





**THE MUSIC OF STRANGERS:**

**YO-YO MA AND THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE**

Directed by Morgan Neville

(Director of the Academy Award® winning 20 FEET FROM STARDOM)

Produced by Tremolo Productions in association with Participant Media and The Silk Road Project



Running Time: 96 minutes

***Distribution Contact:***

Dan Goldberg / The Orchard / 646.256.3030 / [dgoldberg@theorchard.com](mailto:dgoldberg@theorchard.com)

***Press Contacts:***

Ryan Werner and Emilie Spiegel / Cinetic PR (NY)

[ryan@cineticmedia.com](mailto:ryan@cineticmedia.com) [emilie@cineticmedia.com](mailto:emilie@cineticmedia.com)

Nancy Willen / Acme PR (LA)

[nancywillen@acmepr.net](mailto:nancywillen@acmepr.net)

[www.facebook.com/TheMusicofStrangers](http://www.facebook.com/TheMusicofStrangers)

**THE MUSIC OF STRANGERS: YO-YO MA AND THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE**

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

From the director of the Oscar®-winning documentary 20 Feet from Stardom and the critically acclaimed Best of Enemies, the new film ***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble*** tells the extraordinary story of the renowned international musical collective created by legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma. The feature-length documentary follows this group of diverse instrumentalists, vocalists, composers, arrangers, visual artists and storytellers as they explore the power of music to preserve tradition, shape cultural evolution and inspire hope.

**LONG SYNOPSIS**

Over the past 16 years, an extraordinary group of musicians has come together to celebrate the universal power of music. Named for the ancient trade route linking Asia, Africa and Europe, The Silk Road Ensemble, an international collective created by acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, exemplifies music’s ability to blur geographical boundaries, blend disparate cultures and inspire hope for both artists and audiences.

***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble***, the latest film from the creators of the Oscar-winning documentary 20 Feet from Stardom and the critically-hailed Best of Enemies, follows an ever-changing lineup of performers drawn from the ensemble’s more than 50 instrumentalists, vocalists, composers, arrangers, visual artists and storytellers as they gather in locations across the world, exploring the ways art can both preserve traditions and shape cultural evolution.

Blending performance footage, personal interviews and archival film, director Morgan Neville and producer Caitrin Rogers focus on the journeys of a small group of Silk Road Ensemble mainstays from across the globe to create an intensely personal chronicle of passion, talent and sacrifice. Through these moving individual stories, the filmmakers paint a vivid portrait of a bold musical experiment and a global search for the ties that bind.

The Orchard presents, in association with Participant Media, HBO and The Silk Road Project, a film by Morgan Neville, ***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble***. The Producers are Morgan Neville and Caitrin Rogers. Executive producers are Participant Media’s Jeff Skoll and Diane Weyermann, The Silk Road Project’s Laura Freid, Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, Motto Pictures’ Julie Goldman, and HBO’s Sheila Nevins. The Director of Photography is Graham Willoughby. The Editors are Jason Zeldes and Helen Kearns.

**ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

***“The intersection of cultures is where new things emerge.”***

Yo-Yo Ma, cellist and founder of the Silk Road Ensemble

Stretching from the farthest reaches of Asia to the streets of ancient Rome, the fabled Silk Road was a complex network of highways, footpaths and ancient trails connecting the world’s far-flung civilizations, including China, India, Persia, Africa, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Encompassing more than 4,600 miles of trade routes, the Silk Road provided safe passage for generations of adventurers, pilgrims and entrepreneurs, and enabled an exchange of merchandise, technology and ideas that transformed culture and shaped the modern world.

In the new documentary ***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble***, filmmaker Morgan Neville profiles the legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma and examines the many ways in which art and culture continue to define and connect people across the globe through the work of the innovative international arts collective he founded, the Silk Road Ensemble. A group of extraordinary musicians playing instruments as familiar as the cello, the clarinet and the banjo, and as exotic as the Arabic oud, the Chinese pipa and the Persian kamancheh, the Silk Road Ensemble has for 16 years provided some of the finest performers in the world an opportunity to learn from other traditions and share their own.

A movie as bursting with energy and ideas as Yo-Yo Ma himself, ***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble*** chronicles the musical visionary’s 20-year journey through global music. “My background is in classical music,” says Ma. “When I meet someone from another tradition, I can see how they approach music differently. A Roma musician or an Appalachian fiddler has certain freedoms, but also specific rules. You can find the national soul in the ethos of the music of a certain region. It conjures up memories, images and historical references—all the little things that create culture.”

