

# Movie Scripts

[Movie Scripts](#) > ["T" page 139](#) > [The Music of Strangers \(2015\)](#)

## The Music of Strangers (2015)

So, this is my cello.  
Have you ever seen one before?  
...the many faceted career  
of cellist Yo-Yo Ma is  
a testament to his  
continual search  
for new ways to communicate  
with audiences...  
Mr. Ma maintains a balance  
between his engagements  
and his solo...  
He's recorded over 90 albums,  
including more than 17  
Grammy Award winners.  
...studied at the  
Juilliard School...  
I didn't get in there...  
...President's Committee on

the Arts and the Humanities.  
After Mr. Ma's remarks tonight,  
we will have an opportunity  
to ask questions...  
So without any further ado,  
please welcome Yo-Yo Ma.  
Hi there.  
Hi.  
I'll start off with this.  
There's an old joke.  
A six-year-old boy  
tells his father,  
"When I grow up, I want  
to be a musician."  
And the father looks at the son,  
shakes his head sadly, and says,  
"I'm sorry, son,  
you can't do both."  
I think when I was a kid,  
a lot of things just happened.  
There has come to us this year  
a young man aged seven,  
bearing the name Yo-Yo Ma,  
a Chinese cellist playing  
old French music  
for his new American  
compatriots.  
Being good at something  
can carry you really far

for a long period of time,  
and not require a lot  
of introspection, right?  
Because... you're good at it  
and everyone tells you that.  
I would think that somebody  
who has mastered his art  
so early in life, so completely,  
would have the problem that  
most wunderkinder have,  
which is, how do you  
keep your interest up?  
That's part of my problem. When  
you grow up with something,  
you kind of don't make a choice.  
I never committed to  
being a musician.  
You know? I just did  
it, I fell into it.  
I was interested in a  
lot of things, but...  
I didn't particularly  
pursue any of those.  
Leon Kirchner said to  
him when he was young,  
"You're a phenomenal musician,  
but you haven't  
found your voice."  
And this notion was

stuck in my dad's mind.

"What does that mean?

How do you do that?"

I think he started

looking for answers.

I'm always trying to

figure out at some level

who I am and how I

fit in the world,

which I think is something

that I share with seven

billion other people.

I was calling my mom in Damascus

before... before

you guys came in.

And she's like, "Oh, Kinan,

did you clean the place?"

I'm like, "Yes, Mom, it's okay."

- She wants to make sure...

- Moms are always moms.

No, she wants to make sure

that the CDs are not here,

because, you know, they're there and,

you know, it's like, "Is it all tidy?"

I said, "Yes, I've tried my best.

It's going to be fine."

So...

I mean, growing up in

Damascus was great.



Just had, you know, lots  
of friends and family.  
I don't think of myself  
as somebody who just,  
you know, packed his stuff  
and left, actually.  
I mean, I still have a little  
apartment back in Damascus.  
And my parents are still there.  
I miss it a lot. I do miss it.  
Now I'm thinking a lot  
like, "What is home?  
"Is it where your friends are?  
Is it where your family are?  
"Is it the place  
where you grew up  
or is it the place that y...  
where you want to die?"  
I mean, you know, all the...  
all these questions,  
and I think now I'm  
realizing that  
it's basically the place where you  
feel you want to contribute to  
without having to justify it.  
And here is your coffee,  
whoever wants my  
little Arabic coffee.  
I mean, since I left Syria,



lots of things have changed.

There's always a fight  
in each one of us  
between believing in the  
power of the human spirit  
and dreading the power  
of the human spirit.

March 2011...

when the Syrian  
revolution started...

I found myself experiencing  
emotions that are, by far,  
more complex than...  
than what I can express  
with my music.

So the music fell short,  
and I found myself not  
able to write any music.

Like, can a piece of  
music stop a bullet?

Can it feed somebody who's hungry?

Of course, it doesn't.

You question the role  
of art altogether.

When I was a student at Harvard,

Leonard Bernstein came to visit.

