

THE REAL AMBASSADORS:

A MUSICAL ON JAZZ DIPLOMACY AND RACE RELATIONS DURING
THE EARLY COLD WAR YEARS

by

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ABSTRACT

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This Master's thesis examines jazz diplomacy and race relations in the United States during the early Cold War years, the U.S. State Department's cultural diplomacy propaganda initiatives, and narratives of musicians featured in State Department jazz tours as reflected in the musical *The Real Ambassadors*. The musical was written by Lola and Dave Brubeck following their State Department jazz tour of Europe, Asia and the Middle East in 1958. The debut performance took place at the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival, featuring Louis Armstrong in the lead role. A textual analysis of songs from the musical will be considered for in-depth coverage of musicians' narrative and experience with locals during jazz diplomacy tours. A thorough understanding of American cultural and racial history during the early Cold War years is also crucial for contextualizing intersections between music and politics in the U.S. during the time period.

To
Michael,
my rock.

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CHAPTER 1

Race Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, and Jazz: Setting the Stage

U.S. cultural programming during the Cold War represented the country's largest propaganda effort next to foreign policy and diplomacy. The wide spread of jazz throughout the world during the early Cold War years helped determine the course of the Cold War and redefine American foreign diplomacy in some instances. In this cultural Cold War, the Soviet Union lacked a weapon to counter jazz, making it the most successful tool within "the arsenal of democracy."¹ The 1950s and 1960s were critical years for U.S. cultural diplomacy to establish its supremacy, but the rest of the world seemed focused on the hypocrisy behind the prevailing racial inequality in a country boastful of its freedom and democracy. The Soviet Union was quick to notice and publicize American politics as segregationist and its culture as "decadent, amoral, materialistic, and individualistic."² As a bold propaganda move in 1956, the State Department strategically began to highlight jazz, African American musicians and integrated bands as part of cultural diplomacy. This strategy prompted disapproval from state officials, both local and abroad, sometimes condemning jazz as a "crude" art. In a memo to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on 23 July 1954, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. advised that only "quality music" such as Western classical art music and ballet should be represented in the U.S. cultural programs abroad and to "avoid jazz music... at first

¹ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999), 2.

² Lisa Davenport, "The Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy: Race and Culture in the Cold War," in *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy: From the Era of Frederick Douglass to the Age of Obama*, edited by Linda Heywood, Allison Blakely, Charles R. Stith, and Joshua C. Yesnowitz (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 142.

and later work it in only as a part of a fairly highbrow program.”³ Despite Lodge Jr.’s seemingly-elitist bias, the Eisenhower administration, recognizing jazz’s propaganda power, charged the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency to actively promulgate jazz as part of cultural programming.⁴

The official platform given to jazz was met with resistance by some members in Congress; Representative John Rooney from New York led the attack with strong support from Louisiana Senator and Southern segregationist Allen J. Ellender. When Gillespie was chosen and announced as the first jazz ambassador to tour for the State Department, Ellender opposed the decision by declaring that Gillespie’s music would reduce the American cultural image to “barbarians,” but the tour turned out to be one of the most successful official cultural presentations.⁵ Gillespie’s band arrived in Greece and played a matinee show for university students shortly after the stoning of the U.S. field office in Athens. These students were angered by U.S. support of Greece’s right wing dictatorship, and “the anti-American feeling was real and intense.”⁶ Gillespie described the experience as, “They loved us so much that when we finished playing they tossed their jackets into the air and carried me on their shoulders through

³ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, Vol. 2, United States Department of State, 1775.

⁴ Davenport, “Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy,” 142. More information on U.S. agencies involved in cultural diplomacy can be found in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁵ Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 40; Reinhold Wagnleitner, “Jazz: the classical music of globalization,” in *Satchmo Meets Amadeus*, edited by Reinhold Wagnleitner (Innsbruck, Germany: Studienverlag, 2006), 295.

⁶ Von Eschen, 34; Dizzy Gillespie quoted in Ralph Ginzburg, “Jazz is too good for Americans,” *Esquire* (June 1957), 55. The field offices were part of the U.S. Information Agency, a government agency in Washington.

the streets of the city.”⁷ The local newspapers carried a similar sentiment of success with the headlines “Students Drop Rocks and Roll with Dizzy,” prompting field mission officials to conclude that jazz was “powerfully effective against Red Propaganda” and for “communicating with [locals] regardless of language or social barriers.”⁸ Jazz scholar Marshall W. Stearns, who accompanied Gillespie on tour, aptly captured the success as,

It has never dawned upon Americans that many people in foreign lands consider jazz a new and impressive contribution to culture. Jazz was born and grew up in the United States and nowhere else. As a European composer remarked to me: “Jazz is one of America's best-loved artistic exports.”⁹

While jazz musicians were subject to frequent State Department “briefings”, it is important to acknowledge that they were by no means stooges of U.S. foreign policy. Many jazz musicians – both Black and White - openly shared their views on race and domestic policies with locals, to the displeasure of government officials. Intentionally or unintentionally, cultural diplomacy tours depicted “pronounced differences in the aims of artists and government officials,” sometimes leading to a difference in opinion on what to highlight as values in American culture.¹⁰

This thesis examines jazz diplomacy and race relations in the United States during the early Cold War years, roughly spanning the 1950s and 1960s. While jazz tours counted towards a small percentage of U.S. cultural programming, their successes were in establishing cultural relationships with locals, as portrayed in the musical *The Real Ambassadors*. The musical was written by Iola and Dave Brubeck following their State Department jazz tour of Europe, Asia,

⁷ Von Eschen, 34.

⁸ Von Eschen, 34; Music Advisory Panel meeting minutes (24 April 1956, 12 June 1956), Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, University of Arkansas Fayetteville.

⁹ Marshall W. Stearns, “Is Jazz Good Propaganda? The Dizzy Gillespie Tour,” *Saturday Review* (July 14, 1956), 31.

¹⁰ Wagnleitner, “Jazz: the classical music of globalization,” 296.

and the Middle East in 1958. The debut performance took place at the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival, featuring Louis Armstrong, another jazz ambassador, playing himself in the lead role. A textural analysis of songs from the musical and personal memoirs of Louis Armstrong and the Brubecks will present an in-depth understanding of musicians' experiences, observations, and interactions with locals during jazz diplomacy tours. A thorough understanding of U.S. race relations and foreign policy during the early Cold War years is also crucial for contextualizing intersections between music and politics during this time period.

Walter Carrington, in his Preface to *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy*, defines diplomacy as “a duty to speak sometimes unpalatable truths not only to people and governments to which they are assigned, but also... the expectation that their insights can have an important impact on the formation of the policies they are expected to carry out.”¹¹ Jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck, and others, were part of the State Department jazz tours that began in the mid-1950s and lasted through the 1960s with the aim of spreading goodwill and democratic values around the world. Jazz was portrayed as a unification of freedom and democracy, which later led to the term “Jazzocracy.” As Mark Laver explains, Jazzocracy refers to the democratic practice in jazz, where improvisation positions the individual in a “dialectical” relationship with the collective.¹² The music that is produced is the result of a democratic process representing the interests of the individual and the collective while celebrating the individual's freedom of expression.

¹¹ Walter Carrington, Preface to *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy: From the Era of Frederick Douglass to the Age of Obama*, edited by Linda Heywood, Allison Blakely, Charles R. Stith, and Joshua C. Yesnowitz (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015), xix.

¹² Mark Laver, “Freedom of Choice: Jazz, Neoliberalism, and the Lincoln Center,” *Popular Music and Society* 37, no. 5 (2014), 538.

When State Department jazz tours commenced in 1956, the focal regions were Asia, Europe, and the Middle East; eventually Africa and the Soviet Union were added as tour locations. Emerging and newly-independent countries in Africa and politically-unstable Middle Eastern countries were specifically targeted as these regions had not firmly allied with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but were perceived to be threatened by communism.¹³ Dave Brubeck described his 1958 tour of Eastern Europe and Asia as “a circle around the Soviet Union,” which aligned with the propaganda framework for U.S. cultural and foreign diplomacy: to “promote and consolidate American economic and military interests in nations bordering the Soviet Union,” and generate goodwill between locals and American citizens through cultural exchange.¹⁴ The U.S. Information Agency (USIA), in particular, was interested in presenting a counter narrative to the Soviet propaganda campaign that was drawing unwanted attention to segregation and racial tension in the United States.¹⁵ In order to portray a picture of racial equality in practice, nearly all jazz bands on tour featured personnel from both races, or featured an African American bandleader. Duke Ellington described his encounters with locals during his 1963 State Department tour of East and South Asia, especially those who were curious about racial equality in the United States, as: “The big question when they meet an American Negro is always the race problem, [but] we have all the problems of a free country.”¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 543.

¹⁴ Stephen Crist, “Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics,” *The Journal of Musicology* 26, no.2 (2009), 162; Laver, “Freedom of Choice,” 544.

¹⁵ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World*, 11.

¹⁶ Ellington quoted in Harvey G. Cohen, “Visions of Freedom: Duke Ellington in the Soviet Union,” *Popular Music* 30, no.3 (2011), 306.

Lisa Davenport summarizes the outcome of State Department tours as the jazz diplomacy paradox, where “racial equality, integration, and American exceptionalism” sometimes did not align with the realities of racial bias faced by African American jazz musicians.¹⁷ As pianist Quincy Jones, who toured with Dizzy Gillespie in Greece in 1956, recalled, “It was the state officials who ‘patronizingly’ warned Greek locals to steer clear of the Black guys.”¹⁸

In *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa*, ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson argues that jazz and its discourse during the Civil Rights Movement had much in common with the politics of the time.¹⁹ Monson maps the changing political, social, and musical landscape through the perspective of musicians on State Department jazz tours and their interactions with locals, the media, and domestic audiences to highlight these parallels. Interviews, archival research, and analysis of recordings and performances reveal how Black and White performers had starkly different experiences based on race, and how their musical aesthetics embodied the tensions of the period.

Among scholarship covering jazz diplomacy and cultural exchange during the Cold War years, the most comprehensive coverage of government records is found in Fosler-Lussier’s *Music in American’s Cold War Diplomacy* and Nicholas Cull’s *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*. Both monographs extensively cover the history of U.S. cultural diplomacy and agencies and strategies set forth by the State Department and the USIA during

¹⁷ Davenport, “The Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy,” 146.

¹⁸ Quincy Jones, *Q: The Autobiography of Quincy Jones* (New York, Doubleday, 2001), 112-4.

¹⁹ Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

the Cold War. The website accompanying Fosler-Lussier's *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* presents records from the U.S. Advisory Committee on the Arts (ACA) that encouraged the promotion of "art of the highest quality" in cultural programming. Fosler-Lussier's scholarship also covers deliberations and arguments made by Music Advisory Panel members against and in support of jazz to be represented in U.S. cultural programming.²⁰ Cull's scholarship outlines the history of Cold War broadcasting, U.S. propaganda since the Truman administration, and a detailed history of the State Department and its agencies (including name changes!) active during the Cold War.

