The French Government Mixes It Up

French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced a reshuffling of his government cabinet June 23. The government reshuffle reinforced President Sarkozy's speech the previous day in which he relayed his plans to overhaul the pension system, invest in infrastructure and research, and help France emerge from the global recession. In total, eight new ministers have been appointed to the cabinet and nine ministers changed positions. One of the most notable changes was the moving of Michèle Alliot-Marie from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Justice and her replacement by Brice Hortefeux, the former Labor and Social Affairs Minister. Luc Chatel, President Sarkozy's spokesman and former Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, now occupies the post of minister of national education.

Some of the new faces in President Sarkozy's cabinet include Pierre Lellouche, formerly France's envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, who now serves as the Secretary of State for European Affairs, as well as Frédéric Mitterrand, the nephew of former president François Mitterrand, who will serve as the new Minister of Culture. Though the changes were widespread, incumbents at the crucial posts of budget, environment, foreign affairs and defense remain intact and François Fillon retains his post as Prime Minister.

French Tall Ships “Challenge” the Open Seas

France wished the Étoile, the Bel Espoir and Belle Poule a “bon voyage” as the three ships set sail for the Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge. The Challenge is a three-and-a-half month trip that began at the end of April and continues through August, comprising a grueling 7,000 nautical miles. It may be called a “challenge,” but this competition emphasizes international understanding and amity rather than speed; the top prize is the Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge Friendship Trophy. With the purpose of educating youth of diverse nationalities, cultures, religions and backgrounds, the Challenge series first took place in 2001 on the Great Lakes and included six countries and 30 vessels. This year, 18 countries participated, comprising 38 vessels with crews of novice and experienced sailors.

The ships follow a historical route that begins at Vigo, Spain, and continues to Tenerife, Canary Islands; Hamilton, Bermuda; Charleston, South Carolina; Boston, Massachusetts; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and finally Belfast, Northern Ireland. French vessels Étoile and Belle Poule observed the Fourth of July in New York City at the Piers. Guests were welcomed aboard to meet the crew and sailed to the Statue of Liberty, where a ceremony was held for the reopening of Lady Liberty’s crown. Guests included French Ambassador Pierre Vimont and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. From July 8 through 13, crews explored Boston, taking the city’s T from the Seaport District, where vessels were docked, to destinations including the Freedom Trail and Fenway Park. The numerous activities and events focused on U.S. and international maritime history.

One of the Challenge’s aims is to provide sailors with a pleasant experience of making new friends and learning more about the visited communities and cultures. Upon arrival at the ports, the vessel’s crews meet and interact with local businesses, families and sailing enthusiasts, explaining the trip’s purpose and sharing their love of impressive vessels.

Bastille Day Takes Paris by Storm

From l’Hexagone to the overseas departments and collectivités, France celebrated Bastille Day on July 14 — the event that symbolizes the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the Republic.

In Paris, President Sarkozy seized the opportunity of this festive day to highlight France’s presence in the international stage. One of the main events involved a massive parade along the Champs-Élysées, including about 5,000 men, 300 military vehicles, 83 motorbikes, 280 horses, 68 planes and 37 helicopters, according to France 24. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was this year’s guest of honor at the annual parade along. To recognize India’s military participation in World War I and to underscore the Atlantic alliance. In recognition of France’s current military activities, troops stationed in Afghanistan, Chad, and Kosovo were present as well as the new addition of commandos from the Atlantica anti-piracy operation. This year was also the first time that a detachment from the Franco-German brigade participated in the parade since its inception 20 years ago.