In his lectures,  
he was searching  
for a universal

musical language.  
That idea stuck  
with me ever since.  
What's the relevance of all  
this musical linguistics?  
Can it lead us to an answer  
of Charles Ives' unanswered  
question, "Whither music?"  
And even if it eventually can...  
does it matter?  
The world totters,  
governments crumble,  
and we are poring over music.  
Out of the 35 years  
I've been married,  
I've been gone for 22 of  
those years, away traveling.  
I used to throw up  
before every trip,  
you know, just... I would just  
feel so awful and anxious,  
and just like, you know...  
it's like I'd get so paralyzed.  
What is my role?  
I'd better find a good reason  
to say, "Why am I doing this?"  
Play... play a song.  
Which song? Um...  
play... "Iron Man."

Let's own it.

My interest is kind of

jump out of the box...

...not only limiting myself as a

Chinese musician or pipa player.

Yes!

Yeah! Woo-woo-woo-woo!

Thank you, thank you.

Hey, wait. What do you do?

This...

I mean, Wu Man was not

supposed to be here.

She was just supposed to be

a music professor, right,

at the Central Conservatory

or somewhere in China.

I remember 1966,

starts the Cultural Revolution.

And then my parents actually

asked me to learn music...

to escape from that situation.

Wu Man was in the first

class of students

that reentered Conservatory

after the Chinese

Cultural Revolution,

and she became a

sensation overnight.

We had no information



about Western culture.  
Right after revolution...  
everything was  
destroyed, culturally,  
so we are, I guess,  
standing on the ruins,  
dreaming, "What's  
the next music?"  
Oh! Surprised they open.  
It's all very different.  
Isaac Stern gave a  
master class here,  
right here on this stage.  
It's like opened another idea.  
It opened the door to me.  
"American orchestra, that's...  
that's very interesting."  
I wanted to see what's  
going on outside China.  
In the '80s,  
when I was asked in an interview  
about what my next  
project might be...  
What's next for you?  
I'm casting about for  
something, anything,  
I said that I had always...  
I said, "I have always been  
fascinated by"... guess what...

The bushmen of the  
Kalahari Desert.

Yeah.

I think he went  
because he wanted...

He wanted to put some  
dirt in his bones.

He wanted to get  
down into the soil.

③ He wanted something that was  
going to radically alter  
his ways of thinking  
about things.

Shoot.

Where the hell is the "F"?

There we go.

I'll tell you one thing  
that stayed with me  
that actually became the event  
that unlocked all of this.

They do a trance dance...

...and I was invited  
to participate.

They get into trance,  
and then they lay hands on  
people who need healing.

I asked the women why they  
do their trance ritual...

and they said the

clearest reason  
for music, for culture, for  
medicine, for religion.  
They said, "Because  
it gives us meaning."  
So one day, I sat with  
Yo-Yo at the caf  
and we were talking about  
where creativity comes from...  
...where new ideas come from.  
And so he drew... on a  
napkin at the bar,  
he drew circles intersecting.  
And he said... then he shaded  
the intersections and said,  
"This is, you know...  
this is a culture,  
"this is another culture,  
and in the intersection,  
that's where new  
things will emerge."

The Silk Road Project  
we started as an idea...  
a group of musicians  
getting together  
and seeing what might happen...  
you know, when strangers meet.  
We went and scoured from  
Venice through to Istanbul,

A

central Asia,  
Mongolia, and China  
looking for incredible talent.  
This was like the Manhattan  
Project of music.  
We invited about 60 performers  
and composers from the  
lands of the Silk Road,  
meeting in a kind of workshop.  
No one knew what  
was gonna happen.  
"Did Yo-Yo go off his  
tracks or something?  
What... what did he  
drink?" You know?  
We gathered in the summer  
of 2000 in Massachusetts.  
Frankly...  
I was scared to death.  
Yo-Yo Ma is, of course,  
a golden child.  
He can touch anything  
and do anything,  
and everything... everybody  
thinks it's great.  
But you could not expect  
that someone from Africa  
or China picks up on the...  
on the subtleties of a culture

that is not their own.

A lot of people thought that...

what we were doing was not pure.

It's, uh... What is it called?

Cultural tourism.

Let's go. Yeah.

Beautiful.

This is basic rhythm.

I mean, just not the accent.

