

# Promote Culture, Promote Peace



Cultural Diplomacy

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# Table of Contents

- Cultural Diplomacy.....3
- Why Cultural Diplomacy is Important.....4
- EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations.....5
- Appeal.....6
- Beginnings, US Cultural Diplomacy.....7
- Results, US Cultural Diplomacy.....8
- Recent Example: The Kennedy Center.....9
- Recent Example: The National Symphony Orchestra.....10
- Recent Example: BRIDGES Harmony Through Music.....13
- Interviews and Testimony.....14
  - Bridges.....15
  - Adam Namm.....19
- Call to Action.....22
  - Government .....23
  - Private Organizations .....24
  - Individuals .....25
- Take-Aways.....26
- References.....27





# Cultural Diplomacy

## Definition

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.

## Practitioners

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.





# Why Cultural Diplomacy is Important

Cultural diplomacy promotes mutual understanding between groups of people.

Promoting culture promotes peace, and anyone can help.

These are benefits of cultural diplomacy:

***Prevents and reduces tensions***, and fosters mutually beneficial connections between groups of people.

***Encourages economic cooperation*** and prevents trade wars, which would devastate our globally interconnected economies.

***Counteracts the insulation and isolation*** now advocated by certain national governments.







# Appeal

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.

Therefore, I am appealing to the State Department, but also to private organizations, and to individuals who appreciate and would like to support art and culture.



## Governments



## Private Organizations



## Individuals



# Beginnings of US Cultural Diplomacy

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.



Dizzie Gillespie World Jazz Tour, Saudi Arabia





# Results of US Cultural Diplomacy

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.



Dizzie Gillespie World Jazz Tour, Italy





# Recent Examples, #1: The Kennedy Center

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.



Logo: The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts,  
2700 F St NW, Washington, DC 20566, USA



# Recent Examples, #2: The National Symphony Orchestra

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 90<sup>th</sup> 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.



Maestro Christoph Eschenbach leads the National Symphony Orchestra in a Moscow performance honoring Rostropovich.

(The Washington Post; Scott Suchman/National Symphony Orchestra) 10



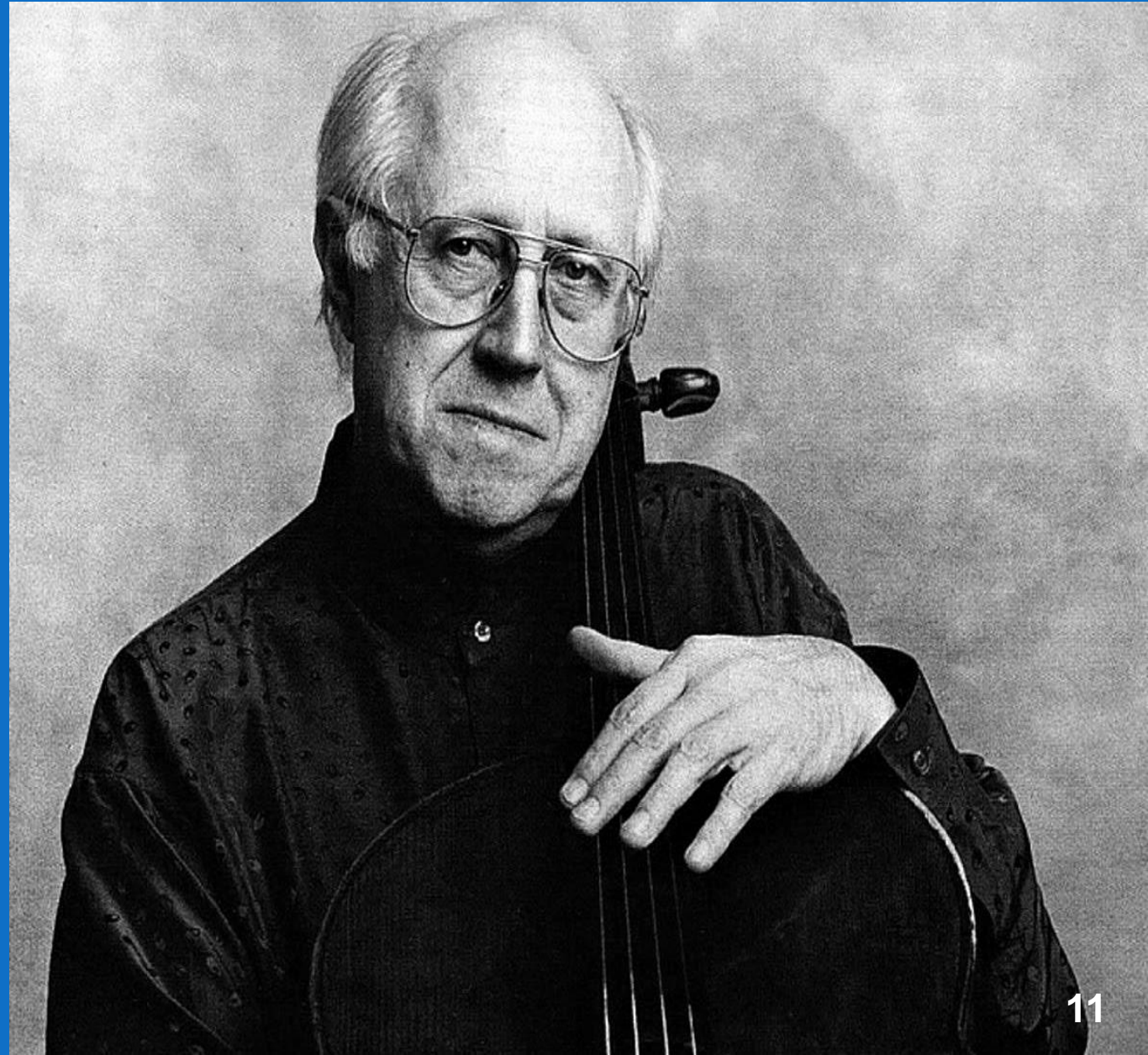


## Recent Examples, #2: The National Symphony Orchestra

Anne Midgette of The Washington Post reports: “Culture stands tall above the din of politics,” says John Tefft, the US ambassador to Moscow, while speaking at a reception for the NSO.

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 (pictured at right)**, 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.







# Recent Examples, #2: The National Symphony Orchestra

**Anne Midgette, The Washington Post:**

**“We want to like music. And we want to like each other. That may be the most profound message, at the moment, that cultural diplomacy has to offer.”**

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 tour is one of the brightest elements in our current relations” – Sergei Kislyak, Russian Ambassador to the US; interview by Anne Midgette, The Washington Post**



National Symphony Orchestra Maestro Christoph Eschenbach (The Washington Post; Scott Suchman/ National Symphony Orchestra)





# Recent Examples, #3: 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.



Logo: BRIDGES Harmony Through Music  
after-school music-education and inclusion program  
Cunningham Park Elementary School, 1001 Park St, Vienna, VA 22180,USA



# Interviews and Testimony

The following section includes two interviews from practitioners describing actions that they took to promote cultural diplomacy, and providing their testimonies for cultural diplomacy.

The first interview is with the Board of BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music. The second is with Former Ambassador Adam Namm.







# Interview & Testimony: The Board of BRIDGES Harmony Through Music

**Q: What is BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music?**

**A:** 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.



BRIDGES Choral Director and Founder  
Ms. Tynch with BRIDGES students



# Interview & Testimony: The Board of BRIDGES Harmony Through Music

BRIDGES students learn to play the violin



**Q:** When, where, how, and why was it established? Is there another model or idea on which it is based?

**A:** 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.





# Interview & Testimony: The Board of BRIDGES Harmony Through Music

**Q: What are the goals of this program for its participants?**

**A:** 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.

**Q: How does the program sustain itself?**

**A:** 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.

**Q: How does BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music promote culture and art?**

**A:** 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.



BRIDGES students at Cunningham Park Elementary School, Vienna, Virginia



# Interview & Testimony: The Board of BRIDGES Harmony Through Music

**Q: How does BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music foster understanding between groups of people?**

**A:** 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.

**Q: What are the future goals of BRIDGES: Harmony Through Music and how will it achieve them?**

**A:** The program's leaders would like to expand it to other schools in the Greater Washington DC area, and they aim to grow the program within the schools that currently participate in BRIDGES, so that more students can access and benefit from it. This will be achieved through the successful completion of various fundraising campaigns. The program has already expanded to two additional elementary schools.



BRIDGES students with their band teacher, Mr. Tynch





# Interview with Former Ambassador Adam Namm: Diplomacy Through Music

Adam Namm is a former US Ambassador to Ecuador and a practitioner of public sector cultural diplomacy.

Studying abroad in France as a college student inspired Mr. Namm to pursue a globally-focused career. Therefore, Mr. Namm embarked on a 30-year career with the US Department of State. This led him to serve in various positions around the world, including as US ambassador to Ecuador.



Adam Namm, Former US Ambassador to Ecuador





# Interview with Former Ambassador Adam Namm: Diplomacy Through Music

In Ecuador, there was significant anti-American sentiment among government officials. The general population, however, had a more neutral opinion overall, and often enjoyed American culture and products. Mr. Namm discovered that an effective way to foster understanding and promote better relations between these two countries would be to help Ecuadoreans and Americans appreciate each other's music. Mr. Namm played American jazz and Ecuadorean music with locals, forging strong bonds within the government and the community.



Former US Ambassador to Ecuador Adam Namm with Jose Barbosa, Rector of UTPL, a respected private technical university in Ecuador



# Interview with Former Ambassador Adam Namm: Diplomacy Through Music

**Q: In your experience and the experience of your State Department colleagues, what are some of the most effective methods of pursuing cultural diplomacy?**

**A: It's best to get out and connect with members of the community and local government, through whatever it is that they love to do, whether that would be sports, music, theater, or art. Whenever officials connect with the community, the community's opinion of them improves.**

**Q: How would you suggest that individuals and private organizations pursue and promote cultural diplomacy?**

**A: Cultural diplomacy can be pursued in many ways. Again, it is best to connect with the community to which you want to reach out, so engaging in activities that they like is always a good idea.**



Former US Ambassador to Ecuador Adam Namm playing the piano and singing with American and Ecuadorean musicians



# Call to Action



## Governments

**Create** international and domestic:

- cultural and artistic **exchange** programs
- cultural **education** initiatives
- series of cultural and artistic **performances, showcases**

**Fund** artistic and cultural **people** and **movements** from **around the world**



## Private Organizations

**Create** global, domestic, and local **organizations** for:

- cultural and artistic **exchange**
- art and culture **education**
- artistic and cultural **performances, showcases**

**Fund** private and government culture **programs, performances, showcases, and education initiatives**



## Individuals

**Work, volunteer, donate, intern** for cultural and artistic **institutes and movements**

**Host** domestic and international **students and artists**

**Found** cultural and artistic **organizations and programs**

**SPREAD THE WORD**



# Call to Action: Government

## Potential Actor:

Department of State – Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; Foreign Service

## Current Cultural Diplomacy Initiative Examples:

- **Fulbright Programs, Scholarships:** Americans research, study, intern, teach English, or work in another country; international students come to America
- **OneBeat:** International cultural exchange for artists and musicians from the US and around the world
- **American Film Showcase:** Showings of award-winning American films around the world

## Potential Future Cultural Diplomacy Actions:

- International cinema showings, festivals
- New international scholarships, grants, programs for work, study, and research
- International concerts, fostering and funding development and performances of non-US musicians and artists



The US Capitol Building, Washington DC, USA





# Call to Action: Private Organizations

## Potential Actors:

- **City of Asylum:** Pittsburgh-based non-profit for writers and artists from around the world
- **DeVos Institute of Arts Management:** Training, consulting, implementation support for arts managers in Washington DC and at the University of Maryland
- **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:** DC-based performing arts institution promoting both American and international artistic works.

## Current Cultural Diplomacy Program Example:

**City of Asylum Exiled Writers-in-Residence:** Writers exiled from their countries due to their writing can reside at the City of Asylum to continue their work

## Potential Future Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives:

- Create programs for global artists and musicians to come to the US
- Fund artistic works
- Create educational short-term artistic exchanges





# Call to Action: Individuals

## Potential Actor:

You!

## Current Cultural Diplomacy Initiative Example:

**Ms. Bonny Tynch (pictured at right):** She is the founder of **BRIDGES Harmony Through Music**, an intensive after-school music education program for disadvantaged students at Cunningham Park Elementary School, where she works as a choral director and music teacher; she founded this program by recruiting volunteers from her teacher colleagues, applying for funding, working with the school administration, and reaching out to interested students

## What Can You Do?

- Found programs, movements supporting cultural exchanges and cultural and artistic education
- Donate, work, volunteer, intern for cultural diplomacy organizations
- Host international exchange students; study and travel abroad; learn about global languages and cultures
- SPREAD THE WORD about cultural diplomacy and its global benefits!





# Take-Aways



Reduce tensions and foster connections

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

Enhance image abroad

Counteract isolation and insulation

Encourage economic cooperation



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**Promote Culture,  
Promote Peace**

