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[Images Available Here](#)

[Videos Available Here](#)

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
THE NILE PROJECT
A CROSS-CULTURAL ENSEMBLE OF MUSICIANS
FROM COUNTRIES OF THE NILE BASIN IN CONCERT ON
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 IN ZELLERBACH HALL AT 8:00 P.M.

Extensive residency activities are planned on campus and in the community, including classroom visits, talks, master classes, a day-long symposium, SchoolTime Performance, lecture demonstration, food of the region and a community music-making event

[Watch an exclusive Cal Performances interview with The Nile Project founder Mina Girgis](#)

BERKELEY, January 23, 2015—In an historic first, 13 musicians from the 11 Nile Basin countries have collaborated to use the power of music to raise awareness of the cultural and environmental challenges along the world’s longest river. Inspired by Yo-Yo Ma’s *The Silk Road Project*, Egyptian ethnomusicologist **Mina Girgis** and Ethiopian-American singer-songwriter **Meklit Hadero** co-founded **The Nile Project** in 2011. As part of its first United States tour, the collective performs a concert in Berkeley on [Thursday, February 19 at 8:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall](#), featuring works in a dozen languages and on an array of traditional instruments. Forged over weeks of workshops, musicians have tackled the different traditions and modal systems of the other members’ countries. A “committed, euphoric international coalition” (*The New York Times*), the musicians emulate the intrinsic rhythms and current of the Nile by adding percussion interludes between each song. In support of The Nile Project, Cal Performances has created a weeklong residency on campus and in the community to raise awareness about local and Nile-related sustainability challenges.

“The history of the Nile is as old as it is long. The Nile is the longest river in the world, but it’s also a river that runs through many countries that are never seen as connected,” said Girgis, a Bay Area resident. “Because of that cultural disconnect, the people in the region have grown to believe that they don’t have anything in common except the water that runs through all

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their countries ... that cultural isolation has really made a perfect environment for a potential water conflict when water became a resource that was becoming more and more scarce and we were trying to figure out how best to divide it.”

Public residency programs begin on Wednesday, February 18 with an [“OLLI Talks: Civic Engagement and the Management of Water Resources,”](#) hosted by the Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) from 12:30–1:30 p.m. at the Freight and Salvage Coffeehouse. On Friday, February 20 a day-long symposium, entitled “The Nile Gathering,” will be held at the Magnes Collection for Jewish Art and Life. Presented by Cal Performances in association with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for African Studies, “The Nile Gathering” begins with a 2:00 p.m. panel discussion between UC Berkeley scholars Elsadig Elsheikh, (Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society) and Michael Watts (Geography), and Nile Project musicians AlSarah, Dina El Wedidi, Jorga Mesfin, Meklit Hadero, Kasiva Mutua, and Steven Sogo about how divergent understandings of African identity have contributed to resource conflicts throughout the history of the Nile. Attendees may view the Magnes Collection exhibition at 3:30 p.m., followed by a 4:00 p.m. lecture demonstration highlighting the Nile Project’s creative process. Food from along the Nile is available for \$20.00 at 6:00 p.m., and the symposium concludes with an interactive music session at 7:30 p.m., led by musicians from the Nile Project. These events are free and open to the public, with the exception of the food event. [Advance registration](#) is required for all of the events.

[The Nile Project](#), was founded in 2011 by Egyptian ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis and Ethiopian-American singer songwriter Meklit Hadero, and performed its first concert in Cairo in January 2013. The ensemble’s debut live recording, *Aswan*, was named one of NPR’s “5 Must-hear International Albums” and praised as being “joyous and even raucous.” A pan-Nile percussion section drives the orchestra of Ethiopian *masenko* and saxophone; Egyptian *ney*, *oud*, violin, *simsimiya*, and *tanbura*; and Ugandan *adungu* and bass guitar. Six vocalists sing in 11 languages with lyrics that explore themes of identity, regional solidarity, intercultural relationships, local music scenes, and living in the diaspora. The Nile Project’s unique sound comes from intensive musical residencies, gathering the musicians together for weeks at a time

to learn from one another and translate that experience into collectively composed new musical works.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **The Nile Project** concert on Thursday, February 19 at 8:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall range from \$18.00 to \$48.00 and are subject to change. Half-price tickets are available for UC Berkeley students. Tickets are available through the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, at (510) 642-9988, at www.calperformances.org, and at the door. For more information about discounts, go to <http://calperformances.org/buy/discounts.php>.

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Cal Performances' 2014—2015 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Residency

Residency activities are planned on campus and in the community as part of **The Nile Project**, on Wednesday, February 18 and Friday, February 20, as follows. For the most current information, go to www.calperformances.org.

Wednesday, February 18, 12:30–1:30 p.m.

*OLLI Talks: Civic Engagement and
the Management of Water Resources*

Freight and Salvage Coffeehouse

2020 Addison Street, Berkeley

Program: An event with The Nile Project founder and executive director, Mina Girgis, presented with the Osher Life Long Learning Institute in conjunction with Cal Performances. Free with UC Berkeley identification or OLLI membership, \$10.00 for the general public.

Friday, February 20, 2:00–6:00 p.m.

Symposium: *Nile Gathering*

Magnes Collection for Jewish Art and Life

2121 Allston Street, Berkeley

Program: A symposium presented by Cal Performances in association with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for African Studies, with sessions on "The Nile and African

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Identity" and "Musical Collaboration and Water Cooperation."

Friday, February 20, 6:00–7:30 p.m.
*Food from the Eleven Countries of
the Nile Region*

Magnes Collection for Jewish Art and Life
2121 Allston Street, Berkeley

Program: Food security for the people of the Nile basin is dependent upon cooperation for water resources. Taste the possibilities together, with food available for purchase in advance only at \$20.00. Presented in cooperation with the Nile Project and the Magnes Collection.

Friday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m.
The Nile Project Community Music Event

Magnes Collection for Jewish Art and Life
2121 Allston Street, Berkeley

Program: Berkeley Musicians of The Nile Project lead a participatory musical experience.

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Thursday, February 19 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Street, Berkeley

World Stage

The Nile Project

Mohamed Abozekry, oud

Alsarah, vocals

Michael Bazibu, traditional Ugandan string and percussion

Hany Bedair, percussion

Nader El Shaer, kawala

Dina El Wedidi, vocals

Meklit Hadero, vocals

Jorga Mesfin, saxophone

Kasiva Mutua, percussion

Sophie Nzayisenga, inanga, vocals

Dawit Seyoum, bass-krar, krar

Steven Sogo, Burundi, ikembe, guitar, bass, vocals

Selamnesh Zemene, vocals

Program: As part of its first United States tour, artists from The Nile Project—13 musicians from the 11 Nile Basin countries—perform works in a dozen languages and on an array of traditional instruments

Tickets: Prices range from \$18.00 to \$48.00 and are subject to change. They are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, at (510) 642-9988, at calperformances.org, and at the door.

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