



June 9, 2009, 8:00pm on PBS
The Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma

Tuesday evening, June 9 will mark the transmission of one of Live From Lincoln Center's most unusual programs since the inauguration of the series more than 30 years ago. It will take place out of doors in a newly-refurbished bandstand in Damrosch Park on the Lincoln Center acreage (and we all have our fingers crossed hoping that the weather will cooperate!) What is this event? Nothing less than the Silk Road Ensemble playing with Yo-Yo Ma.

The aims and hopes for the Silk Road Project and Ensemble have been outlined in some detail by its Artistic Director and founder, the renowned cellist, Yo-Yo Ma. "In 1998 we formed the Silk Road Project to explore connections from ancient times to the present. These links form pieces of a puzzle that combine to reveal a coherent picture of who we are, what our place is in the world, and why we do what we do". The statement goes on to say: "I look forward to the Silk Road Project's second decade, in which by knowing subjects deeply and sharing ideas broadly we will continue to strive to serve a community that seeks a broader, empathetic understanding of the peoples and cultures of our globalized world".

The Silk Road Project takes its name from the ancient trading routes across Eurasia more than 2,000 years ago. Those trading routes intersected multiple cultures and provided a unique opportunity for peoples to share their arts, sciences and ideas. In essence it is that intermingling of cultures that is represented by today's Silk Road Project. The Silk Road Project Ensemble numbers some 60 players from 24 countries! The extent of the success of the venture may be measured by the fact that since its founding the Silk Road Ensemble has played in more than 100 venues in 25 different countries and has appeared at prestigious venues such as Tanglewood, the Hollywood Bowl, the Lucerne Festival, the BBC Proms and the World Expo 2005 in Nagoya, Japan.

Education is a fundamental element in the activities of the Silk Road Project. In that regard it has established educational resources for elementary and middle school students. In 2005 a residency was set up at Harvard University (Yo-Yo Ma's alma mater) and the Rhode Island School of Design, which has brought members of the Ensemble to lead interactive projects with students and faculties of those institutions. In addition, museum residencies have brought Ensemble musicians to such esteemed locations as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts; the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, Switzerland; the Nara National Museum in Nara, Japan; the Rubin Museum of Art in New York; and the Art Institute of Chicago.

What may we expect from the Silk Road Ensemble performance on Live From Lincoln Center? A kaleidoscopic content of music from China, Arabia and other exotica, along with music by Western classical music composers including the Azerbaijani, Fikret Amirov, and the Argentinian-American, Osvaldo Golijov. It would come as no surprise to anyone should Yo-Yo Ma himself chose to introduce some of the music.

I come back to what I said at the beginning: this promises to be one of the most unusual programs ever presented on Live From Lincoln Center. Mark the date on your calendars: Tuesday evening, June 9. BUT be sure to check with your local PBS station as to the exact date and time of the telecast in your area.

Enjoy!

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN