

SOUND PATROL Cellist Yo-Yo Ma hits town for a one-night only performance.



## Ma to the Rescue

In his new Chicago-based gig, cellist Yo-Yo Ma hopes to spread music to the masses | *By Vicki Crain | Photography by Michael O'Neil* |

Yo-Yo Ma. It's one of those names that everyone knows, but not everyone knows exactly *why* they know it. That's about to change here in Chicago. Classical guru Ma—who has recorded more than 75 albums with a genre-defying range of collaborators like Alison Krauss, James Taylor, Sting and even Elmo—was recently appointed by the CSO as the first-ever Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant, a three-year post where he'll be focusing on community outreach via music. This month the 54-year-old Massachusetts resident heads to town for his first post-appointment appearance: a one-night-only performance with pianist Kathryn Stott on the 24th. We get the scoop...

### (MA'S CHICAGO FAVORITES)

On a day off: [A visit to the Art Institute, a stroll through Millennium Park, dinner at Red Light, visiting my relatives in Des Plaines](#) Where to hear good music: [Orchestra Hall is a great place to hear a concert, especially if the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is in town](#)

***Congratulations on your appointment. How did it all come about?*** About a year ago I met with Riccardo Muti [the new director of the CSO] and I asked him what he was passionate about, outside of his family and music. His answer was beautiful: the environment, children and people in prisons. It's rare for a conductor to bring to the table that kind of passion and compassion about the world beyond the musical score, so his statement stayed with me. He said that for his work as music director to be meaningful to him, it has to resonate not only with the music-loving community in Chicago, but also with the community at large.

***So what does your job entail?*** I will be designing programs that translate the passions Muti described into programs for the people of Chicago. We've started talking about how to do that through programs for three- to five-year-old children, and workshops for college and high-school age musicians. The CSO's Institute for Learning, Access and Training has joined Storycatchers [Theatre] in their work with incarcerated youth, and I'm looking forward to helping with that next fall.

***A large portion of your career has been spent working with youth and community outreach. Why?*** Ever since my children were born (they're now in their twenties), I've been aware that they're growing up in a world vastly different from the world I grew up in. I think there is no more important work than preparing our children for a world we won't live to see.

***What's on your iPod?*** This year, the Silk Road Project is doing a pilot project called "Silk Road Connect" in the New York City public schools. Many of the schools we're working with have significant Dominican populations, so I have music from the Dominican Republic on my iPod. I believe that one of the best ways to learn about people is through the music they listen to. I also have the music of Marcel Khalifé, the Lebanese composer and oud player.

***You had already played for five sitting U.S. presidents when you took the stage at President Obama's inauguration. Which performance was the most memorable?*** As a citizen, it's always a great honor to play for the leader of your country. I think what any musician is trying to do in a performance is to create memories, so to be part of Obama's inauguration, already such a memorable moment in our nation's history, and to be part of music created especially for that occasion, was extraordinary. ■