

# The Impact of American Jazz Diplomacy in Poland During the Cold War Era

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For more than two decades during the Cold War from 1956 to 1978, the United States incorporated tours by American jazz artists as an essential element of the nation's efforts to increase sympathies around the world for America in its Cold War struggles against the Soviet Union. During this era, these jazz ambassadors took on the mantle of citizen diplomats, helping to expand the audience for jazz while being portrayed by the U.S. State Department as representatives of a society that valued free artistic expression for all.<sup>1</sup> In large part, the government's use of jazz as a form of propaganda in support of American values was designed to help counter the troubling realities of America's segregation and racism that were then prevalent. Although the intent of enlisting jazz in the fight against communism was one that centered on its propaganda value, the jazz ambassadors, many of them African Americans, shared a more nuanced and accurate portrayal of the ongoing struggles for equality through conversations and interviews around the world. 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.<sup>2</sup> These contradictions included the State Department's reliance on jazz artists as the nation's cultural ambassadors at a time when many of those artists were

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<sup>1</sup> Penny Von Eschen, interview by Joe Maita, at [http://www.jerryjazzmusician.com/linernotes/penny\\_von\\_eschen.html](http://www.jerryjazzmusician.com/linernotes/penny_von_eschen.html) (accessed January 5, 2011). Von Eschen suggests that the term "jazz ambassadors" was originally adopted by the State Department based on Louis Armstrong's 1955 album titled *Ambassador Satch* (the album presented a live concert recorded that year in Milan, Italy). She also opines that the enthusiastic response to Armstrong's 1955 European tour further convinced diplomats that jazz could be a strong, positive influence in winning the hearts and minds of people around the world. See also Felix Belair, "United States Has Secret Sonic Weapon—Jazz," *New York Times*, November 6, 1955, p. 1. This article makes a strong case for the diplomatic impact of jazz prior to the start of the jazz ambassadors program. In it, Belair states, "America's secret weapon is a blue note in a minor key. Right now its most effective ambassador in Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong.... It knows no national boundaries, but everyone knows where it comes from and where to look for more." As a page one story in the *New York Times*, the article likely drew the attention of the U.S. diplomatic corps.

<sup>2</sup> Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 252. This work is an essential study of the 22-year period when jazz was exported around the world to help gain a U.S. advantage in the Cold War cultural battle.

not allowed equal rights at home due to the prevalent Jim Crow laws in many states. At the same time, the Soviet Union attacked jazz as a symbol of Western vulgarity and decadence that had no place in its society or that of its satellite countries, when just a few years earlier it had embraced the music as an essential part of its World War II efforts.<sup>3</sup>

While the use of jazz as an element in the Cold War struggle has been documented in a number of books and articles, there have been few studies considering the actual effect such tours had on the people in the countries American jazz performers visited.<sup>4</sup> This article will provide a historical consideration of the role of jazz in post-World War II Poland and then assess the impact of a specific U.S.-sponsored jazz tour to that country in 1958 by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. What did it mean to Poles in 1958 to see and hear Brubeck? Did such tours contribute to improved attitudes abroad towards the U.S.? And, finally, how did Poles interpret Brubeck's so-called West Coast jazz into their own emerging jazz styles?

Through resources housed in both the Brubeck and Willis Conover Collections, along with a series of interviews with Polish jazz performers who attended Brubeck's 1958 concerts, a broader understanding of how jazz had an impact on Poland's music and cultural institutions will emerge.<sup>5</sup> Jazz in Poland operated both as a form of artistic expression that attracted many of the nation's most talented young musicians, and also as a broader symbol of the efforts made by the country's intelligentsia to assert the right of self-expression at a time when limitations had been placed on cultural and artistic works by the authorities. As will be seen, this duality highlights both the multiple meanings that jazz often represented to its various audiences during the Cold War period while also shedding more light on the contradictions inherent in the Cold War use of jazz as a form of propaganda.

Looking as far back as the end of World War I is essential to understanding the genesis of jazz in Polish society. Under the leadership of Józef Pilsuski, who led Poland immediately after the First World War, Polish nationalism and culture came to the fore.<sup>6</sup> After prolonged periods of subjugation by neighboring countries, Poland's inter-war period provided Polish artists with the opportunity to express themselves without interference from foreign rulers. During this period, jazz music was an important part of the cultural landscape in Poland's largest cities. As was the case throughout Western

<sup>3</sup> S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: Jazz in the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Starr provides an excellent overview assessment of the Cold War status of jazz in the U.S.S.R.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the books referenced above, Walter Hixson's *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), provides a well-researched study of how American policy makers came to endorse the use of jazz as a force in the Cold War culture battle. More recently, musicologist Danielle Fosler-Lussier's "Cultural Diplomacy as Cultural Globalization: The University of Michigan Jazz Band in Latin America" (*Journal of the Society for American Music* 4 [February 2010]: 59–93) provides an informative look at the complexities encountered by college-age American jazz ambassadors involved in Latin American cultural exchange programs during the Cold War.

<sup>5</sup> The author's research trip to Poland would not have been possible without the generous support of the Trust for Mutual Understanding and a grant from the Rupley-Church Fund for International Relations at University of the Pacific.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall Pilsuski led Poland from 1919–1923 before retiring. He then returned to power from 1926 until his death in 1935.



**Figure 1** The Dave Brubeck Quartet. This version of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, the so-called classic quartet active from 1958–1967, included (l-r) pianist Dave Brubeck, bassist Eugene Wright, alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, and drummer Joe Morello. Brubeck Collection, DBP-64-12, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Copyright Dave Brubeck.

Europe, prominent musical influences included popular song composers such as George Gershwin and Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, as well as the Broadway musical repertoire more broadly.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Warsaw's jazz life in the 1930s scarcely lagged behind that of either Berlin or Paris.<sup>8</sup> Polish jazz musicians routinely performed in clubs and concert halls across Poland. Jazz records were imported from America and Europe.<sup>9</sup> However, the initiation of German hostilities in September 1939 caused Polish music and culture to mostly be ignored as survival became paramount to Poles

<sup>7</sup> Tomasz Szachowski, "Polish Jazz," at Culture PL, [http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es\\_polski\\_jazz](http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es_polski_jazz) (accessed January 5, 2011). In his historical appreciation of Polish jazz, Szachowski asserts that the jazz movement in Poland has a long tradition, and that no date or event precisely defines its origin.

<sup>8</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, 197.

<sup>9</sup> Dionizy Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda* (Mosina, Poland: Alpim Press, 1993). Piatkowski documents the favored status of jazz in the interwar period (34). He also cites Poznań's "72 establishments with live swing music in the city's center" in the 1920s (143).

during World War II.<sup>10</sup> Polish musicians who played jazz before the war had little opportunity to perform during the German occupation. However, some young Poles were able to listen to German musicians playing jazz during this period. Alto saxophonist Jerzy “Dudus” Matuszkiewicz, raised in Lvov and co-founder of one of the seminal early post war jazz ensembles, the Melomani, remembers “listening to jazz being played by German musicians occupying Lvov, a sort of pseudo-jazz in the style of swing.”<sup>11</sup> Immediately after the war and up until 1948, jazz reasserted itself as a part of Polish life, as it had during the interwar period. Matuszkiewicz, along with other Polish musicians formed dance orchestras playing variations on swing music, often performing in hotels and restaurants.

Bass player Roman Dylag, a native of Krakow, started playing accordion right after the war and recalls his first exposure to jazz.

In 1947, our family purchased a small short wave radio and by scanning the frequencies, could pick up East German radio, which featured big bands doing Harry James arrangements. When I was ten, my older brother took me to an open jazz club built on the ruins of the YMCA; for me, this club was out of this world! Somehow, club members had borrowed radio transcription discs from the US Army and we were listening to Glenn Miller’s Orchestra. I quickly became hooked on jazz.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, immediately after World War II, jazz was connecting in a meaningful way with both a ten-year old music student, as well as with Matuszkiewicz, a budding professional saxophonist, thereby helping to set the stage for Poland’s own postwar jazz movement.

