

# YO-YO MA

## BIO

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences, and to his personal desire for artistic growth and renewal. Whether performing new or familiar works from the cello repertoire, coming together with colleagues for chamber music or exploring cultures and musical forms outside the Western classical tradition, Mr. Ma strives to find connections that stimulate the imagination.

Yo-Yo Ma maintains a balance between his engagements as soloist with orchestras throughout the world and his recital and chamber music activities. He draws inspiration from a wide circle of collaborators, creating programs with such artists as Emanuel Ax, Daniel Barenboim, Kayhan Kalhor, Ton Koopman, Yu Long, Edgar Meyer, Mark Morris, Cristina Pato, Kathryn Stott, Chris Thile, Michael Tilson Thomas, Wu Man, Wu Tong, and Damian Woetzel. Each of these collaborations is fueled by the artists' interactions, often extending the boundaries of a particular genre. One of Mr. Ma's goals is the exploration of music as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the migration of ideas across a range of cultures throughout the world. To that end, he has taken time to immerse himself in subjects as diverse as native Chinese music with its distinctive instruments and the music of the Kalahari bush people in Africa.

Expanding upon this interest, in 1998, Mr. Ma established Silkroad, a nonprofit organization that seeks to create meaningful change at the intersections of the arts, education and business. Under his artistic direction, Silkroad presents performances by the acclaimed Silk Road Ensemble and develops new music, cultural partnerships, education programs, and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Silkroad's ongoing affiliation with Harvard University has made it possible to develop programs such as the Arts and Passion-Driven Learning Institute for educators and teaching artists, held in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a new Cultural Entrepreneurship initiative in partnership with Harvard Business School. More than 80 new musical and multimedia works have been commissioned for the Silk Road Ensemble from composers and arrangers around the world.

Through his work with Silkroad, as throughout his career, Yo-Yo Ma seeks to expand the cello repertoire, frequently performing lesser known music of the 20th century and commissions of new concertos and recital pieces. He has premiered works by a diverse group of composers,

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among them Elliott Carter, Richard Danielpour, Osvaldo Golijov, Leon Kirchner, Zhao Lin, Christopher Rouse, Giovanni Sollima, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, John Williams and Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky. In February of 2017 he will premiere a new concerto by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

As the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant, Mr. Ma is partnering with Maestro Riccardo Muti to provide collaborative musical leadership and guidance on innovative program development for The Negaunee Music Institute of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and for Chicago Symphony artistic initiatives. Ma's work focuses on the transformative power music can have in individuals' lives, and on increasing the number and variety of opportunities audiences have to experience music in their communities. In March 2016, he was appointed Artistic Advisor at Large to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of their expansive initiatives honoring the centenary of JFK's birth and to encourage the idea of creative citizenship.

Yo-Yo Ma is strongly committed to educational programs that not only bring young audiences into contact with music but also allow them to participate in its creation. While touring, he takes time whenever possible to conduct master classes as well as more informal programs for students – musicians and non-musicians alike. At the same time, he continues to develop new concert programs for family audiences, for instance helping to inaugurate the family series at Carnegie Hall. In each of these undertakings, he works to connect music to students' daily surroundings and activities with the goal of making music and creativity a vital part of children's lives from an early age. He has also reached young audiences through appearances on "Arthur," "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Sesame Street."

Mr. Ma's discography of over 100 albums (including 18 Grammy Award winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. He has made several successful recordings that defy categorization, among them "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." Mr. Ma's recent recordings include: "The Goat Rodeo Sessions," with Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile and Stuart Duncan, which received the 2013 Grammy for Best Folk Album, and "Songs from the Arc of Life," with pianist Kathryn Stott. His most recent release, "Sing Me Home," recorded with the Silk Road Ensemble, was released in April 2016 as the companion album to documentary film *The Music of Strangers*.

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Created by Oscar-winning producer Morgan Neville, the film follows the Ensemble's more than 50 musicians, composers, visual artists and storytellers as they explore the ways art can both preserve traditions and shape cultural evolution. In spring 2017, Mr. Ma will release and tour "Bach Trios," recorded with Edgar Meyer and Chris Thile. Mr. Ma remains one of the best-selling recording artists in the classical field. All of his recent albums have quickly entered the Billboard chart of classical best sellers, remaining in the Top 15 for extended periods, often with as many as four titles simultaneously on the list.

Yo-Yo Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age four and soon came with his family to New York, where he spent most of his formative years. Later, his principal teacher was Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School. He sought out a traditional liberal arts education to expand upon his conservatory training, graduating from Harvard University in 1976. He has received numerous awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the Glenn Gould Prize (1999), the National Medal of the Arts (2001), the Dan David Prize (2006), the Leonie Sonning Music Prize (2006), the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award (2008), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010), the Polar Music Prize (2012) and the Vilcek Prize in Contemporary Music (2013). In 2011, Mr. Ma was recognized as a Kennedy Center Honoree. Appointed a CultureConnect Ambassador by the United States Department of State in 2002, Mr. Ma has met with, trained and mentored thousands of students worldwide in countries including Lithuania, Korea, Lebanon, Azerbaijan and China. He also serves as a UN Messenger of Peace. He has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

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

For additional information, see: [www.yo-yoma.com](http://www.yo-yoma.com), [www.silkroadproject.org](http://www.silkroadproject.org), and [www.opus3artists.com](http://www.opus3artists.com).