



Gene Aitken with Jazz Ensemble at Erbil's College of Fine Arts



Hiplomacy at Beijing School of Dance and Music

Welcome to American Voices' quarterly newsletter. It has been an active season with a one-month jazz and classical music program in Iraq, our first film project in the Philippines and hip-hop in Western China, Beijing and Japan. The months of May and June will find American Voices presenting Jazz Bridges with Mike Del Ferro in Togo, Senegal and Peru; CoCo York in Vietnam and Brunei; and Executive Director John Ferguson back in Iraq, Egypt and Switzerland. And our Hiplomacy program continues with a month-long program in Denmark. July will find us back in Iraq with the 2008 Unity Performing Arts Academy and August in Taiwan with the American Performing Arts Academy.

We hope you enjoy this more nimble newsletter system which should help keep all our members and project partners up to date on our recent activities, successes and challenges on a regular basis. News of our all our initiatives and current fundraising and much more is are now just a click away.

## FEATURED NEWS

### Executive Director's Update

John Ferguson has just returned from five weeks in the Middle East, where in Cairo he met with officials of the Cairo Conservatory and the Cairo Opera House. He was also in Beirut on his way into Iraq and met with future project partners of American Voices' planned summer music academy program for Lebanon in 2009. His internationally syndicated opinion piece on 'Hip Hop Diplomacy' continues to draw positive attention to American Voices, and he has recently made agreements with Bangkok-based filmmaker Ryan White and Soulbird Production company in New York to make a documentary about the upcoming Unity Youth Performing Arts Academy in Iraq in July. Read more about his recent month-long teaching and performing tour of Iraq, where American Voices was able to make contact and work with the artists and institutions of Kirkuk and Mosul.

<http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2008/Iraq/>

### Special Appeal for Iraq Project Funding Underway

Many thanks to our friends whose generosity during our first annual drive has brought in more than \$18,000 in donations. Please help us continue the momentum of our Iraq programming with a donation to the 2008 Unity Youth Performing Arts Academy. The vitality and scope of the performing arts in Iraq is a well-kept secret. That these institutions strive to keep their doors open and educate Iraqi youth is a testament to the tenacity of their belief in the arts as a unifying force in the current situation.

Please help us continue to support these institutions and ensembles with training, performance opportunities and donations of music scores and instruments in 2008. You can [make a donation via our Web site](#).

### Watch American Voices TV

We have continued to develop our YouTube Channel, where we now have 150 videos available online. There you will also find playlists devoted to special projects such as the 2007 Unity Academy in Iraq and Jazz Bridges in Western China.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/americanvoices>

### Follow our Blog

Now you can get even more timely updates about American Voices through John Ferguson's postings at <http://rovingpianist.blogspot.com/>



John Ferguson performs Frederic Rzewski's Winsboro Cotton Mill Blues in Suleimanya, Iraq in a concert attended by 350 and 4 television stations



Karwan, one of Erbil's budding young jazz musicians

### Unity Youth Performing Arts Academy 2008 Update

Astute readers of this newsletter will notice we have added one word to the name of our Academy program in Iraq – "Youth". We have shifted focus slightly to work primarily with young people between the ages of 8 and 25 with our music, theater and dance programs. The amount of raw talent in Iraq is mind-boggling and that this talent has gone undeveloped for some many years due to conflict and isolation is what we seek to address. This year we are excited to bring youth from the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk into the fold as well as to expand our program to an additional academy in the city of Suleimanya. There, we will work closely with the local city and regional government to train more than 200 youth in the city's new concert hall complex.

View [videos](#) and [photos](#) from the 2007 Unity Academy.

### Still Going Strong in Iraq

Over a one-month period, Dr. Gene Aitken and John Ferguson worked with more than 300 students at three different institutions from Northern Iraq and Kirkuk. Gene coordinated a huge shipment of donated instruments, scores and materials ranging from new saxophones to methods, oboe reeds and music stands, which were distributed directly to students, young professional players and institutions according to need. Our three concerts were broadcast throughout the region on local television and enthusiastically received by large audiences hungry for more visits from the outside world...

[Read more](#)

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### Hiplomacy

Hip Hop dance instructors and performers, Michael Parks Masterson, Quae Simpson and Brian Jones toured Japan and Urumchi and Beijing, China in March. Though the program was often in flux due to the unrest in Tibet, they did manage to reach a significant number of ethnic Uighur youth with their message of Hiplomacy. Read more [http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2008/china/projectpage\\_view](http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2008/china/projectpage_view)

### Film

In our first ever collaboration with the Mayme Clayton Center and Library in Los Angeles, American Voices presented a Black History Month film festival at the University of the Philippines in Manila. Read more at [http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2008/Philippines/projectpage\\_view](http://www.americanvoices.org/projects/2008/Philippines/projectpage_view)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

2008 continues to be an exciting season!

- **Togo and Senegal:** Mike Del Ferro is currently on tour in Togo and Senegal for American Voices in a Jazz Bridges program with traditional and pop musicians.
- **Denmark:** B-boy Isaac Barron and hip-hop dance specialist Rosie Pichon return to work with immigrant communities in Denmark
- **Vietnam and Brunei:** Jazz and blues vocalist CoCo York will team with Vietnam's leading jazz musician, Tran Manh Tuan, for concerts at the Hue Festival, Saigon Conservatory and the Brunei Concert Society.
- **Iraq:** 2008 Unity Youth Performing Arts Academy
- **Taiwan:** The American Performing Arts Academy will be in Taipei August 10 - 23, 2008 and will feature an American piano academy, hip-hop dance workshops and musical theater workshops centering on Rent and Guys and Dolls. More than 100 Taiwanese and international participants are expected. [Read more](#)
- **Turkey:** Chevron has just announced that it will support the production of a Broadway revue in Adana which will then tour the central and eastern regions of Turkey.

For more information about our programs or to make a donation, contact us at:

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Hip Hop Dance on the Silk Road in Urumchi, W. China

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