Try... dut-dut, ba-ba-ba-ba.

Ba-ba-ba-ba, ba-ba-ba...

Kayhan, he's such a

well-known figure in Iran,

and he was here at

the very beginning.

That's fantastic. Ah.

So the nail going back

and forth, right?

Yeah. Right, left, two rights.

Does it...

Oh.

Yeah.

My intention is to

represent my culture

and the contribution

that this very old culture

made to human life.

If you go back, you know, in the

beginning of the 20th century,

every Eastern culture was  
so fascinated with West...  
you know, the technology, cars,  
and music, of course.  
My instrument, kamancheh,  
it was not being taught.  
And I was really lucky, because I got  
to professional music very early,  
so I had the chance to work  
with the older generation.  
Kayhan, he brings you  
closer to the horse  
or to the cow or to  
the... to the source,  
you know, that you forget.  
But Kayhan has had a  
very tragic life.  
The revolution.  
Chaos.  
You realize that your life's not  
going to be the same anymore.  
I was 17...  
my parents decided  
that I had to leave.  
I just walked... walked,  
you know, out...  
out of the country like that.  
I... I worked little by little  
in every country,

kind of farm work.  
Turkey for nine months, and then  
Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy.  
Yeah, I had a little backpack...  
and, um... I had a kamancheh.  
That was it. Yeah.  
When I left...

meeting a lot of different  
world musicians...

that was very attractive to me.

I always wanted to do something  
outside of my culture.

I think that was a...  
a very important turning  
point in my career.

How's it going, Kayhan?

Uh, fine. We definitely  
need more rehearsal time.

But... um, they're  
very good musicians,  
and they're much  
better than yesterday,  
so... there is hope.

The Tanglewood workshop  
was fantastic,  
because we don't speak  
necessarily perfect English  
or perfect Chinese  
or perfect Persian,



but we speak perfect  
music language.  
Some projects, you know,  
at the end of it,  
that's wonderful.  
It was a great thing,  
but it's done.  
This one... is different.  
You make a connection.  
You make a cultural connection.  
You make a connection  
to another human being.  
That's very precious.  
We were faced with the decision,  
"Should we go on or is this it?"  
And we were very careful  
to try to not just say  
we should go on because  
we would like it to.  
Bye!  
What's the reason for going on?  
...understandably  
so, but of course,  
the major concern is human loss.  
I mean, do you know if there  
were many people  
in the building?  
Oh! Another one just hit!  
Something else just hit.



A very large plane  
just flew directly  
over my building,  
and there's been  
another collision.

- Can you see it? I can see it on this shot.

- Yes. Oh my...

Ellio Something else has just...  
that looked more like a 747.

We just saw a plane  
circling the building.

I was in a hotel room at nine  
o'clock the morning of 9/11.

My wife called me and said,  
"Turn on the television.

Something's happening."

I saw a large plane, like a jet,  
go immediately heading directly in  
towards the World Trade Centers...

It was surreal.

The, you know,  
nation was in shock.

And I had a lot  
of time to think.

We really wondered that, in  
the face of the xenophobia,  
it might just not be  
possible to do this anymore.

Everybody, in the

face of disaster,  
reexamines who they  
are in their purpose.

We are a group that has so  
many disparate elements.

We could have been a group  
of adversaries, essentially.

And I think all of us  
kind of knew that,  
you know, we had a  
responsibility to...

to work harder.

This piece is called "Quartet  
to the End of Time,"  
and it's written by a composer  
named Olivier Messiaen.

He wrote this while he was a  
prisoner of war during World War II.

How does Messiaen do that?

How do you express  
incredible grief  
or eternity and love?

You add a little vibrato,  
and you suddenly feel  
that you might be bathed  
and blanketed by the warmth  
of an intense light.

That love is mythic,  
eternal, and unconditional love.





It's a paradox.  
By trying to kill  
the human spirit,  
the answer of the human spirit  
is to revenge with beauty.

Culture doesn't end.

It's not a business deal  
where, at the conclusion  
of the business deal,  
it's... it's done.

You know, it's not  
an election cycle.

It... it's about keeping  
things alive and evolving,  
and so we decided  
to go on, and...

and then that's when all  
of our trouble began.