The newest technological innovations were also featured in the parade including an infantry fighting vehicle and Caesar cannons that will be deployed to Afghanistan later this summer. With a modern, international military parade on the ground and the traditional sky-high aeronautic performance from the Patrouille de France, this year’s festivities celebrated both France’s historic and current global activities. Rocking the patriotic day out on a “high” note, thousands of Parisians gathered in front of the Eiffel Tower, where French rock hero Johnny Holiday performed, followed by a display of fireworks.
**En bref**

**E.U. Provides Aid to Pakistan**
The European Union pledged to give Pakistan $100 million in aid at the first ever E.U.-Pakistan summit, which convened in Brussels on June 17. “Last year, the people of Pakistan voted for a strong, secular democratic government,” José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, stated before the summit. “I welcome President Zardari’s commitment to reinforce the democratic institutions, reform the economy and defeat extremism and terrorism … The E.U. will continue to assist Pakistan in its fight against both militant insurgency and economic crisis, while boosting significantly our humanitarian aid.” The aid is designed to provide food, water and shelter to the approximately two million people who have fled Swat Valley and the nearby regions of Pakistan. This emergency response aid is going to supplement, not replace, the $670 million that the European Commission already promised Pakistan for long-term development aid over the next five years. France has similarly reaffirmed its support for Pakistan by pledging up to 300 million euros over 3 years for economic development as well as 12.3 million euros in emergency assistance for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of the Swat valley.

**Lévi-Strauss Wins Smithsonian Bicentennial Medal**

Professor Lévi-Strauss’s fundamental contributions to understanding the human condition and passionate personal engagement in defense of the common humanity and dignity of all peoples,” said Hans-Dieter Sues, associate director for research and collections of the Smithsonian. Mr. Lévi-Strauss grew up in Paris and studied law and philosophy at the Sorbonne. In addition to his accomplishments as an author, he was also a chair of social anthropology at the Collège de France and is a member of the Académie Française.

**Current Events**

**The Tour de France Attracts Tour-ists From Around the World**

Hearts raced and tensions soared as cyclists from around the globe gathered at this year’s Tour de France, the world’s third largest sporting event after the Olympics and the Soccer World Cup, to compete in a grueling race that began July 4 in Monaco and will end July 26 in Paris. Consisting of 21 stages that include time-trials, flat courses, and arduous mountain paths, the Tour covers approximately 2,175 miles in 23 days, stopping in 34 towns and passing through 560 municipalities as well as Spain, Andorra, Switzerland, and Italy along the way.

A peloton, a cluster of bike riders who save energy by riding together, speeds onward during the Tour.

The Tour’s international presence is highlighted by the sheer number of multinational viewers: besides drawing foreign crowds, which comprise 20 percent of the fans present at the race, the event is broadcast on television in 180 countries and attracts representatives from 76 radio stations and 450 newspapers, photography agencies, and news media from countries around the world. Together, 3,600 accredited media members follow the event. The Tour’s budget is around $140 million, 50 percent of which comes from television rights and 40 percent from sponsors; the remainder is paid by the towns in which the Tour’s stages begin and end.

One of the Tour’s most recognized participants, seven-time American champion Lance Armstrong, returns this year for a shot at a record-breaking eighth yellow jersey. Riding for the Kazakhstan-based team Astana, the 37-year-old cancer survivor came out of retirement in January and competed in the recent Giro d’Italia, Italy’s version of the Tour de France. Other famous participants of the Tour will include 2007 Spanish Tour de France winner Alberto Contador and American rider Tyler Farrar.

Created in 1903 by Géo Lefèvre, a journalist at the French sports publication L’Auto Magazine, the Tour de France symbolizes French athleticism and sportsmanship. The much-anticipated race unifies French citizens as thousands flock to the racing path to cheer on their favorite rider and fosters regional pride as towns across the country vie for the honor to be included in the Tour’s route. This year’s race promises to deliver both top-notch cyclists and thrilling competition.

**Climate Change a Hot Issue for Major Economies Forum**

To what extent can we restrict global warming? France, with its firm commitment to battling climate change, is ready to play a leading role in the global effort to do so. In response to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) urgent call for industrialized nations to reduce their overall emission by at least 25 percent, France aims to individually reduce its emissions by more than 14 percent and to press for a European reduction of at least 20 percent by 2020. Paris demonstrated its commitment to these goals on May 25 and 26 when it hosted the European Union and 17 other nations for the second preparatory meeting of the Major Economies Forum — a meeting that concentrated specifically on energy and climate in continuation of a meeting held last April in Washington, D.C.