Ma’s interest, he says, is a natural progression of years spent exploring cultural connections in the music world. As an example, he recalls seeing an unfamiliar musical instrument in the Imperial Palace in Japan that bore evidence of a remarkable journey. “It was like a Chinese pipa but with five strings instead of the usual four. The only other existing example is a painting in the Dunhuang caves in China. The instrument had a painting of a Persian man on a camel with a Chinese mountain landscape in the background. The back was inlaid with mother of pearl and two red stones that I was told came only from East Africa. It arrived in Japan around the same time Buddhism first got there. A 1,500-year-old instrument that carries traces of very different places traveled the same route as religion and now exists only in Japan.”

Neville, whose previous films included cinematic treatments of Western popular-music icons The Rolling Stones, Johnny Cash and Ray Charles, was interested in exploring the ensemble’s cross-cultural collaborations. “We’ve all heard that music is an international language that builds bridges between people,” says Neville. “But what does that really mean and how does it really work? Yo-Yo’s been on a 20-year journey to figure out how he can use music to make the world a better place. I wanted to go along for the ride and see what it can do in action.”

**THE CHALLENGE**

***“Traditions are born of innovation and when culture fails to innovate, it will die.”***

Yo-Yo Ma

For The Silk Road Project, the organization that oversees the ensemble’s activities, this was an opportunity to achieve something far larger in scope than a conventional concert film. “We always wanted to do something that would bring the audience more deeply into the richness of our work,” says Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, The Silk Road Project’s Director of Artistic and Learning Programs. “As Yo-Yo often says, music is the tip of the iceberg with Silk Road. He’s always interested in connection. He believes that if you look deeply enough at anything that seems local, you always find global elements, but we tend to be unaware of how we’re constantly influencing each other. Morgan grasped the idea immediately.”

Less than a week after their first meeting, Neville was in Hong Kong, meeting the ensemble and attending a live performance. From there, he followed the group to mainland China. “I found myself wondering what I’d gotten myself into,” Neville laughs. “Figuring out what the film was about was an enormous part of our early journey. There is so much context and history that would never have fit into the concert format. All the themes in the film are things Yo-Yo has been grappling with for years. Seeing them through his eyes opened up a way to tell a bigger story about music and culture.”

Since October 2013, in addition to China, the filmmakers have been to Jordan, Turkey, Spain and all over the United States, documenting the ensemble as well as individual members pursuing independent projects. “This was the most difficult film I’ve ever done,” says Neville. “It was hard to get permission to shoot in many places. We had an especially hard time in the refugee camp in Jordan and were eventually asked to leave. In China, we had a government minder watching over us at all times.”

After seeing some of Neville’s initial footage, Participant Media, a company whose mission is to create entertainment that inspires and accelerates social change, came on board the project in 2014. “One of the essential building blocks of a peaceful and prosperous world is communication,” says Diane Weyermann, Participant’s Executive Vice President, Documentary Film and an executive producer on ***The Music of Strangers***. “We have to be willing to be open with one other and make an effort to understand one another. This film is about people doing that by creating, composing and playing music together.”

Neville’s efforts have made him not only its chronicler but an integral part of the Silk Road Ensemble, according to Laura Freid, The Silk Road Project’s CEO and Executive Director. “He went on several tours and worked with individual artists to tell their stories,” she says. “We now think of him as a co-creating artist. He’s very comfortable in the musical genre and adept at telling stories with music. It was very exciting to have him portray our world through a totally different lens.”

Adds Ma: “We are very happy to have someone as sensitive and creative as Morgan telling our story. It’s been fascinating to see how he has shaped the narrative. This is not just a story about what each of the musicians has done. It is also about the meaning behind what they do. It’s about our responsibility to one another. That’s a huge part of our story.”

**WHERE IT ALL BEGAN**

***“We started as a group of musicians getting together and seeing what might happen when strangers meet.”***

Yo-Yo Ma

***The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble*** takes audiences back to 2000, when Ma first brought together more than 50 master musicians from the lands of the Silk Road in Lenox, Massachusetts. The result of years of preparation and work with musicologists, ethnographers and anthropologists who studied the musical traditions of countries along the ancient trade routes, the unprecedented gathering became what former executive director of The Silk Road Project Ted Levin calls “the Manhattan Project of music.”

After 10 days of collaboration and improvisation, the workshop concluded with a concert that debuted 16 new pieces for an enthusiastic audience of musical luminaries. When the participants returned to their distant corners of the world, Ma and The Silk Road Project were faced with a decision. “When some projects end, you know they were wonderful to have done,” says Ma. “This one was different. We were faced with a decision. Should we go on or was this it?”

Over the years, the Silk Road Ensemble has continued and evolved into an organization of musicians and artists exploring themes of cultural connectivity, history and tradition, as well as a family of people from vastly different backgrounds who explore and celebrate their commonality. “In the process, they model for us a way to understanding the Other,” says Neville. “If there’s anything we should be doing today, it’s that, because so many forces in our world want us to be scared of the Other.”

