

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Nile Project is a collaborative group of musicians, educators and activists who work together to build awareness about and generate new ideas to address environmental challenges in the Nile River basin. It was founded in August 2011 by Egyptian **ethnomusicologist** Mina Girgis and Ethiopian-American singer Meklit Hadero, who both feel passionately about the power of music to make a difference in the Nile region.



The 437 million citizens of the 11 nations in the Nile River basin do not have many opportunities to connect with each other. Girgis and Hadero believe that these countries must work together to solve the environmental challenges facing the Nile River, such as food sustainability, climate change, water policy and pollution. The Nile Project brings together musicians from the Nile countries to make new songs and tour around the region and beyond, sharing the music and cultures of their river neighbors. Another strategy the Nile Project takes is education, working with universities to hold workshops that provide students with opportunities to learn more about the Nile River and develop ideas to create a more **sustainable** Nile Basin. The organization also offers a Nile Prize, which provides students a way to turn their inspiration and environmental knowledge into new and exciting sustainable solutions for the Nile **ecosystem**. In 2015 The Nile Project tours the United States for four months, bringing music and education programs to American universities and towns. The Project aims to inspire and educate citizens around the world to work together for environmental sustainability.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The Nile Project performs original music that was composed collaboratively by all the participating artists. Each musician taught the others in the group the musical language and rhythms of his or her own traditional music, then the group composed and arranged new songs that weave together elements from each culture. Though some songs relate to nature or geography, the songs are *from* the river rather than *about* the river. Lyrics in more than ten different languages range from the deeply personal to the party **anthem**, exploring themes of identity, regional solidarity and intercultural relationships. A powerful percussion section drives the **collective**, which brings together traditional instruments of common musical ancestries and unites those that have never played together. The performance at the Hopkins Center will feature the following artists and instruments:



Mohamed Abo Zekry, *oud*, (Egypt)
Alsarah, vocals, (Sudan/Brooklyn, NY)
Michael Bazibu, *endongo*, *adungu*, *endingidi*,
and percussion, (Uganda)
Hany Bedair, *daff* and *riq*, (Egypt)
Nader El Shaer, *ney* and *kawala*, (Egypt)
Dina el Wedidi, vocals, (Egypt)
Meklit Hadero, vocals, (US and Ethiopia)

Jorga Mesfin, saxophone, (Ethiopia)
Kasiva Mutua, percussion and vocals, (Kenya)
Sophie Nzayisenga, *inanga*, (Rwanda)
Dawit Seyoum, *krar* and bass *krar*, (Ethiopia)
Steven Sogo, bass, *ikembe*, guitar and vocals,
(Burundi)
Selamnesh Zemene, vocals, (Ethiopia)

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

The plucked harp (lyre) and spike fiddle (bowed instrument resting on a spike) have been at the heart of the Nile's musical identity since ancient times. Today, modern versions of both instruments are found in every country within the Nile Basin. In **curating** the collective, co-producers Miles Jay and Mina Girgis highlighted the unique **timbres** of these instruments, while also surrounding them with the complementary sounds of harps, zithers, wind instruments and percussion from each musical tradition.

LYRES

The *oud* is a stringed instrument with a pear shaped body found throughout the Middle East and North Africa, related to the European lute. The neck does not have frets, allowing musicians to play many **microtonal** notes. *Ouds* have between 5-7 pairs of strings, tuned differently from region to region, and are plucked with a long, thin pick.



above, *krar*; below, *entongoli*



The *krar* is another variation of the lyre found in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. The *krar* has five or six strings and a bowl-shaped body.

The Egyptian *simsimiyya* is a lyre with 5-7 steel strings, found in a variety of sizes. Its musical ancestors are pictured in many Egyptian tomb paintings, illustrating musicians from antiquity entertaining the Pharaohs. The modern *simsimiyya*'s construction and strumming style comes from Port Said, Egypt.

The *entongoli* is a lyre from the Basoga tribe of Uganda. It has six to eight strings that produce a buzzing sound by vibrating against the sound board, which is traditionally made of lizard skin. The instrument is played by *griots*, or praise singers, either solo or to accompany songs of praise.



oud



simsimiyya

See and hear these instruments online!

oud: <http://egyptiancentermakan.wordpress.com/oud/>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWC3MNE_tUA

krar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGFrPGSWi4E>

simsimiyya: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1d2vmAWqyw>

entongoli: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlftvG1RxVM>

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS (CONT.)

STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

The Ugandan *endingidi* is 1-string bowed instrument, very similar and likely related to the *rababa* of Egypt. Its body is round and made of wood, and though similar in size to its relative spike fiddles, is often much deeper, giving the instrument a bassier, grittier **tone**.

The *umuduri* is a Ugandan instrument made of one string stretched across a bow. A gourd is attached to the bow, which the player holds against his or her body while striking the string with a wooden stick and a rattle. The string is separated into two sections of different lengths which produce two different notes.



above, Nile Project musician Steven Sogo with an umuduri;
below, inanga

HARPS

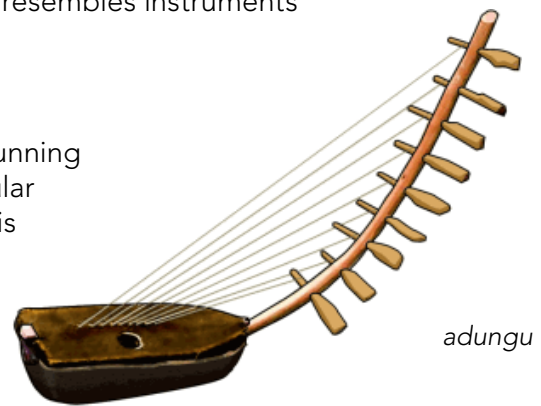
The Ugandan *adungu* is an arched harp with 7-15 strings, different from many of the other harps of the Nile Basin in that the strings come off the top at a 90 degree angle. While traditionally it came in a few sizes, in the last 80 years it has been greatly expanded and ranges from large bass versions all the way up to small high-pitched ones. The *adungu* is used by the Alur people of northwestern Uganda, and closely resembles instruments carved into ancient hieroglyphics in Egypt.

