



## RUSSIA: RHYTHM ROAD JAZZ ENERGIZES THOUSANDS ACROSS 11 TIMES ZONES



The group in a Russian submarine museum during their visit to Vladivostok June 23-26, 2008. [Evgheniya Diamantidi, U.S. Consulate Vladivostok]

American jazz artists Alvin Atkinson and the Sound Merchants performed in seven cities throughout June, including Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok. Highlights included participation in two international jazz festivals, performances and master classes at universities and arts colleges, a parade, sessions with Russian musicians in numerous jazz clubs, and major concert hall performances for upwards of 2,000 people each. On their last stop in Vladivostok, the group put on mesmerizing performances at the State Philharmonic, among other venues, which generated major mass media, a glossy magazine

photo feature, and extensive online coverage. The tour harkens back to a Cold War era when, according to *The New York Times*, jazz was the country's "secret sonic weapon" against communism. This is the tenth ensemble of the current season touring for the Rhythm Road-American Music Abroad program administered by Jazz at Lincoln Center, through a grant from the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau, which sends jazz and hip-hop bands on tours to 56 countries.

## NORWAY: STATUE OF GENERAL MARSHALL UNVEILED IN OSLO



The ambassador with a statue of General George Marshall, June 16, 2008. [Kjersti S. Ofstad, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Store unveiled a statue of George C. Marshall by the Norwegian sculptor Asbjørn Høglund in a ceremony on the Oslo waterfront. U.S. Ambassador to Norway Benson K. Whitney also paid tribute to the great statesman in front of an audience of 200 that included Oslo's mayor and former mayor, the director of the Nobel Institute, journalists, students, and members of a generation of Norwegians who had experienced the Marshall Plan firsthand. The statue was donated by a committee led by Sigval Maartman-Moe, who made the first film about Marshall aid in Norway more than 50 years ago. Filmmaker Steinar Hybertsen recorded the unveiling for a new documentary film, to be released later this year. The embassy sponsored the making of the film, and has purchased 500 copies for distribution. A particularly distinguished guest at the ceremony was the 102-year old Haakon Lie, party secretary of the Labor Party during the reconstruction era, who spoke to Norwegian Public Television about the enormous impact of the Marshall Plan on Norway during the difficult post-war years.

## MACEDONIA: KIDS SOW SEEDS OF SUCCESS AT MULTI-ETHNIC PEACE CORPS CAMPS

Peace Corps volunteers have held camps for approximately 600 Macedonian youths this summer, including two camps focused on building leadership skills and inter-ethnic tolerance funded by the U.S. Embassy in Skopje's Democracy Commission. The National Leadership Camp, run in partnership with the Red Cross of Kavadarci, was a six-night residential camp for 100 boys from ages 13 to 17. The Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp, held in partnership with the Center for Inter-ethnic Dialogue, placed its participants in eight ethnically mixed groups to ensure the maximum opportunity for intercultural exchange and the development of friendships.



Boys participate in a team-building exercise at the National Leadership Camp, July 2008. [Peace Corps]

## BELARUS: BELARUSIAN STUDENTS LEND A HAND TO DISASTER RELIEF IN THE US



Belarusian YCO students hoist sandbags in a clean-up project at the University of Iowa following record floods, July 2008. [Shanley Pinchotti, American Councils]

With forest fires raging and rivers still over their banks, 45 Belarusian students got a hands-on view of how America responds to disasters. As participants in the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau's Youth Culture Orientation (YCO) program, the students traveled to Iowa City to view damage left by record floods and joined volunteers from the University of Iowa to clean up sandbags that protected campus buildings. In California, students were briefed on citizen participation in politics and how the state is responding to natural disasters as well as a budget crisis. Before heading to Washington, D.C. for a roundtable hosted by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State David Merkel, the group stopped in Chicago for a business module at the Federal Reserve Bank and saw how pork bellies and other commodities are traded at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Along the way, they managed stops at

Disney World and marched in 4th of July parades. The YCO program is the primary exchange with Belarusian youth at the high school level and continues despite current challenges in U.S.-Belarusian relations and the forced drawdown of staff at the U.S. Embassy in Minsk.

