

EASTMAN PRESENTS – KODAK HALL SERIES

# SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

WITH

# RHIANNON GIDDENS

*Sanctuary: The Power of  
Resonance and Ritual*

Thursday, March 26, 2026  
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre  
7:30 PM



Eastman School of Music

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

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*Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual* explores humanity's enduring impulse to turn to music in moments of upheaval, grief, and transformation. Across cultures and throughout history, communal sound-making has served as a refuge and a way to process loss, forge connection, and restore balance in times of uncertainty. In *Sanctuary*, Silkroad invites audiences into this shared space, examining how ritual, trance, and resonance function not only as musical practices, but as deeply human responses to the challenges of living together in an unsettled world.

Drawing from a vast range of global traditions, including Southern Italian tarantella, Moroccan Gnawa, Indian classical music, Japanese farmers' song, and American folk practices, the program highlights music's ability to create presence, grounding, and collective meaning. Rather than presenting these traditions in isolation, *Sanctuary* weaves them into an ongoing dialogue, revealing unexpected connections across geography and history. The result is an evocative experience in which listeners are invited to participate as witnesses and partners in the act of listening itself.

At the heart of *Sanctuary* is a deeply collaborative creative process rooted in improvisation and shared musical storytelling. Each artist brings their own cultural lineage and lived musical language into the room, offering it as both a personal expression and a communal invitation. Through attentive listening and trust, the ensemble allows one another to "sit" within these traditions, learning, responding, and building new music together in real time, while honoring the integrity of each voice.

This program also marks the first appearance of guest artists Mehdi Nassouli and Mauro Durante, whose musical lineages bring powerful expressions of trance and communal rhythm into conversation with Silkroad's core ensemble. Through spontaneous collaboration, layered grooves, and moments of quiet reflection, the musicians explore how repetition, pulse, and resonance can open pathways to healing and shared understanding.

At once intimate and expansive, *Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual* is not a retreat from the world in a time of unrest, but a response to it, offering music as a space of refuge, renewal, and connection. In a time when division and dissonance often dominate, Silkroad reminds us of music's capacity to hold complexity, honor tradition, and create moments of collective stillness and joy.

## ABOUT THE SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

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Founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998, **Silkroad** is a global organization that uses collaborative music and art to spark cross-cultural understanding and creative exchange. The Silkroad Ensemble brings together master musicians from around the world, representing diverse traditions and artistic practices. Their work breaks down cultural boundaries and demonstrates how shared artistic creation can foster empathy, connection, and social change. Silkroad's music with purpose reflects its mission to build a more hopeful, inclusive world through the power of artistic collaboration.

Over more than two decades, Silkroad has built bridges across cultures, created new music through collective improvisation and deep listening, and engaged audiences worldwide in experiences that celebrate cultural diversity and human connection.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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**Rhiannon Giddens** has made a singular, iconic career out of stretching her brand of folk music, with its miles-deep historical roots and contemporary sensibilities, into just about every field imaginable. A two-time GRAMMY Award-winning singer and multi-instrumentalist, MacArthur “Genius” grant recipient, Pulitzer Prize winner, and composer of opera, ballet, and film, Giddens has centered her work around the mission of lifting up people whose contributions to American musical history have previously been overlooked or erased, and advocating for a more accurate understanding of the country’s musical origins through art.



Giddens has released three albums under her own name and two in collaboration with Italian multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, all on Nonesuch Records. *American Railroad*, her first album in collaboration with the Silkroad Ensemble, was released in November 2024, and her most recent album, a collaboration with Justin Robinson, *What Did the Blackbird Say to the Crow*, released this past April.

A founding member of the landmark Black string band Carolina Chocolate Drops, and the all-female banjo supergroup, Our Native Daughters, Giddens is as much a curator as a creator. She is the current Artistic Director of the Yo-Yo Ma-founded Silkroad Ensemble, hosts a TV show on PBS, *My Music with Rhiannon Giddens*, and has hosted two podcasts (*Aria Code* from New York City’s NPR affiliate station *WQXR*, which ran for three seasons, and *American Railroad* from Silkroad). Giddens has published two children’s books and written and performed music for the soundtrack of *Red Dead Redemption II*, one of the best-selling video games of all time. She appeared as a recurring cast member on ABC’s hit drama *Nashville* and as a music history expert on Ken Burns’ *Country Music* series on PBS. This year, she launched her own music festival in Durham, NC called Biscuits & Banjos, to celebrate Black culture outside the mainstream.

