



**For Immediate Release**

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## The Nile Project sets sail on first Africa Tour

The Nile Project is pleased to announce that it has set sail on its first Africa Tour and will be performing concerts and leading Nile sustainability workshops at universities in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Egypt.

The tour follows the second Nile Gathering, which took place in Uganda from January 23 to February 13, 2014. During this musical residency, 14 musicians from Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda collaborated in writing and composing songs inspired by the Nile Basin's diverse musical traditions and instruments. This music will be performed during the Africa Tour concerts and will culminate in *Jinja* - the Nile Project's second album.

In January 2013, the Nile Project held its first Nile Gathering in Aswan, Egypt. After two sold out concerts in Aswan and Cairo, the project's first album, *Aswan*, was released. NPR Music named it one of the '5 Must-Hear International Albums of the Fall' and it was selected for Songlines 'Top of the World' annual collection.

"We were very happy that the Nile Project's music struck a deep chord with our Egyptian audiences last January," said Mina Girgis, Nile Project Founder & Executive Director. "This year, we built on this success by inviting a more diverse pool of musicians, expanding our performance circuit to more Nile Basin countries, and launching the project's university education and innovation programs with partner institutions. Based on our audience's feedback after our Kampala premiere, it is clear that the Nile Project is equally relevant in Uganda as it is in Egypt."

By exposing audiences to the music of their river neighbors, these performances are meant to foster cross-cultural empathy and inspire environmental curiosity among Nile citizens. Despite ancient relations among East African civilizations, the 437 million citizens of the 11 nations sharing the longest river in the world have few avenues to connect beyond their state borders. Polarized by strenuous political relations and unhelpful media, most see the Nile as a water security question rather than an opportunity for synergistic relations within one integrated watershed. At a time when riparian tensions over the proposed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam have captured headlines around the world, the Nile Project offers an alternative path for dialogue and cooperation.

Along with the concerts, the Nile Project has begun to roll out a number of university-based dialogue and education programs that build on this musical inspiration to help students understand Nile-related development challenges in a more systemic way. These programs begin with interactive Nile Workshops that allow university students to reflect on their understanding of their river's environmental and cultural challenges. Other university activities include multidisciplinary online courses, ecological and cultural mapping expeditions, student exchange programs, Nile choirs, an annual short film festival and a virtual dialogue and collaboration platform.

Acting as the capstone to the university programs, the Nile Prize will channel the new understanding gained from the dialogue and education programs towards concrete action by incentivizing students to develop innovative solutions to regional challenges. Over the span of a year, the program will support university students and faculty in the design and implementation of local solutions based on principles of sustainable, community-centered design. More than just an award, the prize will guide students through a series of educational and skills-based trainings, community-focused exercises, and transboundary collaborations. The intention will be to build the capacity of students, civil society organizations, and communities with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to collaboratively design and deliver new innovations that improve the multifaceted sustainability the Nile Basin. Following the upcoming workshops, the Nile Project will hold information sessions to launch the inaugural Nile Prize and introduce the 2014 'Food sustainability' theme.

The Nile Project is also currently planning tours to Europe in summer 2014 and North American in winter 2015.

### **2014 Africa Tour Dates**

February 6 Jinja, Uganda – Live Concert at Mezzanine  
February 8 Kampala, Uganda – Live Concert at National Theater  
February 10 Kampala, Uganda – Live Concert and Q&A at International University of East Africa  
February 11 Kampala, Uganda – Workshop at Kyambogo University  
February 15 Zanzibar, Tanzania – Live Concert at Sauti Za Busara Festival  
February 18 Nairobi, Kenya – Performance & Workshop at United States International University  
February 19 Nairobi, Kenya – Workshop at the Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace & Environmental Studies - University of Nairobi  
February 22 Nairobi, Kenya – Nile Day Forum and Live Concert at Kuona Art Center  
February 23 Nairobi, Kenya – Live Concert at Safaricom Jazz Festival  
February 25 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Live Concert at Africa Philanthropy Forum (private)  
February 27 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Live Concert at Mulatu Astatke's Ghion Hotel  
February 27 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Live Concert at Mega Ampitheater  
March 5 Cairo, Egypt – Live Concert at the Cairo Opera House  
March 6 Cairo, Egypt – Workshop at the American University in Cairo  
March 7 Aswan, Egypt – Live Concert at the Nubian Museum  
March 8 Aswan, Egypt – Workshop at the Nubian Museum  
March 10 Alexandria, Egypt – Live Concert at Bibliotheca Alexandrina  
March 11 Alexandria, Egypt – Workshop at Bibliotheca Alexandrina

