Transcending Political Dissonances: Music as an Instrument of Diplomacy

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Abstract

While the intersection of music and politics has garnered some attention in scholarly discourse, the role of instrumental music as a soft power tool in diplomacy remains underexamined. This thesis bridges this gap by exploring the transformative capacity of instrumental music in influencing socio-political norms and international relations in both state sponsored and non-state sponsored contexts. Using a critical aesthetic approach that synthesizes Adorno’s understanding of music and Said’s concept of “the Other”, my research examines the powerful potential of music as a diplomatic tool. To further my analysis, I adopt a mixed-methods approach to apply my theoretical framework to two case studies: the state-sponsored American Jazz Ambassadors and the non-state-sponsored West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. These examples demonstrate how music can operate as an agent of cultural exchange and foster understanding among politically divided groups, ultimately shaping socio-political norms and influencing power dynamics. By transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries, instrumental music emerges as a unique artistic medium that facilitates cross-cultural exchange and transforms the diplomatic landscape. My analysis and findings demonstrate the multifaceted nature of musical diplomacy and contribute to an in-depth understanding of international relations and soft power discourse. Consequently, my research advances the existing literature by integrating critical aesthetic theory into contemporary diplomatic practices and analyzing how instrumental music can be utilized as a diplomatic tool for societal transformation and cross-cultural dialogue.

Keywords: Instrumental Music, Diplomacy, Critical Aesthetic Theory, Adorno, Said, Jazz Ambassadors, West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
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Ever since starting my undergraduate degree, I left a significant part of myself behind as I immersed myself in my studies in political science and adjusted to a new life in Canada. Despite having played the violin for 12 years, my musical pursuits took a backseat as I explored new aspects of my identity and broadened my knowledge in political science. However, although I hold no regrets from my undergraduate experience, I do wish I had engaged myself more musically.

Throughout my time at UBC, I felt that something was missing, and I could feel myself yearning for a deeper connection with my musical background. Constrained by the lack of time to practice and my responsibilities as an honours political science and economics student, I often found myself unable to make time for violin and this made me feel incomplete – as if a vital part of my identity remained unfulfilled. Yet, after attending over 20 concerts during my undergraduate years, I realized the importance of creating these musical opportunities for myself. And it was this realization that prompted me to find a way to integrate both my passion for political science and my love for music into my academic journey. This thesis is the culmination of these two fields, and I hope my passion for both political science and music shimmers through this project.

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1. Introduction

From the moment we are born, we are surrounded by music. Whether it be the improvisational melodies of a jazz band playing until twilight in New Orleans or the triumphant E flat major cadence that concludes Beethoven’s Eroica symphony, music echoes throughout all aspects of life and enriches the human experience. Musicians have long recognized the power of music to transcend cultural and political divides and its instrumental role in social commentary. Yet, despite its profound ability to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds and communicate beyond the confines of language and ideology, the application of instrumental music in diplomatic policy and international relations remains largely underexplored. It is within this paradigm that this study explores the underrecognized potential of music as a diplomatic tool, exploring its capacity to influence political agendas, challenge cultural norms and existing power structures within international relations. Consequently, I seek to answer the question: How do state-sponsored and non-state sponsored actors challenge cultural norms and power dynamics through instrumental music as a soft power diplomatic tool and how does their resistance manifest in the socio-political landscape?

I demonstrate the transformative power of instrumental music in engendering diplomatic change and reimagining cultural norms in the socio-political landscape. I argue that instrumental music operates as a unique diplomatic tool that challenges socio-political norms and fosters cross-cultural dialogue. Unlike traditional methods of diplomatic communication, which primarily engages with the procedural and tactical aspects of political dialogue, instrumental music taps into the propensity of humans to find connection through shared experiences and foster deeper bonds among individuals and communities. This approach recognizes instrumental music as dynamic means of communication, allowing individuals to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers and fostering empathy among diverse groups. As a tool of diplomacy, instrumental creates a universal bridge to shared human experiences, facilitating connections that traditional diplomacy often fails to achieve.

To guide my study, I create an original theoretical framework that bridges the aesthetic and critical approaches of Theodor Adorno and Edward Said to illustrate how the universality and emotional resonance of music can be redefined as a diplomatic tool. I primarily draw upon Adorno’s notion of music as a universal language and Said’s conception of “the Other” and contrapuntalism to substantiate my argument. I then apply my framework to a contemporary diplomatic context through analysis of two case studies to capture the interplay between abstract theoretical concepts and the real-world applications of instrumental music. First, I analyze the strategic use of the American Jazz Ambassadors program by state sponsored actors, analyzing the mechanisms in which governmental musical initiatives can foster cultural exchange, counteract negative perceptions, and promote national interests abroad. Next, I analyze the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO), a non-state-sponsored pre-professional orchestra comprised of Israeli, Palestinian and Arab musicians, and evaluate how their musical interactions work to bridge political divides, facilitate dialogue and challenge entrenched social and political narratives. Finally, I examine the distinctions and parallels that emerge from the utilization of music as a diplomatic tool by both state-sponsored and non-state sponsored entities and
conclude by outlining the future implications of the role of instrumental music in contemporary diplomatic practices.

My study aims to contribute to the academic literature in two ways. First, I offer an innovative way to redefine instrumental music as a diplomatic tool through a mixed-methods approach that bridges political theory with qualitative analysis of contemporary case studies. Second, my study enhances scholarly discourse by analyzing the unique role of instrumental music in diplomacy through the lenses of both state and non-state actors, highlighting their respective impacts in challenging the status quo of the socio-political landscape.

1.1 Clarifying Key Concepts

Before delving into my study, it will be important to clarify key concepts that operate as the theoretical underpinnings of my analysis. The concept, “transcendence” will be central to my work, and it will be crucial to distinguish between its general English usage and its philosophical connotations as articulated by thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Arthur Schopenhauer. In its most immediate sense in the English language, transcendence refers to the elevation above and beyond the normal bounds of the physical (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). It suggests an ascent to a higher state of being or a surpassing the limitations faced by individuals. In contrast, Adorno’s notion of transcendence in his Essays on Music invokes a critique of societal structures, where music acts as a form of resistance, elevating humans to a state of universal understanding that challenges cultural and political norms (Adorno, 2002). In The World as Will and Representation, Schopenhauer sees transcendence as the alignment with the universal “Will” through the aesthetic experience of music, connecting us to a broader metaphysical realm (Schopenhauer, 2016).

While these concepts appear distinct, they are interconnected in that they all seek to express the movement beyond the immediate and towards a universal experience of understanding. Instrumental music exemplifies this movement, enabling musicians and listeners to transcend cultural narratives and political divides, and engage in a shared expression that extends beyond spoken language. In this transcendent state, the particularities of individual identity, cultural context, and political allegiance give way to a collective experience that places understanding and empathy at the forefront of the agenda, allowing for a unique connection that can inspire dialogue and foster peace, even amid entrenched conflicts.

Next, it will also be important to clarify “universality” within the context of my study. I define universality as the inherent quality of music to resonate across cultural, linguistic and ideological divides that provide a shared aesthetic experience that transcends individual subjectivities. In other words, universality allows music to work as a common language that speaks to human emotions and experiences, regardless of an individual’s background or beliefs. Universality acknowledges the power of music to evoke a collective consciousness and empathy, highlighting its role as a medium through which individuals connect to a realm larger than themselves (Schopenhauer, 2016). In political terms, universality emerges as a tool in which music can challenge entrenched social norms and contribute to transformative social change by embodying and expressing a unified human essence that surpasses political and cultural boundaries (Adorno, 2002). Here, this “essence” represents a set of shared human experience and emotional states that instrumental music can evoke, transcending the
boundaries of spoken language to communicate feelings and connect with the listener and musician on a universal level. It is a foundational and emotional truth that offers a reflection of the human condition on a personal and collective level, resonating through melodies and harmonies that articulate what words cannot, thereby fostering an intimate, yet shared experience for all (Adorno, 2002).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Prior Literature

Music has long been recognized as an influential tool that holds the power to transcend cultural and political barriers, making it a unique instrument for political expression and social commentary. Existing literature on the intersection between politics and music has mostly been limited to a few topics: national anthems and identity construction, protest music, and how popular music sometimes reinforces prevailing values, institutions, and stereotypes (Garratt, 2019; Adorno, 2002). Scholars such as Burstyn (2019), Erden (2019), Hebert and Kertz-Welzel (2012), Pavkovic et al (2015) and Mayo-Harp (2001) argue that national anthems serve to preserve a national identity and promote social unification through the interweaving of cultural, nationalistic, and religious values of a country. While this body of work provides valuable insights into the explicit political dimensions and universality of music, it overlooks how the aesthetic experience of music can evoke emotional responses and influence political norms and attitudes.

2.2 Aesthetic Theory

Aesthetic theory is a branch of political thought that explores the nature of the human experience in tandem with art and beauty. According to Paul Guyer (2015), aesthetic theory seeks to understand artistic expression and the ways that art shapes and reflects the cultural, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of the human experience. Discussions pertaining to the power of instrumental music in aesthetic theory emerged in the late 18th century. Scholars such as Immanuel Kant and E.T.A Hoffmann delved into the unique qualities of instrumental music and its capacity to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers (Kant, 2001; Hoffmann, 1989). Hoffman argued that the absence of verbal language in instrumental music empowers the artistic medium to transcend the limitations of verbal communication, such as misunderstandings that emerge due to language barriers and the inadequacy of words to fully encapsulate complex human emotions. Here, he emphasized how instrumental music engages listeners and performers alike to project their own experiences, emotions and imaginations onto the music, creating a universal experience that speaks to the shared essence of human feeling (Bonds, 2009). This notion of universality resonates with the core principles of aesthetic theory, by suggesting that instrumental music possesses a unique capacity to bridge individual differences and forge a shared human experience that transcends personal and cultural boundaries (Guyer, 2015). Consequently, the universality of instrumental music works to harmonize the varied emotions and experiences of humans, fostering a communal bond through the language of melody and rhythm.

Similarly, German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer went on to argue that instrumental music operated as the highest of all art forms due to its capacity to represent the metaphysics of reality (Schopenhauer, 2016).
In *The World as Will and Representation*, metaphysics is understood as the foundational forces that underpin existence, which he identifies as the “Will”. In Schopenhauer’s philosophy, the “Will” refers to a fundamental, blind, and insatiable force or drive underlying all existence. It is the essence behind all phenomena and the innermost reality of the world, transcending individual beings and manifesting in various forms, including human desires and the forces of nature. Schopenhauer extends this notion of the “Will” to instrumental music, arguing that music evokes a metaphysical tension and reaches into the universal undercurrents of the human experience. As music overcomes these boundaries, music elevates listeners and performers alike to a new, metaphysical realm where the distinctions between the individual and “the Other” dissolve into the universality of the “Will”. This metaphysical realm is characterized by a transcendent quality where individuals experience a humanistic interconnectedness within the universality of music. It is within this elevated state where music emerges as a powerful force in affirming each other’s humanity, as barriers between the individual and “the Other” dissolve (Schopenhauer, 2016). As such, the metaphysical space of music transforms itself into a platform for the recognition and celebration of a shared humanity, encouraging an environment of mutual respect and compassion that transcends the confines of language and the individual self.

However, while Schopenhauer emphasizes the metaphysical force of instrumental music, other aesthetic theorists, including Adorno, have highlighted different aspects of the aesthetic experience of instrumental music. In his *Essays on Music*, Theodor Adorno analyzes instrumental music within the context of the culture industry and societal control, suggesting that while some compositions rise to the level of “autonomous art” capable of challenging and broadening our understanding of oppressive realities, much of what is popularly consumed might only serve to pacify critical thinking and reinforce existing social orders (Adorno, 2002). Consequently, he argues that music works as a social commentary on the conditions of modern life and mirrors the tensions inherent in contemporary society. This music defies conventional harmony and structure, challenging listeners to confront uncomfortable truths about the prevailing social order. Through this confrontation, instrumental music becomes a tool for reflection, urging musicians and listeners alike to question and reconsider their societal frameworks and values.

As such, Adorno’s perspective reveals the inherent paradox of instrumental music: while it is shaped by the composer’s subjective intent and coloured by each listener’s individual experience, it also conveys universal themes that resonate across societal divides (Adorno, 2002). This paradox is crucial because it highlights the dynamic interaction between the experiences of individuals and the universality of the human condition that instrumental music embodies. The personal, intimate moments that a piece of music can encapsulate for a listener (the particular) are made potent by their potential to echo in the collective consciousness (the universal). This dichotomy between the personal and the collective in instrumental music exemplifies the relationship between the immanent—the experiences and emotions that are specific to different individuals—and the transcendent (Adorno, 2002). It is within this context that the dialectical relationship

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1 The concept of “autonomous art”, as articulated by Adorno, refers to works of art that maintain a degree of independence from the social, political, and economic conditions of their time. These works are characterized by their complexity, innovative form, and potential to provoke critical thought and self-reflection in the listener. Autonomous art resists the commodification and homogenization tendencies of the culture industry, providing a space for engagement with the deeper truths of human existence and the contradictions of society (Adorno, 2002).
takes precedence, as despite music’s structured nature, it fosters an expansive freedom within the listener to interpret and find meaning, often leading to liberation from the constraints of their socio-cultural environment.

Moreover, Adorno’s analysis further suggests that instrumental music that achieve the status of “autonomous art” provides a space for critical engagement and emancipation for both the individual and society, challenging the listener to confront and think critically about societal conditions (Adorno, 2002). As such, this engagement with instrumental music is not a passive experience but a dialectical one: it involves a continuous exchange between acceptance and challenge, between affirmation and critique of the status quo. As Adorno puts it, “music, enacted through time and in tension with time’s cultural given-ness, remakes our experience of time at once by ‘showing’ time for what it has become, and, conversely, what it might otherwise be” (Adorno, 2002, 108). In this way, the aesthetic experience of instrumental music becomes a medium for both personal reflection and societal transformation. Through its paradoxes, music acts as a catalyst for the revelation and reassessment of the deep structures of our reality, inviting a more nuanced and collective understanding of our humanity.

2.3 Critical Theory

Drawing upon aesthetic dimensions into its broader critique of society, Frankfurt School Critical Theory emerges as a branch of political thought that can be used to understand the role of music in society. Celikates and Flynn (2023) define Critical Theory as “a family of theories that aim at a critique and transformation of society by integrating normative perspectives with empirically informed analysis of society’s conflicts, contradictions, tensions and tendencies” (Celikates and Flynn, 2023, 1).\(^2\) This approach underscores Critical Theory’s commitment to analyzing societal structures in ways that challenge oppressive practices, aiming for their transformation. Simply put, Critical Theory seeks to “bridge the gap between empirical research and political thought” and apply these innovative ideas to a real-life context to overcome relations of domination as central to this intellectual tradition (Celikates and Flynn, 2023, 5). Here, Critical Theorists see empirical reality as a complex network of human experiences, cultural practices and social interactions. Unlike a quantitative methods social scientist who may focus on measurable variables to interpret social phenomena, Critical Theorists approach the empirical reality as a dynamic field wherein the lived experiences and power relations fill out the narrative and provide depth to understanding society.

In this context, instrumental music provides insights into societal dynamics and provides channels for expressing collective identities and aspirations for change. Critical Theory highlights how it is through music, specifically autonomous art, where a critical voice emerges that can articulate the specificities of individual experiences and relate them to the broader dynamics of societal structures. As such, Critical Theory encourages a deep engagement with music as a form of active resistance and a beacon for progressive change, fostering a culture of critical reflection that is central to the empowerment of individuals and communities alike (Celikates

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\(^2\) Within the broader scope of Critical Theory, contradictions and tensions refer to the inherent disparities and conflicts that arise within social structures and relations, often perpetuating systems of domination and oppression. Critical Theorists examine these contradictions not merely as abstract concepts but as lived realities that affect individuals and collectives, driving the need for societal critique and potential transformation (Celikates and Flynn, 2023).
Similarly, paradoxes and dialectics within the Critical Theory framework highlight the complex relationship between instrumental music and societal structures. These paradoxes illuminate the tensions inherent in instrumental music, wherein the artistic form is both a product of its cultural context and a challenge to the prevailing norms within that society (Adorno, 2002). For Critical Theorists, instrumental music emerges as a tool to understand the tensions between the emotive power of music and the rational structures of music theory. By situating instrumental music within this dialectical and paradoxical framework, the artistic medium challenges and redefines the discourse of social change and cultural understanding (Adorno, 2002).

Furthermore, Frankfurt School Critical Theory concerns itself with the emancipation of oppressed social classes from the various forms of domination and injustice permeating modern society. Critical Theorists examine the economic and political frameworks that restrict human freedom, while simultaneously assessing the cultural and ideological foundations that uphold these structures (Celikates and Flynn, 2023). As such, Critical Theorists argue that true emancipation requires a transformation that is both societal and individual, involving a critical awareness of the forces that shape our beliefs and actions. This awareness is seen as the first step towards autonomy and self-determination, freeing individuals from unjust social structures and enabling them to work towards a more equitable form of social organization (Celikates and Flynn, 2023). The emancipatory goals of Frankfurt School Critical Theory can be connected to instrumental music, as this artistic medium enables individuals to experience a form of liberation from societal constraints. Music encourages performers and listeners alike to transcend passive consumption and to actively engage with their social realities (Adorno, 2002). Extending beyond the act of musical performance, the roles of the musicians themselves exemplifies the principles of Critical Theory as they employ their influence and platforms to advocate for social change. In this way, players of instrumental music become catalysts for the broader application of Critical Theory, embodying its call to action to social realities and the transformation of socio-political landscapes.

Here, Adorno emerges as an important figure in the Frankfurt School, renowned for his analysis of the intersection between aesthetics, the culture industry, and music. By integrating elements of aesthetic theory with critical perspectives, Adorno offers a distinctive method for examining artistic expression against the broader canvas of cultural norms and socio-political dynamics (Adorno, 2002). Consequently, I will be focusing on the work of Adorno to understand how instrumental music can be used to elicit change in the socio-political landscape.

2.4 Overview of Adorno

Adorno examines the role of music in society by navigating the tensions between the transformative potential of music and the commercial forces that shape its production and consumption. In the essays collected

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3 The “culture industry” is a term from Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) which encompasses cultural products such as music, film and radio. Horkheimer and Adorno express concern over the rise of mass culture and the growing commodification of the culture industry, as it leads to a passive consumption of cultural products rather than active engagement and participation. This commodifying process risks diminishing the public’s capacity for critical thinking and devalues genuine appreciation and understanding for these cultural products (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947).
in *Essays on Music* (2002), Adorno emphasizes the significance of music as a tool for communication that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries. Unlike language and speech, which is limited by its dependence on social conventions and representational nature, music can express a more emotional and immediate representation of human reality (Adorno, 2002). This immediacy in instrumental music - its ability to convey the subtleties of human emotion directly - resonates with Adorno's viewpoint that music often conveys aspects of our innermost experiences and emotions in ways that language cannot.

Describing music as a paradoxical language that communicates to performers and listeners through an affective manner, Adorno contends that music cannot be “pinned down as to what it says, and yet it speaks” (Adorno, 2002, 122). Although music is like language in that it adheres to musical syntax, grammar and structure, its affective qualities propel music into a dialectical landscape.

In this context, music departs from linguistic conventions and provides a unique platform wherein emotions can be communicated in a way that extends beyond the confines of verbal language. As Adorno puts it, “its similarity to language is fulfilled as it distances itself from language” (Adorno, 2002, 117). While words convey specific, delineated meanings, Adorno contends that the affective power of music lies in its ability to evoke human emotions without being bound by the precisions of vocabulary. As such, the “language” of music is one that speaks through the emotions it evokes, rather than through concrete semantic content, and it is through this non-semantic communication that music emerges as a universally accessible medium of communication. Within this framework, Adorno illustrates the transformative power of music as a communicative tool and emphasizes the interpretive act central to musical engagement. Here, musical interpretation extends beyond passive reception and encompasses an active engagement that grants both performers and listeners a significant degree of freedom. This freedom enables individuals to project their personal experiences, emotions and cultural backgrounds onto the music, consequently transforming each musical experience into a unique event. As such, the act of interpreting music transforms into a dialogue between the artwork and the individual, revealing the multifaceted nature of musical communication (Adorno, 2002).

Moreover, Adorno argues that this interpretive freedom is crucial for understanding the role of music in society. By fostering an environment where multiple interpretations can coexist, music becomes a platform through which individuals can explore alternative perspectives and challenge existing narratives (Adorno, 2002). This effect is particularly significant in the context of non-lyrical instrumental music, which offers a more abstract form of expression that is subject to a wider range of interpretations. Such openness not only reflects the diversity of the human experience but also encourages a deeper engagement with the underlying social and cultural contexts that shape these experiences.

Furthermore, I draw upon Adorno’s understanding of “truth” throughout my thesis, and this term is important to define before delving into analysis. Truth can be defined as the emergent property of authentic musical expression that transcends the structures of society to reveal underlying social realities and conditions.

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4 In the context of this thesis, “dialectical” is employed in accordance with Hegelian and Marxist traditions to denote a mode of analysis and discourse that uncovers the interplay between opposing forces within a given system, leading to the emergence of new, synthesized conditions (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947). This approach is particularly pertinent to the study of music within society, as it elucidates the dual role of music as both a by-product of socio-economic circumstances and a catalyst for cultural reflection and transformation. The dialectical method, therefore, provides a framework for understanding the multifaceted impact of music on societal structures, revealing its dual nature as both a symbol of the socio-economic landscape and a transformative force within the ongoing narrative of societal evolution (Celikates and Flynn, 2023).
For Adorno, truth in music is not a fixed concept, but is realized in the engagement with the work of art itself, revealing contradictions and tensions within the socio-political order (Adorno, 2002). In other words, Adorno’s notion of truth can be understood as a process of provoking an active and conscious engagement with the world, fostering a deeper understanding of the socio-political landscape and the human condition within it. Given Adorno’s perspectives, his theories illuminate how instrumental music can operate as a form of resistance and critique within socio-political contexts. By analyzing the role of music beyond its entertainment value, Adorno provides a framework for understanding how music reflects and challenges the complexities and contradictions within society. Consequently, his examination of music underscores its potential to act as a catalyst for socio-political change, encouraging critical reflection and fostering a deeper engagement with social realities.

2.5 Overview of Said

To understand the intersection between politics and instrumental music through a theoretical lens, it will also be crucial to analyze the work of Edward Said and his application of musical insights to comprehend political phenomena. Although Said is most renowned for his contributions to postcolonial history and studies on Orientalism, his scholarly endeavours also extend into the aesthetics of the musical realm (Magome, 2006). Having written multiple books on the role of music in society, Said’s extensive literature offer a multifaceted perspective and a new understanding of the intersection of politics, culture, and musical expression. In his *Musical Elaborations*, Said (1991) recognizes the transformative capacity of music to transcend political divides and foster dialogue, emphasizing the role of music as a platform for acknowledging “the Other” and promoting empathy for different cultures. Here, acknowledgement refers to an empathetic understanding that affirms the rights and dignities of “the Other”. This acknowledgement through music emerges as a powerful statement of empathy that dissolves barriers and in turn fosters a collective sense of humanity across cultural and political divides (Said, 1991). As such, Said interprets music as a social force that can nurture solidarity and advocate for socio-political change by creating spaces where dialogue and empathy are placed at the forefront of the musical agenda.

Continuing on this train of thought, Said argues that the affective nature of music holds the ability to transcend the boundaries of language, nationality and political tensions, acting as a bridge to connect with “the Other” on an emotional level (Said, 1991). In this context, Said highlights the symbolic and emotional act of playing in a musical ensemble with a diverse group of musicians and the experience of critically listening to one another. Here, Said explains that critical listening involves a holistic approach, wherein the musician must move beyond merely understanding their individual parts; instead, musicians must engage in an active immersion with the musical lines and dialogues of the other instruments (Barenboim and Said, 2014). As such, by understanding the broader context of the entire musical score, musicians not only enhance their understanding of their role in the musical work, but also gain insights that inform their decisions, such as emphasizing a specific melody or playing a softer accompanying harmony (Barenboim and Said, 2014). Consequently, the shared goal and musical vulnerability inherent in this collective experience represents the
epitome of the essence of the human experience and highlights the power of music in bridging political, cultural, and linguistic divides.

In his exploration of the shared human experience and the unique language of music, Said draws upon his idea of contrapuntalism from *Culture and Imperialism* to understand the multiplicity of conflicting narratives and their interdependence with one another (Said, 1994). In the musical context, contrapuntalism is based off the harmonic technique of counterpoint, where multiple contradictory melodies are played simultaneously to create one, cohesive melody. Even in the face of musical dissonance and tension, Said emphasizes that contrapuntalism serves as a metaphor for fostering harmony and understanding by encouraging individuals to engage with diverse perspectives in a mutually enriching dialogue (Said, 1994).

Rokus De Groot (2010) interprets Said’s concept of contrapuntalism as the ability to respond to other musical voices, wherein musicians uncover new ideas and voices through polyphony. Within the musical context, this means that the act of counterpoint requires individuals to temporarily relinquish one musical identity to highlight another, underscoring the collaborative overtones of such practices (De Groot, 2010). Thus, the musical metaphor of counterpoint extends beyond music itself and becomes an innovative idea of comprehending “the Other” not only within the artistic realm, but in the broader socio-political context (Said, 1994). Here, counterpoint enables people to gain a deeper understanding and empathy towards diverse perspectives, encouraging an active engagement with a plurality of voices that enriches the collective discourse. By appreciating the distinct melodies that each voice brings to the symphony of human experience, individuals learn to value the complexity and richness of “the Other”, laying a foundation for mutual respect and a shared sense of community.

Similarly, Kiyoko Magome (2006) describes the musical technique of contrapuntalism as an inherently democratic process wherein suppressed voices and voices of power can be heard on equal standing while revealing their interdependencies with one another. In her analysis, she underscores how Said’s conception of counterpoint offers a profound and multifaceted understanding of the world through the aesthetic experience, enabling human beings to establish contrapuntal relationships beyond the musical realm (Magome, 2006). As a result, the polyphonic interplay of contradictory melodies stands as a representation of the interconnectedness within human relationships and highlights the power of music in transcending political and cultural differences. This representation illuminates the way contrapuntal collaboration in music facilitates dialogues that might otherwise be impossible to initiate without this artistic medium (Said, 1994). By engaging in this collective musical expression, individuals find a shared language that encourages conversation and understanding, demonstrating that music can be a powerful catalyst for fostering communication across diverse perspectives.

2.6 Combining Adorno and Said

In analyzing the works of Adorno and Said, I synthesize their political thought to understand how music can be used as a diplomatic tool. The universality and emotional resonance of music emerges as a common thread in the works of both Adorno and Said, illustrating how the experience of music can transcend differences and emerge as a common ground for understanding. Adorno’s understanding of instrumental music as a non-
verbal language suggest that the emotional resonance of music can speak beyond the confines of language and facilitate communication through a shared, human experience (Adorno, 2002). Here, the universality of music materializes into a bridge between disparate cultures and ideologies, forging a non-verbal dialogue that speaks to the shared core of human emotion. Similarly, Said’s reflections amplify this dialogue, situating instrumental music as a platform that transcends linguistic, cultural and political divisions. His approach to contrapuntalism represents the capacity of instrumental music in articulating the interconnectedness of human narratives, enabling individual voices to express their unique stories while contributing to a cohesive, collective experience (Said, 1994). Together, the works of Adorno and Said can be combined and applied to redefine music not only just as an aesthetic experience, but as a diplomatic tool that holds the capacity of addressing and reconciling tensions in global politics. By synthesizing their political thought, instrumental music can be understood as a force capable of challenging existing power structures and facilitating the exchange of ideas and cultures across borders. This collaboration between Adorno and Said offers a powerful and reimagined understanding of diplomacy that situates intercultural communication, mutual understanding and the universality of instrumental music into the forefront of the diplomatic sphere. Consequently, this convergence of political thought endorses a more culturally conscious approach to international relations and acknowledges the power of music to act as a mediator in diplomatic tensions. It is through the shared language of music that diplomacy can find new pathways to navigate conflict and build bridges of cooperation that rest within the recognition of our common humanity. 5

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Based on the existing literature, my theoretical framework adopts a critical aesthetic approach by integrating the theories of Adorno and Said. By integrating their political thought, I construct a theoretical framework that emphasizes how instrumental music can function as a powerful tool to challenge socio-political norms through its capacity to engage emotions and affective experiences. This approach acknowledges that music transcends mere intellectual understanding and taps into deep emotional responses that can inspire reflection, foster empathy, and motivate collective action. Furthermore, I aim to employ Schopenhauer's thought on the metaphysical nature of music as a tool to extract and elucidate insights within the critical aesthetic frameworks of Adorno and Said, bringing these philosophical concepts into a clearer view through their practical implications in real-life contexts. Consequently, by bridging Adorno and Said’s theories of music and applying their ideas into a contemporary context, I aim to highlight the aesthetic and transformative power of music as a diplomatic tool in challenging the status quo.

Moreover, it will be important to underscore the deliberate choice of instrumental music over other forms of music, such as vocal music, within the scope of this study. The rationale behind this decision stems from

5 It is interesting to note that in his Musical Elaborations (1991) Said directly engages with Adorno’s musical thought and acknowledges the depth of his critique. However, Said identifies limitations in Adorno’s perspective and seeks to expand the discourse by highlighting the dynamic between musical performances and their societal implications, an aspect he finds underrepresented in Adorno’s analysis.
the need to narrow the focus and to avoid the added complexity introduced by lyrical elements. Since vocal music incorporates verbal language, this medium of music can directly convey messages and potentially steer my analysis towards explicit narratives that may overshadow the interpretive nature of instrumental music. This selection aligns with the perspectives of Schopenhauer, Hoffmann, Adorno and Said, who all assert that instrumental music provides a unique space for individuals to engage with the emotional and aesthetic experience of music without the direct influence of verbal language (Schopenhauer, 2016; Hoffmann, 2001; Adorno, 2002; Said, 1994). Consequently, I aim to explore the multifaceted ways in which the affective elements of instrumental music can be applied as a diplomatic tool in real world phenomena.

3.2 Methodology

To examine the role of instrumental music as a soft power diplomatic tool, my study will employ a mixed methods approach. My primary methodological tool will draw upon the critical perspectives of Adorno and Said and combine their theoretical frameworks to explore the power of music in engendering cultural resistance (Adorno, 2002; Said, 1994). I will also employ qualitative analysis of two case studies: the Jazz Ambassadors, a state-sponsored musical diplomacy initiative and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, a non-state sponsored collaborative initiative (Von Eschen, 2006; Smaczny, 2005).

By combining a theoretical framework with empirical observations, this mixed methods approach aims to offer an innovative way to bridge the gap in the literature of musical diplomacy. This approach aims to capture the interplay between abstract theoretical concepts and the real-world applications of instrumental music in diplomatic contexts. While a purely empirical framework may only illuminate qualitative data on the observable effects of music in diplomacy, it may miss deeper contextual and interpretative layers a theoretical framework can provide. Conversely, a purely theoretical framework may lack the empirical grounding necessary to validate my assumptions of music in the contemporary context. In the context of my thesis, it will be particularly important to emphasize the empirical reality and its connection to normativity as raised by Critical Theorists, as I will be drawing upon the theoretical aspects of the human experience and socio-cultural interactions to analyze diplomacy in both state-sponsored and non-state sponsored cases. Consequently, the mixed methods approach enriches my analysis by combining the depth of theoretical insight with the practical understandings derived from qualitative studies, offering a strong foundation for drawing conclusions on the relationship between diplomacy and music.

4. Case Studies

4.1 Summary of Case Studies

To apply my critical aesthetic approach to a contemporary context, I analyze two case studies that explore how music can be used to challenge cultural norms and power dynamics. First, I analyze how state-sponsored musical actors use music as a diplomatic tool, drawing upon the empirical case of the American Jazz Ambassadors. The Jazz Ambassadors were an ensemble of jazz musicians who were sponsored by the U.S. State Department to tour Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia as part of a cultural diplomacy initiative to
promote American freedom and democracy worldwide during the height of the Cold War (Von Eschen, 2006). Renowned African-American jazz musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong assumed diplomatic roles sponsored by the US, receiving acclaim for their sold-out performances and standing ovations worldwide (Von Eschen, 2006). According to Raussert (2018), the genre of jazz music in particular was interpreted as a symbol of freedom and individualism, and these values played a crucial role in fostering positive perceptions of the U.S. abroad. In this way, the Jazz Ambassadors exemplify the transformative potential of music as a diplomatic tool, showcasing how this artistic medium can be used to reshape narratives in the global political landscape.

Next, I analyze how non-state sponsored actors use instrumental music as a diplomatic tool to challenge cultural norms and power dynamics. To substantiate my argument, I will be drawing upon the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO) as my non-state actor case study, a pre-professional orchestra created by the late political theorist Edward Said and conductor Daniel Barenboim, which brings Israeli, Palestinian and Arab musicians to collectively rehearse orchestral works every summer (West Eastern Divan Orchestra, 2023). Beyond the surface level aspect of playing classical music in an orchestra together, musicians of WEDO undergo a transformative process wherein musicians are compelled to interact with “the Other” and dismantle their pre-conceived views of their political “enemies”. From sharing the same music stand and collaboratively working together to create one cohesive voice, the orchestra functions as a diplomatic platform that works to create an open space for dialogue that fosters mutual understanding among its diverse members (Larrinoa, 2017).

4.2 Justification of Case Studies

These case studies were selected for their relevance and applicability in highlighting the practical dimensions of instrumental music as a diplomatic tool. The Jazz Ambassadors holds historical significance as the first diplomatic project of its kind, demonstrating overwhelming success and influence in shaping international perceptions of the U.S and its foreign policy (Von Eschen, 2006). Revolutionizing diplomacy through a genre of music rooted in African-American culture, jazz music embodied the struggle for racial equality, while simultaneously representing American ideals of freedom and democracy. It was through jazz music that these musicians could express their artistry and cultural narratives on an international stage, effectively challenging entrenched racial inequalities and offering a compelling story of American diversity and democracy. Specifically, by sending African American jazz musicians around the world, the Jazz

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In the context of the Jazz Ambassadors, freedom is understood as both the expression of individuality and the ability to engage in artistic and political self-representation without restraint. It is the pursuit of artistic integrity and authenticity that challenges social constraints and aligns with the broader American narrative of liberty and self-determination. This freedom extends beyond the right to perform and create; it encompasses the musicians’ ability to embody and convey their experiences and aspirations through music, thereby resonating with universal desires for self-expression and liberation from oppression.

Democracy, as illustrated by the Jazz Ambassadors, refers to the inclusive participation and representation within a societal context that is reflected in the collaborative and improvisational nature of jazz. It represents a process and a system where diverse voices contribute to a collective creation, much like a jazz ensemble, where each musician’s input is valued and critical to the whole. In a diplomatic sense, democracy is mirrored in the way music can open dialogues, transcend hierarchies, and foster equality, representing the American ideals of pluralism and harmony in the face of geopolitical tensions.
Ambassadors projected a diverse image of American society that ultimately counteracted prevailing narratives of domestic discrimination.

Through a Critical Theory lens, the Jazz Ambassadors can be interpreted as embodying emancipation in action, as their roles extended beyond their musical performances. By leveraging their roles as ambassadors of the U.S. to advocate for domestic civil liberties, the Jazz Ambassadors served as agents of cultural diplomacy that embodied the paradoxical American narrative of freedom amidst racial segregation. In their capacity as cultural diplomats, the Jazz Ambassadors not only presented a facade of racial harmony but also subtly highlighted the dissonance between America’s professed values and the reality of segregation back home, thus using their international platform to underscore the urgency for civil rights reform within the United States (Von Eschen, 2006). Such engagement with the artistic and political sphere draws parallels with Adorno’s perspective on the socially transformative power of music, who highlights how music holds the power to overcome passive consumption and evoke a critical awareness of societal structures (Adorno, 2002). Here, the Jazz Ambassadors reflect the principles of Critical Theory as they exemplified the dialectic between American ideals and reality by utilizing their influence and platform to advocate for social change. As an African-American musical genre that represented a history of struggle and liberation, jazz music held the unique capacity to communicate ideals of equality and democracy (Perera, 2018). Consequently, the Jazz Ambassadors emerged as messengers not only through their explicit advocacy, but through the very act of playing jazz, aligning their music with the broader narrative of the civil rights movement. It is this synergy between the music and the musician’s active engagement in socio-political issues that rendered the cultural diplomacy program effective.

Yet, one could argue that the racial identities of the Jazz Ambassadors and their personal stance on civil rights were the driving factor in their diplomatic efficacy, rather than the music itself. However, this perspective fails to appreciate the extent to which the musical genre of jazz inherently articulated these narratives of resistance. It was jazz music itself, characterized by its democratic qualities of improvisation and expressive freedom, that enabled musicians to voice their lived experiences and aspirations for justice (Raussert, 2018). Here, it was the music that spoke through the musicians, with each note they played acting as a testament to the struggle for equality and transforming their artistic expression into a narrative that resonated with the spirit of the civil rights movement. As such, it was this ability of jazz music that enabled it to communicate complex social issues and embody a message of emancipation that ensured that the Jazz Ambassadors were not merely representatives of their race or political viewpoints, but rather, ambassadors of a musical genre whose very essence acted as a call for freedom and societal change (Von Eschen, 2006).

On the other hand, WEDO presents a compelling case study, particularly in light of its affiliation with Said, whose theoretical notions of music find its practical manifestations in this musical project (Riiser, 2009). Mariam Said, the wife of Edward Said, recounted that Edward declared that WEDO functioned as an “alternative type of social model”, and contended that the orchestra represented a microcosm of an ideal society based upon the ideals of collaboration and mutual respect (Schwartz and Telmissany, xiii, 2010). Within this framework, Said highlighted how the ensemble transcends political and cultural discords and its potential for a contrapuntal cohabitation of disparate narratives. As musicians engage in a dialogue that encompasses
musical, social and political interaction, the orchestral initiative emerges as a reflection of Said’s broader intellectual thought, wherein artistic practice is interwoven with equality, dialogue, and the active deconstruction of socio-political barriers. Consequently, through the very act of performing musical works together, WEDO enacts Said’s vision of coexistence and cooperation as necessary tools to counter the divisive forces that characterize the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

Moreover, the contemporary relevance of both case studies is noteworthy in the current political landscape. While the Jazz Ambassadors program operated throughout the 1950s and 60s, the revival of music in soft power diplomacy is evident today, through new initiatives such as the U.S State Department’s Global Music Diplomacy Initiative (Von Eschen, 2006; U.S State Department, 2023). Furthermore, despite Said’s passing in 2003, WEDO continues to perform around the world under the baton of Daniel Barenboim, persevering even amid heightened tensions engendered by the Israel-Palestine conflict (Barenboim, 2023). Such endurance highlights the impact of these projects, illuminating their capacity to redefine music as a diplomatic tool and promote peace, even in the face of challenging geopolitical circumstances.

4.3 Justification of State and Non-State Case Studies

I chose to draw upon state-sponsored and non-state sponsored musical initiatives to demonstrate the broad spectrum of musical diplomacy and highlight their differing effects in the diplomatic landscape. State sponsored initiatives, such as the Jazz Ambassadors, align with national geopolitical strategies and leverage cultural expression to further national interests and foreign policy objectives. In contrast, non-state entities like WEDO prioritize a more socially collaborative impact, focusing on fostering social change and promoting mutual understanding. By analyzing both state and non-state actors, I offer a holistic view of musical diplomacy, demonstrating the broad spectrum of how music can be used as a universal language that can transcend political barriers and foster global understanding. The fusion of state and non-state cases highlights the multifaceted role of music in international relations and provides a rich comparative perspective that underscores the contributions of music as a diplomatic tool within state ambitions and the humanistic goals of civil society.

5. State Sponsored Case Study: The Jazz Ambassadors

5.1 Audience Reception of the Jazz Ambassadors and the Transformative Power of Music in Shaping Global Perceptions

In May 1956, legendary American jazz trumpeter, Louis Armstrong, went to Ghana for his first diplomatic trip as a U.S State Department Jazz Ambassador (Berkeley, 2018). Upon arriving at Kotoka International Airport, Armstrong was welcomed by crowds of fans who would later attend his concert that night as some of the 100,000 audience members at his first official performance as a Jazz Ambassador (Berkeley, 2018). Within the soulful melodies, roaring applause and standing ovations that echoed throughout the concert, Armstrong’s trumpet transcended its musical role and transformed into an instrument of diplomacy that would rise above the confines of language, politics and cultural differences. Serving as the prelude to a series of performances that would see him tour in over 60 countries, Armstrong’s concert in Ghana left behind a diplomatic legacy
that would change the dynamics of the Cold War and shape international perceptions of the U.S for decades to come (Louis Armstrong House Museum, 2023).

Following Armstrong’s successful performance in Ghana, the U.S government was quick to recognize the potential of jazz in shaping the global image of the U.S. The U.S State Department strategically created a concert tour schedule for Armstrong and other renowned jazz musicians to spread American values of freedom and democracy worldwide through music (Von Eschen, 2006). Foreign newspapers began to feature glowing concert reviews of the Jazz Ambassadors, with headlines like “Satchmo Is a Smash on the Gold Coast”, heralding the musicians as a cultural phenomenon that attracted standing ovations, raucous applause and demands for encores (Von Eschen, 2006, 73). Beyond the immediate impact of the performances themselves, the musicians also had the opportunity to engage with local musicians following their concerts, fostering genuine cultural exchanges that transcended the boundaries of nationality and language. The *New York Times* reported that Benny Goodman’s band engaged in a jazz jam session with Thai kings for “an hour of Dixieland and boogie-woogie” and were reported to have been having “the time of their lives” (Von Eschen, 2006, 59).

Here, Von Eschen describes the Jazz Ambassadors as “cultural translators”, as the Jazz Ambassadors strategically used instrumental music to forge a meeting ground that would foster human-to-human connections that would ultimately reshape the image of America abroad (Von Eschen, 2006, 252). These interactions were not only about sharing music but also about giving and receiving – absorbing local traditions, rhythms and melodies that would later influence the Ambassadors’ own music. For instance, Dizzy Gillespie incorporated Afro-Cuban and Afro-Latin elements into bebop jazz music, after being inspired by his experiences touring the world as a Jazz Ambassador. Similarly, local musicians were exposed to the depth of American jazz music and absorbed its improvisational elements, which in many cases led to the creation of new, hybrid musical styles within their own cultures (Hatschek, 2010). As such, this bidirectional influence of jazz music demonstrates the capacity of jazz in facilitating global dialogue and highlights the role of the Jazz Ambassadors in bridging disparate musical and political worlds.

5.11 Analyzing the Cultural Phenomenon of the Jazz Ambassadors Through Adorno’s Theoretical Framework

The cultural phenomenon and the overwhelmingly positive audience reception of the Jazz Ambassadors can be analyzed in tandem to the political thought of Adorno. Drawing thousands of people together to concerts that fostered intercultural connections between audiences and musicians alike, jazz music functioned as a meeting ground for cultural understanding (Raussert, 2018). Irrespective of an individual’s background, jazz music was able to universally resonate with foreign audiences and transcend linguistic boundaries in a way that conventional diplomatic tools (which often rely on verbal language) could not achieve. Adorno emphasizes the humanistic element of music and argues that “[music] say[s] something, often something humane” highlighting the capacity of music in conveying messages that can only be understood through a shared musical experience (Adorno, 2002, 113). In his interpretation of Adorno, Leppert also contends that the universality of music provides a “form of cognition through which we can understand the world”, helping humans to broaden their understanding of socio-political phenomena through an aesthetic experience that place human connections at the forefront of political discourse (Leppert, 2002, 89). Here,
cognition refers to the process of perceiving, interpreting and emotionally engaging with music through a philosophical lens. To Adorno, cognition involves a critical reflection on music as a social mirror and an agent for societal critique, allowing for an exploration of cultural narratives and societal conditions (Adorno, 2002). As such, cognition in this context is not confined to the mechanics of neural processes, but rather it signifies an intuitive understanding and engagement with music, enabling it to act as a powerful conduit for emotional resonance, critical reflection, and socio-political transformation (Leppert, 2002). Consequently, the Jazz Ambassadors exemplify how jazz music transforms into a platform for diplomatic engagement that emphasizes the significance of emotional connection and the universality of the musical language.

5.12 Harmony Over Discord: The Jazz Ambassador’s Diplomatic Impact in Greece

Recognizing the cultural power of the Jazz Ambassadors, the State Department began to send these musicians to countries where anti-American sentiment was brewing, in an attempt to cool down the anger of the people. Urgent requests from the State Department prompted Dizzy Gillespie’s band to perform in Greece, following student protests at the American Embassy in Athens, which unfolded following the announcement of U.S support for Greece’s right-wing dictatorship (Berkeley, 2018). Describing the atmosphere in Athens as tense and charged with anti-American sentiment, Gillespie’s band approached their performance with caution, anticipating violence from the student demonstrators. Yet, once the band played its first note in front of the same students who hurled rocks at the US Embassy, Gillespie recounted that “they loved us so much that when we finished playing, they tossed their jackets into the air and carried me on their shoulders through the streets of the city” (Von Eschen, 2006, 34). The next day, Greek newspapers headline reported: “Students Drop Rocks and Roll with Dizzy” (Von Eschen, 2006, 34). This reaction demonstrated the impact of musical diplomacy in transforming initial animosity into an unexpected overture of harmony and understanding among foreign audiences. Aware of their dual roles as musicians and musical diplomats, Gillespie and his band were able to strategically utilize their performances to pacify foreign audiences and their success in Greece exemplified their diplomatic role: to harness the unifying language of jazz as a tool to soften tensions and foster mutual understanding. In turn, such engagements enriched the perspectives of other musicians, as they witnessed the reconciliatory power of their art and reaffirming their belief in music as an instrument for international harmony.

5.13 Freedom Embodied by the Jazz Ambassadors

So, why did jazz music resonate so profoundly with foreign audiences? How did the Jazz Ambassadors manage to transcend political dissonances and influence the global image of the U.S overseas? Raussert (2018) suggests that jazz music had the ability to resonate with foreign audiences by embodying values of American freedom and democracy, particularly during the height of the Cold War. Although the concept of American freedom was initially linked to the ideologies of capitalism and representative democracy, it also embodied broader, universal desires for self-expression and freedom from oppression. In this context, freedom extended beyond its political and ideological limits to also reflect the experiences and identity of African Americans, presenting a more universal narrative of liberation. Ties can be drawn to Schopenhauer’s notion of the “Will”
in understanding the universal appeal of jazz as presented by the Jazz Ambassadors (Schopenhauer, 2016). Here, the liberating essence of jazz serves as a manifestation of the “Will,” embodying the universal struggle for freedom and expression beyond the limitations imposed by political doctrines. The raw, emotive power of jazz resonated with a fundamental human desire for liberation, and this transcendental quality allowed the Jazz Ambassadors to engage with audiences on a profound existential level, regardless of the political climate or societal structures. This connection through the medium of music echoes Schopenhauer’s assertion of the profound capacity of music to communicate the deepest truths of human existence, thus aligning with the broader, more philosophical concept of freedom that transcends political and ideological boundaries (Schopenhauer, 2016).

Furthermore, jazz music emerged as a metaphor for freedom and democracy through its improvisatory elements. Improvisation is a musical technique often heard in jazz music which involves musicians to spontaneously compose melodic lines in real-time, showcasing their creative prowess and immediate responsiveness to the surrounding musical environment (Laver, 2014). Hatschek (2010) highlights a critique by jazz pianist Andrzej Trzaskowski who argued that the improvisations of David Brubeck held more intrinsic value than many meticulously composed pieces, declaring that “in fact, many pieces carefully crafted by composers are not worth a note of Brubeck’s improvisations” (Hatschek, 2010, 284). Trzaskowski emphasizes how improvisation reflects principles of individuality, freedom and self-expression inherent in democratic societies. Laver (2014) builds upon this concept by explaining how jazz improvisation locates musicians in a dialectical relationship with the ensemble, creating a collective sound in the music that is forged through a democratic process. Here, he argues that this process not only represents the musician’s freedom of expression, but also provides the individual the unique opportunity for their voice to be heard within the broader scope of the collective (Laver, 2014). The democratic notions of jazz music gains greater relevance in the context of the Cold War, as this musical genre represented itself as a metaphor for American liberation with the endorsement of the U.S State Department (Laver, 2014). Brubeck even went on to assert that “no dictator can tolerate jazz… it is the first sign of a return to freedom” throughout his overseas tours circling around the Soviet Union (Von Eschen, 2006, 51). He underscored the perceived threat that jazz posed to authoritarian regimes and its symbolic role as an ambassador of democratic ideals and individual liberties. In addition to the political context of the Cold War, the African American roots of jazz music adds a layer of significance that represents both the struggle for national freedom and emancipation from racial oppression. As an African American art form, jazz music carried the weight of Black American history, and its inherent embodiment of resilience and liberation made it an even more potent symbol of freedom (Von Eschen, 2006). As such, the improvisational nature of jazz became a living testament to the possibilities of creativity and represented an art form that defied subjugation and spoke to the universal aspirations of human dignity and autonomy. Consequently, it becomes evident that the global resonance of jazz affirmed its role as a symbol of resistance, freedom and democratic values, resonating across geopolitical divides and challenging the constraints of oppressive regimes.
5.14 Jazz Music as a Reflection of Adorno’s Understanding of Freedom

Although Adorno was critical of jazz music and deemed the musical genre as a commodified product of the culture industry, his broader theoretical insights offer a valuable lens in understanding how the Jazz Ambassadors represented freedom and individuality. As a Frankfurt School theorist, Adorno was a strong advocate for artistic mediums that challenged the status quo and promoted critical reflection, freedom and emancipation (Adorno, 2002). Declaring that “artists should not yield to any pressure of the ever more overwhelming social organizations of our time, but should express, in full command of meaning and potentialities of today’s processes of rationalization”, Adorno illustrates the artist’s role as a societal critic and catalyst for change (Adorno, 2002, 387). This perspective invites a reconceptualization of the musical performances of the Jazz Ambassadors, portraying these musicians as agents of cultural resistance despite their origins from a “commodified” musical genre. Here, improvisation emerges as a manifestation of Adorno’s concept of freedom, as musicians assert their individuality while simultaneously resist conventional musical structures. In this dynamic, a dialectical tension arises between structure and spontaneity, individuality, and collectivism, as jazz music emerges as a form of critical resistance against the homogenizing forces of the culture industry (Adorno, 2002; Perera, 2018). The improvisations of the Jazz Ambassadors epitomized this dialectical interplay as they navigated between spontaneous creativity and the structures of music. Through improvisation, their performances transformed into a live dialogue that intertwined the personal freedoms of musicians with the overarching traditions of jazz (Laver, 2014). Consequently, these dynamics underscores a deliberate resistance to commodification and societal conventions, showcasing how jazz improvisation becomes a symbol of both artistic and social liberation.

5.2 The Paradox of the Jazz Ambassadors

Despite the roaring success of the Jazz Ambassadors in their diplomatic tours across the globe, their role as cultural representatives of the U.S. presented a complex paradox. Ambassadors such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie were African-American musicians who were tasked to represent white American values of freedom abroad against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement (Von Eschen, 2006). Aware of the disparities between their proclaimed ideals of democracy and freedom and the pervasive racial inequality within the country, the U.S. State Department sought to address these criticisms on a global scale. To counter the accusations of hypocrisy directed towards the U.S., the State Department strategically utilized jazz music and African-American musicians as cultural ambassadors to divert attention from the existence of Jim Crow laws and racial discrimination within the country (Raussert, 2018). Their strategy was a success: through their captivating performances, the Jazz Ambassadors were able to showcase the U.S. as a proponent of diversity, artistic innovation and freedom (Raussert, 2018). Before one of his performances in Ghana in

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7 In “On Jazz,” Adorno expresses his belief that jazz music represents the standardization and commodification of the culture industry. He contends that jazz music is integrated into the same capitalist system that exploits and alienates individuals (Adorno, 2002). However, in my analysis, I argue that Adorno fundamentally misunderstood the essence of jazz music, a point later subtly acknowledged as he grappled with the broader socio-cultural impacts and racial underpinnings of this genre.
1956, Louis Armstrong was introduced as “the great American musician, who is black like all of us” (Von Eschen, 2006, 61). Moved by the passion and joy emanating from the Ghanaian audience during Armstrong’s performance, Armstrong articulated his emotional connection stating, “I know now. I came from here, way back. At least my people did. Now I know this is my country too”, following the concert (Von Eschen, 2006, 61). Von Eschen argues that since “Armstrong the American embraced his African roots and caused the Africans to embrace him”, this cultural exchange and unique experience of identity contributed towards fostering positive images of American diversity on an international stage (Von Eschen, 2006, 61).

Yet, it is important to recognize that the Jazz Ambassadors were deeply aware of the ironic undertones inherent in their diplomatic roles, which represented an image of American freedom abroad that they were often denied access to back home (Von Eschen, 2006). As African-Americans with lived experience with racial injustice throughout their entire lives, the Jazz Ambassadors were not afraid to voice their experiences on an international stage and go against the wishes of the U.S. government. Gillespie was famously renowned for refusing to attend State Department briefing sessions that the Jazz Ambassadors were required to attend prior to their international tours (Berkeley, 2018). In an act of defiance against the State Department, Gillespie declared, “I’ve got 300 years of briefing. I know what they’ve done to us and I’m not going to make any excuses”, asserting his self-determination and his insistence in representing a full picture of American freedom, a freedom that was denied to its African-American population (Berkeley, 2018). Consequently, the Jazz Ambassadors reconciled their personal experiences of racial discrimination with their roles as cultural representatives of American values by utilizing their art as a platform that embraced the complexity of their identities and echoed the broader struggle for civil rights and equality.

5.21 Re-evaluating the American Identity Through a Theoretical Lens

The notion of the American identity can be analyzed through the work of Said, as the dual identities of the Jazz Ambassadors represented a critique of society that challenged cultural norms and power dynamics. As African-American musicians entrusted with representing a world superpower in the midst of domestic racial tensions, the Jazz Ambassadors embodied a living critique of the hypocrisies prevalent in 1960s America. From a Saidian perspective, the Jazz Ambassador’s paradoxical role can be interpreted as a living manifestation of “the Other”, as marginalized members of society were tasked to promote white American values abroad (Said, 1991). Instead of succumbing to societal subjugation, the Jazz Ambassadors were able to reverse their subordinate social status through jazz music. As such, their mission to convey American values was intertwined with their personal realities of racial discrimination, forging a paradoxical existence that challenged white American cultural narratives and power dynamics. Adorno’s aesthetic theory complements Said’s political thought, by interpreting the Jazz Ambassador’s utilization of jazz music as a social commentary on the inherent tensions within American society (Adorno, 2002; Said, 1991). Often improvising and deviating from traditional harmony, the music the Jazz Ambassadors performed represented musical resistance and unconventionality and invited listeners to confront the uncomfortable truth of the racial inequality in America. For Adorno, this music was a poignant reflection of the “truth”, a term he described as the emergent property of authentic musical expression that transcends societal structures to reveal underlying realities (Adorno, 2002).
This “truth” is one that the Jazz Ambassadors communicated through the language of jazz, which represented the African American experience and embodied a narrative that refused to be silenced by the white American culture. As a result, in manifesting their “truth” through their art, jazz music therefore functioned as a diplomatic tool for African Americans to promote their voice on the international stage, while simultaneously function as a political instrument that challenge domestic subordination and racism (Adorno, 2002; Von Eschen, 2006).

5.22 The Jazz Ambassadors and the Civil Rights Dilemma

Yet, the Jazz Ambassadors themselves were critical of the hypocrisy of the U.S State Department and did not hesitate to speak out against the racial inequalities permeating throughout their home country (Perera, 2018). Leveraging their agency as state-sponsored artists to address the injustices occurring in the United States through a musical platform, Hatschek (2010) argues that “sending articulate and outspoken artists such as Dizzy Gillespie or Dave Brubeck abroad allowed them the opportunity to speak candidly with those overseas about the struggles for equality going on at that time in the U.S. In such dialogues, they often advocated for the rights of all peoples to be free and the need for greater support of the arts, while acting as what Penny Von Eschen describes as ‘cultural translators’ in the context of the contradictions presented by the battles of the Cold War” (Hatschek, 2010, 253). Racial tensions heightened from the onset of the Little Rock Nine crisis, wherein nine African American students were prevented from entering their school under the racist orders of Arkansas governor, Orval Faubus (Perera, 2018). Taking the world by storm, news of the Little Rock Nine spread internationally and tarnished the global image of America as a champion for equality, freedom and human rights. Amidst the protests and rallies against the xenophobic policies of the U.S government, diplomats began to express concerns surrounding losing ideological ground against the Soviet Union and escalating international criticism (Hatschek, 2010).

It is within this moment of crisis and urgency where the U.S. State Department turned to the Jazz Ambassadors as a diplomatic tool in counteracting negative perceptions of the U.S. Yet, as African-American individuals who have experienced systemic oppression themselves, prominent Jazz Ambassadors like Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie were quick to condemn the incident (Perera, 2018). In a New York Times 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 coloured man hasn’t got any country” and denounced President Eisenhower for his “two-faced” action on civil rights in America (Perera, 2018, 42; Von Eschen, 2006, 63). In a move that would set back the diplomatic face of America, Armstrong refused to continue his state-sponsored jazz tours, publicly expressing his disapproval of the U.S.’ government’s contradictory stance on civil rights. Alarmed by the criticisms of their own cultural ambassadors, the State Department scrambled to appease the angered Jazz Ambassador and expressed hope for Armstrong to “not let the segregation issue keep him from making a musical mission to Moscow” (Von Eschen, 2006, 64). Nevertheless, Armstrong stood firm in his decision and declined subsequent touring offers, prompting Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to assert that “the situation was undermining our foreign policy” (Von Eschen, 2006, 64). Dulles’ statement highlights the significance of the Jazz Ambassadors in the political landscape, underscored by their impact on American foreign policy.
during moments of crisis. Despite their non-traditionalist roles as representatives of America, Armstrong held the capacity to influence the reformation of domestic racial policies, while simultaneously shape the international perception of America. As an ambassador “much too valuable to lose”, the State Department had no other option but to honour the demands of the African-American Jazz Ambassadors, ultimately challenging racialized power dynamics in the tense backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. In other words, the Jazz Ambassadors challenged the status quo of 1960s America by exposing and contesting racial power dynamics, thereby transforming diplomatic narratives through a cultural paradox. Consequently, their roles as musicians permitted the Jazz Ambassadors a greater negotiation that enabled the music to speak through the musicians, thereby evolving their performances to carry the weight of their collective struggle for civil rights.

5.23 Understanding Jazz Diplomacy Through Contrapuntalism and the Interpretive Nature of Music

During the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War, African-American Jazz Ambassadors exemplified the paradox to critique society and influence worldwide views, showcasing the blend of cultural and political power. This intersection between music and diplomacy can be understood through Said’s contrapuntal framework, as suppressed voices and voices of power coexist on equal footing (Magome, 2006). Here, the Jazz Ambassadors demonstrated an innovative application of contrapuntalism to elevate their status from marginalized African-Americans to equals with U.S State Department officials through jazz music. In this context, Said’s notion of contrapuntalism and the symbolism of musical counterpoint challenged racial hierarchies and enabled a democratic exchange of ideas on the global stage. This exchange becomes inherently democratic as the technique of contrapuntalism enables the intertwining of contrasting melodies and rhythms, representing the intersection of different experiences and perspectives. These distinct elements coexist without one overshadowing the other, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Consequently, contrapuntalism emerges as a compelling metaphor for democratic dialogue, serving as a mechanism through which African-American voices can overcome racial hierarchies and redefine the narrative of American diplomacy.

Moreover, Adorno’s conceptualization of the interpretive nature of music provides insights into the cultural and diplomatic agency employed by the Jazz Ambassadors. In his political thought, Adorno contends that the interpretive act in music assumes an analytical role, granting performers and listeners the freedom to interpret music based on their individual experiences and perspectives (Adorno, 2002). As Adorno puts it, “to interpret music means to make music… To play music properly means, above all, to speak its language properly. This language demands that it be imitated, not decoded. It is only in mimetic practice—which may, of course, be sublimated into unspoken imagination in the manner of reading to oneself—that music discloses itself, never to a consideration that interprets it independent of the act of execution” (Adorno, 2002, 115). From the perspective of the Jazz Ambassadors, this interpretive agency empowered them to shape the agenda of the U.S State Department and this was made possible through the interpretive nature of instrumental music. The absence of lyrics in instrumental jazz music enabled the Jazz Ambassadors to craft the meaning of their music without relying on verbal language, and it was this interpretive nature that allowed the musicians to communicate a message that integrated the realities of African Americans and a message of freedom.
Consequently, Adorno’s perspective can be applied to the Jazz Ambassadors as their music operated as a diplomatic tool with two functions: one that spread American values worldwide, and another that served as a messenger critiquing racial inequalities. Foreign audiences interpreted the Jazz Ambassadors as advocates for freedom, embodied through the democratic and collaborative nature of jazz music (Raussert, 2018). In contrast, the interpretive nature of jazz music also enabled the Jazz Ambassadors to raise international awareness of the struggles of African-Americans through their identity and lived experiences, translating the complexities of racial injustice into universally understood musical narratives that conveyed a message of ethnic discrimination. Jazz music was so powerful that it triggered a shift in the government’s approach to African-American civil rights, compelling U.S. government officials to address racial inequalities and integrate African American concerns into the nation's broader diplomatic strategy. Consequently, Adorno’s concept of the interpretative and paradoxical act in music can be applied to the ways in which the Jazz Ambassadors conveyed their identities and challenged socio-political norms.

5.24 Jazz Music in Poland

Polish audiences in particular were profoundly influenced by the freedom embodied in jazz music, especially during the Soviet Union's attempt to eradicate jazz from the country. Denouncing jazz music as a symbol of “Western vulgarity” and a representation of a "decadent, amoral, and materialistic" culture, Stalin began a repressive regime that sent Polish musicians to labour camps and banned jazz instruments such as saxophones, in an attempt to prevent any Western influence onto the country (Davenport, 2015, 142; Hatschek, 2010). Yet, despite these challenges, jazz persisted in popularity underground and emerged as a symbol of freedom and nonconformity, which would later evolve into a resistance movement in Poland. Following Stalin’s death in 1953, restrictions on jazz in the Soviet Union were eased slightly under the leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulko, giving rise to the rebirth of jazz music in Poland (Hatschek, 2010). It was at this juncture where the U.S. Mission in Warsaw recognized the growing popularity of jazz music and recommended the State Department to send one of their Jazz Ambassadors to Poland (Hatschek, 2010).

Selected by the State Department for the 1958 concert tour of Poland, David Brubeck and his jazz quartet were met with high acclaim and praise as they toured six cities across the country over 12 consecutive days (Hatschek, 2010, 276). Although Brubeck himself was a white artist, his mixed-race jazz quartet symbolized the integration of black and white Americans and reinforced the idea of freedom as represented by jazz music. Similar to Armstrong’s popularity in his overseas tours, Brubeck’s high acclaim among Polish audiences transcended the confines of the concert hall, culminating in human-to-human interactions with audience members and jam sessions with local musicians which often lasted until 3am (Hatschek, 2010). Ardent fans of Brubeck even went so far as to follow his quartet across Poland, with one music student recounting, “I attended every single concert and jam session. We all dreamed of America as the ‘Promised Land’ and now America was coming to us” (Hatschek, 2010, 279).

Such idealized notions of America are intertwined with its association with jazz – a predominantly African-American musical genre that symbolized freedom and unity among diverse racial groups. Polish Jazz Society President Krzysztof Sadowski highlights the cultural impact of jazz within the country, remarking that
“in [postwar] Poland, jazz was the language of freedom. Today, when officials from the Ministry of Culture ask Polish jazz performers of the 1950s why we treat jazz with such reverence, we answer that, ‘for us, jazz will always represent the voice of freedom’” (Hatchek, 2010, 194). Jazz trumpeter Tomasz Stanko corroborated such claims, remarking, “[its] message was freedom… Jazz was [a] synonym of Western culture, of freedom, of this different style of life.” (Hatschek, 2010, 295). Such positive remarks highlight the hope jazz represented as a global symbol of freedom that dismantled negative perceptions of the U.S. Through their cultural exchanges, African-American jazz musicians and their integrated bands effectively utilized this notion of freedom to counter anti-American sentiment, while simultaneously promote the ideals of a paradoxical American freedom. Consequently, it was this racial paradox that revolutionized the diplomatic landscape and ironically highlighted the political agency of state-sponsored musicians in challenging the status quo of 1960s America.

5.25 Understanding the Polish Jazz Phenomenon In Tandem to Adorno and Said’s Political Thought

Adorno and Said’s political thought offer insightful perspectives on the Jazz Ambassadors’ influence in Poland, showcasing the power of music to challenge established power dynamics. In Poland, where jazz music was suppressed under Soviet influence, the presence and performances of the Jazz Ambassadors symbolized a defiance against authoritarianism and an assertion of freedom (Hatschek, 2010). Adorno underscores the potential of art to symbolize autonomy and liberation, declaring that “music is emancipated from layers of historical convention” and asserting that it “[claims] to be nothing more than the voice of truth” (Adorno, 2002, 560, 638). Here, Adorno’s perspective on music as an emancipatory force is crucial for interpreting the Jazz Ambassadors’ diplomatic influence. The “truth” that Adorno speaks of is a reflection of universal human experiences and emotions, including the struggle for freedom and autonomy (Adorno, 2002). It is through this lens of truth that the music of the Jazz Ambassadors (which was rooted in African American history and culture) became a symbol of resistance against authoritarianism in Poland and an affirmation of democratic ideals (Hatschek, 2010). The particular histories and identities of these musicians brought a certain authenticity to their performances, which transcended local cultural and political boundaries and enabled individuals to deeply connect with the universal desire for freedom. As such, this universality in music rests in the tangible and shared human condition that music evokes and articulates, bridging particularity with a broader universality of human aspiration. Furthermore, we can analyze the Polish jazz phenomenon in tandem to Said’s understanding of contrapuntalism, where the jazz music represented a voice of American cultural diplomacy and a medium of Polish resistance. Within this dynamic, the music of the Jazz Ambassadors emerged as a contrapuntal space that accommodated both the narratives of American freedom and the aspirations of the Polish people for autonomy, serving as a cross-cultural dialogue against the backdrop of Soviet suppression. Consequently, Said’s notion of contrapuntalism acted as a polyphonic meeting point where diverse experiences and yearnings for liberty were harmonized, defying political divides and fostering a sense of shared humanity beyond the ideologies of the Cold War.
5.3 Effects of the Jazz Ambassadors in the Socio-Political Landscape

Following twelve years of extensive international concert tours that took the Jazz Ambassadors to 78 countries across five continents, the cultural initiative faced its unofficial conclusion during the Reagan administration (Perera, 2018, 22). Despite overwhelming praise of the Jazz Ambassadors program, domestic funding debates surrounding the arts, exacerbated by the exorbitant cost of these cultural tours, led to a shift in America’s foreign policy strategy (Berkeley, 2018). As militarism and regulation of global trade took centre stage in the diplomatic agenda, cultural pursuits were sidelined into the shadows of the U.S State Department’s diplomatic toolkit. Emphasis on economic liberalization and the implementation of structural adjustment policies by the U.S throughout the 1980s and 1990s led to diplomatic strife with countries of the Global South, quickly untangling the cultural ties established by the jazz tours (Von Eschen, 2006). In a series of political events that gradually moved the U.S away from soft power diplomacy, jazz music faded into the background as a faded chapter in the historical narrative of U.S. cultural diplomacy.

Yet, it is undeniable that the Jazz Ambassadors left behind an enduring legacy that shaped the face of American soft power initiatives and cultural diplomacy. Despite being sent to politically turbulent countries such as Iraq and the Republic of Congo, their tours proved successful in easing political tensions and promoting democratic values through the universal language of jazz (Raussert, 2018). Von Eschen observes that prior to Louis Armstrong’s tour to the Congo, the country was torn apart by civil conflict following its independence from Belgian rule on June 30, 1960 (Von Eschen, 2006). It was within these heightened political tensions where Armstrong and his All Stars Bands played their jazz instruments to an audience of 10,000 Congolese citizens from opposing sides (Berkeley, 2018). Berkeley (2018) remarks that the mesmerizing performance had such a profound emotional impact that it quelled the civil conflict, leading to a one-day truce in the country. Although the fighting resumed shortly after Armstrong left the Congo, instrumental music stands as a testament to its potential to unite individuals across political divides and foster harmony, even temporarily.

Similarly, after years of resistance against American jazz music, Soviet officials conceded to the growing demand for the musical genre within the region and finally allowed the Jazz Ambassadors to tour the Soviet Union (Von Eschen, 2006). Although wary of the unpredictability of jazz music on the political and cultural landscape of the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities had no other option but to give in to the soaring popularity of jazz music among their citizens. In fact, Premier Nikita Khrushchev was reported to have attended Benny Goodman’s concert tour in Russia and Von Eschen remarks that Khrushchev expressed enjoyment attending the jazz performance (Von Eschen, 2006). While Khrushchev left the concert during the intermission, he later sent a letter to Goodman which stated that he was “very pleased and delighted to be at the concert” and had only left midway to “leave on a matter of state business” (Von Eschen, 2006, 108). Here, it is evident that jazz music had transcended cultural and political affiliations, creating a “new respectability of jazz in the Soviet Union” (Von Eschen, 2006, 109). Despite being initially viewed with suspicion as a diplomatic threat, jazz music transcended the ideological barriers of the Cold War and emerged as a powerful

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8 In the Berkeley’s (2018) documentary “The Jazz Ambassadors”, a specific scene reveals that a Dizzy Gillespie concert incurred expenses of $60,500, resulting in a deficit of $40,500 for the U.S State Department.
force for cultural exchange, fostering connections between nations and challenging preconceived notions about its subversive potential.

5.3.1 The Metaphysical and Universal Impact of the Jazz Ambassadors

Schopenhauer’s concept of metaphysics can be applied to illuminate how the musical performances of the Jazz Ambassadors transcended political affiliations and tensions. In a world marked by political divisions and adversarial relations, music emerges as a transformative force capable of compelling individuals to momentarily set aside their political differences. Whether it be Khrushchev temporarily setting aside his role as the Premier of the Soviet Union and immerse himself in the music of the “enemy”, or Congolese civilians laying down their weapons to collectively listen to a live jazz concert, the occurrence of these phenomena underscore the impact of music in bridging political divides (Von Eschen, 2006). Here, the performances of the Jazz Ambassadors resonate with Schopenhauer’s concept of the “Will”, operating as an embodiment of the universal struggle for freedom and expression. Rooted in African American culture, the transformative power of jazz offered a medium for the ambassadors to not only display America’s musical prowess, but also challenge its domestic racial inequalities. Their music became a form of universal communication, aligning with Schopenhauer’s vision where instrumental music offers a direct manifestation of the “Will” itself. Here, the “Will” manifests itself as a dynamic force that draws individuals together and enables the collective affirmation of each other’s humanity. It was through the metaphysical dimension of jazz music that spoke to a shared experience that extended beyond the immediate socio-political context. From the improvisational solos in jazz and its roots in African American culture, jazz emerged as a representation of freedom and the human condition through its capacity for creativity, resilience and change, which spoke to a shared struggle and aspiration that encompassed the “Will”. Consequently, the “Will” emerged as a universal platform for shared experiences and aspiration that enabled musicians and listeners alike to affirm each other’s humanity and foster a global consciousness of the civil rights movement.

Said’s political thought on the shared human experience and empathy can be applied to Schopenhauer’s argument, as the metaphysical experience of music helps individuals to understand “the Other”. Despite political differences that divide the world antagonistically, music serves as a unifying platform that fosters a collective sense of unity among people who find common ground through the shared metaphysical experience. As Said states in one interview, “the parallel lines… operating together the necessity of being reconciled at any one moment” shows that despite antagonism and political strife, music helps people from different backgrounds to coexist (Barenboim and Said, 2002, 14). And it is this beauty of coexisting in parallel with one another that highlights the diplomatic nature of music in fostering solidarity and understanding beyond cultural borders.

Adorno’s conceptualization of music as a communicative medium that transcends the confines of verbal language can also be used to understand the metaphysical and universal impact of the Jazz Ambassadors program. In a world vulnerable to misunderstandings due to differences in languages and cultures, music merges as a universal language that empowers the shared human experience and expresses what cannot be fully said in words. Here, Adorno suggests that the emotional spirit of music not only encapsulates individual
emotions, but also brings light to a broader and more objective truth about the human experience (Adorno, 2002). Leppert extends Adorno’s ideas further by explaining how music, as a “mystical, [yet] concrete material practice”, embodies a paradox that enhances emotional cognition within humans (Leppert, 2002, 85). This emotional cognition serves as a powerful tool for communication beyond borders, as music elevates language by introducing an affective element that surpasses the limitations of written expression. This emotional cognition taps aligns with Schopenhauer’s notion of transcendence, where instrumental music elevates audiences and musicians alike to a shared metaphysical experience, enabling individuals to connect with universal human emotions and the “Will” that underlies the collective consciousness (Schopenhauer, 2016). Consequently, the metaphysical dimension of music renders it a powerful diplomatic tool that compels individuals to embrace their emotional vulnerability, regardless of their cultural and political identity. Because as human beings, we connect with our hearts, not our heads.

5.4 Implications of the Jazz Ambassadors

Despite the overwhelmingly positive reception of the Jazz Ambassadors, it is important to discuss the implications and shortcomings of this diplomatic initiative. Critics of the Jazz Ambassadors program argued that the initiative was a wasteful expenditure of government funds, stemming from a broader skepticism about the value and efficacy of cultural diplomacy in the Cold War (Von Eschen, 2006). Conservative critics in particular have argued that the substantial funds allocated to the Jazz Ambassadors could have been used for more immediate and tangible needs within the United States, especially during a time where many Americans were facing economic hardship and social injustices (Berekely, 2018). Moreover, critics have raised doubts regarding the efficacy of cultural diplomacy, particularly in comparison to traditional diplomatic approaches rooted in hard power, such as economic sanctions and military action (Davenport, 2015). Did audiences simply enjoy the music of the Jazz Ambassadors, or did they genuinely influence their perceptions of the United States? Such skepticism extends to analyzing the long-term implications of such cultural engagements as it remains unclear how deeply the messages of the Jazz Ambassadors resonated beyond the concert hall. Although the immediate responses to jazz performances were often enthusiastic, measuring the lasting impact on the foreign audiences’ perception of American values poses a significant challenge. Consequently, this critique touches upon the difficulties of cultural diplomacy – its impacts are indirect and diffuse, which complicates direct attribution to specific initiatives like the Jazz Ambassadors.

Furthermore, in analyzing the Jazz Ambassadors, it is important to acknowledge that the cultural diplomacy program could be interpreted as a tool for American propaganda during the height of the Cold War. Indeed, state actors have historically leveraged music for propagandistic ends, harnessing its emotive power to sway public opinion and instill ideological conformity (Garratt, 2019). However, in the context of the Jazz Ambassadors, such reductionist views fail to capture the essence of their mission, which transcended mere influence and sought to foster intercultural understanding. The very act of defiance against mandatory State Department briefings by artists such as Dizzy Gillespie, and their insistence on portraying a complete image of American society illustrates their commitment to truth and authenticity over superficial narrative shaping.
By utilizing their art form as a complex expression of American identity, the Jazz Ambassadors effectively repurposed their diplomatic roles as platforms for critical societal introspection and the promotion of American values in their authentic, albeit paradoxical, form. The program’s enduring legacy, which facilitated moments of respite in politically charged atmospheres is a testament to its success as a soft power instrument that leveraged cultural expression for diplomatic ends.

6. Non-State Sponsored Case Study: The West Eastern Divan Orchestra

6.1 Understanding the “Other” and Breaking Down Historical Prejudices

Every summer, 80 young individuals from Israel, Palestine, and other Arab countries gather in Spain for a transformative peace initiative that aims to understand “the Other” and dismantle biases against their political adversaries (West Eastern Divan Orchestra, 2024). However, unlike youth conference programs focused on political negotiations and peace talks, these participants gather to unite a powerful instrument – not in the form of a diplomatic treaty, but rather a symphony orchestra. Founded by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, the West Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO) transcends traditional diplomatic initiatives by utilizing the universality of music to unite individuals from politically polarized contexts and break down ingrained political prejudices (WEDO, 2024). Within this musical context, WEDO emerges as a platform for Arabs and Israelis to understand the “Other” through shared artistic expression (Said, 1991). Through non-verbal dialogue, participants transcend the limitations of political discourse through the act of playing instrumental music together, creating a unique space for connection on a human level. Musicians who once saw each other as political enemies find themselves compelled to collaborate within a musical ensemble where they expose their innermost feelings and vulnerability with one another (Barenboim and Said, 2002). It is through this “human project” in which musicians unite to produce a cohesive sound, showcasing the transformative power of shared musical experience in promoting unity among political adversaries (DW, 2017).

Barenboim observes initial tensions between Israeli and Arab musicians as they come eye to eye for the first time, each carrying the weight of historical conflicts and prejudices against “the Other”. Initial apprehension of “the Other” is compounded by family disapproval, leading to self-segregation among participants wherein Arab and Jewish musicians initially stick to their own groups. Barenboim recounts one instance where one musician felt “discriminated against” because a group of Arab musicians declared that Jewish musicians “can’t play Arab music” and that “only Arab musicians can play Arabic music” (Barenboim and Said, 2002, 29). Following the tense exchange, Barenboim challenged such exclusive claims to music, arguing that following this logic would lead to the conclusion that only Germans should play Beethoven based on nationality. Interestingly enough, ten days later, “the same kid who had claimed that only Arabs can play Arabic music was teaching a musician to tune his cello to the Arabic scale”, symbolizing a significant shift towards mutual respect and understanding towards “the Other” (Barenboim and Said, 2002, 29).

Ignorance of “the Other” permeate the early days of the program, as musicians come face to face with their own preconceptions and fears of their historical adversaries. In a Deutsche Welle (DW) documentary, one WEDO musician remarked that “before Divan I was living in Israel and my world did not include Arabs.
I never had contact with them. In the beginning, I was very scared of them because all I knew was that they were terrorists and do terrible things to my people” (DW, 2021). Similarly, Jordanian and Palestinian pianist, Karim Said, confessed that “Israelis to me were un-human… Something to be isolated, because everything I saw in Jordan was of killing, that’s the only thing I saw of Israelis” (Smaczny, 2005). Violinist Nabih Bulos encapsulates the initial tensions among musicians in an interview, highlighting that “the standard view on both sides is these people hate us. You don’t even know what the other side is thinking. You’re not used to thinking as the other side as people, you just think of them as a side, a flag, as an enemy” (Larrinoa, 2017). Such remarks underscore the deeply entrenched prejudices held by each group, exacerbating political hostility and dehumanizing “the Other” by reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

In the context of WEDO, the initial fear and dehumanization of “the Other” conveyed by the musicians reflects a starting point of misunderstanding that symbolizes broader socio-political tensions. However, through the shared experience of playing music, these musicians begin to engage in a “dialectical relationship with tradition” and foster a mutual understanding with “the Other” that was previously obscured by socio-political barriers (Adorno, 1958/1959, 152). As musicians from disparate backgrounds create a dialogue through the shared language of music, they perform a subtle subversion of entrenched social dynamics, reflecting Adorno’s conception of the critical function of instrumental music. This synthesis of diverse voices embodies a vision of unity that respects individual differences, where a reconciled society finds its expression in the microcosm of musical collaboration. Through this process, Adorno argues that art manages to retain its autonomy while engaging with the world, challenging its listeners and creators to reconsider their relationship to tradition, the present, and each other in a transformative dialectic. As Adorno puts it, “the dialectical relationship between artist and material has been in force, in truth, ever since the material of art achieved thing-like autonomy in relation to human beings” (Adorno, 2002, 207). Consequently, this transformative process illustrates how aesthetic experiences can challenge and reshape our understanding of the world and “the Other”.

6.11 Analyzing Said’s Framework of “the Other”

Within this context, WEDO emerges as an intermediary platform, offering a safe space where individuals can confront their biases and prejudices. By sharing the same music stand, playing the same note, synchronizing bow strokes, and helping each other achieve the best musical versions of themselves, the platform of music creates a shared common experience between “Others,” laying the groundwork for mutual understanding beyond the boundaries of politics and conflict (Barenboim and Said, 2014). I argue that the symbolic act of playing in an ensemble together holds a major role in transcending political tensions as musicians connect with “the Other” on an emotional and experiential level. This act of collective music-making not only symbolizes, but actively practices the dialogue and empathy that Edward Said envisioned, breaking down the walls of “otherness” through the universal language of music that speaks directly to our shared humanity.

Within this orchestral space, musicians delve into the metaphysical realm as they access a collective empathetic experience, exposing their vulnerability and emotions to their political adversaries. In this metaphysical dimension, musicians transcend the mere act of playing musical notes with each other; instead,
they unlock their innermost emotions, fostering a profound human connection that transcends language and cultural barriers (Schopenhauer, 2016). Here, the focus lies in fostering empathy towards “the Other”, embodying Said’s vision of a dialogue that nurtures a shared space of respect and recognition across cultural and political boundaries (Said, 1991). As such, through this emotional exchange, musicians cultivate a deeper understanding towards opposing perspectives, creating a shared human experience that unites them beyond the constraints of politics and conflict. Consequently, this act of collective music-making becomes a symbolic reflection of the broader human condition, enabling musicians to explore their innermost nature of their being, and in turn, foster empathy for the perspective of “the Other”.

6.12 Analyzing Said’s Contrapuntal Framework in WEDO

In a similar vein, the orchestra itself transforms into a contrapuntal space where different cultural narratives and personal stories are expressed in a simultaneous, yet harmonious manner. As a musical project that brings together individuals from politically polarized communities, the orchestra plays a major role in facilitating polyphonic dialogue among musicians from conflicting backgrounds (Barenboim and Said, 2014). In other words, the orchestra transforms into a contrapuntal space where diverse narratives and culturally conflicting backgrounds interweave without one overshadowing another. Like contrapuntal music, where no single melody dominates another, in a truly open and empathetic society, no single socio-political narrative should overshadow another (Magome, 2006). It is within this harmonious setting where each musician’s perspective, cultural background and individual story contributes towards the overall texture and richness of the ensemble. In essence, the orchestra becomes a living metaphor of Said’s conception of a contrapuntal society, where different narratives coexist, yet retain its distinctiveness while contributing to a greater whole. As a result, this transformation allows the orchestra not merely to be a group of musicians playing together, but a representation of a society where diverse voices and experiences are acknowledged, understood, and valued, creating a unified but complex symphony of human expression and interaction.

It is no surprise that from such emotionally engaging experiences that musicians emerge from the program with a reimagined understanding of “the Other”. After a summer of intense rehearsals and overseas tours, these musicians work closely together and learn to see each other as fellow human beings. For instance, in the 2017 installment of WEDO, the same musician who dehumanized the other as “a side, a flag, an enemy…” at the start of the program went on to declare that “Divan shows you that these people, even if they are your enemy, that you want to think positively about them”, signifying a transformative shift in perspectives towards understanding and empathizing with “the Other” (Larrinoa, 2017). Furthermore, WEDO oboist Meirav Kadichevski encapsulates this transformation, stating, “when things are far away, it’s scary. But once you get close to them, you meet them, then you see it’s really not as scary” (WEDO, 2013). Such remarks by both musicians illuminates how the simple concept of bringing Arabs and Israelis together through music led to initial interactions that would not have otherwise occurred. And it was these very interactions that fostered unlikely, yet lifelong friendships with individuals from “the Other” side.
6.2 WEDO as a Platform for Dialogue

In the Arabic language, “Divan” (or “Diwan”) refers to “a space for exchanging stories and ideas” that aims to foster a “mutual collective consciousness” (Alkharashi, 2020). While conveying the full depth of such complex concepts into English proves challenging due to linguistic and cultural nuances, this interpretation of the “Divan” holds significant relevance in comprehending the underlying political and diplomatic dynamics of WEDO, from which it derives its name. Representing a forum for cultural exchange, WEDO embodies the ethos of the “Divan” by providing a space where individuals from conflicting backgrounds can come together, share narratives, and engage in dialogue (WEDO, 2023). Through collaborative musical endeavors, participants transcend geopolitical divides and foster a shared understanding of each other’s perspectives, and this transformative process of exchange and mutual recognition underscores the orchestra’s role as a platform for dialogue.

For many musicians, WEDO acts as the first channel of communication between Israelis and Arabs, providing a forum where individuals can navigate past ingrained historical prejudices (Riiser, 2009). Here, it is evident that music provided the impetus for discussions to overcome socio-political tensions, acting as a common ground that encouraged communication and understanding. This common ground manifests itself as a shared musical pursuit among musicians, wherein the act of creating harmony on stage resonates with the possibility of harmony in dialogue and relationships. This shared endeavour demands cooperation, listening and responding to one another, mirroring the fundamental aspects of empathy and conversation. As such, the orchestra emerges as a microcosm of Said’s political vision wherein each musician, regardless of their background, contributes to a unified whole and reflects the potential for diverse individuals to collaborate towards a common goal.

Said’s spatial interpretation of the symphony orchestra intersects with political theory, offering insights into the broader implications of musical expression. In a conversation between Barenboim and Said, Barenboim interprets music-making as a journey through both time and space, suggesting that it encompasses not only a temporal dimension but also occupies a metaphorical and physical “space” (Barenboim and Said, 2014). In this context, the symphony orchestra serves as a harmonic space, representing not only the physical venue where music is performed, but also the arrangement of musical chords and intervals that contribute to the aesthetic quality of sound. Said expands upon this concept by asserting that the symphonic space incorporates a social and emotional dimension, serving as a platform for personal and collective growth among musicians (Barenboim and Said, 2014).

It is within this context that WEDO extends this conception of space, by serving as a tangible realization of Said’s political vision. Beyond its musical dimension, the orchestra embodies a cultural and political significance that operates both as a symbol of peaceful coexistence and a diplomatic space. Here,

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9 In the Arabic language, the term “Diwan”, alternatively spelled “Divan”, traditionally denotes a council chamber or government bureau, reflecting a space dedicated to the deliberation and administration of state affairs. Concurrently, “Diwan” carries a rich literary significance, referring to a compendium of poems, usually by a single poet, encapsulating a spectrum of emotions, thoughts, and cultural reflections. This literary aspect underscores the concept's cultural depth and the intimate sharing of human experiences through art (Alkharashi, 2020).
WEDO functions as a platform for individuals from politically polarized backgrounds to collaborate together, ultimately challenging traditional divides and promoting unity despite differences. In doing so, they present a united front that transcends political boundaries and fosters improved international relations. Consequently, WEDO facilitates a form of dialogue that focuses just as much on listening to each other’s stories, as it is about playing the same notes. As Barenboim puts it, “time and space... [are] the alphabet of music-making”, underscoring the use of time and space not only to create beautiful music, but also to foster a social space where change can be enacted (Barenboim and Said, 2014, 123).