As *Pitchfork* once said, “few artists are so fearless and so ravenous in their exploration”—a journey that has led to NPR naming her one of its 25 Most Influential Women Musicians of the 21st Century and to American Songwriter calling her “one of the most important musical minds currently walking the planet.”

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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Hawaii born bassist and composer **Shawn Conley** grew up loving all types of music. This love of diversity of sound developed into a career that straddles many genres. He has been a member of the Silkroad Ensemble (founded by Yo-Yo Ma) for 10 years and is a member of the Brooklyn-based chamber orchestra The Knights. Recently, he won the principal bass position in the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra. Shawn will be releasing his first solo bass record this year, pairing Bach's first cello suite with freely improvised pieces, exploring the connection between the two words.



You can hear Shawn on the GRAMMY Award-winning CD '*Sing Me Home*' with Silkroad and Yo-Yo Ma as well as a new album with Rhiannon Giddens and the Silkroad Ensemble based on the American Railroad and the overlooked Indigenous and immigrant communities who built it. He can also be heard on The Knights catalog, including album "*Azul*," and a new recording of composer Anna Clyne's music, both featuring Yo-Yo Ma, and Beethoven and Brahms *Violin Concerto* featuring Gil Shaham.

As a studio musician, he has performed on multiple soundtracks including *True Grit*, *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *The Vietnam War* documentary by Ken Burns and the Amazon series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

Shawn studied at Rice University with Paul Ellison and in Paris, France with Francois Rabbath. He currently lives in Honolulu with his wife Megan and their son, Osian.

A Guggenheim Fellow, **Sandeep Das** is one of the leading Tabla virtuosos in the world today. Since his debut concert at the age of 17 with legendary Sitar player Ravi Shankar, Das has built a prolific international reputation spanning over three decades. He has collaborated with top musicians, ensembles, and orchestras from all over the world, and his original compositions have been performed in 50+ countries. Das is the founder of Harmony and Universality through Music (HUM), a nonprofit organization in India



## MEET THE ARTISTS

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that has promoted global understanding through music performance and provided learning opportunities and scholarships for visually-impaired children with artistic potential since 2009. His most recent project, *Transcending Borders One Note at a Time*, launched in 2020 to widespread international acclaim, and seeks to harness the power of music to create positive social change.

Multi-percussionist **Haruka Fujii** has become one of the most prominent solo percussionists and marimbists of her generation. She has won international acclaim for her interpretations of contemporary music, having performed numerous premieres of works from luminary composers.



Since 2010, Ms. Fujii has performed as an artist of the Grammy Award winning Silkroad Ensemble, joining a group of international musicians founded by Yo-Yo Ma and serves as the Associate Artistic Director alongside the current Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens. Ms. Fujii's passion for introducing audiences to new percussion music has put her on stage with diverse orchestras and ensembles. She has appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Nationale de Lyon, and the NHK Symphony Orchestra. She is a member of San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and Line C3 Percussion Group, also Utari Percussion Duo, a duet project with her sister Rika which actively commissions new compositions from young composers. In addition to her career as a performing artist, Ms. Fujii is a faculty member of San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and has been a frequent guest instructor at Juilliard Summer Percussion Seminar and several international percussion festivals. She is the founder and creative director of a nonprofit organization Nippon Kobo, a new cultural event series introducing Music+Culture from contemporary Japan.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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Edinburgh born harpist and composer **Maeve Gilchrist** has been credited as an innovator on her native instrument and taken the Celtic (lever) Harp to new levels of performance and visibility. Currently based in Kingston, NY, Maeve tours internationally as a solo artist and composer as well as being a member of the Grammy-nominated Silkroad Ensemble, Arooj Aftab's Grammy-winning Vulture Prince Ensemble and as part of the multi-disciplinary quartet Edges of Light. She has performed and recorded with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Frankie Gavin, Esperanza Spalding, Bruce Molsky, Ambrose Akinmusire, and Solas. As a composer, Maeve straddles the worlds of folk and classical with pieces including her original *Concerto for Symphony Orchestra and Harp* (a co-commission with Luke Benton), a three-movement Samuel Beckett-inspired piece for Harp, String Quartet and Sound Samples which was premiered at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival in the spring of 2018 and a number of other pieces for Harp Ensembles and Strings. She is a regular visiting artist at the Berklee College of Music and has had a number of instructional books published by Hal Leonard and 80 days publishing. Maeve has released a number of albums to her name on the Adventure Music Record Label as well as being a featured soloist on the Dreamworks blockbuster movie soundtrack, *How to Tame Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. Her most recent album, *The Harpweaver*, has garnered international acclaim including a five-star review from the Irish Times who described it as "buoyant, sprightly and utterly beguiling...a snapshot of a musician at the top of her game".



Maeve is the co-music director of the WGBH *Holiday Show*, a Christmas Celtic sojourn and the co-artistic director of the brand new Rockport Celtic Music Festival; an innovative new festival focused on cross-curation and the outer-fringes of Celtic Music.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

Sought after for her “radiant” (*The New York Times*) performances full of “tremendous heart, bringing joy and a captivating sound to the stage” (*The Strad*), **Karen Ouzounian** is an acclaimed cellist and composer who creates music from a deeply personal place. She has appeared as a soloist in venues including the Konzerthaus Berlin, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Kölner Philharmonie, Tonhalle Düsseldorf and Carnegie Hall, championing a remarkable breadth of music with fierce commitment and emotional power. She has appeared at the Marlboro, Ojai, Caramoor, and Ravinia festivals, and was the founding cellist of the Aizuri Quartet for eleven years, earning a GRAMMY nomination and major chamber music prizes on three continents. She is currently touring *Mayrig* (“mother” in Armenian), an intimate show for cello with electronics, piano and vocals, and in 2024 premiered *Dear Mountains*, her co-composed work with Lembit Beecher for solo cello, oud, percussion and chorus. [www.karenouzounian.com](http://www.karenouzounian.com)



**Mazz Swift** is a composer, conductor, singer, bandleader, educator, and Juilliard-trained violinist, with improvisation as a throughline in their practice across genres and instrumental configurations.

As a violinist and singer, Swift is no stranger to most of the world’s greatest stages including Royal Albert Hall, Walt Disney Hall, Carnegie Hall, Müpa Budapest, David Geffen Hall, Paris Philharmonie, and Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie. As a composer, Swift’s works include commissions by The Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, The Kronos Quartet, and the International Contemporary Ensemble. As an educator, Swift has taught workshops in free improvisation and “conduction” (conducted improvisation) on six continents.



Mazz is a 2021 United States Artist and a 2019 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, continually creating orchestral compositions that involve Conduction, small ensemble works, and solo works that are centered around protest and freedom songs, spirituals, and the Ghanaian concept of ‘Sankofa’: looking back to learn how to move forward.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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**Niwel Tsumbu** is a guitarist and singer who grew up with the hip-swinging Soukous music from the Democratic Republic Of The Congo. Strongly influenced by guitarists such as Paco de Lucia, Luambo Makiadi, Baden Powell and Joe Pass, Niwel Tsumbu has amalgamated these different styles and blurred the boundaries of African, Classical, and Jazz music with his amazing virtuosity, passion and graceful guitar playing.



**Francesco Turrisi** has been defined as a “musical alchemist” and a “musical polyglot.” He has released five critically acclaimed albums as a leader and two as co-leader (*“Tarab”* a cross boundary innovative ensemble that blends Irish and Mediterranean traditional music, and *“Zabr”* a project that looks at connections between southern Italian traditional music and Arabic music.)



## MEET THE GUEST ARTISTS

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**Mauro Durante** (violinist, percussionist, and composer) is a visionary inheritor of the folk roots of his native Salento, in Italy's Puglia region. He leads the internationally acclaimed and award-winning Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino (founded in 1975 by Durante's family), playing in all major world music festivals.



Durante is considered as a key figure in reinventing pizzica music for today, making “Taranta” the most vibrant and relevant form of Italian roots music.

Besides leading CGS, Mauro's duo project with British guitarist and producer Justin Adams earned many awards and international praise, showing their ability to turn a fusion project into a fully realised and unique unit.

