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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 1, 2017] – The National Cherry Blossom Festival’s signature [Opening Ceremony](#) will take place Saturday, March 25 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 H.E. Kenichiro Sasae, Ambassador of Japan. Free tickets have all been claimed, but the ceremony will be streamed live to audiences around the world on the Festival’s Facebook.

Performers include:

- Since its formation in 2012, [EL Squad](#) from Wrecking Crew Orchestra revolutionized the contemporary dance genre with their signature “Light Dance,” a mesmerizing blend of dance, music, and electroluminescent technology.
- Multilingual J-pop artist [May J](#) has been one of the most celebrated female singers in Japan since her debut in July 2006. She has hosted the music program “J-MELO” (the only Japanese music show in English on NHK) for eight years. She is perhaps best known for singing the end roll version of the title song “Let It Go” in the Japanese release of Disney’s animated movie “Frozen.”
- **Shigeyama Kyogen** embodies some of the best traits of traditional Japanese performance culture. Kyogen is a world-renowned form of traditional Japanese theater that is a kind of spoken drama based upon laughter and comedy. Shigeyama is a prestigious Kyogen family in Kyoto, Japan that has passed on this Kyogen craft from one generation to the next since the early 17th Century.
- [The 6821 Quintet](#) is a group created by The Ryuji Ueno Foundation as part of the Potomac Music-Lab Project, specially assembled for the National Cherry Blossom Festival and named to reflect the distance from Tokyo to Washington, D.C. The 2017 group consists of Mayu Kishima (1st Violin), Eric Silberger (2nd Violin), Meng Wang (Viola), Clancy Newman (Cello) and Mamiko Hirai (Composer/Pianist), and will be performing the world-premiere of a commissioned piece written by Ms. Hirai.

The Opening Ceremony is co-presented by Japan Foundation and supported by TOYOTA, Toshiba America, Inc., Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Japan Commerce Association of Washington Foundation, and Warner Theatre.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation’s greatest springtime celebration. The 2017 Festival, March 15 – April 16, 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 or call 877.44.BLOOM for more information and find us on [Facebook](#) (CherryBlossomFestival), [Twitter](#) (@CherryBlossFest), and [Instagram](#) (@CherryBlossFest).

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