

FY22 ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



SILKROAD

our mission:

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

for a more hopeful and inclusive world



CONTENTS

- 4 A YEAR OF POSSIBILITIES**
- 5 YEAR AT A GLANCE**
- 6 ARTISTIC PROGRAMS:**
 - Phoenix Rising
 - Organizational Retreat
 - American Railroad
 - Home Within
 - Silkroad Seeds
- 16 EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS:**
 - Silkroad Connect
 - Global Musician Workshop
 - Boston Conservatory at Berklee
 - Harvard University
 - Spelman College
 - Refugee Programming
 - Project MUSIC
 - BIPOC Internship
- 28 DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT**
- 31 FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS**
- 36 PHOTO CREDITS**



A YEAR OF POSSIBILITIES

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

I am so proud of all that we have accomplished together this year. These last few months, I have often remarked that directing a performing arts organization in the midst of a global pandemic is not for the faint of heart. Well, I am thrilled to report that at Silkroad we are here and we are thriving, leaning in to the compelling vision of our Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens and building on our founder Yo-Yo Ma's original vision in exciting and inspiring new ways, including:

- Launching a new era at Silkroad through a retreat that, for the first time in one place, brought together all artists, staff, and board members to envision how we can use music and the arts to build a more hopeful and just world;

- Creating the new music of *Phoenix Rising*, which premiered to sold-out audiences in Cambridge, Massachusetts;

- Expanding composer Kinan Azmeh and visual artist Kevork Mourad's stunning production of *Home Within*, and orchestrating our first tour since the pandemic began, showcasing this poignant work to over 4,000 people across California and the Midwest;

- Piloting Silkroad Connect, an educational program for middle school students in four—and counting!—districts across the country that brings both world-class artistry and creative opportunities into schools in underserved communities;

- Providing safe harbor and mentorship to three talented young Afghan women

through the Refugee Artists-at-Risk Fellowship Program;

- Training 169 extraordinary young musicians from 39 countries, playing over 40 instruments at our first ever virtual Global Musician Workshop;

- Developing the vision of *American Railroad*, a multi-year music, education, and community engagement initiative that you will be hearing much more about in the months to come.

2021-2022 has been a year full of possibilities and I am grateful to you for helping us to celebrate our shared humanity and work toward a brighter future. Together, we are instruments of change.

- **Kathy Fletcher**, Executive Director

YEAR AT A GLANCE

JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022



- **3 SOLD-OUT DEBUT PERFORMANCES OF PHOENIX RISING**



- **A 7-CITY TOUR OF HOME WITHIN**



- **18,864 AUDIENCE MEMBERS REACHED THROUGH IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL CONCERTS**



- **124 WORKSHOPS IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES, AND ONLINE**



- **4.2 MILLION PEOPLE ENGAGED ONLINE**

creating art:

The transformative power of art fuels Silkroad's work.

Through socially conscious artistic programming, we are able to retell historical narratives, imagine a brighter future, and connect deeply with those around us.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

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



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

PHOENIX RISING

As Silkroad's first artistic endeavor under the leadership of Rhiannon Giddens, *Phoenix Rising* is a concert series that serves as 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 from the pandemic.

Phoenix Rising features **4** new commissions by Silkroad artists Shawn Conley, Sandeep Das, Maeve Gilchrist, and Kaoru Watanabe; new arrangements by Rhiannon Giddens, Colin Jacobsen, Edward Pérez, and Mazz Swift; and a selection of Silkroad's award-winning compositions and arrangements.



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

PHOENIX RISING

Silkroad debuted *Phoenix Rising* at the American Repertory Theater's (A.R.T.) Loeb Drama Center in November 2021, followed by spring performances in Orlando, Florida and Bilbao, Spain. Next up is a seven-stop tour of *Phoenix Rising* in July 2022, which will also serve as Rhiannon Giddens' first official tour as Artistic Director of Silkroad.

1,650 audience members attended three sold-out performances of *Phoenix Rising* at the A.R.T.'s Loeb Drama Center.