Mauro Durante toured the world for many years with Ludovico Einaudi, and has collaborated with Piers Faccini, Ibrahim Maalouf, Ballake Sissoko, Jovanotti, Stewart Copeland, Sam Lee, Enzo Avitabile, Nickodemus, and Red Baraat, bringing a contemporary edge along with his deep feel for tradition.

Guembri specialist **El Mehdi Nassouli** learned from a family steeped in Gnawa culture. Following this, Mehdi Nassouli traverses Morocco during twenty years to complete his journey of initiation with several maâlems (masters of Gnawa tradition), from Taroudant to Marrakech through Essaouira and Safi, gaining a solid understanding of Gnawa music, the Daqqa, Houara, hmadcha or the Malhun.



Open to the fusion of musical genres, Mehdi Nassouli has traveled over the continents, working with renowned world music figures such as Titi Robin, Benjamin Taubkin, Nneka, Antibalas, Karim Ziad, Hindi Zahra, Andy Emler, Omar Sosa, Justin Adams, Métropol Orkest, and Alpha Blondy.

## MEET THE CREATIVE CREW

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**Anna Drozdowski** instigates extraordinary cultural experiences and builds structures for wildness to grow. Delivery systems include: international exchange, cups of tea, gently coiffed conversations, retreats, festivals, and belles lettres. Anna led the adaptive re-use of Neighborhood House, was faculty in the Socially Engaged MFA at Moore, facilitated with ArtistsU and began the Headlong Performance Institute. She co-founded thinkingdance.net and Thirdbird. Projects lately: tours to Koorbienale, Helsinki Opera, David Lang's *Symphony For A Broken Orchestra*, a new opera with Philip Glass, public art with Roberto Lugo and Wanda Raimundi Ortiz, a retrospective of Jonathan Burrows & Matteo Fargion and a sound-sculpture with Immanuel Wilkins, Jenn Kidwell and Rachael Elliott. Her scholarship & curatorial work has been honored by Fulbright, NEA Dance Criticism, and DAAD Fellowships with support from Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, William Penn and Knight Fnds. She holds Master's in Performance Studies from NYU. Come visit ABIGAIL, her hinterland homestead for artists, activists, and academics.

**Rachel Dickstein** (director, designer) is thrilled to be a part of the *Sanctuary* company! She is a director, writer, and choreographer of opera, theatre, new music and dance-based performance.

She founded the Obie-winning theatre company Ripe Time in 2000 to develop and produce ensemble-based, embodied adaptations from literature and documentary based theatre about women+ lives. Recent work includes *COMPASS* (ASU Gammage), Haruki Murakami's *SLEEP* (BAM Next Wave Festival), *THE WORLD IS ROUND* (BAM-Fisher), and *SEPTIMUS AND CLARISSA* (Drama Desk, Drama League nominations, BPAC). Rachel also directs new plays, chamber opera and new music theatre including *BLOOD MOON* (BMP Prototype), *THUMBPRINT* (LA Opera/ Prototype), and the upcoming *STAR SINGER* (LA Opera, BMP/Prototype). Other upcoming new work development includes *IN[FINITE] TIME*, *SALVAGED PAGES* (as writer) and *WOMENWATERRISING*. Associate Professor, and Co-Chair of Theatre and Performance at Purchase College, SUNY. Author of *Towards Embodied Performance: Directing and the Art of Composition* (Routledge 2024.)

## MEET THE CREATIVE CREW

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**Anna Kiraly** is a Hungarian-born visual artist and scenic and projection designer based in New York City. Recent collaborations include set design for the Barrymore-nominated *Franklin's Key* with the Pig Iron Theater Company, The Play Company, the Talking Band, Ripe Time, and immersive environment design for the Nichole Canuso Dance Company. Anna frequently collaborates with universities such as Barnard/Columbia, Fordham, The New School, Montclair, Smith, Colgate. She designed visuals for operas and concerts with the NYP, American Opera Projects, Peter Sellars, and the Hungarian National Opera. She is a recipient of a 2021 and 2025 NYSCA grant, the Soros Arts Link Grant, the NEA/TCG Program for Designers, the TCG New Generations, and the Jim Henson Foundation's project grant. She has taught set design and media at Barnard College/Columbia University, SUNY Purchase, and the Hungarian School of Theater and Film. Find out more about Anna's work at [www.annakiraly.com](http://www.annakiraly.com)

