

## Perm, Russia (Summer 2006)

It may come as a surprise to many to learn that Louisville has a sister. How come we haven't seen her? Well, she lives quite a ways away and is actually Russian born. You may also be surprised to find that she is not our only sister. Louisville has an impressive diversity of sisters summing a grand total of 8 and including: La Plata, Argentina; Quito, Ecuador; Mainz, Germany; Montpellier, France; Tamale, Ghana; **Perm, Russia**; Jiujiang, China; and Leeds, United Kingdom.

Our Sister Cities relationships are part of diverse program called Sister Cities International. A brief history of the program is as follows:

The post World-War II atmosphere proved to be an optimal time for increased international relations. In a September conference on citizen diplomacy in 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed a people-to-people program between the United States and other nations. The main goal of the program was to promote peace, mutual respect, and understanding from the ground up utilizing municipal associations as opposed to the more conventional top down methods of international diplomacy. This plan also allowed smaller organized groups and businesses to participate as well. The proposal was widely accepted and federally backed to help drive the plan into action. Out of this original germ, the citizen diplomacy program slowly developed into the Sister Cities Program (Sister Cities International, which was at the time also called the Town Affiliation Association of the U.S.) that we know today (c.1967).

The Sister City relationship between Perm and Louisville originated between a budding affiliation between the Professor of History at University of Louisville, Dr. Bruce Adams and Professor of Physics at the University of Perm, Dr. Victor Henner. Surprisingly, the two cities have many common ties. Louisville is dubbed as the 13<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States, while Perm is currently the 16<sup>th</sup> largest city in the Russian Federation (by population). Both cities are cultural centers, located by rivers (Ohio and Kama), and home to a number of education facilities. In 1994, the city of Perm was officially recognized as Louisville's new Sister!! Belated Congratulations!! Perm is located on the western slope of the Ural Mountains and is about 800 miles east/south of Moscow. It was founded in 1568 (known as the village Lagoshikha).

In a recent effort to further Perm's international associations, Perm University decided to create an international arts festival. Duly dubbed the "PERM EUROPE International University Festival", the 1<sup>st</sup> of the annual occurring festival was held during the summer of 2006. Since the city-to-city relationship was firmly rooted in the two Universities, Perm University invited a representation from the University of Louisville. Being mainly devoted to the performing arts, a jazz combo and a small theatre group were chosen to perform during the week-long festivities. The University of Louisville also sent three Russian Language students to spend an extended amount of time in Perm, taking intensive Russian language courses and giving them hands-on opportunities to utilize their skills with Russian natives.

The jazz combo consisted of four University of Louisville jazz students, Luke Barker (tenor sax), Jacob Goran (alto sax), Jonathanathan Epley (guitar), and Natalie Boeyink (bass) and two Russian musicians, Natasha Smirnova (piano) and a different drummer (depending on the city) David, Sasha, and Andrey. The mixture of ethnic backgrounds was not only representative of the Sister city bond, but also part of another growing relationship between the University of Louisville Jazz Department and the Open World Project, spearheaded by director of Jazz Studies, Mike Tracy. The Project, which also involved the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Arts, provided Russian Jazz musicians with an opportunity to spend time at Louisville learning under the faculty at the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program. At the end of their tenure, the Russian jazz artists collaborated with both students and faculty from the University of Louisville Jazz Studies Program to record a CD as documentation of their musical experiences and exchanges. These earlier connections, from the Open World Project, provided a clear opportunity for the Russian jazz musicians and the University of Louisville jazz musicians to work together again when the invitation came from Perm. The connection also provided the group of musicians with opportunities to spend time in more than just the city of Perm. Concerts and were also set-up in both Moscow and St. Petersburg Below is a small documentation of the jazz group's experiences from their visit to Russia:



(From left to right: Natasha (Russian), Jonathan Epley, Jacob Goran, Luke Barker, Natalie Boeyink, David (Russian))

The above picture was taken during the group's stay in Moscow. On this particular night we were granted the honor of playing at one Russia's most esteemed jazz clubs, Le Club- a previous venue for jazz greats such as Wynton Marsalis, Joe Lovano, and Kenny

Garrett. During our stay in Moscow, we played at three popular Jazz clubs: Jazz Town, Le Club, and another miscellaneous venue. The reception to our music was positive everywhere in Russia as they have a high level of appreciation for ‘American’ Jazz. As mentioned previously, two or three members of the jazz group (depending on the location) were Russian. Because of this, there was virtually no rehearsal time. In turn, the material performed each night was determined 30 minutes prior to the concert and consisted of tunes that each of the band members already knew. In spite of the spontaneity of our performances, each one was extremely successful and was well received.