This rebirth of Polish jazz was short lived, however, as soon after the peace had been won, jazz in the Eastern bloc found itself targeted for repression. To provide a context for the efforts to suppress jazz in postwar Poland, it is useful to consider how and why the Soviet Union attempted to eliminate jazz and other Western influences from Soviet life.<sup>13</sup> On August 18, 1946, the Soviet government’s daily newspaper *Izvestia* attacked the music as an example of perverse Western vulgarity.<sup>14</sup> This was a dramatic change

<sup>10</sup> Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist* (New York: Picador Books, 2000). Szpilman vividly portrays the struggles of Poles during the occupation. The book was made into a film by Roman Polanski in 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Jerzy Matuszkiewicz, interview with author, August 5, 2007, Sopot, Poland. As many of the Polish artists cited in this article may be new to readers, the Appendix to this article includes short biographies of both the main Polish interview subjects and key Polish Cold War-era jazz musicians. The author would like to thank Pawel Brodowski, editor of *Jazz Forum*, who arranged for the interviews conducted in summer 2007 with a range of Polish jazz artists. Indispensable assistance was also provided by translators Aleksandra Wirkowska, Ewa Kobylarczyk, Anna Binkewicz, Joanna Royce-Davis, Sylwia Qualls, and video documentarian Anna Mielech. Jarek Kapucinski translated dozens of Polish contemporary reviews, while Jacek Szczpanek kindly assisted with research and additional translations of contemporaneous reviews of Brubeck’s tour accessed through University of Warsaw archives during the author’s visit to Poland.

<sup>12</sup> Roman Dylag, interview with author, August 4, 2007, Sopot, Poland. Throughout this article the term “jazz club” will generally refer to the various Polish jazz societies or jazz circles, a Polish network of social organizations dedicated to studying and fostering jazz performance.

<sup>13</sup> Although there has been extensive scholarly research published on the status of jazz in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, there has not been comparable documentation or analysis regarding postwar jazz in Poland. This article attempts to shed some light on the evolution of Polish jazz in the Cold War era.

<sup>14</sup> Cited on the sixtieth anniversary of that editorial on the broadcast of *The World*, Public Radio International, August 18, 2006, as heard at <http://www.theworld.org/node/3721> (accessed November 4, 2009).

of course for a government that had embraced jazz musicians as a vital part of the Soviet Union's efforts to win the war. S. Kenneth Starr has detailed how the status of jazz in the Soviet Union was transformed from a well-funded wartime government initiative, essential to helping maintain morale and a sense of unity among the millions of beleaguered soldiers and citizens, to a maligned and corrupting force seen as a part of a "sinister plot by the American government to break down local cultural resistance to American imperial expansion."<sup>15</sup> The change happened almost overnight, with no advance warning, as some jazz musicians were rounded up and sent to labor camps while dance bands were instructed to avoid playing any music that resembled popular jazz.<sup>16</sup> Faced with the challenge of moving from a wartime psychology of survival and sacrifice to a peacetime government that needed to reassert its absolute control, Stalin and the ruling elite attempted to stamp out jazz and other Western influences. In this way, they replaced the German threat with a much greater menace in the form of Western capitalism and imperialism. In Stalin's mind, such influences represented no less of a challenge to the Soviet way of life, and as such were targeted for repression.<sup>17</sup> Jazz along with many other forms of twentieth-century art and popular culture were decried as being unfit for consumption. Orchestrated by one of Stalin's closest advisors, Andrei Zhdanov, this cultural cleansing came to be referred to as the time of "Zhdanovshchina."<sup>18</sup>

As a result, the postwar resurgence of jazz in Poland came to a halt and jazz was cast as one of the enemies in the culture battles of the Cold War, a casualty in a much broader Soviet campaign to excise all foreign cultural influences throughout its spheres of influence. Classical composers faced similar repression as jazz musicians, including public censure of Russian composers such as Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Kabalevsky, and Aram Khachaturian; all of whom in prior years had been awarded the Stalin Medal for Achievement. Now, under Zhdanov, and assisted by composer Tikhon Khrennikov, Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, music and other cultural expression was subjected to a review process that resulted in overt censorship of many of the most popular art forms of that time. No standards of acceptability were published; instead, the cultural censors would respond to art on a case-by-case basis and make their

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<sup>15</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, 209. Starr notes that his work draws significantly on Alexei Batashev's comprehensive volume, *Soviet Jazz: An Historical Survey* (Moscow: Musica State Publishers, 1972). In particular, Starr's chapter, "The Sonic Backlash, 1945–1953" (204–234), in *Red and Hot*, provides a thoughtful and extensive interpretation why jazz and other art forms believed to be influenced by Western culture were attacked so vehemently by the Stalinists.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the most celebrated and best supported jazz musician in the Soviet Union during the War, trumpeter and band leader Eddie Rosner was rounded up, interrogated, tortured, and then sent to a labor camp, as an example of what would happen to anyone still performing jazz music at this time. Starr, *Red and Hot*, 199, 214.

<sup>17</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, 208. Starr documents the fact that Stalin introduced his strategy of depicting capitalism as the cause of the World War II, rather than as a result of German national socialism, in a speech given on February 9, 1946.

<sup>18</sup> Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 8–9. Tomoff places the Zhdanovshchina, the U.S.S.R.'s campaign to reassert stricter ideological discipline, especially in the arts, in the period 1946–1948. This was then followed by Stalin's continued efforts to root out all unwanted Western influences through anti-cosmopolitan campaigns designed to appropriately rebuild Soviet institutions.

decisions known. For those whose works incorporated non-approved influences, punishments ranged from being sent to forced labor camps to simply being prohibited from making any music at all.<sup>19</sup> Attacks on jazz continued unabated, with *Izvestia* identifying on June 5, 1947, the hundreds of jazz orchestras and small ensembles that had flourished across the Soviet Union during the war as “the place where vulgarity and banality flower.”<sup>20</sup>

By 1949, Stalin went one step further—one could argue veering into paranoia—and banned saxophones in the Soviet Union. Similar to the rounding up of the jazz musicians, one day every saxophonist in Moscow was instructed to report to the State Variety Music Agency with his instrument and identification card. Instruments were confiscated and musicians who walked in as a registered saxophonist walked out as oboists or bassoonists even if they had never touched that instrument.<sup>21</sup> Soviet authorities stepped up their attack on jazz, as recalled by Soviet musician Alexei Kozlov. He remembered that the authorities suggested, “It was just one step from playing jazz to murder. There was a saying at that time: ‘Today he plays jazz—tomorrow he betrays the nation.’”<sup>22</sup> The meaning of such slogans was clear: jazz was vulgar, perverse, and there was no place for it in Soviet society. The consequences for enjoying it in any form would be severe.

The efforts to purge jazz and other Western influences were not limited to the Soviet Union itself, however, as Khrennikov established a sort of traveling cultural inquisition to oversee arts in the satellite countries—including Poland—now under Soviet influence. For instance, while in Prague on a visit to review the appropriateness of Czech culture, Khrennikov decreed that the Communist party had “too long ignored the accessible genres of light music, handing them over to the ruinous influence of American jazz.”<sup>23</sup> During such visits, the authorities in Eastern bloc countries were told to stamp out jazz in their society. Such attacks aimed at what was then pejoratively termed “cosmopolitanism,” a phrase that referred to any culture that was not intrinsically Russian (sometimes termed Great Russian) in origin. This anti-cosmopolitanism campaign encouraged a chauvinistic, ecstatic praise for all things Great Russian while also coming to have blatantly anti-Semitic overtones.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 157–175. The author illustrates the complexities and ambiguities of this period for Soviet composers through his extensive reporting and analysis of the cultural tides that eddied around Soviet classical musicians. Tomoff argues that in addition to his work as a cultural censor, Khrennikov actually saved the careers of a number of musicians accused of cosmopolitanism (i.e., bowing to unapproved Western influences) or being of Jewish heritage, and as such should not be dismissed as a mere Stalinist puppet.