Lisa Davenport's dissertation-turned-monograph *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* largely focuses on the State Department jazz tours and issues of race surrounding jazz diplomacy. Davenport's recurring argument is that the "cultural oppression" of the nation's African American minority came to symbolize "the cultural superiority of American democracy" with the use of jazz in Cultural Presentations.²¹ Davenport also emphasizes how policymakers and State Department officials portrayed jazz as an authentic expression of American life and as a powerful arsenal for the U.S. to win the cultural Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Penny Von Eschen's extensive research on the jazz ambassadors program and artist accounts are reflected in her seminal work *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. The monograph explores how and why the State Department jazz tours were

²⁰ "A Statement on the Selection of American Art to be Sent Abroad under the Government's International Cultural Relations Programs," Minutes from the Eighth meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Arts, 25–26 April 1960, box 159, Record Group 59, National Archives.

²¹ Davenport, "The Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy," 145.

successful in disseminating U.S. propaganda through cultural programming. Von Eschen's emphasis lies in the role played by African American jazz musicians and integrated bands to counter international criticism of U.S. racial tension and segregation.

The time period focus of this thesis is approximately from the end of the Second World War through the 1960s, in order to convey policy and programming decisions made prior to and during the jazz diplomacy tours. This includes the establishment of Cold War broadcasting that led to the popularity of American jazz and popular music abroad, important civil rights events for African Americans, and jazz diplomacy tours that influenced the writing and debut performance of the musical *The Real Ambassadors*.

Chapter 2 presents the origins of State Department cultural propaganda and the role played by jazz and jazz musicians. Much of this chapter covers the history and origins of State-Department-led initiatives such as the Voice of America broadcasting service, goodwill ambassador tours featuring jazz musicians and integrated bands, and correspondence and reports from State Department officials highlighting the effects of American culture abroad through jazz diplomacy. The chapter also presents an outline of jazz diplomacy tours from 1956 through the late 1960s, which is when the program was aborted due to budgetary and financial expenditure.

Chapter 3 covers the state of race relations in the United States during the 1950s by examining effects of the 1957 Little Rock Crisis on cultural diplomacy. The domestic and international experiences of African American jazz musicians and integrated bands are discussed alongside civil rights issues that plagued African Americans at the time. The chapter also discusses landmark civil rights events that moved jazz musicians to speak up or act against

U.S. propaganda, painting a different image of racial unity from what the State Department sought to convey through propaganda documentation abroad.

Chapter 4 will present a textual analysis of the musical *The Real Ambassadors* exploring racial tension and political propaganda, as witnessed by the musical's creators and collaborators. *The Real Ambassadors*, with music by Dave Brubeck and libretto by his wife Iola, was able to capture the often complicated and sometimes contradictory politics of the State Department cultural diplomacy tours. The musical was created as a satire of State Department objectives, personnel, and protocol, and is a representation of "a powerful and unequivocal indictment of Jim Crow America."²²

Much of scholarship on *The Real Ambassadors* has discussed and presented the musical as an aside within jazz diplomacy scholarship. In a performance setting, the musical has not been performed since the early 2000s, nor has it received its due recognition and spotlight as a political satire set to music. The purpose of this thesis is to bring to the reader's attention how the musical is deeply political, voicing creative dissent against a controlled narrative presented in state-sponsored cultural propaganda. *The Real Ambassadors* received much critical acclaim after its 1962 debut as a jazz musical with its swinging juxtaposition of disparate musical styles. However, there has been very little scholarship on the significance of the musical's libretto as a work of art for social and cultural commentary and criticism of U.S. cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. The textual analysis will attempt to disclose the satire portrayed throughout the musical, and expose the state of U.S. cultural diplomacy and race relations during the Cold War.

²² Penny M. Von Eschen, "The Real Ambassadors," in *Satchmo Meets Amadeus*, edited by Reinhold Wagnleitner (Innsbruck, Germany: Studienverlag, 2006), 97.

CHAPTER 2

Jazz and State Department Cultural Diplomacy during the 1950s-60s

The State Department has discovered jazz.
It reaches folks like nothing ever has.
No commodity is quite so strange /
As this thing called Cultural Exchange.

Louis Armstrong, *The Real Ambassadors*
"Cultural Exchange"

Understanding the beginnings of cultural diplomacy in the United States requires knowledge of Cold War broadcasting and propaganda initiatives set in place during and after the Second World War. Frances Stonor Saunders defines propaganda during the Cold War as “organized effort or movement to disseminate information... by means of news, special arguments, or appeals designed to influence the thoughts and actions of any given group.”²³ While the beginning of cultural diplomacy may be traced to the founding of the USIA in 1953, the first formal structures in American cultural diplomacy were established largely through radio broadcasting during and after the Second World War. While European nations and the Soviet Union established official broadcasting services and cultural diplomacy programming during the Interwar period, the Roosevelt administration focused on the creation of a presidential “fireside chat” series on radio to promote New Deal programs during that time, with potential for expanding services to include international broadcasting and cultural programming using radio services.²⁴ In 1935, the State Department began to transmit the daily

²³ Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 4.

²⁴ Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10-11. The Soviet Union’s international radio broadcast began in 1927 with the founding of

Radio Bulletin to foreign mission offices, which eventually led to the creation of the State Department Division of the Cultural Relations in 1938. The goal of this office was to work in conjunction with the Secretary of State and begin cultural outreach to Latin American countries as Europeans and the Soviet Union were slowly approaching same with political propaganda, but the initiative never took ground.²⁵

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, President Roosevelt identified the need to create cultural and political alliances with other nations, and established the Office of the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Affairs in August 1940.²⁶ This new office was led by young oil magnate and philanthropist Nelson Rockefeller, his official title being Coordinator for Commercial and Cultural Relations. An executive order in 1941 renamed the agency as the Office of the Inter-American Affairs (OIAA). Rockefeller developed commercial and cultural projects in Latin America by creating libraries, cultural exchanges, and lecture programs.²⁷ The OIAA was the first U.S. agency to transmit American news and features abroad via shortwave

Radio Moscow to mark the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution with a series of propaganda broadcasts. Prior to that, France had launched an official cultural program in 1923, followed by fascist Italy's first cultural institute overseas in 1926. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Germany spent substantial resources on cultural propaganda, to which England responded with its own national cultural foundation The British Council in 1934. In such circumstances, the United States needed to prepare for cultural diplomacy with its own broadcasting avenues supporting a two-fold mission of domestic publicity for presidential programs as well as overseas broadcasting.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12. More information on charge and mission of the initiative can be found in University of Arkansas Special Collections, State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Relations (CU) archival documents; for scholarly analysis, see Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24-55; Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 49-74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

radio.²⁸ In 1941, with global warfare on the horizon, Roosevelt created the Office of the Coordinator of Information for potential wartime information services and propaganda abroad; the agency was led by war hero Colonel William “Wild Bill” Donovan.²⁹ This new agency was responsible for intelligence and special operations, including the Foreign Information Service (FIS) led by Roosevelt's speechwriter Robert Sherwood. The FIS took an active role in propaganda and information services abroad after the attack on Pearl Harbor, launching its first international shortwave radio broadcast in Europe with the Voice of America (VOA) radio station in December 1941.³⁰ Soon afterwards, the U.S. officially declared its participation in the Second World War, and VOA programs were replaced with wartime news services, which would last through the end of the war.³¹ In spring of 1946, with wartime broadcasting coming to an end, VOA programming returned to “information pertaining to American life, policy, industry, techniques, culture, and customs” under growing ideological tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.³² With the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Public Law 80-

²⁸ Ibid., 13; The agency worked with U.S. commercial radio networks and Hollywood film producers - Walt Disney being one - to develop “readymade programs” for Latin American stations. This approach received mixed responses, with some criticizing American stations as “bombastic” and “sugar coated” compared to the “honest, frank, and uncolored” European radio stations. For more information on Rockefeller's career with OIAA, see Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller, Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 14. For an overview of the history of Voice of America and Cold War broadcasting, see Robert William Pirsein, *The Voice of America: A History of the International Broadcasting Activities of the United States Government 1940-1962* (New York: Arno Press, 1979); Holly Cowan Shulman, *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

³¹ Ibid., 15-16.

³² Ibid., 31; Harry S. Truman Library, Charles M. Hulten papers, box 15, Voice of America 1946-7, folders 1 and 3, Origins of International Broadcasting Activities of the U.S., Benton to Weiner et al., Bracken to Benton, 28 March 1946.

402, also known as the Smith-Mundt Act) in place, the VOA continued its programming abroad during peacetime under State Department jurisdiction.³³ In 1954, the VOA was placed under the administrative control of the newly-created USIA since the agency's mission directly lined up with programming already underway with VOA.³⁴

Cultural programming under the State Department contributed to the resurgence of mainstream jazz as an American art form, especially at a time when Bebop was the more dominant jazz style.³⁵ Popular magazines such as *Down Beat*, *Life*, and *Esquire* featured articles on jazz as an art form, compared to its previous popularity as folk or dance music, and the media continued to highlight the genre as an American invention, which later positioned jazz well within U.S. cultural programming during the Cold War.³⁶ To strike down Soviet propaganda

³³ *United States Information and Education Exchange Act of 1948*, Public Law 80-402, 27 January 1948. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 permanently established the United States propaganda campaign, including cultural exchange programs, to “promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and [other countries by disseminating] information about the United States, its people, and its policies” through press, publications, radio, motion pictures and other information media. The “interchange of developments in education, the arts, and sciences” - cultural diplomacy - would fall under the “Educational Exchange” component of the act. More information on the Act, its objectives, and definitions can be found here: <http://legisworks.org/congress/80/publaw-402.pdf>

³⁴ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 90-91; Dwight E. Eisenhower Presidential Library, *President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization*, box 79, No. 91, *International Affairs, 1953*, memorandum for President Eisenhower, #14, Foreign Affairs Organization, 9 April 1953. While the VOA was the official radio broadcasting service for the U.S., other radio programs such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, which were privately-funded and based in Europe but with a similar mission to VOA, were in operation at the time.

³⁵ Iain Anderson, “The Resurgence of Jazz in the 1950s,” in *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 11. Anderson cites that Bebop musicians’ “risky” life style involving language, behavior, dress, and recurring association with drugs led to a public misconception of “deviant outsiders,” which was perhaps an image that the State Department was not willing to get behind.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11. Examples of jazz reception in print media include a *Down Beat* article titled “Jazz Achieves Social Prestige” and a photo spread on *Life* magazine titled “New Life for U.S. Jazz,”

of jazz as culturally “barbarous,” the State Department turned to jazz as a propaganda tool first with radio and then with cultural programming abroad.³⁷ The strategy was further supported by President Harry S. Truman’s “Campaign of Truth,” which was announced in 1950, to mitigate Soviet policy of “deceit, distortion, and lies” and improve and strengthen a range of informational, educational, and cultural services as part of Cold War propaganda.³⁸ For cultural education of allies, enemies, and neutral newly-independent countries, the VOA, under the State Department’s administration, featured a radio show *titled Jazz Club USA* from 1950-52, which was hosted by jazz producer and broadcaster Leonard Feather.³⁹ While the program only lasted a couple of years, radio jazz had become immensely popular abroad drawing a large jazz-loving audience all over the world. This success led to the creation of a regular jazz program on VOA when the governance of the radio agency moved from the State Department to the USIA in 1954. In 1955, a jazz radio program “aimed at Scandinavia but reaching the U.S.S.R” was proposed, and Willis Conover was hired to be its resident disc jockey.⁴⁰ *Music U.S.A. Jazz Hour* premiered on 6 January 1955 with its opening theme of Duke Ellington’s “Take the A Train”

both in 1955, and a twenty page feature and photo special on *Esquire* titled “The Golden Age of Jazz,” which was published a few years later.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸ Harry S. Truman, “Going Forward with a Campaign of Truth,” *Department of State Bulletin* 22 (May 1, 1950): 669, 671. The *Campaign of Truth* affirmed U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, and acknowledged the importance of government programs to maintain allies and influence neutral countries in America’s favor.

³⁹ Anderson, “The Resurgence of Jazz in the 1950s,” 11. For more information on the career of Leonard Feather, see “Music is Combating Communism: The Voice of America shows bring Universal Harmony,” *Down Beat*, 8 October 1952; Leonard Feather, *The Jazz Years: Eyewitness to an Era* (New York: Da Capo, 1987). For more information on Jazz Club USA and its playlist, see <http://otrlibrary.org/OTRRLib/Library%20Files/J%20Series/Jazz%20Club%20USA/Jazz%20Club%20USA%20-%20Tracklist.pdf>

⁴⁰ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 107.

followed by the voice of host and jazz expert Willis Conover. For the next forty years, Conover hosted *Music U.S.A. Jazz Hour* six nights a week with 45 minutes of popular music followed by 45 minutes of jazz. In 1962, a *New York Times* article lauded Conover's radio show for putting jazz on the map and successfully spreading American values all over the world better than broadcasting service had done to date.⁴¹

While the State Department and its agencies directly involved with propaganda and information services were open with their cultural programming, some government officials retreated to "covert" operations to keep originating agency and its intentions hidden from foreign allies as well as enemies. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), for example, covertly carried out operations and funded cultural programs from 1950-1967, one of which was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) headed by CIA agent Michael Josselson.⁴² Using news services, print media, musical performances and competitions, touring art exhibitions, international conferences, and cultural presentations, the CCF, with funding from CIA, emphasized American culture to the "intellectual" Western world.⁴³

As a parallel to CCF programming, the U.S. Cultural Presentations program formally began as the President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs in 1954, and came to a close in the early 1970s due to shrinking budgets and a decreasing number of artists showing interest in state-sponsored cultural diplomacy.⁴⁴ The fund, first approved by Congress during President

⁴¹ Jack Gould, "Jazz on a Global Scale: Willis Conover Heard in Eighty Foreign Countries over Radio Broadcasts by 'Voice of America' Network," *The New York Times* (21 October 1962), 147.

⁴² Stoner Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁴ Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 2.

Eisenhower's administration, received an annual allocation of \$2.25 million for musical and dramatic presentations abroad and U.S. participation in international trade fairs.⁴⁵ The program received relatively steady funding through 1962, and a total of 206 cultural tours to 113 countries were recorded during the first eight years of the U.S. Cultural Presentations program.⁴⁶ The State Department collaborated with the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA), a private organization promoting theatrical performances, to identify and recruit artists for U.S. Cultural Presentations.⁴⁷ The ANTA established advisory panels for music, dance, and theater, with experts from each discipline, to recommend artists and provide evaluations of candidates proposed for cultural diplomacy tours. Once performers and their agents had expressed interest, each advisory panel met monthly to evaluate not only performers to be sent on official tours but also musicians and other artists touring abroad privately so that USIA field offices could be kept informed. ANTA's Music Advisory Panel members included composer and critic Virgil Thomson; composer and director of the Eastman School of Music Howard Hanson; composer and director of the Juilliard School William Schuman; violist and orchestral conductor Milton Katims; music critics Alfred Frankenstein (San Francisco Chronicle), Jay Harrison (New York Herald Tribune), and Olin Downes (retired, New York Times); prominent music librarians Carleton Sprague Smith (New York Public Library) and Harold Spivacke (Library of Congress); musicologist and journalist Paul Henry Lang; and National Music Council President Edwin Hughes.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Anderson, "The Resurgence of Jazz in the 1950s," 15.

⁴⁶ Harvey Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 414.

⁴⁷ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23; Emily Abrams Ansari, "Shaping the Policies of Cold War Musical Diplomacy: An Epistemic Community of American Composers." *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (2012), 42.

Each advisory panel's recommendations were reviewed by an inter-agency committee made up of officials from the State Department, USIA, Defense Department, CIA, and other cultural agencies.⁴⁹ The State Department also solicited advice from a separate Advisory Committee on the Arts (ACA), whose role was to advise state officials on the effectiveness of the overall arts program. The ACA's role was different from the advisory panels' responsibilities and the inter-agency committee's role; the advisory panels evaluated specific performers and their performance quality and behavior during tours abroad with a letter-grade based ranking system, while the inter-agency committee was directly tasked with cultural propaganda strategies for countries and regions that needed to be "cultivated" with American ideals and cultural influences.⁵⁰ The State Department, in return, was expected to produce annual reports to Congress for continued fiscal and diplomatic support. Over time, officials in Washington recognized the special power in the U.S. Cultural Presentations program connecting foreign audiences with American culture through the arts.

For music programming, members of the ACA and the ANTA Music Advisory Panel were drawn to art music for cultural diplomacy tours, crediting its appeal and recognition in Europe and countries with a colonial past to draw large crowds. Many of these advisers were invested in "high arts" as arts philanthropists, museum presidents, composers, and university professors, with a bias towards art music as representative of an "educated and cultured" society.⁵¹ The Music Advisory Panel had support from some State Department officials, who favored the tours

⁴⁹ Fosler-Lussier, 10. Federal agencies represented include the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institute, the National Gallery of Art, and the Commission of Fine Arts.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

to be demonstrative of “American artists [that] are in the very forefront of the world’s artistic achievement.”⁵² The advisory panel evaluations were intended to identify and promote American performers with originality and “greatness” in cultural diplomacy tours, but as classical music experts, the Music Advisory Panel showed reluctance to include jazz artists, claiming that they were not necessarily qualified to make recommendations for jazz and popular music artists and groups. The State Department had received instructions from the Eisenhower administration to include jazz artists in Cultural Presentations as jazz and African American artists would help shape global perceptions of America’s race relations favorably. Fosler-Lussier points out that indirectly tackling sensitive issues was a typical feature of cultural diplomacy, and by programming African Americans jazz musicians and integrated bands in cultural diplomacy tours would strategically put an end to domestic and foreign media coverage of racial tension in the U.S.⁵³ Members of the Music Advisory Panel were not as convinced; Virgil Thomson stated during a monthly meeting that the only reason to support tours by jazz musicians was because “the State Department boys have a mania for it.”⁵⁴ This was one blatant instance of marginalizing jazz and jazz artists in cultural programming. Eighty-three percent of the groups approved by the ANTA Music Advisory Panel from 1954-63 were classical musicians or music groups.⁵⁵ Though jazz was the second most funded genre in Cultural Presentations,

⁵² Ibid.; Department of State Instruction A-212 to American Embassy in Tokyo, CDF55-59 032 Tucker/9-1757.

⁵³ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴ Ansari, “Shaping the Policies of Cold War Musical Diplomacy,” 45; ANTA Music Advisory Panel meeting minutes, 2 December 1964, folder 19, box 99, Series 5: Committees and Panels for the Performing Arts, Group 2: Cultural Presentations Program, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Fayetteville.

⁵⁵ Ansari, 44-45.

jazz ensembles “never made up more than a third of the groups approved in any given year.”⁵⁶

Other reasons for marginalizing jazz in cultural presentations included its commercial quality compared to “the great symphonies,” and perpetuating Soviet stereotypes of “low-brow” and “market-driven” American culture with state-sponsored jazz tours. Advisory panelists tried to warrant their decision to leave out jazz from Cultural Presentations by citing *The Guide to Cultural Presentations*, a pamphlet delivered to field offices abroad; according to guidelines, musicians must be capable of entertaining or “pleasing” mass audiences without making it their sole purpose, and the performance must carry some form of artistic expression if the group was leaning towards a popular music style.⁵⁷

Having had no luck convincing the State Department against jazz in cultural diplomacy tours, in 1955, the Music Advisory Panel recruited jazz critic and founder of the Institute of Jazz Studies Marshall Stearns as a special consultant to assist with jazz programming, but there was no direction toward recruiting an African American or a practicing jazz musician until a separate subcommittee for folk and jazz music was formed in 1964.⁵⁸ During the monthly meeting on 20 December 1955, Stearns proposed to include Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, and Stan Kenton and their bands in cultural diplomacy tours the following year. Gillespie’s band was the de facto choice for the first State Department jazz tour because Armstrong, Ellington, and Basie either had private tours in place or were not available to

⁵⁶ Ansari, 44, based on analysis of ANTA Music Advisory Panel meeting minutes in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Fayetteville.

⁵⁷ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 78.

⁵⁸ Ansari, “Shaping the Policies of Cold War Musical Diplomacy,” 45.

travel.⁵⁹ The State Department promptly announced its decision to include African American jazz artists in cultural diplomacy tours with a press conference on the steps of the House Office Building; domestic and foreign media speculated the decision as “inclusive” propaganda in response to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision of 1954 and the recent lynching of Emmett Till in September 1955, both of which had attracted wide media coverage of unfavorable race relations in the United States.⁶⁰ The State Department argued, however, that Gillespie’s band was the perfect representation of diverse and integrated American culture comprising of “blacks, whites, males, females, Jews, and Gentiles.”⁶¹

Between 1956 and 1968, the State Department sponsored twenty-six cultural diplomacy tours with jazz musicians (Table 1). 57% of the tours were led by African American musicians, but four well-renowned African American jazz artists and their bands - Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Thelonious Monk - were notably left out from the tours. The inter-agency committee made up of State Department officials had the final approval of artists on tour, and often excluded artists and groups based on reports from field offices on how artists may present themselves abroad, or due to a low score from the Music Advisory Panel evaluations.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 113.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 115. The full roster included Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Gordon, Emet Perry, Carl Warwick, and Quincy Jones on trumpet; Melba Liston, Frank Rehak, and Rod Levitt on trombone; Jimmy Powell and Phil Woods on alto saxophone; Billy Mitchell and Ernie Wilkins on tenor saxophone; Marty Flax on baritone saxophone; Walter Davis, Jr. on piano; Nelson Boyd on bass; and Charlie Persip on drums.