The key to the group’s success, according to Ma, is the people who sustain it. “Each of them is a great virtuoso on their instrument, but that’s the least of what they are,” he says. “Their form of expression is one part of their form of caring. The Silk Road Ensemble is a group of extremely creative people who excel at what they do. But more than that, they love to work with one another and do it exceedingly well. Everybody knows something deeply, but they all know something different and want to share their knowledge. It’s been wonderful to see their personal evolution, but we’ve also seen the artistic evolution and how that gets into the broader context of community and culture and traditions. We’ve learned to collaborate through differences and build trust.”

With that in mind, Neville trained his camera on a small group of Silk Road Ensemble members from China, Iran, Syria and Spain. “One of the reasons we chose musicians from these countries is that they are or have been in danger of having their cultures erased,” he says. “In countries that undergo cultural revolutions, it is common for artists to be silenced, to be marginalized, jailed, exiled or worse. Art gives people hope. It asks them to think for themselves. It does a lot of things that can be threatening to repressive governments.

“In China and in Iran,” the director continues, “the revolution wasn’t just about erasing Western influence. It was about erasing the country’s own traditional cultures. Traditional music was specifically targeted. One of the most important functions of the ensemble is to preserve culture by sharing it. Tradition seems like a simple concept, but trying to take it apart and explore what it means is difficult. It’s not just something you pay lip service to or see in a museum. It’s a growing, evolving presence. Each of the musicians we highlight represents how traditions grow and survive.”

**A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH**

***“The idea of culture is not so much to preserve tradition, but to keep things alive and to evolve things.”***

Yo-Yo Ma

In the film, Kayhan Kalhor of Iran, Wu Man of China, Cristina Pato of Galicia and Kinan Azmeh of Syria all make music publicly and privately, professionally and with family and friends, while discussing the influence that the Silk Ensemble has had on their lives. “We focused on musicians who remind us that being an artist can involve sacrifice and hardship, in addition to joy and other wonderful things,” says Neville. “There is a diversity of geography and gender and style. Their stories are complementary, but different.”

One of the film’s larger themes is the idea of home: What it is, what it means, how it defines each of us. “All of these musicians, including Yo-Yo, left a home and a tradition for the road less traveled,” Neville says. “And ultimately, each came back with a newer, broader view of the world. That’s Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey in a nutshell.”

Kayhan Kalhor, an internationally acclaimed master of the kamancheh, or Persian spiked fiddle, and three-time Grammy® nominee, fled Iran at 17. He walked thousands of miles across Europe to sanctuary with just his backpack and his instrument. “Kayhan is a lifelong champion of Persian music and culture,” says Neville. “He has had a difficult life trying to do one simple thing: play and preserve the music of the kamancheh. It’s symbolic of how complicated life can get in a place like Iran.”

When he finally returned to Iran to teach the traditional Persian style of playing, he found a generation that knew nothing of its history. “My intention is to represent my culture and the contribution that this very old culture made to human life,” he says in the film. “My instrument, the kamancheh, it was not being taught. I was really lucky I had a chance to work with the older generation of players.”

Kalhor married while in Iran and settled outside Tehran, but politics have forced him to flee once again. “I don’t know who writes the scripts for different revolutions, but they all look the same,” he says. “And they affect people’s lives in the same way.”

For Wu Man, the world’s premier pipa (Chinese lute) player and a leading ambassador of Chinese music, leaving China was an opportunity to collaborate with unorthodox partners and set a new standard for her instrument. But on her return to her homeland, she found traditional music disappearing quickly and started an effort to document Chinese folk music.

“She felt people there had so little regard for tradition that she had to become its defender,” says Neville. “She has gone from musical renegade to musical preservationist.”

The filmmakers follow Wu Man to Xian, where she introduces them to the Zhang Family Band, the 11th generation of the clan to perform their raucous and unbridled shadow-puppet plays. Learning that it is unlikely there will be a 12th generation of Zhang family performers, she arranged for them to perform a show in New York City.

Wu Man admits that shuttling between two cultures can make it difficult to belong anywhere. “In America, everyone thinks you’re Chinese. You play a Chinese instrument. You come from China. But in China they say oh, you’re American. You don’t know today’s China.”

The ensemble’s latest recruit, clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, is also one of Syria’s rising musical stars. The current conflict there forced him into exile in 2012. “What he’s going through right this moment with his homeland is incredibly poignant,’ says Neville. “It made him question if art means anything. The realization he came to, and what I believe, is that art always means something.”

The filmmakers followed Azmeh to a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan where he is joined by visual artist and ensemble member Kevork Mourad to conduct workshops for the children. “They think there isn’t time for music,” he says. “[But] that’s when people need music. People need at least one moment of happiness, but the reality on the ground doesn’t make that easy.

