



Internationally-Acclaimed Cellist Yo-Yo Ma to Receive Fred Rogers Legacy Award, Give Benefit Recital May 23

Saint Vincent College Public Relations

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Internationally-acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma will be honored as the inaugural recipient of the Fred Rogers Legacy Award and give a recital to benefit the [Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media](#) on Friday, May 23, at Saint Vincent College.

Ma, who appeared twice with Fred Rogers on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and became a lifelong friend of the late public television legend, was invited to receive the honor by Joanne Rogers, honorary chairperson of the Center's Advisory Council, in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Center. Honored by the award and excited to visit the Fred Rogers Center, Ma welcomed the opportunity to come to Latrobe.

The Fred Rogers Legacy Award recognizes individuals who have made exemplary professional contributions and personal commitments to service that pay forward elements of Fred Rogers' legacy as a person embodying universal human values, a creative artist, a teacher and model of core principles for early learning and development, an innovator and an advocate for the dignity and potential of all children. In their work, recipients also demonstrate the mission of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, as catalysts for communication, collaboration and creative change in their fields.

Through his commitment to education and cultural enrichment, Ma founded the Silk Road Project to promote the study of cultural, artistic and intellectual traditions internationally as well as a multidisciplinary educational program for middle school U.S. students. Like Fred Rogers, Ma expertly uses the power of popular culture and media to engage “students” of all ages in learning about and through music.

In keeping with the life and legacy of Fred Rogers, Ma has used his many talents to inspire, nurture and educate, and it is in the spirit of these unique endowments that the Fred Rogers Center is greatly honored to recognize him with the inaugural Fred Rogers Legacy Award.

“I would describe this as an extraordinary evening that will be fondly remembered by those who attend,” commented the Rt. Rev. Douglas R. Nowicki, O.S.B., archabbot and chancellor at Saint Vincent, and another lifelong friend of Fred Rogers. “I think it will become a cherished memory in the history of the Latrobe and Westmoreland County region.”

The evening will include a 5 p.m. reception at the Rogers Center and the award ceremony and solo cello recital by Ma in the Saint Vincent Basilica at 7 p.m.

All guests will receive a copy of a special commemorative booklet that is being prepared for the occasion to recognize the event’s sponsors and underwriters. It will include photos of Fred Rogers and Yo-Yo Ma, essays by Rogers Center Senior Fellows Dr. Margaret Kimmel and Maxwell King, and selections from renowned photojournalist Lynn Johnson’s collection of more than 12,000 photographs of Fred amassed over a 35-year period. Portions of that collection will also be on display during the May 23 event.

Seating is limited and advanced reservations will be required. Ticket and sponsorship information are available by contacting the Rogers Center at 724-805-2750 or online at www.fredrogerslegacyaward.org. All proceeds will benefit scholarships and fellowships at the Fred Rogers Center, including the Early Career Fellows Program which fosters the next generation of professionals dedicated to children’s media, and the Fred Rogers Scholars Program which is designed for Saint Vincent College students interested in pursuing careers involving children, early learning and media for young children.

“I believe one of the things that is very evident is that this new Fred Rogers Legacy Award has the potential to get the attention of a regional and national audience for the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media,” commented Richard Fernandes, the new executive director of the Center. “It’s a great way to define the Center as it moves into its second decade of work. We are fine-tuning the Center’s programs and I think that the relevance of Fred Rogers’ legacy is more important now than ever before in the fields of early learning and children’s media. One of the things that Fred did so well was to focus on social-emotional development, that is, how children work with their feelings, how they feel, how they react. And one of the things that I think is an interesting juxtaposition is that during Yo-Yo Ma’s visit to the *Neighborhood* he and Fred had a conversation about how they each express themselves through music. So, I think that this special event is really about that expression. It will be reflective but also looking to the future.”

Ma’s multi-faceted career is testament to his continual search for new ways to communicate with audiences and to his personal desire for artistic growth and renewal. Whether performing new or

familiar works from the cello repertoire, coming together with colleagues for chamber music or exploring cultures and musical forms outside the Western classical tradition, Ma strives to find connections that stimulate the imagination.

Ma maintains a balance between his engagements as soloist with orchestras throughout the world, his recital and chamber music activities and his work with the Silk Road Project, for which he serves as artistic director. He draws inspiration from a wide circle of collaborators, each fueled by the artists' interactions. Ma is also widely recognized for his strong commitment to educational programs that bring the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world. While touring, he takes time whenever possible to conduct master classes as well as more informal programs for students – musicians and non-musicians alike. He has also reached young audiences through appearances on *Arthur*, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*.

One of Ma's goals is the exploration of music as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the migration of ideas across a range of cultures throughout the world. Expanding upon this interest, in 1998, Ma established the Silk Road Project to promote the study of the cultural, artistic and intellectual traditions along the ancient Silk Road trade route that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. Since the project's inception, more than 60 works have been commissioned specifically for the Silk Road Ensemble, which tours annually. At the invitation of the New York City Department of Education, in 2009, the Silk Road Project began a multi-year partnership with cultural and educational organizations to pilot Silk Road Connect, a multidisciplinary middle school engagement program designed to spark a lifelong passion for learning. In Silk Road Connect, visual and aural elements are used alongside the experiences of creating and collaborating, making direct connections to classroom work in subjects such as social studies, English language arts, the sciences and the arts.

Ma is an exclusive Sony Classical artist, and his discography of more than 75 albums (including more than 15 Grammy Award winners) reflects his wide-ranging interests. He has made several successful recordings that defy categorization, among them "Hush" with Bobby McFerrin, "Appalachia Waltz" and "Appalachian Journey" with Mark O'Connor and Edgar Meyer, and three albums with the Silk Road Ensemble. Ma's recent recordings include Mendelssohn Trios with Emanuel Ax and Itzhak Perlman; "Songs of Joy and Peace." His album, "The Goat Rodeo Sessions," with Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile and Stuart Duncan, was released in October 2011. His latest album, "A Playlist without Borders," was released in 2013 with the Silk Road Project and he was the featured soloist on the tracks. Across this full range of releases, Ma remains one of the best-selling recording artists in the classical field. All of his recent albums have quickly entered the Billboard chart of classical best sellers, remaining in the Top 15 for extended periods, often with as many as four titles simultaneously on the list. In fall 2009, Sony Classical released a box set of more than 90 albums to commemorate Ma's 30 years as a Sony recording artist.

Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age four and soon came with his family to New York, where he spent most of his formative years. Later, his principal teacher was Leonard Rose at The Juilliard School. He sought out a traditional liberal arts education to expand upon his conservatory training, graduating from Harvard University in 1976.

Ma has received numerous awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the Glenn Gould Prize (1999), the National Medal of the Arts (2001), the Dan David Prize (2006), the Sonning Prize (2006), the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award (2008), and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010). Ma serves as a U.N. Messenger of Peace and as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. He has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

Ma plays two instruments, a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice and the 1712 Davidoff Stradivarius.

Ma and his wife have two children.

The mission of the [Fred Rogers Center](#) for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College is to advance the fields of early learning and children's media by acting as a catalyst for communication, collaboration, and creative change. The Center houses the Fred Rogers Archive including materials from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. The national signature programs of the Center are the Early Career Fellows program, the Fred Rogers Center [Early Learning Environment](#)[™] (*Ele*), and the *Fred Forward Conference* series.

Photo: *Yo-Yo Ma with the late Fred Rogers*

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