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All Roads Lead to Providence
A Week of Cultural Events to Celebrate the Season of the Silk Road

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – FirstWorks (www.first-works.org) announced today a week-long celebration of arts, culture and tourism in Providence to celebrate their “Season of the Silk Road,” culminating in a performance of the Silk Road Ensemble with acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma on March 6 at 8 PM at the Providence Performing Arts Center in Providence, RI. Tickets are now on sale through the Providence Performing Arts Center box office at 401-421-2787, or www.ppacri.org.

FirstWorks’ weeklong celebration includes divine local restaurant deals and hotel packages, with an exclusive Silk Road Celebration to honor members of the Silk Road Ensemble and Yo-Yo Ma to follow the March 6 performance. In partnership with Providence’s Department of Art, Culture and Tourism and the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau, FirstWorks has developed this coordinated tourism campaign to highlight the richness and diversity of arts and culture found in Providence.

“This celebration recognizes the leading role Providence plays in the regional arts and culture scene,” said Kathleen Pletcher, FirstWorks executive artistic director. “As one of the first cities established in the United States, Providence’s rich history of cultural firsts continues with the power of firsts in the arts.”

From Sunday, March 1 through Friday, March 6, “First Course with FirstWorks” will showcase illustrious Providence-area restaurants, including Aspire, CAV, Costantino’s, Local 121, Rue de L’Espoir, and Temple Downtown. Participating restaurants will offer a complimentary appetizer

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with the purchase of a regular dinner entrée. For an up-to-date list of participating restaurants visit www.first-works.org.

Special overnight packages to accommodate performance ticketholders, as well as those looking for a getaway evening to remember range from \$499 - \$189, depending on the amenities. Participating hotels include the Hotel Providence, Nylo/Warwick, and the Hotel Renaissance. For more information or to make a reservation, visit www.GoProvidence.com.

The March 6, 2009 performance by the Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma will kick off the Silk Road Ensemble's North American tour, with music ranging from traditional to newly composed pieces performed by this multicultural collective of virtuoso musicians. The concert features the U.S. premiere of the Silk Road Ensemble's *Layla and Majnun*, adapted from a beloved Central Asian opera, which is itself based on a series of ancient Arabian and Persian tales of ill-fated love often likened to *Romeo and Juliet*. Sets for this production were designed by recent RISD graduate Henrik Søderstrøm [Furniture Design 2008], who will present an exhibition (March 3-6) and discussion of his work to the RISD community on March 4 as part of the Silk Road Project's 2009 residency.

As an exclusive opportunity for concertgoers, FirstWorks will honor members of the Silk Road Ensemble and Yo-Yo Ma with a Silk Road Celebration immediately following the performance on March 6, 2009. Attendees and honored guests will sip champagne and sample sweet delights at the event, to be held at the Hotel Providence Ballroom. Tickets are available to concertgoers for \$125 each. Co-hosts of the event are the Hon. David N. Cicilline, Mayor, City of Providence and Kathleen Pletcher, Executive Artistic Director, FirstWorks.

"Providence is known nationally and internationally as an extraordinary cultural destination," said Mayor Cicilline.

For more information about FirstWorks' Silk Road Celebration visit www.first-works.org or call 401-421-4278.

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About FirstWorks

FirstWorks connects art with audiences year-round through the exceptional vitality of artists' first appearances, children's first experiences with performance and the premiering of new works. Beginning with an unprecedented collaboration with Providence's Department of Art, Culture & Tourism, FirstWorks was launched in 2004 as a vehicle to build community, reach underserved audiences, and present extraordinary arts programs that elevate Providence's national profile. In the five years since, FirstWorks has produced nine groundbreaking arts festivals, attracted 55,000 participants, and engaged more than 100 nonprofit community organizations and schools. Visit www.first-works.org to learn more.

About Yo-Yo Ma

The many-faceted career of cellist Yo-Yo Ma is testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences and to his personal desire for artistic growth and renewal. Mr. Ma maintains a balance between his engagements as a soloist with orchestras worldwide and his recital and chamber music activities. His discography encompasses more than 75 albums, including 16 Grammy award winners. One of Mr. Ma's goals is the investigation of music as a means of communication and a vehicle for the migration of ideas; in 1998 he established the Silk Road Project to promote the study of cultural, artistic and intellectual traditions along the ancient Silk Road trade routes. Mr. Ma was born in Paris to Chinese parents who later moved the family to New York. He began to study the cello at the age of four, attended the Juilliard School, and in 1976 graduated from Harvard University. He has received numerous awards, including the 1978 Avery Fisher Prize, the 1999 Glenn Gould Prize, the 2001 National Medal of Arts, the 2006 Sonning Prize, the 2006 Dan David Prize, and the 2008 World Economic Forum's Crystal Award. In 2006, he was designated a United Nations Messenger of Peace by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon extended his appointment.

About the Silk Road Ensemble

The Silk Road Ensemble is a collective of internationally renowned musicians, composers, arrangers, visual artists and storytellers from more than 20 countries. Each Ensemble member's career illustrates a unique response to what is one of the artistic challenges of our times: nourishing global connections while maintaining the integrity of art rooted in authentic tradition. Many of the musicians first came together under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma at a workshop at Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts in 2000. Since then, in various configurations, Ensemble artists have collaborated on a diverse range of musical and multimedia projects, presenting innovative performances that explore the relationship between tradition and innovation in music from the East and West. The Silk Road Ensemble has recorded four albums and performed to critical acclaim throughout Asia, Europe and North America.

About the Silk Road Project

The Silk Road Project is a not-for-profit artistic, cultural and educational organization with a vision of connecting the world's neighborhoods by bringing together artists and audiences around the globe. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma founded the Project in 1998 as a catalyst to promote innovation and learning through the arts. The Silk Road Project takes inspiration from the historical Silk Road trading route as a modern metaphor for multicultural and interdisciplinary exchange. Under the artistic direction of Mr. Ma and the leadership of CEO and Executive

Director Laura Freid, the Silk Road Project presents performances by the Silk Road Ensemble, engages in cross-cultural exchanges and residencies, leads workshops for students, and partners with leading cultural institutions to create educational materials and programs. The Silk Road Project is affiliated with Harvard University and Rhode Island School of Design, where the Silk Road Ensemble holds regular residencies to promote cross-cultural and interdisciplinary interaction with students and faculty. Developing new music is a central mission of the Silk Road Project: the Project has been involved in commissioning and performing more than 60 new musical and multimedia works from composers and arrangers from around the world.

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