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**THE SILK ROAD PROJECT ANNOUNCES NEW COMMISSIONS FOR THE
SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE**

**Acclaimed Composers and Musicians Gabriela Lena Frank, Rabih Abou-Khalil,
Giovanni Sollima, Sandeep Das, Siamak Aghaei and Colin Jacobsen Create New
Silk Road Ensemble Repertoire at Commissioning Workshop and Open Rehearsal
at Tanglewood Music Center, September 7-15, 2008**

PROVIDENCE, R.I., August 18, 2008 - The Silk Road Project, a non-profit organization founded by Artistic Director Yo-Yo Ma to connect musicians, composers, artists and audiences around the world, announces the commission of three new works by renowned composers Gabriela Lena Frank, Rabih Abou-Khalil and Giovanni Sollima, as well as two additional works by long-time Silk Road Ensemble members Sandeep Das, Siamak Aghaei and Colin Jacobsen. The works of these six composers and arrangers will offer a multitude of voices, echoes and overtones—ranging from Peru and Jewish Eastern Europe, to Lebanon and Germany, to Sicily, Iran, India and the United States. The new pieces will be introduced into the Silk Road Ensemble's repertoire during the Project's commissioning workshop at the Tanglewood Music Center from September 7-15, 2008. The Silk Road Ensemble will hold an open rehearsal of these newly unveiled works at Tanglewood's Seiji Ozawa Concert Hall at 7 p.m. on Monday, September 15.

"New music is the lifeblood of the Silk Road Ensemble," stated Yo-Yo Ma. "Our commissioning program forms the foundation for the remarkable exchanges that take place between musicians from so many different countries and traditions. One of my favorite things about the Ensemble is the way members introduce musicians and composers whose work they are passionate about. We're constantly saying to each other 'You've got to hear this!' I think that enthusiasm, combined with the time and effort we put into incubating new works, really makes the Silk Road Project's commissioning program unique."

The Silk Road Project must commission and arrange new works for the Silk Road Ensemble, since very little existing music is written for the Ensemble's unique combinations of instruments. The Silk Road Project's commissioning program began at Tanglewood in Summer 2000, continued at L'Academie Musicale de Villecroze in southern France in Summer 2001, Tanglewood in Fall 2004 and Fall 2006, and returned to L'Academie Musicale de Villecroze in Summer 2007. Talented musicians, intrigued by the opportunity to compose music for instruments from the Western classical tradition and Silk Road regions, are selected to collaborate with Silk Road Ensemble members on the development of new pieces. The composers attend rehearsals of their works, which offers them the unique opportunity to refine their original ideas and test new approaches.

The creation of new music is a constantly evolving process, with Ensemble members and composers working in tandem to create a diverse repertoire and expand opportunities for connections between artists and audience during performances. To date, the Silk Road Project has commissioned 64 works from composers from 17 countries, many of which have been recorded by the Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma and performed around the world.

"With this round of commissions, I'm especially excited because we are deepening some important relationships with Gabriela Lena Frank and Rabih Abou-Khalil and working for the first time with Giovanni Sollima, whose music embodies the centuries of wide-ranging influences that have long made Sicily a cultural crossroads," said Yo-Yo Ma. "It's also been thrilling to watch Siamak, Colin and Sandeep develop as composers and arrangers, as well as musicians, in the eight years I've known them. I can't wait to hear what they come up with."

Gabriela Lena Frank

Gabriela Lena Frank's compositions are inspired by her diverse heritage as an American of Peruvian, Chinese, Lithuanian and Jewish descent. She has committed herself to exploring South American culture and folklore, and has been lauded as a "musical anthropologist" as her work often incorporates Latin American poetry, mythology, and native music styles into a Western classical framework. Frank's *Ritmos Andinos*, which combines Chinese and Andean musical influences, was commissioned for the 2006 workshop at Tanglewood and performed during the Silk Road Ensemble's 2008 tour of Japan, and will be featured in upcoming performances during the Silk Road Project's 10th-anniversary season.

