CEC ArtsLink’s endurance for 50 years bears witness to elemental human characteristics. Begun by an idealistic dreamer who envisioned a global stand-down from arms, CEC ArtsLink today works to achieve international understanding through arts projects that unite communities and cultures. That the region with which we work has expanded recently from only those of former Soviet influence to include Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey confirms the sad constant of global conflict. Yet, in the face of new polarizations, persistent idealism lives on in CEC ArtsLink’s firm belief—borne out now by 50 years of evidence of the most thrilling kind—in the endless, creative, positive, and collaborative possibilities of art.

When I began at CEC International Partners—as it was known 15 years ago, the organization was housed on 31st Street in a district jammed with luggage and tiara wholesalers. The office’s undistinguished interiors within an awkward floor plan placed the arts section at a considerable distance from the environmental program—the other main activity. In time I learned about CEC’s EcoBridge program and its significant work undoing the toxic damage of the arms race. I also heard about the groundbreaking Glasnost Film Festival as well as the Billy Joel tour to Russia. Working with intelligent, learned staff—many of whom had emigrated from Soviet space—I had the good fortune to absorb CEC’s history along with contemporary political history beyond the trends in art history with which I was more familiar.
I also learned of the steadfast supporters without whom this 50-year celebration could not be. Board members by the dozens have given thought, time, and financial support—none more than our beloved Jane Lombard. I saw how private foundation support informed important programmatic shifts and was awed by the Trust for Mutual Understanding’s sustained and sustaining commitment, which brought the regions formerly isolated by the Iron Curtain into ongoing, open, and balanced conversation with the US. Likewise, I was fortunate to experience and marvel at the network of contemporary art centers that Open Society Institute created.

I grasped too that without the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Christensen Foundation we would not have been able to grow our current strong network in Central Asia; likewise, without the encouragement of the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation we could not embark on our recent expansions. And finally, I saw how instrumental the National Endowment for the Arts’ steadfast vision and support has been to the creation and maintenance of an internationally unique vehicle for cultural conversation—the ArtsLink Awards.

Creative people such as Stephen D. James, Grant Pendill, Lea Freid, Mary Shea, Jennifer Adibi, Masha Pyshkina, and especially Michael Brainerd, with whom I worked for many years, established the trajectory for CEC ArtsLink’s work. Current staff members Zhenia Stadnik, Susan Katz, Anastasia Tolstaya, Tamalyn Miller, Maxim Tumenev, and Alisa Besher enthusiastically maintain the momentum. But certainly the most resounding acknowledgment and loud hurrah must go to artists throughout the world, for they provide us all the great human through-line and our best hope.
Kuponi (coupons), by Belgrade collective Škart, 1995. Škart’s members Djordje Balmazović and Dragan Protić were 1998 ArtsLink Fellows.
Harnessing the Fear of the Cold War MADness

It’s the end of 1961. The Berlin Wall goes up in just 18 hot August days, permanently demarcating Europe and drastically altering the relations between West and East from cold to hot. Tensions rise even higher on October 20 as the Soviets break a three-year nuclear-testing moratorium by detonating a 58-megaton yield hydrogen bomb over Novaya Zemlya Archipelago. The bomb is known as the AN602 and given the nickname “Tsar Bomba,” an ironic reference to the Tsar Bell and the Tsar Cannon, two other massive displays of Russia’s former imperial greatness and the world’s largest objects of their kind. This watershed event in the history of the Cold War, annotated in the CIA annals with its typical cryptonym as “JOE 111,” remains the largest man-made explosion on record.

Back in America, Barbie gets a boyfriend as Ken is introduced by Mattel to its young marketing targets who, along with their parents, continue to play and practice another popular game of the time—“duck and cover.” The threat of mutual assured destruction (MAD)
in conjunction with the vast nuclear arsenals creates a very real sense of nuclear dread. The era of fallout shelters, civil defense drills, and survival kits follows.

World affairs become further complicated just before the year is over; on December 11, the first American helicopters arrive in Saigon along with 400 US personnel. A new, hot war begins to boil.

Meanwhile, an advertising man in New York by the name of Stephen D. James quits his persuasion business job, goes to Grand Central Station and rents a post office box. PO Box 2737 becomes a repository for ideas from his fellow citizens on how to preserve peace and prevent a nuclear catastrophe.

James uses his innate Madison Avenue power to propose, in numerous mailings to editors, columnists, television, and radio producers, government officials and others, that the Soviet and American governments establish a program in which millions of volunteer “peace hostages” from each country spend anywhere from six to 24 months living and working in the opposing country. James’ goal was that volunteers would advance the cause of peace by slipping though the Iron Curtain into the everyday lives of their enemies.
The Talk of the Town

WE have a perennial admiration for people who think up fresh approaches to knotty problems, so it is with deep respect that we introduce you to Mr. Stephen D. James, who has applied himself to the particularly knotty problem of how to prevent nuclear war, and whose fresh and disarmingly simple approach consists of having rented Post Office Box 2737, Grand Central Station, at which address he invites correspondence from anyone with an idea for preserving peace. Mr. James is a freckled and bespectacled advertising copywriter in his late thirties, with a shock of rubiginous hair, an earnest manner, and a profound belief in the ability of man to surmount any difficulties that he himself has created. “I welcome all ideas for peace, no matter how far out or offbeat they may seem,” he told us the other afternoon when we accompanied him on his daily trip to the post office. “Any solution to the nuclear threat will probably seem as impossible at first blush as the bomb itself did. Why, you might even say that the first test of such a solution will be the difficulty of recognizing its feasibility.”

Mr. James called for his mail at a grilled window, stuffed it into an already overstuffed Manila envelope, and then led us across Lexington Avenue to a Horn & Hardart Automat, where, between sips of coffee, he sorted his latest batch of letters and put together for us the story of how he had become interested in peace work. “Things began to jell last November, when I was struck by the notion of exchanging peace hostages with the Soviet Union on a large scale,” he said. “Having no foundation or organization behind me, I soon found out, of course, that to conceive an idea is one thing and to implement it is quite another, and this, in turn, caused me to reflect that there were probably thousands of people in the United States who had suggestions about how to prevent a nuclear catastrophe but no way of bringing them to official attention. So, in the hope of tapping this vast source of creative thinking, I rented the mailbox and embarked upon a campaign of writing letters to editors, columnists, radio and television producers, heads of peace-action groups, and everyone else I could think of who might help me communicate with the public. In the letters, I proposed to screen all the ideas sent to me and to send those that had any chance of practical application on to appropriate individuals and government agencies for action. I also included a description of my own peace-hostage-exchange plan, as an example of the type of idea I was seeking. As a result of the exposure and publicity that my letters occasioned, the ideas for Peace program, as I have named it, and my peace-hostage-exchange plan have caught on simultaneously. My mail reflects such great interest in both that I hardly know which to take up first.”

