

our mission:

Silkroad creates music that engages difference, sparking radical cultural collaboration and passion-driven learning

for a more hopeful and inclusive world





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A NEW BEGINNING A letter from our executive director & artistic director

2020-2021 has been a trying year. Yet, it was also a year marked by many new beginnings. Together, Silkroad has continued to evolve and grow as an organization, and what remains with us is the persistent passion for the arts as a channel for a more hopeful and inclusive world.

As we reach the end of our 21st year, Silkroad is setting its sights on more ambitious projects and programs that celebrate diversity, tell untold stories, connect people from all walks of life, and share beautiful art. We've redefined our artistic leadership, bringing on MacArthur Genius Grant recipient and Grammy Award-winning artist Rhiannon Giddens as Silkroad's new Artistic Director, and have formed a new Artists' Committee to help further Silkroad's creative output in a way that is equitable and impactful. This structure has breathed new life into Silkroad's future, including incredible multi-year initiatives like Phoenix Rising and The American Railroad, new and expanded programs like Silkroad Connect and Project MUSIC, and continued deep partnerships with organizations and universities such as Harvard, New England Conservatory, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Turnaround Arts at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, the FreshGrass Foundation, and more.

The trials and tribulations of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact everything we do, forcing us to grapple with hard truths and uncertain futures. But this past year has shown us the incredible resilience and power that comes through the arts, allowing Silkroad to blossom into a new age. Not only have we launched several programs, we have also made significant structural changes by diversifying and expanding our staff and board, confronting inequity through antiracism training and consultation, increasing our financial resources, and designing replicable systems that center equity through the creation of music and art.

As we reflect as an organization, Silkroad looks towards a bright future of new initiatives and groundbreaking projects. Together, we will continue to embrace our differences in a way that transcends borders and languages. And while these days may be filled with uncertainty, one thing continues to ring true – the arts are a bridge to connect, a tool for healing, and a reminder of the remarkable beauty that unites us all.

> - Kathy Fletcher, Executive Director - Rhiannon Giddens, Artistic Director



YEAR AT A GLANCE

JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021

• NEW ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

• AN EXPANDED TEAM

– 100% of the staff is representative of historically marginalized communities (people of color, LGBTQIA+, women, etc.)

– 20% of the board of directors are performing artists

• 122 WORKSHOPS

- 162,513 AUDIENCE MEMBERS REACHED THROUGH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL CONCERTS
- 10.6 MILLION PEOPLE ENGAGED ONLINE THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS
- 2 NEW MAJOR, MULTI-YEAR ARTISTIC & SOCIAL IMPACT ENDEAVORS

Silkroad reenvisioned:

At the onset of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, Silkroad developed a five-year plan to respond, recover, and rebuild. This fiscal year marks the beginning of our recovery phase, during which time Silkroad has regrown its team, envisioned new ambitious projects, and set its sights on a brighter future.

AN EXPANDED TEAM ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

With a renewed focus and vision, Silkroad brought on accomplished singer, banjoist, and fiddle player, **Rhiannon Giddens** as Silkroad's new Artistic Director. A MacArthur Genius Grant recipient and Grammy Award-winning artist, Rhiannon Giddens brings to Silkroad her lifelong pursuit to shine light on underrecognized voices, genres, and musical traditions, furthering Silkroad's mission to create a more hopeful, inclusive, and equitable world.

"Rhiannon is an extraordinary human being and musician. She lives Silkroad's values, at once rooted in history and its many musics, and is an advocate for the contemporary voices that can move us to work together for a better world." - Yo-Yo Ma, Silkroad Founder (Source: The Undefeated)

Through Giddens' artistic vision, Silkroad has launched a series of new artistic and social impact projects that bring hope and healing to communities across the globe while centering the voices and stories of those who have been historically overlooked by society.

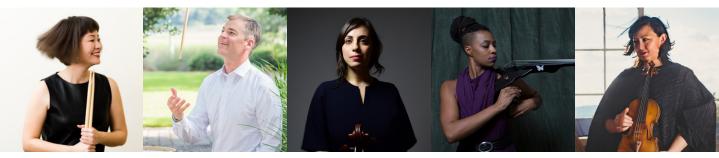
"Silkroad has people from all over, and that's what makes it such a great group to represent the American story, because that's what the American story is. We are world music. With Silkroad, we have the opportunity to show that at the heart of American creation is the world."

