France Hosts International Conference to End Use of Child Soldiers

France hosted an international conference in Paris concerning the issue of children involved in armed forces, "Let Us Free the Children of War," on February 5 and 6. French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy and Ann M. Veneman, executive director of UNICEF (the United Nations Children’s Fund) presided over the event which brought together representatives of nearly 60 countries and delegates from the European Union, the United Nations, and other international and non-governmental organizations.

The conference laid out a framework of action known as the "Paris Commitments" to stop the illegal use of children in armed conflict. In addition, it called for the preparation of new programs to care for, protect and reintegrate child soldiers, specifically through a new set of guidelines known as the "Paris Principles."

Minister Douste-Blazy warned that the use of children in armed conflict threatens the stability and growth of Africa. These are "lost children, lost for peace and lost for development of their countries," he said. At the end of the conference, a petition of more than 235,000 signatures encouraging the care and demobilization of child soldiers was presented to the minister. "We commit ourselves to spare no effort to end the unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed forces or groups in all regions of the world," Douste-Blazy concluded at the final session.

The number of children recruited or used by armed forces and groups is estimated at 250,000 in 2007.

France accords great importance to the issue of child soldiers. It is co-financing reintegration programs in Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone. It has also chaired the Security Council working group on children soldiers since November 2005.

Remembering the Righteous of France

In a ceremony held on January 18, France honored the "Righteous of France," nearly 3,000 French nationals who risked their lives rescuing Jewish persons from mass deportation by the Nazis. While speaking at the Panthéon in central Paris, French President Jacques Chirac unveiled a plaque commemorating these heroes of the French Resistance.

"In the worst collapse of our history," President Chirac solemnly affirmed, "great numbers of French women and men were to show that the values of humanism were rooted in their souls. Everywhere, they took in, hid, saved — risking their own lives — children, women, men persecuted because they were Jews."

Chirac called upon France to continue the work of the Righteous. "Now more than ever," Chirac concluded, "we must heed your message: the fight for tolerance and fraternity, against anti-Semitism, discrimination, and racism in all its forms is one which is being fought continually." In this same ceremony, Chirac called Holocaust denial a "crime against truth" and "an absolute perversion of the soul and the spirit."

President Chirac was France’s first president to publicly acknowledge the French state’s responsibility during Nazi occupation. The ceremony was the first official tribute to the "Righteous of France," whose members are part of the "Righteous Among the Nations," an organization of nearly 21,000 non-Jews worldwide credited with saving Jews during the Holocaust.

Simone Veil, President of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, former French Politician and the first Woman President of the European Parliament, also attended the ceremony. Now nearly 80 years old, Simone Veil’s fight against anti-Semitism in France and elsewhere has been enduring and profound. The daughter of a Jewish architect in Nice, Veil witnessed the holocaust firsthand, deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, where she would remain until the camp’s liberation in January of 1945. In a speech at the Panthéon, she emphasized that there was the France of Vichy, responsible for the deportation of 77,000 Jews, of whom 11,000 were children, but that there were also all those men and women thanks to whom three-quarters of the Jews of our country escaped the Nazis.

She was invited a few days later to the United Nations in New York where she gave the opening speech for Holocaust Remembrance Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. She met with representatives of the Jewish community in New York and addressed the issue of anti-Semitism. She underlined the actions France has taken to keep memory alive. "There is not a day when we do not think of the Shoah," said Veil. "It is not true that we cannot talk about it at school […] We speak about it everywhere. And the children, even at a very young age, are interested. They want to know, to understand."

The sequence of presentations by Chirac and Veil paid a strong tribute to those who risked their own lives to fight anti-Semitism during the war. According to Veil, "In a certain way, the two events allow a more just recognition of what were the actions of France and the French people."
France Mourns Loss of Beloved Father

ONE of France's most beloved philanthropists, Abbé (Father) Pierre, passed away January 22 at the age of 94. A vocal advocate for the poor and homeless, Pierre once soothed the disadvantaged with his caring words, "You who suffer, you who are, enter, sleep, eat and reaffirm your hope. Here, someone loves you." Delivering on his word, he persuaded parliament to make it illegal for landlords to evict tenants during winter.