Collectively responsible for 80 percent of the planet’s greenhouse gases, the nations present at the meeting discussed targets for reducing emissions, courses of action applicable to different countries, and ways in which efforts against climate change and international cooperation on technology can be financed.

France expanded its efforts in the third preparatory meeting held from June 22 to 23 in Mexico, where nations further discussed options for financing emission reduction initiatives. Minister of Ecology Jean-Louis Borloo explains that the ultimate aim of this active preparation is to ensure that nations will not tackle this issue “face to face but rather side by side” when they reunite in Copenhagen this winter for what he calls the "rendez-vous of humanity.”

France is taking action to prepare for the Copenhagen Summit on ways to combat global warming.
France & America

Joan of Arc Captures the Heart of New Orleans

Francophiles, artists, entrepreneurs and other community members gathered at New Orleans’s French Quarter on May 8 to celebrate not only the anniversary of Joan of Arc; lifting the siege of Orleans, but also the launch of a non-profit organization known as the Joan of Arc Project. Horses, medieval costumes, and the sounds of French gypsy jazz were just a sample of what this initiative aspires to accomplish in the coming months: “to put the French back in the French Quarter and the artistry back into Mardi Gras!”

The Project aims to transform the short-lived, annual commemoration of Joan of Arc into a lasting memory that becomes a definitive part of the French Quarter’s identity. By celebrating New Orleans’s connection to this legendary hero, the Project strives to highlight the relationship... of New Orleans to France.” The organization has stirred up considerable excitement. Cécile Andry, president of the New Orleans Council of French Societies, finds that it is “coming at a perfect time to breathe new life into the many French cultural organizations in the city.”

The organization will hold various events in the coming months, including costume sales, student contests, book clubs, French holiday celebrations, the Joan of Arc Fête and Parade. Intending to evoke “Joan as a symbol of individual strength, determination, and loyalty” in all these events, the project hopes to “honor New Orleans’ French heritage” and renew “pride in...[its]...uniqueness.” For more information on this organization, please visit: www.joanofarcproject.org.

Napoléon Conquers Philadelphia’s Imagination

This summer, a walk through the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia is a journey back to the 19th century and a window into the legacy of Napoléon Bonaparte. Open to the public until September 7, this exposition encourages visitors to “see beyond the legend to gain an understanding...[of a leader who]...reshaped the landscape of Europe and America.”

In its grand North American tour, the 6,000-square-foot international traveling exhibition features more than 300 objects from the First Empire of Bonaparte. The framed paintings, sculptures, personal articles, documents and Imperial furniture, some of which are being displayed to the general public for the first time, are items from First Empire-authority and author Pierre-Jean Chalençon’s collection. From the earliest known letter written by Napoléon at the age of 14, to one of his signature hats worn during the Battle at Essling in 1809, each object recalls an element of Bonaparte’s legacy. Divided into 12 parts, the exhibit is organized such that each section represents a certain phase of his life. For an additional $4, one can walk through the exhibit guided by an iPod audio tour.

Linda Johnson, National Constitution Center President and Chief Executive Officer, stresses the importance of this exhibition in conveying “how the destinies of France and America intersected from the time of the American Revolution to Napoleon’s reign.” This relationship is highlighted through the display of objects such as a book on the American Revolution from Napoléon’s time in exile, as well as the valise containing the signed Louisiana Purchase documents. In partnership with the Alliance Française and the French-American Chamber of Commerce in Philadelphia, the center hopes to highlight this interesting and historically deep Franco-American connection. For more information, please visit: www.constitutioncenter.org.

