

## The Asian Arts & Culture Program at UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center

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**CONTACT:** Sue McFarland, 413-577-2486 (aacp@acad.umass.edu)  
**WHAT:** The Nile Project: Songs & Music of the Nile River  
**WHEN:** Tuesday, April 7  
**TIME:** 7:30 PM  
**WHERE:** Fine Arts Center Hall

### ***Loving, Listening, Subtle Flow: The Nile Project Meshes the River's Many Sounds***

*"Music is a language,"* exclaims Ethiopian sax player and Nile Project musician Jorga Mesfin, *"and in the Nile Project, the conversation is about love"*- The love of craft, of place, of the river that connects multiple countries and millions of people. A multilingual triumph of musical collaboration from countries along the Nile River, **The Nile Project** presents their unique sound to western MA audiences on **Tuesday, April 7 at 7:30 p.m.** in the **UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall**. A powerful pan-Nile percussion section drives this orchestra of Ethiopian masenko, saxophone, Egyptian ney, oud, violin, sisimiya, tanbur, Ugandan adungu and bass guitar along with six vocalists singing in eleven different languages. Tickets are reserved seating ranging from \$15-\$25 with 17 and under priced at \$10. **Tickets are available by calling the box office at 1-800-999-UMAS or 413-545-2511. Online tickets are available at: [fineartscenter.com](http://fineartscenter.com).**

Forged over weeks of carefully calibrated workshops and participatory composition, the Nile Project members hail from all along the great river, from its sources beyond Lake Victoria to its delta in Egypt. The Nile Project musicians create substantive music together with work that goes far deeper than mere meet-and-greet jam sessions. To craft this music, Egyptian and Ethiopian artists mastered each other's wildly different modal systems. A Burundian bassist becomes the foundation within head-spinning Ugandan rhythms. Instruments that parted ways millennia ago reunite with new tunings and are pushed to new places. Love songs and lullabies cross geography and language barriers to forge new songs. The Nile Project includes musicians from many different

cultural communities, while also assembling a compelling combination of instruments and voices to support and balance one another.

Evoking the Nile is not enough, however. For The Nile Project, live performance is merely one stop on a long, compelling journey. *“Music is the gateway that lets us envision the Nile Basin, its people, its challenges,”* explains Nile Project executive director, Mina Girgis, *“... the concert experience is just the beginning.”* The Nile Project uses music to spark cultural curiosity and engage audiences by encouraging them to feel connected to the river and to explore new approaches to its large-scale problems. From water issues to women’s roles, from musical discovery to the image of the Nile through history, a wide range of topics tackle the river’s complexity. The UMass appearance of The Nile Project includes residencies with the musicians in local schools and a pre-concert talk at 6 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall lobby. Speakers Mina Girgis and Andrew Fisk, Executive Director, Connecticut River Watershed Council will host an engaging exchange about how the arts are transforming both the Nile and the Connecticut rivers. The talk, entitled *“Arts Affecting Change in the Nile River Delta and the Connecticut River Valley,”* examines the commonalities shared by the two rivers regarding sustainability, fair resource allocation, and regional conflict over stewardship. Additionally, Dean’s Beans, local coffee roasters and a sponsor of the performance and outreach activities will be on hand with free coffee samples and information about its mission to use high quality specialty coffee as a vehicle for progressive change throughout the Coffee Lands.

**The Nile Project has been funded in part by the Expeditions program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the six New England state arts agencies.**

**The Fine Arts Center’s Asian Arts & Culture and Center Series are sponsored by Baystate Health & Health New England. Asian Arts & Culture Program Season sponsor is the Pioneer Valley Hotel Group. Event sponsors are Deans Beans: Brew Great Coffee. Create Real Change, New England Foundation for the Arts, Cooley Dickinson Hospital, Hotel UMass and WRSI. High resolution images are available at:**

**<https://fac.umass.edu/Online/PressImages>**

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