PROGRAM: THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE
FEBRUARY 24 / 7:30 PM
BING CONCERT HALL
ARTISTS

The Silk Road Ensemble
Yo-Yo Ma, artistic director
Joseph Gramley, associate artistic director

Kinan Azmeh, clarinet
Jeffrey Beecher, bass
Mike Block, cello
Nicholas Cords, viola
Haruka Fuji, percussion
Johnny Gandelsman, violin
Joseph Gramley, percussion
Cristina Pato, gaita and piano
Shane Shanahan, percussion
Kojiro Umezaki, shakuhachi
Michi Wiancko, violin

Tour Management:
Opus 3 Artists
Mary Pat Buerkle, senior vice president, manager, artists and attractions

Silkroad:
Laura Freid, CEO/executive director
Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, director of artistic and learning programs
Liz Keller-Tripp, artistic administrator
Christopher Marrion, deputy director
Jessica Shuttleworth, digital media and events specialist
Ed Sweeney, comptroller and business manager
Lori Taylor, education specialist

Production:
Jody Elff, sound engineer
Lisa Porter, stage manager
John Torres, lighting designer
Elijah Walker, monitor engineer

INTRODUCTION

For nearly 2,000 years (ending in the 14th century), the series of land and sea trade routes that composed the historical Silk Road created an intercontinental superhighway of exchange as goods and innovations crisscrossed Eurasia. Inspired by these many exchanges—of knowledge, religious beliefs, artistic practices, and musical traditions—we like to think of our group as a creative cauldron, with a vision of connecting artists and audiences around the world. By exploring the traditional music of each other's cultures and commissioning new works (many composed by Ensemble members), we hope to create the feeling of a borderless musical experience, one which returns in spirit to the joyous campfire gatherings of former Silk Road adventurers.

PROGRAM

Cristina Pato, Kojiro Umezaki

Vojo

Kojiro Umezaki

Ibn Arabi Postlude

Giovanni Sollima

Taranta Project *

Traditional Galician and Edward Perez

The Latina 6/8 Suite **

I. Tarantella-Muiñeira
II. Tanguillo: The High Seas
III. Joropo-Festejo: Muiñeira de Chantada
IV. Fandango: Prueba de Fuego

INTERMISSION

Kojiro Umezaki

Tsuru no Ongaeshi
(Repayment from a Crane)

Osvaldo Golijov

Night of the Flying Horses

Suite of Songs

Sandeep Das, Kojiro Umezaki
Michio Mamiya
Kinan Azmeh, Jeffrey Beecher
John Zorn, arr. Cristina Pato

If you shall return...
Miero vuotti uutta kuuta from
Five Finnish Folk Songs
Syrian Improvisation
Khavier from Book of Angels***

* Commissioned by Silkroad
** Arrangement commissioned by Silkroad, based on an idea by Cristina Pato for her Latina project
*** Arrangement commissioned by Silkroad

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.
Vojo was conceived by Silk Road Ensemble members Cristina Pato and Kojiro Umezaki to connect two sides of the world—Spain and Japan—through the somewhat unlikely but thoroughly Silk Road-ian pairing of the gaita (Galician bagpipes) and shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute). Pato and Umezaki were intrigued by the possibilities of creating a common language through music, just as Esphahan tried to do with written and spoken language in the 19th century. In fact, vojo means “the way” or “the road” in Esperanto. Using traditional melodic lines from Galicia and Okinawa, Vojo introduces this evening’s program with a dialogue from opposite sides of the world attempting to understand and connect with each other’s cultural roots.

Tonight’s version of Ibn Arabi Postlude was created for the Silk Road Ensemble by Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and comes from his orchestral work The Ibn Arabi Suite (commissioned by the Osnabrück Symphony Orchestra). The work was inspired by the writings of Ibn Arabi, an Arab Muslim mystic and Sufi philosopher who traveled from Andalusia to Damascus in the 13th century seeking knowledge. Azmeh was struck by Ibn Arabi’s philosophy that love and free thinking are as sacred as any religious beliefs. About the music, which is in a 15/8 meter, he says, “The piece blurs the lines between the composed and the improvised and can be described as an obsessive ritualistic dance in the maqam, or melodic form, known as Kurd.”

