

FY23 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



SILKROAD

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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SILKROAD RISING

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

What is it about the power of music to express emotions, thoughts, and histories that is so special? How is it that music binds us together, shining a light on unsung songs and forgotten stories? This past year, more than any, Silkroad has traveled the globe, sharing stories, uplifting the voices of historically silenced cultures, and providing moments of joy and discovery to so many.

From our musical programs, including American Railroad, Phoenix Rising, and Uplifted Voices, to our education and social impact initiatives, Silkroad

has been fulfilling its mission to embrace and promote radical cultural collaboration and passion-driven learning. In a year that has taken us from the most prestigious performing arts venues to train stations, public parks, carceral communities, and classrooms across America, Silkroad has been truly rising.

I invite you to take the time to read our Annual Report and discover the stories and journeys that have taken Silkroad from the Standing Rock Reservation of the Lakota and Dakota nations to Carnegie Hall, from intensive university residencies at historic Spelman College to our Global Musician

Workshop in Boston.

In a world where change and unrest are our norm, it is the creative process and artists engaging with humanity that are our constant and compelling reasons to go forward. A special thanks to Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens, the ensemble, and all those who make our work possible. Together, we will continue to rise, bring about change, and share the uniting power of music.

Best Regards,

Ben Hartley, *Executive Director*

YEAR AT A GLANCE

JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023

Over **10,000** audience members reached through **18** in-person concerts

Phoenix Rising toured across **7** cities

794 people reached through workshops in middle schools, universities, and carceral communities

60 musicians from **18** countries participated in Silkroad's Global Musician Workshop

creating art:

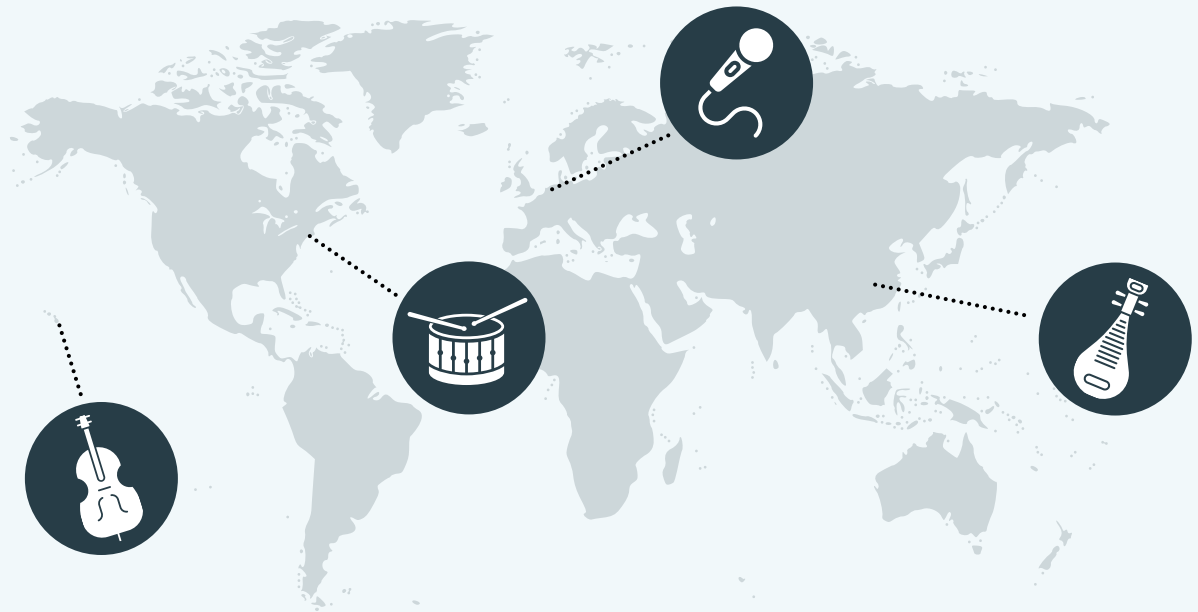
Music serves as a great unifier in the face of difficulty.

At Silkroad, we believe in the transformative power of art to connect us across differences, activate change in our society, and inspire the future we want to achieve.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

34 artists playing over **20** instruments from all over the world



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

PHOENIX RISING

The Silkroad Ensemble toured Phoenix Rising across 7 cities

The first tour with Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens, **Phoenix Rising** serves as a collective grieving song and clarion call to model our vision for a more peaceful and just world as we emerged from a long and stunning upheaval from the pandemic.