<sup>20</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, 213.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 216–217.

<sup>22</sup> “A Brave New World,” an episode of the Public Broadcasting Series *The People’s Century*, at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/episodes/bravenewworld/description.html> (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Starr, *Red and Hot*, 218.

<sup>24</sup> Gavriel D. Ra’anan, *International Policy Formation in the USSR: Factional Debates during the Zhdanovschina* (North Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1983), 54. The author makes a good case that the selection of certain people for persecution was often done as part of the battle for power between two of Stalin’s key lieutenants, Zhdanov and G. M. Malenkov, a battle eventually won by the latter.

## Jazz Goes Underground

Completely eliminating jazz from the Eastern-bloc proved to be beyond the control of the Stalinists, as the powerful transmitters of Radio Iran and Radio Luxembourg continued to beam American jazz broadcasts by the Voice of America across the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. Even in the context of the labor camps, the ban on performing jazz was challenged as some camp administrators, themselves jazz devotees, encouraged imprisoned groups of jazz performers to form ensembles, give regular performances, and to receive special privileges, including touring.<sup>25</sup> These were, however, rare exceptions to the overall policy of jazz censorship throughout Soviet-bloc countries. At the same time, young people's requests made to Soviet band leaders to play the jazz they had become accustomed to were routinely denied. Jazz fans responded by holding parties in their own homes so that they could dance to the accompaniment of a lone accordion, as such personal transgressions could not easily be monitored.<sup>26</sup> Jazz thus found a way to stay alive, albeit in private homes rather than in public.

Polish jazz was not exempt from such cultural attacks. As a young music student, Roman Dylag remembers the change in policy clearly:

Unfortunately, this period after the war when jazz was growing in popularity came to an end later in 1948 in Poland, because the [Soviet-influenced] Polish government convicted jazz for being a form of imperialistic propaganda. From this time until 1956, I didn't see one jazz record or a single piece of sheet music.<sup>27</sup>

Saxophonist Jerzy Matuszkiewicz recalled that the various YMCAs, which provided a venue for the appreciation and study of jazz, were closed down by the authorities. The YMCA branches in Warsaw, Lodz, Gdansk, and Krakow each previously had a lending library of jazz recordings which proved to be extremely popular among Poland's youth. As Matuszkiewicz noted, "In November 1949, state officials decided to close all the YMCAs in Poland. I soon heard ... that the authorities had destroyed all the records."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Polish leaders solidified their power and acted in accord with the dictates of Moscow, systematically attempting to root out all Western cultural influences. As was the case in the U.S.S.R., jazz persisted out of public view in various forms in Poland. Pianist, composer, and jazz organist, Krzysztof Sadowski, recalls that after his classical piano lessons, he and his teacher hid in his music school until everyone had gone home and then play jazz improvisations together.<sup>29</sup> Matuszkiewicz had a similar experience in his formal education: "At school I was required to play the clarinet in the classical style—but in private, I played the saxophone, because saxophone was

<sup>25</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 114–117.

<sup>26</sup> Tomoff, *Creative Union*, 159.

<sup>27</sup> Dylag, interview with author.

<sup>28</sup> Matuszkiewicz, correspondence with author, December 13, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Krzysztof Sadowski, interview with author, August 6, 2007, Warsaw, Poland. Sadowski is also President of the Polish Jazz Society today.

[then] an outlaw instrument in our world.”<sup>30</sup> Musician Andrzej Wroblewski recalled how the authorities made the issue of what music was allowable a topic for their city council:

During the late 1940s and early 1950s my brother (saxophonist Jan “Ptaszyn” Wroblewski) and I were growing up in Kalisz and played with our group for high school parties. This was the only place we could perform [jazz]. The matter of what music we played was actually taken up by the city council. The authorities would come during a school party to check the scores we were using asking us, “What is this dreadful stuff? Are these not imperialist scores?”<sup>31</sup>

Even though Polish jazz musicians attempted to keep a low profile, they regularly encountered attempts to censor jazz. Conveniently, the lack of familiarity with the jazz idiom by many of those chosen to suppress it allowed its practitioners the means to deny its Western origins. According to Matuszkiewicz,

Most of the militia men were musically uneducated and did not know what jazz was, nor could they recognize it. I remember one evening we were jamming and the neighbors called the militia for disturbing the peace. When the authorities arrived, they asked us if it was proper music we were playing, not some degenerate jazz. We, of course, answered that the jazz we were in fact playing was a Polish folk song.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to its broad appeal to Polish youth for its energy, complexity, and newness, the music also represented the desire for a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. To Polish jazz musicians, it represented ideas of free expression and the excitement of being nonconformist. As was the case in the Soviet Union, Polish jazz proved impossible to control.

From 1948–1954, a period Poles call the “catacomb” era, jazz musicians met discretely in private homes to play and experiment with jazz. One group, formed in 1947 of the hippest jazz players, came to dominate the hidden landscape of the Polish jazz underground. Dubbed the Melomani (“Music Lovers”), they played frequently at the Lodz YMCA, one of the places where jazz was alive in late 1940s Poland.<sup>33</sup> One of the original Melomani, Matuszkiewicz, recalls,

We were playing dance music for young people at parties [in and around Lodz], mostly Dixieland music, but we also played what I would term pure [contemporary]

<sup>30</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Piatkowski, *Time of Komedas*, 41. Andrzej Wroblewski was one of the founders of the Poznan jazz circle.

<sup>32</sup> Matuszkiewicz, correspondence with author, December 13, 2007. Roman Dylag remembered using the same ruse, and also mentioned how musicians routinely gave Polish names to American jazz standards to avoid censure. Dylag, interview with author.

<sup>33</sup> Cezary Lerski, “Polish Jazz for Dummies: 60 Years of Jazz from Poland,” at *All About Jazz*, <http://www.allabout-jazz.com/php/article.php?id=19122> (accessed January 5, 2011). Some of the Melomani members were also students at the Lodz Film School, and as a result some of Poland’s films from the mid-1950s onwards prominently featured jazz soundtracks. One of the best surviving examples is the film *Niewinni Czarodzieje* (“Innocent Sorcerers” P. P. Film Polski, 1960), which features as its protagonist a young medical student who plays jazz each night. Piatkowski further argues for the crucial role that YMCAs played in educating Poles about jazz, as these institutions “organized concerts, lectures by critics and events where the few records available were listened to.” Piatkowski, *Time of Komedas*, 12. (This influence occurred in the period before 1949, when the authorities cited earlier closed all YMCAs.)



jazz at private sessions. These underground sessions were dubbed catacombs, because their very existence was known to a very small group of people.<sup>34</sup>

Foreign jazz recordings were nearly impossible to get at this time, so they were smuggled into Poland, becoming prized possessions shared with the small circle of aficionados who came to see jazz expression as a blow against the dictates of the authorities.<sup>35</sup> A few Poles, such as noted director of cinematography Witold Sobocinski (then a film student in Lodz and an early Melomani), were able to secure underground taped recordings of jazz.<sup>36</sup>

An appreciation for how central jazz music was to the Polish intelligentsia's world view can be gained by considering the experience of author and literary critic Helena Zaworska. During the catacomb period, she was a young graduate student of literature and a devoted jazz fan. In order to indulge her passion, she recalled traveling a total of thirteen hours round trip by train to visit a friend in Krakow who owned a private jazz record collection. There she met with other jazz fans and listened for hours to records by Ella Fitzgerald, Errol Garner, and her own favorite, Dave Brubeck. Such records, which were not available commercially anywhere in Poland, had been sent by a family member who had emigrated to the U.S. At the last possible hour, Zaworska and her friends would return by overnight train to Warsaw and go directly to their jobs first thing Monday morning, with little rest.

Clearly jazz carried a great deal of importance in the lives of such young intellectuals. Zaworska outlined the role that jazz and Brubeck played in her own life and that of her peers:

Jazz and particularly Brubeck, took on the status of myth to us. What it represented was bigger than the music itself. By immersing ourselves in jazz recordings, we became independent during that hour, which was the only way to truly feel freedom at that time—through the music. There was really no hope of ever being able to travel, so jazz allowed us to dream, to retain some sense of idealism, because we thought the limits on our freedoms might last forever.<sup>37</sup>

Zaworska's attitude here demonstrates how Poland's disaffected intelligentsia embraced jazz as a tonic to the restrictive policies that limited their access not only to jazz recordings, but to Western books and films, while prohibiting any international travel. The pressures that built up due to such limits on intellectual and personal freedoms were often eased by private jazz sessions throughout Poland's cities during this time.

During the ban, supporting jazz became a subtle form of political resistance for both artists and free thinkers in Poland. Graphic artist Roslaw Szyabo provides another viewpoint into what jazz had come to represent to Poland's intellectuals: "It's a well known fact [in Poland] that jazz was a kind of protest against the stupidity of the

<sup>34</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author.

<sup>35</sup> "All That Jazz," *Warsaw Voice*, October 24, 2002, [www.warsawvoice.pl/view/111](http://www.warsawvoice.pl/view/111) (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Witold Sobocinski, interview with author, August 4, 2007, Sopot, Poland.

<sup>37</sup> Helena Zaworska, interview with author, August 1, 2007, Warsaw, Poland. Zaworska was an active participant in the jazz underground, whose own writings were censored.

times. By listening to jazz, we associated ourselves with the West and came to be in a way, untouchable.”<sup>38</sup> His membership in the jazz underground, along with that of Zaworska, was an indicator that people other than musicians were embracing jazz passionately, not only for the music itself, but also as a symbol representing what they themselves valued, the sense of individual expression expressed so clearly in jazz music.

As was the case in the Soviet Union, official party newspapers in Poland trumpeted familiar rhetoric during the catacomb period declaring jazz a corrupting influence that must be assiduously avoided. Jazz historian Dionizy Piatkowski cites the newspaper *Directly Speaking*, the weekly organ of the communist youth organization, which stated that,

The lack of ideals in the repertoire based on soul-less jazz cannot be tolerated. Funding of jazz ensembles therefore seems senseless or even harmful.... [T]he principal form of entertainment of the [pre-war] capitalist youth, particularly university students, was drunkenness and debauchery. In contrast, today, we dance to the tunes of an orchestra ... playing so many beautiful Soviet dance melodies.<sup>39</sup>

Echoes of Khrennikov and his dictates can be heard in such rhetoric, the purpose of which was to discourage any public performance or acceptance of jazz music in Poland. Such attitudes were not limited to the opinion pages of approved newspapers, however, as pianist and composer Andrzej Kurylewicz (another future Melomani) was expelled in 1954 from the Krakow Music Academy when it was discovered that he was guilty of playing jazz music.<sup>40</sup> Although making or listening to jazz music was forbidden, Poles continued to find ways to experience American jazz, whether it was listening to American jazz records in private, collecting bootleg tapes, or meeting secretly to play contemporary jazz.

By early 1954, the Polish jazz movement had attracted a broad base of the country's leading young artists and intellectuals, who imbued the music with a political meaning. Jerzy Matuszkiewicz sums up the feelings that jazz had come to represent in Poland:

At first we ([the] Melomani) were enamored with jazz for its musical qualities, then as time went by, our activities assumed more and more political implications. It's interesting that as jazz musicians, we were surrounded by others who were artistically inclined, writers, painters, film makers, actors, playwrights, theater directors, who saw in us the potential to be the first art form to surface and break free. They hoped they would then be able to follow us. Being supported and surrounded by the avant-garde gave us more confidence that our form of expression would be accepted. In time, our audience grew to include those who saw jazz expression as much more than

<sup>38</sup> Roslaw Szyabo, interview with author, July 31, 2007, Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Piatkowski, *Time of Komedas*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Wanda Warska, interview with author, August 1, 2007, Warsaw, Poland. Kurylewicz passed away in March 2007, however, his widow, jazz vocalist, Wanda Warska, attested to his expulsion. The fact of his expulsion is also noted on Kurylewicz's biographical citation on the Polish culture web site, [http://www.polmic.pl/index.php?option=com\\_mwosoby&view=czlowiek&id=39&lang=en](http://www.polmic.pl/index.php?option=com_mwosoby&view=czlowiek&id=39&lang=en) (accessed January 5, 2011).

a musical genre. Our music came to be equated both with free expression and as a form of revolution.<sup>41</sup>

As such statements make clear, jazz had become an important symbol of the desire young Poles had to freely express themselves through various art forms demonstrating that at least in Poland, the impact of jazz was substantial.

### Official Recognition of Jazz in Poland

At the same time that jazz had come to represent a cultural and political force in Poland, the restrictions on Polish jazz began to abate, due to changes within Poland's own leadership. After Stalin's death in 1953, and coinciding with the rise of a new leader of the communist party in Poland, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party, Wladyslaw Gomulko, a thaw of sorts began to ease restrictions on public performances of jazz.<sup>42</sup> Gomulko, a Polish nationalist, had been a member of the Polish underground during World War II, fighting the Nazis. After the war, he had been imprisoned during one of Stalin's purges. He had a streak of independence that resonated strongly with Polish citizens, and this trait further solidified his stature when he successfully challenged Soviet leaders during what came to be termed the "Polish October" of 1956.<sup>43</sup> Soviet and Polish negotiators met in Warsaw, and Gomulka's administration was able to secure concessions including a more hands-off policy towards Poland due to the very real threat of a large-scale popular uprising against the communist regime.

Although there were still a great many personal and intellectual restrictions, Poland's intelligentsia saw Gomulka's leadership as providing a type of "semi-freedom on behalf of those who have had no freedom in general for the last 16 years."<sup>44</sup> Under Gomulka's policies, Polish art and culture could advance, albeit in fits and starts, especially when compared to the strict censorship imposed by the Nazis and, after the war, the Stalin-backed Zhdanvoschina that had been extended to all Soviet-bloc countries. Rather than the strict black or white interpretation fostered by the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

<sup>41</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author. Piatkowski concurs, "It [jazz] was music, but not only music. It was most of all a sort of manifesto of cultural independence, maybe even a somewhat political manifesto that called for liberalization." Piatkowski, *Time of Komedas*, 40. See also Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 206. Richmond cites Soviet author Vasily Aksyonov's assertion that to Cold War-era Eastern Europeans, jazz was a platonic rendezvous with freedom.

<sup>42</sup> "All That Jazz," *Warsaw Voice*, 1. The University of Buffalo also hosts an excellent repository of Polish history lectures covering developments during the postwar period. See <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/web/history/socialism/link.shtml> (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> *Episode 7: After Stalin*, an interview with *New York Times* Warsaw correspondent, Flora Lewis, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-7/lowis2.html> (accessed January 5, 2011). Lewis was a reporter covering Poland at this time. Concurrently, the Soviets brutally repressed the Czech uprising, so Poles had some justification for respecting Gomulka's statesmanship.

