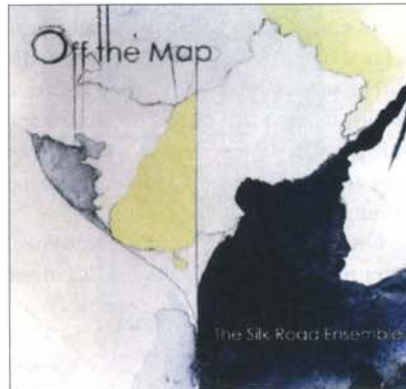


the absolute sound

March 2010



Silk Road Ensemble: *Off the Map*. World Village.

The Silk Road Ensemble, originally developed at Tanglewood by Yo-Yo Ma, is now ten years old. The group's latest effort, *Off the Map*, encompasses myriad musical flavors that hail from beyond the ancient Silk Road trade routes.

The SRE has always emphasized the collaboration of Western and non-Western artists, expanding what counts as “classical music” for open-minded listeners. Gabriela Lena Frank combines two traditional Chinese instruments, pipa and sheng, with a standard string quartet for a South American-inspired piece, *Ritmos Andinos*. Evan Ziporyn, known for his interest in Indonesian music, features Indian tabla master Sandeep Das in *Suvasutra*, a work also employing string quartet and pipa. The main voice in Angel Lam's *Empty Mountain, Spirit Rain* is the Japanese shakuhachi.

“Wah Habbibi,” the opening movement of *Air to Air* by Osvaldo Golijov, highlights Cristina Pato's Galician bagpipe; it's followed by the sublime “Aiini Taqtiru” (“My Eyes Weep”), derived from the Arab-Christian Good Friday service. Next, the dreamlike “Ritual for the Holy Mother of Guadalupe” incorporates a Mexican field recording borrowed from the Nonesuch Explorer Series. The suite ends with the jubilant, percussive “Walls Are Encircling the Land.”

The sound can only be described as “audiophile-quality”—vivid, floating free from your loudspeakers. **Andrew Quint**

Further Listening: Golijov: *Ainadamar*;
SRE: *Silk Road Journeys* (SACD)