⁶² Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 123, 126.

Table 1. State Department Jazz Tours, 1956-1968⁶³

Date	Group led by	Destination
1956 Mar 21 – May 21	Dizzy Gillespie	Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, United Arab Republic
1956 July 26 – Aug 21	Dizzy Gillespie	Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil
1956 Dec 6 – 1957 Jan 17	Benny Goodman	Thailand, Singapore, Burma, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Cambodia
1957 Mar 4 – May 17	Wilbur De Paris	Africa: Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia
1958 Mar 6 – May 9	Dave Brubeck	Poland, Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq
1958 Aug 10-31	Woody Herman	Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Jamaica, Honduras, Guatemala
1958 Sep 26 – 1959 Jan 21	Jack Teagarden	Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan
1959 Dec 31 – 1960 Apr 5	Herbie Mann	Africa: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia
1960 Jan 4 – Mar 30	Red Nichols	Greece, Turkey, Cypress, Palestine, Jordan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, United Arab Republic, Syria
1960 Oct 25 – Dec 4	Louis Armstrong	Africa: Cameroon, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan
1961 Jan 10-29	Louis Armstrong	Egypt
1961 Mar 12 – May 27	Charlie Byrd	Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua,

⁶³ Ibid., 124-125. Table 4.3 Department of State Cultural Presentations Program, jazz tours completed, 1956-1969, compiled from "Tours Completed from Beginning of Program in 1954 through June 1968 (FY 1955-1968), Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Collection, subseries 1, General and Historical files, box 3, folder 10, "Cultural Presentations List of Groups, 1954-1968.

Date	Group led by	Destination
		Honduras
1962 Feb 6 – July 13	Paul Winter	Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, French West Indies, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Chile, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela
1962 May 30 – Jul 9	Benny Goodman	Soviet Union
1962 May 31 – Jun 4	Louis Armstrong	Chile
1962 Oct 15 – 1963 Mar 7	Cozy Cole	Africa: Morocco, Senegal, Volta, Niger, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Congo, Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, Guinea
1963 Sep 6 – Nov 22	Duke Ellington	Near East, South Asia: Syria, Jordan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan
1965 Sep 5-24	Paul Winter Sextet	Brazil
1966 Mar 31 – Apr 9	Duke Ellington	Africa: Senegal
1966 Apr 1 – Jun 8	Woody Herman	Africa: Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, Ivory Coast, Algeria; Yugoslavia, United Arab Republic, Romani
1966 Jul 7 – Aug 17	Earl Hines	Soviet Union
1967 Jan 16 – Apr 9	Randy Weston	Africa: Algeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Sierra Leone, Upper Volta; Lebanon, Egypt
1967 Oct 12 – 22	Charles Lloyd	Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania
1967 Nov 13 – 1968 Jan 20	Junior Wells	Africa: Dahomey, Togo, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Senegal, Guinea
1968 Apr 1 – May 26	Charlie Byrd	Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines
1968 Apr 29 – Jun 23	Charles Lloyd	Okinawa, Hong Kong, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Philippines

While diplomacy has typically been associated with state officials in political or state-to-state negotiations, cultural diplomacy dealt with average citizens serving as amateur diplomats

and goodwill ambassadors of American values and culture.⁶⁴ Most musicians on cultural diplomacy tours received in-person briefings or printed information from the State Department prior to traveling abroad.⁶⁵ Marshall Stearns, who had nominated Dizzy Gillespie's band for the first jazz tour, was requested by the State Department to accompany Gillespie not only to deliver public lectures at foreign embassies but also "to keep an eye on Dizzy's programs [to] maintain the standards that have been set for [jazz musicians]."⁶⁶ Band member Quincy Jones recalled his interaction with an "arrogant and condescending" ANTA official,

He came to rehearsal and stood in front of the band in a pretty wool suit and bow tie, and gave us advice in a flat, patronizing voice, saying, "I have nothing to tell you except that when you're abroad, you're representing our country. So please indulge in your various idiosyncrasies discreetly."⁶⁷

While first-time tour participants received careful instructions about locals and local socio-political conditions, high-profile musicians received minimal briefings or training before their tours. For example, the only instructions Duke Ellington and company received prior to their tour of Asia in 1963 was a single-spaced six-page document titled "Answering the Critic of the United States Abroad."⁶⁸ The document provided suggestions for finding common ground with a "foreign critic" by being calm and reasonable, answering with "yes, but," and avoiding

⁶⁴ The title song in the musical *The Real Ambassadors* explores the roles of political diplomats and goodwill ambassadors, rhetorically asking who the real ambassadors are. See Dave Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors: An Original Musical Production by Dave and Iola Brubeck*, libretto (San Francisco, CA: Hansen Publications, 1963), 47-50.

⁶⁵ This is covered in the prologue to the song "Remember who you are." See Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 21.

⁶⁶ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 80; Robert Schnitzer, ANTA, to Marshall Stearns, 30 January 1956, box 12, folder 2, Marshall W. Stearns Collection, Institute of Jazz studies, Rutgers University Libraries.

⁶⁷ Jones, *The Autobiography of Quincy Jones*, 112.

⁶⁸ Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America*, 428.

arguments with locals. The sub-section titled “Try to Get the Discussion out of an Exclusively American Context” provided explicit instructions on how to derail conversations about U.S. race relations with comments such as “it’s a universal problem for human beings all over the world,” taking the emphasis away from the U.S. Ellington’s band member and jazz trombonist Buster Cooper revealed in an interview that he received no instructions from the State Department, which led to him speaking his mind freely about U.S. race relations during the tour; it may well be that only the main artist, and not every band member, received official documents.⁶⁹

One of the drawbacks of amateur diplomats is the difficulty in making them stick to a script without preoccupations; in the case of college jazz musicians, they were often preoccupied with rehearsals and performances more so than following official narrative and agenda provided by the State Department. During the University of Michigan Jazz Band’s tour of Latin America in 1965, the State Department supplied political briefings in the form of pamphlets with titles such as “Democracy vs. Dictators” and “U.S. Policy toward Cuba.” The pamphlets were distributed right before the tour in early January, and many students complained that they did not have adequate time to read through material between winter break and rehearsals in preparation of the tour.⁷⁰ While critics of cultural diplomacy tours questioned the State Department’s intent to recruit amateurs to represent the United States abroad, State Department officials were confident that amateurs and student performance

⁶⁹ Ibid.; “Suggestions on Methods of Answering the Critic of the United State Abroad,” The Smithsonian Institute National Museum of American History Archives Center, Duke Ellington Collection #301, series 2A, box 2, folder 10; Interview of Buster Cooper with Patricia Willard, 29 September 1989, Smithsonian Institute Ellington Oral History Project, tape 1.

⁷⁰ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 14; Student Questionnaires, box 1, Richard Crawford Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

groups could lure foreign audiences with their “frankness in conversation” and “generosity in sharing expertise,” showing evidence of American goodwill and “the excellence of the American educational system.”⁷¹ State Department officials also favored the emphasis on youth in programming, supporting many college-level jazz groups to travel as part of cultural diplomacy tours. Sending student musicians, as seen in La Paz, Bolivia during the University of Michigan Jazz Band tour, proved out to be an effective tool in building cultural relationships and forming continued cultural exchange; the tour resulted in American and Bolivian students making arrangements to form an educational exchange program with their institutions cultivating continued cultural relations.⁷²

By August 1958, jazz was established as a mainstay of cultural diplomacy; an Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) report noted that “requests for jazz groups continue to be received” from youth audiences abroad. Despite high cost of tours and decreasing financial support from Congress, the State Department continued to support “one jazz group per area each year” as part of Cultural Presentations.⁷³ By the summer of 1959, the administration and funding of diplomacy tours was placed under a new State Department agency: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (CU).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Fosler-Lussier, 14.

⁷² Ibid., 15-16.

⁷³ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 155; National Archives Record Group 306 64-A-0536, Director’s Office subject files, 1957-1958, box 5, President’s Emergency Fund, Inter Agency Committee on Presentation, 1958, OCB, “Report on Activities of the Cultural Presentation Committee,” 20 August 1958. For a detailed account of finances and budget allocations for the State Department jazz tours, see Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 120-123.

⁷⁴ Cull, 181.

The 1960s brought about many changes for civil rights, and the State Department supported the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act with an increasing number of African American jazz musicians on tour in addition to VOA programming including interviews of African American musicians with a lively current affairs segment.⁷⁵ 1962 was a memorable year for U.S.-Soviet relations as Benny Goodman became the first jazz musician to officially tour the Soviet Union representing the State Department. Although the Khrushchev thaw was in place, allowing artists from the West to travel to the Soviet Union, Soviets continued to wage a campaign against “decadent western abstract art,” and Goodman was the ideal candidate to represent the U.S. with his classical training behind jazz career.⁷⁶ Due to locals protesting against Goodman’s “out of date” style and increasing tension during the Cuban missile crisis, which took place soon after Goodman’s tour, the Soviets did not accept another jazz tour until 1966, with Earl Hines and his band, followed by Duke Ellington and his orchestra in 1971.⁷⁷

The impact of American jazz and jazz musicians was evident in artist memoirs and official correspondences from field offices throughout the course of the jazz diplomacy tours. In a 2011 interview with Monk Rowe, Iola Brubeck recalled her observations of jazz-loving audiences during Dave Brubeck’s 1958 state department tour,

In Poland, jazz just became this symbol of the freedom that they wanted and were seeking, and so it was an underground movement that for some time was

⁷⁵ Ibid., 236. The VOA *Music U.S.A. Jazz Hour* by Willis Conover remained popular throughout these transitions and changes to programming.

⁷⁶ Penny M. Von Eschen, “Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz, Race, and Empire during the Cold War,” In *Here, There, and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, edited by Elaine T. May and Reinhold Wagnleitner (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2000), 167.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

forbidden. And by the time, in 1958, when the quartet went there, it had loosened up a little bit so there could be jazz societies.⁷⁸

The State Department's eagerness to frame jazz as representative of American values and the use of African American jazz musicians and integrated bands as representative of racial harmony and equality contributed to the success of U.S. cultural diplomacy. State Department cultural diplomacy tours helped to institutionalize jazz and include the genre in the American arts canon. Whether or not American jazz musicians "intended to subvert" their government, their actions and message of goodwill supported the image that the State Department desired to project cultural diplomacy tours.

⁷⁸ Monk Rowe, Oral History Interview with Iola Brubeck, *Fillius Jazz Archives Interviews*, Hamilton College Library (July 17, 2011), 2.

