



***CEC ArtsLink Brings Five American Traditional Music Groups to Russia  
as Part of the U.S. Embassy's "American Seasons" Cultural Celebration***

March – April 2012

This spring the U.S. non-profit CEC ArtsLink, in collaboration with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress, will bring five American traditional music groups to Russia for the first time. With support from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, the unique concert series *Festival of Traditional American Music* will introduce Gospel, Cajun, Zydeco, Country, and Native American music to audiences who are largely unfamiliar with these genres in eleven cities throughout Russia. This concert series is part of the "American Seasons in Russia" cultural program under the auspices of U.S-Russia Bilateral Presidential Council.

The performers are true masters who have made significant contributions to the preservation and awareness of their specific cultural heritages. The Brotherhood Singers from Kentucky, R. Carlos Nakai Trio from Arizona, Louisiana's Christine Balfa and Balfa Toujours and Jeffrey Broussard et Ses Amis, and Wylie and the Wild West from Washington present a rich spectrum of American cultural life, showcase the exciting diversity of our artists and vitality of our communities. For Russian audiences familiar with American jazz, rock, hip hop, and pop music, this will be a new and intriguing opportunity to experience the masterpieces of traditional music from the United States.

In St. Petersburg, Wylie and the Wild West will be joined by a special guest Paul Zarzysky, a well-known cowboy poet, whose grandparents hail from western Russia. In a remarkable symmetry, Mr. Zarzysky's Russian debut comes two decades after he met the great Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko at an annual National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada. Mr. Zarzysky reminisced that Yevtushenko's muscular poetry and distinct recitation "took Elko by storm". His performance will be a tribute to that memorable occasion.

## About the performers:



### **Christine Balfa & Balfa Toujours Trio**

Led by *Christine Balfa*, daughter of the legendary Cajun fiddle ambassador *Dewey Balfa*, the group has taken generations of inspiration and created a vibrant sound all their own. Balfa Toujours cross many boundaries and perform in a wide array of styles, from rocking dancehalls to crowded festivals to informative concerts, without ever losing the “joie de vivre” that epitomizes their culture. It is for this ability to unite it all and keep the soul intact that the preeminent expert on Louisiana culture, Barry Ancelet, calls the band “the future of Cajun Music.”



### **Brotherhood Singers**

Based out of Covington, Kentucky, the Brotherhood Singers are among the very few remaining Quartet style groups that still perform in the old-school acappella fashion. The Singers, which consist of Eric Riley, Ric Jennings, Greg Page, Stace Darden, and Demetrius Davenport, specialize in the intricate and emotional four-part harmony “jubilee” style pioneered by such legendary groups as the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Golden Gate Quartet, the Soul Stirrers, and the Harptones of Cincinnati.



### **Jeffery Broussard et Ses Amins**

This group plays renditions of early Creole music, as played by legends Canray Fontenot on fiddle and Jeffery’s father, accordion player Delton Broussard, as well as Zydeco. One of the most influential accordionists and vocalists in modern Zydeco music, Jeffery Broussard continues to be one of the genre’s most dynamic performers. He has

continually been an innovator, beginning his career with traditional Creole Zydeco music playing drums in his father's band, Delton Broussard & The Lawtell Playboys, then moving on to develop the nouveau Zydeco sound in Zydeco Force, now returning to the more traditional Zydeco sound with his own band.



### **R. Carlos Nakai Trio**

R. Carlos Nakai is considered the premier performer of the Native American flute. The son of a Ute-Spanish-Celtic father and a Zuni-Athabaskan mother, Nakai has traveled the world, enlisted in the U.S. Navy, taught on the Navajo reservation, authored a book, and developed the first recognized tablature for the Native American flute. The Carlos Nakai, William Eaton & Will Clipman trio has been committed to improvisation – the fine art of crafting directly from the heart or through composing. The ancient melodies of Nakai's Native American cedar flutes are enveloped in the sophisticated harmonic and chordal timbres of Eaton's uniquely handcrafted multi-stringed instruments.



### **Wylie & the Wild West**

A true cowhand who owns a working ranch in the Big Sky country of eastern Washington, Wylie Gustafson happens to be one of the most expressive Country and Western vocalists around. Wylie and his crack Wild West band are just as authentic when it comes to music. Gustafson's songs, most of them originals, are worlds away from the sensitive ballads and slick country-pop that fills country radio these days. Buoyantly upbeat, he concentrates on *yippee-ki-yo-ki-ya* Western barroom music.

Wylie & the Wild West will be joined on stage by **Paul Zarzyski**, who calls himself a *Rodeo Poet*, a title earned from, and informed by, the 35 years he's spent *spurrin' the words wild across fenceless/open range of the blank page*—15 of those years in which he rode bareback broncos on various rodeo circuits, including the PRCA.

### **About the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC)**

The U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC) was created in 2009 by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev to increase cooperation between the U.S. and Russia. It marks a fresh start in relations between the two countries to contribute to future progress and shared prosperity. “American Seasons in Russia” is a year-long celebration of American arts and culture in Russia supported by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow under the auspices of the BPC. It is designed to bring a wide spectrum of cultural offerings to the Russian public in order to introduce them to contemporary artists from the United States to showcase the breadth and depth of American culture.

### **About CEC ArtsLink**

CEC ArtsLink promotes international communication and understanding through collaborative, innovative arts projects for mutual benefit. We support and produce programs that encourage the exchange of visual and performing artists and cultural managers in the United States and 32 countries overseas.

CEC ArtsLink was founded in 1962 to enable citizens of the United States and the Soviet Union to accomplish what their governments would not do—open doors, share ideas and build mutual trust. Our lasting partnerships abroad enable us to build and broaden our international reach, as today’s transformed and complex world makes citizen diplomacy more urgently necessary than ever.

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