Helping Jews to escape during WWII, Abbé Pierre began dedicating his life to those in need at a young age. Throughout his life, he appealed to the inherent kindness that he saw in each citizen, and called for them to join his mission: "I possess nothing, but if you want to help me, we can help many others."

Pompidou Center Celebrates 30th Anniversary

FRENCH President Jacques Chirac visited the Pompidou Center on January 31 to honor the modern museum's 30th birthday. President Chirac stated, "The Georges Pompidou Centre's vocation is to light the way. Its reason for being is to go beyond all boundaries." His speech celebrated the cultural center's pioneering past and praised the museum's momentous development plans for the future.

The opening of the institution in 1977 marked the birth of Paris's most avant-garde and controversial monument. Thirty years later, the Pompidou Center (picture on right) is recognized as one of France's most distinguished landmarks. The museum boasts Europe's greatest collection of modern and contemporary art and is France's second most frequently visited museum after the Louvre — hosting over 180 million visitors. The building's six levels of steel and glass were intended to manage 5,000 guests each day, and the structure has drawn over 25,000 people daily. Last year alone, more than five million visitors explored the Pompidou Center's extraordinary exhibits.

The museum's undeniable international influence and popularity has inspired an ambitious project to establish two additional branches of the modern art institution. Early next year, the center will open a Pompidou outpost in the northern French city of Metz and projects to install another branch of the museum in Shanghai, China. President Chirac supports the program of expansion and announced that "putting an outpost in that part of the world, and preferably in China—a major power that has the vocation to become a major pole for artistic creation—will allow the center to develop irreplaceable skills to encourage more vibrant exchanges with that part of the world." Additionally, the president suggested that the landmark should consider associations with India, Russia, South America and Africa. With some luck, the Pompidou Center's 60th anniversary could be celebrated not only in France, but also at the museum's many partners all over the globe.

France to Consider Introducing New Wine Labels

CHOOSING which of France's 30 unique varieties of wine to enjoy may soon become easier thanks to the launch of a national wine label. For the first time, the "Vignobles de France" mark is pursuing a proposal to authorize French wine makers to fuse mid-range vins de pays wines from individual regions with one another, permitting the producer to sell the blended wine under a single French label.

"We are trying to link together the word 'France,' the name of a grape and the name of a brand on which a company can invest over the long term and earn some money," explained a wine industry official. The new marketing strategy will allow consumers to simply identify their preferred variety of wine according to grape type as opposed to choosing among 140 Vins de Pays and France's 13 major wine-manufacturing regions, which each represent different qualities. As early as this spring, wine enthusiasts around the world could be toasting to the label of Vignobles de France.
French Webmagazine Launched for NYC

B ENEVOLE a New York! Beginning January 29, French tourists and Francophone New Yorkers could discover the Big Apple with ease thanks to the launch of French Morning (www.frenchmorning.com/nyc), the first Webmagazine designed for French speakers living in the U.S.

Every day the site boasts a broad range of new articles, including daily spotlights featured throughout the week. Each Monday, "La France Made in USA" discusses French-related news stories, from the perspective of the American press. Laila Demay's Wednesday column, "Les Pintaderies", reveals the ins and outs of becoming a true New Yorker, all the way down to the essential pair of jeans. Guilleminette Faure gives exclusive advice every Thursday through the blog "Ask Guilleminette" and shares valuable tricks on how to survive the dynamic world of New York. The "NY Pratique" section of the Webmagazine provides other day-to-day wisdom, covering handy topics such as visas, housing, schooling, job opportunities, and health providers. French Morning is also an excellent source for restaurant, club, and bar recommendations.

This new site is brimming with useful information ranging from local and international news, to schedules of French conferences, concerts, movies and expositions happening around the city. French Morning is created and led by a team of Francophone journalists living in the United States and plans to develop many more local editions of the magazines that will serve a variety of major American cities in the near future.