## FRANCE/ITALY: COUNTRY WESTERN PHILOSOPHER-POET KAREEM SALAAM BUILDS BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES

Egyptian-American country music singer Kareem Salama's thought-provoking lyrics express his interpretation of being a Muslim in Christian America, of being a spiritual person in a secular world, of holding onto your humanity in times of war. Salama made visits to France and Italy as part of a State Department-sponsored European concert tour. On France's National Day, July 14, Salama gave a free concert to a full house of country music fans at Billy Bob's Disneyland Resort Paris. Country music has grown in popularity in France in the past few years and the Disneyland Resort Paris is a key stage for any young country talent entering Europe's musical market. To conclude his program in France, Salama traveled to a community youth organization in an eastern suburb of Paris where he met with a group of French teens participating in a summer music session. Via translators from the U.S. Embassy in Paris, the children and Salama exchanged their lyrics and engaged in a discussion about issues such as violence in urban communities and family values. The teenagers confessed that Salama's music was much more interesting than they had expected. Salama then traveled to Italy where he charmed 300 music lovers at Rome's prestigious Villa Celimontana Jazz Festival with his soft-spoken yet powerful message about breaking down cultural and religious barriers. He urged the audience, which included the U.S. Embassy in Rome's Muslim contacts, not to allow prejudice to define their experiences in life.



Kareem Salama during his performance, July 20, 2008. [Monique Quesada, U.S. Embassy Rome]

## ESTONIA: ERIC JOHNSON SHARES AMERICAN FOOD AND CULTURE

Eric Johnson of the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn was featured in an extensive article in Russian-language *Postimees*. The article shared Johnson's recipe and baking advice for a strawberry-margarita cheesecake, a great dessert to celebrate U.S. Independence Day. Johnson has used food as a means of connecting with people and cultures across Estonia, including making hamburgers for press and cultural contacts, showcasing New York cheesecake at the largest centrally located grocery store in Tallinn, baking cookies on morning news and talk shows, contributing recipes for American favorites to the Estonian cooking journal *Oma Maits* ("Your Taste"), and teaching cooking classes at vocational schools in the cities of Kuressaare, Narva and Viljandi.

The *Postimees* article featuring Eric Johnson and his baking skills, July 5, 2008.



## ARMENIA/AZERBAIJAN/GEORGIA: JOURNALISTS FOR PEACE

Fulbright scholar Steven Youngblood worked with students from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to explore the role of journalists in conflict resolution in a workshop at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM) in Tbilisi. Youngblood used case studies to analyze the use of emotionally-charged language and bias in journalism, focusing on articles from South Caucasus newspapers. Students produced their own Peace Journalism Code of Conduct. One student wrote, “Considering the ongoing conflicts in the Caucasus region in general and on the territory of Georgia in particular, local journalists have a special role in conflict resolution. Our goal is to promote peace and help achieve reconciliation among conflict participants.” The students’ multimedia products can be found at: <http://captain.park.edu/digitalpirate/gipa.htm>. CSJMM is one of the schools of the Georgian Institute of Public Administration, an institution funded under the Department of State’s Freedom Support Act, and is attended by scholarship students from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Abkhazia.



Steven Youngblood with Peace Journalism Workshop participants, July 2008. [Tiko Tsomaia, CSJMM]

## GEORGIA: SECRETARY RICE PRAISES JAZZ PIANO PRODIGY



Secretary Rice with Georgian jazz prodigy Beka Gochiashvili, July 2008. [Irakli Gedenidze]

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called 12-year old Georgian piano marvel, Beka Gochiashvili, “one of the best jazz pianists I’ve heard anywhere,” in her remarks to President Saakashvili at the conclusion of her visit to Georgia. Beka was one of several Georgian artists who performed for the Secretary, an accomplished pianist herself. He recently returned to Georgia from an embassy-supported trip to interview at music conservatories in New York City and has been accepted with a generous scholarship to Juilliard’s pre-college program. In April, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi hosted two State Department-sponsored Cultural Envoys, jazz pianist Dan Tepfer and Joel Harrison of the American Pianists Association, who performed with Beka. The U.S. Embassy is working with the American Pianists Association, Georgian Government, and Georgia’s First Lady to identify additional scholarship opportunities for this young prodigy.

## TURKEY: CONSULATE GENERAL ISTANBUL WORKS TO HEAL WOUNDS OF TERRORIST ATTACK

The U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul held a memorial service in honor of the three policemen killed in a terrorist attack on July 9. During the service, the Turkish and American national anthems were played and the American flag was lowered to half staff where it remained for the rest of the day. U.S. Consul General Sharon Wiener praised the police officers for their courage in the line of duty, expressed her deepest condolences to the families of the three Turkish police officers killed and to their colleagues who were wounded in the attack, and emphasized that the U.S. was grateful for their sacrifice and service. Consul General Wiener also attended the Turkish memorial service for the three slain officers. She spoke to a crowd of reporters after the ceremony and her remarks were covered heavily by the press as a sign of respect to the officers. Later, Consul General Wiener visited Istinye State Hospital to thank the police officer and driver who sustained injuries in the attack, presenting the injured with bouquets of white lilies, symbolizing trust.



