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[The Rhythm Road Program
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***THE RHYTHM ROAD: AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD PROGRAM
ANNOUNCES
DENNIS LUXION / MICHAEL RAYNOR QUARTET TOUR DATES
JAZZ ENSEMBLE TO TRAVEL TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
TO PROMOTE CULTURAL EXCHANGE***

Who/What:

Jazz at Lincoln Center and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announced today Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet will tour Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa with *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* program. The Jazz group from Chicago, Illinois was selected from applications by more than 100 ensembles 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, 172 musicians from 44 ensembles have toured with the program, visiting over 110 countries on five continents.

As part of *The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad* program, Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet will also perform two concerts in the United States. In Washington, D.C., National Geographic Live! will present the first concert on February 23, 2012 at 6:00pm at the Grosvenor Auditorium, 1600 M St. NW. Jazz at Lincoln Center will present the second concert in New York City on February 25, 2012

at 12:30pm at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Where/When:

Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet will tour

Malawi (Jan. 21 - 27), Zimbabwe (Jan. 27 - Feb. 1), South Africa (Feb.1 - 9) and Angola (Feb. 9 - 14).

**Dates and locations subject to change*

U.S. Concert Dates:

- Washington, D.C.: February 23, 2012 at 6pm at the Grosvenor Auditorium, 1600 M St. NW
- New York City: February 25, 2012 at 12:30pm at Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola* at Frederick P. Rose Hall, home of Jazz at Lincoln Center

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 Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet (Chicago, Illinois) plays original, hard-swinging jazz. The group came together to create music that encompasses a wide range of styles based on the jazz tradition. The legacy of the legendary Chicago-based tenor saxophonist, Von Freeman, is especially influential on the ensemble's expressive style of improvisation. From introspective solo explorations to a powerful group dynamic, The Dennis Luxion / Michael Raynor Quartet's performances encompass the breadth of human expression. Sharing music with a broad range of audiences and collaborating with local musicians during travels fosters the group's sense of inspiration.

Dennis Luxion (Piano) is a jazz pianist, composer and educator. He currently serves on the faculty of Columbia College Chicago and is an active member of the Chicago jazz scene. He performs as a band leader with his own trio and quintet and as a sideman with numerous other projects. While living and studying in Europe, Luxion collaborated with the legendary Chet Baker and was featured on many recordings, in television appearances and on tours. Since returning to Chicago in 1985, he has worked with some of Chicago's greatest jazz musicians, such as Von Freeman, and international artists such as Bill Frisell and Lee Konitz. He also continues to compose and arrange music for various ensembles and mediums.

Michael Raynor (Drums) has been immersed in the Chicago jazz scene since 1988, working with, among others, Von Freeman, Ryan Cohen, and Steve Coleman. Raynor's collaboration with Kurt Elling earned two GRAMMY® nominations for

Elling's recordings on the Blue Note Label. In his work with the graduate jazz program at Roosevelt University and his own private studio, he has displayed dedication to teaching and supporting young jazz talents. In addition, Raynor spent three years working with children in Chicago area schools through the city's Urban Gateways program. In 2004, he toured Southeast Asia as a Jazz Ambassador with the Chicago Jazz Quartet. Raynor and pianist Dennis Luxion are currently collaborating on a new recording project.

Jeff Pedraz (Bass) is a Philadelphia native and a bassist, composer, and educator. He is an accomplished musician who possesses virtuosity and versatility on both the double bass and electric bass and has worked in an array of musical genres ranging from traditional orchestral to modern genres. Pedraz received much of his training as a jazz musician in the mid 1990's at Ortlieb's Jazzhaus in Philadelphia where he had a chance to play with and learn from some of the best musicians of the time. In 2003, Pedraz joined the legendary Pat Martino's quintet and toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He has performed in venues such as Birdland and The Blue Note, and has appeared in many jazz festivals throughout North America. Pedraz holds a bachelor's degree in Music Education from Temple University, and a master's degree in Jazz Studies from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Greg Ward (Saxophone) is a Chicago saxophonist and composer now based in New York City. His diverse musical interests have led him to explore the world of classical and crossover music both as a composer and performer. In addition to leading his two bands, Fitted Shards and The Greg Ward Sextet, Ward recently recorded with popular artist Lupe Fiasco, received a commission from the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra, and curates the Wednesday night jam sessions at The Velvet Lounge. In 2010 Ward recorded and released his debut CD, *South Side Story*, which focuses on an exploration of contrasting genres and sounds.

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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, 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 and classes, 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 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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