CHAPTER 3

Race Relations and United States Cultural Diplomacy during the 1950s-60s

And If [God] cared if you're black or white,
He'd mixed one color, one just right.
When will that great day come / when everyone is one
[And] God tells Man he's really free.

Louis Armstrong, *The Real Ambassadors*
"They say I look like God"

United States cultural propaganda during the Cold War aimed to showcase mainstream jazz and African American artists as proof of improving race relations and status in American life, but the same propaganda failed to deceive international audiences at times, much to the surprise of government officials. Jazz diplomacy under state sponsorship began as a result of progress in the civil rights movement, beginning with the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 ending the separate-but-equal doctrine.⁷⁹ The *Brown* decision marked a victory for African Americans, and in response to this civil rights landmark event, the Eisenhower administration included African Americans in cultural diplomacy to articulate a narrative of racial progress.⁸⁰ With racial equality as a goal, the State Department and USIA increased African American representation in cultural diplomacy tours as a strategy to mitigate international criticism of domestic racial issues.⁸¹

⁷⁹ For more information on Jim Crow segregation laws and the separate-but-equal doctrine, see Lili Kunfalvi, *Separate but Equal: Racial Segregation in the United States* (Institute of Cultural Policy, 2014), http://culturalrelations.org/Resources/2014/ICRP_Human_Rights_Issues_2014-02.pdf, (Accessed 1 August 2017)

⁸⁰ Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

While African American goodwill ambassadors such as Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie were spreading American ideals of freedom and democracy abroad during cultural diplomacy tours, racial tension and isolated incidents of segregation were very much the reality (and still continue to be!) for African Americans fighting for equality. On 4 September 1957, a major civil rights event challenged the United States portrayal of racial equality and democracy in the eyes of the world, when nine African American high school students attempting to enroll at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas were prevented from entering the school premises by order of Arkansas governor Orval Faubus.⁸² Faubus' orders directly violated the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to end school segregation starting with the 1957-58 school year.⁸³ As the crisis deepened with protests and rallies, domestic and international media coverage of the event also increased. President Eisenhower and his administration got involved with the crisis by deploying the Federal National Guard to Little Rock to escort the Little Rock Nine into the high school. Newspapers around the world covered the incident with images of African American children next to federal troops holding loaded rifles (Figure 1).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 115. For a detailed account of the 1957 Central High School crisis and its reception around the world, see Dudziak, 115-151.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 115-117.



Figure 1. Armed troops escort African American students into Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957.⁸⁴

In an interview with the *Arkansas Gazette*, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles condemned domestic media for inaccurately portraying events and claimed that these “desegregation battles” were not helpful for the United States image abroad, especially since Radio Moscow had been “chirping happily about the troubles of integration.”⁸⁵ Coverage of the 1957 Little Rock Crisis became a highlight for international media from *The London Times*, to

⁸⁴ Armed troops escort African American students from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 3 October 1957, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <https://www.loc.gov/item/94505568/> (Accessed August 1, 2017.)

⁸⁵ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 118; *Arkansas Gazette*, 11 September 1957, 2A.

the *Times of India*, the *South China Morning Post* and other media outlets carrying updates on the story for the entire month of September. According to the U.S. field office in Brussels, the story received great interest among the Belgian press “far greater than any other American domestic issue in recent years.”⁸⁶ While the media criticized Eisenhower’s delayed action to respond to the crisis, the State Department came up with a propaganda document to disseminate to the U.S. Mission at the United Nations and field offices abroad outlining strategies for responding to international criticism.⁸⁷

The white paper titled “Talking Points to Overcome Adverse Reactions to Little Rock Incident” emphasized that the process of school desegregation in most states had not been as contentious as in Little Rock, Arkansas, and talking points covered “marked progress toward integration” and “tremendous strides” being made in removing racial barriers in the U.S.⁸⁸ The document also stressed that there was “growth in homeownership and rising income levels among non-whites,” pointing to economic improvements in the lives of African Americans.⁸⁹ This was not the only instance the State Department commented on African Americans quality of life. In November 1957, after Secretary of Labor James Mitchell sent Secretary of State John Foster Dulles a copy of his article “The Negro Moves Up,” which was due for publication in the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 119; U.S. Embassy, Brussels, to Department of State, 1 October 1957. Record Group 58, 811.411/10-157, National Archives. For international coverage of the crisis, see Orval Faubus, *Down from the Hills* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Pioneer, 1980), 205-328.

⁸⁷ Dudziak, 142; Department of State Instruction no. CA-3382, 10 October, 1957, Record Group 59, 811.411/10-157, National Archives. Instructions were directed to field offices in Eastern Europe: Belgrade, Bucharest, Budapest, Moscow, Prague, and Warsaw.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Cary Fraser, “Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 2 (2000), 252; National Archives Record Group 59, 811.411/10-159, Berding, Memorandum to Rubottom, 1 October 1957.

December 1957 issue of the *Reader's Digest*, Dulles responded that "this comprehensive report with its impressive background of statistical facts should clear up a lot of misunderstanding overseas."⁹⁰

The final paragraph of the "Talking Points" document provided a revealing glimpse into the concerns of the authors of the document:

In the United States, national authority is being used not to suppress individual equality and freedom but to uphold them. In the Little Rock incident national authority was invoked to maintain [the] equal rights of a minority. In the Soviet Union national authority has been repeatedly invoked to suppress the rights of minorities.⁹¹

According to U.S. Foreign Policy historian Cary Fraser, this concluding statement clarifies the need to avoid parallels being drawn between Soviet policies and the U.S. government's actions in the aftermath of the 1957 Little Rock Crisis.⁹² To continue portraying a positive and unified image of the United States abroad (and also for damage control purposes), the USIA distributed pictures of integrated schools and accomplishments of African Americans to field offices as part of information services propaganda.⁹³ Despite the public relations "hiccup" during the 1957 Little Rock Crisis, the State Department continued its cultural diplomacy efforts with an emphasis on "Americana" themed activities with funding support from private foundations such as the Ford Foundation. This new funding model helped to create American studies

⁹⁰ Fraser, 252; Mudd Library, Dulles Papers, box 119, Mitchell to Dulles, 13 November 1957; Dulles to Mitchell, 20 November 1957.

⁹¹ Ibid.; Berding, Memorandum to Rubottom, 1 October 1957, National Archives, Record Group 59, 811.411/10-159.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 147. For a detailed account of the Little Rock Arkansas incident and the response from the Executive branch and the USIA, see Chapter 2 in this thesis.

programs in European universities and create and fund American Studies faculty positions and exchange programs with American academic institutions.⁹⁴

At the turn of the century, African American activist and intellectual W.E.B Du Bois predicted that the politics surrounding race in the United States - “the color line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men” - would drive domestic and foreign policy decisions during the 20th century.⁹⁵ The 1957 Little Rock Crisis was an apt illustration of Du Bois’s prediction, but was not the first occasion where policy decisions were made as a result of racial tension in the U.S. In the fall of 1946, during the United National (UN) General Assembly in New York City, a foreign policy crisis nearly erupted due to several New York hotels refusing to accommodate UN delegations from Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia due to Jim Crow segregation.⁹⁶ The U.S. Ambassador to the UN had to intervene by meeting with the hotel board, who agreed to accept the African delegates but not the Haitians. In the end, the State Department had to

⁹⁴ Cull, 154; National Archives Record Group 306, ZZ entry 1 (formerly 1006), Director’s Chronological files, 1953-64, box 2, microfilm reel 24, Washburn to Allen, 17 January 1958; DDEL Office of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (OSANA), NSC/Status of Projects, box 9, The USIA, status on 30 June 1960, NSC 6013 (5), pp. 6, 11. According to latter report, some of the foreign universities include Bologna, Leeds, University of London, and several universities in Germany.

⁹⁵ Fraser, “Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock,” 235; W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” in *Three Negro Classics*, intro. by John Hope Franklin (New York, 1965), 221. For more information on intersections between domestic and foreign policy and racial issues, see Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1997).

⁹⁶ Fraser, 235.

secure accommodation for the Haitians and prevent the scandal from being publicized in local and international media.⁹⁷

While the 1957 Little Rock Crisis would become a defining moment in American foreign policy, it was not the first civil rights event during Eisenhower's presidency to gain international attention. The world watched the verdict in the brutal murder of Emmett Till in October 1955, with international media weighing in. The field office in Paris, France reported to the State Department that the French media were giving "wide coverage to the Till case, vociferously condemning the verdict."⁹⁸ An all-white jury in Mississippi had acquitted the accused murderers of Till, an African American teenager from Chicago who had supposedly whistled and touched a white woman.⁹⁹ A few months later, in early 1956, the field office in Copenhagen, Denmark reported to the State Department that the case of Autherine Lucy, a young African American woman who was denied admission into the University of Alabama, had gained attention from the Danish press and local university officials. Field officials also reported that the administration and students from two Danish universities (Copenhagen and Aarhus), with support from a local paper, had telegraphed their support and sympathy to Miss Lucy, and had even offered financial assistance for her to complete studies at the University of Copenhagen. The State Department officials blamed domestic media coverage for exacerbating the situation

⁹⁷ Ibid.; National Archives Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, United States Mission to the United Nations, 1945–45, box 78, Thomas F. Power, Jr., memorandum to Samuel Palma, 20 June 1947; For more information on the scandal and the NAACP's response, see Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi, *Human Rights at the UN: The Political History of Universal Justice* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 163–165.

⁹⁸ Fraser, 236; McBride, dispatch to the Department of State, 5 October 1955, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, 811.411/10-555, National Archives.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

and damaging the American image after “such tragedies as the Emmett Till case and the unfortunate riots attending Miss Lucy’s efforts.”¹⁰⁰ The State Department continued to disseminate propaganda documents as official statements for field mission offices abroad in the wake of international media coverage of U.S. civil rights events such as the Emmett Till verdict in 1955, Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-56, and Autherine Lucy’s denial of admission in 1956. However, African Americans involved with cultural diplomacy tours faced a difficult position in continuing to represent the State Department and American values while experiencing racial injustices and discrimination at home.

Louis Armstrong was perhaps the most prominent African American jazz musician repeatedly requested to travel abroad as part of the State Department cultural diplomacy tours. Armstrong, who rarely spoke out about racial issues, was vocal during the aftermath of the 1957 Little Rock Crisis and called off his imminent State Department tour to the Soviet Union. On 19 September 1957, the *New York Times* reported the news with the headline: “Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus.” In the article, Armstrong declared, “the way they are treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell... It’s getting almost so bad a colored man hasn’t got any country.”¹⁰¹ A few days later, Armstrong remarked in a *Pittsburgh Courier* article:

I wouldn’t take back a thing I’ve said. I’ve had a beautiful life over forty years in music, but I feel the downtrodden situation the same as any other Negro. My parents and family suffered through all of that Old South... My people, the Negroes, are not looking for anything. We just want a square shake. But when I see on television and read about a crowd spitting on and cursing at a little colored

¹⁰⁰ Fraser, 236; National Archives Record Group 59, 811.411/2-956, Allen, dispatch to the Department of State, 9 February 1956.

