



“At Silkroad, our vision is to be a catalyst for culture citizenship—to model the ways that culture can be a force for positive change. Most of all, we want to help others tap into this transformative power.”

– Yo-Yo Ma

Organization

Yo-Yo Ma conceived Silkroad in 1998 as a reminder that even as the pace of change in the world has brought challenges, it has also brought extraordinary possibilities for working together. He found inspiration in the historical Silk Road as a model for productive cultural collaboration—the exchange of ideas and traditions at the edges where one culture meets another. In a radical experiment in 2000, he brought together 60 musicians from the lands of the Silk Road to Tanglewood to co-create a new artistic idiom—a musical language founded in difference serving as a metaphor for the power of a more connected world. At that time, the musicians had neither a language nor a musical tradition in common, but they had all responded to his challenge to do something together that they could not do alone. Over two weeks of talking and music making, they created something revolutionary—Silkroad, a musical ensemble and organization that is a living demonstration of how culture connects us. Today in residence at Harvard University, Silkroad has grown to include hundreds of artists and its work has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world. At a time when the world needs evidence and action that shows us what we have in common, Silkroad’s mission of radical cultural collaboration is powerfully relevant.

The Grammy Award-winning Silkroad artists seek and practice radical cultural collaboration in many forms. They create and present new music, train teachers and musicians, and engage deeply with schools, institutions, and communities. These artists represent dozens of nationalities and artistic traditions, from Spain and Japan to Syria and the United States. Silkroad artists perform in many configurations and settings from intimate groups of artists in museum galleries to larger ensembles in concert halls, public squares, and amphitheaters. They are teachers, producers, and advocates who lead professional development and musician training workshops. They create residency programs in schools, museums, and communities of all sizes and experiment with new media, genres, and partners. Silkroad has recorded seven albums, which can be found on Sony BMG Masterworks and World Village: Harmonia Mundi. *Sing Me Home*, which won the 2016 Grammy for Best World Music Album, was developed and recorded in tandem with the documentary feature *The Music of Strangers*, from Oscar-winning director Morgan Neville.

Silkroad recently completed a Theory of Change and Logic Model strategy with key initiatives launching in 2019. Core elements of that strategy are to reclaim Silkroad’s founding vision of creating music that engages difference; advance radical cultural collaboration and passion-driven learning as its primary strategies; commit to listening, curiosity, difference, risk, collaboration, artistry, and community as its primary values; and embrace these goals:

- Conditions and practices that support artistic risk taking
- A more diverse, inclusive, equitable organization
- New artistic content
- Learning programs that create artistic work and organizational learning
- Increased organizational capacity

The practices that Silkroad promotes—listening, curiosity, and collaboration—are essential to living in a hopeful, inclusive, and democratic society. Silkroad will therefore be a diverse, well-governed, financially robust organization that fosters artistic risk and demonstrates healthy learning and organizational practice. The anticipated outcomes of its strategy are an expanded collective of Silkroad artists who create a new body of artistic works as well as learning opportunities in relationship with the global communities that the organization serves. Silkroad will emerge as a leader in disrupting traditional artistic and learning practices that lead to new models and standards in ensemble practice while commissioning, performing, educating, and learning through content creation and distribution.

Silkroad has been in residence at and in a collaborative agreement with Harvard University under the Office of the President for the past five years. The organization provides one yearly concert, hosts interns, and engages in classes that create partnerships with professors and schools, including the Harvard Business School where Silkroad

is a case study taught to all first year MBA students. Silkroad is governed by a 17-member internationally recognized board of directors and has a full-time staff of six employees. Co-Artistic Directors since 2017, Jeffrey Beecher, Nicholas Cords, and Shane Shanahan guide a large roster of 55 multifaceted performing and teaching artists who are supported by numerous production-related consultants and other freelance artists. Silkroad has \$4.7 million in budgeted revenues, evenly divided between programming residencies and contributions, in the 2019 fiscal year. Now, this group of Silkroad explorers and innovators seeks new executive leadership to launch the organization into its next 20 years.

“[Silkroad’s] post-9/11 relevance, the importance of its artistic and educational mission, becomes more clear by the year. The cultural dialogue represented by its work may be seen, in its own way, as a forceful rejoinder to the events of the daily news.”

– *The Boston Globe*

Community

With nearly 4.6 million residents, Greater Boston is New England’s largest metropolitan area. It has long been the region’s economic and cultural hub. The area has strong professional sectors in education, technology, sports, financial services, arts and culture, social services, and healthcare. Robust public and regional transportation systems support its draw as a preeminent international destination with rustic neighborhoods that celebrate the community and its important place in history. Greater Boston is youthful, culturally diverse, and socially active. Approximately 36 percent of the population are ages 24 or younger; 33 percent are ages 25 to 44; 20 percent are ages 45 to 64; and 10 percent are 65 or older. A thriving city, Boston is comprised of 24 percent African American residents, 17 percent Hispanic residents, and 8 percent Asian residents. As Boston looks ahead, the development of One Seaport Square and the Innovation District in South Boston will continue to bring new industries—life sciences, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and consumer technology—to the bustling region.

“[Silkroad’s] vision of international cooperation is not what we read in our daily news reports. There is the better world available if we, like these extraordinary musicians, agree to make it one.”

