

Celebrating the Power of Music: Right To Play and The Silkroad Ensemble, Team Up to Empower Vulnerable Lebanese and Refugee Youth to Rise

Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian youth performed alongside world-renowned musicians in Qasqas, Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon [August 25, 2019] – More than 300 young people, accompanied by cellist and philanthropist Yo Yo Ma and the SilkRoad Ensemble, have turned the rooftops and street of the Qasqas neighborhood in Beirut into a vast, interactive stage to perform a number of musical pieces, many of which they had composed themselves.

The youth, most of whom are Syrian and Palestinian refugees, created the music over the past year as part of a Music For Development project, designed and implemented by Right To Play in partnership with the Silkroad Ensemble.

The concert marked the culmination of the first phase of this project, which brought at-risk and vulnerable young people, living in and around Beirut, together with professional musicians from the Silkroad Ensemble as well as young local music coaches. Through different forms of music, the project aimed to provide a platform and a vehicle through which the youth could explore and express their challenges, learn critical life skills like confidence, collaboration, and communication and advocate for their rights.

“These children are facing some of the most difficult life situations you could imagine, but they’re learning how to find their voice, resolve conflict and rise above trauma, all through the power of music and play,” said Kevin Frey, CEO of Right To Play International. “We’re so honoured to have been able to launch this project last year with Silkroad and their incredible musicians, and can’t wait to see how these youths will inspire their communities with the skills and knowledge they’ve gained through the Music For Development project.”

“Silkroad is thrilled to join the kids and their coaches to celebrate the role music, creativity, and play can have in creating hope and social change in their communities,” said Shane Shanahan, Co-Artistic Director of Silkroad. “Right To Play has been an important partner in this meaningful, collaborative work, and we are eager to share the pieces these children have created through the Music For Development project.”

All of the youth involved in the program came from extremely difficult, high poverty areas with high incidences of drug abuse, violence, diseases and environmental degradation. Many of these young people have lost their voices and their hope. The Music for Development project created an opportunity for them to explore their fears and face their challenges through the transformative power of music.

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For additional photos and b-roll from the event, please contact:

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PRESS RELEASE

About Right To Play

Right To Play is a global organization that protects, educates and empowers children to rise. We work with children in some of the most difficult and dangerous places on earth, helping them to stay in school and graduate, to resist exploitation and overcome prejudice, to prevent disease and to heal from war and abuse.

For more than 20 years, we have delivered programs with impact in both development and humanitarian contexts. As pioneers in a unique approach to learning, both inside and outside of the classroom, we harness play, one of the most fundamental forces in a child's life, to help children dismantle barriers and embrace opportunities. We are the only global development organization focused exclusively on using the power of play to transform children's lives.

We reach 2.3 million children each year in 15 countries around the world. By collaborating with teachers, governments, communities and parents, we unlock children's potential, enabling them to make positive and healthy choices and to create better futures for themselves, their families and their societies.

About Silkroad

Yo-Yo Ma conceived Silkroad in 1998 as a reminder that even as rapid globalization resulted in division, it brought extraordinary possibilities for working together. Seeking to understand this dynamic, he began to learn about the historical Silk Road, recognizing in it a model for productive cultural collaboration, for the exchange of ideas and tradition alongside commerce and innovation. And in a radical experiment, he brought together musicians from the lands of the Silk Road to co-create a new artistic idiom, a musical language founded in difference, a metaphor for the benefits of a more connected world.

The Grammy award-winning Silkroad Ensemble has been at the core of Silkroad's work to build a more hopeful and inclusive world since 2000. These artists represent dozens of nationalities and artistic traditions, from Spain and Japan to Syria and the United States. Today, Silkroad artists seek and practice cultural collaboration in many forms, creating and presenting new music, teacher and musician training workshops, and residency programs in schools, museums, and communities.

Silkroad has recorded seven albums. *Sing Me Home*, which won the 2016 Grammy for Best World Music Album was developed and recorded alongside the documentary feature *The Music of Strangers*, from Oscar-winning director Morgan Neville.

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