French Sculptures on the Move in California

The exhibit "Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture from Renaissance to Revolution” debuted at Musée du Louvre in Paris, traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and currently resides at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Inspiration stems from the current resurgence of interest in sculpture and a widespread taste for Renaissance and Baroque art. According to the Getty, the more than 120 bronze statues from European and American museums display the "most splendid manifestations of the artistic genius" of French sculptors, such as Girardon, Bertrand and Houdon. Highlights of the exhibit include the 16th-century Barthelemy Prieur’s female allegorical figure Abundance and Michel Anguier’s Montarris bronzes, a depiction of seven gods and goddesses. Michael Brand, director of the Getty, commented that "'Cast in Bronze' exemplifies the Museum’s commitment to exhibitions that are of tremendous scholarly importance, [and] allow for collaboration with our sister institutions around the world... the comprehensive catalogue that accompanies it will be the most current reference on the subject matter, and promises to be a tremendous resource for future scholarship and research. "Cast in Bronze" is open for the public through September 27. For more information, please visit: www.getty.edu.

French Embassy Races for the Cure and the Finish Line

Thousands displayed their dedication to fighting breast cancer at the District of Columbia’s Susan G. Komen Global Race for the Cure 5K on June 6 as supporters, fundraisers, and runners filled the National Mall. In total, almost 45,000 people participated in the event and raised $4.3 million, most of which will be used to fund the fight breast cancer in and around Washington, D.C. The rest will help support underprivileged patients in areas of high breast cancer mortality rate. This year was an exciting one for the Embassy of France in D.C. as dozens of employees demonstrated their determination to be involved in supporting breast cancer research by participating in the Komen Race. Amongst a cheering crowd, Emmanuel Jacq, a hearing-impaired employee of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, finished 9th overall out of 2,763 runners and represented France as he stood at the winner’s podium. “It was a pleasure to run with the French Embassy’s team to combat cancer, and [I] will repeat the experience next year,” stated Mr. Jacq. Fellow colleague Rose-Marie Josselin, has been organizing the Embassy’s team with the help of Mercedes and José Martins since 1999.

NEWS FROM FRANCE

Boston commemorated Le Jour de la Bastille with more than just a fête at the Liberty Hotel — its Franklin Park Zoo welcomed new additions to its animal family. Two French, male donkeys made their grand entrance just in time for France’s independence day on July 14. These mammals (pictured above) are regular quadrupeds — they are Baudets du Poitou, or Poitou donkeys, “an extremely rare breed ... and the oldest breed approved in France” according to Zoo New England, as well as the rarest donkey breed in the world. With only about 500 in existence, it is no wonder that “the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy lists the Poitou as critical on its Conservation Priority List.” With their long, thick dark coat highly prized by breeders, white nose, grey underbelly, and tall stature, these unique donkeys are sure to be a hit with young and old alike. The donkeys were greeted with French-themed decorations and are located in the Children’s Zoo.
Sky-High Success for Paris Air Show Centennial

At this year’s Paris Air Show, considerable crowds gathered at the Paris-Le Bourget exhibition park to participate in the world’s largest aviation event and celebrate its 100th anniversary. From June 15 to 21, entrepreneurs, researchers, politicians, and the general public cruised the vast span of the aeronautical industry’s past, present, and future.

Reflecting an increasingly interconnected world, the air show soared to new heights as it welcomed an exceptionally sizable and diverse crowd. With doors open to the general public, the number of visitors reached 157,000 in addition to 3,500 journalists. With a major business component, the Salon du Bourget, as it is known in French, attracted 150 official delegations coming from 20 countries, over 155,000 trade visitors, and a record number of 2,000 exhibitors who all seized the opportunity to “set up commercial links, put forward future programs, present equipment, and broker contracts and partnership projects.” Together, this massive crowd embodied the air show’s strong emphasis on the international sphere. Overall, 48 countries were represented, including new participants Australia, Lithuania, Libya, Mexico, and Tunisia. This international gathering provided the forum in which to showcase innovations such as the new Russian regional transport twin-engine jet dubbed the Sukhoi Superjet 100, and the latest Chinese L-15 advanced jet trainer. Austrian company Schiebel displayed its Camcopter helicopter drone, the first unmanned vessel to be exhibited in the air show’s history.

France and greater Europe’s technological achievements stood out among this distinguished international crowd. The numerous contracts signed demonstrated the extraordinary progress achieved from the pioneers’ first hesitant airplane models to the Airbus A380. European conglomerate EADS’s Airbus unit reported that airlines welcomed the air show’s strong emphasis on the international sphere. Overall, 48 countries were represented, including new participants Australia, Lithuania, Libya, Mexico, and Tunisia. This international gathering provided the forum in which to showcase innovations such as the new Russian regional transport twin-engine jet dubbed the Sukhoi Superjet 100, and the latest Chinese L-15 advanced jet trainer. Austrian company Schiebel displayed its Camcopter helicopter drone, the first unmanned vessel to be exhibited in the air show’s history.

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Rats! A Cutting-Edge Robot with Whiskers

The future of robotics could send some scurrying for cover: researchers at France’s Institute for Intelligent Systems and Robotics (ISIR) have recently created a uniquely sophisticated artificial rat. Named Psikharpax after the mythical king of rodents, the mechanical mammal was designed in the hopes of opening new frontiers in artificial intelligence. The goal of the French researchers is to overcome one of robotics’ greatest challenges — reproducing learning ability — by getting Psikharpax to “survive” on its own. “We want to make robots that are able to look after themselves and depend on humans as least as possible,” explains Agnès Guillot of the Psikharpax team.

Psikharpax represents a new direction in scientists’ quest to design a robot that can act independently of human guidance. Instead of attempting to jump right into replicating the intense complexities of the human brain, researchers at ISIR are starting with the simpler abilities shared with other animals — such as rats. “The rat is the animal that scientists know best, and the structure of its brain is similar to that of humans,” elaborates Steve Nguyen, a doctoral candidate at ISIR.

Psikharpax’s creators believe that its biomimicry, sophistication of sensors and rat neurology-mirroring software is unparalleled in the field of robotics. The large, white automaton has cameras for eyes, microphones for ears, wheels for movement, and four-inch long whiskers on its snout, all of which collect data sent to a chip initiating the structures in a living rat’s brain. Unlike its real-world counterparts, however, Psikharpax feeds strictly off of battery power.

How Cinderella Got Her Groove Back

One of Disney’s most famous princesses is getting a makeover — not from her fairy godmother but from Pascal Hérold, French film director and producer of La Véritable histoire du chat botté and founder of the cinematic production company Herold & Family. His new movie Cendrillon (Cinderella) will be produced jointly by Herold & Family and animation company Nexus Factory in Paris’s Delacave Studio. One of the movie’s claims to fame is that it will be one of the first French stereoscopic three-dimensional animation films, but it certainly will not be the last. According to Variety magazine, “Stereoscopic 3-D is making waves in France, as indeed much of Europe, both from its impact on box office results, and the consequent rollout of dedicated 3-D cinema theater screens. The number of French directors announcing 3-D projects grows almost by the week.”

Based on the fairy tale by 17th-century French author Charles Perrault, the new version of Cendrillon is written by a team of screenwriters that includes Hérold as well as Frederic Le Bolloch and Alexandre and Jérôme Apergis. The film’s setting is America’s Wild West with a host of exciting characters and scenarios to match, while its creative leaps will include pirates, iguanas, vultures and a Native American sorcerer in lieu of a fairy godmother. The film is expected to debut in 2011.