Cristina is one of those people  
that we were lucky to  
meet through Osvaldo.

He said, "Guys, you have  
to work with Cristina.

She is amazing."

She brings... something...  
so sensual, so... earthy.

She needs to be here,  
because she brings something  
that is essential to...

to the universal soul and  
I... and it was missing.  
There is something very primitive  
about the sound of the gaita.  
To me, it's like hearing  
my father speaking.  
In the generation I come from,  
it's like you have two choices,  
of playing soccer or  
playing bagpipes,  
if you were born in Galicia.  
Ah! Man: Ah!  
Whoo! Oh!  
If I ask you to  
think about Spain  
and to think about what is  
the first music that  
comes to your mind...  
Galicia doesn't have  
anything to do with that.  
Galicia is in the northwest  
corner of Spain,  
and geographically speaking,  
it has been always  
kind of isolated.  
It has its own language,  
its own culture,  
and if you were to shrink  
everything to just one sound,

the sound of the bagpipe  
is the sound of Galicia.  
That part of Spain...  
is culturally rich and  
economically poor.  
Cristina is hugely conscious  
of what her friends and  
family go through in Galicia.  
I knew exactly what  
the tradition meant  
to the elder generation.  
But I was excited  
about everything  
that was happening in  
the present tense.  
It was like something explosive.  
She took the instrument  
to an extreme  
that people could not  
even think about.  
She's the Jimi Hendrix  
of the gaita.  
But, you know, I don't think  
everybody likes Jimi Hendrix.  
When you play an instrument  
that really represents  
your country or your  
area of the world,  
that has implications.



The first bad reviews I got  
were from the kind of people  
that really wants to preserve  
pure, traditional Galician music,  
and some of them were  
not very nice to me.

I was 18 years old.

I wasn't thinking about any  
other political meaning.

I just played bagpipes.

One day I woke up  
and I saw myself  
doing that for the  
rest of my life,  
and I didn't like that feeling.

I decided to put all that  
life away and go away.

I didn't even bring my bagpipe.

I mean, I moved to New York  
about 10 days before  
9/11 happened.

And do I say it was easy?

It wasn't easy, because  
all the stereotypes come.

And, you know, you're  
judged by the way you look,  
and I had a big  
beard at that time.

I was born in Paris.

We moved to New York,  
and I had nothing  
to do with that,  
except things just  
changed around me...  
the way things look,  
smell, taste.  
And it was confusing.  
A lot of friends said, "Why  
are you going to America?  
You're crazy." And... I  
was crazy, actually.  
No English.  
Nobody know what a pipa was.  
The very first thing  
that I learned  
was that my experience  
as kamancheh player  
would not count as anything.  
It was zero.  
The moment you place yourself  
in a different context...  
...then you have to  
stretch yourself,  
because nobody knows the pipa  
or the kamancheh or the gaita.  
I worked in a restaurant.  
I drove a cab.  
But I wanted to learn,



I wanted to study and  
become a better musician.  
Play in a Chinatown with...  
local musicians,  
you know, factory  
worker, taxi driver.

That's the only  
way I keep it up.

The good thing about  
being in New York,  
everybody comes from  
a different place,  
and we all bring our roots.

Those roots get re-rooted here.

Definitely, America's  
very different.

But I'm more interested in actually...

in appreciating the differences...

what you have that I don't have.

Not that I want to

take it away from you,

no, but I want to

learn from it, no?

I do remember a press conference  
which was one of the first times  
that we got up as a group  
to talk about what we did  
in front of cameras,  
in front of the press.





And they were asking questions  
along the lines of, you know,  
"It's like you're taking  
this traditional music,  
"you're mixing it together,  
and you're diluting,  
you know, these traditions."

Nick, you want to go? Uh, sure.

I was just terrified.

Share a little bit about...

We were not at the  
point of describing it  
as a family or as this  
creative cauldron.

Uh...

We had none of that,  
really, to stand on.

Thanks, everybody,  
for being here.

I'm gonna go to the bathroom.

To try to describe what  
we were trying to do,  
what this meant and all  
that was... was a nightmare.

