

# Yo-Yo Ma

by ReadWorks

One of the best-known cellists in the world today, Yo-Yo Ma was born in 1955 in Paris, France. He grew up in a family of musicians. He started learning to play the cello when he was just four years old. He would wake up at four or five o'clock in the morning every day to practice.

His exceptional talent at such a young age made Ma a child prodigy. He performed in public for the first time at the University of Paris when he was five. In 1962, his family moved to New York. The same year, Ma and his older sister performed in front of President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jackie Kennedy. This performance was filmed and shown on television. It was the first time many people were introduced to the young cellist.

While in New York City, Ma studied with a famous cellist named Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School of Music. When Ma entered college, he decided to branch out and learn something outside of the world of music. He studied anthropology at Harvard University and graduated in 1976. During college, Ma continued to perform in concerts around the world. He also played his friends' compositions and performed with the university orchestra. His experience at Harvard influenced his musical career.

Since then, Ma has not limited himself to only playing classical music. He has recorded and performed music covering a wide range of styles including country music, bluegrass, and tango music. He has even recorded music for several movie soundtracks! His versatility and desire to explore different kinds of music set him apart from other cellists. It's no surprise that many people consider Ma to be the world's greatest living cellist.

In 1998, Ma launched Silkroad, an organization named for the legendary network of trade routes that once spanned from China to the Mediterranean Sea. The organization brings together artists from around the world. Together, they create and perform music that reflects their unique cultures and traditions. They also work with museums and universities around the world to develop educational programs.

Ma's long list of accomplishments includes performing for eight U.S. presidents, recording over 100 albums, and winning several Grammy Awards. He has also developed a reputation for being humble and kind. Ma takes the time to interact with people who come to his concerts. He is passionate about connecting with people from different cultures and backgrounds. His incredible talent and love of music serve as an inspiration to people all around the world.



White House Photo, Courtesy Reagan Library, PD

*This is a photo of Yo-Yo Ma performing at a dinner hosted by President Ronald Reagan in 1987.*