

**America Days Opening Remarks**  
**May 13, 2015**  
**Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall**

Axşamınız xeyir! Xoş gəlmisiniz! Bu gözəl binada “Amerika günləri”nin açılışında sizi görməyə şadıq.

One of the duties of an ambassador – and I would say a highly pleasant one – is building bridges between their home and host countries.

There are many similarities between the United States and Azerbaijan, something I have learned over the past year. These include an emphasis on different ethnic groups, people of different religions, different cultural traditions coming together – a striving not just for tolerance of differences, but an acceptance, a welcoming of different traditions. It has not always been easy and we sometimes fall short of this goal, but the people of both the Azerbaijan and the United States strive to live this vision and to impart this value to our future generations. And if I may be allowed a political point, it is especially important given the headlines we see in today’s world that we continue to do so.

So with this year’s America Days – a series of events over the next week throughout Azerbaijan that will feature jazz, bluegrass, American cooking, photography, dance – we are looking to show the diversity of the United States, of its culture, its people, to show something of the diversity of their ways of life and the different ways Americans look at life; to try to share with Azerbaijanis our sense that the United States, its culture, its economy, its democracy is an on-going project, that we have to accept, embrace even the idea of change and of drawing on traditions, arts, the good things with which we have been blessed and using them in ways that make sense to meet the challenges of today’s world.

In that spirit, I am happy and excited to welcome you to this concert tonight in which we are privileged to listen to outstanding Azerbaijani artists perform works by American composers. I can’t think of a better way to show and strengthen the bridges, the connections between the United States and Azerbaijan than this sort of collaborative production that harnesses the creativity that is innate in both our multicultural traditions.

Let me close by thanking Minister Garayev, Deputy Minister Mammadaliyeva and the team at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for their strong support. Let me

also extend a deep personal thanks to Mr. Adigosel-zade, Maestro Abdallayev, and the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra. And let me also thank you excellencies, friends, ladies and gentlemen for joining us here tonight.