Consul General Wiener thanks injured policeman Osman Dagli for his bravery, July 2008. [Istanbul Emniyet Mudurlugu]

## KOSOVO: EMBASSY-SPONSORED COMPETITION SELECTS AN “ARTIST OF TOMORROW”

Six finalists out of over 30 young artists showed their best work in the sixth-annual “Artists of Tomorrow” competition co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, the Kosovo Gallery and the New York-based Foundation for Civil Society. The videos, installations, paintings and photography expressed current issues and obstacles facing Kosovo and its people. Karyn Posner-Mullen from the U.S. Embassy served on the three-person jury charged with selecting the winner. The award, a six-week arts residency in New York, went to Bekim Gllogu, whose photographs and sculptures addressed issues of poverty, homophobia and Kosovo’s transition after independence. In New York Gllogu will join artists from neighboring countries such as Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovakia, Albania and Bulgaria. Through this award, the artist will forge artistic ties with the United States and the region, thus strengthening the Kosovo arts scene and promoting regional integration.



“If You Did Not Have a Fiqa, You Will Not Have a Mercedes,” by Bekim Gllogu

## RUSSIA: FROM LONG ISLAND TO VLADIVOSTOK, WITH LOVE



The Long Island Youth Orchestra plays at the Philharmonic in Vladivostok as part of the "Music without Borders" project, July 12, 2008. [Evgheniya Diamantidi, U.S. Consulate Vladivostok]

The U.S. Consulate General in Vladivostok partnered with the Russian Far East branch of the New Eurasia Foundation to host the Long Island Youth Orchestra (LIYO) for ten days in Vladivostok. The project, "Music without Borders," was part of the LIYO's four-country tour (Japan, Russia, Korea, Hawaii) following a year of fundraising by the American youth, who support local charity events in each country they visit. The 75-piece youth orchestra played to a sold-out house at the Philharmonic, launching a series of youth outreach, community service, and charity events that will reach thousands of Russians and bring John Philip Sousa, Gershwin, and even Tchaikovsky to the Russian Far East doorstep. After enjoying day-long home stays with Russian families organized by the International Research and Exchanges Board, LIYO's string quartet and wind quintet gave a concert to 400 youth from around Russia at the Okean summer camp outside the city. The consulate made sure the program was a two-way exchange, giving young Americans the

opportunity to interact face-to-face with their Russian peers. Clips from the concert tour can be found on YouTube, and a photo gallery is posted on the consulate's Web site.

## BELARUS: MINSK ENJOYS NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC OF THE FOX TRIO

American composer, filmmaker, master percussionist, writer and arts educator Stacey Fox and her trio inspired Belarusians to bang the drums after a concert at the Philharmonic Hall in Minsk. The Fox Trio performance included the sound of the Native American big drum, traditional Inuit and Tibetan influences, as well as some rock and roll and modern musical elements. Stacey Fox and her musicians were the first ever American band to perform as a special guest at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Ambasovischa music festival sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Minsk and held at the ambassador’s residence. The festival provides a unique opportunity for up-and-coming rock and folk bands from various regions of Belarus to perform in the capital and to exchange their ideas with other musicians. During their stay in Belarus, the Fox Trio was also invited to a farmstead, where they played a jam session with well-known local folk musicians.

An inspired child bangs the drum following the Fox Trio concert during their stay in Belarus July 10-13, 2008. [Yuri Dudinski, U.S. Embassy Minsk]



## GERMANY: CHANCELLOR MERKEL AND FORMER PRESIDENT BUSH CELEBRATE EMBASSY OPENING

The U.S. Embassy in Berlin celebrated the historic return to its pre-WWII location next to the Brandenburg Gate on July 4th. Standing just yards away from where, in 1987, President Ronald Reagan called upon Soviet Premier Gorbachev to tear down the wall that divided Berlin, Germany and all of Europe, Chancellor Angela Merkel, former President George H.W. Bush, and Ambassador William R. Timken Jr. delivered remarks before 5,000 guests, hundreds of reporters, and a live national TV audience. Chancellor Merkel underscored the significance of the U.S. Embassy's return to the heart of Berlin as a living symbol of the German-American partnership, and emphasized the broad prospects for transatlantic cooperation to cope with new global challenges. As a tribute to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, a group of Airlift pilots proudly took part in the celebrations. Former President Bush, an ex-pilot, evoked an aviation term affirming that the conditions for German-American friendship are "CAVU -- ceiling and visibility unlimited."



