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## **Lotus Announces 2016 Lotus Blossoms Artists and Events**

**Spring outreach features Japan, Ireland, Kenya, & African-American Traditions; new programs for veterans and teachers**

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA – Springtime means Lotus Blossoms, and the 2016 series is ready to burst into riotous bloom. This March and April, local classrooms and community stages will come alive with Lotus artists representing traditions from Japan, Ireland, Kenya, and African-American heritage. Artists will be in residence during the weeks of March 21-25 and April 4-8; in addition, Lotus is proud to feature the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar on April 1-2. Special initiatives for Blossoms 2016 include outreach to veterans and military families through a partnership with American Legion Post 18, as well as a teacher workshop integrating origami art with K-5 math instruction.

Lotus Blossoms 2016 is presented by The Raymond Foundation. Additional support is provided by Macy's, ReMax Acclaimed Properties, Star of Indiana, IU East Asian Studies, IU African Studies, St. John Associates, Mathers Museum of World Cultures, and a Sophia Travis Community Service Grant.

Lotus Blossoms is the premier youth-focused arts education outreach program of the Lotus Education & Arts Foundation, opening the wider world to young people since 1996. At the heart of Lotus Blossoms lies the spring K-12 residency program that connects world artists directly with children. Musicians, dancers, and storytellers share their cultures and heritage through performances and interactive activities, and they field student questions about their lives, childhoods, and experiences. For many students, especially in rural communities, an encounter with a Blossoms artist begins a lifetime of curiosity about the wider world — the first sounds of a different language, the first conversation with someone with a different skin color, the first glimpse of a broader horizon. Serving children, teachers, and families for 20+ years, Blossoms has created up-close cultural encounters for more than 120,000 young people and counting.

The second pillar of Lotus Blossoms is the annual Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar, a two-day “mini festival” where volunteers from the Bloomington community (and around the world) present 30+ activity stations with arts, music, language, and international crafts that let kids get their hands on the world. Finally, Lotus offers Blossoms to the larger community through free programs for the general public as well as for at-risk youth, senior citizens, participants with developmental disabilities, and more.

Blossoms 2016 kicks off with a double-header week that includes Kim & Reggie Harris (African-American spirituals, freedom songs, and original folk) and Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran (Irish Music School of Chicago). In addition to visiting classrooms across south-central Indiana, these artists will also share their talents with the community through free public programs at the Monroe Co. Public Library (March

22, Kim & Reggie Harris), Mathers Museum of World Cultures (March 23, Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran), and the American Legion Post 18 (March 24, Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran); both of Seán & Jackie's events will also feature special guest from the Bloomington-based Ryan Academy of Irish Dance.

Kenyan artists Sylvester Makobi and Moses Kisilili Mayabilo will share the spotlight for the April 1<sup>st</sup> World Bazaar School Day (just for schools, when Lotus buses in 1,000+ fourth-graders); on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the free Saturday World Bazaar Family Day welcomes children and families from across the community. Both Bazaar events are generously hosted at Binford Elementary School. Later in April, Japanese storyteller and origami artist Kuniko Yamamoto returns for Blossoms school visits (she was snowed out last year), and she is also offering a free Origami & Math teacher workshop on April 5<sup>th</sup>.

More information about artists and events can be found at <http://www.lotusfest.org/blossoms-featured-artists-2016/>; complete bios and public event schedules are provided below.

Details about Blossoms school programs, including school sign-up information, can be found at <http://www.lotusfest.org/schools/>.

The Lotus Education & Arts Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Bloomington, Indiana (est. 1994). Our mission is: **to create opportunities to experience, celebrate, and explore the diversity of the world's cultures, through music and the arts.** Organizational support is provided by the Indiana Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, Brown County Community Foundation, and Perfect Parties Tents & Events/Southside Rental.

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## 2016 Lotus Blossoms Artists:

### Kim & Reggie Harris

- Lotus Blossoms Residency: March 21-24, 2016
- Monroe County Public Library, Tuesday, March 22, 7:00pm (Free)

Consummate musicians and storytellers, **Kim & Reggie Harris** are a mini festival of diversity. Combining traditional African-American spirituals and freedom songs with original folk, they sing of life, love, the quest for freedom, environment, and community. Their latest CD, "Resurrection Day," binds these themes into a profoundly moving personal odyssey of inspiration and hope, adding Reggie's experience as an organ donor recipient to the social justice palette. For over two decades, Kim & Reggie have been affiliated with the John F Kennedy Center's Partners in Education program, offering multimedia educational performances for students and community, "Music & the Underground Railroad" and "Dream Alive."

