

Making a Difference

WASHINGTON, DC – “Dare to Think” is the motto of the prestigious **Moscow School of Political Studies (MSPS)**, a Center nominating organization. In late April, MSPS’s charismatic director, **Dr. Elena Nemirovskaya**, visited Washington with a large Open World delegation made up of some of her best and the brightest “graduates.” Not a traditional institution of higher education, MSPS, which operates out of a Soviet-era trade union hall, instead offers classes and roundtables aimed at promoting responsive government, civic activism, and open political debate. MSPS “students,” who are mainly young government officials, businesspeople, and NGO leaders, come from across Russia and several other former Soviet countries.

The idea for MSPS began germinating in the waning days of the Soviet Union, during talks that Nemirovskaya and her husband, philosopher Yuri Senokossov, had at their kitchen table with dissident intellectuals. Nemirovskaya realized her dream in 1993, the year the school held



Dr. Elena Nemirovskaya of the Moscow School of Political Studies.

its first class. When Open World began in 1999, MSPS was an obvious nominating partner, given the organizations’ shared goals. In 2007, Open World initiated an annual accountable governance exchange to Washington, DC, and St. Louis, MO, for MSPS alumni. The nonprofit **Supporters of Civil Society in Russia** conducts the exchanges. During her trip to Washington with this year’s delegation, Nemirovskaya thanked Open World for allowing participating MSPS alumni “to expand their contacts, broaden their horizon, and actually observe other models of legislative practices, municipal management, and public-private partnerships.”

In the Field

WASHINGTON, DC – With swirls of color, the rhythmic stamping of feet, and the expert strumming of two seven-string guitars, the four-member **Drago** ensemble got their *slava* (party) on, and exposed attendees at their April 27 Library of Congress performance to traditional Russian Romani (Gypsy) song and dance. The Open World–sponsored event, which marked Drago’s U.S. debut, is the first of many performances and classes the ensemble will hold during its two-week Cultural Leaders program hosted by the Arlington, VA–based **World Music Folklife Center**. Two highlights of

Drago’s visit will be leading a workshop at the Herdeljezi Festival of Romani Culture in Adelphi, MD, May 2 and headlining May 5 at DROM, a famous New York City performance venue. Founded in St. Petersburg in 2007, Drago takes its name from *drag*, the Romani word for “dear or beloved person.” The group, which includes members of two famous Russian Romani dynasties, is dedicated to preserving and adding their own contemporary flair to ancient Romani dance and musical traditions. National Grantee: Academy for Educational Development



Dancer Yulia Studilova gives an explosive performance at the Library of Congress, to the accompaniment of her husband, Vitaly Studilov, the Drago ensemble’s leader.

Hosting Corner

WASHINGTON, DC – Nearly 20 government officials and maternal/child health specialists from Tajikistan—including a legal adviser to **President Emomali Rahmon** and the head of the Ministry of Finance’s Local Budget Department—arrived in Washington on April 16 for Open World’s first 2009 expansion-country exchange. Their April 17 orientation at the Library of Congress began with welcoming remarks from **Executive Director John O’Keefe** and a talk on U.S.–Tajikistani

relations by former U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan **R. Grant Smith**. **Tara Miles** of Arlington, VA’s Small Business Assistance Network led a session on city management and economic development for the government delegates while the health delegates met with **Dr. Jay Merchant** of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Other highlights included Q and A between government delegates headed to West Virginia and **Kate Denman** of **Rep. Nick Rahall’s office**, and an

evening reception hosted by **Tajikistan Ambassador Abdujabbor Shirinov**. The next morning, the Tajikistanis departed for programs hosted in Des Moines, IA, by **Iowa Sister States**, in Indianapolis by the **Resource Foundation**, in Kalamazoo, MI, by **Colleagues International**, and in Princeton, WV, by the **Center for International Understanding**. National Grantees: World Services, Resource Foundation, Council of International Programs USA, Academy for Educational Development