<sup>44</sup> Andrzej Romanowski, "Giedroyc, or Poland" ("A Recollection on the Passing of Jerzy Giedroyc"), *Tygodnik Powszechny* ("Popular Weekly"), September 24, 2000, 1. Giedroyc was a historian and editor of the popular post-war publication *Kultura*. In this editorial, Romanowski argues that Giedroyc's 1956 endorsement of Gomulka's leadership ultimately benefitted the gradually emerging cause of freedom in Poland.

propaganda machines of the time, which painted the war on culture as being a clear choice for one ideology or another, Polish jazz began to navigate the shades of grey that represented various official political responses ranging from outright support, through indifference, to occasional limits on its performance and interpretation. Perhaps reflecting the often uneasy relationship between Warsaw and Moscow, Polish jazz found opportunities large and small over the next few years to further link artistry with free thought, in part because the rise and fall of political tensions between Warsaw and Moscow eventually overshadowed musical concerns in the post-Stalin era.

By November 1, 1954, this more favorable attitude toward jazz was made public. Saxophonist Matuszkiewicz recalled the inaugural Krakow All Soul's Days Jazz Festival, which represented the first legal gathering of jazz musicians from all parts of the country following the crackdown on jazz.<sup>45</sup> According to journalist Pawel Brodowski, this event signaled the end of the catacomb era and acceptance of jazz "above ground."<sup>46</sup>

The groundswell of support for jazz had now spread throughout Poland's major cities and included the formation of student jazz circles in each one. Historian Walter Hixson explains that the Polish communist party saw the efficacy of aligning the party's goals with the country's jazz movement. Thus, in 1955 they proclaimed that the "building of socialism proceeds more lightly and more rhythmically to the accompaniment of jazz."<sup>47</sup> Polish leaders saw advantage in distancing themselves from what had become the unpopular policy of restricting jazz. Their stance stood in stark contrast to Czech and Hungarian leaders who continued to refer to jazz as a "decadent Western disease" that promoted "hooliganism," as Richmond reports. Clearly, jazz would continue to be contested cultural territory throughout the Cold War era, at times, even in Poland, and most certainly in other Eastern-bloc countries.<sup>48</sup>

The next major milestone of the Polish jazz movement was an event in August 1956 that garnered headlines throughout Poland. As restrictions on jazz continued to be loosened, the first state-approved International Jazz Music Festival was planned for August 6–12 in the resort town of Sopot on the Baltic Sea, near the city of Gdansk. The international artists included the Dave Burman Jazz Group from England, and a

<sup>45</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author. This event was held over three days from October 31 to November 2, 1954. Matuszkiewicz recalled that he and the other participants paid musical tribute to artists that had passed away. The festival continues in Krakow today.

<sup>46</sup> Pawel Brodowski, interview with author, August 7, 2007, Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>47</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 117.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* Hixson also cites USIA efforts that tracked Soviet efforts to jam broadcasts of *Music USA*. An incident from a later jazz ambassador tour further illustrates how jazz was perceived in another Eastern bloc country. In 1970, Dave Brubeck was performing in Bucharest, Romania, on another State Department-sponsored tour. Iola Brubeck accompanied the group and remembered learning (from a symphonic bassist who had loaned Brubeck bassist, Jack Six, an instrument to use for their concert) that the reason that that night's audience was so subdued (when compared with other audiences in Europe) was that members of the secret police were situated throughout the hall. Their objective was to add the names of those who responded with too much enthusiasm to a list for more intensive surveillance. Iola herself was seated next to one such police observer: "He never responded to the music in any way and his eyes were not focused on the stage. Instead, his eyes were constantly searching [the audience] like the Secret Service men who accompany our president when he is in public. At the end of the concert, a number of young people rushed the stage to get autographs and speak to the Quartet members. We learned later that by doing so, they may have risked being admitted to university or consideration for a better job." Iola Brubeck, correspondence with author, February 10, 2009.

nine-piece band from Prague led by pianist Kamil Hala. This event marked a watershed in the evolution of Polish jazz, as an estimated audience of 30,000 jazz lovers came from all across Poland to participate.<sup>49</sup> Such a gathering would have been unthinkable just three years earlier. Saxophonist Jan “Ptaszyn” Wroblewski gives the context for what came to be referred to as the Sopot “Earthquake.”

We never dreamed of anything like a festival—a festival that was international. I had never played anywhere before other than at dance parties in Poznan, exclusively for my friends, the students. Tens of thousands of people came to Sopot from all over Poland. When the legendary parade on the Sopot promenade was happening, you could not squeeze a finger between the marchers. Twenty-four hours a day, there was a strange, wonderful atmosphere. People, free people were everywhere, on the streets, on the Sopot pier, on the beaches.<sup>50</sup>

The sheer size of the audience totally surprised the sleepy resort town and its burghers. Young people from all over Poland found their way to Sopot, overwhelming the city’s accommodations.<sup>51</sup> Conveniently the miles of beaches provided a perfect place for the jazz revelers to sleep.

Two images of the festival emerged from its New Orleans-style opening parade, which featured a symbolic coffin carried on the shoulders of those leading the march. On the one hand, jazz fans and musicians viewed it as a monumental event, with jazz taking over the resort community for seven days and nights of music making and revelry. However, to the region’s established authorities, the spirited young audience that attended the festival marked a break from the small resort town’s status quo, and as such became an easy target for criticism. Catacomb-era sentiments which demonized jazz as promoting “hooliganism” and other unsavory behaviors resurfaced almost immediately. Since so much of Polish jazz culture was an urban and youth phenomenon, it is plausible that such a reaction to the Festival’s boisterous public displays helped fuel the ensuing criticism. Whereas jazz was readily accepted in Warsaw and other major cities, its appearance in Sopot on such a grand scale must have threatened the sensibilities of many.

The Festival almost died at its outset as one of the first jam sessions, by members of the Melomani, drew so many attendees that according to Pawel Brodowski, the windows and a wall of the building were broken down by the jazz zealots. Local authorities immediately interrupted the performance, stating that the festival must not

<sup>49</sup> Attendance figures for the 1956 Sopot Festival were published in *Jazz 1957 Sopot Festival program*, Gdansk, 1957, 2. Also cited in Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda*, 45.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. A variation of this quote is also cited in “Polish Jazz: Freedom at Last,” at [http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es\\_jazz\\_polski\\_jazz\\_wreszcie\\_wolnosc](http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es_jazz_polski_jazz_wreszcie_wolnosc) (accessed January 5, 2011). The wonder and awe that Polish jazz musicians vividly convey today when discussing the first Sopot Festival is reminiscent of first person accounts of the 1969 Woodstock festival, especially those that refer to Woodstock as representing a societal change. For one comparative example, see Andy Bennett, *Remembering Woodstock* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 31.

