

# Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

## NEWS

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### **Celebrating workers and their art**

#### *Pullman historic site welcomes three performers in city's 'Art of Work' series*

CHICAGO – Award-winning Celtic musician Jimmy Keane performs at Pullman State Historic Site on June 10, the first in a series of concerts celebrating Chicago's workers and their artistic contributions to the city.

Keane will be followed on July 22 by Tatsu Aoki with an exhibition of Japanese music and dance and on Aug. 12 by Carlos Mejia, a master marimba player from Guatemala.



All three performances are free and take place at 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

They are part of "The Art of Work," a year-long program highlighting the cultural contributions of Chicago workers, from day laborers to ornamental iron workers. It features 12 events at four sites chosen because of their histories and locations:

Pullman, McKinley Branch Library, Back of the Yards and the Illinois Labor History Society.

Keane, a piano accordion player, was declared "Male Musician of the Decade" by Live Ireland and the Irish American News in 2011. He was raised in Chicago's Southside Irish Community by Irish-speaking parents from Connemara and Kerry. He has recorded and produced numerous albums, and he co-wrote the soundtrack for the PBS documentary "Irish Chicago."

At Pullman, Keane will first discuss his Irish family, settling in Chicago and working as an ironworker. He then does a concert of Irish music, with some songs related to Irish history in the United States.

The July performer, bassist Tatsu Aoki, teaches at the Art Institute of Chicago. Aoki and a group of 6-8 performers will perform both shamisen (music and dance) and taiko drumming. He will discuss growing up in a geisha house in Japan and the history of both shamisen and taiko.

Carlos Mejia, who performs in August, began learning marimba from a player who lived across the valley from his village. As a prominent musician, he was considered a threat to Guatemala's ruling military junta, which jailed and tortured him. He was granted refugee status in the United States in 1987.

The "Art of Work" is presented by the Company of Folk with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Pullman neighborhood, including the part operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, was declared a national monument because of its significance in civil rights, the labor movement and urban planning.

It began in 1880 as company-owned housing for workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company, the first planned community of its kind.

The Pullman company was the target of a historic, nationwide strike in 1894. It also contributed to African-American history by employing porters who organized a union and supported the civil rights movement.

The Hotel Florence and part of the Pullman factory are operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. IHPA protects the state's historic resources, which contribute to education, culture and the economy. IHPA sites include ancient burial mounds, forts and buildings erected by settlers, and homes connected to famous Illinoisans.

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