France Pays Tribute to D-Day Vet for His Fight in WWII

FRANCE honored James Sheeran in a ceremony at French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte's residence in Washington, D.C., on January 31, for his bravery and courage during the Second World War as member of the 101st Airborne Division. "This evening, I want to pay tribute to a great American patriot and to a Son of France," announced Ambassador Levitte while bestowing the insignia of Chevalier in the Légion d'honneur upon "Jimmy." Mr. Sheeran is also the father of Josette Sheeran Shiner, who was the Under Secretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs for the U.S. Department of State until 2005 and has been the Head of the U.N. World Food Programme since November, 2006.

Ambassador Levitte recounted Jimmy's "extraordinary story, much better than any Steven Spielberg movie," to the invited guests, which included French and American diplomats as well as members of Sheeran’s family and former colleagues of Josette Sheeran Shiner from her time at the Washington Times.

Jimmy's story began with his father, John Sheeran, meeting Jimmy's mother, Lucie Munier-Sheeran, in the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

Miraculously, Jimmy escaped while being transported by train. As chance would have it, he found himself in the Ardennes region of France, only 130 miles from his mother's birthplace. He quickly joined members of the Resistance and assisted in several successful sabotage operations against the German troops. Soon Jimmy's adventures landed him in Domremy, where he was reunited with his mother's family after one of his mother's former teachers recognized him by family resemblance. Jimmy hid with his newfound family for several months until he was able to safely escape and rejoin the American army and continue fighting the war.

French Circus Clowns Around in New Orleans

A FRENCH Street Circus, Le Prato, traveled to New Orleans last month, entertaining school children and adults alike through a series of performances and workshops. The performing troupe arrived January 12 from Lille and remained in the city for more than one week, delighting the crowd with street performances and conducting workshops at local schools. During the workshops, the skilled performers taught the art of acrobatics, juggling and clowning to eager school children who demonstrated their newly acquired talents in a special presentation January 20 to friends and family who had gathered for the occasion.

Members of Le Prato displayed their own expertise in an hour-long performance January 14 that took place as part of the "Soirée Française: France and Jazz on Frenchmen Street," a day long cultural celebration that featured local and French musicians and performers. Their performance followed a forum earlier in the day during which French and local musicians discussed the cultural links between France and Louisiana. The evening culminated in a series of jazz sets at local jazz clubs across the city.

Le Prato street circus ensemble is part of Le Prato International Theatre located in Lille, France. There are residency programs, year-long presentations and regional traveling shows. Today, Le Prato is an accredited theater in the "burlesque arts"— the art of everything that moves! Founded by clowns, Le Prato is also a troupe creating its own shows by exploring the many forms of laughter and poetry.

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Entrepreneurialism in France

Investors take note! France is becoming one of Europe’s newest business hotspots. As the fifth largest economy in the world by GDP, number three exporter of services worldwide and second most productive workforce on an hourly basis in the world, France’s economy is flourishing. It also boasts the creation of 1 million businesses since 2002, 230,000 of which were formed last year alone.

The French use the verb *entreprendre* to describe the act of organizing, operating, and assuming the risk for a business venture. In English, the word "entrepreneurialism" refers to the same process. The "entrepreneur" is the leader who identifies the opportunity and executes a plan of action upon his own initiative and at great personal risk. To be an entrepreneur or "to entreprendre" thus encompasses notions of self-motivation, uncertainty, and adventure. It refers to state of mind or a certain *esprit* in the heart and mind of the individual.

Xavier Kergall, founder and general director of the Salon des Entrepreneurs, a yearly business convention that takes place in Lyon and Paris, characterizes the increasingly large number of individuals in France who have seized opportunities to form new businesses, even at great personal risk. "With the gradual decrease of financial, legal, and psychological restraints around the creation of business in France, we have seen a trend reversal in recent years: at present, more and more executives, employers and job seekers have undertaken ventures that would have been considered too risky before," said Mr. Kergall.

**The New Business *Esprit* in France's Education System**

Schools are also making entrepreneurship a key component of the education plan. Gilles de Robien, France’s Minister of Education, hopes that schools and business, two traditionally separate domains, can soon reach a rapprochement. "We must impart upon the young a desire to innovate. It is necessary in order to orient the students toward a professional life and to guarantee [their] smooth transition to the workforce."