L’Oréal Celebrates 100 Years

Women have turned to L’Oréal for innovative cosmetic products for the past 100 years. At the beginning of the 20th century, natural-looking hair dye was in great demand, but the only products available in the market caused severe allergic reactions to sensitive skin. All this changed in 1909, when French chemist Eugène Schueller created the world’s first safe hair dye, which he named “L’Auréliane.” Since then, L’Oréal has been the site of some of cosmetics’ greatest innovations, including Dop, the first mass-market shampoo made without soap (1934), Rétical, the first ever home hair dye kit (1966), and Revitalift, a skin cream with a “facelift” effect. Nearly 100 years after its inception, L’Oréal is one of the world’s leaders in cosmetic research and products — last year, the Paris-based company employed 67,500 men and women globally.

L’Oréal’s areas of operation, however, are not limited to business or cosmetic innovation. Launched in celebration of its centennial anniversary and in demonstration of its desire to give a makeover to its spheres of social responsibility, its “100 Citizen Projects Around the World” focus on enhancing education and professional opportunities. Some of these projects include facilitating the entrance of young handicapped individuals into the beauty and commerce industries in France, financing schooling and educational opportunities for girls in Turkey, promoting art and music education of underprivileged children in Australia, supporting disadvantaged youth in Sweden, and many others. These projects remind customers and business entrepreneurs alike that L’Oréal plans on taking seriously its mission of beautifying the world for at least another 100 years.
City of Light Shines in City Brands Index

Despite tough competition from cities such as Sydney, London, Rome and New York, Paris was ranked the top city among 49 others in this year’s Anholt-GfK Roper City Brands Index, released on June 16. As an analysis of data from approximately 10,000 adults in 20 countries, the results were derived from averaging the scores of six categories. Paris especially shone in three areas: its presence in the global community; its climate, cleanliness, and overall appearance; and the quality and types of lifestyles available to the public. These findings highlight Paris’s status as a beautiful, globally recognized city that offers an array of exciting events, tourist attractions and lively nightlife.

Combining the efforts of market research organization GfK Custom Research North America and British author and government advisor Simon Anholt, the study is based on the latter’s concept of “city branding,” which encompasses criteria ranging from popular perception and overall likeability to vitality of business and tourism.

The idea for the exhibition originated during the artist's 2006 Chicago visit where "he was struck by both the similarities and the great contrasts between Chicago and his home city of Paris." LUMA is partnering with, among others, the French Cultural Services in Chicago and Alliance Française de Chicago to make this exhibition possible.
Les coups d’œil

Cultural Highlights

Le Centre Pompidou Finds Its Female Intuition

Modern and contemporary women artists of all nationalities conquered Le Centre Pompidou on May 27 with their exposition "elles@centrepompidou." Following the "Big Bang" and the "Movement des Images," "elles@centrepompidou" is the third major theme to be featured at the museum (www.centrepompidou.fr). The works of 200 artists, including Maria-Elena Vieira da Silva, Sonia Delaunay, Frida Kahlo, Dorothea Tanning, and Joan Mitchell, adorn the rooms of the fourth and fifth floors of the museum in chronological and thematic order. Among the seven topics are "Pioneers," a presentation of works that were at the forefront of artistic change, "Free Fire," a representation of individuals who played historic roles by challenging established boundaries and categorizations, and "A Room of One’s Own," an embodiment of the notion of private space. The exhibition walls also offer written reflections of female writers, philosophers, novelists, and historians. Some of the artists accompanied their pieces with commentaries and engaged the public through lectures and discussions. For additional instruction on the exhibition, an audio-guide provides guided tours while a 384-page catalogue contains several essays and a chronology of women’s art over the past century, published in French and English.

After Nearly 90 Years of Smiling, the Laughing Cow Still Says ‘Cheese’

A famous ongoing French commercial asks: "Why does the Laughing Cow laugh?" La Vache qui rit, the smiling 90-year-old celebrity on the package of the soft, easy-to-spread cheese, now welcomes the public to its home in the Jura province where one just might find the answer.