### Seán Cleland & Jackie Moran (Irish Music School of Chicago)

- Lotus Blossoms Residency: March 21-25, 2016
- WFHB Firehouse Session, Wednesday, March 23, 4:00pm (listen live or online)

- Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Wednesday, March 23, 7:00pm (Free)  
*With special guests The Ryan Academy of Irish Dance*
- American Legion Post 18, Thursday, March 24, 5:30pm (Free)  
*With special guests The Ryan Academy of Irish Dance*

**Seán Cleland** is an Irish fiddle player, music teacher, producer, and founder/executive director of the Irish Music School of Chicago. Seán grew up on the North side of Chicago in an Irish-American household; with two teachers as parents, it was natural for him to prioritize teaching alongside performing. He has toured with bands such as Baal Tinne, The Drovers, and Bohola; taught at the world-famous Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago; recorded 4 albums; and appeared in two major Hollywood films, contributing songs to the soundtracks. Seán is an in-demand Irish musician playing at feisanna (traditional Gaelic arts and culture festivals) all across North America, Canada, and Ireland. Bodhrán player and percussionist **Jackie Moran** was born in Tipperary; after immigrating to Chicago with his family, he began drumming with the best players in the Irish music scene. Jackie is preeminent in Chicago Irish music, a founding and driving force of bands such as The Drovers, Comas, and Bua. He is a fixture in the studio and in concert settings, accompanying great artists such as Liz Carroll, John Doyle, Martin Hayes, Paddy Keenan, and Jimmy Keane, as well as playing in four Hollywood films. Jackie's talents have also led him to appear on stage with *Riverdance*, and to perform with the Trinity Irish Dance Company, which he helped to create.

### **21st annual Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar**

- School Day: Friday, April 1, featuring **Sylvester Makobi** and **Moses Kisilili Mayabilo** (Friday is for registered schools only, contact Lotus to participate)
- Family Day: Binford Elementary School Gym, Saturday, April 2, 11:00am-2:00pm (Free)

**Sylvester Makobi** has performed with the Kenyan Boys Choir for many years, and sang with them at President Obama's first inauguration. He recorded as a soloist in three of the choir's albums, singing one of the most popular Swahili love songs ("Malaika") and an arrangement of "Kyra Sillo," as well as in a commercial for Okobos wear. He is the co-founder and former director of Taifa Mziki (which translates as Music Nation), an all-male vocal ensemble whose repertoire includes arrangements of traditional Kenyan music. Makobi has toured with the two groups to different parts of the world including, the UK, France, China, and the U.S., to great acclaim. For the Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar performances, Makobi will be joined on-stage by **Moses Kisilili Mayabilo**, who he met at Kenyatta University Students Choir where they were soloists. Both artists are currently studying voice performance at the IU Jacobs School of Music.

The **Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar** is a free multicultural arts-and-education event for kids and families. Created in 1996 with the help of area teachers, the World Bazaar has become a tradition in Monroe County schools — public, private, and charter — as well as in our community. More than 30 activity stations let kids get their hands on the world...so grab your passport at the door, and go! The Saturday World Bazaar Family Day is free and open to the public, featuring hands-on activities,

exploration of world cultures, and live performances. Appropriate for all ages, but especially fun for kids K-6. Children must be accompanied by parents/guardians.

**Kuniko Yamamoto**

- Lotus Blossoms Residency: April 4-8, 2016
- Teacher Workshop “Math & Origami”: Tuesday, April 5, 4:30pm (Free, pre-registration required)

**Kuniko Yamamoto** enchants audiences of every age with dramatic storytelling using myths and fables from ancient and modern Japan, spiced with social revelations to educate and amuse. Kuniko uses traditional Japanese music, handcrafted masks, stylized movement, and a touch of magic to create an artistic balance of illusion and reality. For younger children, Japanese Storytelling with Origami uses folded paper animals and faces, which come alive in folk tales. Every program encourages audience interaction and participation, with each narrative carefully selected for cultural and moral perspectives. Trained in dance and traditional arts in her native Osaka, Japan, Kuniko has lived in Florida since 1992.

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