“When the Syrian revolution started,” Azmeh adds, “I found myself experiencing emotions that are far more complex than I can express in my music. I found myself not able to write any music. The journey is you look for your voice and sometimes you think you’ve found it. Then once you have it, it changes.”

Like Wu Man, Cristina Pato is a rebel who has become a defender of tradition. The world’s leading player of the Galician bagpipe, or gaita, her unconventional performance style has earned her the sobriquet “the Jimi Hendrix of the gaita.”

“Cristina brings such a different energy to the ensemble and the film,” says Neville. “She has a lightness and playfulness. There are some difficult issues, but music can also be about joy and she’s very joyous. People have been trying to erase Galician culture for 2,000 years. Her Spain is not the Spain of flamenco and bullfights. It’s almost like the South coast of Ireland. Everyone eats seafood and plays bagpipes.”

Galicia was once its own country and still maintains a unique language, but Pato has been dismayed to see the region’s ways being eroded. As founder of the Galician Connection, a multidisciplinary festival celebrated annually in Galicia, she has taken the guiding principles of The Silk Road Ensemble and tried to replicate them in her homeland.

“Being part of this experiment makes me understand what it means to keep your identity alive,” she says. “I have dreams of having some sort of role in the arts in Galicia in the future.”

The musicians all speak eloquently about the struggles that motivate them and the creative relationships that sustain them. “You see Cristina talking about writing music inspired by her mother,” observes Ma. “Kinan is such an optimistic person and all of this is happening in his country of birth—what can he do about it? We’ve built a huge amount of trust and make it a point to help one another out. Whether it’s Cristina doing her festival in Galicia, or Sandeep Das and his work in India, they invite each other to participate, which creates a lot of cross collaboration.”

These individual and collaborative efforts help open doors into a more expansive and inclusive world, according to Weyermann. “The story of the Silk Road Ensemble is a story of people coming together and focusing on how to move forward in a complex, conflict-ridden world. It is about discovering unexpected commonalities and celebrating our shared humanity.”

For Rogers, the personal stories are the heart of the Silk Road Ensemble and the film. “Hearing about the work they do to support their cultures is the most interesting part of all this,” she says. “The cooperation was inspiring. People interact at a different level than I’ve ever seen.”

**PLAYING INTO THE FUTURE**

***“I’m always trying to figure out at some level who I am and how I fit in the world, which is something that I think I share with seven billion other people.”***

Yo-Yo Ma

Ultimately, the new traditions the Silk Road Ensemble is creating may be the salvation of the old ones they are working to protect. “Every tradition is the result of successful invention,” says Yo-Yo Ma. “But as soon as something becomes successful, people want something else just like it and the tradition becomes smaller. The idea of culture is not so much to preserve tradition, but to keep things alive and evolving. Human beings grow by being curious and receptive to what’s around them. A lot of people are scared of change, and sometimes there’s reason to be fearful. But if you can welcome change, you become fertile ground for development.”

As a musician himself, Neville feels privileged to share the ensemble’s story with the world. “Music is an amazing Trojan horse,” says the director. “It’s a profound way of explaining and exploring all different kinds of issues. Every music movie I’ve made is really about something else. For example, 20 Feet from Stardom is about ego and fame. My film about Stax Records is really about the civil rights movement. Because music carries history and emotion within it, it is an incredible tool for a filmmaker. It allows us to take people on journeys they may not even know they want to go on.”

Weyermann agrees, adding: “Morgan has done a lot of work focusing on music, but it is never just about music. This is a film about the power and inspiration of music and art to connect people across different divides.”

The unifying factor in all of Neville’s films is that they are about culture, he says. “And about how art and culture fit into world that likes to measure things in concrete ways. Art is difficult to quantify. We explore what culture means to remind people that it reflects the way we see ourselves. This film is trying to remind people that culture is not the frosting on the cake. It’s the plate that the cake sits on.”

Telling this story has been creatively very fulfilling but often challenging, he admits. “Nothing about this film was ever easy. This world is almost limitless. But part of the reason I make a film is because it’s set in a world I want to learn about. The story could have gone in a variety of directions. There are a lot of characters and a lot of ideas. We shot all over the planet. It was a complex puzzle to put together. We have a lot of smart people saying a lot of smart things about music, but ultimately, for me, that doesn’t compare with experiencing the music. The music speaks for itself.

“I want people to come out of the film and feel like they learned something they didn’t even know they wanted to learn,” the filmmaker continues. “I hope people can see some version of themselves in one of the characters and understand that we’re all on these journeys of self-definition. These artists just happen to do it with their music.”

For Ma, the Silk Road Ensemble brings some elements of his life full circle. “My father was born in 1911 and left China when he was about 25 to go to France to study. He wrote about what Chinese music might sound like with French techniques of composing. Isn’t that strange? All these years later, the apple didn’t fall that far from the tree.”

The Silk Road Ensemble has become home for him, Ma concludes. “We started as a group of musicians getting together and seeing what might happen when strangers meet. Now, when I’m with them, I feel a huge amount of creativity and trust. I am supported, inspired and energized by the work they do. It’s a pleasure to have seen them grow into mature artists and contributing cultural citizens. They are all people who care about their communities. Some are professors and some run festivals. They have all created fulfilling and meaningful lives for themselves in sometimes trying circumstances and I feel like I’m a fuller human being for the experience of knowing and working with them.”

**FEATURED ENSEMBLE MEMBERS**

**YO-YO MA** is a cellist whose many-faceted career is a 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.

Ma’s discography of more than 90 albums (including 18 Grammy Award winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. He has made several successful recordings that defy categorization, among them “Hush,” with Bobby McFerrin; “Appalachia Waltz” and “Appalachian Journey,” with Mark O’Connor and Edgar Meyer; and two Grammy-winning tributes to the music of Brazil, “Obrigado Brazil” and “Obrigado Brazil – Live in Concert.” His recent recordings include “Mendelssohn Trios,” with Emanuel Ax and Itzhak Perlman; “The Goat Rodeo Sessions,” with Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile and Stuart Duncan (which received the 2013 Grammy for Best Folk Album); “A Playlist Without Borders,” recorded with the Silk Road Ensemble, which was released in 2013; and “Songs From the Arc of Life” with Kathryn Stott. Across this full range of releases, Ma remains one of the best-selling recording artists in the classical field. All of his recent albums quickly entered the Billboard chart of classical best sellers and remained in the Top 15 for extended periods, often with as many as four titles on the list simultaneously.

In 2009 Sony Classical released a box set of more than 90 albums to commemorate Ma’s 30 years as a Sony recording artist. He has received numerous awards, among them the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the National Medal of Arts (2001) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2011). Also in 2011 Ma was recognized as a Kennedy Center Honoree. He has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

Ma is the artistic director of The Silk Road Project, an organization he founded to promote cross-cultural performance and collaborations at the edge where education, business and the arts come together to transform the world. More than 80 works have been commissioned specifically for the Silk Road Ensemble, which tours annually. Ma also serves as the Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His work focuses on the transformative power that music can have in individuals’ lives, and attempts to increase the number and variety of opportunities that audiences have to experience music in their communities.

Ma is also widely recognized for his strong commitment to educational programs that bring the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world. While touring, he takes time whenever possible to conduct master classes as well as more informal programs for students (musicians and non-musicians alike). He has also reached young audiences through appearances on “Arthur,” “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” and “Sesame Street.”

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 4, attended the Juilliard School and in 1976 graduated from Harvard University. Ma recently joined the Aspen Institute Board of Trustees.

Ma and his wife have two children. He plays two instruments: a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice and the 1712 Davidoff Stradivarius.

**WU MAN** is a Grammy-nominated musician widely recognized as the world’s premier pipa virtuoso and a leading ambassador of Chinese music. Wu Man has carved out a career as a soloist, educator and composer, giving her lute-like instrument – which has a history of over 2000 years in China – a new role in both traditional and contemporary music. Through numerous concert tours, she has premiered hundreds of new works for the pipa, while spearheading multimedia projects to further the awareness of China’s ancient musical traditions.

Wu Man’s adventurous spirit and virtuosity have led to collaborations across artistic disciplines, allowing her to reach wider audiences as she works to break through cultural and musical borders. Wu Man’s efforts were recognized when she was named Musical America’s 2013 Instrumentalist of the Year, the first time this prestigious award has been bestowed on the player of a non-Western instrument.

Having been brought up in the Pudong School of pipa playing, one of the most prestigious classical styles of Imperial China, Wu Man is now recognized as an outstanding exponent of the traditional repertoire as well as a leading interpreter of contemporary pipa music written by today’s most prominent composers. She was awarded The Bunting Fellowship at Harvard University in 1998 and became the first Chinese traditional musician to receive the United States Artist Fellowship in 2008. She also has the distinction of being the first artist from China to perform at the White House.

Wu Man’s discography spans more than 40 albums, including the Grammy-nominated recordings “Our World in Song,” “Traditions and Transformations: Sounds of the Silk Road Chicago,” her recording of Tan Dun’s Pipa Concerto with Yuri Bashmet and the Moscow Soloists, and “You’ve Stolen My Heart,” featuring the Kronos Quartet.

During the 2015-16 season Wu Man has embarked on an extensive North American tour with her longtime friends and colleagues the Shanghai Quartet. The tour takes them to 12 cities across the U.S., with a final concert at The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Wu Man also travels to Brussels and Geneva to collaborate with Uyghur singer Sanubar Tursun for performances presented by the Aga Khan Music Initiative, an interregional music and arts education program. Orchestral highlights of the season include a performance with the West Michigan Symphony of Zhao Jiping’s Pipa Concerto No. 2, which was written for her, as well as performances with the New York Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony (for their Chinese New Year celebrations).

Born in Hangzhou, China, Wu Man studied with Lin Shicheng, Kuang Yuzhong, Chen Zemin and Liu Dehai at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she was accepted into the conservatory at age 13 and became the first recipient of a master’s degree in pipa. Wu Man’s audition was covered by national newspapers and she was hailed as a child prodigy, becoming a nationally recognized role model for young pipa players. She subsequently received first prize in the First National Music Performance Competition, among many other awards, and she participated in many premieres of works by a new generation of Chinese composers.

Wu Man’s first exposure to western classical music came in 1979 when she saw Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra performing in Beijing. In 1980 she participated in an open master class with violinist Isaac Stern and in 1985 she made her first visit to the U.S. as a member of the China Youth Arts Troupe.

Wu Man moved to the U.S. in 1990 and currently resides with her husband and son in California.

**KINAN AZMEH** is quickly gaining international recognition for creating an utterly distinctive sound across different musical genres. He has appeared worldwide as a soloist, composer and improviser. Notable appearances include Opéra Bastille, Paris; Tchaikovsky Grand Hall, Moscow; Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall and the U.N.’s general assembly, New York; Royal Albert Hall, London; Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires; Philharmonie, Berlin; the Library of Congress and the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.; Mozarteum University, Salzburg; and Damascus Opera House (for its opening concert), in his native Syria.

Azmeh has appeared as a soloist with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the NDR Bigband, the Kyiv Camerata, The Knights orchestra, the Izmir State Opera Orchestra, the Corasara Orchestra, the Osnabrück Symphony, the Morgenland Festival Orchestra, the Qatar Philharmonic, the New Juilliard Ensemble and the Syrian Symphony Orchestra. He has shared the stage with Yo-Yo Ma, Marcel Khalife, Aynur Doğan, Daniel Barenboim, Djivan Gasparyan, Zakir Hussein, François Rabbath, Simon Shaheen, Solhi al-Wadi, the Calefax Reed Quintet and members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

His compositions include several works for solo, orchestra and chamber music as well as film, live illustration and electronics. His discography includes three albums with his ensemble Hewar, several soundtracks for film and dance productions, a duo album with pianist Dinuk Wijeratne and a recent album with his New York Arabic/jazz quartet.

Azmeh serves as artistic director of the Damascus Festival Chamber Music Ensemble, with whom he released an album of new contemporary Syrian chamber music written for the ensemble by various composers. Azmeh is also a frequent guest faculty at the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music and is on the advisory board of the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra.

Born in Damascus, Azmeh was the first Arab to win the top prize at the 1997 Nikolai Rubinstein International Competition in Moscow. He is a graduate of New York’s Juilliard School (as a student of Charles Neidich) as well as the Damascus High Institute of Music (where he studied with Shukry Sahwki, Nicolay Viovanof and Anatoly Moratof) and Damascus University’s School of Electrical Engineering. Azmeh earned his doctorate in music from the City University of New York in 2013.

**KAYHAN KALHOR** is a three-time Grammy nominee and an internationally acclaimed virtuoso on the kamancheh. Through his many musical collaborations he has been instrumental in popularizing Persian music in the West and remains a creative force in today’s music scene. Kalhor’s performances of traditional Persian music and multiple collaborations have attracted audiences around the globe. He has studied the music of Iran’s many regions, in particular those of Khorason and Kordestan, and has toured the world as a soloist with various ensembles and orchestras including the New York Philharmonic and the Orchestre National de Lyon.

Kalhor is the co-founder of the renowned ensembles Dastan, Ghazal: Persian & Indian Improvisations, and Masters of Persian Music. He has composed works for Iran’s renowned vocalists Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Shahram Nazeri, performing and recording with Iran’s greatest instrumentalists. Composing music for both television and film, his work was recently featured on the soundtrack of Francis Ford Coppola’s Youth Without Youth, in a score on which he collaborated with Osvaldo Golijov.

In 2004 Kalhor was invited by American composer John Adams to give a solo recital at Carnegie Hall, as part of Adams’ Perspectives Series. That same year, he appeared on a double bill at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, sharing the program with the Festival Orchestra and performing the Mozart Requiem.

**CRISTINA PATO** is a Galician bagpiper, pianist and educator who enjoys an active professional career devoted to jazz and Galician popular and classical music. Her dual careers have led to performances on major stages throughout the U.S., Europe, India, Africa and China. Pato is a founding member of the Leadership Council for Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble, collaborating closely in tours and planning residencies such as a multi-year partnership with Harvard University.