Under his direction, a new operation “100,000 Entrepreneurs” aims to teach the youth of France about the business world. Beginning in elementary school, the association organizes conferences between students and professionals. Over the course of a two-hour class, workers talk to students about their life and experiences in the working world. "We want to tell them: it’s cool to start a business, why not try it out?" explained Philippe Hayat who heads the project.

France’s youth seems to have caught on. A 2006 survey conducted by IFOP, an international marketing firm, reveals that 46 percent of France’s youth between the ages of 13 and 25 dream of owning their own business. "Will I become rich if I start a business?" asked one eager school child after one such session. "Can a girl succeed in this type of work?" inquired another.

In higher education, French schools topped the Financial Time’s 2006 ranking of the European Masters in Management programs. Last year, French schools offered 11 of the 35 programs ranked; of these 11, six occupied the top seven ranks. HEC ranked the highest for the second year in a row, also boasting the best paid graduates who earned an average of $74,400 a year.

**FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN FRANCE**

France’s entrepreneurial spirit has not gone unnoticed by investors. France, alongside China, ranks first worldwide for total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin announced January 29 that France’s FDI reached almost $88 billion in 2006, a nearly 40 percent increase from 2005 and over triple the 2004 figure. "Our country is one of the most open in the world," Villepin said. He added that foreign investment "stimulates [France’s] long term growth" and "contributes to its development." According to Villepin, the increase in last year’s FDI was also responsible for the creation of more than 30,000 jobs in 2005 and 35,000 in 2006.

**Focus on Technology:**

**The Virtual Businessman**

France is a technology-driven economy, boasting one of the most technically skilled workforces in the world. In Europe, it ranks second for the number of workers holding scientific or technical diplomas and hosts the second largest workforce engaged in research and development. France now also lays claim to a new generation of virtual businessmen who have successfully capitalized on the Internet and its vast economic potential.

Across the country, young professionals are creating successful e-businesses. Thirty-two-year-old Pauline de Breteuil is one of France’s newest virtual success stories. This mother of three and graduate of HEC who left a promising career in marketing to open up a virtual jewelry and handbag store on the Internet. After only three months, Winaretta.com has already proven its success. "The beginning wasn’t easy," she said, "I felt very alone...No one was ready to take a young entrepreneur only on good faith." Today, over 15,000 people visit her site each month, which offers over 500 luxury products, including jewelry, handbags, and accessories. "It’s true, I took risks but even if I have to work until one o’clock in the morning, I experience a sense of freedom—which is priceless in my eyes."

Pierre Kosciusko-Morizet, founder of Priceminister.com, also offers his advice. He has become a virtual star in France, gaining fame for his site, which allows consumers to buy and sell goods via the Internet. The 29-year-old hotshot is especially popular among school-age children who use his business to make pocket money. "Where there’s a will, there’s a way," he told a group of school children. "It’s the passion to innovate that moves mountains...[...]." When you form your own company, neither clients nor suppliers ask you if you studied business. I know many CEO’s who did not receive any formal education and started out penniless and who came from the *boulangeries* without any particular connections. Me, I started off with a student loan."

The *SalondesEntrepreneurs.com*, an on-line forum for businessmen to network and exchange ideas about their professions, is another example of the strength of the e-community in France. Launched in October 2006, the site offers a virtual forum for entrepreneurs who seek advice about starting or managing a business and allows them to showcase their product. Participants exchange ideas with each other via virtual message boards or engage in biweekly video chats with various types of experts, including lawyers, accountants, notaries, and bankers. A virtual trade show that is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year offers businessmen a choice of exhibitors, partners, and suppliers personally selected by the site.
Auto Industry Receives Breath of Fresh Air

Indian automotive company Tata Motors signed an agreement with French corporation Moteur Développement International (MDI) to produce and license the first air-powered passenger cars to be introduced in India by 2008. MDI, located at Carros near Nice, has pioneered an engine with only compressed air for fuel — which could be the most environmentally friendly engine yet. The new engine is efficient, cost-effective, scalable, and capable of other applications such as power generation.

The latest incarnation of the MDI engine, CAT 34, operates on an innovative system to control the movement of both pistons and crankshaft. The pistons work in two stages: one motor stage and one intermediate stage of compression and expansion. These two-stage pistons serve dual functions, first to compress ambient air, thus refilling the air compression storage tanks on which the car runs, and secondly to make successive expansions cycles which approach a level of isothermic expansion. What is equally impressive is that the CAT 34 engine can be equipped with, and run on multiple fuels, including fossil fuels, bio diesels or compressed air.

