basis. For further information, visit www.boxoffice.harvard.edu or call 617-496-2222.

LAYLA AND MAJNUN AT THE SACKLER MUSEUM

On the Path of Madness: Representations of Majnun in Persian, Turkish and Indian Painting

September 27, 2007 – February 10, 2008

Monday – Saturday 10 :00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 485 Broadway, Cambridge

The Sackler Museum presents an exhibition of works that illustrate the story of *Layla and Majnun* focusing on the tragic tale of Majnun, whose desperate longing for his beloved Layla set him on a path of madness.