



November 2008

Monthly Newsletter



*Soul Steps Gives a Workshop to Members of the Ballet Troupe of the National Theater.
Photo: Arbnor Haxhibeqiri, U.S. Embassy*

AFRICAN AMERICAN STEP DANCERS WOW KOSOVO

On November 21-26, the African American step dance company “Soul Steps” made its international debut in Pristina, introducing step dancing to the city’s public for the first time. Based in New York City, five members of the group performed during SKENA UP, Kosovo’s annual Students International Film and Theater Festival. The Festival shared the cost of bringing in the artists, who were sponsored under the “Performing Arts Initiative.”

The group danced its way into the hearts of the overflow crowd which attended “A New Step” at the National Theater for a late night show on November 24. The audience of over 300 people, many of them young, was wowed by the group’s rhythm and energy, cheering them with a standing ovation at the end of the night. Afterwards, many audience members crowded around them, enthralled by the new style of dance, eager to learn more.

During their stay in Pristina, “Soul Steps” also held workshops with the Ballet Troupe of Kosovo, which performs in the National Theater. Together, the ballet dancers and step dancers created a synergy that precluded any need for translation.

The group received wide media coverage. All major newspapers covered the performance, giving the group rave reviews, with some carrying full page spreads. “Soul Steps” also gave interviews to Radio Blue Sky and television station KTV.

POLITICAL & CULTURAL LEADERS FROM THE WORLD’S NEWEST DEMOCRACY CELEBRATE ELECTION NIGHT 2008 WITH THEIR AMERICAN FRIENDS



*Guests enjoy the Election Night festivities at the Grand Hotel in Pristina.
Photo: Arbnor Haxhibeqiri, U.S. Embassy*

On November 4th Ambassador Tina Kaidanow hosted a reception for over 300 guests at Pristina’s Grand Hotel on Election Night, inviting the guests to share in one of America’s enduring democratic traditions. A local jazz band entertained the guests, among whom included Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and many cabinet members, as well as the ICO head, Peter Feith, who also enjoyed large-screen projections of Election Day coverage, food and drink, and conversation with their hosts. Ambassador Kaidanow’s speech highlighted the process of American presidential elections, explaining the Electoral College and stressing the importance of both individual votes and state and local authority.

Broadcast and print media widely covered her speech, headlining Ambassador Kaidanow’s message that a new presidential administration would, without a doubt, continue its strong support for Kosovo’s democratic, economic and social institutions.



U.S. Jazz Pianist Uri Caine at Pristina's ODA Theater, November 2nd, 2008.
Photo: Laura Hochla, U.S. Embassy

U.S. PIANIST OPENS THE FOURTH-ANNUAL PRISTINA JAZZ FESTIVAL

Jazz pianist Uri Caine performed to a full house at the ODA Theater in Pristina on November 2nd, 2008, the first night of the week-long Pristina Jazz Festival. Based in New York City, Mr. Caine has recorded 19 CDs as a leader. His most recent is *The Othello Syndrome* (Winter and Winter 2008). He has made CDs featuring his jazz trio, his Bedrock Trio and the ensemble performing arrangements of Mahler, Wagner, Beethoven, Bach and Schumann. His solo performance in Pristina, Kosovo included arrangements of jazz, classical and popular music. After his performance, Mr. Caine held a jam session with local and regional artists. Mr. Caine's visit to Kosovo was sponsored by the U.S.

Embassy in Pristina as part of the Embassy's support for the local arts community and its ties with U.S. artists. To watch a clip of Mr. Caine's performance in Kosovo, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuaJRnVgsYY>