



For Immediate Release

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Silkroad Partners with the University of Limerick

The new partnership will launch on September 8 with music workshops and a public performance as part of Silkroad's exploration of the American Transcontinental Railroad

Boston, MA — [Silkroad](#), the global musical ensemble founded by cellist and cultural ambassador Yo-Yo Ma, announced today a partnership with the [University of Limerick](#) (UL) in Ireland. The artistic and educational collaboration will provide UL students with the unique opportunity to participate in the creation of a theater work exploring the history, cultures, and music of the immigrant communities who built the American Transcontinental Railroad. The resulting piece will be a crucial component of [The American Railroad](#), Silkroad's multi-year concert, educational, and commissioning series led by Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens.

The partnership will officially kick off on Thursday, September 8 with a series of workshops exploring the stories and songs of Irish railroad workers, followed by a performance featuring artists from Silkroad and UL. The concert is being held at Harvard University's ArtLab (140 North Harvard Street in Boston, MA) at 7 p.m., and will be preceded by a reception at 6 p.m. The reception and concert are open to the public; a suggested donation of \$30 is encouraged. Due to limited capacity, advance RSVPs are required via email to Alysha@silkroad.org.

"Having worked with the University of Limerick as their artist-in-residence over the last year, I've been dreaming up a collaboration between them and our artists at Silkroad for some time. Members of our team visited UL's campus in March—just down the street from my home in Ireland—to begin exploring the intersections of Irish traditions and Irish American music within the context of the American Railroad. It's a joy to continue that journey now in Silkroad's neck of the woods, and I can't wait to see what we create together," shared Giddens.

An array of artistic and educational activities—including master classes, workshops, artistic retreats, and performances—will broaden the newly-established collaboration in the coming months. These activities will gather Silkroad and UL artists in Ireland to uncover the Irish community's impact and legacy on the American railroads, focusing on musical traditions that have been widely shared and reinterpreted since the 19th century. UL students will also be invited to share in and learn from the creative process as these artists join forces to design, shape, and produce a new theater work, with music written and performed by members of the Silkroad Ensemble, as part of *The American Railroad* project. The UL residencies will be based at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, and will be facilitated and overseen by Dr. Sandra Joyce, Interim Executive Dean of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences at UL.

“UL is delighted to forge this partnership with the prestigious Silkroad Ensemble, particularly through Silkroad’s Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens,” stated Dr. Joyce. “Rhiannon’s presence in Limerick, where she is raising her family, and her appointment as artist-in-residence at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance have provided us with a unique opportunity to develop our relationship, and we are excited about the potential to collaborate going forward. Silkroad’s *The American Railroad* is a very appropriate focus for the building of our connections. We are delighted to be in Boston and at Harvard to celebrate the partnership and to plan for the future!”

As an organization that believes in the power of the arts to create social change, Silkroad’s partnerships strive to add more equity and justice into the world. Artist residencies are long-term educational partnerships designed to integrate academic curriculum with Silkroad’s mission and ongoing artistic initiatives. Through them, Silkroad artists and staff work closely with schools, conservatories, and universities to curate programs that provide an understanding of global cultures and musical traditions, as well as collaborations with innovative artists and insight into their creative processes. The UL partnership will follow this model, leveraging the arts as a unique tool to inspire creativity, explore identity, and activate a generation of changemakers.

Funding Credits

Support for *The American Railroad* is provided, in part, by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Alice L. Walton Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Wagner Foundation, and Hyosung Corporation. Underwriting is generously provided by Thomas Roush and LaVon Kellner, Diann Kim, Lori Samuels, and the Silkroad Board of Directors. Silkroad gratefully acknowledges their generous support of activities that promote innovation, education, and cross-cultural understanding through the arts.

About Silkroad

Yo-Yo Ma conceived Silkroad in 1998, recognizing the historical Silk Road as a model for cultural collaboration—for the exchange of ideas, tradition, and innovation across borders. In a groundbreaking experiment, he brought together musicians from the lands of the Silk Road to co-create a musical language founded in difference, thus creating the foundation of Silkroad: both a touring ensemble comprised of world-class musicians from all over the globe and a social impact organization working to make a positive impact across borders through the arts.

Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens, Silkroad leads social impact initiatives and educational programming alongside the creation of new music by the Grammy Award-winning Silkroad Ensemble.

To learn more, please visit silkroad.org and @silkroadproject on social media.

About the University of Limerick

The University of Limerick is an independent, internationally focused university. It is a young, energetic, and enterprising university with a proud record of innovation in education and excellence in research and scholarship. It is located on the west coast of Ireland along the picturesque River Shannon and enjoys an unspoiled natural environment blended with state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities. On its award-winning campus, students can study in a safe and supportive environment. The University of Limerick has been voted number one in the world for student experience.

UL offers more than 70 undergraduate programmes and a strong postgraduate offering with more than 100 taught postgraduate programmes to Doctoral and Post-doctoral level. UL Global at the University of Limerick, assists all international students coming to UL under its Postgraduate, Undergraduate, Study Abroad, Erasmus+, Exchange, and Summer School programmes.

UL pioneered the concept of Cooperative Education in Ireland, placing more than 2,000 students in paid and semi-paid work placements annually with over 1,600 different companies- 30% of these as international placements. These valuable work experiences make UL graduates more employable.

To learn more, please visit ul.ie and @universityoflimerick or @UL on social media.

About the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance

The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance is a centre of academic and performance excellence housed at the University of Limerick, Ireland. Founded in 1994 by Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, it has come to find its true home on the beautiful banks of the River Shannon in a state-of-the-art building, which includes two theatres, recording studios, individual practice rooms and dance studios. It provides an inspiring creative space for all those who study and work there. The Academy has a strong international presence, with over 50 countries represented by its current student body and alumni. The Academy also has a faculty of excellent performers, academics, and industry professionals. The Irish World Academy offers a suite of taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in music, dance, and related subject areas and its research is at the forefront of these fields of enquiry worldwide.

To learn more, please visit irishworldacademy.ie and @irishworldacademy or @IWorldAcademy on social media.

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