“I follow the Way of Love, and where Love’s caravan takes its path, there is my religion, my faith.”
—Ibn Arabi

In his music, Sicilian cellist and composer Giovanni Sollima deftly combines elements of classical music, rock, and jazz, as well as ethnic musical traditions from Sicily and other Mediterranean lands such as North Africa, Israel and the Middle East, the Balkan states, Turkey, and Andalusia. Though certainly not a direct link, the linguistic closeness of Sollima and Suleiman (yes, that Suleiman, the Magnificent, 16th-century sultan of the Ottoman Empire) perhaps hints at the great cultural fluidity and richness of the Mediterranean region.

Many of these influences are evident in Taranta Project, commissioned by Silkroad for its 2008 workshop at the Tanglewood Music Center. Following a mirage-like introduction, the work launches into a sequence of feverish dances whose intricate interlocking grooves call upon the performers to oscillate between village band and rock band. At one point, the piece breaks into a duet between cello and percussion, an episode overflowing with bravado (perfect for busking). The cello part calls for scordatura to achieve “power chords” by tuning the C string an octave lower than normal, and the score calls for the percussionist to freely add vocalization and body rhythms. Calm reassurances that no musician was harmed in the making of this performance...

The Latina 6/8 Suite consists of original material by Edward Perez along with traditional music, all based on an idea conceived and commissioned by Cristina Pato as part of her Latina album project. The four-movement suite begins with the Italian tarantella (a style hinted at in the preceding Taranta Project) and travels through Spain and Latin America. Pato explains that the piece is “a way to embrace my heritage through music, looking at the connections between the country where the word ‘Latino’ originated—Italy—and the countries that are considered ‘Latino’ today.” The suite explores the many facets of 6/8 meter, essential to such styles as the Venezuelan joropo, the Peruvian festejo, and the Galician muiñeira, along with other rhythms from dances that have traveled both to and from the Latin world, namely the tanguillo and the fandango.

On a recent residency in Lame Deer, Montana, an exchange of stories took place between Native American youth, Ko Umezaki, and fellow Silk Road Ensemble members. Umezaki learned how the flute came to the Northern Cheyenne tribe; he then used his shakuhachi to illustrate the life of a crane, a story with deep symbolic overtones in Japanese culture. The resulting work expands on that experience to bring to life one of the most popular folk stories in Japan, which Umezaki retells in Tsuru no Ongaeshi, or Repayment from a Crane. The piece seamlessly weaves together two modes of storytelling: one through the spoken word and the other through both original music and select fragments from traditional Edo Period shakuhachi repertoire, which serve to underscore the essential drama and atmosphere of the story.

Argentinian native Osvaldo Golijov grew up around classical music, klezmer, and tango and has created an utterly distinctive compositional language drawing from those influences and many more. A long-time friend and collaborator of the Silk Road Ensemble, he has a passionate curiosity and the uncanny ability to juxtapose disparate elements, which have gained him a singular profile as a composer. The three pieces that make up Night of the Flying Horses are his arrangements for the Silk Road Ensemble of an original concert work scored for flute, clarinet, and strings called Lullaby and Doina. The lullaby is a set of variations on a Yiddish lullaby he composed for Sally Potter’s film The Man Who Cried. According to Golijov, “The lullaby metamorphoses into the second movement, a dense and dark doina (a slow, rubato Gypsy lament), and closes with a fast gallop boasting a theme I stole from friends who are members of the wild Gypsy band Taraf de Haidouks.”

During a Silk Road Ensemble residency at the Art Institute of Chicago in 2006, ensemble members Sandeep Das, Ko Umezaki, and Hu Jianbing (fellow ensemble member and sheng virtuoso from China) were huddled together, just moments before a gallery performance, wondering what they were going to play. Das whispered a tune into Umezaki’s ear, which was subsequently “reinterpreted” by Hu Jianbing in the performance as something quite different from what Das had originally
intended. The original tune, heavy-laden in a minor modality, was spontaneously inverted that day into a decidedly more sunny version! What Das sang initially was a Bhatiali boat song from the Ganges delta region. The solitary boatmen associated with these songs would typically sing out of loneliness, not knowing if or when they would return.

Since its inception that day in Chicago—and very much embracing that day’s game of musical telephone—it has grown into the present work. *If you shall return*... Assembled by Umezaki, this composition adds expanded melodic material and solo sections, all set against the altered original motive (heard initially in the viola). As the tune gently gathers steam, it eventually reaches a turbulent climax—perhaps a point of no return for the boatman?

