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SONES DE MÉXICO JOINS WITH CHICAGO BLUES MASTER BILLY BRANCH TO UNITE AFRO-MEXICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AT THE OLD TOWN SCHOOL OF FOLK MUSIC FEBRUARY 21

Concert will explore the interplay between two musical traditions that share African roots

WHO: Sones de México Ensemble and Billy Branch

WHAT: Son Jarocho Meets the Chicago Blues in Concert

WHERE: Old Town School of Folk Music, 4545 N Lincoln Ave · Szold Music & Dance Hall

WHEN: Saturday, February 21, 2015, 7pm

TICKETS: \$30 General Public

BOXOFFICE & INFO: (773) 728-6000, www.oldtownschool.org

CHICAGO – Two Chicago based GRAMMY® nominated artists will share one stage when Mexican folk music ensemble **Sones de México** joins forces with blues harmonica master **Billy Branch and the Sons of Blues** at **Szold Hall of the Old Town School of Folk Music, 4545 N. Lincoln Ave in Chicago, on Saturday, February 21 at 7pm**. The concert will bring Sones de México and the Sons of Blues together for an exploration of the commonalities and differences between two musical traditions that arose out of the African experience in the Americas.

Branch was one of several special guests who performed in Sones de Mexico's 20th Anniversary concert at Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion in September of 2014.

"We first met Billy several years ago at Buddy Guy's club," says Sones de México co-founder and Executive Director Juan Díes. "We were there playing at a Recording Academy sponsored Chicago Blues Festival Kickoff event and Billy asked if he could sit-in and jam with us. I was surprised and delighted when he told us that he knew the traditional son jarocho La Bruja. We vowed that night that we would collaborate some day, and it's finally here!"

Billy Branch adds, *"After spending two weeks in Xalapa, Veracruz conducting my Blues in Schools program, I was pleasantly surprised to discover the amount of African influence on*

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Mexican culture, especially through its music. I hope this concert will be the symbolic beginning of more collaboration between the African American and Latino communities. Let our common musical roots be the bridge between our communities.”

Sones de México’s members include original members **Juan Díes** and **Gonzalo Córdova plus Lorena Íñiguez, Juan Rivera, Zacbé Pichardo** and **Javier Saume**. All are multi-instrumentalists on a wide range of Mexican folkloric instruments.

In addition to **Billy Branch** on harmonica, the members of the **Sons of Blues** are pianist **Sumito Ariyoshi**, guitarist **Dan Carelli**, bassist **Marvin Little** and the newest member of the band, drummer **Andrew “Blaze” Thomas**.

This concert is made possible in part by a grant from The Joyce Foundation. 90.9 WDCB is the media sponsor.

ABOUT SONES DE MÉXICO: The group is Chicago’s premier folk music ensemble specializing in Mexican ‘son,’ a genre encompassing the roots of mariachi music and other regional styles, including huapango, gustos, chilenas, son jarocho, and more. The ensemble was formed in 1994 and soon incorporated as a non-profit organization to keep the tradition of Mexican ‘son’ alive in its many regional forms. As a performer and recording artist, they have developed and popularized many original arrangements of Mexican traditional tunes. Its original work has experimented cross-culturally with symphonic, Irish, folk, C&W, jazz, and rock music, though never abandoning its roots in Mexican son.

The group has released six CDs: *¡Que Florezca! (Let it Bloom)* (1996); *Fandango on 18th Street* (2002); the GRAMMY® nominated *Esta Tierra Es Tuya (This Land is Your Land)* (2007); *Fiesta Mexicana* (a children’s album) (2010); *¡Viva la Revolución!* (2010); and *13 B’ak’tun* (2013).

The organization is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a commitment to teaching. The mission of Sones de México Ensemble is to promote greater appreciation of Mexican folk and traditional music and culture through innovative performance, education, and dissemination.

For more information, visit www.sonesdemexico.com

ABOUT BILLY BRANCH AND THE SONS OF BLUES: Billy Branch was discovered by Willie Dixon, the “father of modern Chicago Blues”, while Billy was still in college. Since those early days, Billy has played on nearly 200 different recordings, including 12 albums under his own name. He’s recorded with Willie Dixon, Johnny Winter, Lou Rawls, Koko Taylor, Eddy Clearwater, Honeyboy Edwards, Syl Johnson, Lurrie Bell, Ronnie Baker Brooks, John Primer, and Taj Mahal, just to name a few. He has received three GRAMMY® nominations and has won multiple W.C. Handy Awards from the Blues Foundation, an Emmy Award, an Addy Award, three Chicago Music Awards, and numerous humanitarian achievement awards.

He and his band, the Sons of Blues, have delivered the cultural legacy of the blues around the world, having made over 70 international tours. The 2007 Chicago Blues Festival honored the thirtieth anniversary of Billy Branch and the Sons of Blues with a 3 hour performance and they also headlined the 2011 Chicago Blues Festival.

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