

1. **A three-page report of research accomplishments, to be published on the American Councils website.**

My five months in Almaty, Kazakhstan on a Title VIII Research Scholar Program grant from American Councils contributed significantly to my dissertation research on music and national identity production in this Central Asian urban center. I was able to meet with and interview a variety of experts on musical subjects, including Conservatory students and faculty, composers, instrument makers, performers, librarians and theater directors; I also met with the president of a major local record label, as well as representatives from local radio and television stations. In addition to these research activities, I also gathered many useful articles and book chapters from the National Library and the libraries of the Academy of Sciences and the National Conservatory. I also purchased or received a substantial amount of relevant local literature, and in some cases had the opportunity to discuss the works with their authors. I also attended numerous concerts at the city's numerous concert venues; these concerts covered a wide spectrum of musical styles and provided a vivid picture of the ways in which musical life in Almaty continues to both embrace and depart from Soviet-era performance models. Finally, I took music lessons with one of the foremost female performers of the Kazakh traditional instrument *qyl-qobyz* (a bowed fiddle with two strings made from horsehair), Raushan Orazbaeva. These lessons proved invaluable to my understanding of this very intriguing instrument, and Orazbaeva's insights continually provoked additional questions for me to investigate further.

Being in Almaty also provided me with the opportunity to experience several important Kazakhstani holidays, including Nauryz (Kazakh New Year), Women's Day, and International Unity Day. My observation of these holidays was valuable from a

research standpoint because such celebrations encapsulate very public demonstrations of how Kazakhs, Kazakhstanis, and Kazakhstan currently identify with these holidays, some of which have clear roots in Soviet cultural policy and others of which appear to reflect post-Soviet imaginings of Kazakh (and Kazakhstani) national identity.

My research also included some interesting events that I had not initially planned to include in my itinerary. One such event was my participation in a television broadcast on the national “Kazakhstan” channel that featured performances from various musical traditions for International Unity day; I was invited to play *qyl-qobyz* while the other artists performed Ukrainian, Tatar, Kazakh, and other types of songs and dances.

Another departure from my work in Almaty was a brief trip to the Kazakhstani capital of Astana, in order to observe the Kurmangazy Competition of National Instruments, a very prestigious competition for young performers of instruments such as *qyl-qobyz*, *dombra* (Kazakh two-stringed plucked lute), and *bayan* (accordion). I was able to watch and videotape the competition and, through my acquaintance with a number of judges and participants, got an inside look at the nature of these types of competitions and their significance to governmental promotion of “national” music and instruments in Kazakhstan. Lastly, I participated in an academic conference organized by the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory by giving a paper (in Russian) describing my research and the field of ethnomusicology as it is practiced in the United States. The organizers were pleased to have an American presenter on their conference program, and I was excited to have the opportunity to share my research and meet a wide range of Kazakh music scholars who attended. My paper will be published in the conference proceedings next year.

A good portion of my time was also spent utilizing my language skills to interact with as many people as possible who were involved in the music and issues I was interested in researching. I led weekly English conversation groups at the National Conservatory, which was made possible through an academic affiliation facilitated by American Councils. This teaching activity greatly improved my relations with Conservatory faculty, staff, and students through my new-found status as “instructor.” My language skills also came in handy when my *qyl-qobyz* teacher needed me to translate some legal documents from Russian to English so that she could more effectively protect her artist’s rights while performing in European countries; I also helped her to submit English-language applications to perform in several large, international music festivals. Another performer friend enlisted me to help her translate the liner notes for her CD from Kazakh to English. My English-language translation then appeared in the notes when the CD came out in May 2008; this was my first such credit in a published album.

At the same time, I was able to remain productive on the American side of my academic pursuits and to make several significant achievements that will greatly aid the successful completion of my doctoral degree in ethnomusicology. I wrote and submitted my first scholarly article for publication, “Resurrecting the Nomads: Historical Nostalgia and Modern Nationalism in Contemporary Kazakh Music Videos,” which will appear in the spring 2009 issue of *Popular Music and Society*. I also successfully applied for a dissertation year fellowship from my home institution (UCLA), and submitted a successful proposal for an undergraduate seminar entitled “Sounds of the ‘Stans: Music and National Identity in Central Asia,” which I will teach at UCLA in spring 2009.

2. **American Councils for International Education:** How effectively did American Councils assist you in the following areas:
- A. Pre-departure preparations: travel, stipend, university affiliation, visa, home stay, pre-departure information.

My travel arrangements, visa, and stipend were arranged well before my departure to Almaty, Kazakhstan. In my case, very little pre-departure information was required since I was already familiar with my destination city; however, Sarah Krueger was very helpful in answering my questions before and after I arrived in Almaty.

My affiliation with the Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory was arranged through the American Councils office in Almaty, a process that proceeded very quickly and proved effective in improving my relations with Conservatory faculty and students.

- B. In-Country Support: finalizing arrangements at your university, assisting with archive access, arranging support services (medical care, etc.) as needed.

None of these additional support services were required. However, the Almaty-based American Councils staff was regularly in communication with me and very accessible.

3. **Your Future Plans:** What is the timeline for the remainder of your research? What are your plans for the immediate future? Do you have plans to publish articles, give lectures, briefs, presentations, and/or meet with Embassies, NGOs, or Government officials about your research in the near future?

At this time I am preparing to write my doctoral dissertation, which I plan to file in June 2009. I was awarded a Dissertation Year Fellowship by the Graduate Division of UCLA so that I can focus on my writing and finish my degree more quickly. This year, I will present a conference paper about my research on Kazakh music at the national meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) in October 2008, and I have submitted an article for publication in a 2009 special issue of the scholarly journal *Popular Music and Society*. Also, I will be teaching an undergraduate seminar at UCLA in the Spring 2009 quarter entitled "Sounds of the 'Stans: Music and National Identity in Central Asia" under the auspices of the UCLA Collegium of University Teaching Fellows (CUTF) program. After filing my dissertation next summer, I will seek employment teaching ethnomusicology courses at a post-secondary institution.