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JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE ANNOUNCE 2011 TOUR OF “THE RHYTHM ROAD: AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD”

Who/What:

Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announced today the lineup for the 2011-12 season of *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* program. With more than 100 musical groups auditioning for *The Rhythm Road*, the following bands were selected for their artistic integrity, musical ability, and educational skills. They are:

- Ari Roland Jazz Quartet (New York, jazz)
- Dennis Luxion/ Michael Raynor Quartet (Illinois, jazz)
- The Earth String Band (Massachusetts, bluegrass)
- Jed Levy Quartet (New York, jazz)
- Kate McGarry Quartet (New York, jazz)
- Legacy (New Jersey, urban/hip hop)
- The Melvin Williams Group (Mississippi, gospel)
- Mountain Quickstep (New York, bluegrass)
- Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life (Missouri, gospel)
- Paul Beaudry & Pathways (New York, jazz)

International tour activities will include public concerts, master classes, lecture-demonstrations, workshops, jam sessions, collaborations with local musicians, and media outreach.

Where/When:

Ensembles travel around the globe for approximately one month from May 2011 through February 2012. The program also offers free public performances in New York at Dizzy’s Club *Coca-Cola* at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, and in Washington, D.C. presented by National Geographic Live! at the Grosvenor Auditorium.

How:

For more information visit *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* at jalc.org/TheRoad, and exchanges.state.gov/cultural/rhythm.html, which include featured countries, bands, stories from the road, and more.

Background:

Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs produces an annual series of international tours for ten ensembles

performing jazz, urban, blues, bluegrass, country, gospel, hip hop and other American roots music to countries all over the world. Through performance, education, and person-to-person interaction, *The Rhythm Road* program encourages mutual respect and understanding. The program also incorporates free performances by each group at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York, and at The National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. Since 2005, 150 musicians from 39 ensembles have toured with *The Rhythm Road*, visiting over 100 countries on five continents.

Quotes:

"Jazz at Lincoln Center is delighted to send talented musicians and educators to the far reaches of the globe in the historic tradition of such musical alumni as Armstrong, Ellington, and Gillespie," said Adrian Ellis, Executive Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "In the spirit of our mission, the emphasis on education as well as performance leads to powerful cultural exchange and understanding for our audiences and musicians alike."

"*The Rhythm Road* builds on Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's vision of "smart power" diplomacy, which embraces the use of a full range of diplomatic tools – in this case music," said Ann Stock, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. "Music bridges language barriers and opens lines of communication. This program connects people to one another in both immediate and lasting ways."

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Ari Roland Jazz Quartet (New York, jazz)

Inspired by the jazz legends of the Golden Age, the Ari Roland Jazz Quartet performs music from that era as well as its own original compositions. In 2007, the quartet traveled to Russia and Central Asia on behalf of The Rhythm Road as musical ambassadors. In addition to its active touring schedule, this quartet runs international programs that bring young musicians from across the globe together to play jazz.

Dennis Luxion/ Michael Raynor Quartet (Illinois, jazz)

The Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet plays original, hard swinging jazz steeped in the Chicago tradition. Though each member draws from contemporary influences, the group convened on the city's south side, jamming with the legendary Von Freeman. Soaking up Freeman's expressive style of improvisation, the quartet credits him for influencing its high-energy and unique sound – a quality that Dennis Luxion/ Michael Raynor Quartet wishes to share with musicians and audiences worldwide.

The Earth String Band (Massachusetts, bluegrass)

The Earth String Band combines bluegrass with contemporary acoustic music, achieving synergy with soulful songwriting and musicianship. Fiery and improvisational, The Earth String Band creates pulsing earthy grooves and melodious

hooks that form a unique, infective vibe.

Jed Levy Quartet (New York, jazz)

The Jed Levy Quartet explores a wide variety of approaches to the modern jazz idiom based on each band member's unique professional experiences. Coming together as four friends with a passion for music, this quartet provides a colorful and uniquely American perspective on music. The Jed Levy Quartet has over 300 original works and arrangements of jazz standards.

Kate McGarry Quartet (New York, jazz)

The Kate McGarry Quartet is a bold and cohesive unit that embraces the freedom of the jazz tradition while pointing the genre towards a future that is as fresh and thrilling as its past. GRAMMY® Award nominee McGarry travelled to Romania, Montenegro, Greece, and Albania with The Rhythm Road in 2009.

Legacy (New Jersey, urban/hip-hop)

Legacy brings together three siblings – a drummer, spoken word artists, singer, MC, and rappers – who have been born and raised by different mothers together through music. The fourth member, a brother from a different father and mother, is a master bassist. Together, Legacy creates rhythms and music about faith, love, struggle and the pursuit of beauty in life and art.

The Melvin Williams Group (Mississippi, gospel)

GRAMMY® Award nominee Melvin Williams, a distinctive voice in music for over 49 years, together with his group, bridges the gap between traditional and contemporary gospel music. This ensemble infuses its music with gospel, soul, jazz, hip-hop mainstream, and classical selections. The Melvin Williams Group brings high-level energy and emotion-filled performances to all of its shows.

Mountain Quickstep (New York, bluegrass)

Based in upstate New York, Mountain Quickstep combines elements from the old-time, bluegrass and swing music of the Appalachian, Blue Ridge, and Smokey Mountains regions. Bringing lively fiddle tunes, lonesome folksongs, and fancy footwork, Mountain Quickstep performances feature a variety of instruments. When mixed with Appalachian clog dancing and 4-part vocal harmonies the group showcases the diversity of rural American music.

Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life (Missouri, gospel)

Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life is more than just a gospel group; they represent a new musical movement. These artists believe in the healing power of music, and aim to create music that is inspiring and life-changing. Collaborating with Band of Life, Oscar Williams jr. returns to The Rhythm Road in 2011 after touring Eastern Europe and Lebanon in 2010.

Paul Beaudry & Pathways (New York, jazz)

Paul Beaudry & Pathways' music is deeply rooted in the jazz and blues traditions, and is influenced by each musician's distinctive backgrounds and personal experiences. Rousing scat singing, soul-stirring melodies, exciting rhythms, and fiery instrumental improvisations are all part of the group's dynamic performances. Paul Beaudry & Pathways returns for its second tour with The Rhythm Road – in 2010, the ensemble toured South America.

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Jazz at Lincoln Center is dedicated to inspiring and growing audiences for jazz. With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of performance, education and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, a jazz hall of fame and concert series, weekly national radio programs, television broadcasts, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, jazz appreciation curriculum for students, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses, student and educator workshops and interactive websites. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Chairman Lisa Schiff, and Executive Director Adrian Ellis, Jazz at Lincoln Center produces thousands of events each season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. For more information, visit jalc.org

U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through a wide range of academic, cultural, private sector, professional, and sports exchange programs. Through its [Cultural Programs Division](#), the Bureau supports cultural exchanges that support U.S. foreign policy, foster America's artistic excellence, and demonstrate America's respect and appreciation for other cultures and traditions. The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program presents selected professional American performers on concert tours in countries with limited exposure to live American culture. For more information, visit exchanges.state.gov/cultural/rhythm.html.

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