Chancellor Merkel and George Bush on Pariser Platz, July 4, 2008. [John Self, U.S. Embassy Berlin]

## GERMANY: AMERIKAFEST A HUGE SUCCESS



Amerikafest 2008, a festival held on July 5th and organized by the Federation of German-American Clubs with support from the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, drew a huge crowd. More than 300,000 attended performances on a stage outside the U.S. Embassy and visited U.S.-oriented information booths and other attractions lining the street in both directions from the Brandenburg Gate. The event was full of diverse cultural presentations uniting American artists with German counterparts. Highpoints of the Amerikafest were dance performances by Ailey II and Dancing to Connect, both made possible by the U.S. Department of State.

Amerikafest 2008 attracted a huge and diverse crowd. [Nancy Rajczak, U.S. Embassy, Berlin]

## USNATO: MISSION BRINGS JOURNALISTS FACE TO FACE WITH NATO'S AFGHANISTAN WORK

Aiming to engage audiences in both NATO and non-NATO countries on a topic critical to the Alliance, the U.S. Mission to NATO led two groups of journalists to observe and report on the vital work ongoing in Afghanistan. These tours, coordinated with U.S. Embassy in Kabul and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), began with briefings at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and NATO headquarters in Belgium before heading to Afghanistan. While there, journalists talked to top NATO and Afghan leaders, including ISAF Commander General David McKiernan, and visited construction sites, police training centers, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF headquarters, and more. After the tours, which were the third and fourth ones led by the U.S. Mission to NATO this year, reporters completed stories in French paper *Le Monde* and German paper *Die Welt* on increased Tajikistan-Afghanistan trade, a three-part series in Norway's *Dagbladet*, Polish reporting on police training; and a lengthy analytical piece in Russia's *Gazeta Daily*.



A woman shows off her products in an inaugural agricultural fair in Kunduz, Afghanistan, June 21, 2008. [Sgt. 1st Class Reeba Critser, USNATO]

## KOSOVO: SUMMER CAMP BRINGS ALBANIANS, SERBS AND TURKS TOGETHER WITH ENGLISH

Twenty-two Albanian, Serb and Turkish students and four teachers spent a week near Bitola, Macedonia teaching and learning English. Sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Pristina and directed by English Language Fellow Molly Staeheli, the camp gave teachers new strategies for teaching inter-ethnic acceptance and understanding through English. While students played camp games with Macedonia Peace Corps Volunteers in the mornings, Staeheli lead intensive teaching workshops for their instructors. In the afternoons, the teacher's taught mixed-ethnic groups of students using new lessons and strategies they practiced in the morning. With English as their only common language, students quickly developed language skills to communicate with their new friends. Teachers came away with new tools and strategies, as well as a deeper understanding of their role in shaping the perceptions and prejudices of the next generation.



Students studied English in an idyllic classroom from July 20 to 27, 2008. [Laura Hochla, U.S. Embassy Pristina]

## DENMARK: STUDENTS EXPLORE GREENLAND

Thirteen students and educators from the U.S., Denmark and Greenland visited the Greenland Environmental Observatory at Summit (GEOSummit) research station, located atop the melting Greenland ice sheet. The



group studied ice sampling techniques and atmospheric research and saw how the support station operates. The trip is a youth spin-off of the U.S.-Denmark-Greenland Joint Committee, chaired for the U.S. by Ambassador to Denmark James Cain. The 109th National Guard Air Wing transported the group to National Science Foundation's Summit station via planes equipped for ski landings. The group returned to their academic institutions with an understanding of how the projects inform scientists - and ultimately, governments - about arctic and global conditions.

U.S., Greenland and Danish exchange students and faculty at the National Science Foundation's Summit Research Station located atop the Greenland ice sheet, July 2008. [Kathy Gorski, National Science Foundation Fellow]

## ROMANIA: EMBASSY HELPS PROMOTE SPORTS AMONG YOUTH

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Mark Taplin joined Romanian Olympic gold medal-winner Gabriela Szabo in a demonstration run to raise awareness among youth about participating in sports and the life lessons they provides. The 2,000-meter run at the Iolanda Balas Soter Stadium of the Romanian Athletic Federation was attended by children from sports clubs and several well-known Romanian Olympic athletes and gymnasts. The event, organized by the American Cultural Center, also allowed DCM Taplin to recognize Ms. Szabo's contribution to the April special edition of eJournal USA, "The Olympic Experience," in which she describes her winning moment at the 5,000-meter race in Sydney Olympics in 2000 and her long path to this victory. The event was part of the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest's initiative to support the Romanian athletic movement, especially the sport of track and field, in which the country has won Gold medals. Previously, the embassy held a series of conferences on tackling racism in sports.



Romanian Olympic athlete Gabriela Szabo (left) and Olympic gymnast Marius Urzica (right) join in a demonstration run with DCM Mark Taplin (center), July 21, 2008. [Ana-Maria Popa, U.S. Embassy Bucharest]

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