We suggested that at the moment Mr. James take up his peace-hostage proposal first, and he concurred. “I feel that the exchange of hostages should start at the top,” he said. “For example, let one of President Kennedy’s brothers or sisters go with his or her family to Russia in exchange for the family of one
Early in 1962, just months before another standoff between the US and the Soviet Union develops during the Cuban Missile Crisis, James founds the Peace Hostage Exchange Foundation in his Fifth Avenue office, which he later renames Citizen Exchange Corps. He initially pledges nearly 750 volunteers, some of which are prominent names.

James’ vast Soviet-American hostage-exchange program proves hard to materialize, but his activism propels him onto the Cold War stage. He is now a fixture at international conferences and diplomatic forums, later becoming the first to organize tours to Moscow and Leningrad for American citizens—“to learn,” as his ad claimed, “about Russia in Russia.”

That was 50 years ago. Back then, cold was hot. Red was evil. The Russians had horns. Superpowers were superpowers. In the 1960s, the flow of information was slow. Social media belonged to Stanley Kubrick’s embryonic “starchild.” Nothing was instant, and James worked with just a typewriter and a post office box.

Forty years before the term “soft power” was coined, James practiced it earnestly. He turned a source of active terror into a thing to actively explore and interact with. He went on to prove that many things—core human experiences, our needs, fears, desires, and artistic expressions—are the same on each side of the Iron Curtain.

CEC ArtsLink, the organization that evolved from Stephen James’ original idea, remains deeply rooted in the same ethos of building bridges by examining human differences and similarities through art and cultural exchanges.
When Mr. James resigned from his post at CEC in 1974, the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the capitalist United States of America were entering an era of détente that pointed to a more hopeful future. That hope, however, was short-lived. Several years later, Soviet troops would invade Afghanistan. The US President Jimmy Carter would order a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. And by 1982, the new American President named Ronald Reagan denounced the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.”

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev emerges as a new kind of communist leader, introducing the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika*—openness and restructuring—after decades of stifling, heavy-handed rule. Two years later, Reagan calls on Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.” When the Berlin Wall comes down in 1989, the world rejoices. In less than three years, a bloodless coup removes Gorbachev from office and the country he led, the USSR—founded by Lenin, expanded by Stalin, and once the feared empire of communism—dissipates.

CEC ArtsLink witnessed and thrived through all these epoch-changing events. And it changed with them. If the US lost its main adversary with the collapse of communism, CEC ArtsLink gained a roster of new countries with which to partner. The Cold War politics are supposedly over. What is left are the arts, which continue to serve as a vital link, as essential now to building mutual understanding as they were in 1962.

**LJILJANA GRUBISIC, PHD, AUGUST 2012, LOS ANGELES**

A specialist in European history, visual arts, and literature, Dr. Grubisic is the co-author of an annotated bibliography Russian Modernism, which documents the Getty Research Institute’s flagship collection of rare books and archives from the 1910s–1940s. Most recently, she has curated exhibitions and programs at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles and at the Wende Museum in Culver City.
An article from the November 1969 issue of *Ebony* magazine about a visit to Russia by high school students from Atlanta, Georgia, under the auspices of CEC.

**TO RUSSIA—WITH UNDERSTANDING**

Atlanta teen-agers try out their high school Russian during study tour of Soviet Union

**TROLLING** through the baroque Peterhof gardens by the Neva River in Leningrad, 13 Southern teen-agers joked about the years they had shared only a month earlier in America. Some of them had been afraid to leave their familiar neighborhoods to journey the few miles to downtown Atlanta to pick up their passports.

And now, 6,340 miles later in an even more unfamiliar neighborhood, the Atlanta high school students felt right at home. They spoke the language. They felt confident. Most had never been out of the South before, much less on a week Scandinavian Airlines jet that purred softly as they flew from Copenhagen to Stockholm and finally to their destination, the Soviet Union. Now they felt that they were experienced world travelers.

Everywhere they went, from Moscow to Leningrad and to the ancient capitals of Estonia and Latvia, the teen-agers were stared at by the Russians with what the group says was curiosity rather than hostility. Many queried, "Vee ohl Koo dah?" (Where are you from?). When the students said they were from America and not Africa, the inquisitive Russians wanted to know where they had received their tans. Another question often asked the students concerned the "race wars" in America. Many Soviets they met believed that black and white Americans never encountered each other without threat of bloodshed.

The naïveté of the Russians regarding Negroes did not amaze the traveling Atlanta teens. They had been prepared for it by their Russian teacher at Booker T. Washington High School.
Stephen James (foreground) and Richard Lasser (first man holding sign) in Russia, 1966.
INT. NEW YORK, CITIZEN EX-CHANGE CORPS OFFICE—DAY

Richard walks into the dishevelled office of dishevelled STEPHEN D. (DAN) JAMES, pudgy, pasty 40s. Glasses pushed down on his nose, this rotund proto-nerd rises from his desk, extends his hand, which is attached to a flabby arm extending from a short-sleeved white shirt.

DAN
You the kid from U Va?

RICHARD
Yes.

DAN
(in terrible Russian)
Vvi govoritye pa-russki?

RICHARD
(like a native speaker)
Da. Konyeshno.

DAN
That’s why we need you. You fluent?

RICHARD
Sure. Absolutely.

DAN
Good.

He takes Richard over to a world wall map, points at it with a broken pointer stick.

DAN (CONT’D)
The Soviets have nukes here, here and here.

He points to the US portion of the map.

DAN (CONT’D)
And we’ve got ‘em here, here and here. Not to mention the subs.

He drags the stick around the Pacific, accidentally tearing the map.
DAN (CONT’D)
Well, that’s what would happen if...
He trails off, apparently lost in his apocalyptic thoughts.