(From left to right: Jacob Goran, Luke Barker, Natalie Boeyink, Natasha, Jonathan Epley)

This photo was taken during the second leg of our trip in our sister city, Perm. As mentioned previously, we were part of an international arts festival hosted by the University of Perm. We performed nearly every night and were treated like celebrities each time. On this occasion, the participants of the festival were invited to take a day cruise on the river that runs through the city. We were set up on top of the boat in the space seen above. Again, it was amazing to witness the level of appreciation that the Russians have for the arts, as we were constantly bombarded with attention and praise that we simply do not receive in the US. In addition to our performances, we would often be asked to do interviews for local news stations and radio broadcasts. I think it would be a safe bet to say that our group enjoyed the stay in Perm more than any other part of the trip.





(From left to right: Jonathan Epley, Sasha (Russian), Luke Barker, Jacob Goran)

Possibly the most ‘Americanized’ city in Russia that we visited was St. Petersburg. It is a gorgeous city with vast stretches of exquisite architecture and historical landmarks. Without a doubt, St. Petersburg seemed to be the most colorful city we encountered during our visit. We visited the Hermitage as well as other significant landmarks during our five-day stay. For Americans, this city was the most tourist friendly. This photo was taken during our performance at the JFC (popular jazz club in St. Petersburg). It was one of two performances in St. Petersburg, and by our accounts, was probably the most proficient night of them all from a musical standpoint. Unfortunately, Natalie was not with us in St. Petersburg, so Sasha, Natasha’s boyfriend, filled in on bass. Both Sasha and Natasha were instrumental and in many ways vital to our successful navigation of Russia. Both spoke decent English and helped us spear through our cultural differences.





After a jazz jam session in Moscow, a couple of the local musicians took the group to visit the Red Square (which is beautifully lit at night).



The building pictured here was part of an old Russian village. Many of the people in the village worked on extracting and purifying salt from a local lake. Not a single nail was used on the house. All the pieces were designed to naturally fit together.



Visiting Perm's surrounding area. Behind the group is the local lake from which salt was extracted.





During the International University Festival in Perm, Jacob Goran was given a chance to perform with one of the vocalists from the University of Moscow.



We were lucky enough to fly first class from Washington, D.C. all the way to Moscow, Russia. In first class, we had a flat screen monitor that gave us our coordinates at all times and personal DVD players to watch movies during the trip. It was easy to sleep in the comfortable chairs as well. There were almost a dozen different ways to move the seats for maximum comfort.





The food on the plane was a little different than the normal affair. It included raw salmon and fish eggs as well as fruit crumpets. Everywhere we ate in Russia had smaller portion sizes than what we are accustomed to in the US. Some of us had to alter our eating and drinking habits in order to keep meals at an affordable price.