## **2014 Artist Selection**

Alsarah / Sudan / Vocals, Lyricist

Dafaalla El Hag / Sudan/ Oud, Percussion, Banimbo, Zombara

Dawit Seyoum / Ethiopia / Bass Krar, Krar

Dina el Wedidi / Egypt / Vocals, Lyricist

Endris Hassen / Ethiopia / Masenko

Jorga Mesfin / Ethiopia / Saxophone

Kasiva Mutua / Kenya/ Percussionist, Lyricist

Lawrence Okello / Uganda / Percussion, Adungu, Amadinda

Michael Bazibu / Uganda / Endongo, Adungu, Endingidi, Percussion

Nader El Shaer / Egypt/ Kawala, Ney

Selamnesh Zemene / Ethiopia / Vocals

Sophie Nzayisenga / Rwanda / Inanga, Vocals

Steven Sogo / Burundi / Ikembe, Guitar, Bass, Vocals

## **Background on the Nile Project**

The Nile Project was founded in 2011 to address the Nile Basin's cultural and environmental challenges. Using music, education, and innovation programs, the Nile Project inspires, informs, and empowers university students to work together to foster the sustainability of their ecosystem. The Nile Project curates collaborations among musicians from the 11 Nile countries to expose audiences to the cultures of their river neighbors. These musical experiences foster cross-cultural empathy and inspire environmental curiosity to shift the Nile from a divisive geo-political argument to a uniting East-African conversation.

## **Founder & Executive Director: Mina Girgis**

Mina Girgis is an ethnomusicologist and entrepreneur who specializes in curating and producing innovative musical collaborations across diverse styles. Relying on his background in hospitality, Mina explores new ways to design environments conducive to learning, making, and experiencing music. In 2009, he founded Zambaleta, a nonprofit community World Music school based in San Francisco. In 2011, Mina created the Nile Project. He is currently developing Zambaleta into an online marketplace for music lessons. Mina writes about World Music education, arts entrepreneurship, applied ethnomusicology, the representation of Gypsies within the World Music industry, and the role of music in the Arab Spring.

## **Musical Director: Miles Jay**

Contrabassist, composer, and arranger Miles Jay has collaborated in a wide range of ensembles and productions. Since receiving his BA in music from UCSB, he lived and worked 6 years in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Greece, furthering his musical immersion in the modal music of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Dedicating himself to developing the voice of the contrabass within these various regional musical aesthetics, he has worked extensively with the ensembles of Youssou N'Dour, Ziad Rahbani, Fathy Salama, Ross Daly, Naseer Shamma, Niyaz, Mashrou3 Leila, and the Cairo Symphony Orchestra, performing at venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Emirates Palace, the United Nations, and the TED convention Long Beach. In addition to his unique playing technique, Miles has personally designed and hand built a new type of double bass inspired by several traditional instrumental designs, as well as the need for a compact, travel friendly acoustic bass. As a composer, Miles is a 2013 Sundance film composers fellow and has just released his debut solo album titled "the Troposphere".

## **About the Musicians**

### **Alsarah**

Alsarah is a singer, songwriter and ethnomusicologist. Born in the capital city of Khartoum, she spent four years at Wesleyan University studying Music with a concentration in ethnomusicology. Residing in Brooklyn, NY, she performs music from different parts of the Middle East and East Africa. Most recently, her song with the Nile Project, “Salam Nubia” was placed on Songlines Magazine’s “Top of the World” annual CD.

### **Dafaalla El Haj**

Native from the city of Oum Dourman, Sudan, Dafaalla El Haj is a diverse multi-instrumentalist and performer based in Khartoum. Currently the head of the Sudanese Traditional Music Center, he spent many years experimenting and supervising techniques of traditional instrument restoration or reconstruction. He has participated and performed regularly with the Sudanese National Band for Traditional Instruments. Dafaalla’s thorough knowledge of the manufacture and organology of these instruments has lead him to teach and research at various schools and institutes throughout Sudan.

### **Dawit Seyoum**

Dawit Seyoum is a well known Bass Krar player in Addis Ababa, flexible in a wide variety of formations and styles, and also a skilled player of the traditional Krar and flute called Washint. Dawit has toured extensively throughout Ethiopia and represented the Addis Ababa University at Mekele, Bahir Dar, Ambo, Dessie and Nazreth. He has also toured internationally with artists such as Paal Nilsson-Love, Jeroen Visser and Mirco. Dawit is a member of Ethiocolor, the top Ethiopian cultural band based in Addis.

### **Dina el Wedidi**

Dina discovered her passion for music at the age of 19 when she joined the reputable Warsha Theater Troupe, where she mastered the iconic vocal and spoken word traditions of Al-Sirah, Al-Hilallya, and Al-Madih. In 2012, Dina was the recipient of The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative with Gilberto Gil as her mentor. Today, Dina and her band are a popular staple in Egypt’s rich independent music scene, experimenting with local idioms and genres from around the world.