“I saw Phoenix Rising last night. Every chord struck, every drum beat, every string plucked, every foot tapped sent notes of healing to this abjectly broken world. I think I saw real joy on your faces. Pent up tears poured down mine. **And there were so many words of amazement flowing through the crowd as we left the theater's glow.**”

**- RISA M.
PHOENIX RISING AUDIENCE MEMBER**

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

ORGANIZATIONAL RETREAT

In November 2021, Silkroad hosted its first **Organizational Retreat**, bringing together staff, artists, and board in North Adams, MA for the first time since the founding of the organization over 20 years ago. In partnership with FreshGrass Foundation, Silkroad organized community workshops, meetings, and artist rehearsals on the Porches Inn and MASS MoCa campuses.

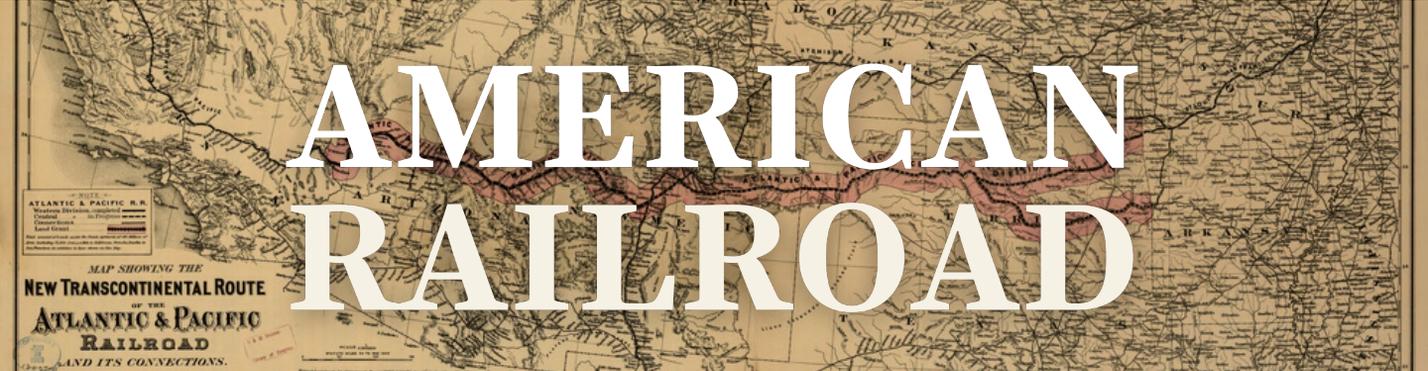
During the retreat, the Silkroad team:

- Workshopped new music for Phoenix Rising
- Joined in strategic visioning with Sozo Vision
- Participated in community building exercises
- Worked with DEIB facilitator Susan X Jane to cultivate a culture of belonging
- Examined what systemic allyship looks like within Silkroad



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

AMERICAN RAILROAD

A historical map of the United States showing the route of the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad. The map is titled "MAP SHOWING THE NEW TRANSCONTINENTAL ROUTE OF THE ATLANTIC & PACIFIC RAILROAD AND ITS CONNECTIONS." The route is highlighted in red, stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast. The map includes various geographical features, state boundaries, and city names. The title "AMERICAN RAILROAD" is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters across the center of the map.

AMERICAN RAILROAD

In drawing upon a passion for amplifying the voices and experiences of people of color and a dedication to redefining the understanding of American music, *American Railroad* was born – a multi-year, multimedia concert, educational, and commissioning series that dives deeply into the untold history, cultures, and music of the Transcontinental Railroad and the silenced communities that helped to build it. This project cultivates an understanding of the true American identity – in all of its diversity and resilience – and the power of the arts to both challenge and redefine historical narrative.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

AMERICAN RAILROAD

This effort encompasses commissions of new music that explore the crossroads of innovation and tradition, stemming from the cultures that built the railroads, including both enslaved and newly-freed Black Americans, Indigenous, Chinese, Irish, and other immigrant communities whose ways of life were forever altered by the Transcontinental Railroad. This fiscal year launched the research and planning for *American Railroad*, which will continue to grow in the new year through artistic planning retreats, new commissions, and a series of intimate trio concerts.



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." In 2020, Silkroad commissioned an expansion of *Home Within* from a duo project to now include 7 artists.

Home Within toured across seven cities and three U.S. states bringing together over **4,000** audience members.



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

SILKROAD SEEDS

Silkroad Seeds is a biennial initiative aimed to fuel the creativity of Silkroad's community of artists through individual project-based commissions. Seeds acts as a key engine of Silkroad's creative output, encouraging the members of its artistic collective to contribute meaningful and impactful work that serve to better communities, push artistic boundaries, and/or encourage meaningful social change.