DAN (CONT’D)
Now, what we’ve done is we’ve put, we WILL put...
Rambling again.

DAN (CONT’D)
It’s called the Peace Hostage Program --
A beat.

RICHARD
Yes, I read about it in --

DAN
By putting thousands of Americans in the Soviet Union, and thousands of Soviets in America, it’ll make nuclear war into...

DAN (CONT’D)
A mutual suicide pact!
He emphasizes the last phrase as though it was the most delightful in the English language.

RICHARD
(trying to shift the conversation)
So, you need interpreters for this trip to the Soviet Union?

DAN
Now, we can’t pay you, but you’d get room, board, airfare, the works.

RICHARD
I’d like to do it. Do you want to see my résumé, letters of recommendation...
He fumbles through a file folder.

DAN
That won’t be necessary. You have an honest face. Be back here June fifth for orientation. We leave on the twelfth. Oh, and make sure your passport is up to date.

Dan turns away from Richard, picks up a roll of scotch tape, repairs the map.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA,
PROFESSOR COCKBURN’S
OFFICE—DAY
CHRISTOPHER COCKBURN, 40s, sitting militarily erect, a confident look about him, grades papers.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Come in.
Richard comes in, looking unsure of himself.

RICHARD
You wanted to --

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Sit down, Mr. Lasser.
Before Richard’s butt hits the seat, Professor Cockburn reaches into his desk, hands him a tiny book, no bigger than a deck of cards.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
Dr. Zhivago.

RICHARD
What?
PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Look at it. It’s “Dr. Zhivago,” in
Russian.
Richard turns the tiny volume over,
examines it, flips it open, tries to
read the miniscule Russian text.

RICHARD
But how could anyone read --

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
A hungry man will eat ants.

Richard appears to turn that
observation over in his mind, then
smiles, grasping the analogy.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
You know it’s banned in the
Soviet Union.

RICHARD
I --

Cockburn tosses another tiny
volume at him.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
So’s this one. “Moscow Sum-
mer,” by Mihajlov. And this, by
Sinyavsky, when he was in the
gulag. Sent there for writing
anti-Soviet propaganda.

He reads from a tiny version of
Sinyavsky’s book.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
Yesterday I was marched off
to load timber, and all of a sud-
den, I saw: the forest was dark.
Really dark. Darker than
anything around, as if it had
assimilated all the dark-
ness, and absorbed it into its
blotter-like greenery. This has
been known for a very long
time -- not for nothing was the
forest (in Russian fairy tales)
called dark, never green. The
same thing, if one thinks of it,
it is true of the damp earth. It
is always damp, even in the
driest season, infinitely damp.
Which is why springs and riv-
ers originate in it and never
dry up.

He snaps the little book closed.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
There are others, by Anna
Akhmatova. Osip Mandelsh-
tam. Yevtushenko.

RICHARD
Yevgeny Yevtushenko? I love
his poetry.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Yes, it’s marvelous, and
marvelously controversial. He
really knows how to walk the
line, and now he’s starting to
get published. Anyway, there’s
a bookstore...

He scribbles an address down,
hands it to Richard.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
I know you’re going to cram
your suitcase full of Marlboros
and Beatles albums and blue
jeans and all the other things
Russians can’t get. But you’d
have something to give them
-- and yourself -- of much great-
er value, inestimable value,
if you go to this bookstore in
New York and pack as many of
these little guys as you can.
The implication that Richard might get better grades if he goes along with this is not lost on the young man.

RICHARD
OK. But, uh, do they cost a lot?

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Not a kopeck. If they have any questions, they can call me.

But from the smug look on his face, it’s clear that there won’t be any questions.

Then he takes an expensive chronometer watch off his wrist, hands it to Richard, who looks puzzled.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
Put it on.

Richard looks even more puzzled.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
I want you to have it.

RICHARD
I can’t take this.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
It’s my gift to you.

RICHARD
Why?

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
For bringing the truth to the Russians.

Richard admires the watch. It’s a Breitling, and a beauty, all tricked out with dials and push buttons.

RICHARD
You’re sure.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
Absolutely.

Richard puts it on, admires it.

PROFESSOR COCKBURN
(CONT’D)
Good luck and God’s speed.

CUT TO:

INT. CITIZEN EXCHANGE CORPS OFFICE, CONFERENCE ROOM—DAY

The cheaply furnished room is in need of a paint job. The AIR CONDITIONER HUMS NOISILY. But from the sweating faces of five or so nervous young people, seated facing an old chalkboard, it’s hardly working.

A slide projector on a card table facing an oft-patched screen attached to an off-kilter tripod at the front of the room.

Richard looks around the room. Near the front is a self-confident, not-unattractive young woman, (EVE). Richard stares at her...until she looks over at him.

GLEN PENROSE, a tall, gangly professorial type comes to the front of the room, clears his throat, pulling Richard away from his romantic reverie.

GLEN
Hi. Um, I’m Glen Penrose, and I, along with Eve from last year’s exchange, will be in charge of the Counterpart Program. In two weeks we’ll board an Aeroflot TU-one fourteen, the world’s largest airplane.

He turns out the lights, flicks on the slide projector.
A slightly out-of-focus slide showing the huge Russian turboprop fills the screen.

Penrose adjusts the focus, moves to the next slide, a picture of a US hospital.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Onboard will be a hundred Americans, as committed to world peace as each of you are. There will be doctors.

Another slide: a fire truck.

GLEN (CONT'D)
A fireman.

Another slide: an insurance policy.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Insurance men.

Another slide: a Russian hospital.

GLEN (CONT'D)
They’ll be meeting their counterparts in Russia.

Another slide: a Russian firetruck.

Another slide: a smiling Russian insurance man -- with gold front teeth.

Glen turns the lights back on.

GLEN (CONT'D)
I’m going to assume you’re all fluent in Russian or you wouldn’t be here, right?

ALL

Richard shifts uneasily in his seat, smiles a little too broadly, nods affirmatively.

GLEN
A Vvi, Richard?

RICHARD
Da. Ya dumayu shto ya horo-sho govoryu pa-russki.

His accent is absolutely perfect.

GLEN
Ochen horosho.

EXT. MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING—DAY

Richard enters an office building, checking the note Professor Cockburn had given him, verifying the address.