### **Endris Hassan**

Endris is one of the most sought-after masenqo players in Ethiopia. He is a member of Ethiocolor, the resident band at Addis Ababa’s Fendika Azmari Bet, and performs with Hager Fikir, Ethiopia’s National Theater. Endris has also performed and collaborated with the likes of Paal Nilssen-Love, The Ex, Imperial Tiger Orchestra and Trio Kazanchis. He has played on more than 600 recordings.

### **Jorga Mesfin**

Jorga is a self-taught musician with influences that span the spirit and innovation of Jazz and the ancient and diverse sounds found in Ethiopian music. A professional performer since the age of 17, his career boasts appearances with Tsegaye Gebremedhin, Carolyn Beard Withlow, The Last Poets, Vijay Iyer,

Wayna Wondossen, Kirk Whalum, Takana Miyamoto, Gizze Reggae band, Dionne Farris, Aster Aweke, Mahmoud Ahmed and Mulatu Astatke. He is the founder of Ethio-jazz group Wudasse, and composed the score to Haile Gerima's epic Ethiopian movie Teza, for which he won the award for Best Music Selection at the 22nd Carthage Film Festival and Best Composer Award at the 5th Dubai International Film Festival. As a saxophone and piano instructor, Jorga teaches at the African Jazz School, Mekanisa Mekanyesys Music School and the Wusate Berhan Abere Music Training Center for the Visually Impaired.

### **Kasiva Mutua**

Jackline Kasiva Mutua is an internationally touring drummer and percussionist based in Nairobi, Kenya. Her performance style is influenced by Afrobeat, Zouk, Samba, Reggae and Soul. Kasiva learned traditional drums from her grandmother at a young age and continues to perpetuate her heritage and celebrate her community's spirit.

### **Lawrence Okello**

Lawrence Okello is a professional percussionist and multi-instrumentalist from Uganda. A member of the renowned Ndere Troupe from 1997 to 2012, in 2013 Okello became the Musical Director of the Sosolya music and dance troupe in Uganda. Okello has performed internationally in a variety of formations and ensembles.

### **Michael Bazibu**

Michael Bazibu is a Ugandan diverse multi-instrumentalist and performer based in Kampala. He's one of the lead musicians of the Ndere Troupe, a cultural development organisation that performs a repertoire of more than 40 authentic Ugandan dances and songs, accompanied by various indigenous percussion, stringed and wind instruments. Bazibu has performed across Africa and the World.

### **Nader El Shaer**

Nader Eshaer was born and raised in the coastal and musically diverse climate of Port Said, Egypt. Having never received formal training in music, he started playing accordion at a young age, switching to Ney as a teenager before discovering a deep connection with the tone of the Kawala. Nader is a master of Maqam, the modal musical tradition of the Middle East, but also listens to extensively and plays music from India, Turkey and East Asia. Nader has performed all over Egypt, in events ranging from classical to traditional to Shaabi.

### **Salamnesh Zemene**

Salamnesh was born in a small town in the Gonder region in Northern Ethiopia and comes from a long line of Azmaris, known as the keepers of a special musical tradition in Ethiopia. In addition to her own albums and videos, Salamnesh has worked with Debo Band, Badum Band, the Ex, a Baroque Ensemble from Paris called Baroque Nomads, Wudasse Band, Ethiocolor, Africolor group, and many more groups internationally.

### **Sophie Nzayisenga**

Sophie Nzayisenga is the first female player of the Inanga, a large tough-zither instrument with between 8 and 16 strings. Her father, Thomas Kirusu, was one of the most renowned Inanga players in Rwanda, and at a very young age he began to teach Sophie. At age 6 she was presented and awarded by the French

Cultural Center for her work. She has since developed the role of the Inanga in traditional Rwandan music, as well as in international formations in Malawi, the UK, and Turkey.

### **Steven Sogo**

Steven Sogo was born in 1983 in Kamenge, a popular area of Burundi's capital, Bujumbura, and started to play the guitar and sing at an early age. Music rapidly became a passion and in 1997 he became an active member at the Kamenge Youth Center, where he started to work with different bands before forming his own band "Hope Street" in 2005. Today, Steven is a leading bass player in Burundi and he has recently been selected by the World Bank Institute as Burundi's music ambassador. Sogo sings in Kirundi, Swahili and in French.

### **These Nile Project programs are made possible with support from:**

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### **For further information please contact:**

+1.415.234.3952

+20.115.018.3377

[info@nileproject.org](mailto:info@nileproject.org)