Phoenix Rising featured a cross-section of Silkroad's award-winning compositions and arrangements; four major new commissions by Shawn Conley, Sandeep Das, Maeve Gilchrist, and Kaoru Watanabe; and new arrangements by Rhiannon Giddens, Colin Jacobsen, Edward Pérez, and Mazz Swift.

Silkroad's sold-out performance at Tanglewood in Lenox, MA was recorded for a future EP release in 2023; the performance also featured Silkroad founder Yo-Yo Ma as a special guest for his first ever collaboration with the Silkroad Ensemble under Rhiannon Giddens' leadership.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

PHOENIX RISING

Phoenix Rising reached:

7,752 *audience members across seven performances*



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

AMERICAN RAILROAD

Silkroad's latest initiative, **American Railroad**, illuminates the impact the African American, Chinese, Indigenous, Irish, and other communities had on the creation of the United States' Transcontinental Railroad and connecting railways in North America. This project amplifies untold stories to paint a richer, more accurate picture of the origins of the American Empire and the formation of our multifaceted American identities.

ARTISTIC RETREATS

Led by Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens, this multi-year landmark project began with a series of **Artistic Retreats**, bringing together small groups of Silkroad artists to learn about railroad history from experts, build crucial relationships with members from the aforementioned communities, and conceptualize seeds for new musical ideas.

These retreats took place in San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; and at the Standing Rock Reservation, ND/SD.



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

AMERICAN RAILROAD

TRAIN STATION TRIOS

Following the Artistic Retreats, Silkroad launched the **Train Station Trios** series. The Train Station Trios served as the first phase of new music creation and public performances for American Railroad, bringing small groups of Silkroad artists to sites across the country for a series of community-centered open workshop performances. Trios formed by Silkroad artists collaborated with local scholars to feature new music inspired by the history of the railroads, songs and tunes collected from railroad workers and the impacted communities, and storytelling with an emphasis on the historic and cultural ties to the area where each concert was held.

Three different trios visited the following sites:

The California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, CA

The Irish Arts Center and Grand Central Station in New York, NY

The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History and Springdale Train Station in Springdale, AR

244 *audience members reached across three performances*

“I was blown away by the experience of this retreat... Those moments of connection were incredibly rich – intellectually, creatively and personally. **It gave me a lot of hope.**”

**- REYLON YOUNT, SILKROAD ARTIST
SAN FRANCISCO ARTISTIC RETREAT**

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

UPLIFTED VOICES

In **Uplifted Voices**, Silkroad shines a light on previously under-recognized voices from across the globe to change our perspective of the history and migration of music. Through a stunning collaboration of global instrumentation, this project champions women and non-binary members of the Silkroad Ensemble alongside special guest Tuscarora/Taíno musician Pura Fé to tell a musical journey that connects the music of indigenous North America to the World. Drawing inspiration from the folk and ancestral music of Japan, China, Armenia, Ireland and the Hebrides, and native populations across North America, Uplifted Voices brings together this collection of distinctive and powerful musical origins within a contemporary musical tapestry.

Uplifted Voices toured across Connecticut, Virginia, and New York reaching over 1,700 audience members.

The newly created repertoire from Uplifted Voices will also be part of the upcoming American Railroad tour in fall 2023.

“You were medicine for us at such a difficult time.”


- UPLIFTED VOICES AUDIENCE MEMBER



making impact:

Creativity unlocks a path towards belonging, enrichment, and impact.

Through arts programming at schools, carceral communities, and beyond, we witness the power of music to deepen connections with one another and open pathways for self-expression and education.



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

GLOBAL MUSICIAN WORKSHOP

Silkroad's **Global Musician Workshop** (GMW) is an intensive musician training program that brings together musicians from around the world to engage in workshops that explore a global array of musical genres, styles, and traditions.

GMW 2022 was held at New England Conservatory (NEC) from August 8-12, 2022 and was offered tuition-free to all participants for the first time in the program's history. A three-day Performance Festival at NEC's renowned Jordan Hall closed out the program featuring performances by GMW faculty and participants alike.



*GMW 2022 brought together **60** participants from **18** countries playing over **30** different instruments*

“[Silkroad’s GMW] was an absolute dream.
I will never forget it. It has been one of the greatest
privileges of my life to have this experience.”

- GMW 2022 PARTICIPANT



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

SILKROAD CONNECT

Silkroad Connect is a program that brings Silkroad artists to middle school classrooms across the country, positioning the arts as a social justice and advocacy tool. The program includes artist visits across four schools; professional development for teachers; culturally inclusive curriculum to deepen student knowledge of American Railroad history; and a unique, culminating performance at each school.