- RHIANNON GIDDENS (SOURCE: NY TIMES)

AN EXPANDED TEAM ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

Silkroad also founded the brand new **Artists' Committee**, a group of five elected artists who work in close collaboration with Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens to develop transparent, equitable, and inclusive practices that center Silkroad artists and their voices in the creative planning process.

The inaugural Artists' Committee consists of Haruka Fujii, Joseph Gramley, Karen Ouzounian, Mazz Swift, and Michi Wiancko.

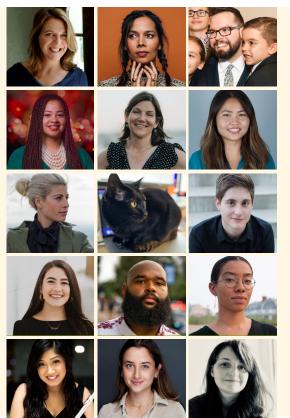


AN EXPANDED TEAM

SILKROAD STAFF

In light of COVID-19, Silkroad faced the difficult decision of downsizing its team to only four full-time staff members. However, thanks to our generous funders, we've been granted the opportunity to recover and expand our team, bringing together talented and passionate voices from across artistic, educational, and development backgrounds.

Silkroad expanded its team from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{14}{4}$



AN EXPANDED TEAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Silkroad also expanded and diversified its board of directors from a team of 13 to 22

Lori Samuels, *Chair* Faith Raiguel, *Treasurer* Isabelle Hunter, *Clerk* Jonathan Bays Ophelia Dahl Rohit Deshpandé Boris Dolgonos Kathy Fletcher, *ex officio* Federico Cohen Freue* Rhiannon Giddens, *ex officio** Joseph Gramley, *ex officio** Helena Hwang* LaVon Kellner Diann Kim You-young Kim* Golnar Khosrowshahi Nicholas Ma Tara Sonenshine* Paul Stebbins Alfre Woodard* Wu Man, *ex officio** Stefanie Zeldin*

*joined the board this fiscal year





Recognizing the need to diversify the nonprofit arts sector, **Silkroad launched an internship program** for emerging arts professionals of color seeking to expand their skills in arts administration and leadership. This paid professional development experience is designed to create a holistic and expansive view of the many facets of nonprofit administration while remaining flexible and responsive to the needs, interests, and aspirations of the interns.

Silkroad brought on 4 new interns this year with a commitment to bring on a new class of interns each semester.





Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice are at the core of Silkroad's mission.

We recognize the long, unforgivable history of white supremacy that continues today and the vast repercussions that permeate throughout our society. In our commitment to systemic allyship, our conversations, programming, and active participation in cultural collaboration are meant to join the greater struggle against white supremacy and the intersection of identities it threatens.

As we examine how Silkroad can better serve to uphold systemic allyship in every facet of our organization, we have partnered with <u>Sozo Vision</u>, a consultation group that works to assess and refine structural processes in organizations on their journey towards becoming institutionally anti-racist.

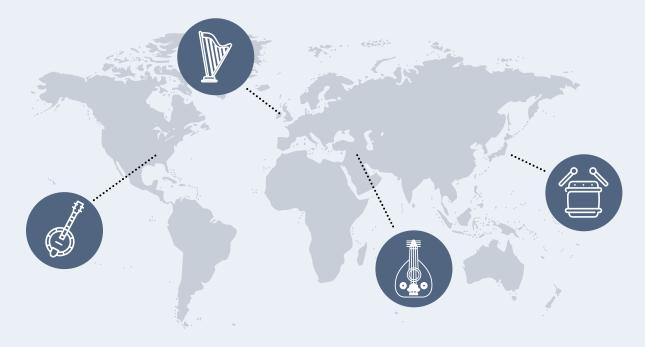
Additionally, Silkroad has worked with <u>Overcoming Racism</u>, an organization that provides high-impact race and equity professional development in order to dismantle systems of oppression and improve the collective cultural competence of team members. creating art:

Music and art is the lifeblood of Silkroad.

