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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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2021 National Cherry Blossom Festival to Welcome Spring, Honor 1912 Gift of Trees With Spectacular Opening Ceremony – A Livestreamed Event

***Production Co-hosted by Olympic Gold Medalist Kristi Yamaguchi, Spotighting
World-Class Talent from Japan and the U.S.***

Washington, D.C. [March 1, 2021] – The National Cherry Blossom Festival today announced that its signature Opening Ceremony, an artistic celebration of the 1912 gift of trees from Tokyo to Washington, D.C., and an annual tribute to the longstanding friendship between Japan and the U.S., will be livestreamed on Saturday, March 20 at 6:00 p.m. ET. Co-presented by The Japan Foundation, the Opening Ceremony will be co-hosted by Kristi Yamaguchi, Olympic gold medalist, and Michelle Marsh, journalist with ABC 7 (WJLA). The celebration will feature special performances from acclaimed artists with ties to Japan and the U.S., plus narration from Festival dignitaries.

“The 2021 National Cherry Blossom Festival’s Opening Ceremony is always an official welcome to spring,” said Diana Mayhew, president and CEO of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. “What’s exciting about this year’s program is that so many performances have been created specifically for the Opening Ceremony. This livestreamed event is surely not to be missed!”

Solo and group musical and dance acts for the Opening Ceremony will include:

2.5-Dimensional Musical – 2.5-Dimensional Musical casts of three popular anime works – “Naruto,” “My Hero Academia,” and “Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon” – will perform songs from each of the theatrical performances. Based on Japanese manga, popular animation, and video games, 2.5-Dimensional Musical presentations exist somewhere between 2D and 3D.

Fukushima Youth Sinfonietta – The Fukushima Youth Sinfonietta (FYS), a dynamic group of 50 young Japanese musicians set up by UK charity Keys of Change, in partnership with schools in Fukushima, has made rapid musical strides and performed in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Tokyo Opera City, Boston Symphony Hall, Bangkok Siam Pic Ganesha Theatre, and Tokyo Suntory Hall.

Kazunori Kumagai – Kazunori Kumagai is a “True Tap Artist” (The New York Times), always searching for expression through sound and rhythm. He trained in the New York Shakespeare Festival Institute of Tap (“Funk University”), the training workshop for the hit Broadway musical, “Bring in da’ Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk.” Since then, he has been performing and teaching all over the world, and opened his first tap dance studio, KAZ TAP STUDIO, in Japan to pass his knowledge and passion to the next generation.

Matsumoto Arigasaki Senior High School Japanese Calligraphy Club – The Matsumoto Arigasaki Senior High School Japanese Calligraphy Club was the first-prize winner in the 12th “Shodo Performance Koshien”, a competition to determine the top high school Shodo performance team in Japan. The club will appear with members of Alexandria, Virginia’s Hayfield Secondary School to convey a special message of friendship.

Taiko Project – Founded in 2000 in Los Angeles by a group of young, emerging taiko drummers led by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba, Taiko Project defines a modern American style of taiko. The group has performed on the Academy Awards, the Grammy Awards, NBC’s “The Voice,” “Jimmy Kimmel Live,” and more.

Access to the Opening Ceremony live stream is free, but registration is required. A virtual seat can be reserved at nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/opening-ceremony/.

The Opening Ceremony is being co-presented by The Japan Foundation and supported in part by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Supporting sponsors include JCAW Foundation, Inc. and TOYOTA. Contributing supporters include Daikin U.S. Corporation, Japan National Tourism Organization, JTI, Marubeni America Corporation, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America, Mitsui Fudosan America, Inc., MUFG Bank, Ltd., and Toshiba America, Inc. Media partners include The Washington Informer and The Washington Post.

The 2021 National Cherry Blossom Festival will offer engaging virtual and personal experiences through unique programs, activities, and events that honor the Festival’s deep traditions and bring the celebration of spring into the hearts and homes of communities throughout the D.C. area and beyond. Lead sponsors (Leadership Circle) for this year’s Festival are Amazon and Events DC.

For more information, visit nationalcherryblossomfestival.org and follow the Festival’s social media pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

About National Cherry Blossom Festival

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is one of the world’s great celebrations of spring. The 2021 Festival, March 20-April 11, will include three weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. Visit nationalcherryblossomfestival.org or call 877.44.BLOOM for more information, and check out [Facebook](#) (@CherryBlossomFestival), [Instagram](#) (@CherryBlossFest), and [Twitter](#) (@CherryBlossFest).

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