

# Travel



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## For women only

Some great places to head to when you decide to leave the men at home **PG 4**

## Day trips

Spring (and various other) breaks **PG 2**



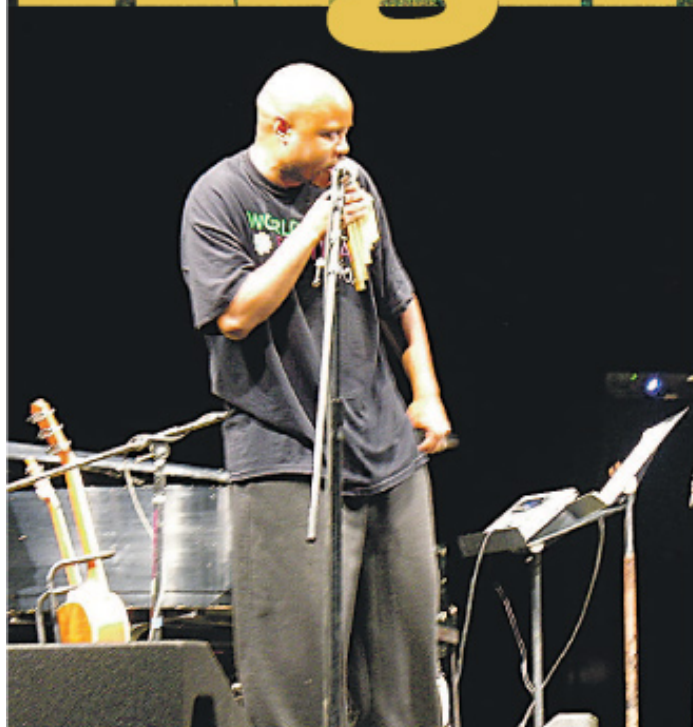
## CELEBRITY TRAVELER



BOULDER CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU PHOTO

Boulder, Colo., is one of Shodekeh's favorite places. "You just look at those mountains, and you think, 'Shut up. Don't worry about anything,'" he says.

# High notes



## Beatboxer Shodekeh's music takes him from the mountains of Colorado to the wilds of Tuva

BY STEPHANIE CITRON  
Special to The Baltimore Sun

**I**t's easy for internationally renowned musician Shodekeh to journey with just carry-on luggage; his instrument travels in his soul.

The Baltimore-based beatboxer and vocal percussionist performs in a multitude of genres and music domains, including dance and the visual arts. By channeling the concepts of musical instruments and soundscapes, he vocalizes dynamic emulations of everything: drum sets, turntables, ocean waves, sleigh bells. Shodekeh is the founding director of "Embody, A Music Series of The Vocal Arts," which strives for artistic and cultural unity through the vocal traditions of the world, ranging from opera to beatboxing.

Shodekeh said he immerses himself in local communities wherever he performs. He prefers staying at a home or at a university, rather





Baltimore beatboxer Shodekeh performs at the Conference on World Affairs in Boulder, Colo. He started attending the annual conference in 2008.

JON HURD PHOTO

than a hotel, to take in the local vibe. We caught up with him in between global appearances, to hear about the places and people that have inspired him. See **SHODEKEH**, page 5



ILYA NAYMUSHIN/REUTERS PHOTO  
Shodekeh is scheduled to pay a visit this summer to Tuva, a small Central Asian republic, where a form of throat-singing is practiced.

## **Do you have a favorite music destination?**

My music brings me to a lot of extraordinary places. But I've been traveling back and forth to Boulder, Colo., since 2008, and just love it. It's really beautiful out there; so inspiring. The mountains — they are so unreal, they look like paintings.

## **What do you do in Boulder?**

Music. [On his last visit,] I was doing a music residency at Naropa University to promote an upcoming concert with the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra. It's a piece titled "Deadlock," written by Ruby Fulton of Baltimore. The piece is about a chess game that becomes deadlocked between the two opposing kings. I provide a distinctive beat for each of the six chess pieces: pawn, knight, bishop, rook, king and queen. As the game unfolds, the beats trade off with the "orchestral translations," interacting whenever a piece is captured. Essentially, you can follow the whole game by listening to the concert.

## **What else do you do when you are there?**

We went hiking in the foothills around Boulder; it is just so serene and peaceful. I had taken some anxiety with me about some other projects coming up here in Baltimore, but you just look at those mountains, and you think, "Shut up. Don't worry about anything." It made me think if you are that worried about your problems, it's probably your ego getting in the way, and there are so many things bigger than you are out there. I tried to bring some of that back to Baltimore and find moments of peace with it. I've developed a good relationship with the community in Boulder. I don't know if there is any place like it. The people in that town, they don't lock their front doors, you know? That doesn't happen here in Baltimore.

## **When did you first visit Boulder?**

In 2008 I was a panelist and speaker at the Conference of World Affairs. I've attended for several years and really gotten to know the people and places in the area.