ZITHERS

The Rwandan *inanga* has around 20 strings running lengthwise end to end along a long rectangular shallow wooden plate or trough. The *inanga* is played like a harp, with both hands, and usually has accompanying vocals. The strings of the *inanga* are made from natural fibers, and used to be made from animal gut. It was originally a court instrument that served specific functions for the *mwami*, or king.



endingidi



adungu



See and hear these instruments online!

endingidi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyOO1jsTtYc>

umuduri: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSHYamVybo0>

adungu: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVUbhQvfTug>

inanga: <http://music.africamuseum.be/instruments/english/burundi/inanga.html>

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS (CONT.)

WIND

The *ney* is a flute used throughout the Middle East in religious, classical and folk music. Egyptian *neys* are made of reed and have seven holes, one of which is played by the thumb in the back. The *kawala* is similar to the *ney* but has only six finger holes. It was originally used by shepherds and now is frequently heard at religious festivals and weddings. They are both played by placing the lips over the top of the instrument and blowing at an angle against the rim.



Neys come in several sizes; smaller instruments have a higher pitch

PERCUSSION

The *duff* and the *riq* are both Egyptian wooden frame drums covered on one side with an animal skin **membrane**. On the inside, small metal rings are attached to rattle and create sound. The *duff* is held with both hands and played with the fingers, and usually played by a singer as accompaniment. A *riq* is usually played without singing and might be shaken above the head and around the body.

The *amadinda* is from a family of Ugandan xylophones called “log” xylophones. Typically, the instrument is made by placing 12 wooden bars placed across two fresh banana tree trunks. Two or three different musicians, called the *omunazi*, *omwawuzi* and *omukoonezi*, sit on the two sides of the *amadinda* and use mallets to hit the wooden bars.

The *ikembe* originally came from the Congo and has migrated to several countries including Burundi, where it reaches the Nile River basin. It consists of a series of iron *lamellae*, or plates, fixed to a rectangular wooden soundbox. The soundbox is formed by hollowing out a soft rectangular block of wood from the side, placing a few seeds or pebbles inside, and covering it with a strip of wood and sealed with resin, rubber or honey.



Nile Project musician Dina El Wedidi with her duff



ikembe

See and hear these instruments online!

ney: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac2g5NW9RhU>

kawala: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8mScv-G1CQ>

daff: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x90dfMDaJlc>

riq: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCNra-9NCHK>

amadinda: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJzWOC--ixc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KrYB9f9fsw>

ikembe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1loXAh4ubw>

ABOUT THE MUSIC AND CULTURE

The countries making up the Nile River basin show the influence of cultures from around the world. For centuries, trade networks brought goods from other continents through the **Horn of Africa** to the center of the great continent. The 16th century brought European colonial influence, and in the 19th century Arab nations controlled parts of the area. Today, traditional African music that incorporates historical influences as well as modern popular music styles is still performed and taught throughout the region. The Nile Project musicians reflect influences from the following cultures and musical **idioms**.

MUSICAL STYLES AND CULTURES

In Arabic music, a *maqam* is a set of notes, similar to a musical scale or **mode** (for example major or minor) in Western classical music. Each *maqam* has a built-in emotional character and rules which determine specific important notes, **modulation** and melodic development. Many *maqams* use microtones not found on the piano, the tuning of which varies across regions and towns.

Chaabi means “of the people” in Arabic, and refers to a musical style that evolved in the 1970’s in Egypt. *Chaabi* became a medium to express the difficulties of life in urban Egypt. Lyrics are often funny, metaphorical and very political. In modern-day Egypt, it has evolved into “Electro *Chaabi*,” a genre that is grabbing international attention.

Taqsim is a term used in Arabic, Greek, Middle Eastern and Turkish music. It is a solo musical (melodic) or vocal improvisation based on the melodic nature of a *maqam* or family of *maqams*. It often introduces a song, but can also take place in the middle of a song or be performed alone. An artist’s ability to establish the mood of a *maqam* through *taqsim*, as well as modulate and return, can have great emotional effect on listeners.



The Ethiopian system of scales and modes is called *Kinit*. At the core of the *Kinit* tradition are 4 unique **pentatonic** scales, called *Tizita*, *Batti*, *Ambassel* and *Anchihoye*. *Tizita* and *Batti* each have major and minor versions, and the **intonation** and **ornamentation** of *Kinit* vary from region to region.

Nubia is an ancient region along the Nile River, which encompassed southern Egypt and northern Sudan, named after the Nubian people who settled in the region. Throughout the Middle Ages, there were several small Nubian kingdoms, the last of which collapsed in 1504. In the 1970s, the construction of the Aswan Dam forced many Egyptian Nubians move away from their villages in to cities and northern regions of Egypt.

Nile Project musician Nader El Shaer playing kawala, which comes in nine sizes, according to the maqam.

Map of the Nile River Basin