Created in 1921 at Lons-le-Saunier, in the heart of the mountainous Eastern region of France, this product quickly earned global recognition thanks to its unique recipe, triangular shape, and unfor-gettable icon. The producer of La vache qui rit is shedding some light on the inner workings that helped create its product, including the story of its production, promotion, and even its imitators. The public is invited to tour the old factory, facilities, and machinery and to watch a movie that traces the technological advances that formed the cheese’s product life-cycle. The museum also boasts a collection of over 600 objects including the original round container and drawing of French illustrator Benjamin Rabier. Children embark on an interactive adventure as they make their way through the "heroes’ obstacle course" with their very own multimedia badges, accompanied by the projection of a 3-D Vache qui rit who orients their journey. The surrounding grounds invite toddlers to enjoy the large garden equipped with various thematic toys, and an obstacle course that explains the intriguing transformation of milk to cheese.

This museum not only focuses on the company’s history, but also inspires both creativity and innovation. La vache qui rit company, for whom energy consumption is no laughing matter, envisions a future where efficiency is essential. Architects Reichen et Robert & Associés equipped the museum with environmentally-friendly technology and numerous energy optimization processes, including 560-ft² of photovoltaic panels, geothermic technology, low-energy consuming lighting, and larch wood without chemical protection.

Lights, Camera, Action: Celebrating French Film

A journey into the world of French cinema began in Boston with French director Réné Bezançon’s moving box-office hit The First Day of the Rest of Your Life. From July 9 to 26, the 14th Annual Boston French Film Festival, in cooperation with Cultural Services Office of the French Embassy in Boston, premiered 20 French feature films. The diverse selection of movies included comedies, historical dramas, thrillers, and mysteries. The festival ended on a high note with the screening of Martin Provost’s drama Séraphine in which young French painter Séraphine Louis captivates viewers as she works exhausting house-keeping jobs by day and paints beautiful canvases by night. Other screenings included Claire Denis’s latest film 35 Shots of Rhino, Maiwenn’s Le Besco’s All About

Actresses, and Pascal Thomas’s Towards Zero, an original adaptation of an Agatha Christie novel.

Several other cities partook in the French cinematic season in the U.S. The 2009 Denver French Film Festival, organized by the Denver Film Society and the Alliance Française de Denver, ran from June 17 to 28 at the Starz Film Center and screened 14 films. Some features highlighted veteran directors’ latest achievements such as Agnès Varda’s self-portraitdocumentary Beaches of Agnès. The Denver Film Society honored productions such as The Beautiful Person, a modern adaptation of Madame de Lafayette’s novel La Princesse de Clèves, by younger artist Christophe Honoré. California’s capital held its 8th Sacramento French Film Festival from June 19 to 28 at the Crest Theatre, where audiences enjoyed more than just the delights of French cinema. In addition to midnight movie screenings, a fashion show, French classics, short films, premières, and a special visit from actor Aurélien Wiik, the theater offered viewers all kinds of treats, including an open wine bar and French food at the opening, and pastries and coffee at late-night showings.

The Louvre: A Cultural and Financial Staple of the City

The Louvre — a wonder rooted in centuries of innovation, and a touristic site that attracts 6 million visitors a year — never ceases to stand out as an exceptional cultural center. A recent study by the Centre d’Économie de la Sorbonne that examined the Louvre’s economic influence revealed that unlike most museums, it is an active profit center that plays a major role in the community. According to French daily Le Figaro, with annual revenues 10 times greater than its spending, the Louvre earns between $835 million and $1.39 billion in profit. As a major destination for the average visitor of Paris, the museum alone is responsible for almost $544 million in yearly tourist spending. Most telling was an in-depth look at the Louvre’s role in generating employment. While the Louvre employs 2,000 people, the sum of individuals involved professionally in this institution at any given time amounts to 21,000 people. With these figures, the Louvre boasts its transformation from a site at the margins of Paris to one that “dominates the heart of the city.”

