

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: APRIL 29, 2011

**For High Resolution Photos:
[The Rhythm Road
Bands](#)**



***THE RHYTHM ROAD: AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD PROGRAM
ANNOUNCES
OSCAR WILLIAMS JR. AND THE BAND OF LIFE TOUR DATES
GOSPEL ENSEMBLE TO TRAVEL TO SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA
TO PROMOTE CULTURAL EXCHANGE***

Who/What:

Jazz at Lincoln Center and the **U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs** announced that the Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life will tour South and Central America with *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* program. The gospel group from St. Louis, Missouri, was selected from a pool of over 100 applicants to travel abroad and encourage mutual respect and understanding. International tour activities will include public concerts, master classes, lecture-demonstrations, workshops, jam sessions, collaborations with local musicians, and media outreach. Since 2005, 150 musicians from 39 ensembles have toured with the program, visiting over 100 countries on five continents.

As part of *The Rhythm Road*, Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life will also perform two concerts in the United States, in Washington, D.C. at the National Geographic

Society and in New York City at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center. Details to be released in upcoming months.

Where/When:

Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life will tour Colombia (May 17-21), Argentina (May 22-28), Chile (May 29-June 4), Ecuador (June 5-10), Guatemala (June 11-18).

**Dates and locations subject to change*

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.

For more information:

Anna Kukowski, Burson-Marsteller for Jazz at Lincoln Center, 212-614-4560, anna.kukowski@bm.com.

Talley Sergent, U.S. Department of State, 202-632-6043, SergentRT@state.gov.

- - -

Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life (St. Louis, Missouri) is an award-winning gospel ensemble with a spiritually refreshing sound that uplifts and intrigues audiences worldwide. The group combines an array of talents and styles which converge into a cutting edge melodic sound. Members of this ensemble have performed at the Vatican for the Pope, toured with international pop star Elisa, and performed with GRAMMY® winner Jason Mraz. Oscar Williams jr. and the Band of Life has also toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe including performances in Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, and most recently in the Czech Republic. In 2010, the group toured Eastern Europe and the Middle East with The Rhythm Road.

Oscar Williams jr. (Piano and Vocals) writes spiritual, uplifting melodies that speak to audiences. Williams' music offers antidotes to life's difficulties reminding audiences of the good things in life. He is inspired by a variety of sources, ranging from renowned musicians such as Wynton Marsalis, Elisa, and Erykah Badu to the enthusiasm of spectators tapping their feet and humming. He released *Unstoppable*, his first album, in 2005 through Aleho/Warner/Ryko Records. He has toured extensively throughout Jamaica, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, and Austria. Williams received a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Thelma Guyton (Vocals) began singing professionally at age nine. Her sound is a mixture of genres and styles fused in a melting pot of eclectic soul music. Guyton has been inspired by female artists such as Brandy and Kim Burrell, and now aspires to uplift young women through her own music. She has had the opportunity to write and work with artists such as Faith Evans, 112, Dream, Ne-Yo, and Jack Knight. At the age of 14, Guyton was a contestant on the popular television series *Showtime at the Apollo*, and by the age of 16 was signed by Bad Boy Entertainment as part of the Bad Boy Gospel Project.

Dorrian Neymour (Vocals) is a vocalist and teacher who has coached students in acting and dancing as well as various genres of music including gospel, pop,

Broadway/musical, and R&B over the last 16 years. She toured internationally with the Golden Gospel Singers to Austria, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain. Her theatre credits include lead character roles in several stage plays and she appeared as Dorothy in the gospel version of *The Wiz*, which she also wrote and directed. From 2005-2009 she was the Director of Worship and Assistant Minister of Music for Victorious Life Church, in Kansas City, Missouri. Neymour is an active recording artist and back-up singer with many artists including Barry Manilow, Asaph, Alex Ward, and Dello Thedford.

Tracy Smith (Vocals), born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, has incorporated gospel, jazz, opera, and country styles into her own timeless and creative style. She began singing at age three and is influenced by the music of Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, and Donnie McClurkin. Participating in various talent competitions, Smith was the Grand Prize winner in the “Christian Artist Talent Search” sponsored by the Inspirational Network, and a contestant on the fifth season of *American Idol*. Smith attended Florissant Valley Community College, where she studied music and music theory and received a certificate in business management.

- - -

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. The Bureau’s cultural exchanges 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.

#