

《马友友新专辑Songs From the Arc of Life》

Yo-Yo Ma's state of mind when performing is, he says, to have simultaneous access to both the conscious and unconscious mind. It is an act of artistic alchemy encapsulated in his new album "Songs From the Arc of Life".

For Ma, music has served as a signpost for life's most important moments.

"Everybody goes through hard times, good times, and when you go through any one of those times, extreme moments, there's usually some music associated with it. First date, first kiss, you know, moments where...or grief, first loss, and so we kind of compiled something that goes from beginning to end, and, uh, and to acknowledge that no matter how focused we are at any moment on our lives, that it is part of a larger whole, and how in the end do we want that life to be. So there's a choice involved, in sort of saying, you know, 'This is the soundtrack of my life', but what kind of life do you want to have led, you know," Ma said.

Among the musical milestones he has recorded for this album are two versions of "Ave Maria", along with pieces by Debussy, Gershwin, Tchaikovsky and, of course, 'The Swan' from Saint-Saens' 'Carnival of the Animals' - 19 tracks in total.

Ma, who turned 60-years-old on Wednesday, also talked about how getting older has been liberating for him.



Yo-Yo Ma

"In some ways it's very freeing. You know, some people say as you get older, you get morose, so if you're cranky as a younger person you get maybe crankier, or you know, you just get more intensely something that you are already, and I think I feel so much freer in terms of knowing that, you know, I'm older, and, so what? Right? And I feel I can be more and more myself, and that, you know, why not? And 'myself' meaning not, like, 'Oh, I just do what I please', but more like, 'Ahh,' I feel that I don't live compartments, I'm basically always myself. It's not like, 'Ok I have to be really polite, or I have to do this,' no, I'll just say what I think is true and do what I think is right, and not worry about someone saying, 'Well that's stupid,' you know, because, OK, if they think it's stupid, it's stupid. I can't help it. I'm just going to try and do my best," Ma said.

Ma offers a tantalizing glimpse into the creative process of a great artist, how he brings Heaven to Earth, how he performs in what some call 'The Zone'.

"When I'm on stage, for me, the state of mind of performing is when you have total access to your conscious and unconscious mind. So I view sort of performing like the moments before you fall asleep or right when you wake up and you're sort of half, you're half-dreaming, half-awake. And you have these great ideas that come to your mind and you try and write them down because if you don't, you forget them, because you have temporary access. And having that access puts you in this very, very wonderful state," Ma said.

Ma recorded "Songs From the Arc of Life" with his long-time friend and music collaborator, pianist Kathryn Stott. They will perform in Japan and Taiwan in October and November in support of the album, before going on to Boston and Indiana.