Festival de Saint-Denis Strikes an International Chord

The soft reverberations of classical music filled the outskirts of Paris as the Festival de Saint-Denis celebrated its 40th anniversary with music, dance and musical theater. From June 7 to July 7, European artists, choirs and orchestras featured international talents such as Russian violinist Alina Ibragimova and German conductor Kurt Masur. The performances ranged from Verdi’s “Messa de requiem” to Mendelssohn’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” to Rachmaninoff’s “The Bells.” Festival musicians reached out to younger generations, and students had the opportunity to meet with musicians, attend workshops, and visit the Basilica of St. Denis. The concerts ranged from $15 to $91, and were recorded by Radio France for free online broadcasting. For more information, please visit: www.festival-saint-denis.com.

NEWS FROM FRANCE
Bastille Day Storms the United States

France was not the only country where fireworks illuminated the skies this July 14. La Fête Nationale was celebrated in many major American cities as Francophiles from all over the United States enjoyed the opportunity to commemorate French culture and history through French food, games, and entertainment.

Boston celebrated July 14 in style at the Liberty Hotel, an appropriate venue, as it was formerly a prison. To start off the evening, the event offered a broadcast of Parisian festivities, cocktails, and dancing. At the hotel’s deluxe restaurants, party-goers savored classic French dishes such as gâteau de foies de volaille (chicken foie gras) and jambon du porc braisé sur nouilles fraîches (braised pork on fresh noodles). As day turned into night, a French DJ helped revellers tear up the dance floor of the Liberty Hotel. Harvard Square likewise participated in the festivities, with various French music, food, and performances.

New York City’s Upper East Side came alive on Sunday, July 12, as French cuisine and performers, even cancan dancers, stormed 60th Street (www.bastilledaynyc.com). The theme this year, Art de Vivre à la Française (The Art of French Living), aimed to give the festivities a luxurious touch. An open-air picnic offered delicacies while children tried their hand at soft pétanque and adults perused French market-stalls. For two lucky people, the highlight of the celebration was winning round-trip tickets to Paris.

Philadelphia’s festivities began July 9 and did not rest until July 12 (www.easternstate.org). Most notable was Philadelphia’s very own version of the Storming of the Bastille, during which “Marie Antoinette” was abducted by an angry crowd, threw Butterscotch Krimpets from her prison window in imitation of the real monarch’s alleged assertion to “let them eat cake,” and was finally brought to justice in front of a crowd which decided her fate vis-à-vis a (real) guillotine.

On the opposite coast, Le bal des pompiers (Firefighter’s Ball) was held July 11 in Seattle (www.seattle-bastille.org) amidst plenty of live music and other festivities. Le bal, a French tradition, is usually held the night before or on the day of La Fête Nationale in many French cities and is hosted by the local firemen. The dancing often moves to the streets and can last until the early morning.

The memory of the Bastille did not lack attention from the Midwest. Milwaukee’s 28th Bastille Day celebration included its version of the Storming of the Bastille, a five-kilometer run that started off the festivities on July 9. Milwaukee (www.easttown.com) offered events until July 12, which included mini-French lessons, street performances, and a traditional French mass. A 43-foot Eiffel Tower soared above the participants and gave the festival an authentic feel. Similarly, Minneapolis (www.amflsp.org) offered various sorts of traditional food and wine as well as mimes, children’s performers, and even an exhibition of vintage Citroën cars at its Opera Center on July 11.

In the South, Atlanta (www.afatl.com) celebrated in its Atrium of City Hall with fine dining and an exhibition of photography featuring the city of Atlanta through the French lens. The band US Beat performed throughout the evening, and a French market and silent auction offered, among other things, jewelry, art, and travel accommodations. This event, held on July 11, commemorated not only Bastille Day but also the Atlanta Consulate’s 20th anniversary.

Many other cities, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco also celebrated the French holiday. Los Angeles featured a pétanque tournament and a Parisian Waiters Race, while San Francisco hosted a bal populare. Please visit the embassy’s Web site (www.ambafrance-us.org) and click on the interactive map to find out more about each region’s consulate and festivities.