*Seeds supported **6** new artistic projects:*

- An initiative to organize performances at polling locations across the United States
- An illustrated children's book, including an edition for visually impaired readers
- A video series on multi-style harp technique and performance
- A new musical work centered around incense and its many cultural and religious ties
- An immersive augmented reality sound experience centered around healing and self reflection
- A new music work and accompanying children's story in response to the refugee crisis in Afghanistan

making impact:

Education and social impact are intrinsic to Silkroad.

By bringing the arts into middle schools, carceral communities, universities, and beyond, Silkroad serves to broaden arts education, reduce barriers of access, and activate change.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

SILKROAD CONNECT

Silkroad Connect is a partnership with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, its Turnaround Arts program, and middle school classrooms across the United States that explores the stories, cultures, and music of the communities that helped build the transcontinental railroad through a culturally responsive, inquiry-based curriculum paired with professional development opportunities, artist visits, and performances.

In its pilot year, Silkroad partnered with four schools:

- North Monterey County Middle School in Castroville, CA
- John C. Fremont School in Stockton, CA
- Orchard Gardens K-8 School in Boston, MA
- Parkway Middle School in Fort Lauderdale, FL

Silkroad Connect kicked off with three professional development sessions on Culturally Responsive Teaching with Silkroad Connect teachers and artists, paired with multiple Silkroad artist visits, workshops, and performances at each of the schools, reaching over 400 students.



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

GLOBAL MUSICIAN WORKSHOP

Silkroad's **Global Musician Workshop** (GMW) is an intensive musician training program that fosters a community of globally-minded musicians through workshops that explore and engage with musical genres, styles, and traditions from around the world.

GMW 2021 was hosted online, with GMW faculty artists streaming live from New England Conservatory. The virtual program closed with a two-night GMW Online Performance Festival, featuring performances by GMW faculty, participants, and special guests including Angelique Kidjo, Speech, and Jake Shimabukuro.



*GMW 2021 brought together **169** participants from **38** countries playing over **40** different instruments*

WHERE THE SOUL NEVER DIES / RAGHUPATI RAGHAVA RAJA RAM



Click the link above to watch the GMW 2021 faculty joined by Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens perform an arrangement of "Where the Soul Never Dies/
Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram"

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

BOSTON CONSERVATORY AT BERKLEE

In partnership with **Boston Conservatory at Berklee** (BCB), Silkroad presented a weekend-long class centered around musical workshopping, cultural learning, and mindfulness through the lens of Japanese and Indian music and culture.

Silkroad also presented the semester-long course titled the “Silkroad Creativity Lab.” Led by Silkroad artist Sandeep Das, this course explored the foundations of traditional North Indian music through group instruction on tabla, guided listening, and guest artist visits.

Finally, Silkroad artists Mike Block and Kaoru Watanabe joined BCB faculty and students in a collaborative performance that explored the question: “What is classical music?”



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Silkroad continued to partner with **Harvard University**, providing artistic and educational program offerings to the Harvard community through performances, residencies, guest lectures, and more.

This year:

Silkroad hosted the debut performance of *Phoenix Rising* at the American Repertory Theater's Loeb Center on Harvard's campus.

Silkroad worked with the Harvard Business School's (HBS) Arts and Cultural Entrepreneurship Field Course to analyze the corporate giving landscape and develop a corporate funding strategy that can support Silkroad's fundraising efforts, led by HBS students.

Silkroad staff joined as guest lecturers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, engaging with **25** students through class sessions led by Professor James P. Honan.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

SPELMAN COLLEGE

Silkroad launched its inaugural residency with **Spelman College** in Atlanta, GA. Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens led vocal master classes, facilitated a community workshop about oral traditions and the importance of knowing one's history, and led a call-and-response activity that had every participant singing and engaging in the oral tradition. The engagement reached over **80** participants.

Silkroad also led a listening tour with Spelman students and faculty who shared their vision for how the residency and the American Railroad project could be integrated into their program, eliciting ideas such as youth engagement and a for-credit independent study course that is focused on research of the African American contribution to U.S. railroads.



EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

REFUGEE PROGRAMMING

Refugee Fellowship Program

In light of the life threatening situation in Afghanistan, Silkroad launched a **Refugee Fellowship Program** together with Harvard's Scholars at Risk Program, working to resettle and evacuate Afghani artists and provide a lifeline to create and perform their art in the United States, free from Taliban reprisals.