While the engine runs on alternative fuels, the compressor refills the condensed air tanks while maintaining zero-pollution emissions.

For more information about the MDI air-engine please visit: www.theaircar.com

Protons Set to Break World Speed Record at CERN

The Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the most powerful particle accelerator in the world, located at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN, is primed to make history later this year. When activated, the LHC will collide beams of protons against one another at energy levels of 14 TeV, and of lead nuclei at an unprecedented level of 1150 TeV. A single TeV unit is roughly equivalent to the amount of energy a flying mosquito consumes when in motion. What makes the LHC so remarkable is that it can compress this energy into a space a million times smaller than this tiny insect.

The increased energy levels that the LHC particle accelerator will produce are crucial in order to allow further discoveries concerning the understanding of particles and their mass. These breakthroughs in particle research will engender a new age of discoveries about the universe, many of which are expected to produce the greatest advances in science yet. Officials at CERN state that the LHC will assist in solving various issues, including questions about anti-matter, supersymmetry, the Standard Model, and the forces which forged our universe.

To achieve such goals, the LHC will break technological records. Functioning at a biting 1.9K (approximately -270 degrees Celsius), lower than outer space itself, the 27-km-long particle accelerator will handle as much data transfers as the entire European telecommunications network does today. Along with particle collisions that occur approximately 800 million times a second, the LHC is poised to change our perceptions of the universe.

Excavation Gives Glimpse into History of Southern France

The French southern city of Nîmes, one of the largest cities in Roman times, is currently undergoing a major urban excavation in hopes of discovering relics from the past. The excavation team consisting of 35 archeologists is investigating a band of earth 15 by 400 meters at the very heart of the ancient town. "This linearity is very interesting, because it allows us to complete a large section of the Roman city and its origins," noted Marc Célix, Scientific and Technical Assistant to the National Institute for Research in Preventive Archaeology (INRAP). "There, we will be able to study how the Gaelic countryside outside the walls was progressively covered up by the Roman city," he added.

Roman Nîmes is celebrated for its impressive amphitheaters, expansive aqueducts and temples dedicated to the descendants of the Emperor Augustus. Despite the sweeping 220 hectare aqueduct system that once encircled the fortified city, today only a fraction of that figure has been retrieved.

With the possibility of a number of considerable findings waiting just under the soil, there remains much work to be done. The occasion to perform an excavation such as this only becomes available "one or two times each decade," stated Jean-Paul Demoule, president of INRAP. The archeological event is certain to give the world a better understanding of the many developments in the historical city of Nîmes.
France Voted “Best Place in the World To Live”

France is the best place to live, according to the International Living’s Quality of Life Index which ranked France number one for the second year running. The Index, which examines a variety of countries around the world each year, looks at factors such as cost of living, taxes, climate, and business opportunities.

France can attribute its success to a variety of factors, including its low cost of living. For example, elegant and affordable homes can be purchased outside of Paris for less than $100,000. In addition, the country boasts one of the highest health ratings in the world, and the World Health Organization ranked France’s healthcare system as one of the best. Family friendly policies such as reduced taxes for large families and paid parental leave also contributed to its high ranking.

France also enjoys a robust economy. A per capita GDP of $27,500, strong exports, and one of the largest agricultural markets in the European Union attract foreign investment. In addition, the country offers a strong infrastructure with an easily navigable and ultra fast system of TGVs, high speed trains which can travel at speeds of up to 320.3 mph.

For more information about the Index and study, please visit: www.internationalliving.com.

Sébastien Loeb Clinches Monte-Carlo

The World Rally Championship (WRC), one of the most strenuous and challenging events in the history of motorsports, kicked off the 2007 season with the 75th edition of the Monte-Carlo Rally. Taking place across 16 countries, ranging everywhere from Cyprus to New Zealand, the WRC is a test of endurance for both car and driver, taking place in some of the most unforgiving roads in the world.