## **Where do you like to eat around Boulder?**

Sushi Zanmei is real good. I also had a buffalo burger for the first time. That was an interesting experience — and buffalo steak, kinda chewy, not like regular steak.

## **Where do you usually stay?**

This past time I stayed in a Quality Inn. It was really nice: heated pool, hot tub. When I went to the conference, they partnered each panelist with a member of the community to lodge with their family so the kids get exposure to whatever you have expertise in. I did that several years in a row. One family had a son who is a DJ, so we had a really great time together, spinning some cool stuff. Another time, my host family invited another family over, and their kids were musical prodigies — really fun! So I've gotten to know the people in Boulder, not just those involved with the institutions, and made some good connections.

## **Where else has your music taken you?**



The American Dance Festival at Duke University in Durham, N.C. Durham is laid-back and chill. The Duke Gardens are gorgeous; don't take a lady there unless you want to get into trouble (too romantic). Some of the best Southern food — fried chicken — I've ever eaten was at The Know [a now-defunct bookstore/cafe specializing in African-American literature].

I just came back from New York City, where I did a remix for [composer] Meredith Monk. It's a hustle-bustle kind of place.

Oh, and Lithuania, in Vilnius — the capital. I did a residency organized by the U.S. Embassy there, titled "The American Month of Culture." The idea was to introduce something from the United States that represents our culture. I performed with the traditional Lithuanian folk singers. Lithuania has gorgeous women; they all look like they're on their way to a modeling session. The food is great; I loved the pickled herring. In one restaurant, we ordered pig ears! They serve these really tall beer bottles that have a tap at the bottom — whew [laughs]; that's just WRONG! We were sitting outside and it was kind of windy, so they brought us blankets and wrapped us up and were just hanging out all wrapped up ... just be in the moment — have a blanket! Got to visit the KGB Museum, pretty freaky stuff. I learned a couple of words: *he'lev* is hello, *aciu* [pronounced ah-choo] is thank you, *vien alus* is one beer.

### **What's coming up for you this summer?**

I am headed to Tuva [in Russia, bounded by Eastern Siberia and Mongolia]. I am going to perform with Alash, the Tuvan Ensemble. I met them while they were here performing at the Walters. [Perhaps the most unusual cultural treasure of Tuva is the performance of Khoomei, where the singer simultaneously produces a low drone and a series of higher melodies over the drone note.]

### **That is a very faraway, remote area. How long will it take to get there?**

Whew — maybe 17 hours. I have to fly through Russia.

### **Where do you want to go next?**

Oh, wow — Japan, China, South Africa, Canada, South America. I want to go everywhere!

### **What are you listening to these days?**

I post whatever I'm listening to on my Facebook page to offer people exposure to new sounds. These are self-imposed research projects that force me to expand what my ears are used to listening to. In January, I posted videos of songs that demonstrated fusions of different genres — syntheses of contemporary music with a classical orchestra. Like Metallica and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. In February, it was repertoires of Meredith Monk. This month, I'm posting songs that focus on [the game of] chess. Like Art Blakey's "The Chess Players," "Search For Bobby Fischer: The Soundtrack" [by James Horner], "Da Mystery of Chessboxin" by Wu-Tang Clan.

### **What is one item you will not travel without?**

My headphones and at least two books.

### **If you go: Boulder, Colorado**

### **Getting there**

Southwest, United and US Air fly nonstop from BWI to Denver, beginning at \$330 round-trip. Boulder is 50 miles from the airport. Many folks rent a car and drive. There is also plenty of public transport, such as the Sky Ride (a luxury bus) and the airport Super Shuttle.

## **Lodging**

**Quality Inn Boulder**, 2020 Arapahoe Ave., 888-449-7550, [qualityinnboulder.com](http://qualityinnboulder.com). This award-winning hotel is unlike any other. Renowned for its green initiatives, the hotel provides free use of bicycles. Other amenities include flat-screen TV's, free W-Fi, breakfast, a year-round heated pool and hot tub.

## **Dining**

**Sushi Zanmai**, 1221 Spruce St., 303-440-0773 [sushizanmei.com](http://sushizanmei.com). Shodekeh's favorite place for sushi.

**Ted's Montana Grill**, 1701 Pearl St., 303-449-5546, [tedsmontanagrill.com](http://tedsmontanagrill.com). Enjoy fresh bison choices include chili, nachos, meatloaf, short ribs, burgers and steak.

## **Don't miss**

**Hiking:** The trails around Boulder draw thousands of tourists and trekkers.

**Festivals:** Music lovers delight over the plethora of events and festivals throughout the year, including Boulder's renowned classical music venues: Boulder Philharmonic, Boulder Chamber Orchestra and Boulder Symphony Orchestra. [getboulder.com/music](http://getboulder.com/music)

## **Information**

**Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau**, [bouldercoloradousa.com](http://bouldercoloradousa.com)

—*Stephanie Citron*

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