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## OPENING CEREMONY KICKS OFF SPRING AND HONORS GIFT OF TREES WITH WORLD-CLASS TALENT FROM THE U.S. AND JAPAN

**Washington, DC** [March 6, 2019] – The National Cherry Blossom Festival’s signature [Opening Ceremony](#) will take place Saturday, March 23 at the Warner Theatre from 5-6:30 p.m. The event welcomes the nation’s greatest springtime celebration and marks the annual commemoration of the 1912 gift of cherry blossom trees from Tokyo to Washington, DC. The friendship between the U.S. and Japan is celebrated through outstanding performances from acclaimed artists with ties to both countries; Festival leaders and dignitaries help narrate the ceremony, including a special moment of friendship between DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and the Ambassador of Japan, His Excellency Shinsuke Sugiyama. Free tickets have all been claimed, but the ceremony will be live-streamed on [Facebook](#).

Performers include:

### **“Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon” The Super Live**

The series, *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*, written by Naoko Takeuchi, debuted in *Nakayosi*, a leading girls’ comic magazine published by Kodansha, in 1991. As a new type of performance based on this series, “*Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon*” *The Super Live* has clearly distinguished itself from a conventional musical. The full eighty-minute performance, with an overwhelming sense of speed, dance, images and special effects, premiered in Tokyo in August 2018 and again in Paris in November 2018, and was highly praised. The cast members of the show will make their **North American debut** at the National Cherry Blossom Festival’s Opening Ceremony, where special selections from the show will be performed. This entirely new live performance is sure to captivate audiences around the world!

**Ikuko Kawai Ensemble:** Violinist and composer Ikuko Kawai will present an original interpretation of Japan’s famous *The Tale of Genji*, accompanied by traditional Japanese instruments. *The Tale of Genji* was written in the eleventh century by a woman in the Japanese royal court, and is often called the world’s first novel.

**Yusaku Mochizuki (Mochi):** With thrilling showmanship, Yusaku Mochizuki raises the bar of live performance, incorporating tap dance, video art, and LED diabolos into his shows. The world champion juggler was a much-loved quarterfinalist on America’s Got Talent Season 13 (2018): <https://youtu.be/JtQ7Q5wQfSw>

**The 6821 Quintet:** Created by The Ryuji Ueno Foundation as part of the Potomac Music-Lab Project, this classical ensemble was specially assembled for the National Cherry Blossom Festival and named to reflect the distance from Tokyo to Washington, D.C.

**Skylark Creative Group** is one of Washington, D.C.’s leading entertainment production companies for special events. Founded by DMV-native, Kathleen Sullivan Nelson, Skylark creates exhilarating custom theatrical performances featuring dancers, acrobats, musicians, and other performing artists.

The Opening Ceremony is co-presented with the Japan Foundation as part of *Japan 2019*, a series of events highlighting Japanese arts and culture in the United States throughout 2019. It is supported by

Ryuji Ueno Foundation, Japan National Tourism Organization, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Kawasaki Heavy, Mitsubishi Heavy, and JCAW.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation's greatest springtime celebration. The 2019 Festival, March 20 – April 14, includes four weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. Visit [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org) or call 877.44.BLOOM for more information, or check out [Facebook](#) (CherryBlossomFestival), [Twitter](#) (@CherryBlossFest), and [Instagram](#) (@CherryBlossFest).

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