Rabih Abou-Khalil

An accomplished instrumentalist and composer raised in Beirut and Munich, Rabih Abou-Khalil's compositions intertwine Arabic and Western musical traditions in a contemporary context. The Silk Road Ensemble met Abou-Khalil at the 2007 workshop in Villecroze, France, and he has arranged a performance of his celebrated *Arabian Waltz* for the Silk Road Ensemble, which has been a favorite of Silk Road Ensemble members and audiences. This is his first commission expressly for the Silk Road Ensemble. Other recent commissions include works for the Südwestfunk (Southwest German Radio) and BBC Concert Orchestra, and he has collaborated with the Ensemble Modern, one of the most renowned orchestras specializing in contemporary music.

Giovanni Sollima

Giovanni Sollima is an accomplished cellist and progressive composer whose diverse and eclectic approach is characterized by elements of classical, jazz and rock music. Sollima is influenced by ethnic sounds from his native Sicily, North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkan States. Despite his traditional Western classical roots, Sollima's compositions extend beyond conventionality, eluding fixed genres. In addition to performing as a soloist at world-renowned concert halls, his work has been commissioned for ensembles, film directors and choreographers. This will be Sollima's first collaboration with the Silk Road Ensemble.

Sandeep Das

A member of the Silk Road Ensemble since 2000, Sandeep Das is considered one of the premier tabla players today. His percussion expertise has made him a celebrity in India and earned him international renown. Das was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2005 for one of his approximately 20 collaborative albums.

Siamak Aghaei

A talented santur player, Siamak Aghaei is regarded as among the best Iranian classical musicians of his generation. An integral member of the Silk Road Ensemble since 2000, Aghaei has studied folk music traditions of Iran for the past decade.

Colin Jacobsen

A graduate of the Juilliard School and regular performer with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center among other New York ensembles, Jacobsen has performed with the Silk Road Ensemble since 2000. His most recent arrangement for the Ensemble has been of an ancient Persian song, Ascending Bird.

About the Silk Road Project

The Silk Road Project is a not-for-profit arts, cultural and educational 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 interchange of culture and ideas along the historic trade route, the Silk Road Project presents performances by the Silk Road Ensemble; commissions new musical and multimedia works; and develops educational materials and programming. Partnering with other institutions to present musical, visual and narrative traditions from Silk Road regions, the Silk Road Project engages audiences throughout the world through performances, educational programs, and residencies in universities, colleges, museums and schools.

About Yo-Yo Ma

The many-faceted career of cellist Yo-Yo Ma is testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences and to his personal desire for artistic growth and renewal. Ma maintains a balance between his engagements as soloist with orchestras worldwide and his recital and chamber music activities. His discography includes more than 75 albums, including 16 Grammy award winners. One of Ma's goals is the investigation of music as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the migration of ideas; in 1998, he established the Silk Road Project to promote the study of cultural, artistic and intellectual traditions along the ancient Silk Road trade routes. Ma was born in Paris to Chinese parents who later moved the family to New York. He began to study cello at the age of four, attended the Juilliard School and in 1976 graduated from Harvard University. He has received numerous awards, including the 1978 Avery Fisher Prize, the 1999 Glenn Gould Prize, the 2001 National Medal of Arts, the 2006 Sonning Prize, the 2006 Dan David Prize, and the 2008 World Economic Forum's Crystal Award. In 2006,

he was designated a United Nations Messenger of Peace by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon extended his appointment.

About the Silk Road Ensemble

The Silk Road Ensemble is a select group of performers and composers drawn from a wide range of cultural and international musical heritages. The Ensemble presents innovative and energetic performances that explore traditional and contemporary music from their diverse backgrounds, provide a creative platform for their own artistic growth and engage audiences in further learning about the Silk Road.

For more information, please visit www.silkroadproject.org.