*In Spring 2023, Silkroad Connect featured **32** virtual and in-person artist visits across **9** different classes, along with **4** culminating events that engaged over **250** students and **1,500** audience members.*



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

SILKROAD CONNECT

75%

of students say that because of Silkroad Connect, they are a more confident artist and/or musician.

85%

of students say that thanks to this project, they have a better understanding of the roles that Chinese, Irish, African-American, and Indigenous people had in building America's railroads, and how their work still impacts our society today.

“It made me think about the people who built [the railroad],
and I feel proud to represent the people who made it.”

**- SILKROAD CONNECT STUDENT PARTICIPANT
JOHN C. FREMONT SCHOOL**

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCIES

Silkroad's **university residencies** synergize academic curriculum with Silkroad's mission and ongoing artistic initiatives. This academic year, Silkroad's university residencies resulted in a series of artist visits and workshops; collaborative concerts between Silkroad artists and university students; and a music development workshop to prepare for Silkroad's debut *Uplifted Voices* tour in the spring of 2023.

Silkroad's current partners include Spelman College, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, George Mason University, and University of Limerick.

394 *students reached*
across five classes



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

PROJECT MUSIC



Project MUSIC (Music Uniting Strangers Into Community) brings the artists and music of Silkroad into carceral communities across the country to exchange musical and cultural traditions, creating connection through communal singing and music making. Over the past year, Silkroad hosted two visits to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women, creating music collaboratively with approximately 70 of its residents.

Additional programming is underway for June 2023 in Northwest Arkansas and during the debut American Railroad tour in November 2023.

SEE PROJECT MUSIC IN ACTION:



Click the link above to watch the Silkroad artist Mazz Swift and Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens speak about their experience with Project MUSIC.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

REFUGEE PROGRAM

In light of the life threatening situation in Afghanistan, Silkroad launched the **Refugee Artists-at-Risk Program** with support from Harvard's Scholars at Risk Program, to provide a lifeline to refugee artists. This year, Silkroad supported a family of four, all of whom are currently pursuing their education at universities, creating art, and rebuilding a life together after two years of separation.

On June 17, 2023, Silkroad hosted Art Overcomes, a benefit for Silkroad's Refugee Program, featuring a panel discussion, live music from a Silkroad artist, and a silent auction. The event also debuted the world premiere of a new commission by Silkroad artists Sandeep Das and Haruka Fujii that accompanies a short story written by author Homeira Qaderi. The event served as a reminder of the struggles that refugees face while offering a platform to celebrate the artistry and resilience of these artists.



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023

1,703,853

IMPRESSIONS ACROSS
DIGITAL PLATFORMS

149,453

WEB VISITORS



92,181

DIGITAL
ENGAGEMENTS

259,493

PAGEVIEWS FROM 99
COUNTRIES

IN THE NEWS

CLICK BELOW TO READ THE ARTICLES

WASHINGTON POST



TAKING THE BATON FROM
YO-YO MA, RHIANNON
GIDDENS REBOOTS SILKROAD

PBS



SINGER RHIANNON GIDDENS
BECOMES NEW ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR OF YO-YO MA'S
SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

WBUR



SILKROAD, BOSTON MUSIC
INSTITUTION FOUNDED BY
YO-YO MA, ANNOUNCES
NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT SILKROAD'S ONLINE PRESS ROOM](#)

OPERATIONS

SILKROAD EXPANDED



The Silkroad team has continued to grow as we've welcomed **six new full-time staff members** to the team, including Silkroad's **new Executive Director Ben Hartley**. Hartley was selected through an international search process that drew interest from more than 400 applicants, succeeding Kathy Fletcher, who left the position in December 2022.

Silkroad also brought Red Light Management into the fold, serving in an artist management capacity for the Silkroad Ensemble to help craft and curate ongoing tours, performances, and overarching programming together with Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens.

OPERATIONS

BIPOC INTERNSHIP

The 2022-2023 season ushered in two new classes of interns as part of Silkroad’s **BIPOC Internship Program**, a five-month professional development experience designed to prepare emerging arts professionals of color with fluency in non-profit arts administration and leadership.

10 *interns worked with Silkroad across Artistic Programs, Education Programs, Development, Operations, Communications, and Social Media.*



“The internship experience was everything I could have asked for and more. The skills and expertise I have learned during the internship have definitely prepared me for the next steps in my career. **I am incredibly thankful for this opportunity.”**

**- ALEX S.
FALL 2022, EDUCATION PROGRAMS INTERN**

FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS

FUNDING PARTNERS

Silkroad Supporters are Instruments of Change

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

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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, 2022, and June 30, 2023.*

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