John Ferri

Professor FitzPatrick

Composing Digital Media

18 April 2018

**Cultural Diplomacy Podcast Final Project Script**

Hello, my name is John Ferri, and today I am going to talk about cultural diplomacy – what it is, why it’s important, and how anyone can help support it.

**Let’s start by defining cultural diplomacy and talking about who works in this field.**

Cultural diplomacy means using culture and the arts to promote mutual understanding between groups of people. Cultural diplomacy is a recognized and valuable aspect of diplomacy, under the umbrella of public diplomacy. It is appreciated for its flexible, positive, and inclusive nature.

In the US Department of State, there is an entire Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. However, cultural diplomacy is also pursued and promoted by private organizations, like the DeVos Institute of Arts Management in Washington DC and the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin. This is a very open field to which even individuals can make meaningful contributions.

**So, why does it matter?**

Cultural diplomacy promotes mutual understanding between groups of people. Promoting culture promotes peace, and anyone can help. These are benefits of cultural diplomacy:

1. Prevents and reduces tensions between people and societies, and it fosters mutually beneficial connections between groups of people.
2. Encourages economic cooperation and prevents trade wars, which would devastate our globally interconnected economies.
3. Counteracts the insulation and isolation now advocated by certain national governments.

Cultural diplomacy operates at many levels in official and unofficial ways. Governments pursue official cultural diplomacy initiatives at national and international levels, including the performances and cultural exchanges promoted by the US State Department. However, there are also initiatives at the levels of organizations and individuals that promote cultural diplomacy, whether or not they are officially sponsored by the US State Department. These initiatives are just as important as the governmental programs. Governments can only act in limited official capacities, and can be influenced by restrictions, the climate of international relations, and public funding and support. Organizations and individuals, however, can act in a more flexible manner, sometimes filling niches that governments cannot.

**Here's how people and groups at every level can contribute to promoting and implementing cultural diplomacy.**

**Governments can:** Create international and domestic cultural and artistic exchange programs, cultural education initiatives, series of cultural and artistic performances and showcases, and fund artistic and cultural people and movements from around the world.

**This is what private organizations can do:** They can create global, domestic, and local organizations for cultural and artistic exchanges, art and culture education, artistic and cultural performances and showcases, and fund private and government culture programs, performances, showcases, and education initiatives.

**Individuals can contribute, too:** For example, they can work, volunteer, donate, and/or intern for cultural and artistic institutes and movements. They can host domestic and international students and artists. They can found cultural and artistic organizations and programs. Most of all, though, they can SPREAD THE WORD.

**Now, let’s switch to history, going back to see how US Cultural Diplomacy began:**

In the midst of the Cold War, a nuclear crisis, and the process of rebuilding from World War II, the United States realized that it needed to create a new way of communicating with the rest of the world. So, in 1956 the American government sent a special agent for a crucial mission – Dizzie Gillespie, on a world tour.

Dizzie Gillespie was an immensely popular American jazz musician at the time, and the US government hoped that it could use his popularity to start discussions with nations worldwide that might have otherwise been hostile to government envoys.

Karen Grigsby Bates of NPR wrote an article about this initiative and quoted Adam Clayton Powell III, a USC professor: “Really interesting music attracts people, and then they hang around for a discussion of the politics. They may hate our policies, but they love our music.” Professor Powell’s father, Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY), who served the Harlem constituency in New York City, was the inspiration for Gillespie’s world tour.

**You may be wondering: what did this program accomplish?**

This world tour accomplished exactly what was intended for it. It opened the door for positive relations between the United States and countries around the world, including nations with governments that were critical of America. Dizzie Gillespie went all around the world, from Italy to India to Saudi Arabia. However, the key note to this tour’s success was not that it brought American jazz music around the world, but that it invited local artists to contribute as well. Gillespie made an effort to always play with local musicians and bands, and this collaboration fostered openness, understanding, and pro-American sentiment. Even in modern times, in spite of the unpopular conflicts in the Middle East, American culture remains both ubiquitous and extremely popular all around the globe. Coca-Cola can be found and bought almost anywhere. The latest and greatest American films, especially major Hollywood productions, top the box office ticket sales in many countries. When governments are hostile to US policy and official diplomacy fails, cultural diplomacy still gives America a chance to reach out to the populations of other nations directly. The people themselves are not as likely to be anti-American as the government, especially if they enjoy American culture.

**Here are three recent examples of cultural diplomacy operating at the local, national, and international levels. First is the Kennedy Center, operating at the international and national levels.**

Cultural diplomacy deserves to be actively supported at all levels. In the private sector, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC is a major institution that has done great work in cultural diplomacy. In the past few years, the center has greatly expanded its quantity and diversity of international art programming.

One example of this is the festival the Kennedy Center hosted a few years ago that showcased high-level performances by artists from countries with which the United States had strained relations or was in conflict. The performers included the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra, Russian ballet companies, and Chinese musicians. The festival was lauded for demonstrating to skeptical Americans the high level of culture and beautiful art that could come out of these nations as well, for fostering understanding between the US and these countries, and for being a very engaging series of performances.

**The second example is the National Symphony Orchestra, which works at the national and international levels to promote cultural diplomacy.**

The National Symphony Orchestra is another private American organization that has successfully promoted cultural diplomacy around the world through praised performances and commendable outreach and education programs. Their recent performance in Moscow, Russia is an excellent example of their cultural diplomacy efforts, because they respected their audience by playing Russian music in honor of a Russian conductor, Rostropovich.

The National Symphony Orchestra played a concert on the evening of Wednesday, March 29 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, a prestigious Russian venue for musical performances. The performance was a tribute to Russian cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, the beloved late music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, on what would have been his 90th birthday. This tribute concert was part of an annual festival concert series created by Rostropovich’s daughter, Olga, to commemorate her father’s work.

As reported by Anne Midgette of The Washington Post, this performance came at a critical time for both the US and Russia, as political relations have become increasingly strained in recent years.

The National Symphony Orchestra may not have come to perform in Russia for diplomatic reasons, but the concert that it delivered helped to generate excitement among the local population and create positive American press, as opposed to anti-American sentiments. Locals knew the ensemble from its previous ground-breaking Russian performances. The Russian population had adored these previous NSO performances, but the US National Symphony Orchestra had not visited Russia and played in the Moscow Conservatory Great Hall since 1993, when it became the first orchestra in history to play in the Red Square, where the audience numbered 100,000. In its 2017 performance, the NSO played Russian music, not just American pieces, and honored Rostropovich, a Russian by birth.

This represents an important type of cultural diplomacy that promotes understanding by playing global music for a global audience, as opposed to exporting only American music.

According to The Washington Post, both Russia and the United States see this National Symphony Orchestra concert tour as a bright spot in a complicated relationship.

Anne Midgette of The Washington Post interviewed Nicholas J. Cull, the director of the master of public diplomacy program offered by the Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism at the University of Southern California. He wrote that concerts of this nature have very significant symbolism and accomplish core goals of cultural diplomacy. Cull is quoted: “…there’s the idea of a gift. If you give somebody a fantastic gift, it starts to establish a reciprocal relationship.” He goes on to say: “maybe today there’s value in reminding people that we’re not all about Taylor Swift. There is still high culture in America.”

**The third and final example of cultural diplomacy in action is a small organization operating at the local level, called BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music.**

Smaller organizations and individuals can also contribute to cultural diplomacy in meaningful ways. These contributions range from learning about global cultures, languages, and art, or hosting international exchange students, to donating to, volunteering with, or working for groups that promote cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange. An example of this is BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music. BRIDGES is a program headquartered at Cunningham Park Elementary School in Vienna, Virginia.

BRIDGES is an intensive after-school music education program that provides high-quality instruction in vocal and instrumental music, and while it focuses on under-served elementary school students, it is open to all children at the Cunningham Park Elementary School. It also offers academic tutoring, mentoring and a healthy snack.

The program was started four years ago, initially staffed completely by volunteers. Ms. Bonny Tynch, a music teacher at the school, started this program because many students were coming to her asking to listen to them on their instruments. Ms. Tynch realized that they were hungry for extra instruction and assistance with music, but their families did not have the means to acquire this instruction. She enlisted the support of her music teacher colleagues. She based BRIDGES on El Sistema, an intensive after-school music education program in the barrios (ghettos) of Venezuela, which was created to keep the children safe from crime and provide a positive and academically-enriching environment. El Sistema program sessions took place after every school day, plus Saturdays. Gustavo Dudamel, an alumnus of this program, has gone on to be a very successful musical conductor, now leading the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

This program aims not only to help under-served students with music and academic instruction, but also to help integrate these children and their largely immigrant families into the school and greater community. It is a program that works to promote social inclusion and foster understanding between groups of people, as a type of cultural diplomacy.

At first, the staff was composed entirely of volunteers. Then, the program started charging very minimal tuition from students with means and received donations for snack food and other program necessities. Now, BRIDGES has become a 501c3 organization, entitling it to apply for certain grants and larger donations. This program currently functions on a combination of tuition, grants, and donations.

It exposes the participating children to a variety of music types from many different cultures, including classical music, jazz music with instruction on how to do improvisation, folk music, and popular music. The children are also given the chance to play and learn several instruments from the band, choral, and orchestral music spheres.

First, the participating children are exposed to many different kinds of music and instruments, increasing their comprehension of art from around the world. Second, the students learn teamwork, cooperation, listening, and social skills by rehearsing and performing together, playing games together, and becoming friends with each other. No one is considered an ‘outsider’ or ‘other,’ because there is great diversity of all kinds in the group of participants and they all get to know each other well.

**Here are the take-aways:**

To promote culture is to promote peace, understanding, and better relations. Anyone can help support it.

It reduces tensions and foster connections between people and societies.

Cultural diplomacy enhances a nation or organization’s image abroad.

This approach will counteract policies of isolation and insulation.

Lastly, cultural diplomacy encourages economic cooperation.

**Alright, I would like to take a moment before concluding to recognize the research sources and audio tracks used in this podcast.**

**The research for this podcast comes from a variety of sources, as listed now:**

* “Dizzy Gillespie’s Cold War Jazz Diplomacy,” an NPR article from October 16, 2006, written by Karen Grigsby Bates
* The written report titled “On the Cultural Economy,” published on March 1, 2012, created by Dai Yuwen of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, Germany, on its website culturaldiplomacy.org
* Information taken from the websites devosinstitute.umd.edu and devosinstitute.net about the DeVos Institute of Arts Management
* Information on cultural diplomacy programs and theories taken from the diplomatie.gouv.fr website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the French Government
* The article “What is Cultural Diplomacy” on the website culturaldiplomacy.org for the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy
* The Washington Post article “Russia Deploys ‘Cultural Diplomacy’ in France,” written on October 22, 2016 by James McAuley and Andrew Roth
* The web page created in 2017 about the Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy on the meridian.org website for the Meridian International Center
* The Washington Post article “There’s Still High Culture in America: Why the National Symphony Orchestra Went to Moscow” written on March 30, 2017 by Anne Midgette
* The article written on January 1, 2010 titled “Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy” in Public Diplomacy Magazine, which is sponsored by the Association for Public Diplomacy Scholars
* The web page created by Andreas Sandre about Digital Diplomacy at the Italian Embassy in Washington DC: Experimenting with Digital Diplomacy, taken from the website for the Italian Embassy of Washington DC.
* Information taken from the website eca.state.gov, which represents the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the US Department of State

**The audio tracks in this podcast are taken from Podington Bear and from the Composing Digital Media spring 2018 semester course sound effect files library. The tracks used in this podcast are listed and attributed now:**

* The music track ‘Gray-grey’ by Podington Bear
* The sound effect ‘clink’ by Dr. FitzPatrick, from the Composing Digital Media sound effect files library
* The music track ‘K2’ by Podington Bear
* The music track ‘Pounded Piano’ by Podington Bear

**So in conclusion, please remember that cultural diplomacy is a valuable field to which we can all contribute. Promote culture, promote peace. Thank you, and goodbye.**