– *Los Angeles Times*

Position Summary

Silkroad’s Executive Director will lead its local, national, and international strategic direction and ensure programmatic integration, artistic and social impact, financial resourcing, and administrative effectiveness. Reporting to and serving as an ex-officio member of the board of directors, the Executive Director will clearly articulate an organizational strategy, identify and take advantage of new opportunities, and deliver results that support vibrancy and sustainability. The Executive Director will develop and manage productive relationships with diverse constituencies of artists, partner organizations, board members, and funders. The Executive Director will also convey complex stories in understandable language to internal and external stakeholders, both in person and through media technology.

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision, Programmatic Vitality, and Social Impact

- Realize a short-term and define a long-term strategic direction that integrates artistic programs, collaborations, and educational activities in synergy with Silkroad’s mission, vision, and values.
- Partner with the Co-Artistic Directors to create effective relationships with artists and strategic partners that ensure radical cultural collaborations, curiosity, and listening.
- Assess complex and imaginative ideas, balance competing yet complementary interests, and prioritize strategic initiatives into specific and measurable actions.
- Implement the strategy to scale a successful programmatic model that has historically reached a small number of people to both grow the organization and reach a larger target audience.

- Maintain a strong relationship with Silkroad artists who are the principal source of creative content, innovative programs, and cross-cultural collaboration.
- Evaluate and oversee a diverse array of local, national, and international programs and partnerships.
- Embrace other strategic vision, programmatic vitality, and social impact responsibilities, as needed.

Public Visibility, Revenue Enhancement, and Governance

- Serve as Silkroad’s public voice in the media, at educational institutions, during relevant conferences, and elsewhere in advancing the organization’s position as a catalyst for change.
- Identify, cultivate, and maximize earned revenues through expanded programs and partnerships.
- Inspire philanthropic support as an investment in creativity and global cultural understanding.
- Create and develop strong ties with organizations at the forefront of positive social change.
- Oversee a dynamic marketing and communication plan that conveys the stories and results of Silkroad’s programs.
- Proactively participate in identifying and recruiting diverse local and international board members.
- Engage board members to draw on their relationships and connections as ambassadors, fundraisers, thought leaders, and champions for Silkroad’s future.
- Deliver concise, relevant, and timely materials to the board so that it can realize its full potential in policy making responsibilities.
- Perform other public visibility, revenue enhancement, and governance responsibilities, as needed.

Infrastructure, Empowerment, and Inclusion

- Guide the organization’s culture from its stages of entrepreneurial growth and expansion to one of maturity, stability, and sustainability.
- Build and lead a diverse team of staff, consultants, and freelancers to ensure that artists, strategic partners, and the communities Silkroad serves have an experience consistent with its vision and values.
- Take a transparent approach to leadership in dialogue with the Co-Artistic Directors, board of directors, committees, community partners, staff, and other stakeholders.
- Lead the overarching development and implementation of diversity, inclusion, and equity activities.
- Establish accountability measures while actively ensuring a safe and healthy work environment where talents, skills, and cultural competencies are valued.
- Empower those at all levels of the organization to have a voice in its future, embedded in creativity, innovation, and respect.
- Perform other infrastructure, empowerment, and inclusion responsibilities, as needed.

Traits and Characteristics

The Executive Director will be a creative strategist and action-oriented leader with a deep respect for Silkroad’s values of diversity and collaboration. The Executive Director will be outgoing, open, grounded, and even-keeled, conveying self-confidence without self-importance. A perceptive listener with outstanding interpersonal and diplomatic skills, the Executive Director will be flexible and accessible; demonstrate humility and grace; exude energy, optimism, and resilience; celebrate humor and camaraderie; and exhibit the highest level of personal and professional integrity. A collaborative, transparent, and visible servant leader receptive to new ideas and opportunities, the Executive Director will be people-oriented and value social impact and artistic creativity. The Executive Director will be an influencer who addresses both local and global issues while building organizational capacity and readiness to advance the organization’s mission in the communities that it serves.

The role also requires the following competencies:

- **Leadership and Flexibility** – The capacity to develop, set, and pursue strategic initiatives while adapting to societal changes and embracing a diverse range of opportunities.
- **Collaboration and Accountability** – The agility to build diverse and meaningful relationships, listen carefully, and respond conscientiously to an active array of internal and external stakeholders.

- **Diplomacy and Teamwork** – The ability to be socially savvy, respectful of differing viewpoints, fair regardless of personal biases, and productive in reaching mutually beneficial outcomes.
- **Planning, Organizing, and Prioritizing** – The ingenuity to collaboratively establish strategic goals while assessing risks, organizing activities, and operationalizing priorities.

Qualifications

A bachelor's degree is required and an advanced degree with at least 10 years of senior management experience in the arts, higher education, or social purpose organizations are preferred. Exemplary verbal and written communication skills, demonstrable experience growing philanthropic and earned revenues, and a track record of collectively working with a variety of stakeholders are necessary. Qualified candidates must have the ability to travel internationally on a regular basis. Multiple language capabilities and nonprofit governance expertise are greatly appreciated.

Compensation and Benefits

Excellent compensation and access to Harvard University benefits that include comprehensive medical and dental benefits with POS, HMO, and HDHP options are provided. Fully funded retirement plans, along with optional tax-deferred retirement savings accounts and a new Roth after-tax option, are designed to help employees save and invest for the future. Committed to a healthy work-life balance, Silkroad offers generous paid time off, including vacation, personal days, sick days, and holidays.

Applications and Inquiries

Please submit a cover letter and resume highlighting relevant and demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred) to:

Dr. Bruce D. Thibodeau, President



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Silkroad is committed to diversity and inclusion that represents where the organization and its artists live, work, and create. It has increased attention to gender balance, cultural and racial diversity, and diversity of thought.