The Nile Project at Middlebury College

The Nile Project brings together artists from the countries bordering the Nile River to make music that combines the region’s diverse instruments, languages, and traditions, and raise awareness for the area’s environmental and cultural challenges. Participatory workshops and cross-cultural dialogues provide students and community members with a deeper understanding of the Nile ecosystem. In addition to the Nile Project residency in April 2015, a suite of lead-up events is planned in February and March to build context and excitement.

These events are 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. Campus sponsors include the Arts Council, the Performing Arts Series, the Mahaney Center for the Arts, the Environmental Studies Program, the Dance Program, and the Department of Music.
LEAD-UP EVENTS (Free; no tickets required)

KINOBÉ: MUSIC FROM AFRICA

February 19, Thursday
Kinobe: African Music Workshop
7:30 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Room 221
This workshop is open to Middlebury College students only. Online sign-up required at http://mysignup.com/kinobe

February 20, Friday
Kinobe: Music from Africa
8:00 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Concert Hall
Herbert Kinobe (pronounced “Chin-O-bay”) is a gifted Ugandan multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and composer known for his inspired synthesis of African roots and global fusion. He has performed all over the African continent and the world, studying and playing with celebrated musicians including Toumani Diabate, Youssou N’Dour, Salif Keita, Angelique Kidjo, Oliver Mtukudzi, and Baaba Maal. Kinobe’s latest CD *Searching for Survival* was recorded in Uganda with his band WAMU SPIRIT and released in spring 2013. Kinobe is a World Ambassador for the Harmony Foundation (Canada), supporting their important work on environmental protection and social development, and improving the lives of children and their families around the world. At Middlebury, he performs with three musical collaborators as part of a suite of lead-up events for the upcoming Nile Project. A pre-concert lecture with the artist and Music Department faculty member Damascus Kafumbe will take place at 7:00 PM in Room 221.

RESIDENCY BY ETHNOMUSICOLOGIST SYLVIA NANYONGA-TAMUSUZA

Dr. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza is Associate Professor of Music at Makerere University (Uganda), where she is also the curator of the Klaus Wachsmann Music Archive. She is a sought-after presenter on topics such as Ugandan, popular, and church music; school music competitions; sexuality in music and dance; politics; plus gender and music. In this suite of three lead-up events to The Nile Project in April, Nannyonga-Tamusuza will explore aspects of music and dance selected from cultures in the Nile basin (Uganda in particular) and how they directly benefit from and are shaped by the resources of the Nile.

March 2, Monday
Lecture/Demonstration:
Musical Instruments: In Search of Links among Selected Cultures in the Nile Region
4:30 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Concert Hall

March 3, Tuesday
Lecture/Demonstration:
Similarities and Differences: Comparing Dances in the Nile Region
4:30 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Room 221

March 4, Wednesday
Lecture:
The Role of Audio-Visual Archiving in Recapturing Cultural Collaboration in the Nile Region
4:30 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Concert Hall

Learn more at http://go.middlebury.edu/nileproject
THE NILE PROJECT RESIDENCY

March 31, Tuesday
Nile Project: Music Master Class with Dance
4:30 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Room 110
Musicians from the Nile Project will present this lively master class surveying music and dance traditions from some of the 11 countries bordering the Nile River basin.

April 1, Wednesday
Nile Project Keynote: Musical Collaboration and Water Cooperation
7:00 PM, Mahaney Center for the Arts, Concert Hall
In this interactive lecture/demonstration, Nile Project founder and ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis breaks down the creative process involved in producing Nile Project music and draws connections to methods used in water conflict transformation. We will explore the necessary ingredients required for successful cross-cultural collaboration among Nile Project musicians and how these can point the way to fruitful trans-boundary communication and cooperation in the water sector. The lecture will be introduced by Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty Andi Lloyd.

