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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 2, 2016] – The National Cherry Blossom Festival’s signature [Opening Ceremony](#) will take place Saturday, March 26 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. Tickets are free with a \$5 processing fee and must be reserved [online](#) in advance.

Performers include:

- Japanese soprano singer [Asako Tamura](#), who has impressed and delighted audiences with an extraordinary blend of vocal brilliance, powerful stage presence, and innate musicality. Born in Kyoto, Japan, Tamura was awarded the prize for “Best Opera Performer” from Mannes College of Music in New York City.
- Pantomime-based silent comedy group, [Gamarjobat](#), who fascinates people with thoroughly-plotted stage acts, and lively shows with explosive energy. The group has been invited to perform at over 200 festivals in more than 30 countries and was chosen as one of “the 100 most respected Japanese people in the world” in the Japanese-edition of Newsweek magazine.
- **The 6821 Quintet**, a quintet specially assembled for the 2016 National Cherry Blossom Festival by the Ryuji Ueno Foundation. Cleverly named to reflect the distance from Tokyo to DC, the group is comprised of two violins, a viola, a cello and a piano.
- Tsugaru Shamisen duo **Dois HAZUKI**, who combine traditional Japanese folk songs with fresh new sounds
- New York-based jazz composer **Miho Hazama**, along with a fourteen-piece jazz ensemble

The Opening Ceremony is co-presented by Embassy of Japan and supported by TOYOTA, Toshiba America, Inc., Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Japan Commerce Association of Washington, Warner Theatre, National Press Club, and media partner Washingtonian Media.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation’s greatest springtime celebration. The 2016 Festival, March 20 – April 17, includes three spectacular weeks and four weekends 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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