



# A river runs through them

## ■ Music brings members from different countries in Africa together

BY RAECINE WILLIAMS  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

If life imitates art, then the multiethnic spectrum of talent that makes up the Nile Project will surely inform perspectives and open minds when they perform at The Clarice on Sunday.

The Nile Project, founded in 2011, unites artists from countries along the Nile River Basin, and allows them to perform as one, uniting their languages, traditions and musical influences.

"It's almost like different cultures donating small bits to this one big, multicultural wheel which is rotating over and over, and it's so diverse," said Kasiva Mutua, a percussionist and vocalist with the Nile Project.

"When you come to watch us, you should be prepared to go on a journey," Mutua said. "It's like going on an actual safari but seated in a theater for two hours, and you get to fly from Burundi to Rwanda to Kenya to Ethiopia to Egypt, and again to Sudan."

The countries mentioned are only but half of the nations around the Nile Basin, which is shared by 11 countries.

"Eleven countries that are not normally thought of as one region," the Nile Project's co-

founder Mina Girgis points out. "Nobody thinks of Egypt as being in any way relevant to Kenya or Uganda."

Girgis, who grew up in Cairo, believes that the cultures uniting through music will transpose into real life.

"Collaboration inspires our audience to become more curious about the cultures of all the

### See RIVER, Page B-4

different musicians represented on stage," Girgis said. "It helps create a space for the kinds of conversations we need to have in the Nile Basin around water issues and around our connection and what challenges we face."

Girgis began his musical journey first as a DJ, then an ethnomusicologist who examined music in its cultural context. He became entranced with the music of the gypsies, eventually writing his graduate school thesis on them.

"The gypsies originated in India and migrated into the Middle East and then Europe about a thousand years ago," Girgis said. "I was looking at the connection between all the different musical groups and how the story was being told in the world music industry."

His intimate studies on the gypsies soon birthed a new question: "How does the process of learning somebody else's music help you understand these people?" Girgis posed.

At the same time, Girgis said he was always interested in musi-

cal projects that combined musical styles from different geographies.

"Both of these incidents kind of came together in the Nile Project as all the musicians that we bring into the collective need to learn about each other's music in order to play together," said Girgis.

The collective presently has 27 musicians from nine countries, 13 of which are in the U.S. on tour right now.

"They can expect to see these musicians playing together, not in what looks like a variety show where every musician is singing a song from their respective culture," Girgis said.

To Mutua, the Nile Project has personal significance.

"The music of Nile Project has a deeper meaning to me because it's understanding, it's togetherness, it's coming to a consensus — that's what it means to me, Mutua said.

Mutua, who has been playing music since childhood and learned traditional drums from her grandmother, said music is her entire life.

"Both the music of the Nile Project and the music that I play is happiness to me," Mutua said.

Because of this happiness that radiates from all the musicians involved, she said people can expect one big thing from the Nile Project.

"People can expect joy, first of all," Mutua said.

## THE NILE PROJECT

■ **When:** 7 p.m., Sunday

■ **Where:** The Clarice, 3800 The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, College Park

■ **Tickets:** \$25

■ **More information:** theclarice.umd.edu, nileproject.org; 301-405-2787

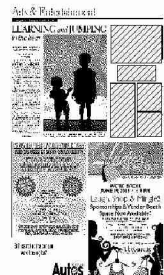




PHOTO FROM THE CLARICE

The Nile Project is set to perform at The Clarice on Sunday.