

**Mihoko Fujita (藤田三保子):** Mihoko learned how to play Koto (Japanese Harp) at a very young age. She learned from her mother who is a master Koto player. When she was 15 years old, she studied with an Ikuta School master of Koto. Mihoko is now a junior master of the Koto. Mihoko has been active in cultural exchanges through participation in concerts in Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the US (Los Angeles and San Francisco). Before moving to Charlotte, NC, she lived in Poland where she participated in various cultural events to promote Japanese culture.



**Kanako Ford (フォード加奈子):** Kanako started to learn the Koto from her aunt, Hashiba Masatoshi when she was 12. She became a junior master when she was 16 and master in 2012. She studied the Koto and three-stringed instruments with Satou Masazuka (San Francisco) and Masachika (Iwate Prefecture, Japan). While she lived in Salt Lake City, Utah, she founded Wasatch Koto School which was the biggest Koto class in that area of the US. In order to introduce Japanese culture in the US, she also started a performance group called, “Sounds of Japan”. She has had several concerts and pursues her music activities enthusiastically. Currently she lives in Raleigh, NC and is a member of Seihahogakukai (the largest Koto school in Japan) under her stage name of Utashika (雅樂之加).



**Naomi Mikami (三上直美) :** Naomi started to study Koto when she was 9 years old. She studied Koto 9 years under the guidance of Senya Watanabe (渡辺千也) and Hisaya Watanabe (渡辺久也) who are masters of Kyoto Toudou Kai (京都當道会) and presidents of Miyabi Kai (み也美会). When she was 18 years old, she was granted “Ura Yurushi” (裏許 Advanced certification) from school. In 2006, she restarted her study and practice Koto and Sangen. She performed at several concerts held by Mionokai JAPAN including performing at the National Theatre of Japan in Tokyo. She also joined the concert tour in Saint Petersburg (2007), Shanghai (2010), Croatia and Slovenia (2015). In 2015, she was granted “Kaiden” (皆伝 Full mastership) from Miyagi Kai and she started to teach Koto as an assistant teacher of Mionokai JAPAN. She moved to Asheville, North Carolina in the spring of 2018. She established the Mionokai Asheville chapter to hold concerts, workshops and school.



#### **Trio Formation:**

It will be a triple performance with two 13-string standard kotos and a 17-string bass koto. The two kotos will play the melody and accompaniment parts, while the 17-string koto will play the bass part.

In NC, this group is probably the only ones who have a 17-string zithero in that sense, this will be a very rare performance.