In 1999 Pato became the first female gaita (Galician bagpipe) player to release a solo album and has since collaborated on world stages with Yo-Yo Ma, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Osvaldo Golijov, the New York Philharmonic, Paquito D’Rivera and Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra.

A pop star of the gaita in her native Spain, Pato moved to New York to earn her doctorate and push her career in an entirely different direction. Pato has combined her love of the gaita with an extraordinary blend of jazz and Latin sounds. Her touring life includes a passionate commitment to education and cultural exchange.

An active recording artist and performer since age 12, Pato has released six solo gaita recordings and two as a pianist. She has also collaborated on more than 30 recordings as a guest artist, including the Grammy Award-winner “Yo-Yo Ma and Friends: Songs of Joy and Peace” (SONY BMG 2008); “Miles Español: New Sketches of Spain” (Entertainment One Music, 2011); and the Grammy-nominated Silk Road Ensemble album, “Off the Map” (World Village, 2010). Pato has performed more than 600 concerts with her own band, many of them recorded and broadcast by television stations such as RAI, BBC, TVG, CNN and RTVE.

Pato holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts in collaborative piano from Rutgers University, where she was awarded the Irene Alm Memorial Prize for excellence in scholarly research and performance. A passionate lecturer and educator, she was named Mellon Visiting Artist in Residence for the 2014-2015 season at the College of the Holy Cross. She has served as panelist and lecturer at Harvard University, UCSB, SphinxCon, Princeton University and other institutions.

Pato is also a regular collaborator with the Vail International Dance Festival, the Arts Program of the Aspen Institute and the Turnaround Arts educational program initiated by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. In 2014 her groundbreaking Gaita and Orchestra Commissioning Project was awarded a grant from New Music USA to build a repertoire for the gaita and symphony orchestra. She encouraged a round of commissions to create music that would combine her two passions: world music and classical music. Two of the concertos, Emilio Solla’s and Octavio Vázquez’s, have already premiered in 2015 with Sphinx Orchestra in Detroit, Chicago Sinfonietta in Chicago, and Orquestra Simfònica del Vallès in Barcelona.

Pato is also the founder and artistic director of Galician Connection, a multidisciplinary festival celebrated annually in Galicia. She currently resides in New York City.

**ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**MORGAN NEVILLE** (Director, Producer) is one of the top documentary filmmakers in the industry. His film 20 Feet from Stardom won the 2014 Academy Award® for Best Documentary as well as a Grammy Award for Best Music Film. Neville has been nominated for four additional Grammys including bids for Respect Yourself: The Stax Records Story, Muddy Waters Can’t Be Satisfied and Johnny Cash’s America. He won an Emmy Award® for his telefilm Hank Williams: Honky Tonk Blues. Neville’s non-music films include The Cool School and Beauty Is Embarrassing. His latest film, Best of Enemies, was purchased by Magnolia Pictures at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival and was released on July 31, 2015.

**CAITRIN ROGERS** (Producer) is an Academy Award-winning filmmaker who has produced documentaries on a wide variety of subjects from war and politics to music and sports. Her recent credits include 20 Feet from Stardom, which won the 2014 Oscar for Best Feature Documentary and the 2015 Grammy for Best Music Film. She was also a producer on The Tillman Story, which won an Emmy Award in 2012. Other film credits include Once in a Lifetime and Amazing Journey: The Story of the Who.

**JEFF SKOLL** (Executive Producer) is a philanthropist and social entrepreneur, working to bring life to his vision of a sustainable world of peace and prosperity. The first full-time employee and President of eBay, Jeff developed the company’s inaugural business plan and helped lead its successful initial public offering and the creation of the eBay Foundation. Over the last 15 years, Jeff has created an innovative portfolio of philanthropic and commercial enterprises, each a distinctive social catalyst. Together, these organizations drive social impact by investing in a range of efforts that integrate powerful stories and data with entrepreneurial approaches. The Jeff Skoll Group supports his organizations, which include the Skoll Foundation, the Capricorn Investment Group, Participant Media and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

**DIANE WEYERMANN** (Executive Producer) is the executive vice president of documentary films at Participant Media. As such, she is responsible for the company’s documentary feature film slate. Participant’s current documentary projects include Joshua Oppenheimer’s The Look of Silence, Marc Silver’s 3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets, Robert Gordon and Morgan Neville’s Best of Enemies, Davis Guggenheim’s He Named Me Malala and Bernardo Ruiz’s Kingdom of Shadows. Previous releases include the Oscar-winners Citizenfour and An Inconvenient Truth, Emmy-winner Food, Inc. and Emmy-nominees The Great Invisible, Chicago 10, Pressure Cooker and Page One: Inside the New York Times, as well as feature documentaries The Unknown Known, The Internet’s Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz, Ivory Tower, A Place at the Table, State 194, Last Call at the Oasis, Waiting for “Superman,” Countdown to Zero, Climate of Change, Standard Operating Procedure, Jimmy Carter Man from Plains and Darfur Now.