I knew that whatever we did,  
there was going to be  
naysayers from all sides.

Kinan and Wu Man,  
are you... you ready? Kinan: Yep.

All set.

Yes, criticism hurts.

But you actually have

to have conviction

in the genuineness and

the power of your ideas.

And I'm sort of saying,

"Gee, let's take a chance."

Phew!

What a view!

This project, it

adds your voice.

I think this is what is

exciting about the journey is,

you look for your

voice, you know?

Sometimes you think

you found it,

and then once you have

it, it changes again.

Oh, look, look, look.

They're playing badminton.

Oh yeah, let's go see this.

This is... I love this.

Wow.

- Look.

- Wow.

Oh. Whoa!

That's great. That's great.

Mmm.

Mmm!

It's very, very necessary for me

to go and live in Iran,

because what happened

after the revolution...

all of the better

teachers moved out.

I went back 2002 to

teach Persian music.

Uh-huh.

I think living with

tragedy for many years

and being alone is

really, really tough.

So when he moved back to Iran...

he started teaching,

met Zohreh...

and it changed his life.

It's very dangerous.

The Iranian government

really keeps their...

their eye on... on

artists like Kayhan

and other musicians

that are quite popular.

They were warned that they

should not be participating

in conversations about

what's happening in Iran.

One thing that I cannot  
accept is violence.

I've been outspoken,  
I've been active,  
you know, to try to help that.

Did anything happen  
to you personally?

Yes, but, you know, I... I  
wouldn't want to talk,  
you know, to camera about it.

I can choose to be part  
of that society or not,  
and-and... and that's not a  
very idealistic society  
for me to be a part of...  
so I had to leave.

But... Zohreh stayed.

I haven't been back for  
five years now, yeah.

You know, I miss her,  
and I miss my homeland,  
and I always want to go  
back and live there.

I haven't been able  
to do it so far.

But I think it... it will happen.

Yeah, I think I missed one.

Okay, guys, all right.

Okay. I'd like to  
ask you something.  
I would like a very free rhythm  
and almost nothing.  
It's sort of intimate  
and atmospheric and...  
So, how does it go?  
It can go... It can  
do something there.  
Good. Something like that.  
Mongolian birds'  
wings fluttering.  
And if you want to do...  
you know, it could be wind, right?  
So...  
- Is that okay? Yeah.  
- Let's do it.  
So it should sound like  
a giant horse fart.  
You know? Like...  
Back to the top.  
In the States, the first few  
years was really difficult.  
But music circle and the music  
community is very small.  
So when you're interested,  
you went looking for something,  
and definitely,  
it's there or there

if you pay attention.  
My instrument, nobody knows it.  
And I remember one  
day, I get phone call.  
"How come this string quartet  
wanted to work with me?"  
She is a total rock star.  
She started playing with  
so many different people.  
It's like, "I need a pipa  
player!" "Call Wu Man."  
In America, people  
think you're Chinese.  
You play Chinese  
instrument and from China.  
But when I go back to China,  
they say, "Oh, you're American."  
"You... you don't  
know today's China."  
When you leave your  
home, your country,  
and you have this picture  
of it in your mind.  
When I went back, nothing fit  
that picture I had in my mind.  
Everything changed.  
People were even  
speaking differently.  
I think the challenge

in Galicia right now is  
the same challenge that exists  
in the rest of the world,  
which is keeping  
your roots alive.  
There is no tradition  
that exists today  
that was not the result of  
really successful invention.  
But unless a tradition  
keeps evolving...  
...it naturally becomes  
smaller and smaller.  
That leads me back to China,  
to rediscovering "What  
is China's music?"  
None of us can prove  
anything about how...  
much of the past  
we carry with us.  
I had thought that this  
is, in Yo-Yo's mind...  
his investigations  
into his own past.  
My father was born in 1911...  
and he left China when he was about  
25 to go to France to study.  
And he wrote about that  
fusion of what Chinese music

might sound like with French  
techniques of composing.

Isn't that strange that,  
so many years later...

the apple did not fall  
that far from the tree?

Yo-Yo!

Yo-Yo.

Yo-Yo.

That's Yo-Yo, the dog.

Okay, come on in.

Home is this for me.

Every birthday of mine

since I was first,

my first birthday, was celebrated

here or in this house.

And for us to keep that

cultural identity alive

is probably one of the

most defining aspects

of what it means

to be a Galician.

During the history of time,

many different

civilizations have tried

to take away that identity...

like Roman Empire.

...they will lose

their memories.



Their... They couldn't  
remember anything.  
That's the legend  
behind the piece  
I wrote for my mother,  
who maybe like four years ago  
started to... to...  
lose her memory.  
We want to protect  
what we have...  
our culture, our music...  
and we want our children to  
keep the language alive.  
And in order to be alive,  
you have to let it grow.  
Lots of people, when they  
think of the Middle East,  
they think of divisions,  
like Sunni, Shia,  
Christian, Armenian,  
Kurds, Turks.  
I don't think of the  
Middle East this way.  
You know, I think  
it's an ancient place  
where all the cultures happen  
to exist at some point.  
- How much are these?  
- Excuse.

That's okay, that's okay. I'm  
just going to play this, yeah?  
Yeah?

When we were in Juilliard,  
Kinan and I, Kinan  
was graduating.

He made this very moving,  
beautiful piece.

And I told Kinan, I said,  
"I think I can contribute  
something in this piece."

We think very similarly,  
even though he's Muslim Arab  
and I'm Armenian Christian.

It's... it's not necessary.

We grew up without even knowing  
who's Christian, who's  
Muslim in Syria.

It was not a necessary thing.

So this place was...

used to be a church,

and then it turned

out to be a mosque.

And then here it is,

now it's a museum.

No, "This is so beautiful,

I don't want to cover it."

That's the power of art,  
one crosses any... limitation.

It's the "F" word.  
Fa... fun.  
Whoa.  
Apparently I thought  
my father worked  
at the airport when  
I was a child,  
because that's where  
he was always going,  
and so it was a bit of  
a massive revelation  
that he was not, in fact...  
employed by Logan Airport.  
But he knows what's important,  
and I think he sees  
his obligation,  
particularly when he  
goes to smaller towns,  
as beginning the moment he lands  
and lasting the entire  
time he's on the ground.  
He's there to spread  
his sense of the world  
in every conversation  
and interaction  
that takes place.  
Wow.  
Good evening.  
I'm Yo-Yo Ma,



and this is my brother,

Kayhan Kalhor.

Now, we were twins,

but we were separated at birth.

But we found out

from DNA analysis...

that even our life choices...

are the same. Almost, yeah.

Everybody is afraid of going

somewhere they

haven't gone before.

But you build enough

trust within a group,

and sometimes you can

turn fear into joy.

Woo!

A lot of us in our own careers

have developed in

different directions.

We have our own bands,

or we have our own

work here and there,

but this is the one place where

you can come together...

and play music that you... that

you don't get to play otherwise.

That tells people like me,

it's okay to be doing

what I'm doing.

Ah.

Music is their whole life,  
and they told me they're  
already 11th generation.

So I asked them, "What  
about 12th generation?"

Is there any 12th, 13th?"

They look at me.

There's no answer.

So that... to me,  
really emotional.

I don't know who  
writes the scripts  
for different revolutions, but  
they all look the same...

...and they affect people's  
life in the same way.

Cultural Revolution is  
the darkest history  
time period of China.

And for artist, there  
is no creation.

The party tell you what to do.

I question the role of art.

I question my role, like,

"What am I doing?"

What is my role in comparison  
to somebody who's on the ground,  
peacefully demonstrating

at the risk of being  
shot, you know?  
If you ask me, "Do you  
want to go home?"  
Of course, I want to  
do... I want to go home,  
but in what circumstances  
would I go?  
We humans are...  
we have a tendency to  
control everything...  
the earth, animals, you know,  
even the humans around us.  
It's endless.  
Later on, when the  
Iran-Iraq war started,  
it was a very, very  
difficult period.  
I lost two of my friends.  
I lost my best friend.  
And later on... a  
missile hit our house.  
I lost all of my family,  
my parents and my brother.  
I mean, you see how the  
world is reacting to Syria.  
Nobody gives a fuck,  
if I can use the real language.  
It's like...

