

The Silk Road Project
at Cal Performances is presented by
United Commercial Bank

Yo-Yo Ma, cello
and the
Silk Road Ensemble

Wednesday, April 24, 2002, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

PROGRAM

A. Adnan Saygun Partita, Op. 31 (1954)
(Turkey) Allegretto
cello

Vache Sharafyan The Sun, the Wine, and the Wind of Time (1998)
(Armenia) duduk, piano, violin, cello

(Azerbaijan) Classical Music from Azerbaijan
Alim Qasimov, vocalist
tar, kamancheh

INTERMISSION

Michio Mamiya Kio (1988)
(Japan) shakuhachi, cello

Kayhan Kalhor Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur (2000)

(Iran/New York) kamancheh, ney, santur, tabla, violin 1, violin

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arr. Kalhor/Prutsman+ viola 1, viola 2, cello 1, cello 2, bass

A roster of Silk Road Ensemble musicians is located on p. 13.

* Written in May 2000 on commission for the Silk Road Project, Inc., and dedicated to the life of Harrison Kravis.
+The arrangement for Persian instruments is by Mr. Kalhor and the arrangement for string parts is by Stephen Prutsman.

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Seven hundred years after Marco Polo, the Silk Road still evokes a nebulous geography that, like an ancient mariner's map, stretches between reality and fantasy. Indeed, these days the Silk Road is no less a product of imagination and metaphor than a legacy of actual historical events, and this very hybridity is what has made it such an enduring symbol of cultural discovery and exchange.

Both the symbolism and the reality of the Silk Road attracted Yo-Yo Ma, who created the Silk Road Project as a way to study the global circulation of music and musical ideas. One of the Project's first activities was a program to commission composers to write chamber music works that evoke the spirit of East-West cultural exchange symbolized by the Silk Road. Thus far, composers from the lands of the Silk Road—including China, Mongolia, Korea, Armenia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan—have completed their commissions, and one of these works appears on tonight's program: *Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur* by Kayhan Kalhor from Iran. Vache Sharafyan, from Armenia, another composer commissioned by the Silk Road Project, is represented on tonight's program by an earlier work that features the *duduk*. Traditional music ends the second half of the program with renowned singer Alim Qasimov performing classical music from Azerbaijan. Tonight's program also features two works, one written in Turkey and one in Japan, which resonate with the evening's theme of cross-cultural musical exchange.

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The study and collection of folk music played a pivotal role in the career of Turkish composer Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907–1991), just as it had for his mentor, Hungarian composer Béla Bartók. “In order to understand people's souls and psychology and, of course, to understand myself and my own problems,” explained Saygun, “I decided I had to understand the people and villages of Anatolia. So I traveled throughout the country and lived among the people in villages.” His studies in Western composition at the Paris Conservatory deepened his interest in learning more about the music of his homeland. His sister performed the *oud*, the short-necked fretless lute of Middle-Eastern art music. At local nightclubs or *gazin*os, Saygun was exposed early on to a *mélange* of Turkish art song, folk song, dance, and gypsy music—performed, more often than not, by musicians who had been removed from the Ottoman court during the declining years of the Empire. His claim that the pentatonicism of the region's folk music came from Central Asia was widely embraced by a group of Turkish nationalists who sought to create a new secular republic. Tonight's performance features Saygun's simple, yet artful, *Partita* (Op. 31).

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Armenian composer Vache Sharafyan (b. 1966) represents the variegated influences of the Silk Road. After receiving a degree in composition from the Yerevan State Conservatory, he served as musical director of the Armenian Theological Seminary in Jerusalem. His music is informed by post-Soviet compositional techniques, as well as the liturgical and folk music of Armenia and Israel. In *The Sun, the Wine, and the Wind of Time*, Sharafyan features the Armenian *duduk* as a solo instrument, supported by a Western piano trio. The *duduk* is one of the many wind instruments that traveled the historic Silk Road. Similar double-reed instruments are found in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, and northern Iran. The Armenian *duduk* is over 1,500 years old and is a cylindrical wooden flute made of apricot root with eight finger holes and one thumbhole. It is played by holding a special double reed or “slit-tube” reed between the lips. In Sharafyan's work, the monophonic line of the *duduk*, which is typical of Armenian folk music, is juxtaposed against post-Soviet harmonies. Armenian liturgical and folk music references are also present in this work.

