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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE SILK ROAD PROJECT INTRODUCES CROSS-CULTURAL MUSIC
AND EDUCATION AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**Weekly performances will animate the Museum's *Traveling the Silk Road* exhibition
each Sunday from November 15, 2009, through August 15, 2010**

***Along the Silk Road* curriculum training at the Museum's Educator Evening on
November 18, 2009, will engage teachers with the cultural legacy of the Silk Road**

November 12, 2009, Providence, R.I. —The Silk Road Project will offer a series of musical and educational events at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in conjunction with the Museum's new exhibition, *Traveling the Silk Road: Ancient Pathway to the Modern World*. Musical programs coordinated by the Silk Road Project will take place every Sunday afternoon for the duration of the exhibition, from November 15, 2009, through August 15, 2010. On November 18, a workshop for teachers will introduce a Silk Road curriculum prior to the Museum's Educator Evening. Together these programs offer diverse perspectives on the historical Silk Road as well as its contemporary resonances.

Performances brought together by the Silk Road Project will take place at 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30 PM every Sunday between November 15, 2009, and August 15, 2010, in the *Traveling the Silk Road* exhibition gallery space. A group of long-time members of the Silk Road Ensemble is coordinating the musical series: Nicholas Cords, violist; Shane Shanahan, percussionist; and Kojiro Umezaki, who plays the shakuhachi, a Japanese bamboo flute. Together they are recruiting a diverse lineup of musicians—including members of the Silk Road Ensemble as well as local performers—whose music will reflect a connection with the goods, peoples, arts, technologies and cultures showcased in the exhibition. These weekly performances will range from traditional music to new works that draw on the traditions that are flourishing in New York City today.

On Sunday afternoons, musicians will also be available to answer questions from visitors, discuss their instruments, and explore connections with the objects in the exhibition's four sections, each of which is modeled on an ancient city: Xi'an, China's Tang Dynasty capital; Turfan, a verdant oasis; Samarkand, home of prosperous merchants; and ancient Baghdad, hub of commerce and scholarship.

“We’re expecting some interesting questions and comments, since most visitors may not be used to the idea of live musicians in the context of an exhibit,” said Nicholas Cords. “We have encouraged the musicians to make their own connections with the exhibit, either literal—through material used to make their instruments, or musical traditions tied directly to one of these regions—or figurative, drawing on the idea of exchange and transformation that is so central to the history of the Silk Road. Our goal is to make this exhibit even more memorable through the addition of music and dialogue.”

The ***Along the Silk Road Curriculum Workshop*** for educators, which will be held from 4 to 5:30 PM on November 18, will train teachers in a curriculum developed by the acclaimed Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE) and the Silk Road Project. *Along the Silk Road* offers teachers and students in grades six through 10 maps, video, audio, photos, and interactive lessons that investigate the geography, cultures, belief systems, arts, languages, and commerce of the historic Silk Road region.

Teachers also have the opportunity to preview the exhibition *Traveling the Silk Road*, receive the Museum’s Educator Guides, hear from exhibition curator Dr. Mark Norell, Division Chair and Curator-in-Charge of the Museum’s Division of Paleontology, and enjoy a brief performance by members of the Silk Road Ensemble during the Museum’s **Educator Evening** the same night, from 5:30 to 8 PM. To register for the event, please call 212-769-5200.

“We have been overwhelmed by how engaged teachers and students have been with the *Along the Silk Road* curriculum and maps now in hundreds of classrooms nationally,” said Laura Freid, chief executive officer and executive director of the Silk Road Project. “Through our collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, we can now invite New York City teachers, students, and parents to journey to the ancient cities along this historic trading route. I hope that everyone will enjoy some of the many modern musical perspectives that will animate the experience on Sunday afternoons throughout the year.”

PERFORMANCE SERIES

Sunday, November 15, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

The Shanazaki Ensemble

Using cross-cultural instrumentation—shakuhachi, oud, cello and percussion—Shanazaki creates a unique blend of the traditional and the contemporary.

Sunday, November 22, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Kinan Azmeh

Syrian virtuoso clarinetist Kinan Azmeh brings together classical, jazz and Arabic music in performance with New York-based guitarist Kyle Sanna.

Sunday, November 29, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Brooklyn Rider

The genre-bending string quartet Brooklyn Rider presents original material inspired by Silk Road regions and beyond.

Sunday, December 6, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Bassam Saba and Shane Shanahan

Lebanese-born musician Bassam Saba performs traditional music from the Arab world and Turkey on oud, nay and saz with accompaniment from percussionist Shane Shanahan.

Sunday, December 13, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Time Changes Percussion Trio

This dynamic drumming group draws on ancient sources from the Middle East, India, Indonesia and Africa, framing them in the context of 21st-century New York.

Sunday, December 20, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Time Changes Percussion Trio

See above.

Sunday, December 27, 2009: 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 PM

Faraz Minooei, santur; Behfar Bahadoran, tar; Shohreh Majd, vocals

Musicians of the contemporary Persian generation perform traditional and reimagined Iranian classical music.

Future performances will be listed on the Silk Road Project website

(www.silkroadproject.org/schedule) and the American Museum of Natural History website (www.amnh.org/silkroad).

About the Silk Road Project

The Silk Road Project is a not-for-profit artistic, cultural and educational organization with a vision of connecting the world's neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe. Founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998 as a catalyst to promote innovation and learning through the arts, the Silk Road Project takes inspiration from the historic Silk Road trading route as a modern metaphor for multicultural and interdisciplinary exchange. Under the artistic direction of Mr. Ma and the leadership of CEO and Executive Director Laura Freid, the Silk Road Project presents performances by the acclaimed Silk Road Ensemble, engages in cross-cultural exchanges and residencies, leads workshops for students, and partners with leading cultural institutions to create educational materials and programs. Developing new music is a central mission of the Silk Road Project, which has been involved in commissioning and performing more than 60 new musical and multimedia works from composers and arrangers from around the world. For more information on the Silk Road Project and the Silk Road Ensemble, visit the Project's online pressroom at <http://www.silkroadproject.org>.

About the Silk Road Project's educational programs in New York City

The *Along the Silk Road* Curriculum Workshop is part of the Silk Road Project's ongoing educational initiative in New York City. **Silk Road Connect** is a multi-year, multidisciplinary program designed to inspire passion-driven learning by empowering middle school students and teachers to make connections across courses of study and in their own lives. The Silk Road Project is piloting Silk Road Connect in five New York City middle schools by invitation from the NYC Department of Education as part of its

Campaign for Middle School Success. Other partners include the American Museum of Natural History, CALLIOPE Magazine, Manhattan School of Music, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, SPICE, and Teachers College at Columbia University. The *Along the Silk Road* Curriculum Workshop was made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation. For more details on the curriculum and workshop, visit <http://www.silkroadproject.org/teachers>.

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