<sup>51</sup> Pawel Brodowski, correspondence with author, June 30, 2008. In the months leading up to the 1956 Sopot Festival, Brodowski recalled that the popular weekly magazine *Przekroj* (“Profile”), ran editorials encouraging drivers headed toward the seaside region to give a free ride to young people traveling to the Sopot Jazz Festival. *Profile* held a place in Polish society similar to that of *Life Magazine* in the U.S.

continue as such behavior was completely unacceptable.<sup>52</sup> Zofia Komeda-Trzcinska was a co-organizer of the first Sopot festival and quickly intervened and promised that the organizers would manage the crowds more safely and effectively.<sup>53</sup> Sopot's authorities were persuaded and warily allowed the festival to continue.<sup>54</sup>

These activities, viewed as a coming-out party for jazz by its devotees, but looked on as a riot by those unfamiliar with the music, drew harsh rebukes. Such criticisms were justified to some degree when the destruction of property on the first day's events is considered. While the youthful participants adopted an almost bacchanalian response to the weeklong festival, arbiters of decency saw it as an assault on accepted norms of morality. The *Evening Express* editorialized, "Already during the opening concert of the festival ... the crowds broke down doors and windows and trampled on peaceful listeners. In parades scantily clad girls reigned carrying a sign glorifying the four letters—*dupa* [Polish slang for ass]."<sup>55</sup> The newspaper went on to lambaste the festival organizers, declaring that the organizers should be held responsible and that the scandal should be referred to a court for action.<sup>56</sup> Considered in a broader context, such criticism was likely focused more on the hedonistic youthful behaviors and destruction of property than any cultural or political meanings that jazz had acquired. Like counter-culture events around the world that followed in the footsteps of Sopot in the coming years, many arbiters of the status quo saw such behaviors as outrageous. It should be noted that no mention is made of the music itself in any of the editorials condemning the Festival. Similarly, no reference to the larger significance jazz had taken on as part of a cultural shift was made, showing that its symbolic connection to free expression was either unappreciated or, if the connection was made by those outside the jazz circles, such a connection no longer presented a threat to the party, and as such, deserved little attention.

That said, at least one critic did consider Sopot's meaning to Poles themselves and their identification to the music's origin, writing, "It turns out that this [jazz] is already our own, a hero 'made in Poland.'"<sup>57</sup> Jazz historian Dionizy Piatkowski agreed with this remark, stating that, "Although Polish jazz initially imitated American music, it soon developed its own unique sound and style, marked by the emergence of Komeda, Kurylewicz, and Trzaskowski."<sup>58</sup> This viewpoint certainly seemed to be more in step with the party's own endorsement of the Festival, which was the first such event staged in any Soviet-bloc country at that time. Rather than the forbidden fruit it represented

<sup>52</sup> Brodowski, interview with author.

<sup>53</sup> Z. Komeda-Trzcinska, interview with author, August 13, 2007, Warsaw, Poland. She was married to Polish jazz pianist, Krzysztof Komeda.

<sup>54</sup> Brodowski, interview with author.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda*, 12. The sparseness of some of the female jazz fan's attire at Sopot is also mentioned in "All That Jazz," *Warsaw Voice*, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda*, 17–18. Komeda, Kurylewicz, and Trzaskowski all performed at Sopot. Komeda's Sextet played in the style of contemporary American jazz, and were particularly influenced by both bebop and (to a greater extent) the West Coast cool style, as exemplified by Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, and Chet Baker. Kurylewicz and Trzaskowski each went on to lead various ensembles to acclaim throughout Europe.

during the catacomb era, jazz was now one more element of a reawakening of Polish culture. It was soon followed by other Polish artists, poets, film makers, and playwrights who gradually began to find their voices. "It [Sopot] was a big victory for us," concluded Jerzy Matuszkiewicz.<sup>59</sup>

Three events during the following year illustrated that jazz continued to expand its presence throughout Polish life and culture with the blessing of the authorities. As the cultural thaw proceeded, by April of 1957, a student's club featuring nightly performances of jazz opened in Warsaw named Club Hybrydy.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, the first Polish-originated jazz radio program was broadcast from the city of Szczecin, and soon after another originated in Warsaw.<sup>61</sup> The third event, the August 1957 Sopot International Jazz Festival, included two American performers, New Orleans clarinetist Albert Nicholas (backed by a Polish ensemble), and blues singer Big Bill Ramsey. Also of note, Sopot-57 included the first postwar invitation for German artists to perform in Poland. Their appearance marked the first German-Polish cultural exchange since 1933 when Hitler had come to power. Although the grim realities of the war were still evident in the rubble that still cluttered many Polish cities, the Joki Freund Quintet and the Albert Manglesdorff Swingtet were nonetheless warmly welcomed both on- and offstage by Polish jazz audiences, thereby further demonstrating how the Festival provided a platform for cultural détente and the sense that more normalized relations between the two former enemies might be achieved.

The popularity of jazz in Poland was duly noted by the U.S. mission in Warsaw and reported to Washington. As a result, the timing seemed propitious for a visit by one of America's prominent jazz ambassadors. A trail of communiqués cited by historian Lisa E. Davenport document the role that the arts were playing in the Cold War political effort. In April 1957, Edward Symans, the U.S. Press Attaché in Warsaw, reported the start of discussions for a visit to Poland by an American jazz orchestra with Pagart, the Polish State Artist's Agency. In his correspondence to Washington, Symans pointed to the success of the 1955 State Department-sponsored visit to Warsaw and Katowice of the touring company of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and argued that more cultural exchanges be arranged to "enhance U.S. prestige and engender sympathy for the United States in the region." Another U.S. official in Poland had suggested a Dixieland jazz band for an appearance at the 1957 Sopot Jazz Festival, and this proposal was approved

<sup>59</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author. For further documentation on the Sopot Jazz Festival, consult *Jazz Forum* magazine's Polish language reproductions of the original 1956 and 1957 Sopot programs as part of that magazine's August 2006 and 2007 fiftieth anniversary commemorative issues. These reissues also included CD recordings of the 1956 and 1957 festival performances. Copies of these recordings and programs were kindly shared with the author by Pawel Brodowski.

<sup>60</sup> Krzysztof Sadowski, interview with author. Krzysztof Wilski (a Polish jazz writer and retired diplomat), correspondence with author, November 29, 2007. Wilski corroborated the Club's opening date was in April. An article by Arthur J. Olsen, "That Jazz in Warsaw; Red Election Talk Draws Thin Crowd As Jam Session Below Packs Them In" (*New York Times*, March 25, 1961, p. 3), characterized the jazz Club Hybrydy nearly four years after its opening as a "student cellar that offers a postage-stamp size dance floor, a four-piece combo and bad Bulgarian wine."

<sup>61</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 117. Stanislaw Modelski, interview with author, August 3, 2007, Sopot, Poland. Modelski, a Szczecin musician and broadcaster, hosted Poland's first sanctioned postwar jazz radio show. At its outset, he had so few recordings available that he was forced to read passages from a book about jazz for lengthy portions of each broadcast.

by the Polish Ministry of Culture. The communiqué went on to state, “The [Polish] Minister [also] suggested a small American jazz combo.”<sup>62</sup> Diplomatic requests for a small American contemporary jazz group soon focused on Dave Brubeck’s Quartet, an outfit that by this time had earned critical acclaim in much of the world. In a communiqué dated November 7, 1957, an embassy official in Czechoslovakia making recommendations for an ensemble to tour that country noted the popularity of Brubeck. That same official went on to urge that “the United States underscore Brubeck’s background in classical music, for both the curious and knowledgeable showed great interest in Brubeck’s jazz.”<sup>63</sup> By December 30, 1957, a letter from Brubeck’s New York booking agency to his manager confirmed that he would embark on a two-week tour of Poland, which would likely be followed up by visits to other countries on behalf of the State Department.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the stage was set for Brubeck’s initial tour as a jazz ambassador.

### America’s Leaders “Discover” Jazz

In order to better understand the role that the jazz ambassadors played in American foreign policy, it is useful to review the process of how American leaders came to incorporate the music in their Cold War strategy. By the 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made the decision to utilize cultural diplomacy as a key fourth element of his foreign policy, alongside the nation’s political, economic, and military efforts. The concept of using uniquely American art forms as unofficial “ambassadors” for the United States was developed by the Eisenhower administration as a strategic response to the Cold War conflict.<sup>65</sup> Eisenhower himself was cited as understanding “the importance of information and culture, both during the Second World War and during his presidency.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz, Race, and American Cultural Exchange: An International Study of US Cultural Diplomacy, 1954–1968*, vol. 1 (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2002), 138. No American jazz ensemble appeared at the 1957 Sopot Festival, although as noted earlier, two American soloists, Albert Nicholas and Big Bill Ramsay did perform with Polish bands. Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 4) points out that the *Porgy and Bess* tour was kept on the road for four continuous years by the Eisenhower administration, in part as an attempt to counter the fact (continually raised by the Soviets) that blacks were persecuted in America.