Through it, we are able to build deep connections, learn about each other, and create a space for expression and reflection using a unique musical language founded in cross-cultural collaboration.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

37 artists playing 25 instruments from all over the world



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

THE AMERICAN RAILROAD: A TRANSCONTINENTAL JOURNEY



Under Rhiannon Giddens' new artistic direction, Silkroad launched several new large-scale initiatives, including *The American Railroad: A Transcontinental Journey*, a multimedia concert, educational, and commissioning series that will dive deeply into the untold history, cultures, and music of the transcontinental railroad and the silenced communities who helped to build it.

Still in the early stages of development, the American Railroad program is Silkroad's largest endeavor to date. Silkroad aims to shine a light on the culturally-rich immigrant populations on whose hard labor and treacherous – often lethal – work the transcontinental railroad was built, including Chinese immigrants, Native Americans, Irish populations fleeing the famine, and both freed and enslaved Black people.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS PHOENIX RISING

During this unprecedented moment in history, society has risen and fallen together. Separated and yet united by the shared impact of the pandemic, Silkroad's **Phoenix Rising** concert series serves a collective grieving song and clarion call, uniting audiences through varied cultural experiences to model our vision for a more peaceful and just world as we emerge from a long and stunning upheaval.

Phoenix Rising will feature 4 new major commissions by Silkroad artists Shawn Conley, Sandeep Das, Maeve Gilchrist, and Kaoru Watanabe; and new arrangements by Rhiannon Giddens, Colin Jacobsen, Edward Pérez, and Mazz Swift.

Phoenix Rising is slated to debut in fall 2021



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS HOME WITHIN

Home Within is an emotional accounting of home in a time of conflict. An evening-length audio-visual performance conceived by Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh and Syrian Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad, the result is an impressionistic reflection on the unity of loss, longing, and the impact of tragedy on our sense of 'home'.

Silkroad commissioned an expansion of the work, evolving it from a duo into a production of 7 artists.





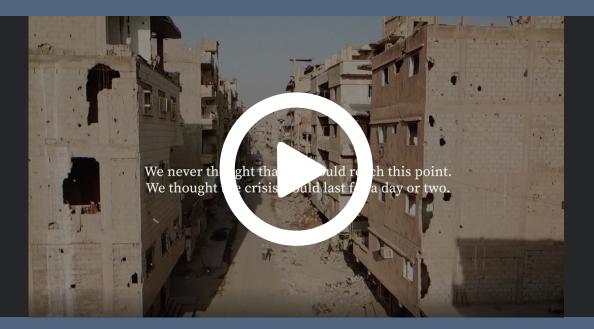
ARTISTIC PROGRAMS VOICES FROM SYRIA

As we marked the 10 year anniversary of the start of the Syrian crisis, Silkroad teamed up with the **United Nations** to release a 4-minute soundscape that mixes 100 self-recorded messages from people inside Syria set to music from Kinan Azmeh's *Sad Morning, Every Morning*.

The soundscape was combined into a collective photo essay that draws on the archives of 16 Syrian photographers. Their photographs and moving hand-written captions serve as a window into Syrian lives over the past 10 years. This unique collection highlights the cost of the crisis, but it also shines a light on the strength of Syria's people and their hopes for a future without conflict.

"I wish it had been a dream" – Voices from Syria

VOICES FROM SYRIA



Click on the link above to experience the soundscape and photo essay that explores the past ten years of Syria's history

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS FALLING OUT OF TIME

Silkroad released a new album: Falling Out of Time

Inspired by Israeli writer David Grossman's eponymous novel, the music tells the story of a bereaved mother and father grieving the unbearable loss of their son. Featuring thirteen artists and drawing from ballads of Central Asia and the early Delta Blues, the result is music that immerses listeners into "a realm where loss is not merely an absence, but a life force of its own."

The work was premiered on a tour in fall 2019, during which time the album was recorded at The Barns at Wolf Trap in Virginia.



Falling Out of Time is now managed by In a Circle Records

FALLING OUT OF TIME



Click on the link above to listen to Silkroad's Falling Out of Time

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ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

1:1 CONCERTS©



Silkroad partnered with the Brooklyn Academy of Music to curate **1:1 Concerts**© at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, bringing together **43** artists to present intimate performances one-on-one with guests.

The four-day event raised funds for Weeksville Heritage Center, a historic site and cultural center that uses education, arts, and a social justice lens to inspire engagement with the history of one of the largest free Black communities in pre-Civil War America.

642 1:1 performances were presented across four days

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

Silkroad partnered with Sozo Vision and ArtPark, a performing and arts space in Lewiston, NY, to curate a guided walkthrough tour around Rhiannon Giddens's track featuring Yo-Yo Ma, "Build a House." As the final stop on the Underground Railroad, the installation at ArtPark honored Juneteenth, accompanied by a narrated track from Giddens that shed light on Lewiston's place in history, Juneteenth, and the history of the banjo and American music.

700 people participated in the walking tour



BUILD A HOUSE

Rhiannon Giddens featuring Yo-Yo Ma - "Build A House"



Click on the video above to watch Rhiannon Giddens and Yo-Yo Ma's performance of "Build a House" as part of the Silkroad Home Sessions

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creating impact:

Silkroad uses the arts to fuel passions and inspire new pathways for education and impact.

Through artistic workshops, guided discussions, collaborative residency programming, and virtual engagements, Silkroad extends its impact beyond the stage and into its communities.

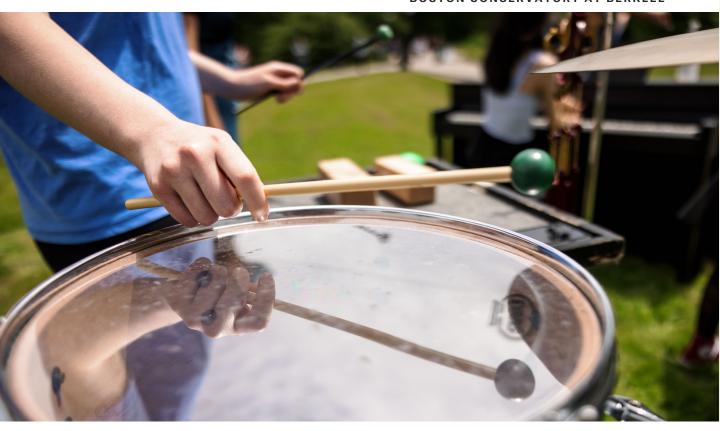
EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT BOSTON CONSERVATORY AT BERKLEE

Silkroad partnered with **Boston Conservatory at Berklee** to offer three virtual residency programs across the fall, spring, and summer. During the fall, students attended virtual sessions with duos of Silkroad artists to discuss cross-cultural collaboration and the process of creation and art during the time of the pandemic.

In the spring, Silkroad artists taught several "mini-courses" that focused on unique topics, including creative music-making, improvisation, navigating transcultural identity, and more. All students in the Instrumental Studies department participated in these classes over the course of the semester. *78 classes were led with 180 students*.

During a three week summer intensive titled "Beyond Walls: Performance in Public Space", Silkroad artists taught classes on improvisation and led coaching sessions with student groups to develop a pitch for a multidisciplinary performance art piece that would be performed by the entire student body during the final week of the intensive. *47 students participated in the summer program*

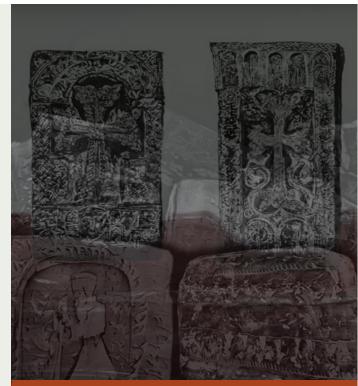
EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT BOSTON CONSERVATORY AT BERKLEE



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Silkroad and **College of the Holy Cross** continued their multi-year partnership by hosting four virtual workshops with Silkroad artists along with an exclusive virtual concert. Silkroad artists performed and discussed their <u>Artist</u> <u>Response Projects</u>, which were developed during the early days of the pandemic as an artistic response to the rapidly shifting global landscape.