¹⁰¹ “Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus,” *The New York Times* (19 September 1957), 23.

girl, I think I have a right to get sore and say something about it. After all, America is my country, too, and I've always tried to do anything I could to help it.¹⁰²

Armstrong also criticized President Eisenhower for being “two-faced [and] allowing the Governor of Arkansas to run the Federal government.” As for Faubus, Armstrong called his actions “a publicity stunt by the greatest of all publicity hounds.”¹⁰³

In multiple interviews, Armstrong repeatedly stated that the goodwill tours should target American audiences before reaching out to Communist regions. That sentiment later made its way into one of the songs in the musical *The Real Ambassadors*: “Look here, what we need is a goodwill tour of Mississippi. Forget Moscow, when do we play New Orleans?”¹⁰⁴ As an example corroborating Armstrong’s comments, Dizzy Gillespie and his band was the first jazz group and integrated band to travel abroad representing the State Department tours, but his band would not have been welcomed in Athens, Georgia despite success in Athens, Greece. It was far from amusing to African Americans such as Dizzy Gillespie to represent America’s freedom abroad while they continued to live in a segregated society at home. In his autobiography-biography, Gillespie recalled his response to State Department propaganda reinforcing equal opportunities for all Americans: “I sort’ve liked the idea of representing America, but I wasn’t going to apologize for the racist policies.”¹⁰⁵ Gillespie purposely avoided

¹⁰² Larry Lubenow, “I won’t Take Back a Thing I’ve Said!: Satchmo Tells Off Ike, U.S.!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 September 1957.

¹⁰³ Ibid. For other interviews and articles on the topic, see “State Dept. Pipes Up with ‘Satchmo, for the Soviets,” *Variety* (31 July 1957), 1, 7; “Ike Swipe May Cost Satchmo Edsel Spec - Others ‘Penalized,’” *Variety* (25 September 1957), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Penny M. Von Eschen, “Who’s the Real Ambassador? Exploding Cold War Racial Ideology,” in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945–1966*, edited by Christian G. Appy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 125; See also Dizzy Gillespie and Al Fraser, *Dizzy: To be or Not to Bop* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1982), 413–414.

his pre-tour briefing stating that “he’s got three hundred years of briefing,” as a reference to African American history of racial oppression, and did not hesitate to promote his own version of America while on tour.¹⁰⁶ Needless to say, the State Department did not appreciate Gillespie’s off-scripted comments on race and U.S. foreign policy. It would take another eighteen years before Gillespie was invited to travel abroad for his second jazz diplomacy tour.¹⁰⁷

The 1957 Little Rock Crisis also created a chain of events in the U.S. and abroad limiting opportunities for African American musicians to continue in Cultural Presentations. From 1957 to 1960, State Department officials showed reluctance to send all-Black jazz groups on tour, and opted for integrated and all-White bands to travel abroad representing the State Department. Further proof can be found in correspondence from field offices; an official from Rio, Brazil requested Woody Herman’s band, while the field office in Czechoslovakia pointed to the popularity of the Dave Brubeck Quartet.¹⁰⁸ In Poland, Edward A. Symans, attaché in Warsaw, argued that a White jazz group “would rekindle waning sentiments and strongly reinforce relationships still alive.”¹⁰⁹ As far Africa, numerous requests were made from field offices in Senegal and Congo proposing Louis Armstrong for the next State Department jazz tour. Due to

¹⁰⁶ Von Eschen, 125.

¹⁰⁷ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 43. For a detailed account of Gillespie’s tour, see pages 31-42.

¹⁰⁸ Lisa Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 74; Briggs, Rio to Secretary of State, Department of State Incoming Telegram 1187, 18 March 1958, box 89, Decimal File 032, Foreign Policy File 1955-1959; Johnson, Prague to Secretary of State, #279, box 89 Decimal File 032, Foreign Policy File 1955-1959.

¹⁰⁹ Davenport, 74; Warsaw, Department of State Incoming Telegram 1435, 12 April 1957, box 88 Decimal File 032, Foreign Policy File 1955-1959.

Armstrong's recent dissent against the Eisenhower administration, the State Department decided to send Dave Brubeck and band on a tour of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East in 1958.¹¹⁰ Brubeck's quartet had been recently integrated with African American bass player Eugene Wright with the remaining three members being White (Brubeck on piano, Paul Desmond on alto saxophone, Joe Morello on drums); this may have increased the group's eligibility to represent the State Department as an integrated band.

Brubeck was a surprising choice for the 1958 tour as his style was identified in a *Time* magazine article from November 1954 as West Coast modern jazz with growing popularity and profitability. The article described Brubeck as a "new kind of jazz artist" for his intellectualism and commitment to a family life.¹¹¹ A combination of originality and artistry together with growing media attention made Dave Brubeck and his band the ideal candidate to represent American culture appealing to "high culture" audiences in Eastern Europe.¹¹² While Brubeck had a successful cultural diplomacy tour abroad, his quartet had difficulty scheduling performances at universities in the South because of the band's integrated nature. For example, the University of Georgia's policy for visiting integrated groups requested that Black members be replaced with White members, which Brubeck refused to do; in doing so, the band reportedly lost forty-thousand dollars during the entire tour season.¹¹³ For Brubeck, the choice

¹¹⁰ Davenport, 74.

¹¹¹ "The Man on Cloud No. 7," *Time*, 8 November 1954.

¹¹² Davenport, "The Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy," 153; Frank J. Lewarnd, Cultural Attaché, Warsaw to State Department, FSD-355, "Report on Dave Brubeck Jazz Quartet Concerts in Poland," 24 March 1958, box 97, file "Dave Brubeck," Decimal File 032, Foreign Policy File 1955-1959.

¹¹³ "U. of GA. Nixes Brubeck (Bassist a Negro) But OK at Atlanta Race Spot," *Variety* (4 March 1959), 49.

presented to him and his band was “unconstitutional” and “ridiculous,” and the quartet’s White members demanded that university authorities modify policy to allow integrated groups to “play music without intimidation or pressure.”¹¹⁴ Gene Wright added, “It’s a shame we can go travel all over the world and not have problems, and some have such a ‘silly problem’.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ibid.; For more on this story, see “Brubeck’s ‘No Play Sans Negro Bassist,’ Cues Shoutout at Dixie University, Buck Ram, in U.K. Hits U.S. ‘Bigotry,’” *Variety*, 20 January 1960.

¹¹⁵ Ralph Gleason, “An Appeal from Dave Brubeck,” *Down Beat* (18 February 1960), 12-13.

CHAPTER 4

The Real Ambassadors

The Real Ambassador is a story about jazz and jazz musicians in the context of cultural exchange and race relations in the United States during the 1950s. The co-creators of the musical, Dave Brubeck and wife Lola, drew on theirs and others' experiences from touring the world in 1958, on behalf of the U.S. State Department. The scholarly and serious Brubeck was starting to be recognized as an important jazz composer, pianist, and leader of the highly-acclaimed Dave Brubeck Quartet. His wife Lola was an actress, poet, and writer.¹¹⁶

The Brubecks, alongside Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and others, were part of the official State Department tours to spread American culture and arts during the early Cold War years. The primary mission of cultural diplomacy jazz tours were to reach countries whose allegiances were not well defined, or who were at risk of aligning with the Soviet Union. As the title of the musical states, *The Real Ambassadors* was about the role these jazz musicians played as cultural ambassadors for their country. Among actual events referenced directly or indirectly in the musical are Greek student riots outside the U.S. Embassy in Greece and their resolution during Dizzy Gillespie's 1956 State Department tour, and Armstrong calling off his official State Department tour to the Soviet Union as a result of the Eisenhower administration's handling of the 1957 Central High School Crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas.

¹¹⁶ 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival Program pages concerning *The Real Ambassadors*, 21, *The Real Ambassadors*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

The librettist of the musical, Iola Brubeck, once stated, "Dave [Brubeck] says *The Real Ambassadors* is a Broadway version of a jazz show," referring to the true emotional quality of jazz and ironic wit in Broadway portrayed in the musical.¹¹⁷ Iola began working on the libretto shortly after Dizzy Gillespie and his band returned from the first State Department jazz tour in 1956, but much of the lyrics were completed after accompanying her husband Dave and his band during the State Department tour in 1958.¹¹⁸ Jazz was finally receiving its long-overdue recognition with federal funding, leading to the possibility to a musical highlighting a cultural exchange tour and associated racial and societal issues. After five years of "writing, rewriting, and waiting", the first rehearsal and five subsequent recording sessions in 1961 led to a cast album of musical selections under Brubeck's own label Columbia Records (COL CL 5850), which was released in 1962.¹¹⁹ In 1994, song selections from the LP cast album were re-released with the same album title, by Sony Music Entertainment on the Columbia/Legacy label (CK 57663).

The 1962 original cast album was produced by Teo Macero, and performers included The Dave Brubeck Trio (Brubeck on piano, bassist Eugene Wright, drummer Joe Morello), Louis Armstrong and his band (including trombonist Trummy Young, pianist Billy Kyle, clarinetist Joe Darensbourg, Willy Kronk, and drummer Danny Barcelona), vocal trio Lambert-Hendricks-Ross,

¹¹⁷ Iola Brubeck, Liner Notes to *The Real Ambassadors* Original Cast Recording. Columbia Records OL 5850 (1962), LP, 3.

¹¹⁸ Penny M. Von Eschen, "The Real Ambassadors," in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, edited by Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 190.

¹¹⁹ Mike Lawless, Interview with Iola Brubeck about *The Real Ambassadors*, *The Real Ambassadors*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. During the interview, Iola recalls events during the Brubecks' State Department tour of 1958 and how they led to revisions to the plot (0:07:45-0:08:40).

and jazz vocalist Carman McRae.¹²⁰ The libretto with fifteen songs and related narration from *The Real Ambassadors* was printed in 1963 and published by Hansen Publications. Iola recognized Louis Armstrong as the perfect candidate to play the lead role:

His horn [was] his crown and scepter... Anyone who has been caught in Louis' spell can really believe that if he were to blast three times 'round, the walls of hate would come tumbling down!¹²¹

This statement comes directly from the lyrics of the song *Blow, Satchmo*, where Armstrong's horn, compared to the biblical story of Joshua's horn bringing down the walls of Jericho, would lead those fighting for racial equality "to that promised land."¹²² In her commentary accompanying cast album recording, Iola also reminisced about the choice of company singers and musicians that would be featured in the musical:

Carmen McRae was our immediate choice to play opposite Louis... Obviously, no vocal group but Lambert-Hendricks-Ross could manage to sound like a crowd or a full chorus on demand.¹²³

The musical's first public performance was in the form of a revue of ten tunes at the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1962, with Iola Brubeck in the narrator role and the album cast (except Annie Ross, who was replaced by Yolande Bavan).¹²⁴ Brubeck commented on the performance's reviews,

[Ralph] Gleason and [Leonard] Feather weren't [always] kind to me, [but] they flipped over it. They had tears in their eyes after the concert, and said they felt it was the greatest thing ever done at Monterey. The most critical jazz audience in

¹²⁰ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 1. The members of the vocal trio comprised of jazz singers Annie Ross, Dave Lambert, and Jon Hendricks.