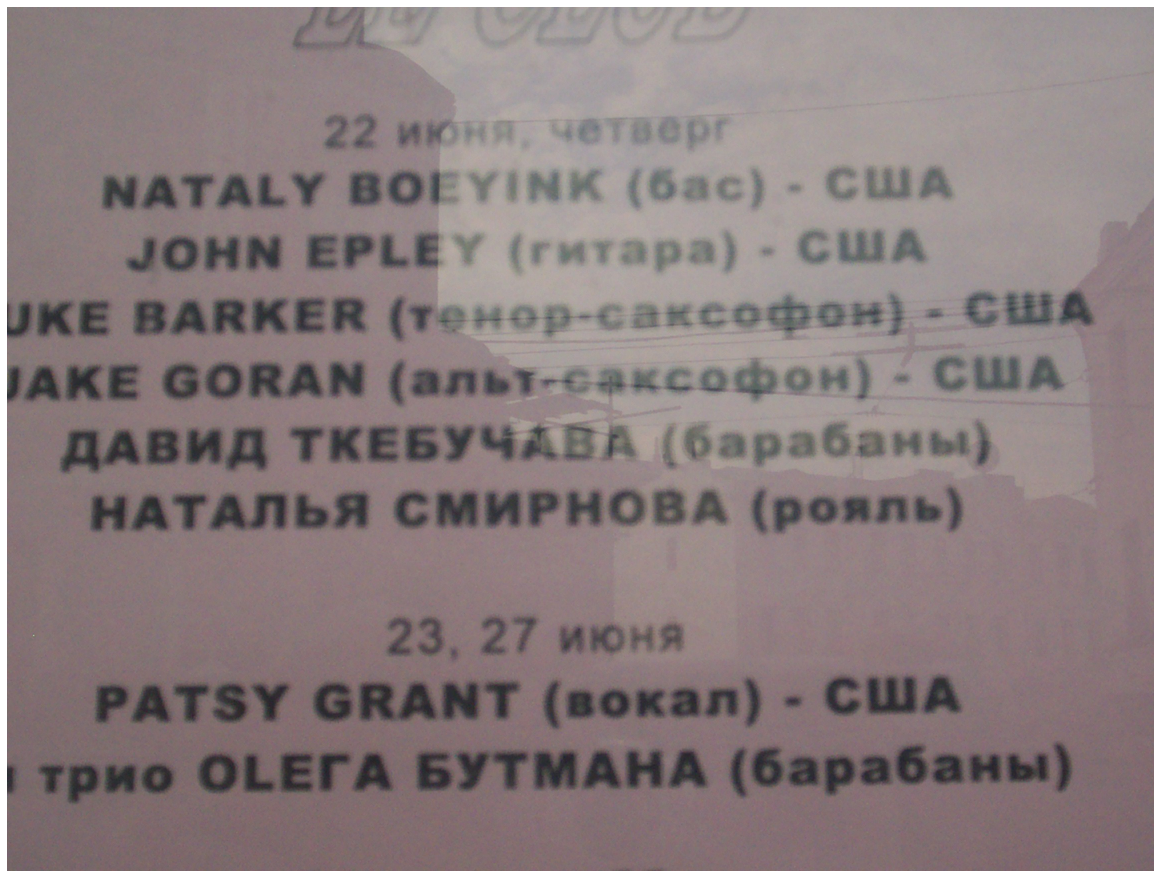


We stayed in a hostel while in Moscow. It was a little snug to share with another person, but it felt good just to lie down on a bed after being in a plane for so long.

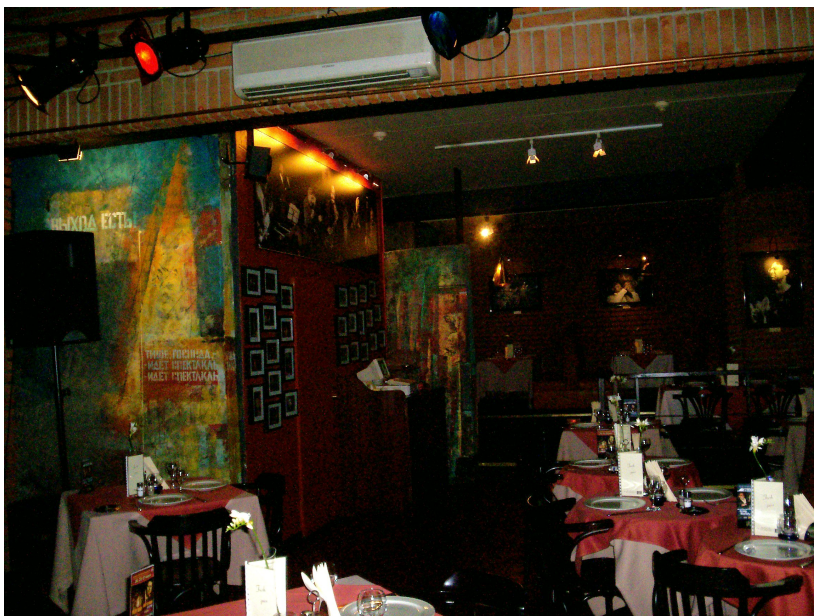


Moscow was our first stop in our Russian experience. It is very spread out city such as Los Angeles, but has an intricate metro system similar to that of New York City. Overall, the city of Moscow was very impressive, if not a bit intimidating.





Here is our group listed on a billboard promoting our gig at Le Club in Moscow. We were greeted with open arms each time we performed.





Another picture of “Le Club” in Moscow. It is the equivalent of the Blue Note or the Village Vanguard in New York. There were also several great jam sessions at other clubs in Moscow, and this gave us a chance to hear some great players from the area.



The JFC Jazz Club is from more of the underground scene in St. Petersburg. We got a great response from the crowd. It was a small venue but made for a very intimate setting. While in St. Petersburg we also played on a cruise ship that toured the city.