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LOTUS BLOSSOMS DELIVERS DIVERSITY TO SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY

Lotus Education & Arts Foundation announces five global artists to perform and educate during the 22nd annual Lotus Blossoms program.

Bloomington, Indiana: With events scheduled March 20 – April 18, the 2017 Lotus Blossoms program will bring artists representing China, Iraq, Uganda, Mexico, and the U.S. directly to K-12 students at schools across six Indiana counties. Lotus Blossoms also offers music fans of all ages an opportunity to celebrate music through concerts that are free and open to the public. This year's Lotus Blossoms artists represent a Grammy winner and several Grammy nominees, a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowship, two political refugees, and a collaborator in the acclaimed documentary *Alive Inside*.

Now in its 22nd year, Lotus Blossoms is the cornerstone of Lotus Education & Arts Foundation's year-round, educational outreach and a key component of its mission to create opportunities to experience, celebrate, and explore the diversity of the world's cultures through music and the arts. Annually, Lotus Blossoms reaches 7000-8000 participants of all ages.

Lotus Blossoms' K-12 programming invites global artists for multi-day residencies and includes interactive performances in schools plus the Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar. This year, artists will share their cultures, heritage, and music with students in 18 schools spanning six counties, including Monroe, Lawrence, Greene, Owen, Brown, and Marion.

The Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar, a two-day "mini Lotus Festival," offers both children and families an opportunity to explore the world through hands-on experiences including international crafts; salsa, tango, and Middle-Eastern dance; language discovery; food from around the world; and music ranging from Japanese folk songs to Scottish bagpipes and African drumming. On Friday, March 31, Lotus buses 1000+ 4th graders to Binford Elementary from 16 participating area schools, and on Saturday, April 1, the Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar Family Day is free and open to all families interested in deepening their children's knowledge and experience of cultures different from their own.

Blossoms educational outreach also reaches into higher-education settings, with artist visits to IU classrooms and engagements across several schools, departments, and student organizations.

With seven free public concerts, Lotus Blossoms also offers adults multiple opportunities catch performances from visiting artists and take a "deeper dive" with performers who augment their concerts with stories, demonstrations, and outreach. Venues for public Blossoms concerts range from the Buskirk-Chumley Theater, to Meadowood Retirement Community and the Monroe County Public Library, to IU sites such as the Mathers Museum and the IU Archives of Traditional Music. For the first time, Lotus Blossoms also extends into Indianapolis with two performances at Eskenazi Hospital. Complete public event information is available at <http://www.lotusfest.org/events/>

About the Artists
Rahim AlHaj

A Grammy nominated oud virtuoso and Iraqi political refugee, AlHaj seeks to infuse his music with the suffering, joy, anxiety, and determination that he has witnessed in his life. Alhaj combines traditional Iraqi magams with contemporary styling and influence to communicate with compelling immediacy that bypasses cultural obstacles. His music speaks to the heart in a universal language of compassion on his instrument that spans over 5,000 years. AlHaj was recognized for his mastery of the oud in 2015 when he received the National Endowment for the Arts “National Heritage Award,” the highest honor for traditional artists in the US.

Free Public Performances:

March 21, 4:00 p.m., Meadowood Retirement Community

March 22, 12:00 p.m., IU Archives of Traditional Music

Wu Man

Recognized as the world’s premier pipa player and leading ambassador of Chinese music, Grammy award-winner Wu Man has carved out a career as a soloist, educator and composer to give her 2000-year old lute-like instrument a new role in both traditional and contemporary music. As a principal musician in Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project, Wu Man has performed throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia with the Silk Road Ensemble and recently shared a 2017 Grammy Award for Best World Music Album for *Sing Me Home*, the companion CD to the Silk Road Ensemble’s Grammy-nominated documentary *Music of Strangers*. Adamant that the pipa does not become marginalized as only appropriate for Chinese music, Wu Man strives to develop a place for the pipa in all art forms, including solo and quartet works, concertos, opera, chamber, electronic, and jazz music as well as in theater productions, film, dance and collaborations with visual artists including calligraphers and painters.

Free Public Performance:

March 31, 7:30, Buskirk-Chumley Theater, with the IU Jacobs School of Music Vera Quartet and New Music Ensemble.

Sones de México Ensemble

A sextet that skilled on over 80 instruments, Sones de México Ensemble form the country’s premier folk music organization specializing in Mexican “son.” Their diverse repertoire is rich in colors, textures, and rhythms to show that more exists to Mexican music than mariachi. Each performance intertwines Mexican culture and heritage through original arrangements that feature regional styles of guapango, gustos, chilenas, and so jaarocho. Sons de México entertains all the senses while exploring the riches of Mexican music, dance, and culture.

Free Public Performance:

April 5, 7:00 p.m., Mathers Museum of World Cultures

Samite

A world-renowned musician, Samite is a political refugee who was born and raised in Uganda. Known for his East African melodies, Samite is one of East Africa's most acclaimed flutists. Samite was a collaborator in the documentary *Alive Inside*, which explores music's ability to impact Alzheimer's patients. His goal is to deliver a message of peace and hope to the world through the healing power of music. "While performing, I see that people are able to forget their differences and join as one in the moment; my hope is for that moment to last," says the Ugandan flutist. "If we can make that moment last, the world will be a better place.

Free Public Performances:

April 12, 7:00 p.m., Monroe County Library

April 14, 12:00 p.m., Eskenazi Hospital, Indianapolis

Fiddle-n-Feet

With Jamie Gans on fiddle and Tamara Loewenthal on feet, Fiddle-n-Feet is committed to presenting the very best in percussive dance and traditional Celtic and North American countries. The duo dances, sings, and plays a variety of instruments, including fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar, and jaw harps. Live performances showcase a variety of step dance styles ranging from American clogging, to English wooden shoe clogging, to French-Canadian reels and waltzes. Fiddle-n-Feet is the featured performer at the World Bazaar School Day.

Free Public Performance:

April 18, 12:00 p.m., Eskenazi Hospital

Sponsors:

Lotus Blossoms is made possible by the generosity of community partners:

Producer Sponsor: The Raymond Foundation

Adopt-a-School Sponsor: Daily Leadership Studio, Eskenazi Health Foundation, IU Center for the Studies of the Middle East, IU School of Education

Performance Sponsor: Like Law Group, Sandra Clark Counseling + Consulting, St. John Associates, Tribeswell, Vibe Yoga

Grantors: Brown County Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Monroe County, Indiana Arts Commission, National Endowment For the Arts, Visit Bloomington

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About Lotus Education & Arts Foundation

Established in 1994, the Lotus Education & Arts Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization based in Bloomington, Indiana, with a mission to create opportunities to experience, celebrate, and explore the diversity of the world's cultures, through music and the arts. Lotus offers the annual flagship Lotus World Music & Arts Festival, Lotus Blossoms Educational Outreach, a vibrant Visual Arts program, and special programming and events with community partners throughout the year.

For more information about Lotus, please visit www.lotusfest.org or contact Marketing Director Sara Sheikh, sara@lotusfest.org, 812-336-6599. A full list of Lotus Blossoms public events can be found at <http://www.lotusfest.org/events/>.