French driver Sébastien Loeb returned this season after a biking accident last year forced him to take a four-month leave. Despite the quadruple fracture on his right shoulder, Loeb sped through the 2007 season opener with a tour de force, seizing first place on six of the 14 event stages, claiming the 29th victory of his career.

This year’s course went through heavy design changes to transport drivers back to the birthplace of the sport: the Vercors and Ardèche regions of France, unfamiliar to current competitors. French car manufacturer Citroën also introduced its new C4 WRC to replace the proven Xsara that Loeb himself drove to three consecutive world titles in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Blogs

PLAY ROLE IN PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Political enthusiasts and internauts who come across Nicolas Vanbremeersch’s blog find his analyses accurately issue-centered and charmingly introspective. The French political blogger, known to many as simply “Versac,” maintains a delicate air of mystery around his personal convictions, leaving his followers to guess his political persuasion. His analytical style drew nearly half a million people to his site in 2006 alone, 80,000 of whom became regulars on the blog. Those visiting regularly took Versac’s analysis into account at least 50 times, engaged in debates on issues he highlighted, and used his references to better understand the platform of each candidate for the upcoming French presidential elections.

Journalists and media in France often point to Versac as the center of France’s political blogosphère. However, the popular political blogger authors only one out of thousands of politically oriented sites in France today. While more neutral sites seek to develop an encompassing database of each candidate’s political platform, political parties and more militant supporters have also created a visible presence on the Internet. Many candidates have created sites of their own, while offering official domain names to bloggers who wish to declare their support. In addition, a record number of inscriptions to political parties are being made online, a practice which has helped reach out to younger and previously less politically active citizens. The government itself is catching on to the trend. French Minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy recently invited a number of bloggers to the Quai d’Orsay, with the objective of discussing the place of foreign affairs in the current political campaign.

Never before has the Internet played such a conspicuous role in France’s political life. With the first round of elections a mere two months away, the phenomenon has left political experts to speculate over the implications of this popular new medium in the developing campaign.

Despite the emergence of political sites on the Internet, however, Vanbremeersch predicts that it may not be the dead-line supporters whose opinion will count the most. “The blog which has the most influence is that which modifies the perception [of the voter], thus modifying little by little the political agenda,” he told a fellow blogger in Lyon. Remaining true to his theory, Versac maintains his identity as a distanced philosopher and political expert, refraining from declaring his support for one candidate over another. “People on the right would place me on the left and vice versa,” he writes. “I have a spirit of contradiction extremely well-developed, which for bids me from placing myself in the same camp as the person with whom I am debating.” For the moment, Versac is doing his part to make sure the debate continues.
FRANCE implemented a new two-step initiative aimed at reducing smoking to promote a healthier community on February 1. The first stage of the restriction prohibits smoking in public facilities, such as schools, sports centers, stores, hospitals, doctors’ offices, business offices, train stations, airports, theaters, and all public transportation. The most notable changes, however, will be felt on January 2008, when bars, casinos, discotheques, restaurants and cafes will have to adhere to the final half of the ban. Even though these social venues have been given a one-year grace period in order to adapt to the challenging code, a voluntary regulation strongly encourages restaurant owners to place a ”Non-smoking establishment” sticker in their windows.

Cigarette smoking remains a prevalent issue throughout the world. According to the U.S. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, smoking causes approximately one of every five deaths in the United States every year. Exposure to second-hand smoke has led to a fatality rate of nearly 5,000 French citizens per year, and the government is taking the public health initiative very seriously. Some 175,000 French agents have been assigned to oversee the legislation’s implementation in public spaces, state offices and private workplaces with the duty of penalizing smokers who disregard the law. France’s smoking ban grants hope for a breath of fresh air and a healthier society for years to come.

French Thriller Series “SAS” Releases New Book

In the presence of a bronzed female sculpture clenching an AK-47 assault rifle between her legs, French novelist Gerard de Villiers produces another contemporary action thriller on a vintage IBM typewriter in his flat located on Paris’s chic Avenue Foch. It may come as a surprise that a 74-year-old man would produce books packed with sex and violence, but Villiers has been doing just that for years. In fact, even though his novels are rarely sold in bookstores, Villiers has been on France’s best-seller lists since 1965, selling more than 200,000 copies of each issue from his 166-strong “SAS” series.