INT. MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING, HALLWAY—DAY

Richard walks down the hall, checking the suite number against that written on the note. He reaches a door on which the sign reads:

INSERT:
“World Literacy Books”

He tries the door, but it’s locked. He hears a buzz, tries the door again, and it opens.

INT. WORLD LITERACY BOOKS—CONTINUOUS

The small bookstore is lined with rows of simple wood shelves filled with miniature books, identical in size to those Professor Cockburn had given him.
He approaches a nondescript MAN, 40s, sitting behind a desk, reading a regular-sized book, seemingly taking no notice of him.

RICHARD
Excuse me.

MAN BEHIND DESK
You Richard Lasser?

RICHARD
Uh, how did you --

MAN BEHIND DESK
Professor Cockburn. Your books are over there.

Richard looks at a small duffel bag lying open on the floor, absolutely filled with books.

RICHARD
Oh, wow, I don’t think I can --

MAN BEHIND DESK
Worried about the weight?

RICHARD
Yeah, I think they charge for --

MAN BEHIND DESK
You won't have any trouble.

Richard lifts one edge of the duffel, testing its weight.

RICHARD
Pretty heavy.

The Man closes the book he’s reading, removes his glasses, stands.

MAN BEHIND DESK
I’m closing.

RICHARD
Uh, OK.

The Man looks at the duffel.

Richard gets it, zips it closed, and lifts it. The Man ushers him toward the door. He holds the door open for Richard who exits, as does the man, who then locks the door and -- without another word -- heads down the hall, away from the elevators.

Richard watches him go, then turns, walks to the elevators and pushes the button.

RICHARD A. LASSE
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Richard Lasser was an interpreter for Citizen Exchange Corps in 1966 and 1967. He went on to work in the film industry in Los Angeles, and currently lives in Seattle.
Ms. Nancy Reilly does the twist with a Russian man at the House of Friendship, Moscow, 1965 (first CEC group).
Poster for Glasnost Film Festival in the US, organized by CEC in 1989.
came to CEC on December 3, 1979. Three months later, I was spending most of my day, together with CEC’s president Grant Pendill, going through the drawers of a room full of file cabinets. Neatly filed in manila folders were carbon copies and “wet” photocopies of a voluminous correspondence with prominent and ordinary Americans, passionate advocacy for the organization’s people-to-people peace mission. Alas, most of those letters had gone unanswered, and now they became hundreds of pounds of scrap to be discarded. CEC and I still use manila folders and paperclips that were salvaged then.
By summer 1980, the landlord had built a partition, and three of us settled into the remaining two rooms: my assistant Andrea Sengstacken, the part-time bookkeeper Belle Vogel, and I. Some of CEC’s trustees were ready to abandon ship. Two voices prevailed, Ruth Roosa’s and Jane Lombard’s. “Now, more than ever!” became the slogan that guided CEC through those first years of repeated international crises and bellicose exchanges between Washington and Moscow.

Board and staff reinvented CEC, for perhaps the third time in its still short history, and certainly not the last. CEC’s program and its funding evolved with the shifting tides of US-Soviet relations. I would divide CEC’s history into four or five periods: volunteers for peace (1962-74), people-to-people (1975-85), perestroika (1986-91), innovation (1992-2003), and onward.

I had a background in Soviet studies, which is what I think mattered most to the board, and I was an alumnus of two international student exchanges. As the Cold War warmed and cooled, we emphasized CEC’s unique role in cultural exchange with the Soviet Union. By the mid-1980s tourism to the Soviet Union had grown significantly, but educational exchanges were still limited to a few dozen scholars and scientists, the beneficiaries of laboriously negotiated bilateral treaties; and cultural exchange meant big-name artists and performers. CEC alone offered ordinary Americans the opportunity of a person-to-person experience.

My first CEC business trip to Moscow and Leningrad was in early 1981 with Jane and Richard Lombard and Elizabeth Valkenier. (I had been there before as a lowly graduate student in 1969-70.) We returned at least once every year; I studied Russian with a tutor and felt privileged to have far more time “in-country” than most scholars.
At home, I represented CEC in educational travel gatherings, the growing citizen diplomacy movement, and the emerging international educational and cultural exchange associations in Washington.

The next phase came, as the timeline illustrates, with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and a new generation in the Soviet party apparatus. A few years before, a younger official of the Ministry of Higher Education, scoffing, told me that he would be afraid to send his teenage son to the US. Now high-placed members of Gorbachev’s staff were begging American acquaintances to arrange visits to the US for entire elementary school classes.

Opportunities multiplied, and CEC had achieved some status in the US-Soviet exchange community by virtue of its long history, knowledge of the Soviet Union, and expertise in exchange. Project funding from the USIA and the MacArthur Foundation was suddenly available. I had the pleasure of working with the late Gregory Guroff at the USIA; Greg did more, probably, than any other individual to transform US-Soviet relations in the cultural sphere. CEC developed the University Pairing Program and was chosen to produce two conferences on Spacebridging, both in 1987.

About the same time, our educational tours declined, because it was now easy for teachers to use their own contacts in the USSR and work with large travel agencies. CEC was entering a different world, far removed from that of its origins.

Glasnost on both sides made it possible to undertake once-unimaginable projects. Up to that time there were only 35 public international telephone circuits for the whole of the USSR. The 8-hour time difference led to odd practices: Soviet colleagues were used to receiving
business calls at home late at night, and Americans would stay up
till the wee hours, trying to catch them at work in the morning.

It is hard now to grasp how much difference was made by the
appearance in Moscow of a few fax machines. Without the fax that
CEC donated, our two documentary film festivals in 1989-1990 would
have been inconceivable. Personal computers and email made their
appearance in Russia soon after, around 1992, and with them came
more complex projects like River-to-River.

I accompanied 12 American documentary filmmakers for two weeks
with the American Documentary Showcase. It was the most extraordi-
nary experience of all my time at CEC. On the Russian side, the project
owed its success to heroic acts of will by one man, Leonid Gurevich. In
the Caucasus, a local official challenged him: “Who gave you permi-
sion?” Leonid answered, with absolutely firm conviction: “These are
new times. Whatever is not expressly prohibited is permitted.” The
Americans traveled around the Soviet Union for one month for $8,400.