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Azerbaijan, a nation in the Caucasus bordering northwest Iran, is home to a rich musical tradition that has existed since the height of the Silk Road. Acclaimed Azerbaijani vocalist Alim Qasimov is one of the foremost exponents of a form of art music known as *mugham*, a complex collection of modally based suites based upon traditional models. *Mugham* is

typically performed by a trio that includes a tar (long-necked lute), performed here by Malik Mansurov, and kemancheh (spike fiddle), performed by Rauf Islamov, in addition to a daf (framedrum) played by the vocalist. Born in 1957, Alim Qasimov grew up 100 kilometers from the capital of Baku. Following a stint in the army, he held various odd jobs as a truck driver and mechanic in one of the ubiquitous oil refineries bordering the Caspian Sea. In 1978, he began his conservatory studies with Agha Khan Abdullaev, who instructed him in the art of the mugham. There is no one correct method or school for learning mugham; rather, each artist must take his own path, which explains the great variety of mugham styles. In 1999, recognized for his musical contributions to world peace, Alim Qasimov was awarded the coveted International IMC-UNESCO Music Prize. Past winners of the Prize have included Yehudi Menuhin, Ravi Shankar, Olivier Messiaen, Daniel Barenboim, Claudio Arrau, and Herbert von Karajan.

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Kio (1988), by Michio Mamiya (b. 1929), offers a natural view of the world that crosses the divide between musical cultures. Tonight's program features music that has wandered while remaining rooted in an authentic musical tradition. Just as Zoltán Kodály's Sonata for Cello was inspired by the folk melodies of Eastern Europe, Mamiya's work has been similarly marked by the composer's own peripatetic travels and study of Scandinavian, African, and Japanese folk music. Kio combines the cello with the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese end-blown bamboo flute employed in ancient times by a sect of wandering Zen Buddhist monks who used the instrument as a devotional tool to rout out falsity. Written as a monody in homage to Japanese poet Kio Kuroda, the piece was inspired by the following verse:

Silent field, our native soil,
My words embody the existence,
Of the pained, yet awakened soul,
Who rises up against his homeland.

The muted yet guttural murmurs of the shakuhachi are produced by a special technique called *muraiki*, which requires one to blow a strong gust of air into the instrument. In this piece, the unearthly pitches of the shakuhachi sinuously coil around the cello line to create a stark yet uniquely beautiful musical landscape.

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Neyshabur, one of the oldest cities on the Silk Road, was a major cultural crossroads that boasted one of the ancient world's first universities. It produced many of Iran's greatest poets, including Omar Khayyam and At'ar, and was also known for its turquoise. In *Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur*, Kayhan Kalhor (b. 1963) draws inspiration from traditional Iranian modal melodies, which he supports with an ensemble of Western strings. Featured instruments include the kemancheh (spike fiddle), santur (struck zither), and ney (bamboo flute). Born in Teheran, Kalhor began studying classical violin at age six, but found his own musical voice in its Persian analog, the kemancheh. Explains Kalhor, "It is a misunderstanding that Persian classical music is the same as Arab music. At the height of the Persian Empire, the music, poetry, and literature of Persia spread to India, Central Asia, Turkey, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Persian music can still be heard today in the music of Andalusia and the Spanish flamenco." A passionate advocate for these traditions, Kalhor spends half his year teaching Persian classical music to conservatory-trained students in Tehran.

As a metaphor for cultural exchange, the Silk Road might at first suggest linear connections between East and West. Yet the works and lives of the composers represented in tonight's program demonstrate that the process of cross-cultural innovation is exquisitely circuitous. For Yo-Yo Ma and his colleagues in the Silk Road Project, illuminating both the diversity and the unifying elements of this process is a primary aim. Said Ma, "As we interact with unfamiliar musical traditions, we encounter voices that are not exclusive to one community. We discover trans-national voices that belong to one world."

—Esther Won

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Background on the artists and the Silk Road Project is located on p. 7.