Just three days ago,  
people die of cold.  
I mean, as simple as that.  
I mean, the fact that they  
tried to cut the aid for...  
for the refugees, because  
it's too expensive.

Fuck.

You know, it's just people  
are not... are not bothered.

We are not our  
political identities.

Nobody remembers who was the  
king when Beethoven lived.

But culture stays,  
language stays as a  
part of culture,  
music stays as part of culture.

The arts is more about opening  
up yourself to possibility.

Possibility links to hope.

We all need hope.

Hey, Yo-Yo. Hi, Fred.

So glad to see you.

Nice to see you.

Thank you. When you play,

I'm sure you have a lot  
of different feelings.

And as you played as a child,

12

did you ever play happy  
things or sad things  
or angry things, just  
'cause you wanted to?

Oh, sure. One of my favorite  
was "The Swan," which is...  
And you can imagine the swan...  
right?

You look at anybody's life,  
you could find tragedy.  
Nobody escapes either the great  
things or horrible things.

That's the space between  
life and death.

How do you deal with  
the fears and doubts?

Do you dare go there?

Can you put all of  
yourself behind something  
and be absolutely authentic in doing  
it to the best of your ability?

All right then.

This is the first time that I tried  
to smuggle flutes into somewhere.

It feels like smuggling  
flutes, actually...

but it's smuggling  
for a good cause.

Of course it's emotional, yeah.



It's just simply emotional.  
I'm going to teach...  
Syrian children who have been...  
they left their homes by force.  
I was like them when I was kids.  
Look, I didn't have...  
a hope that I'm going to be  
in New York doing my art.  
And definitely, one or two of those  
kids, they're going to make it.  
So if we can inspire them and  
can help them to do this,  
they're going to just  
continue this... this circle.  
It's one of those moments  
again in your life, you know?  
Just you realize that...  
considering what I'm  
doing for the culture  
and for the country, you know,  
I shouldn't be treated that way.  
This is what I don't deserve.  
You know, I miss my wife.  
It doesn't really matter  
where the base is...  
as long as we try to see  
each other, you know,  
as-as... as much as we can.  
Zohreh.

We have a tendency not  
to be appreciative  
of beautiful things  
that surround us.  
But if you realize what  
you have in this life  
and how precious is the  
breaths that you take,  
the water that you drink,  
the music in your life...  
and your loved ones around you,  
it's just enormous  
wealth and happiness  
that doesn't have...  
to have anything  
else to complete it.  
It's just complete by itself.

(13)

What's the purpose?  
Everything I've learned  
about performing,  
about music,  
about what happens  
between the notes...  
that's about making sure  
that culture matters.

I don't think Yo-Yo sees  
himself as a cellist.

I think he sees himself  
as someone who wants

to change the world,  
and he happens to have a cello  
with him half the time.

And he wants us to be  
collaborators with scientists  
and be collaborators with  
historians and educators.

I would love it  
to be contagious.

It's nice just to see that  
it's a new way of thinking,  
also about music, about what  
people can do together.

Cultural identity,  
it actually shapes your  
decisions all the time,  
and you can take that  
as a good challenge  
or a bad one.

Being part of this experiment  
did make me understand  
what it means to keep  
your identity alive.

I have dreams about having  
some sort of role in...  
in the arts in Galicia  
in the future.

And for that, I... I started the  
festival, Galician Connection.

This is a festival where I put  
together international artists  
with Galician  
traditional artists.

When you learn something  
from another culture,  
you will grow more if you're  
giving back to your own culture.

Just imagine, if we don't have

Silk Road musicians

moving around,

Chinese music scene

or Western music

scene are different.

To me, the world is round.

There's no east or west.

It's just a globe.

As a four-year-old,

what I wanted to do in

life was to understand.

As T.S. Eliot said,

"We shall never cease

from exploration...

"and the end of all

of our exploring...

"will be to arrive

where we started...

and know the place

for the first time."



I don't think that the Silk Road  
Project was his trying to go home.  
I think it was his trying to  
go away, away from music,  
away from a single repertoire.  
And I think through  
that process,  
he found himself at home again.