The time when anything was possible ended with economic
collapse, near-civil war, and the re-establishment of centralized
power in Moscow. CEC moved toward a new sense of its mission and
a structure that could support ongoing programs and the major fund-
raising they require. Its board members never flagged in their vision,
and Jane Lombard was frequently the source of ideas that staff devel-
oped into successful projects. The perspicacity and support of Richard
Lanier at the Trust for Mutual Understanding were invaluable.
Our board gave staff great scope for initiative. “My” projects were the Spacebridging conferences, the documentary film festivals, and the American Committee for St. Petersburg 2003, headed by William H. Luers. To mention only some examples, River-to-River and ArtsLink were conceived and established by Mary Shea and Lea Freid, respectively; Open World was brought to CEC by Masha Pyshkina. Fritzie Brown lent her characteristic resourcefulness and concern for quality to the ArtsLink Awards, which is the longest-running and most successful program in CEC’s history. Susan Katz in St. Petersburg has achieved impressive results with projects across Russia and Central Asia.

In the post-Soviet years, we had a real sense of partnership and mutual benefit with our friends and collaborators in Russia, Central Asia, the Baltic states, the countries of Central Europe, the former Yugoslavia, and southeastern Europe. I’m sorry that I can’t name them all.

When I was about to graduate from college, I took a career aptitude test, and the dean gravely informed me that I was most suited to be an orchestra conductor. We both laughed, because though I have made music all my life, I have not seriously studied it. Later, I came to realize that my work at CEC was indeed much like conducting an orchestra: virtuosic talent and energy, held together by a cogent directorial presence, made beautiful music.

**MICHAEL BRAINERD, PHD, AUGUST 2012, NEW YORK**

*Dr. Brainerd retired in 2007 after serving as CEC’s president for 26 years. He continues to make beautiful music with several choral groups.*
Free, by Dan Perjovschi (Romania, 1995 ArtsLink Fellow), from White Chalk Dar Issues at Kokerei Zollverein Kunst und Kritik, Essen, Germany 2003.
Celebrating the Difference

In 2005 I was invited to deliver a keynote speech on the occasion of the opening session of Trans Europe Halles, a most interesting European network that brings together industrial sites successfully turned into cultural spaces. The network was celebrating the importance of artistic mobility. In my speech then I attempted to sum up this idea by making the argument that mobility in the artistic field is necessary because it pushes us out of our boxes and also drives us not to fear being “aliens.” It shines a light that allows us to see ourselves as a part of a broader world of understanding. Now, in 2012, mobility remains a key to creative inspiration and, as much as the world has radically changed since 2005, it still remains the only critical instrument to build trust.

Organizations that have creative mobility as a mission are few. The more the world changes its modus operandi, the more this handful of organizations must respond to different and more and more complex challenges. All through its history, CEC ArtsLink has been such an organization: fully and competently dedicated to supporting and encouraging mobility.

During its 50-year history the organization moved, shook, and reconfigured the boundaries of thought and the imaginations of many. If ArtsLink is still wonderfully alive and standing it is precisely because it absorbed and responded energetically to each global challenge.
The more closely we regard the depth of the geopolitical changes that occurred globally during the 50-year period of time, the more the organization’s capacity to adapt and reconfigure itself appears striking and daring. Classical mobility models for the arts do not include the Internet or global entertainment channels or global communication. Cultures are supposed to encounter each other and learn from each other without such interference. In this paradigm, the emerging markets of India and China do not exist nor does the Arab Spring or the worrying recrudescence of extremism in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the good old “pre-virtual” days after the fall of communism in Europe, physically encountering the other was the only way to meet. Getting out of your isolated space into the connective tissue of new creative environments was key to artistic inspiration and development, and key to becoming “open.” Today these encounters can happen online, via Skype or email or Facebook or Pinterest even in those regions traditionally considered completely isolated. Does creative mobility remain a must? And if yes, why?

Paradoxically, it is even more of a must and for the precisely opposite reasons. Today, moving out of one’s physical reality, out of one’s mental context—now so profoundly connected to various virtual networks—is the only way to re-center one’s creative self, far away from those things one thinks one knows. Physically crossing borders is the only way to disconnect in order to reconnect later with a new level of understanding.

Global culture runs the risk of spawning a generation of undifferentiated identities; creative exchange through mobility permits the rediscovery of how different and unique each of us really is. Many of the
artists who came to the US via CEC ArtsLink programs in recent years speak about how they shifted their creative approach after the residency. They gained, or regained, understanding of who they are. They go home with this precious and powerful revelation at hand. Past ArtsLink Fellows, in their turn, speak about how much they found in common with their foreign creative peers while newer generations tell how many differences and creative clashes came out of the ArtsLink journey. Today the ArtsLink space has become more of a place of necessary disconnection from the fuzzy networks surrounding us, a place for artists to rediscover that their voice actually is one of a kind.

Nevertheless, mobility is never enough. You also need the adapted mentor, the right host institution to go to, the ear of an attentive listener who discreetly but efficiently responds to your needs. This also is what CEC ArtsLink has consistently built: a group of knowledgeable partners, capable of hosting “aliens.” Unique in the United States (we Europeans are so spoiled by the mobility funds of national culture ministries and arts councils or Soros or those of the European Cultural Foundation or the Roberto Cimetta Fund or resources like the On-The-Move portal!), CEC ArtsLink is the organization to which hundreds of artists in the part of the world I come from are grateful.

Alerting and aligning American arts and artistic organizations with those areas on the globe where creativity is a way—sometimes the only way—to survive in spirit, means simply and clearly making a difference. It is this 50 years of difference that we really celebrate here.

CORINA SUTEU, AUGUST 2012, NEW YORK

Corina Suteu is currently the director of the Romanian Cultural Institute. In addition to international consulting and producing countless cultural policy studies, she is the founder of ECUMEST’s Eastern European cultural training program.
Since 1962 CEC ArtsLink has activated more than 5,000 international exchanges
The number of exchanges is approximate. Like the famous fast food restaurant, at some point we had to stop counting. Each voyage of international exchange sends ripples of increased international awareness and understanding out into the world. Daily our email inboxes prove that the links we have fostered consistently keep communities of curators, artists, opera directors, singers, dancers, choreographers, film makers, playwrights, festival organizers, video artists, stage designers, poets, dramaturges, and many, many others connected to vital organizations and nurturing colleagues in the US and throughout the world.
50 years of engaging international communities, opening doors, and changing perspectives
1945–1960
Cold War begins

The US uses nuclear weapons in Japan. The USSR tests its first atomic bomb. US policy of stockpiling nuclear weapons to deter the USSR goes into effect. Khrushchev ends Stalinist repressions in the USSR. The Hungarian Revolution, a nationwide uprising against the Communist government, is suppressed by the Soviet troops.