**LAURA FREID** (Executive Producer) is the CEO and executive director of The Silk Road Project. Nationally and internationally, she has more than two decades of leadership experience in top-tier institutions of higher education as well as consulting for not-for-profit, public affairs and media organizations. One of her lifelong interests is understanding how traditional concepts and new ideas travel across time and cultures; this is the focus of her published articles and interviews.

Since Freid came to The Silk Road Project in 2004, the Grammy-nominated Silk Road Ensemble has recorded five albums, appeared on “Live from Lincoln Center” and performed more than 220 times across the U.S., Asia, Europe and the Middle East, including at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm, the Special Olympics in Shanghai and the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York City.

Under Freid’s leadership, The Silk Road Project has sustained an ongoing multi-year affiliation with Harvard University, completed a five-year partnership with Rhode Island School of Design, and conducted numerous residencies in universities and museums around the world. During her tenure, The Silk Road Project has spearheaded a yearlong, citywide celebration of the arts in Chicago; focused on the arts and passion-driven learning in work with middle schools, educators and teaching artists; and brought together artists and business leaders to influence the emerging field of cultural entrepreneurship.

Prior to joining The Silk Road Project, Freid was executive vice president for public affairs and university relations at Brown University. A magazine journalist and editor, she served as publisher of Harvard magazine and publisher and editor of Bostonia magazine. She graduated from Washington University in St. Louis and holds an M.B.A. from Boston University as well as an Ed.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

**CRISTIN CANTERBURY BAGNALL** (Co-Executive Producer) is the director of artistic and learning programs at The Silk Road Project. She previously spent 19 years working with Yo-Yo Ma, serving in capacities such as general manager and director of strategic planning. In 1998 Bagnall was the founding treasurer of The Silk Road Project. She served for eight years as a board member.

Bagnall executive-produced a number of Ma’s albums. She has also served as a strategic consultant to various cultural institutions including the Kennedy Center, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and MusiCorps, a conservatory-level music rehabilitation program at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center that works to help severely wounded warriors recover their lives through music. Bagnall lives outside of Boston with her husband and daughter.

**JULIE GOLDMAN** (Executive Producer) is an Emmy Award-winning producer of documentary feature films. Recent films include The Kill Team and Art and Craft, both Oscar shortlisted for 2015. She produced several acclaimed films which premiered in recent years in the U.S. Documentary Competition at Sundance: Gideon’s Army; Manhunt; the Oscar shortlisted God Loves Uganda; Participant Media’s A Place at the Table; the Oscar shortlisted Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry and Buck, winner of the Sundance Documentary Audience Award, shortlisted for an Academy Award and one of 2011’s top five grossing documentaries.

Julie consulted on the Academy Award-winning The Cove and produced the Oscar shortlisted Sergio.

**ABOUT THE ORCHARD**The Orchard is a pioneering independent film, TV and music distribution company that operates in over 25 global markets. The company, founded as a music distributor in 1997, is a groundbreaking leader in the film and television distribution space, known for its innovative technology that provides filmmakers with up-to-the minute trending data and analytics on their projects. The Orchard's film division has enjoyed such recent successes as the Academy Award-nominated documentary "Cartel Land," "The Overnight," "Dior & I" and "What We Do in the Shadows." Upcoming releases include Academy Award-winner Morgan Neville's "The Music of Strangers" and Joachim Trier's "Louder Than Bombs.”

**ABOUT PARTICIPANT MEDIA**Participant Media (http://www.participantmedia.com/) is a leading media company dedicated to entertainment that inspires and compels social change. Founded in 2004 by Jeff Skoll, Participant combines the power of a good story well told with opportunities for viewers to get involved. Participant’s more than 70 films, includingSpotlight, Contagion, Lincoln, The Help, He Named Me Malala, The Look of Silence, CITIZENFOUR, Food, Inc., and An Inconvenient Truth, have collectively earned 50 Academy Award® nominations and eight wins. Participant has also launched more than a dozen original series, including “Please Like Me,” Emmy® Award-winning “Hit Record On TV with Joseph Gordon-Levitt,” and “Fortitude,” for its television network, Pivot (http://www.pivot.tv/). Participant's digital hub, TakePart (http://www.TakePart.com), serves millions of socially conscious consumers each month with daily articles, videos and opportunities to take action. Follow Participant Media on Twitter at @Participant and on Facebook.