

“Jazz Embodies Human Rights”: The Politics of UNESCO’s International Jazz Day

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Abstract

This article explores the representation of jazz at UNESCO’s International Jazz Day, focusing in particular on the 2016 edition of the event hosted by former President Barack Obama at the White House. It locates Jazz Day in the history of US jazz diplomacy, demonstrating that the event results from strategies of the US government that emerged in the 1950s and sought to use jazz as an emblem of an American social order that was ethically superior to the Soviet Union. While Jazz Day – in the tradition of US jazz diplomacy programs – casts jazz as an embodiment of intercultural dialogue, diversity, and human rights, this article seeks to juxtapose this rhetoric with the event’s economics and politics. It argues that Jazz Day’s messages of diversity, intercultural dialogue, universal human rights, and peace, in their one-dimensional and non-intersectional form, ultimately serve to obfuscate the economic and political power interests that underlie the event. Contrary to its rhetoric, Jazz Day has so far failed to challenge the power structures that lie at the heart of a socially unequal global order built on the denial of basic human rights.

Keywords: UNESCO, International Jazz Day, Politics, Jazz, Diplomacy, International Relations

Introduction

Celebrating the fifth edition of UNESCO’s International Jazz Day on 30 April 2016, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova explained why the organization had decided to embrace jazz by introducing an annual International Jazz Day:

What is most important for us is that we celebrate jazz as a dialogue among culture, as human rights, as quest for freedom, and for human dignity. Jazz was born in this country [the US], but now is travelling all around the world. It has helped shape the American spirit, and now it is owned by all the people all over the world. This [sic] is not only that jazz is a great music, it is because jazz carries strong values. Jazz is about freedom, about courage, renewing itself every time it is played, and we are seeing this with every single minute this evening. Jazz is about civil rights and civil dignity. It was the soundtrack of struggle in this country, and I would say beyond.

But jazz is also about diversity, drawing on roots in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and elsewhere. And through jazz we learned about discrimination, about racism, but we learned about pride and dignity. Through jazz we improvise with others, we live together better, in dialogue and respect. Jazz I believe touches our hearts and souls and influences the way we think and behave. And this is why UNESCO created the International Jazz Day. (United Nations)

Delivered as a contribution to Jazz Day’s main event, the so-called Global Concert, Bokova’s speech in many ways exemplifies the rhetoric that has framed UNESCO’s International Jazz Day since its inception in 2011. Accordingly, jazz is a carrier of “strong” but highly opaque “values,” including freedom, dignity, dialogue, and human rights. By thus framing jazz’s values, Bokova appropriates the music as an embodiment of UNESCO’s core mission. [1] At the 2017 Global Concert, Bokova would repeat verbatim parts

of the speech she gave in 2016, confirming that musical differences mattered less than jazz's supposedly transhistorical essence as an embodiment of UNESCO's ethical agenda.

This article explores the representation of jazz at UNESCO's International Jazz Day. It locates Jazz Day in the history of US jazz diplomacy, demonstrating that the event results from strategies of the US government that emerged in the 1950s and sought to use jazz as an emblem of an American social order that was ethically superior to the Soviet Union (Eschen 1-26). While Jazz Day – in the tradition of US jazz diplomacy programs – casts jazz as an embodiment of intercultural dialogue, diversity, and human rights, this article seeks to juxtapose this rhetoric with the event's economics and politics. Post-colonial feminist scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Jacqui Alexander, and Sara Ahmed have pointed to the way in which the language of diversity can be emptied and dissociated from the "points at which power relations meet" (Ahmed 14). As such, the language of diversity can "bypass power and history," providing a façade that hides rather than exposes social inequality (Ahmed 14). The historian Samuel Moyn has similarly argued that the pervasive ethical concept of human rights can be little more than an "empty vessel" appropriated for non-humane political purposes in highly contradictory and inconsistent ways (Moyn 51). This article argues that Jazz Day's messages of diversity, intercultural dialogue, universal human rights, and peace, in their one-dimensional and non-intersectional form, ultimately serve to obfuscate the economic and political power interests that underlie the event. Contrary to its rhetoric, Jazz Day thus fails to challenge the power structures that lie at the heart of a socially unequal global order built on the denial of such basic human rights as the "right to life."

International Jazz Day as US Music Diplomacy

My analysis of International Jazz Day is informed by three main research areas. In addition to drawing on the work on diversity by postcolonial and feminist scholars on the one

hand, and studies on the history of human rights, on the other, it is indebted to research on music and diplomacy by such scholars as Penny von Eschen, Danielle Fosler-Lussier, Lisa Davenport, Rebekah Ahrendt, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, and Martha Bayles. Exploring the functions of music in international relations, their works have helped to establish the study of music diplomacy as a significant academic field that is located between history, political science, and musicology. In her 2004 study *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, Penny von Eschen details the way in which the US government began to appropriate jazz music in the 1950s, demonstrating the extent to which jazz diplomacy was an integral part of US Cold War politics. Defined as an African-American musical genre, jazz became an emblem of diversity and democracy, countering the negative images of US culture that resulted from racist violence directed against the Civil Rights Movement (Eschen 1-26). In the course of two decades, the US State Department sent many of the most celebrated jazz musicians abroad, including Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington, among others. Following the success of US jazz diplomacy programs, jazz, in the early 1960s, became a more broadly Western instrument in the ideological antagonism of the Cold War as it was embraced by other Western cultural institutes and governments including West Germany (Dunkel, "Jazz – Made in Germany").

While the scale of American jazz diplomacy programs started to decrease in the late 1970s (Eschen 251), jazz has remained an important diplomatic means for the US – despite the fact that the organization of jazz diplomacy programs has been handed over to Jazz at Lincoln Center (see Jankowsky 277) and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. Significant jazz diplomatic missions since 2000 have included trips by US musicians to Vietnam, India, France, Morocco, and several other nations. In 2005, the Monk Institute sent a group of musicians to Vietnam "to mark the 10th anniversary of the US and Vietnam resuming diplomatic relations" (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *About Us*). Two years later, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter accompanied a group of students to India as

a contribution to the celebrations of the Indian nonviolent movement's 100th anniversary. The Monk Institute sought to reaffirm the association of jazz with nonviolent resistance in 2009 by sending Hancock, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Terri Lyne Carrington, George Duke, Chaka Khan, along with Martin Luther King III and a Congressional Delegation around John Lewis to India in order jointly commemorate the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King's 1959 trip to India (ibid.).

This association of jazz with nonviolent resistance thematically prepared the inclusion of jazz into UNESCO's International Day program. The close association of jazz with nonviolent resistance that the Monk Institute seeks to underscore is indeed rooted in US social history. Harking back to African American blues and gospel traditions, the jazz style known as hard bop was closely tied to the African American civil disobedience and cultural pride associated with the Civil Rights Movement (Saul; Monson; Dunkel, *Charles Mingus*). Building on this historical association of jazz with peaceful resistance and the struggle for social equality, UNESCO increasingly accepted jazz as a music that could help to promote the organization's core values. From 2002 to 2004, UNESCO collaborated with the Monk Institute in staging UNESCO's "International Philosophy Day," to which the Institute sent both student and celebrity musicians, including Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Dianne Reeves (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *About Us*). The creation of UNESCO's International Jazz Day in 2011, then, was largely an expansion of these previous collaborations between UNESCO, the Monk Institute, and the US government.

The initiative for an International Jazz Day was first presented to UNESCO in July 2011 as a shared proposal by the US and seventeen other member states (UNESCO Executive Board). International Jazz Day was finally passed at the UNESCO General Conference in Paris in November 2011 (International Jazz Day, *About*). The first official International Jazz Day took place on 30 April 2012 in New Orleans and New York. Subsequently, Jazz Days have been hosted by Japan (Osaka 2013), Turkey (Istanbul

2014), France (Paris 2015), and Cuba (Havana 2017). The US is the only country that has hosted Jazz Day twice. After the shared 2012 inaugural concerts in New Orleans and New York, Barack Obama hosted Jazz Day at the White House in 2016, thus demonstrating that his administration considered jazz an integral part of its public diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy at UNESCO's 2016 Global Concert

According to the organizers of Jazz Day, decentralization is one of the basic ideas behind the event. Jazz Day's official website therefore accentuates that everyone is welcome to plan events on 30 April, register them on jazzday.com, and celebrate Jazz Day locally. As if to testify to the diversity and inclusivity of the event, the website lists all of the locations where jazz day events have taken place so far (International Jazz Day, *2017 Global Celebrations*). This focus on decentralization can hardly obscure the fact that the so-called Global Concert – Jazz Day's main concert of celebrity musicians from different countries that takes place in the respective host city – is Jazz Day's main event. Consisting of speeches and performances by a select cast of celebrity jazz musicians, these shows are highly and widely mediatized events. Since 2012, all of the Global Concerts have been video recorded and distributed through various channels. The 2016 Global Concert at the White House was produced by Don Mischer Productions, broadcast by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), streamed by the United Nations and UNESCO, and made available on Youtube by the event's organizers (International Jazz Day, *Jazz Day 2016 Worldwide*). In addition, Jazz Day's official Youtube account, called "InternationalJazzDay," cut performances of individual musicians and uploaded them to the online platform. A selection of celebrity musicians on the margins of the jazz genre (such as Sting), as well as speeches by politicians and celebrities (such as Barack Obama, Morgan Freeman, and Will Smith), served to guarantee the centrality of the Global Concert within the celebrations of International Jazz Day.

A closer look at the 2016 Global Concert illuminates the way in which Jazz Day provides a stage for both political and economic interests. As the initiator of International Jazz Day and the only country that has hosted Jazz Day twice, the US is particularly invested in the event. That the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz organizes the event additionally increases the influence of US actors on International Jazz Day; the Monk Institute has close ties to the US State Department with whom it has cooperated repeatedly in the past.

In line with previous celebrations of Jazz Day, the 2016 Global Concert sought to cast jazz as a diverse music. Performing in several rooms and the backyard of the White House, a young generation of musicians, represented by Esperanza Spalding, Robert Glasper, Christian McBride, and Jamie Cullum, among others, shared a stage with "jazz legends" and practitioners who have significantly impacted jazz since the 1960s, including Herbie Hancock, Al Jarreau, Chick Corea, and Wayne Shorter. Casting jazz as a trans-generational music, the organizers of the 2016 Global Concert, for instance, assembled a trio with Wayne Shorter, the young bassist Esperanza Spalding, and the 12-year old, Indonesian jazz prodigy Joey Alexander. Performing in the Blue Room of the White House, this band exemplified one of Jazz Day's main tropes: Jazz connects generations, ethnicities, genders, and nations. Jazz, it is claimed, both embodies and transcends difference.

As if to underscore jazz's boundary-crossing essence, the organizers of International Jazz Day employed an expansive, formal definition of jazz. At the White House, the jazz tradition included soul, blues, Latin, pop, and hip hop. Among the musicians invited to the White House concert were such artists as Sting, for instance, whose music would usually be considered rather irrelevant to the jazz tradition. As a result, the jazz tradition presented at the White House seemed united less by formal commonalities than by a common, universal legacy. In a way, Jazz Day continues a debate on the boundaries and nature of the jazz tradition that has divided the US jazz scene since the 1980s when Herbie Hancock and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis

represented two oppositional views that still have not been reconciled: While Marsalis argued for a narrow definition of the jazz tradition as an African American artistic genre based on the blues, Hancock envisioned jazz as an absorptive, adaptable practice whose strength lies in its potential to blend with new forms of popular music (Zabor and Garbarini 52-64). By emphasizing the music's malleability, Jazz Day draws on Hancock's vision of jazz. Since 2013, all Global Concerts have ended with shared performances by the participating musicians of John Lennon's "Imagine" – an emblem of utopianism and pacifism, but certainly not of the jazz tradition as it would have been defined by Marsalis. The adaptation of "Imagine" performed at Jazz Day is based on Herbie Hancock's 2010 version of the song, which was recorded as part of his *Imagine Project*. As such, it also serves to center the jazz tradition around Hancock's *oeuvre*.

Although the 2016 Global Concert thus sought to display a high level of generic inclusion and diversity, the event lacked diversity in other areas. Only six out of forty-nine musicians performing at the White House in 2016 were women – a remarkably small percentage considering the increased visibility of female jazz musicians in the jazz scene. [2] In addition to being shaped by gender, the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion were regulated through institutional affiliation. The main cast of the 2016 Global Concert was recruited from a very select group of musicians affiliated with the Institute that is in charge of the production of International Jazz Day: the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. A Washington-based institute for jazz education and diplomacy, the Monk Institute refers to these musicians as the "Monk Institute Family." [3] Many of them have performed repeatedly at Jazz Day's main events. Nine out of sixteen Monk Institute Family members played at the 2016 Global Concert. [4] The continuities in personnel from US State Department initiatives in jazz diplomacy and the cast of International Jazz Day are indeed striking, as musicians for both programs are selected by the Monk Institute. Accordingly, US jazz and international jazz are largely represented by the same musicians, among them Herbie Hancock,

Dee Dee Bridgewater, Wayne Shorter, and other members of the Monk Institute Family (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *About Us*).

In addition to privileging members of the “Monk Institute Family,” the 2016 Global Concert advantaged US citizens. Seventy-three percent of the musicians performing at the White House in 2016 were US citizens, followed by seven percent who were from England. Every other country was represented by one musician only. The overrepresentation of US musicians did not only have to do with the fact that the event took place in the US. In previous years, US artists had similarly dominated the Global Concerts. [5] In light of this overrepresentation of US musicians, the Cuban government demanded that for every international artist invited to the 2017 Global Concert in Havana, a Cuban musician had to be invited as well (Newman).

If instead of looking at the musicians’ native languages one considers the military alliances of their home countries, the dominance of NATO members at the 2016 Global Concert was similarly overwhelming. Eighty-eight percent of the musicians who performed at the White House came from countries that are either NATO members or official allies of the organization. NATO’s most powerful opponents, China and Russia, were not represented at the concert. The overwhelming dominance of musicians from countries that are NATO members testifies to the fact that jazz diplomacy has been and still is a predominantly Western practice (see Dunkel, “Jazz—Made in Germany”).

In order to better understand the Global Concert’s mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, one needs to consider the history and the economic anatomy of the event. The 2011 official proposal for an International Jazz Day by the US reveals the rhetoric that the US employed in establishing Jazz Day as an officially recognized UNESCO event:

Jazz developed in the United States in the very early part of the twentieth century and New Orleans played a key role in this development. The city’s population was more diverse than anywhere else in the country, and people of African, French, Caribbean, Italian, German, Mexican,

and American Indian, as well as English descent interacted with one another. African American musical traditions mixed with others and gradually jazz emerged as a unique style of music [...]. Interest quickly spread, and within a few decades, Americans of all ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic classes, ages and genders were listening to and playing jazz. [...] During the course of the twentieth century, jazz proved to be a universal language spreading over all the continents, influencing and being influenced by other kinds of music, evolving as a merging cultural element for its supporters all around the world, with no distinction of race, religion, ethnic or national origin. (UNESCO, *General Conference, Proclamation of International Jazz Day*, 36 C/65)

For one, jazz is used as a transhistorical concept here. Its essence transcends the history of the twentieth century so that traditional New Orleans jazz and contemporary avant-garde jazz are treated as essentially the same. Second, this sketch of the history of jazz attempts to define jazz as a genre that both expresses *and* transcends cultural particularities. This contradiction is ingrained in narratives about jazz history (DeVeaux 530-1). But it is important to note that it is in fact a contradiction. For how can jazz be a universal language, understood by everybody in the same way, if it contains an array of cultural particularities from a very specific place in the early twentieth century?

Third, this sketch is based on the melting pot narrative. Accordingly, when cultures interact, they “blend” and “merge” into one syncretic whole. The application of the melting pot concept to the jazz tradition is closely tied to Marshall Stearns’s vision of jazz, which provided the conceptual framework for jazz diplomacy programs in the 1950s (Dunkel, “Marshall Winslow Stearns,”; Dunkel, *The Stories of Jazz* 341-380). The concept’s disregard for sustained cultural difference facilitates claims about the seemingly universal essence of jazz. The proposal finally constructs jazz as a cipher that associates the US with UNESCO’s core mission and values. Jazz has always been intercultural, according to this proposal. But it was a US intercultural music

before becoming universal. As the intercultural "cradle of jazz," the US thus also becomes the sonic birthplace of UNESCO's core values, embodying human rights, peace, diversity, and intercultural dialogue.

This identification of the US with UNESCO's ethical agenda, however, is complicated by International Jazz Day's financial set-up. At its 36th General Conference, UNESCO made clear that International Jazz Day would rely entirely on extrabudgetary funds (UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference*, 48). The General Conference, however, did not address how exactly these funds would be raised. As a result, a large part of the annual budget has been channeled by the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, which, in turn, has relied on private and corporate donations. For the year 2012, the Monk Institute's Form 990 indicates that the Institute spent \$819,446 on the production of Jazz Day, amounting to twenty percent of the Institute's operating budget for that year (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *Form 990 for the 2012 Calendar Year 2*). Between 2012 and 2015, the Institute likewise spent a large part of its budget on what it calls "international programs," including on Jazz Day. [6] In April 2016, the list of the Institute's most important donors, the "Major Benefactors," according to the Institute's website, was topped by the Northrop Grumman Corporation. The exact amount Northrop Grumman has paid to the Institute is unclear, but in April 2016, the corporation was listed as the Institute's most important donor for 2015 (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *Support - Current Sponsors*). Interestingly, the Institute changed its list of donors significantly in May 2016, when it added Toyota as a "lead partner," ranking above Northrop Grumman for the 2015 calendar year (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *Support - Current Sponsors*). It therefore remains unclear whether Toyota or Northrop Grumman was the Institute's main donor in 2015. According to the two versions of the Institute's website, however, both companies have contributed substantially to the Institute's budget.

In its sponsorship guide, International Jazz Day lists several reasons why companies should invest in the event. Most importantly, Jazz Day gives sponsors an opportunity to link

their brand "with the strong positive values of International Jazz Day, which include peace, intercultural dialogue and cooperation between nations" (UNESCO, *International Jazz Day Sponsorship*). The Thelonious Monk Institute's website additionally seeks to attract sponsors by citing a *New York Times* article in which an advertising executive claims, "Bottom line, jazz has integrity. It's never corny. It moves. And its percussive quality, its energy, livens up anything associated with it" (Gladstone). According to the Monk Institute, "Companies can tap into this energy by sponsoring the Institute's programs" (Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, *Support - Sponsorship Opportunities*). While Toyota has not released statements on why they are funding International Jazz Day, the strategy to associate with a sonic emblem of energy and vitality might be appealing to a car manufacturer invested in branding increasingly automated machines. The company's support for the event may also have to do with the fact that one of their greatest rivals made ample use of the jazz brand by naming one of their car series Honda Jazz.

Regardless of the exact reasons for Toyota's investment, Northrop Grumman's motivations behind sponsoring the event are far from self-explanatory. Northrop Grumman is one of the major manufacturers of military drones and military airplanes in the US. In October 2015, the company was selected by the US government to supply the US military with the next generation of the B2 stealth bomber (Cohen). Using jazz to sell products to the general public makes little sense for Northrop Grumman, since the company's business model does not rely on a broad market. In 2014, 2015, and 2016, Northrop Grumman derived more than eighty-three percent of its sales from the US government alone (Northrop Grumman 6). In its 2016 Annual Business Report, Northrop Grumman in fact identifies its dependence on the US government as a major risk factor (Northrop Grumman 6).

Northrop Grumman's investment in funding jazz therefore needs to be considered against the backdrop of the company's reliance on the US government. In providing funds to the Monk Institute, Northrop Grumman has taken over a function that had previously been performed by the US State Department: the sponsorship of US

jazz diplomacy programs. Accordingly, Northrop Grumman's sponsorship of the Monk Institute can be read as part of a gift-making strategy whose indirect beneficiary is the US government. Financially supporting International Jazz Day could give Northrop Grumman a competitive edge over fellow defense contractors Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon when it comes to securing government contracts. Possibly, the company may also have hoped to curry favor with Barack Obama himself, whose passion for African American music traditions is very well-known.

Complex funding structures as well as intersecting corporate and governmental interests are not unique to Jazz Day. As the political scientist Jan Melissen has noted, the practice of diplomacy has transformed significantly over the last 20 years, giving rise to what he calls a "new public diplomacy." If governments used to fund and coordinate cultural diplomacy programs directly during the Cold War, the involvement of non-government actors in programs representing nations to foreign audiences has increased exponentially over the last two decades. Melissen describes this new public diplomacy in the following way:

The new public diplomacy is no longer confined to messaging, promotion campaigns, or even direct governmental contacts with foreign publics serving foreign policy purposes. It is also about building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and abroad. Tomorrow's diplomats will become increasingly familiar with this kind of work, and in order to do it much better they will increasingly have to piggyback on non-governmental initiatives, collaborate with non-official agents and benefit from local expertise inside and outside the embassy. (Melissen 22)

Jazz Day exemplifies how this larger development has led to opaque funding structures.

The investment in the event of a military contractor such as Northrop Grumman raises

obvious ethical questions. As drones and military aircrafts designed and manufactured by Northrop Grumman are used to violate human rights in various countries across the globe, [7] the Monk Institute's enmeshment with Northrop Grumman seems ethically problematic, to say the least. The fact that the Institute uses a large part of its Northrop-Grumman-sponsored budget to finance UNESCO's International Jazz Day foils Jazz Day's central ethical claims, including the notion that the event seeks to uphold and promote human rights as a central universal value. As a military contractor, Northrop Grumman thrives when intercultural dialogue fails while global conflicts encourage the government to raise its military budget. In a utopian, peaceful world without borders – which the jazz musicians evoke when they sing John Lennon's "Imagine" at the end of the Global Concerts – Northrop Grumman would be bankrupt and obsolete. In order to turn corporate financial investment into symbolic capital, International Jazz Day therefore relies on a façade of ethical integrity, captured by empty vessels of human rights and diversity. This façade crumbles as soon as one juxtaposes the event's rhetoric with its economics.

Consequently, UNESCO's role in the organization of Jazz Day seems questionable. The 2011 proposal for an International Jazz Day mentions several reasons why UNESCO would profit from such an event. It claims that International Jazz Day would help UNESCO to transport its values to "social areas that are not usually targeted by UNESCO's message, in particular reaching younger generations" (UNESCO, *General Conference, Proclamation of International Jazz Day*, 36 C/65, 2). By giving Jazz Day into the hands of an institute that channels donations by a manufacturer of weapons used to violate human rights, UNESCO rather seems to provide a brand of ethical integrity to the Monk Institute's sponsors and the US government. What is more, low sales indicate that jazz is actually quite unpopular with the majority of young people around the world (La Rosa). It seems surprising that an unpopular genre such as jazz would be selected in order to disseminate ethical values amongst young people who evidently tend not to listen to

jazz. The proposal additionally suggested that International Jazz Day "could have a beneficial influence on the promotion of music teaching," which would, in turn, facilitate intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, *General Conference, Proclamation of International Jazz Day*, 36 C/65, 2). This may very well be true, but why not launch an International Music Day then?

As an ostensibly neutral association of member states, UNESCO has the power to "consecrate" cultural heritage, to put it with Pascale Casanova (Casanova 127-8). As such, the organization can bestow cultural artifacts with the symbolic capital of universal value – similar to the way in which an artistic circle that is considered authoritative on a global level can consecrate a work of art (Casanova makes this case for literary circles in early-twentieth-century Paris). By facilitating International Jazz Day, UNESCO frames jazz as an ethical tradition. It contributes to turning jazz into an officially recognized cultural artifact that embodies "values" and transcends cultural particularities. Defined as essentially American, jazz becomes an embodiment of what is universally moral.

As a highly visible event such as Jazz Day has the power to shape the global image of jazz, questions concerning its stakeholders are particularly significant. Does the choice of a pacifist piece such as "Imagine" as the event's major theme song have to do with the fact that the organizing institute relies on funding from a major US weapons manufacturer? Is jazz cast as an emblem of peace and human rights because this helps to re-brand the US as benevolent, peaceful, and non-aggressive? Although it is impossible to answer these questions for certain, it is also important to note that the image of jazz that is forged at an event such as Jazz Day cannot be dissociated from the interests of the event's stakeholders. Since Jazz Day is a highly visible event for the global representation of jazz, it also has the power to intervene in the branding of jazz, ultimately affecting the way in which jazz is practiced and received on a global scale.

Conclusion

UNESCO's International Jazz Day, then, is not only a musical event that celebrates an African American musical tradition, but it is also a sugar-coated claim to morality: the cultural morality of the jazz tradition, the organizational morality of UNESCO, and the national morality of the US. By relying on an economic and political anatomy that involves the US military-industrial complex, however, International Jazz Day belies its professed messages of human rights, peace, diversity, and intercultural dialogue. What is more, Jazz Day's façade tends to obscure its politico-economic reality. While articles covering Jazz Day point to the diversity of the event, there is literally no academic or public discourse on the questionable sponsorship of Jazz Day.

Besides thus obfuscating "the points at which power relations meet" (Ahmed 14), Jazz Day misrepresents cultural encounters. Rather than casting cultural change as a constant, inescapable reorientation characterized by both conflict and harmony, loss and gain, Jazz Day belittles the labors of cultural change and makes invisible the dynamics of power that drive cultural change in a globalized world. By choosing the melting pot concept for cultural change, according to which different cultures "blend" harmoniously into one rather homogeneous whole, Jazz Day promotes a universalist misconception based on the notion that, as everyone is basically the same, intercultural dialogue can come easily and without serious obstacles. This concept of culture and intercultural dialogue underlies free trade ideology and corresponds to the interests of the event's organizers and investors.

International Jazz Day could avoid these kinds of contradictions only by fundamentally changing the way in which the event is funded. UNESCO would need to confront rather than rely on financing methods by which money is channeled from dubious sponsors via NGOs to UNESCO. This could be done by implementing regulations for NGOs involved in UNESCO events (by allowing them to accept donations only from sponsors that have been approved by UNESCO). It could also be achieved by giving more responsibility (and funding) to UNESCO in the organization of UNESCO events, thus

reducing the reliance on the politics and funding strategies of such NGOs as the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz.

Secondly, Jazz Day would need to reject the kind of universalistic rhetoric that frames the event, embracing a concept of jazz that takes cultural differences to be complex, variable, and subject to intersecting power interests. This concept would not necessarily undermine the idea of an International Jazz Day. For jazz has in fact taken many forms throughout the world and has been relevant to many people in radically different ways. Conceiving of jazz as a complex, variable, and pluralistic type of music would rather challenge the way in which Jazz Day is celebrated in the 21st century. If jazz is not a universal language, then it also needs to be celebrated as a much more inclusive concept that does not belong to any nation and can be represented by musicians regardless of their citizenship. Applying the lyrics of Jazz Day's theme song, "Imagine there's no countries," to the jazz tradition would be a good starting point.

Endnotes

[1] See <http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>. The short introduction to UNESCO's mission includes the key terms human rights, dialogue, diversity, heritage, freedom, democracy, development, and human dignity, among others.

[2] All of these figures stem from my own evaluation of the names and biographies for the 2016 Global Concert listed on jazzday.com.

[3] For a list of the current "Monk Institute Family" see <http://monkinstitute.org/>.

[4] Kris Bowers, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Aretha Franklin, Herbie Hancock, Lionel Loueke, Diane Reeves, Wayne Shorter, Bobby Watson, and Ben Williams.

[5] UNESCO's official announcement of the 2015 concert in Paris demonstrates this. It gives the nationalities of non-US jazz artists in parentheses but fails to provide the nationality of musicians from the US, thus implying that a US citizenship is the norm for jazz musicians performing at the Global Concerts. (UNESCO, *International Jazz Day 2015 - All-Star Global Concert in Paris*). At the Global Concert in France, almost one half of the musicians (thirteen out of 27) were based in the US, while only two (Mino Cinélu and Guillaume Peret) were French citizens. The line-ups for all Global Concerts can be viewed at jazzday.com.

[6] See the Monk Institute's IRS (Form 990) for 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015, available at <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/521544030>.

[org/nonprofits/organizations/521544030](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/521544030).

[7] NGOs concerned with the protection of human rights such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have been campaigning against illegal targeted killings by the US government. See (Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch).

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