Sputnik, the first satellite in space, creates a public awareness that the USSR has the means to deliver nuclear weapons anywhere. The space race begins. The era of mutual assured destruction (MAD) begins.

CEC ArtsLink (highly selective)

Stephen D. James quits his Madison Avenue advertising job to devote himself to preventing nuclear war. In a well-publicized media event, he solicits ideas from the public about ways to avoid mutual assured destruction.

John F. Kennedy is the President of the US. Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba fails. Berlin Wall is erected. USSR tests a hydrogen “Tsar Bomba” in the most powerful explosion ever created by man.

Soviet citizen Yuri Gagarin is the first human to travel to outer space.
1962

Peace Hostage Foundation is founded by Stephen D. James. Mission: to make the policy of nuclear mutual assured destruction unnecessary by instituting the practice of exchanging prominent hostages between hostile states. 750 individuals volunteer.

USSR performs nuclear test in Kazakhstan.

US resumes aboveground nuclear testing.

Cuban Missile Crisis brings US and USSR to the brink of a nuclear conflict.

1963-1964

James’ plan receives positive reaction from the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Representatives of the USSR Peace Committee meet with representatives of Hostages for Peace in Moscow to discuss a visit by a group of Americans.

A hotline between the Kremlin and the White House is established. The US, UK, and the USSR sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty.

John F. Kennedy is assassinated.

Khrushchev is ousted from power.

1965-1967

144 Americans visit Moscow and Leningrad (below). James is disappointed: he had anticipated 8,000. The new name, Citizen Exchange Corps, is inspired by the popular Peace Corps. CEC organizes visits to the USSR for 500 Americans, exceeding the year’s total for official governmental and educational groups.

The show trial of dissident writers Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky marks the end of liberal policies in arts and culture in the USSR during the Khrushchev Thaw.

An amicable meeting of the Soviet Premier Kosygin with President Johnson signals a turn in diplomacy.
1968

The 28-member Sarah Lawrence College European Choir visits Moscow, Kiev, and Leningrad. The Boston Herald editorially commends CEC’s efforts: “...the more the people of each land know of the interests, attitudes and aspirations of the other, the greater will be the chance of a constructive, peaceful relationship.”

The Prague Spring, a political liberalization in Czechoslovakia under the rule of Alexander Dubček, ends with the invasion of Soviet troops. The Prague Spring inspires the work of Václav Havel, Milan Kundera’s novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being, and others.

US and USSR sign Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

1969-1972

Led by Ms. Billie T. Davis, groups of students from Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta visit the USSR under CEC’s sponsorship. Sixty Minutes and Ebony magazine (left) feature the story. NY Senator Jacob Javits praises CEC in a letter entered into the Congressional Record: “CEC is a small candle of hope.... The world deserves nothing less.”

CEC sponsors an exhibit of US and Soviet Children’s Art at the Metropolitan Museum featured in Life magazine.

CEC explores the possibility of exchanges with China, Ghana, and Central Europe.

Jane Lombard joins the board of trustees in 1972 and soon becomes its chairman.


Russian poet Joseph Brodsky is forced into exile, emigrates to the US.
1973-1975
CEC organizes visits to the USSR for US hospital administrators, high school students, and numismatists.
Stephen D. James resigns in 1974. Dr. C. Grant Pendill Jr., Soviet affairs specialist, becomes CEC’s new president.

President Nixon resigns.
An exhibition of nonconformist art near Moscow is destroyed by police with bulldozers and water cannons.
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is expelled from the USSR.
Cellist Mstislav Rastropovich, who sheltered Solzhenitzyn at his home, leaves the country the same year.
US Apollo spacecraft docks with the Soviet craft Soyuz, the first of several joint space missions, marking a symbolic end of the space race.

1977-1979
CEC organizes visits to the USSR for chess enthusiasts and skiers.

Jimmy Carter is president of the US.
The pro-American regime in Iran is overthrown by the Islamic revolution; the US Embassy staff is taken hostage.
USSR invades Afghanistan to support a pro-Soviet government.
US enacts a trade embargo on the USSR, declares a boycott of the 1980 Olympics, and suspends official scientific, technical, and academic exchanges.
1980-1983

Dr. Pendill resigns. CEC is reorganized under Dr. Michael Brainerd.

After the boycotted Olympics interest in travel to the USSR revives and CEC carries out a tour to Siberia and Mongolia.

CEC is renamed Citizen Exchange Council and announces new travel programs for students, as well as for photographers previously rejected by Soviet authorities.

President Reagan declares: “...beware the temptation... to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.”

Poland imposes martial law to crush political opposition led by Solidarity, the first independent trade union. Dissident playwright Václav Havel is imprisoned in Czechoslovakia; the US Ambassador William H. Luers visits him in prison.

1984-1985

CEC, with the director of the International Center of Photography Cornell Capa and Soviet photojournalist D.N. Baltermants, organizes an exhibit, *Soviet Photography of WW II: 1941-1945*.

CEC leads a tour of Russia and the Caucasus for the faculty of Phillips Andover Academy (below).

President Reagan’s “Evil Empire” speech animates calls to bring an end to the USSR as well as a surge of private initiatives to defuse hostilities through citizen-to-citizen dialogue.

A new generation of USSR Communist Party leaders are open to contacts with the US. Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the General Secretary of the Communist Party.

Reagan and Gorbachev meet in Geneva.
1986-1988

CEC's Yale-Moscow University exchange in partnership with the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education initiates the University Pairing Program, the first undergraduate student exchange between US and Russia. CEC considers limiting contact with the US government to be seen in the USSR as a truly non-governmental organization.


CEC provides expertise and logistics for Billy Joel's concerts in Moscow and Leningrad where the “mosh pit” becomes a learning experience for Soviet presenters and security personnel.

With the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education dissolved, CEC seeks new projects and partners.