84 students participated in four workshops



Sample image from "How the Knot Binds" – the Artist Response Project developed by harpist Maeve Gilchrist and visual artist Kevork Mourad

From Morgan Neville, the Director of the Academy Award'- Winning 20 FEET FROM STARDOM only way to change the world to make a little noise.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROJECT MUSIC

As COVID-19 reminds us of the damaging effects of isolation, Silkroad partnered with <u>Carnegie Hall's Musical</u> <u>Connections</u> program to launch **Project MUSIC** (Music Uniting Strangers in Community), building a relationship with some of the most isolated people in our society: those incarcerated across the country. Silkroad worked with Sing Sing Correctional Facility to bring free streamings of the documentary film *The Music of Strangers* together with videos from Silkroad artists, music videos, and access to the film's companion album *Sing Me Home*.

Looking ahead, Silkroad is expanding this program to prisons across the United States with both in-person and virtual artist visits in order to build ongoing relationships with incarcerated communities.

"To the members of the Silkroad Ensemble, thank you for such a wonderful movie... Being an incarcerated musician sometimes feels like an exercise in futility. I really know the solace playing an instrument can bring when one is away from home."

> - JAMES T. (SING SING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY)

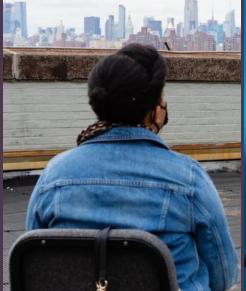
IN THE NEWS

CLICK BELOW TO READ THE ARTICLES

SILKROAD RECEIVES \$3M FROM THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION



ONE-TO-ONE CONCERTS BRING LISTENERS BACK TO LIVE MUSIC, ONE AT A TIME

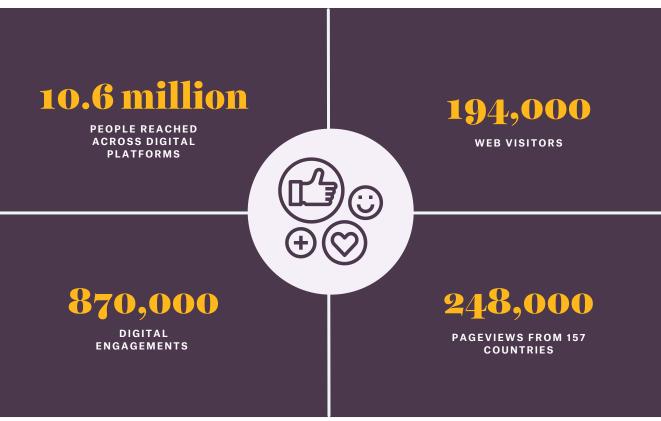


RHIANNON GIDDENS AIMS AT 1800S AMERICA IN HER SILKROAD PLANS

CLICK HERE TO VISIT SILKROAD'S ONLINE PRESS ROOM

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

JULY 2020 - JUNE 2021



PLAYING FOR CHANGE



Playing for Change Foundation and Silkroad united to present a cross-cultural concert to aid in providing emergency food and health supplies to programs and communities in need around the world. Click on the video above to watch the full concert.

FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

This year, Silkroad was awarded **\$3 million** by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is the largest gift in Silkroad's 21-year history and will go towards supporting a four-year capacity-building effort to expand artistic & educational initiatives focusing on social justice and equity, and creating new musical projects to connect people and inspire hope -- including the American Railroad program. This investment will enable the board, artists, and staff to grow Silkroad's artistic programming output in a sustainable way, emphasizing new music, art, and education programs that are both highly relevant and impactful to our time today.

THE ANDREW W.



FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS

The Silk Road Project, Inc. (dba Silkroad) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization supported by individuals, foundations, and corporations. **Silkroad is deeply grateful to the institutional partners whose generous support allows Silkroad to promote innovation, learning, and cross-cultural understanding around the world.**

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CONNECTING THE WORLD'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Silkroad gratefully acknowledges the generous individuals, corporations, and foundations that share our vision of a world transformed through the arts. *The following*

list recognizes donations received between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

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Thank you for your support!



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