After many months of difficult coordination, Silkroad has safely resettled three Afghani refugees to the United States, providing shelter, support, and freedom to pursue their art.



A work painted by one of our refugee artists-at-risk fellows

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

REFUGEE PROGRAMMING

Migration is Beautiful Campaign

Silkroad presented a performance talkback as part of the **Migration is Beautiful Campaign**, hosted by Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Immigrant Health. Dozens of organizations, including Boston health care institutions and community organizations, teamed up to host a week-long series of events to celebrate the cultural richness migration brings, raise awareness and promote advocacy around issues facing immigrant communities, and demonstrate solidarity with immigrant patients and colleagues.

Western New York Refugee Film Festival

The **Western New York Refugee Film Festival**, the first of its kind in the US, raises unrestricted funding to support the many programs and services for refugees and other immigrant communities in Buffalo, NY provided by Journey's End Refugee Services. The film festival screened *The Music of Strangers* to conclude the festival, followed by a Q&A from Silkroad artists and staff.

Over **1,000** people tuned into the film festival, which was offered at no-cost to all viewers.

"This truly filled me up, gave me goosebumps, thrills; I danced, I was awestruck, I swooned, I felt joy, but also fragile beauty and even at times profound sadness.

**I want everyone I know to experience this film.
Thank you."**

**- AUDIENCE MEMBER
WESTERN NEW YORK REFUGEE FILM FESTIVAL**

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

PROJECT MUSIC

CHANGING
CORRECTIONS
FOR GOOD

APDS

With **Project MUSIC** (Music Uniting Strangers Into Community), Silkroad is partnering within carceral communities to create uniquely curated artistic experiences for those in spaces where walls are a literal and figurative divider.

Silkroad's engagement with carceral communities began pre-pandemic in partnership with Carnegie Hall's Musical Connections program. In addition to Silkroad artists engaging with the carceral community as Musical Connections' artists-in-residence, Silkroad also expanded its presence across the country via curated digital content through American Prison Data Systems (APDS).

APDS provides individualized education and training through digital content at no cost to those that are involved in the justice system. Silkroad curated existing content for APDS devices across the country.

EDUCATION & SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMS

BIPOC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Recognizing the need to diversify the non-profit arts sector, Silkroad launched the second round of its **BIPOC Internship Program** for emerging arts professionals of color seeking to expand their skills in arts administration and leadership.

Silkroad brought on 4 new interns this year to support work in Artistic Programs, Education Programs, Communications, and Development.



DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022

4,193,163

PEOPLE REACHED
ACROSS DIGITAL
PLATFORMS

123,139

WEB VISITORS



182,566

DIGITAL
ENGAGEMENTS

217,346

PAGEVIEWS FROM 99
COUNTRIES

IN THE NEWS

CLICK BELOW TO READ THE ARTICLES



**SILKROAD COLLABORATES
ON STAGE TO EXPLORE THE
IDEA OF 'HOME'**



**SILKROAD CONNECT LINKS
HISTORY, MUSIC, AND
EDUCATION**



**FOR ONE NIGHT, MUSIC
EASED THE LOSS OF THE
LAST TWO YEARS**

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

"Tears flowed freely down my double-masked face, as her voice channeled the collective pain we have all been carrying.

I felt two years' worth of loss and exhaustion leave my body, as I sat in a theater for the first time in just as long."

- ANRI WHEELER
WBUR

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.

ALICE L. WALTON FOUNDATION

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS

FUNDING PARTNERS

A Special Thank You to the Alice L. Walton Foundation

for providing its largest grant to Silkroad to date, in the amount of \$1,586,000. This critical funding will support the development of Silkroad's artistry, community engagement, and educational programming, including the many facets of the *American Railroad* initiative: new music, residencies in historically marginalized communities, a podcast that explores the history and cultural contributions of these communities, compelling art installations, and more. Foundation support will also make possible the development and presentation of *Uplifted Voices*, the Arts and Passion-Driven Learning Institute, a *Phoenix Rising* album, and other mission-driven programs that serve to connect us across cultures through the power of the arts. Silkroad shares the Alice L. Walton's Foundation commitment to make the enjoyment and experience of world-class artistry and educational opportunities available for all.

FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS

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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, 2021, and June 30, 2022.*

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