April 2, Thursday
Lecture: Civic Engagement and the Management of Water Resources
12:30 PM, The Orchard (Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest)
Human life depends on the availability and quality of water to sustain our health, grow our food, power our homes with electricity, and stimulate our economies. However, due to overpopulation, increased demand for food, climate change, and pollution, as much as two-thirds of the world’s citizens may face water-stressed conditions by 2025. Using the Nile Basin and our Champlain Basin as regional and local case studies, Nile Project founder Mina Girgis, Middlebury Professor of Geology and Environmental Studies Pete Ryan, and Mike Winslow of the Lake Champlain Committee will explore the use of innovative civic engagement strategies to overcome political stakeholder barriers, create a common understanding between competing interests, and build constituencies for action where water has become an impediment to peace and socio-economic development. This lecture is offered as part of the Howard E. Woodin Environmental Studies Colloquium.

April 2, Thursday
The Nile Project Concert
8:00 PM, Wilson Hall, McCullough Social Space
Egyptian ethnomusicologist Mina Girgis and Ethiopian American singer Meklit Hadero are joined by musicians who live along the world’s longest river for a boundary-crossing evening of new music. The Nile Project, inspired by Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project, hopes to spread the musical traditions of the 11 countries touching the Nile, using music to raise awareness for the area’s environmental and cultural challenges. The group’s first recording, Aswan, was named one of NPR’s Top Five Must-Hear International Albums of 2013. The New York Times called the Nile Project’s January 2015 premiere “a committed, euphoric international coalition.”
*Tickets: $25/20/6 at 802-443-MIDD (6433) or http://go.middlebury.edu/tickets

April 3, Friday
Class Visit: Women of the Nile: An Untapped Resource
9:05 AM, Axinn 109
Female Nile Project musicians will lead a discussion with Professor Baker-Medard’s Gender, Health, and the Environment class. Open to Middlebury College students only.

Learn more at http://go.middlebury.edu/nileproject
The Nile River Basin

The Nile, one of the world’s most iconic rivers, has captivated the imagination of millions throughout time. Originating in two sources—Lake Victoria in East Africa and Lake Tana in the Ethiopian highlands—the 6,670-kilometer river flows northward through a diversity of climates, landscapes, and cultures before passing through Egypt and emptying into the Mediterranean Sea.

Its 437 million inhabitants are projected to more than double within the next 40 years, placing an ever-increasing demand for Nile water—water that is tied to all aspects of life, from the food on tables to the electricity that powers homes to people’s health. Even now, people living along the Nile are vulnerable to water-related hardships. At least five nations in the Nile basin are facing water stress. Seven of the 11 Nile countries continue to suffer from undernourishment rates higher than 30%. Less than 10% of basin residents have access to electricity. The core issue at hand is how to peacefully allocate Nile Basin water among 11 nations with different needs and priorities, whose populations are all skyrocketing.

This mounting resource scarcity has contributed to a geopolitical conflict between upstream and downstream riparian states. Tremendous political capital has been expended to draft the Nile Cooperative Framework Agreement, an international treaty to govern water distribution and infrastructure projects differently from the existing 1959 Egyptian-Sudanese treaty giving Egypt the majority water right annually. While the agreement has yet to win mutual consensus, the arduous negotiation process has exposed the deep-seated mistrust between countries, the absence of opportunities for citizen-led dialogue, and the lack of a unified identity and vision for the future development of a shared Nile ecosystem.

The Nile River Basin is wrought with political, environmental, economic, and social challenges requiring a new approach to better address the myriad challenges it faces. As regional tensions flare, the Nile Project offers a unique grassroots strategy to effectively mobilize thousands of people across the Nile Basin and beyond in constructive cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration.

Nile Project Personnel

Alsarah / Sudan / Vocals
Dawit Seyoum / Ethiopia / Bass Krar, Krar
Dina el Wedidi / Egypt / Vocals
Hany Bedair / Egypt / Percussion
Jorga Mesfin / Ethiopia / Saxophone
Kasiva Mutua / Kenya / Percussion
Meklit Hadero / US & Ethiopia / Founder, Vocals
Michael Bazibu / Uganda / Endongo, Adungu, Endingidi
Mina Girgis / Egypt / President, Ethnomusicologist
Miles Jay / US & Abroad / Music Director, Contrabass

Middlebury College Presenters

Liza Sacheli, Mahaney Center for the Arts  •  Damascus Kafumbe, Department of Music  •  Allison Coyne Carroll, Performing Arts Series

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