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Classical CD of the Month: Yo-Yo Ma New Impossibilities

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Sony

Yo-Yo Ma



The blend of East and West in the Silk Road Project -- the ambitious performance series and recording venture by cellist Yo-Yo Ma -- gets a symphonic boost in Silk Road Ensemble's latest CD, *New Impossibilities*.

Named after the centuries-old Asian trade route, Ma's Silk Road Ensemble has for nine years been seeking to recapture the same sort of cross-pollination with an international blend of folk and trained musicians, playing instruments including European strings, the pipa (a Chinese lute), tabla (Indian drum) and the kamancheh (a Persian string instrument).

Ma's vision is to create a "world classical music." On *New Impossibilities*, released on the Sony Classical label, the music becomes more classical in the Western sense with the addition of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fort Worth's own Miguel Harth-Bedoya.

The CD is a live recording of performances last spring at Chicago's Orchestra Hall. Anytime Ma lends his star power and burnished tone to a piece, you take notice. But some tracks work significantly better than others.

After starting off with the infectious polyrhythms of *Arabian Waltz* by Lebanese-born composer Rabih Abou-Khalil, the CD excels when it is most authentic, notably in Osvaldo Golijov's *Night of the Flying Horses* and in *Song of Eight Unruly Topsy Poets* by Chinese composer Zhou Long. Later, the minimalist solemnity of Kayhan Kalhor's *Silent City* recalls the meditative music of Arvo Part. Yet some of the rest of the CD runs dangerously close to kitsch, especially in the overboard Hollywood-like arrangement of the Chinese traditional piece *Ambush From Ten Sides*.

New Impossibilities

Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Miguel Harth-Bedoya

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