**Christopher Gilmore.** Lighting Design: Resident Lighting Designer of Fort Greene Orchestra (2024- current), Broken Theater (Aarhus, DK), "American Railroad: 2025 Tour" (Silkroad Ensemble), Luke Hickey's A Swing Suite (New Victory Dance Festival 2025, current tours with Dorrance Dance), Book of Sounds and Zarabanda Variations (American Modern Opera Company's Lincoln Center Festival 2025), "El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered" (AMOC\*: 2023 Tour, St. John The Divine 2023-24), Boston Ballet School: Next Generation 2023 (Boston Ballet), Ensemble Connect Up Close: Through Movement (Carnegie Hall), CAGE (AMOC\*). Associate: The Seasons (Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Philadelphia), B E N D (Pomegranate Arts: Northrop UMN, TO Live), Taylor Mac's Bark of Millions (Pomegranate Arts: BAM, CalPerformances), Only an Octave Apart (Spoleto Festival USA, Gate Theatre Dublin), La Boheme (BLO, OP), Harawi (AMOC\* US and Europe Tour), Broken Theater (AMOC\*: CPA, OZ Arts Nashville, La MaMa), Trevor: A New Musical (Stage42). Proud graduate of Emerson College.

## MEET THE CREATIVE CREW

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**Paul Vazquez** has provided audio recording, sound design, and live sound needs for clients such as Philadelphia-based professional chamber choir The Crossing, Silkroad Ensemble, Westminster Choir College, Jason Max Ferdinand Singers, and more. Always passionate about sound, he founded Digital Mission Audio Services to address the unique needs of the classical and new music community. Recent projects have included David Lang's Grammy-nominated *Poor Hymnal*, Ted Hearne's premiere of *Farming* with performances in the Netherlands, Caramoor and a working farm in Bucks County PA. Paul's work can be heard on WNYC, WRTI, as well as The Crossing's CD releases including Grammy winning albums *The Fifth Century*, *Zealot Canticles*, *Born*, and *Ochre*. A native of Long Island, NY, Paul now resides in Madison, NJ with his wife Jennifer and children Emma and Christopher. Paul is a voting member of NARAS and local NY AES chapter. [dmasrecording@gmail.com](mailto:dmasrecording@gmail.com)

**Dave Harris** has been the Front of House Audio Engineer for Silkroad Ensemble since 2023. When he isn't busy with Silkroad he works with the Boston Symphony as Head of Live Audio at Tanglewood, where he will be celebrating his 20th summer this year.

After studying anthropology, music, and religion at University of Virginia and receiving a master's degree in ethnomusicology from Tufts University, **Katie Harvey** has dedicated her career to facilitating creatives in live music settings. She began touring in 2011 and tour managing in 2013. Currently, her work supports the Silkroad Ensemble, Christian McBride, and Oteil Burbridge. With pride, she lives in New Orleans and participates in the ongoing music making and street performance communities centered there. Katie believes in the power of music to connect people through bridges of empathy and joy.

## MEET THE CREATIVE CREW

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**Hilarie Spangler** is an arts producer, art therapist, and creative manager whose work lives at the intersection of storytelling, care, and collective making. With a background in community-based arts, mental health, and project leadership, Hilarie brings both emotional intelligence and logistical precision to every space they hold. As a producer, she shepherds projects from first spark to final performance, centering artists' voices while building structures that allow creative risk to thrive. As an art therapist, she uses music, visual art, and embodied practices to support healing, resilience, and self-expression, which is why she's so excited to collaborate on Sanctuary. Whether facilitating a group, coordinating a tour, or shaping a new project, Hilarie is driven by a belief that creativity is a vital force for connection, transformation, and care.

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*

## UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

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Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](http://EastmanTheatre.org)

### FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

#### **Eastman Virtuosi**

Saturday, March 28, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

### EASTMAN PRESENTS – EASTMAN-RANLET SERIES

#### **Doric String Quartet**

Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 3:00 PM

Kilbourn Hall

#### **Holocaust Remembrance Concert**

Sunday, April 12, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

\*Free, tickets not required

## UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

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All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

#### **Composers Concert**

Monday, March 30, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Hatch Recital Hall

#### **Chamber Jazz Ensemble**

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Hatch Recital Hall

#### **Brass Guild**

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

#### **Eastman Wind Orchestra**

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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