



**Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Louise V. Oliver,
Permanent Delegate of the United States of America**

**Blues Concert:
Cephas and Wiggins, A Traditional Night of American Music
Hotel de Talleyrand
April 28, 2004**

Background: On April 28, Ambassador Oliver hosted an evening of traditional Blues music for UNESCO Executive Board members and their permanent delegates. The program featured U.S. musicians John Cephas and Phil Wiggins. This was the first U.S. Mission organized cultural event since our return as a Member State to UNESCO in October 2003. The performance was made possible with assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Excellencies Distinguished Colleagues Fellow Music-lovers Welcome!!!

In almost every culture, there are rites of passage that mark the transitions that occur when one moves from one stage of life to another. In the culture of UNESCO, that rite of passage is experiencing one's first Executive Board meeting. Having survived that experience, I now feel as though I am truly a member of the UNESCO family.

Tonight I am pleased that so many members of the UNESCO family have joined me and the rest of the U.S. UNESCO Mission for an evening of traditional American music. We can not think of a better way to celebrate the end of a very successful Executive Board meeting.

Last night I was here in this magnificent Hotel de Talleyrand for the unveiling of the statue of Madame de Pompadour that stands behind me. It is an exact copy of the original statue that stood in that niche.

This Hotel was built between 1767 and 1769 for the Count de Saint-Florentin, a friend and advisor to Louis XV. After passing through the hands of various owners, including Napoleon's foreign minister, Charles-Maurice, de Talleyrand-Perigord, it was purchased by Baron James Mayer de Rothschild.

One of the speakers for last night's event was Baron Guy de Rothschild, who had grown up in this house. Now 95 years old, he entertained us by telling stories about his childhood. Tonight, in these same beautiful rooms, we are going to be entertained by two of America's finest blues musicians, John Cephas and Phil Wiggins.

"Bowling Green John Cephas is an extraordinary guitarist and singer who received the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship in 1989. He serves on the National Council for the Traditional Arts and is a founder of the Washington DC Blues Society.

John Cephas is accompanied by "Harmonica" Phil Wiggins, known for his genius in improvising on the harmonica. Phil Wiggins began his musical career with some of Washington's leading blues artists, and developed his harmonica sound by listening to piano and horn players. The music they play together is rooted in the traditions of America's Piedmont region, which is in the southeastern part of the United States. Known as the East Coast Piedmont style of Blues, it has had a major influence on the development of American country music.

It is one of the most diverse styles of blues, incorporating other genres like ragtime, spirituals, and rock-and-roll. Most important of all, this music tells the story of America's heartland in the 20th century in a dynamic and powerful way.

And now I want to take a moment to thank our cosponsors for tonight's program, the National Endowment for the Arts. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the official arts agency of the U.S. government, and the largest contributor to the non-profit arts sector in the United States. Through its grants, programs, and public and private partnerships, the NEA supports traditional and folk artists, jazz musicians, creative writers, poets and translators.

One last word about the program. John and Phil may, or may not, play everything that is written down in your programs. They may decide to play something different. It depends on their mood, and our response.

When they are finished, you will have an opportunity to talk with them at the reception--which should be interesting, and perhaps useful if you feel as though you have had enough of UNESCO and want to try a career in music.

The reception is being held in the Salon Nobles. You will need to exit this room at the front, or at the back of the second room. We will have people at the doors to help show you the way. Again, thank you for coming, and for honoring us with your presence.

In addition to representing many countries from around the world, you represent many languages, which, sadly, I can not understand. Fortunately for all of us, music is the international language that we can all understand. However, before we turn to that language, I would like to ask my associate, Nilse Ryman, to deliver my remarks in French for the benefit of those of you who are as impaired in English as I am in French. Thank you Nilse.

And now, for a little good old-fashioned American-style East Coast Piedmont Blues, I give you John Cephas and Phil Wiggins!