

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: NOVEMBER 1, 2007

For More Information, Contact:

BRIDGET WILSON, Assistant, Public Relations, Jazz at Lincoln Center (212) 258.9868, bwilson@jalc.org
CATHERINE STEARNS, U.S. Department of State, (202) 203.5107, StearnsCL@state.gov

**THE RHYTHM ROAD: AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD
TOURS WEST AFRICA
featuring
DEVIN PHILLIPS & NEW ORLEANS STRAIGHT AHEAD**

November 25 - December 20, 2007



DEVIN PHILLIPS & NEW ORLEANS STRAIGHT AHEAD

WHO/WHAT: The band, **Devin Phillips & New Orleans Straight Ahead** comprised of **Devin Phillips** on saxophone, **Andrew Oliver** on piano, **Eric Gruber** on bass and **Mark DiFlorio** on drums, continues the 2007-2008 Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad season.

WHEN: November 25 - December 20, 2007*

WHERE: **SENEGAL:** (November 25-28); **SIERRA LEONE:** (November 29-December 4); **GUINEA:** (December 5-10); **REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** (December 11-14); **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** (December 15-20)*

*Dates and locations subject to change

HOW:

Please visit the **Jazz at Lincoln Center website** at www.jalc.org/TheRoad/index.html for more information on The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program. In addition, you can listen to music and stories about the program for free on **Jazz at Lincoln Center Radio** at <http://www.jalc.org/jazzcast/program.asp?programNumber=205>

BACKGROUND:

The program, produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is designed to foster cultural exchange with audiences worldwide. Between Fall 2007 and Spring 2008, six jazz quartets and four urban music ensembles will visit regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Participating bands were selected from a national pool of applicants in a competitive audition process.

International tour activities include public concerts, master classes, lecture-demonstrations, workshops, jam sessions, media outreach and collaborations with local musicians. The program also incorporates free performances by each quartet hosted by Jazz at Lincoln Center at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* in New York and at The National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C.

"Cultural diplomacy allows artists and audiences to share in a common experience that reaches beyond differences in culture, religion, language and generations and to connect as people without borders," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Professional and Cultural Exchanges Alina L. Romanowski.

Over the past two years, Jazz at Lincoln Center has produced 17 Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad tours visiting 120 cities, in 66 countries, on 5 continents.

“In the historic tradition of such musical alumni as Armstrong, Ellington, and Gillespie, these tours focus on diverse geographic audiences and the dynamic interaction born of music. The emphasis on education as well as performance leads to powerful exchange for our audiences and musicians alike,” said Susan John, Director of Touring for Jazz at Lincoln Center.

- - -

DEVIN PHILLIPS & NEW ORLEANS STRAIGHT AHEAD play modern jazz spiced with the rich musical traditions of New Orleans. Through their repertoire of standards, traditional songs and original works, the band members celebrate the unique musical heritage of the birthplace of jazz. Their debut CD, *Wade in the Water*, was released in December 2006.

Devin Phillips (saxophone) began playing the saxophone at age eight. He graduated with honors from The New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and went onto study with some of the city’s most renowned instrumentalists, including Clyde Kerr, Donald Byrd, Kent Jordan and Reggie Workman, among others. Phillips has performed at numerous jazz festivals in the United States. and abroad and earned a GRAMMY® nomination for his performance with Los Hombres Calientes on their *New Congo Square* album. A Hurricane Katrina evacuee, Phillips resides in Portland, Oregon, where he teaches and performs regularly.

Andrew Oliver (piano) began his studies in jazz performance at Loyola University but made a detour after Hurricane Katrina to Portland State University to complete his bachelor’s degree. He has studied privately with renowned pianists Randy Porter, Darrell Grant and Alan Nisbet and has performed with Maurice Brown, Dan Schulte, Glen Moore and Dick Titterington. Oliver has also performed at the Portland Jazz Festival and The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and has toured internationally with both the Loyola University Jazz Orchestra and Portland Youth Jazz Orchestra.

Eric Gruber (bass) began studying music at age six in Ashland, Oregon and eventually became the principal bassist for the All-City Orchestra. After stints at both the University of Northern Colorado and Whitworth College, he completed his studies with a B.A. in Music from Portland State University, where he was also an instructor for their Jazz In Schools Program. In 2000, Gruber won the bass solo competition at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival. He has toured domestically and internationally with various ensembles, including The Ronnie Mann Big Band, Spokane Jazz Orchestra, Civic Theatre Orchestra, Portland State University Symphony Orchestra and the Whitworth College Jazz ensemble.

Mark DiFlorio (drums) entered the world of music at age nine, originally playing the saxophone and flute. In high school he began playing drums under the mentorship and guidance of master drummers such as Johnny Vidacovich, Ricky Sebastian and Leon Anderson. DiFlorio received the Music Chair Award for excellence from the University of New Orleans, where he also earned a master’s degree in Music for Jazz Performance. DiFlorio has toured extensively in the United States. and Europe and has performed at festivals in Portland and New Orleans.

- - -

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, weekly national radio and television programs, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, a jazz appreciation curriculum for children, advanced training through the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, adult education courses and student and educator workshops. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce nearly 2,000 events during its 2007-08 season in its home in New York City, Frederick P. Rose Hall, and around the world. For more information, visit www.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 international educational and exchange programs. Through its Cultural Programs Division, the Bureau supports a variety of cultural exchanges programs 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 of jazz and urban music on concert tours in countries with limited exposure to live American culture. Further information about Cultural Programs of the U.S. Department of State is available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/culture/index.htm>.

- - -

For more information please visit <http://www.jalc.org/TheRoad/index.html>

- - -

The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad Program is made possible with underwriting support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State.

#