Michio Mamiya’s insatiable curiosity about the traditional music of his native Japan—along with Scandinavia and Africa—greatly influenced his compositional output. Early on in his life as a composer, Mamiya became fascinated with the Sami people of Finland (also known as the Lapps), the indigenous people of sub-Arctic Scandinavia who represent a somewhat surprising musical and linguistic connection to the East. Inspired to explore deeper, Mamiya traveled to Finland to study its indigenous music, following his studies in Western classical music composition at the Tokyo Academy. Tonight’s selection, *Miero vuotti uutta kuuta* (a song of the new moon), is a loving snapshot of these encounters and is excerpted from Mamiya’s larger 1977 collection, *Five Finnish Folk Songs for Cello and Piano*.

Following an improvisation by Kinan Azmeh and bassist Jeffrey Beecher, we close with *Khabiel* from *Book of Angels*, a sprawling collection of short melodies in lead-sheet form (melody plus basic chordal outline), created and assembled with a near monastic dedication by the prolific American composer, multi-instrumentalist, and improviser John Zorn. *Book of Angels* is the second in a series of collections from Zorn’s Masada project, an experiment in Jewish musical styles inspired by his own heritage. In approaching this arrangement, Pato found that “the original melody of *Khabiel* took me directly to the south of Spain.” Indeed, a distinctively flamenco flavor grounds this arrangement, broken up in the middle by the weightless visitation of a heavenly presence.

Night of the Flying Horses appears on New Impossibilities (Sony Classical). *Miero vuotti uutta kuuta* appears on Silk Road Journeys: When Strangers Meet (Sony Classical). *If you shall return*... appears on Sing Me Home, scheduled for release in spring 2016 (Sony Classical).

—Notes by Nicholas Cords

**ABOUT SILKROAD**

Inspired by his curiosity about the world and eager to forge connections across cultures, disciplines, and generations, cellist Yo-Yo Ma founded the nonprofit organization Silkroad in 1998. Through Silk Road Ensemble performances, the creation of new music, and programs for educators and teaching artists, Silkroad is committed to exploring the role of the arts in fostering cross-cultural understanding, deepening learning, and promoting innovation.

With a conviction that by exploring our differences we enrich our humanity, this community of globally minded artists, passionate learners, and cultural entrepreneurs strives to create unexpected connections, collaborations, and communities in pursuit of meaningful change. Recognizing every tradition as the result of successful innovation, Silkroad works at the edge where education, business, and the arts come together to spark new ways of looking at our world.

**ABOUT THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE**

Since 2000, the Silk Road Ensemble has been redefining music for 21st-century audiences. Formed by Yo-Yo Ma as a way of bringing together performers and composers from around the world, the ensemble continues to break new ground. It has been called “vibrant and virtuosic” by the Wall Street Journal, “one of the 21st century’s great ensembles” by the Vancouver Sun, and a “roving musical laboratory without walls” by the Boston Globe. Audiences and critics throughout Asia, Europe, and North America have embraced these artists, who are passionate about cross-cultural understanding and innovation.

The Silk Road Ensemble’s performers and composers hail from more than 20 countries. Dedicated to learning from one another’s traditions and incorporating them into their own artistic voices, these rooted explorers co-create art, performance, and ideas. Through engaging, high-energy programs, the Silk Road Ensemble draws on the rich tapestry of traditions that make up our shared cultural heritage, creating a new musical language—an engaging and accessible encounter between the familiar and the previously unknown.

Throughout Asia, Europe, and North America, the Silk Road Ensemble has performed for more than 1.8 million people in some of the world’s most lauded venues including Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall, the Concertgebouw, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Ensemble performances have also highlighted the Nobel Prize celebrations in Stockholm, the Sir Bani Yas Forum in the United Arab Emirates, the Special Olympics in Shanghai, the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland, and London’s BBC Proms.

The group has recorded five albums, including its most recent CD, *A Playlist without Borders*, and the Live from Tanglewood DVD, and is currently recording a new album to be released in 2016. A documentary about the Silk Road Ensemble by Academy Award–winning filmmaker Morgan Neville, *The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble*, will also be released in 2016.

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