Inspired by Ian Fleming, the creator of “James Bond,” Villiers heartily acknowledges that he does not possess the literary aptitude comparable to French writers Jean-Paul Sartre or Georges Simenon, stating during an interview with Bloomberg News: “I’m not a novelist, but a story teller.” Novelist or not, Villier’s books are riveting.

In Villiers’s series, the protagonist, an Austrian prince named Malko Linge, is a rogue intelligence agent who tracks down rogue intelligence agents who tracks down international criminals. But unlike the fictional “James Bond,” actual current world events fuel the ideas behind Villiers’s novels. Basing the plots on current events provides a level of authenticity that can be attributed to Villier’s access to actual members of the intelligence community—giving his fictional books a unique sense of credibility.

Young French Musicians Gain Recognition in U.S.

YOUNG Concert Artists (YCA), a professional organization founded in 1961, discovers and launches careers of brilliant, but unknown, young musicians worldwide, including the likes of Pinchas Zuckerman and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. Offering an excellent opportunity for young musicians, more and more French artists are meeting the standards of selection to enter the YCA roster.

Jean-Frédéric Neuberger, a nineteen-year-old French pianist and recipient of the YCA’s John Browning Memorial Prize, performed at Washington’s prestigious Kennedy Center and New York’s distinguished Carnegie Hall in December, receiving rave reviews from the Washington Post, Le Journal and the New York Times. Lise de la Salle, another critically acclaimed French pianist and member of YCA, entertained guests at French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte’s residence during a dinner and auction gala early this February.

The YCA Series at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center is especially renowned for introducing emergent musicians, many of whom have gone on to win numerous Grammy awards, record under major labels, and compose and perform music that has moved audiences all over the globe. YCA concluded its February concerts with Philippe Bernhard, Loic Rio, Laurent Marfaing, and François Kieffer, of the Amedeo Modigliani Quartet (pictured below). The French quartet won the Sander Buchman Memorial Fund Prize of YCA and has been highly praised by musical commentators and the media. Thanks to the YCA, rising concert artists have the opportunity to tour in the United States, promising to further harmonize cultural exchange for decades to come.

For more information, please visit: www.yca.org.
A Glimpse of France in Southern Virginia

Students at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, no longer need to book a plane in order to catch France’s latest theater attractions. As the French & Francophone Film Festival returns to Virginia Tech’s campus this month, French enthusiasts and curious observers are getting a taste of French culture. The festival represents one of many events that are taking place on college campuses across the country as part of The Tournées Festival, a program of the French American Cultural Exchange Program (FACE). Created with the vision of encouraging college campuses to create their own self-sustaining French film festivals, the program has enjoyed enormous success. The Tournées Festival distributes $140,000 in annual grants, forming partnerships with hundreds of universities to bring French-language films to over 250,000 college students nationwide.

Virginia Tech first benefited from the grant last year, receiving wide-spread support from both students and faculty in Blacksburg. The five-weekend series of films, which began on January 27 and will end on February 24, is hosted by Blacksburg’s beloved Lyric Theatre, well known for its small-town charm. “We are very happy to have the French and Francophone film festival in Blacksburg,” Virginia Tech professor and festival organizer Janell Watson told News From France. “Our students, faculty, and community members love French-language cinema, and need more opportunities to see it on the big screen.” The Tournées Festival represents a major step forward in making that happen. For more information regarding the festival or to apply for a grant at your own school, please visit: www.letournees.com.

Matisse: Painter as Sculptor Debuts in Dallas

A NEW traveling exhibition highlighting the sculptural achievements of French artist Henri Matisse debuted January 21 in Dallas. Featuring over 150 of Matisse’s sculptures, paintings, and drawings, Matisse: Painter as Sculptor opened concurrently at the Dallas Museum of Art and the Nasher Sculpture Center.

Creators of the exhibit hope to draw attention to the lesser known aspect of Matisse’s work, in particular his skill as a sculptor. The presentation of a core group of 40 sculptures alongside selected pieces on paper, paintings, and original photographs of the artist at work will help demonstrate the dialogue between the second and third dimension in his œuvre.