¹²¹ Iola Brubeck, 1962 LP liner notes, 3.

¹²² Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 43.

¹²³ Iola Brubeck, 1962 LP liner notes, 3.

¹²⁴ 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival Program pages concerning *The Real Ambassadors*, 20, *The Real Ambassadors*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

the world rose as one body to give Louis Armstrong and the cast a standing ovation. It was an electrifying moment.¹²⁵

While the musical was written as a Broadway show, it never made to Broadway. During a 2007 interview with Shan Sutton, Head of Special Collection and Curator of the Brubeck Oral History Project at University of the Pacific Library, Dave and Lola Brubeck cited the cost of production and race relations at the time as reasons for why the musical was never performed in full in a commercial venue. Lola specifically credited the Brubecks' (and Louis Armstrong's) manager Joe Glaser's opinion of concert tours being more lucrative than time and production cost spent for a Broadway show. As for race relations, both Lola and Dave stressed that the emphasis on racial issues and government criticism were possible reasons for no producers stepping up to promote the show beyond its premiere.¹²⁶

In 2002, the musical returned to the Monterey Jazz Festival to celebrate its 40th anniversary with the Dave Brubeck Quartet (now saxophonist Bobby Militello, Brubeck on piano, bassist Michael Moore, and drummer Randy Jones), jazz singer Lizz Wright, Roy Hargrove and Byron Stripling on trumpet, Christian McBride on bass, Chris Brubeck on trombone, and vocalists Lynne Fiddmont, Lamont VanHook, and Fred White.¹²⁷ Selections from the musical

¹²⁵ Ricky Riccardi, *What a Wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong's Later Years* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 209; Dave Brubeck, Liner notes to *The Real Ambassadors* (CD, 1994), 5, 9.

¹²⁶ Shan Sutton, Oral History Interview with Dave and Lola Brubeck, *Brubeck Oral History Project*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library, 0:08:30-0:10:30.

¹²⁷ "Dave Brubeck at Monterey: Part 5," Monterey Jazz Festival, <http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org/exhibitions/brubeck-monterey/part-5> (Accessed 7 June 2017)

returned to the stage again in April 2014 for its first performance in New York City as part of the *Jazz at Lincoln Center* series, this time featuring Yolande Bavan in the role of narrator.¹²⁸

The Real Ambassadors contains ballads, jump tunes, and patter songs, offering a variety in its musical content within the jazz style. The musical is in many ways a tribute to Louis Armstrong for taking a stance during the 1957 Central High School Crisis. Iola later recalled, “[When] we got into this project we really didn’t know Louis that well, but we sensed in him a depth and an unstated feeling we thought we could tap into, without being patronizing, and I think that’s why he took [the role].¹²⁹ Casting Armstrong as the musical’s hero and leading star was the Brubecks’ way of recognizing his impact on foreign audiences as a jazz and goodwill ambassador. Iola intended for the libretto to satirize State Department objectives, personnel, and protocol, and voice “an unequivocal indictment of Jim Crow America.”¹³⁰ For Armstrong, however, some of the song selections presented an opportunity to address many of the racial issues he had struggled with throughout his career. The song *They Say I Look Like God* had a particular effect on Armstrong, as Dave Brubeck recalled in a 2009 interview:

Now, we wanted the audience to chuckle about the ridiculousness of segregation but Louis was crying... and every time we wanted Louis to loosen up, he'd sing, 'I'm really free. Thank God Almighty, I'm really free.' It was too emotional.¹³¹

¹²⁸ “Dave and Iola Brubeck’s *The Real Ambassadors*,” Program for Jazz at Lincoln Center Series Performance, Friday, April 11, 2014. Also featured Peter Martin as Music Director and Pianist, Roberta Gambarini as Vocal soloist, Brian Owens as Vocal soloist, Vivian Sessoms as Vocalist, Russell Graham as Vocalist, Ty Stephens as Vocalist, James Zollar on Trumpet, Robert Hurst on Bass, Ulysses Owens on Drums, Yolande Bavan as Narrator, and Russell Gloyd as Creative Advisor.

¹²⁹ Gilbert Millstein, Liner Notes to *The Real Ambassadors* Original Cast Recording. Columbia Records OL 5850 (1962), LP, 2; Chip Stern, Liner notes to *The Real Ambassadors* (Columbia Legacy, 1994), 7, quoted in Riccardi, *What a Wonderful World*, 205.

¹³⁰ Von Eschen, “Satchmo Blows Up the World,” in *Here, There, and Everywhere*, 168.

¹³¹ Michelle Norris, Interview with Dave Brubeck on “*The Real Ambassadors*,” *NPR All Things Considered with Michele Norris* (12 June 2009), 0:04:05-0:04:50.

The Real Ambassadors is set in a fictional and newly-independent African country called Talgalla, and the hero's story mirrors Louis Armstrong's career and reception as a jazz ambassador. The hero, played by Armstrong, has just arrived with his band, bringing jazz music to win friends abroad for the United States. Here, Talgalla's portrayal satirizes the political motives behind State Department tours in Africa:

It had been unknown and unrecognized as a nation until the two great superpowers simultaneously discovered its existence. Suddenly, Talgalla was a nation to be reckoned with. The Russian techniques build the empty road that lay below them. U.S. equipment had cleared the airfield.¹³²

On the one hand, Talgalla is pictured as a product of superpower rivalries, yet it is also a place where a new social order can be ushered in as “a symbol of democratic and utopian aspiration.”¹³³

Returning to the narrative of the musical, Armstrong is made king for the day, and he promises to establish a pendulum in the town square to remind people that the world still swings. The meaning of the latter expression could mean literally swinging to jazz music, or metaphorically that the world is neither good nor evil, and each country swings like a pendulum between the two ends. In between musical selections, a narrator ties together the threads of the story, and the vocal group, like a chorus in opera or musical theater, provides commentary on events that do not take place on stage.

The political and satirical tone of the musical is established by the narrator's opening comments, which describe the musical as neither drama nor play, but a means of “pretending”

¹³² Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 40.

¹³³ Von Eschen, “The Real Ambassadors,” in *Uptown Conversation*, 196.

to raise many voices as one.¹³⁴ In the absence of scenery or costumes, except when props assist singers for plot advancement, the narrator opens the musical with an invitation to imagine "an African village with a church and a palace and people in its streets" as the backdrop to the musical. The opening number *Ev'rybody's Comin'* introduces the cast members and musicians by name as they enter the stage on cue. The narrator's comments lead to the next number, and introduce the purpose of the musical:

[The hero] had no political message, no slogan, no plan to sell or save the world. Yet he, and other traveling musicians like him, had inadvertently served a national purpose, which officials recognized and eventually sanctioned with a program called Cultural Exchange.¹³⁵

In the song *Cultural Exchange*, the chorus and the hero recall a news account of Dizzy Gillespie putting an end to riots in Greece during his 1956 State Department tour, and acknowledges Gillespie's success as the reason for continued support from the State Department for jazz musicians to be represented in cultural diplomacy tours.¹³⁶

Yeah! I remember when Diz was in Greece back in '56.
He did such a good job we started sending jazz all over the world...
No commodity is quite so strange / as this thing called Cultural Exchange.¹³⁷

The line "No commodity is quite so strange, as this thing called cultural exchange" can only be fully appreciated in the context of Brubeck and Armstrong tours. Both artists and their bands were "deliberately sent into the front lines of a major foreign policy crisis" as official representatives of the State Department.¹³⁸ After a 120-day long tour of Asia and Eastern

¹³⁴ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁶ See Chapter 1 in this thesis for backstory.

¹³⁷ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 12-13.

¹³⁸ Von Eschen, "Satchmo Blows Up the World," in *Here, There, and Everywhere*, 169.

Europe, the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles “unilaterally cancelled” Brubeck’s U.S. engagements and extended his 1958 tour to include Iran and Iraq in the midst of the Middle East oil crisis of 1958.¹³⁹

Iola captures the satire in *Cultural Exchange* with the line "Say that our prestige needs a tonic, export The Philharmonic," (p. 13-14) as a reminder of the U.S. State Department delaying to include jazz in its official cultural presentations.¹⁴⁰ Another jab at sour race relations between government officials and African American musicians come out in the line, "And when all our neighbors called us vermin, we sent out Woody Herman," (p.14) referring to the White band leader and his group that toured Europe while African American groups were restricted from official travel.¹⁴¹ The song continues to highlight white musicians and/or their music that had long represented the State Department:

Gershwin gave the Muscovites a thrill (with Porgy and Bess).
Bernstein was the darling of Brazil.
And just to stop internal mayhem, we dispatched [dancer] Martha Graham.

while African Americans and integrated bands did not receive official representation until 1956.¹⁴² *Cultural Exchange* encapsulates the controversial and complicated history between jazz, African Americans, and the State Department with:

The State Department has discovered jazz. It reaches folks like nothin' ever has.
Like when they feel that jazzy rhythm, they know we're really with 'em.

¹³⁹ Ibid. For more information on the Middle East Oil and Energy Crisis of July 1958, see Joe Stork, *Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 102-108.

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 2 in this thesis for information about the Music Advisory Panel’s selecting process for cultural diplomacy tours.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 3 in this thesis for more information on why African American jazz musicians were restricted from travel during the late 1950s.

¹⁴² See Chapter 2 in this thesis for more information on representation of African American jazz musicians during State Department Cultural Presentations.

That's what we call cultural exchange.¹⁴³

The essence of cultural diplomacy is best captured in this sarcastic tag that appears towards the end of the song, which came about as an improvisation by Armstrong during a recording rehearsal with his band: "And if the world goes really wacky / We'll get John [Kennedy] to send out Jackie," at which point trombonist Trummy Young interrupted, "You mean Jackie Robinson?", to which Armstrong responded, "No, man, I mean the First Lady / That's what we call cultural exchange."¹⁴⁴ The narrator's comment closing the song draws a parallel to Armstrong's delayed acceptance of an invitation to travel as part of the State Department cultural diplomacy tours: "He, who had experienced such great success as an unofficial ambassador, felt that [an official] tour could jeopardize his spotless, non-committal career."¹⁴⁵

The song *Remember Who You Are* captures much of the sarcasm and satire in the musical, and recalls the briefings given to Dave Brubeck and his band at the airport shortly before leaving for the 1958 State Department tour:

When you travel in a far off land,
Remember you're more than just a band
You represent the U.S.A.,
So watch what you think and do and say
Remember who you are and what you represent...
Always be a credit to your government.
No matter what you say or what you do,
The eyes of the world are watching you.
Never face a problem, always circumvent
Stay away from issues. Be discreet,
When controversy enters, you retreat.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 12-13.

