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***THE RHYTHM ROAD: AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD PROGRAM
ANNOUNCES
THE MELVIN WILLIAMS GROUP TOUR DATES
GOSPEL ENSEMBLE TO TRAVEL TO RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE
TO PROMOTE CULTURAL EXCHANGE***

Who/What:

Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs announced today The Melvin Williams Group will tour Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Georgia with *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* program. The gospel group from Smithdale, Mississippi, was selected from a pool of more than 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*, The Melvin Williams Group 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:

The Melvin Williams Group will tour Russia (May 30-June 13), Azerbaijan (June 14-20), Turkmenistan (June 21-26), and Georgia (June 26-30).

**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:

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The Melvin Williams Group (Smithdale, Mississippi) creates a raw and high-energy sound that is uplifting and inspiring. GRAMMY® Award nominee Melvin Williams, and his group bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary gospel music. This ensemble infuses its music with gospel, soul, jazz, hip hop, and classical selections. The Melvin Williams Group delivers emotion filled performances in all of its shows. The group is inspired by the opportunity to share its passion for traditional gospel and other music to all audiences.

Melvin Williams (Vocals) has one of the most distinctive gospel voices in the music industry. For over 50 years, he has performed as part of the world renowned group, The Williams Brothers. Williams' older brothers performed as the famed gospel quartet The Jackson Southernaires, and in 1960 his father organized the younger siblings to form The Williams Brothers. The group has been nominated for six GRAMMY® Awards, and has shared the stage with talented artists including Al Green, Patti LaBelle, Steve Winwood, Chaka Khan, Stevie Wonder, and others. Williams combines gospel, soul, jazz, and hip hop in all his performances, bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary gospel music. Williams' self-penned "Cooling Water" remained on the Billboard charts for over 100 weeks and is one of the most popular requested songs by audiences nationwide.

Andre L. Tate (Vocals) has been singing and playing music for 25 years. Born in Houston, Texas, his music career started while singing with his family group, the Tate Family. Taught to play numerous instruments by his father, his professional career started when he joined the Wonderful Harmonizers, The Bolton Brothers and later The Williams Brothers. Tate has collaborated with Shirley Caesar, Kenny G, Cissy Houston, Stevie Wonder, Spanky Williams, Brandy, and other notable musicians. Tate's vocal contributions featured on two GRAMMY® Award nominations with The Williams Brothers and two Stellar Awards for Melvin Williams' duet and solo albums.

Bridget Fleury (Percussion, Piano & Guitar) grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, with a love of jazz, gospel, and contemporary music. For 20 years she has worked with jazz and gospel groups including The Ken Chaney Experience, the late Art Porter, The Williams Brothers, and Lee Williams. Fleury produced The Williams Brothers' "Still Here" music video and GRAMMY® Award nominated song, Melvin Williams' Stellar Award nominated "Another Blessing" music video, and the Melvin Williams live recordings *Crazy Like Love* and *Love Like Crazy*. Fleury also served as Executive Producer for Stellar Award and Soul Train Award nominated artists Tracy Worth and Leanne Faine through her independent record label, Serenity Entertainment. She owns an entertainment management firm called Bridget Fleury & Associates. Fleury

continues to collaborate with The Melvin Williams Group creating and delivering both traditional and global gospel music.

Castro Coleman (Guitarist and Vocals) has been playing music since the age of six. Throughout his career, Coleman has been a member of several bands, and each group has played a major role in forming his unique musical style. Influences include The Williams Brothers, Grace Cain, My “Paw Paw” Louis Coleman, Neo Soul, and BlackStreet. He has also collaborated with Texas Boyz, Neal Roberston, Stan Jones, Yolanda Adams, Rance Allen, and many more. He owns his own record label called Baby Boy Records and leads his quartet group Castro Coleman & Highly Favored. Coleman’s lead guitar collaborations have earned him two GRAMMY® Award nominations with The Williams Brothers and a Stellar Award nomination for Melvin Williams’ solo album.

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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. The Bureau’s 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.

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