CEC assists with the American-Soviet Youth Orchestra's first concert and becomes producer of a festival of Russian documentary films.

The US Information Agency (USIA) creates the President's US-Soviet Exchange Initiative to fund private exchanges.

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion in Ukraine contaminates a huge span of Central Europe and Scandinavia. The USSR government's acknowledgment of the disaster signals the beginning of glasnost, a lessening of censorship and greater transparency in government. The policy of perestroika aims to restructure the Soviet economy.

Reagan and Gorbachev meet at the Summit in Reykjavik, Iceland.
1989-1990

Cold War ends:
Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan. Gorbachev abandons the USSR’s policy of intervening with military force to preserve Communist rule in the region.

Reforms in Hungary lead to multiparty elections.

In Poland, Solidarity forms the first non-Communist government within the Soviet bloc since 1948.

Czechs and Slovaks led by Václav Havel demand political reforms. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia peacefully transfers rule to Havel in the Velvet Revolution.

The Romanian Communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu is overthrown; Ceausescu and his wife are executed.

The Communist parties of Bulgaria and Albania cede power.

Lithuania declares its independence from the USSR followed by Latvia and Estonia in 1991.

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall falls. On December 3, US President Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev declare the Cold War over.

The Glasnost Film Festival tours 22 films and 11 Soviet directors to US university campuses in a six-week tour. The organization adopts a new name, CEC International Partners, to reflect the idea of cooperation.

CEC produces American Documentary Showcase in the USSR, a monthlong tour of Russia and the Caucasus by 24 American filmmakers. Such frank features as Harvey Milk and an episode of the civil rights movement PBS series Eyes On the Prize astound Soviet audiences.

Ninth graders from Hilton Head Preparatory School, participating in a CEC environmental program, witness the anti-Soviet revolt in Vilnius, Lithuania.

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On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall falls. On December 3, US President Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev declare the Cold War over.
Beginning of the civil wars in Yugoslavia leads to disintegration of the country.

On December 25, the USSR is dissolved and replaced by a commonwealth. All 15 republics of the USSR are now independent states.

The Strategic Arms Reductions Treaties (START I and START II) reduce the number of long-range nuclear weapons in the US and the former USSR.

Russia and the other newly independent states endure economic collapse and political turmoil.

US Congress adopts the FREEDOM Support Act to support reconstruction and disarmament in the former USSR.

CEC closes the University Pairing Program and creates environmental education exchange River-to-River, which pairs secondary schools in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, and the Tennessee Valley.

CEC identifies new directions in the arts and environment. Its geographic scope grows to encompass not only the former USSR but also the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

CEC inaugurates ArtsLink Awards, an exchange of artists from those newly independent countries. ArtsLink is a partnership of CEC International Partners, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, and the Trust for Mutual Understanding.

CEC takes several American scholars and musicians to Moscow for the Scriabin Festival and co-sponsors Artists As Social Innovators, a symposium on the role of contemporary artists.
1993-1995

A network of Soros Centers for Contemporary Art expands to 17 countries in Central and Eastern Europe as part of further growth of the Open Society Foundations established by George Soros.

Dayton peace agreement between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia led by US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke ends the war in Bosnia, preserving it as a single state.

Russia adopts a new constitution with strong presidential powers as a result of a violent confrontation between President Yeltsin and Parliament.

Artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrap the Reichstag in Berlin prior to the building’s renovation to become the seat of the newly unified Germany’s parliament.

CEC’s environmental education program EcoBridge sponsors exchanges for 390 high school students from Russia and the US.

The initiative St. Petersburg 2003 aims to help cultural institutions in the former Leningrad modernize and prepare for the city’s 300th anniversary. American Committee for St. Petersburg 2003, a consortium of US organizations, is chaired by Ambassador William H. Luers.

The Nijinska Dance Project (left), co-organized by CEC, brings the legendary Bronislava Nijinska ballet Les Noces to Russia.
1996-1997

River-to-River Teacher Training Seminar meets in Rostov to evaluate exchanges and develop curricula.

School Linkages program places 88 Russian students, teachers, and educators in residencies in the US.

CEC helps bring and restore Peter the Great’s first sailing boat to the festival St. Petersburg: A Cultural Celebration at the World Financial Center in New York (left).

In St. Petersburg CEC facilitates Along the Frontier, a USIA-supported traveling exhibition of work by US contemporary artists Ann Hamilton, Bruce Nauman, Francesc Torres, and Bill Viola.

The inaugural Manifesta 1 responds to the new European realities and presents the work of young artists from Western and Eastern Europe. The European Culture Foundation initiates Art for Social Change, a program that involved more than 7,000 people in 13 countries.

1998-1999

The Meyerhold Project brings graduate students of St. Petersburg Drama Academy to Yale Drama School to stage Gogol’s The Inspector General (left).

In collaboration with the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theater, CEC organizes a video symposium on biomechanics that includes Russian participants via the Internet.

In celebration of the anniversary of D-58, the first jazz club in the USSR, CEC brings the legendary jazz pianist Billy Taylor (right) to the Jazz Festival in St. Petersburg.

Russian financial crisis. The government devalues the ruble and defaults on its debt. Yeltsin retires, names Vladimir Putin his successor.

The influential exhibition After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe opens in Stockholm.
CEC organizes a symposium on the dioxin problems in Russia and sends 132 participants to the Third North American-European-Russian Workshop on Joint Actions to Reduce Dioxin and Dioxin-Related Compounds.

CEC coordinates the Chemical Weapons Destruction in Russia and the US and the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

CEC launches Museum Partners, aimed at building collaborative relationships between museums and libraries in the US and Russia.

NATO bombs Yugoslavia.

Students at the Applied Arts and Design Academy in Belgrade organize exhibitions during the bombing.

Last civil war in the former Yugoslavia ends. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia emerge as independent countries. Kosovo is granted status of autonomous territory.

2000

CEC hosts Content/Interpretation/Presentation, a seminar for museum information specialists on museum labeling.

The State Hermitage Museum hosts The Andy Warhol Symposium.

Nationwide uprising (the Bulldozer Revolution) overthrows Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

George W. Bush is elected US president.
On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda attacks the US. US launches global war on terror with massive military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

US and Russia reach landmark arms agreement to cut nuclear arsenals by two-thirds over the next 10 years.