<sup>63</sup> Davenport, *Jazz, Race, and American Cultural Exchange*, 137.

<sup>64</sup> Frances Church, letter to Mort Lewis of December 30, 1957, Brubeck Collection, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA, I.A.1.59. (Hereafter cited as “Brubeck Collection.”) The author gratefully acknowledges the tireless assistance of the staff of the Holt-Atherton Special Collections, which includes Shan Sutton, Michael Wurtz, and Trish Richards. Their extensive knowledge of the various holdings in the Collection has been an invaluable resource in the author’s research.

<sup>65</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 1–27. Hixson provides the background on Eisenhower’s decision to wage a cultural battle which relied heavily on jazz as a central element of U.S. Cold War strategy.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. This quote is attributed to Edward Barrett, former editor of *Newsweek* who became Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs in 1950 under President Truman, and was given the task of assessing Eisenhower’s grasp of culture and propaganda. Although Eisenhower rightfully deserves credit for embracing the export of jazz as a diplomatic stratagem, Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 6–7) points out that the very first jazz ambassador tour in 1956 by Dizzy Gillespie was originally suggested by civil rights activist and Harlem Congressman, Adam Clayton Powell.



One of the high-profile initiatives of this era sent American jazz artists such as Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and many other musicians to perform around the world, with the stated goal of improving America's international image. Although some members of Congress felt that exporting jazz was ill-advised, Eisenhower's commitment to exporting jazz and its most noted American practitioners moved ahead.<sup>67</sup> Another facet of Eisenhower's plan was the so-called "People-to-People" citizen diplomacy initiatives which made significant and lasting impressions that helped to raise attitudes in Eastern-bloc countries as to the value and quality of American culture.<sup>68</sup> This agenda included both cultural and educational exchange programs between East and West.

The formation of the United States Information Agency (USIA), which initiated the majority of the Cold War educational and cultural exchange programs, was done at President Eisenhower's explicit direction in 1953. Although the USIA was technically under the umbrella of the State Department, it was allowed to have its own director, who reported directly to the President.<sup>69</sup> Beginning in 1949 with a European tour of *Hamlet*, a growing number of American artists toured Europe, Africa, and Asia under the overall sponsorship of the State Department.<sup>70</sup> A sign of the growing status of cultural exchanges can be traced to August 1, 1956, when the President's Special International Program was authorized by Congress. This program provided funding specifically for art and cultural tours by American artists. Supervised by the State Department, the program's staff began with the expansive goal of exporting what at that time was deemed best in all forms of American art. They quickly found that jazz was not only one of America's most popular commodities, but that it was the art form most frequently acknowledged by American foreign missions as being recognized around the world as uniquely American. Importantly, the Soviets had no ready response to counter the styles and attitude of jazz or its greatest artists. It was this advantage that lent this music's greatest strategic value to the State Department. Jazz was also believed to provide a needed tonic to the somber mood found across much of

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<sup>67</sup> Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 40–41) details the attempts by certain members of Congress to derail Eisenhower's jazz ambassador program while also pointing out that the integrationist agenda promoted by such tours was hidden in part from conservative audiences at home by these tours "export only" status, a characteristic shared with the Voice of America broadcasts.

<sup>68</sup> Throughout this article, the phrase "People-to-People" is used to broadly define the key tenets of President Dwight Eisenhower's cultural diplomacy strategies. This particular phrasing is used to differentiate the Eisenhower strategies from People to People International, a non-profit organization that was dedicated to enhancing "international understanding and friendship through educational, cultural and humanitarian activities involving the exchanges of ideas and experiences directly among peoples of different countries and diverse cultures." The People to People Program government office, founded in 1956 by presidential order, was privatized in 1961, and today the program remains an active non-governmental organization promoting international exchanges. See the People to People International website, "History," at [http://www.ptpi.org/about\\_us/History.aspx](http://www.ptpi.org/about_us/History.aspx) (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 25–27.

<sup>70</sup> With respect to the logistics of State Department-sponsored cultural exchanges, the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA) handled day-to-day operations. ANTA provided the formal liaison for international cultural exchanges with the various foreign agencies that officially hosted American performers in their respective countries. ANTA also provided strict guidelines for how artists should act while overseas representing the cultural exchange program. According to Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 126), in 1963, the USIS took over all aspects of the tours, eliminating ANTA's role in the jazz ambassador tours.

Europe in the devastation that persisted after World War II. For these reasons, jazz became the signature cultural export of the Cold War era.<sup>71</sup>

Eisenhower continued to actively build the public profile for international exchange programs. On September 11, 1956, he further formalized educational and cultural exchange efforts by authorizing the People-to-People initiative to promote a broad range of cultural and educational exchanges.<sup>72</sup> The People-to-People moniker neatly encapsulated the way Eisenhower's strategy worked: one-on-one exchanges of ideas with a citizen from another culture. To many musicians, Dave Brubeck recalled, "the phrase 'People-to-People' became a catchword, used to describe cultural exchange and citizen diplomacy efforts started during the Eisenhower era."<sup>73</sup>

The use of jazz was not limited to tours, however, as broadcasts by the Voice of America made jazz a daily staple across much of the world during this time. The Voice of America (VOA) had inaugurated its service on July 13, 1942, broadcasting news and war aims twenty four hours a day as part of the Office of War Information.<sup>74</sup> By 1947, VOA began broadcasting foreign language programming consisting of fifteen minutes of news followed by "typical American music and discussions of the various problems of life in America and how we are attempting to solve them."<sup>75</sup> Over time, a careful study of the response to VOA programming by U.S. embassies led U.S. officials to conclude that music, particularly jazz, was a powerful force that was effectively helping to build new audiences beyond the Iron Curtain.<sup>76</sup>

Following the suggestion of the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Charles Bohlen, a new nightly jazz radio program titled *Music USA* was initiated. VOA chose a knowledgeable Washington, D.C.-based jazz broadcaster named Willis Conover to host the hour-long program.<sup>77</sup> Beginning on January 6, 1955, Conover's broadcasts, which went out continuously for 40 years, started each evening with the strains of Billy Strayhorn's iconic composition "Take the A Train," followed by Conover's mellifluous and precisely enunciated call, "Time for Jazz!" At its peak, an audience estimated at 100 million people

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<sup>71</sup> Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 1–20) provides a broad overview of the emerging role of jazz in Cold War diplomatic strategy in the early 1950s.

<sup>72</sup> People to People International, "History."

<sup>73</sup> Dave Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*, an unpublished autobiography co-authored with Iola Brubeck, n. d. The author wishes to sincerely thank Dave and Iola Brubeck for sharing portions of this book manuscript and for graciously answering the author's many inquiries regarding the events documented in this article.

<sup>74</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 115, and Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 8. Von Eschen cites jazz critic Leonard Feather's pioneering but short-lived *Jazz Club USA* broadcasts of 1952 over VOA as early evidence of the growing awareness of the value of jazz in the Cold War. Leonard Feather, *The Jazz Years* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 199. Feather wrote that, during a 1962 visit to the Soviet Union, he learned that his 1952 *Jazz Club USA* broadcasts had generated a lively exchange in bootlegged tapes of his pioneering jazz program.