¹⁴⁴ Millstein, 1962 LP liner notes, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 17. The statement does not take into account Armstrong's cancellation of Soviet Union jazz tour following the 1957 Little Rock Crisis. See Chapter 3 in this thesis for more information.

¹⁴⁶ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 21-23.

While briefings were focused on preventing “potentially embarrassing behavior,” the musicians were given little warning on how to respond to turbulent politics and criticism of American domestic policy.¹⁴⁷ The song *Remember who you are* also pays homage to jazz pioneers Jelly Roll Morton and Count Basie – “Jelly Roll and Basie helped us to invent” (p.22) - but perhaps the most chilling expression in the entire song is Lola’s characterization of jazz as Cold War arsenal – “a weapon that no other nation has, especially the Russians can't claim jazz” (p.23) – for the closing words of the song.¹⁴⁸

In *King for a Day*, Armstrong and Young daydream about the things they would do if Armstrong was appointed king for a day. When Armstrong announced that he would call a “basement session.” Young interjects with, "Pops, you mean a summit conference?" to which Armstrong replies, "Man, I don't mean a U.N. kind-of session, I mean a jam session." He goes onto say that he would:

Form a swingin' band with all the leaders from every land.
Why, they will fall right in a swingin' groove and all the “isms” gonna move.
Relationship is bound to improve.¹⁴⁹

One of the “isms” implied here may be communism, which the United States perceived as the biggest threat against the world during the Cold War years. Young objects to Armstrong’s idealistic words with:

How can they all agree on one melody? Won't each man call his own tune?
They will want the song they've played all along.
You're expecting too much too soon.
Although my king is wise, Can't he realize / Rome wasn't built in a day

¹⁴⁷ Von Eschen, “The Real Ambassadors,” in *Uptown Conversation*, 194.

¹⁴⁸ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 22-23.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 33-34

Won't a diplomat just be apt to scat in a "hippy"-critical way?¹⁵⁰

Armstrong replies,

Not if they are playin' jazz. They'll be no such razzmatazz.
'Cause it's a session where we jam the blues.
Khrushchev poundin' both his shoes couldn't have the final say,
If I'm king for a day.¹⁵¹

The song clearly captures the political context in which jazz tours took place and the impact that cultural diplomats could make in the absence of effort from political diplomats. What is particularly interesting is the reference to Nikita Khrushchev, Russian prime minister during the height of the Cold War 1958-1964, and his shoe-banging incident during the United Nations General Assembly in New York City in 1960.¹⁵² *King for a Day* is the only musical example that directly references the U.S.-Soviet relations during the Cold War. The song also pays homage to "kings" or pioneers of jazz such as Buddy Bolden (who was called the King of Black New Orleans music), King Oliver (hot jazz pioneer), Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Earl "Fatha" Hines.¹⁵³

The punch line of the entire musical is revealed in the title song *The Real Ambassadors*, when the chorus, pretending to be diplomatic ambassadors following instructions verbatim, asks the hero who the real ambassador is:

It is evident we represent American society
Noted for its etiquette, its manners and sobriety
We have followed protocol with absolute propriety.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 35, 38-39.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵² For more information on Khrushchev's visit to the U.S. and the incident during the United Nations General Assembly, see William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 475-476, 657.

¹⁵³ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 37.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 47-48.

The lyrics capture the sarcasm behind state officials being reluctant to include jazz musicians on grounds of alleged rebellious nature and improper conduct, often to do with night life and clubs.¹⁵⁵ The chorus continues to describe the power and prestige carried by political diplomats with endorsement from public media (“NBC and CBS”), “Senators and Congressmen,” and the State Department itself. Fortunately, Armstrong steps in and clears up any confusion, but by doing so he challenges the “legitimacy of government policy” and asserts self-imposed authority.¹⁵⁶

I'm the real ambassador.
It is evident that I wasn't sent by government to take your place
All I do is play the blues and meet the people face to face
I'll explain and make it plain /
I represent the human race and don't pretend no more...
In my humble way, I'm the U.S.A.
Though I represent the government,
The government don't represent some policies I'm for.
Oh, we've learned to be concerned about the constitutionality
In our nation segregation isn't a legality
Soon our only differences will be in personality
That's what I stand for.¹⁵⁷

The lyrics here are especially personal to Armstrong's response denouncing President Eisenhower and his administration over the handling of the 1957 Central High School Crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas. This was the only instance where Armstrong openly stated his personal views on racial inequality and segregation in a political context.

The storyline continues with a street festival held in Talgalla to welcome the musicians and diplomats visiting the newly-independent country. The tone of the musical takes a dark

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 2 in this thesis for information related to moral conduct and lifestyle choices of jazz musicians that were often scrutinized by state officials and foreign mission offices.

¹⁵⁶ Von Eschen, “The Real Ambassadors,” in *Uptown Conversation*, 197.

¹⁵⁷ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 47-50.

turn as the hero reflects on his role as a goodwill ambassador and an image of reverence. The song *They say I look like God* is presented as an antiphonal Blues between Armstrong and the vocal trio Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks, and Annie Ross chanting a biblical text.¹⁵⁸ In an audio letter, Iola explains to Armstrong the scene in which the song occur:

You have just been publicly shamed by the real Ambassador, who thinks that you have falsely claimed to be an Ambassador of the United States. The people, who had hailed you as a hero, sadly turn away from you because they have seen the real Ambassador seems to wield more power than you... You feel your idealistic dreams for helping the world has completely crumbled. You feel complete and absolute humility... From within the church you hear the chant of priests: 'God created Man in his image and likeness. In the image of God, created He them. Beloved, let us love one another for lovers of God. He that loveth God loveth his brother also.'¹⁵⁹

While the song *The Real Ambassadors* may seem to be the title song, *They say I look like God* states the real purpose of the musical exposing racial equality and humanity regardless of color of skin and place of birth. The song emulates a religious feeling similar to a traditional spiritual:

Oh, Lord, please hear my plea! Oh give me eyes to see
That our Creation was meant to be An Act of God to set man free...
When will that great day come? When everyone is One
And there will be no more misery When God tells man he's really free.¹⁶⁰

The story ends on an upbeat tone (pun intended!) as the people of Talgalla take to the streets to dance and celebrate the hero, Armstrong, being crowned King of Talgalla. Armstrong, in the role of the hero and “the real ambassador”, is celebrated as a symbol of hope for peace,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1. The biblical chant is taken from the end of the block quote: “God created Man in his image and likeness. In the image of God, created He them. Beloved, let us love one another for lovers of God. He that loveth God loveth his brother also.”

¹⁵⁹ Audio letter from Iola Brubeck explaining and Dave Brubeck singing "They Say I Look Like God" to Louis Armstrong, *The Real Ambassadors*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library, 0:00:53-0:03:05.

¹⁶⁰ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 58-59.

freedom, and human dignity in the Finale: "This day we're free! We're equal in ev'ry way."¹⁶¹

Iola Brubeck explains the significance of lyrics in this final coronation scene:

The priests from the mission, standing on the church steps, sing their plea, which are quotations from the bible - 'Cry loud! Spare not! Lift up thy voice like a trumpet' [p.70] - because the priests have seen your effect on the people and they want you to stay there and lead them. The crowd want you to blow your horn, the symbol of freedom.¹⁶²

The finale continues with the chorus, representing the crowds, singing "Blow, Satchmo! Make that trumpet roar" (p.70) and "Can you hear us... talkin' to you. Good Lord, set us free" (p.74).

The only ones who are "almost without hope," according to Iola's audio letter, are the workers in the street singing the spiritual: "Been waitin' so long, Lord! How long will it be?" (p.76).¹⁶³

The finale ends with Satchmo picking up his horn of freedom and everyone dancing and singing with the hero as the king leads them to "that promised land."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁶² Audio letter from Iola Brubeck explaining Coronation scene to Louis Armstrong, *The Real Ambassadors*, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library, 0:00:58 – 0:01:16.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 0:01:28-0:01:38.

¹⁶⁴ Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, libretto, 80.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

State Department officials expected for cultural diplomacy to be eagerly accepted abroad due to their nature of reaching global audiences with American values and culture. However, much of global reception of American ideals and cultural diplomacy propaganda during the Cold War were effected by U.S. domestic and foreign policy issues. Eisenhower's administration built on the initiatives set in place during the Truman administration to elevate cultural diplomacy using Federal funding. American arts and culture, especially jazz, received international level acclaim as a result of investment and support from federal agencies such as the USIA and the State Department. This cultural "high" continued into the Kennedy administration with the creation of the Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs at the Department of State. In the 1970s, the USIA and the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs brought back emphasis into American studies, once again disseminating American culture around the world.¹⁶⁵ While the Berlin Wall didn't come down to the blowing of Satchmo's trumpet, the immense contributions made by jazz artists via radio and diplomacy tours did more for the United States to win the cultural Cold War than any politician or government official.

James Der Derian defined diplomacy as "a mediation between estranged individuals, groups, or entities. Mediation, in this context, is defined as a connecting link or an intervention."¹⁶⁶ Utilizing music, especially jazz, and associated cultural exchanges (such as jam

¹⁶⁵ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 489.

¹⁶⁶ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in American's Cold War Diplomacy*, 20.

sessions) were a successful measure to build cultural relationships during the Cold War. This provided an opportunity for musicians to be involved in global relationship building as cultural ambassadors and allowed average citizens to share American values and ideals in a global setting. Throughout this thesis, the question I have considered here is to what extent did jazz succeed in being recognized as an American strength beyond Cold War cultural propaganda? While cultural diplomacy tours exemplified jazz as an American treasure around the world, they failed to create the same effect among domestic audiences at the same time and in the years to come.

As Fosler-Lussier points out, while music did not have the capacity to break down political borders and distrust during the Cold War, jazz as an American invention transcended political action in helping America win the cultural Cold War.¹⁶⁷ The argument that jazz was improving race relations within the United States was often crosscut with political propaganda. In some instances, the mere presence and representation of African Americans in the State Department jazz tours was enough to convey a strong positive message of racial equality. For the musicians who participated in the State Department tours, engagement with audiences created a sense of purpose in representing American culture and music, and the State Department's eagerness to include jazz for cultural diplomacy helped to institutionalize jazz and create a fan base at home. The issue of racial equality accomplished during the cultural diplomacy tours is still somewhat unresolved. African American artists who openly discussed struggles and observations during tours used their public image as goodwill ambassadors to advance not only the interests of their government but also their race. A balance between

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 22.

critical outspokenness and patriotic discretion were necessary and appropriate for advancing the cause of African Americans seeking racial equality and freedom during the Cold War.

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