President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze resigns after mass protests (the Rose Revolution).

1st Tirana Biennial co-curated by the artist Edi Muka, the city’s mayor, is the first large-scale exhibition of contemporary art in Albania.

Scene from a theater piece *Janyl Myrza*, a collaboration between Yara Arts Group (New York, 2006 ArtsLink Projects award) and Sakhna Theater in Kyrgyzstan. Photo by Margaret Morton, 2006.
HOW DO YOU DO? WILL YOU PLEASE STOP AND READ THIS? NO, IT’S NOT ANOTHER PUBLIC SURVEY; WE’RE NOT SELLING ANYTHING, EITHER!

I’M JUST AN ARTIST WHO WANTS TO TELL YOU SOME OF MY THOUGHTS!

O.K., I DON’T KNOW IF I SHOULD CALL MYSELF AN “ARTIST”, REALLY. I JUST DRAW SILLY CARTOONS. NO DEEP PHILOSOPHY...

IN FACT, I COME FROM SERBIA—YES, I KNOW THAT’S A WEIRD PLACE IF YOU DON’T WANT TO READ FURTHER, JUST LEAVE!

BY LIVING IN A COUNTRY UNDER CRISIS, I’VE LEARNED TO QUESTION EVERYTHING: YEAH, THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO ANYTHING...

IN 1999, I VISITED THE US FOR THE FIRST TIME... I ASKED MYSELF: HOW DIFFERENT WOULD I BE IF I HAD BEEN BORN HERE? HOW WOULD THAT HAVE AFFECTED MY ART?

I JUST DON’T BELIEVE THERE’S ANYTHING BAD ABOUT BEING BORN AND RAISED IN EASTERN EUROPE... I LIVED A HAPPY LIFE... AND THROUGH MY ART I RELEASED THE PHANTOMS FROM MY HEAD... AND I KNOW THAT SOME OTHERS DID THE SAME!

SO... ANYWAY! COME AND SEE FLIPSIDE

ARTSLINK at ARTISTS SPACE
38 GREENE STREET NYC
November 11 to December 18 2004

Organized by CEC ArtsLink and Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, FACE Croatia, a program of the Heathcote Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the Virginia Kettering Fund of the Dayton Foundation.
The president of the Russian Federation awards CEC ArtsLink a medal “In commemoration of St. Petersburg’s 300th Anniversary.”

CEC expands arts programs in Central Asia through VisArt program.

ArtsLink organizes *Flipside*, an exhibition of work by ArtsLink awardees at Artists Space in NYC.

**2005-2007**

CEC ArtsLink begins successful collaboration with contemporary music organization Bang on a Can to bring Central Asian musicians to the Summer Institute at Mass MoCA (below).

President Michael Brainerd retires. Fritzie Brown, director of the ArtsLink Awards program, is chosen to lead the organization.

After violent protests in Kyrgyzstan, President Askar Akayev flees the country and resigns (the Tulip Revolution).

1st Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art.

Romania and Bulgaria join the EU.

Russia suspends participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, a Cold War-era agreement to limit the deployment of heavy weaponry.
2008
As a follow-up to Flipside exhibition, CEC ArtsLink produces FlipFest! to celebrate diaspora culture and fusion with an evening of diverse performances by artists from around the world at Angel Orensanz Center in NYC.

Kosovo declares independence from Serbia.

Fidel Castro retires as the president of Cuba after 50 years.

Barack Obama is elected US president.

2009
CEC inaugurates Global Art Lab exchange of US and Central Asian visual artists to foster development of socially engaged projects.

The US and Russia report a breakthrough in arms control negotiations and agree to lower the limit on deployed strategic weapons.

2010
CEC ArtsLink Awards expands to include Turkey and Afghanistan.

CEC ArtsLink initiates Publicly Creative, a workshop for artists on the practice of public art.

The Arab Spring, demonstrations and protests in the Arab world, forces repressive regimes from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

Violent protests in Kyrgyzstan force President Bakiyev to flee Bishkek.

2011
CEC ArtsLink Awards expands to include Turkey and Afghanistan.

The US and Russia report a breakthrough in arms control negotiations and agree to lower the limit on deployed strategic weapons.

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Violent protests in Kyrgyzstan force President Bakiyev to flee Bishkek.
2012

Vladimir Putin wins the presidential election in Russia. Thousands of demonstrators in Moscow protest validity of elections.

Members of Russian feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot are arrested and convicted for illegal performance of Punk Prayer—Mother of God, Chase Putin Away.

Civil uprisings in Syria turn into a bloody civil war.

President Obama signs an agreement with President Karzai to provide Afghanistan with development assistance for 10 years after US troops withdraw.

Gunmen storm US embassy in Libya and kill US Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other embassy officials. Attacks on US embassies in Egypt and Yemen.

CEC ArtsLink opens programming to Eastern Mediterranean countries.

New initiative One Big City supports collaborative projects engaging international diaspora communities and émigré populations in New York City. In its first year, One Big City pairs artists from Russia, Thailand, and Croatia with African-American and Latino artists living in New York.

In collaboration with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress, CEC brings five US traditional music groups to Russia.

Top: Fragment of My America (My America), a multimedia installation at Museum of the Moving Image in NYC by Daniel Gallegos and Mikhail Zheleznikov as part of One Big City, 2012.

CEC ArtsLink promotes international communication and understanding through mutually beneficial, innovative arts projects. We support and produce programs that encourage the exchange of visual and performing artists and managers in the US and 37 countries.

We believe that the arts are a society’s most deliberate and complex means of communication and that the work of artists can help nations overcome long histories of reciprocal distrust, insularity, and conflict.

Our organization was founded in 1962 to enable citizens of the US and the USSR to accomplish what their governments would not do—open doors, share ideas, and build mutual trust. Today’s transformed and complex world makes creative international dialogue more urgently necessary than ever.

Our Programs

ArtsLink Awards
Facilitates the exchange of arts professionals through ArtsLink Projects, ArtsLink Residencies, and Independent Projects grants.

Global Art Lab
Responds to current artistic and cultural issues in Russia and Central Asia through collaborations, professional development workshops, and residencies.

inPublic nYC
Presents public events with the US and international artists in New York through the One Big City project and other initiatives.

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www.cecartslink.org