

YO-YO MA

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is testament to his enduring belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works from the cello repertoire, collaborating with communities and institutions to explore culture's role in society, or engaging unexpected musical forms, Yo-Yo strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity.

In August 2018, Yo-Yo began a new journey, setting out to perform Johann Sebastian Bach's six suites for solo cello in one sitting in 36 locations around the world, iconic venues that encompass our cultural heritage, our current creativity, and the challenges of peace and understanding that will shape our future. The Bach Project continues Yo-Yo's lifelong commitment to stretching the boundaries of genre and tradition to explore music as a means not only to share and express meaning, but also as his contribution to a conversation about how culture can help us to imagine and build a stronger society and a better future.



Foto: Jason Bell

It was this belief that inspired Yo-Yo to establish Silkroad, a collective of artists from around the world who create music that engages their many traditions. Through his work with Silkroad, as well as throughout his career, Yo-Yo Ma has sought to expand the classical 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, among them Osvaldo Golijov, Leon Kirchner, Zhao Lin, Christopher Rouse, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Giovanni Sollima, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, and John Williams.

In addition to his work as a performing artist, Yo-Yo partners with communities and institutions from Chicago to Guangzhou to develop programs that champion culture's power to transform lives and forge a more connected world. Among his many roles, Yo-Yo is as a UN Messenger of Peace, the first artist ever appointed to the World Economic Forum's board of trustees, and a member of the board of Nia Tero, the US-based nonprofit working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and movements worldwide.

Yo-Yo's discography of over 100 albums (including 18 Grammy Award winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. In addition to his many iconic renditions of the Western classical canon, he has made several 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." Yo-Yo's recent recordings include: "Sing Me Home," with the Silkroad Ensemble, which won the 2016 Grammy for Best World Music Album; "Brahms: The Piano Trios," with Emanuel Ax and Leonidas Kavakos; "Six Evolutions — Bach: Cello Suites;" and "Not Our First Goat Rodeo," with Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer,

and Chris Thile. Yo-Yo's latest album is "Songs of Comfort and Hope," created and recorded with pianist Kathryn Stott in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yo-Yo was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age four and three years later moved with his family to New York City, where he continued his cello studies with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School. After his conservatory training, he sought out a liberal arts education, graduating from Harvard 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 World Economic Forum's Crystal Award (2008), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010), Kennedy Center Honors (2011), the Polar Music Prize (2012), and the J. Paul Getty Medal Award (2016). He has performed for nine American presidents, most recently on the occasion of President Biden's inauguration.

Yo-Yo and his wife have two children. He plays three instruments, a 2003 instrument made by Moes & Moes, a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice, and the 1712 Davidoff Stradivarius.