### 6.21 Application of Metaphysics on WEDO as a Platform for Dialogue

The need for a metaphysical understanding arises in settings like WEDO, where cultural and political differences could otherwise impede true connection and dialogue. As Schopenhauer argues, instrumental music holds a unique place among the arts because it depicts the “Will” in itself (Schopenhauer, 2016). In the interplay of instruments and melodies within WEDO, we see this concept vividly brought to life. Each performance operates as an intimate conversation expressed in the language of emotion, embodying the collective struggles, aspirations and celebrations that define the human spirit. These musicians who come from conflicting backgrounds, tap into a universal emotional resonance that allows for the recognition of shared struggles and triumphs regardless of the differences in their personal narratives. Consequently, this shared musical journey undertaken by WEDO becomes a living demonstration of Schopenhauer’s “Will”, uniting the musicians through a common purpose that transcends cultural, linguistic, and political barriers. When they perform, they are engaging not just with each other but with something greater—an intrinsic force that binds them in their humanity (Schopenhauer, 2016). Consequently, it is the metaphysical engagement with the music that WEDO facilitates an empathetic connection and acknowledgement of a shared humanity, going beyond the theoretical realm to forge mutual understanding across the divides of “the Other”.

### 6.22 Understanding Music as a Universal Language

Yet, the role of dialogue in WEDO cannot be fully analyzed until we examine the significance of language in facilitating communication within the orchestra. While verbal dialogue certainly plays a crucial role, the universal language of music is equally as important in fostering meaningful interactions among musicians. Just like how contrapuntal music observes multiple melodic lines collaboratively engaging in a musical dialogue and contributing towards a cohesive whole, the political context of WEDO similarly sees individuals from diverse backgrounds engaging in dialogue facilitated by the universal language of music. United by their shared passion for music, musicians of WEDO find a common language that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. In an interview, Barenboim declared that it was this “universal metaphysical language of music [that became] the link, it is the language of the continuous dialogue that these young people have with each other” (Riiser, 2009, 18). Here, he highlights how the universality of music facilitates ongoing communication and contributes to the orchestra’s role as a platform for dialogue. Similarly, following a performance, one musician remarked, “we conveyed a message that we can sit at the same stage and form together without fighting or arguing. [Music] was our mutual language. This is the message I want to convey.
from this orchestra. We can actually communicate and from there we can go on” (Larrinoa, 2017). Such personal remarks suggest that the language of music acts as a catalyst for dialogue, enabling initial communication that transcends the confines of the orchestral setting to engage in discussions about the broader political landscape. It is within this context that the transformative power of music paves way for deeper understanding and communication among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Adorno would corroborate Barenboim’s claims on the universality of music as a language by underscoring its ability to communicate beyond the confines of verbal communication. In the opening lines to Music, Language and Composition in his Essays on Music, Adorno declares that “music is similar to language”, highlighting the communicative power of music while also noting its distinctive qualities (Adorno, 2002, 113). He argues that music, like language, holds a “quality of being a riddle, of saying something that the listener understands and yet does not understand”, thereby engaging the listener in an interpretive process that stimulates the emotional and intellectual cognition of humans (Adorno, 2002, 122). He expands upon the enigmatic quality of music and language by declaring that “no art can be pinned down as to what it says, and yet it speaks”, suggesting that while music does not communicate in direct propositions, it nonetheless conveys profound truths and meanings (Adorno, 2002, 122).

In the case of WEDO, this framework helps to explain how music can act as a bridge between individuals from conflicting backgrounds. By participating in an orchestra that places the universal language of music at the forefront of its values and principles, musicians experience a form of communication that goes beyond words, where shared performances become a medium for dialogue and mutual understanding. Here, Adorno's insight that “art comes closer to the idea of freedom from appearance by perfecting that appearance than it would by arbitrarily and impotently suspending it… Music distances itself from language by absorbing its peculiar strength” becomes particularly pertinent (Adorno, 2002, 122). This suggests that through the act of rehearsing musical works, WEDO musicians are not just playing instruments, but are engaging in a deeper, metaphysical act of communication that embodies a vision of freedom. In this way, the orchestra embodies Adorno’s conception of the unique strength of music: to communicate beyond conventional language and foster a collective sense of liberation. As Said puts it, “music is the art of excellence, an art free of all limits imposed by words, an art that touches the depth of human existence, and art of sounds that crosses all borders. As such, music can take the feelings and imaginations of Israelis and Palestinians to new, unimaginable spheres” (Smaczny, 2005).

6.3 Effects of WEDO in the Socio-Political Landscape

Since its inception in 1999, WEDO has been recognized for its extensive work in improving international relations, exemplifying the power of cultural diplomacy (WEDO, 2023). In 2016, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon designated WEDO as a United Nations Global Advocate for Cultural Understanding, which has led to multiple performance opportunities at the UN headquarters in New York and Geneva (United Nations, 2016). Moon declared that “the work of the orchestra is testimony to the power of music to break down barriers and to build bridges between communities… I am delighted that the orchestra has committed to
help us in our work towards creating a more peaceful, inclusive and united world” (United Nations, 2016). His quote highlights the orchestra’s diplomatic role in advancing broader international efforts for peace and unique power to bridge political and cultural conflict. Alongside the UN recognition of WEDO, the orchestra has garnered prestigious awards, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Prize in 2012, the Príncipe de Asturias Concord Award in 2002, and the Praemium Imperiale awarded by the Japan Arts Association in 2007 (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2012; Barenboim, 2002; Barre 2007). These accolades underscore the orchestra's international acclaim as a symbol of peace and diplomacy, further solidifying its role as a global ambassador for fostering dialogue and improving relations between Israelis and Arabs.

6.31 WEDO Alumni

Following the WEDO summer program, many alumni of the orchestra go on to translate the orchestra’s guiding principles into their subsequent professional endeavors, whether it be musical or not. For instance, Jordanian WEDO violinist Nabih Bulos currently works as a Middle East Bureau Chief and foreign correspondent at the Los Angeles Times, where he covers news such as the ongoing Israel Palestine conflict (Los Angeles Times, 2024). Although Bulos naturally infuses his reporting with an Arab perspective, much of his journalistic output incorporates a balanced perspective that encompasses views from both Israeli and Palestinian sides. His articles, such as “In northern Israel, fears grow of a war that engulfs ‘all the Middle East,’” shed light on the Israeli experiences of war, while pieces like “‘No words for this horror.’ Israelis and Palestinians confront a terrifying new reality” articulate the mutual suffering and grief that pervades both communities. Moreover, in his poignant article “‘I need to ask God why.’ In Israel and Gaza, the scale of death overwhelms the living,” Bulos reflects on the universal sorrow that transcends borders, noting that nearly every family, whether Israeli or Palestinian, has been affected by the tragedy of the conflict (Bulos and Yam, 2023; King, Bulos and Lidman, 2023; King, Bulos and Yam, 2023). He writes, “almost no family, either Israeli or Palestinian, has been left untouched by this war, the deadliest between Israel and an Arab foe in half a century. Each death is a daub of paint on a vast canvas, but for the bereaved, each opens up a gaping chasm of grief”, illustrating the shared nature of loss and mourning that transcends ethnic boundaries (King, Bulos and Yam, 2023).

In the current day and age, where news and journalism are increasingly accessible and influential for the general public, the transition of WEDO musicians into journalistic roles demonstrates the potential of soft power initiatives to shape public discourse and opinion. Nabih Bulos’ transition from music to journalism is not an isolated incident, but representative of a broader pattern among WEDO musicians, who leverage their unique experiences and perspectives gained from the orchestra to inform their subsequent professional endeavors. By transitioning from music to journalism, former musicians like Bulos bring a unique blend of cultural sensitivity and humanistic insight to the reporting of complex geopolitical issues. This underscores the profound impact of the experiences from WEDO on its musicians, transforming them into leaders who are capable of fostering understanding beyond the program and extending this into their professional careers. Consequently, in this context, WEDO can be regarded as an implicit diplomatic tool that holds the power to influence perceptions through the dissemination of its core values.
6.32 Contrapuntal Effects of the WEDO in the Socio-Political Landscape

Said’s contrapuntal framework can be applied to understand the journalistic work and impact of Bulos, exemplified through his reporting style for the *LA Times*. Similar to Said’s contrapuntal approach that advocates for the simultaneous acknowledgement of diverse perspectives, Bulos’s work demonstrates contrapuntalism by weaving together narratives from both Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints (Magome, 2006). Put simply, his articles provide a platform where the voices of the marginalized and the dominant coexist, enabling readers to appreciate the full spectrum of experiences and emotions engendered by the conflict. In the task of maintaining balance in his reporting, Bulos faces the challenge of honouring both sides, while navigating potential accusations of bias. The responses to his work by the broader journalistic community provides a measure for how contrapuntalism can be received in the media and reflects the ongoing negotiation between maintaining journalistic objectivity and providing a space where conflicting histories are given voice. As such, Bulos’ contrapuntal approach to journalism invites audiences to confront their own preconceptions and advocates for a more nuanced discourse that acknowledges the multiplicity of voices in geopolitical issues. Consequently, Bulos’ journalistic advocacy not only embodies Said’s idea of engaging with “the Other”, but also challenges socio-political norms that encourage the general public to reconsider the complexity of human experiences beyond binary oppositions.

6.4 Implications of WEDO

Although the WEDO initiative has been met with high praise and acclaim for its work in fostering peace and understanding worldwide, it is important to analyze the implications and shortcomings of the orchestral program and its diplomatic effects. Musicians who join WEDO are self-selected, suggesting that musicians who choose to audition for the orchestra are likely to be more open-minded and predisposed to cultural exchange and dialogue. While this can enhance the ensemble’s internal cohesion and collaborative efforts, this might also imply that the orchestra predominantly attracts individuals already inclined towards reconciliation and peace, potentially limiting the diversity of viewpoints within the group. Consequently, while WEDO serves as a model for harmony and collaboration, it may face challenges in reaching and influencing those within Israeli and Palestinian communities who hold more entrenched or resistant views towards peace and cooperation between divided groups.

Furthermore, the privilege associated with the ability to learn and perform music at such a high level introduces another layer of complexity. This level of musical education often requires access to resources and opportunities that may not be available to all echelons of society, particularly in conflict-ridden areas. As a result, the orchestra may inadvertently project an image that does not fully encapsulate the broader spectrum of experiences and struggles within the communities it aims to represent. This could lead to criticisms of exclusivity and raise questions about the efficacy of WEDO’s mission in bridging deeply divided communities. As such, the intersection of privilege and accessibility shapes the orchestra’s impact and raises considerations about inclusivity and the representation of societal narratives within peace-building initiatives.
7. Counterargument: The Negative Effects of Instrumental Music

Furthermore, despite the positive effects of instrumental music in the diplomatic landscape, it is important to acknowledge that not all music can be used in a positive light. State and non-state actors alike have oftentimes used instrumental music for propaganda and political manipulation by harnessing the emotive power of music to sway public opinion and rally nationalistic sentiments (Garratt, 2019). The very qualities that make music a universal language – its ability to evoke emotion and understand one another – can also be exploited to craft narratives that serve specific political agendas. Consequently, while this thesis focuses on the positive power of instrumental music to transcend socio-political divides and facilitate dialogue, there remains a darker side to its use that warrants further analysis. Future research could explore the negative utilizations of instrumental music in diplomatic contexts, which would provide a more balanced perspective of the role of music in international affairs and examining both its capacity to unify and its potential to mislead.

8. Conclusion

In a world where hard power political strategies like sanctions and military intervention take center stage in the socio-political landscape, instrumental music offers a unique and compelling alternative that touches the hearts of many. By engaging in the emotional and metaphysical dimensions of the human experience, instrumental music illuminates an innovative way of transforming diplomatic engagement and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Reaching directly into the shared humanity that underlies all cultures and communities, instrumental music establishes a common ground for understanding and dialogue that resonates beyond the concert hall. However, it is important to note that musical initiatives like the Jazz Ambassadors and WEDO do not erase diplomatic tensions or provide easy solutions to deep-seated conflicts. At the end of the day, a Beethoven symphony will not solve the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, nor would attending a Dizzy Gillespie concert instantly reconcile decades of discord between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Yet, despite these limitations, the impact of music as a soft power diplomatic tool should not be underestimated in the political landscape. By facilitating dialogue established in shared human experiences and emotions, the universality of music can break down barriers that often seem impossible with peace talks and diplomatic negotiations. It creates a shared space for non-verbal communication where words might fail, allowing the shared musical experience to lay the framework for mutual understanding and improving international relations. And if this isn’t diplomacy, what is?
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