<sup>77</sup> Hixson (*Parting the Curtain*, 115–116) attributes the suggestion to Bohlen, an expert on Russian affairs. He also cites various Department of State correspondence beginning in 1954, and argues that jazz was proving itself to be an effective instrument for positive American propaganda. Through the course of the author's interviews conducted with Polish and Russian jazz musicians, many referred to *Music USA* either as the *Jazz Hour* or with the simple one-word descriptor most Polish musicians use today to recall these broadcasts: "Willis." During the course of the author's 2007 visit to Poland, it became clear that Polish jazz musicians and aficionados felt an almost paternal connection with Conover, and they continue to hold him in their memories in the highest possible esteem.

heard *Music USA*. The show was rebroadcast regionally to air each evening after the dinner hour. Ironically, due to a law prohibiting any domestic use of VOA programs, Conover's shows were never aired in the U.S.<sup>78</sup> American jazz struck deep, responsive chords beyond the Iron Curtain, where an estimated nightly audience of 30 million listeners tuned in. Importantly, no pro-American or anti-Communist propaganda of any sort was ever explicitly incorporated into Conover's actual broadcasts. Instead, the *Music USA Jazz Hour* broadcasts were appreciated by its listeners for the artistry on display as well as the individualism expressed by its featured performers.<sup>79</sup>

As jazz became an effective propaganda tool for the State Department, the music was appreciated on various levels by *Music USA*'s global audience.<sup>80</sup> For aspiring jazz musicians, the broadcasts provided a means to learn jazz styles and arrangements. The Polish artists interviewed for this article frequently cited *Music USA* as being instrumental in their own Cold War jazz education. "The only contact we had with contemporary jazz was the [*Music USA*] hour with Willis Conover. This was our real jazz academy," recalled bassist Roman Dylag.<sup>81</sup> Alto saxophonist Zbigniew Namyslowski elaborates further, "Jazz blew in [on the airwaves] from America and we adored it. Conover really taught us what jazz is and how it sounds, [and] the theories of jazz."<sup>82</sup> In addition to his role as a de facto music teacher, Conover was viewed as a celebrity in his own right in Poland. When he visited there in 1959, jazz aficionado and photographer Marek Karewicz recalled,

Crowds of Conover's fans went to greet him at the airport. Warsaw jazzmen, about thirty of them from Club Hybrydy and Stodola with their instruments, were all playing "When the Saints Go Marching In." When his limo left the airport, an escort of scooters followed him to the downtown area. A special concert was organized in his honor the next night at the National Philharmonia Hall.<sup>83</sup>

To his diverse audience, Conover became a trusted companion through his nightly broadcasts. They showed their loyalty to the program by forming listener clubs in 94 countries.<sup>84</sup> He meticulously built each show's play list from his own collection of thousands of jazz records and introduced the Dave Brubeck Quartet to *Music USA*'s global audience. From its inception, Brubeck's music appears to have been a staple of

<sup>78</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 115. Also Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 13–17, and "Willis Conover Dead at 75; Aired Jazz at the Soviet Bloc," *New York Times*, May 19, 1996, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> Richmond (*Cultural Exchange*, 207) cites the popularity of Conover's program in the U.S.S.R. and provides an anecdote related by V. Aksyonov, which shows that the program was not approved by the authorities. "We taped [Conover's] music on antediluvian recorders, and played it over and over at semi-underground parties, which often ended in fistfights with Komsomol patrols or even police raids."

<sup>80</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 16–17.

<sup>81</sup> Dylag, interview with author.

<sup>82</sup> Zbigniew Namyslowski, interview with author, August 5, 2007, Sopot, Poland.

<sup>83</sup> Marek Karewicz, *Jam Session*, Special Polish Program Insert, Summer 2009, Warsaw Poland, 4.

<sup>84</sup> In an undated typewritten autobiographical summary extant in his personal papers, Conover cited the more than 1,600 *Music USA* clubs that had been started in 94 countries and whose membership numbered 25,000. Each chapter received a personalized bimonthly newsletter from Conover. Willis Conover Collection, University of North Texas Music Library, Denton, TX, Box 126 (hereafter "Conover Collection"). The author would like to thank Morris Martin and the staff of the University of North Texas Music Library, which houses the Conover Collection, for their generous advice and assistance during my visit to the Collection.

the programs.<sup>85</sup> Although the precise date that Brubeck's music first aired on *Music USA* is unclear, within a year of the show's inception, Conover dedicated an entire hour to Brubeck's composition and improvisation in a November 1955 broadcast that also featured an extensive taped interview with Brubeck.<sup>86</sup>

By 1956, Eisenhower's administration had constructed a menu of cultural diplomacy offerings that came to include jazz and theatrical tours, bound together by nightly VOA broadcasts of American popular and jazz music. The first jazz ambassador to venture abroad on behalf of the USIA was Dizzy Gillespie, who toured the Middle East in 1956, while Benny Goodman performed in South East Asia for the State Department in the winter of 1956–1957. The Dave Brubeck Quartet's tour was the third in what became a long-running effort by U.S. diplomats to utilize jazz as an instrument of foreign relations. Citizen diplomacy, branded as the People-to-People initiative, was integrated into the artists' State Department-sponsored tours through scheduled social interactions, a fact made clear by Brubeck's 1958 Polish tour.<sup>87</sup>

The USIA-segment of Brubeck's tour lasted from March 5 to May 11, 1958, and covered a wide swath of the globe from Poland to India returning through the heart of the Middle East.<sup>88</sup> After thirteen performances in Poland, the group then toured seven other countries, including Turkey, India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), East and West Pakistan (now Pakistan and Bangladesh), Afghanistan, Iran, and finally, Iraq.<sup>89</sup> In light of the tour's route, it is important to note that one of the tenets of American Cold War diplomacy was the concept of the firm and vigilant containment of the Soviet threat, leading to the eventual goal of the hoped-for disintegration of the communist

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<sup>85</sup> Iola Brubeck, letter to Willis Conover, dated April 8, 1958, wherein she states "I know that the tremendous success of our appearances in Poland can be attributed largely to your constant use of Dave's records on your Voice of America program." Brubeck Collection, I.C.1.20.

<sup>86</sup> *Music USA*, Tape 357-B, Voice of America, transcription recording (November 11, 1955). Conover Collection.

<sup>87</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 27. In *A Time to Remember*, Dave Brubeck recalled the vetting process for any artists being considered for overseas cultural exchanges as being extremely rigorous with at least five separate U.S. agencies doing evaluations before the foreign host countries would then initiate their own investigation of prospective jazz ambassadors.

<sup>88</sup> I am indebted to fellow researcher, Stephen A. Crist, who kindly shared a pre-publication draft of his article "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics" which looks at both Brubeck's 1958 State Department tour as well as Brubeck's involvement in the historic 1988 Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting in Moscow in the overall context of Cold War cultural policy. The article has subsequently been published in the *Journal of Musicology* 26 (Spring 2009): 133–174.

<sup>89</sup> The number of Polish concerts has on occasion been misreported as twelve (see Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 50; and Piatkowski, *Time of Komeda*, 68) due to the fact that an unscheduled performance was added on the Quartet's day off in Warsaw because of unprecedented public demand. This additional performance was held at the city's largest venue, the Stalin-built Palace of Culture. A contract was drawn up using hotel stationery on the spot and executed by Polish tour manager Adam Cung and Iola Brubeck for a flat fee of 8,000 zlotys. The proceeds from the thirteenth concert were designated to offset the costs of Brubeck's family joining him in Poland (estimated at 7,840 zlotys by Iola Brubeck) and evidenced by a rider drawn up on March 12 by Pagart's director, Wacław Budziszewski. Brubeck Collection, I.A.2.29. The unplanned March 12, 1958, concert sold out in a matter of a few hours as Polish jazz fans spread the word of the added opportunity to hear the group. This improvised contract is extant in the Brubeck Collection, I.B.3.9. Perhaps further clouding the question of how many performances were given, a settlement sheet prepared and signed at the end of the two-week Polish tour by Adam Cung, the Pagart tour manager, lists only twelve concerts with the net proceeds scheduled to be turned in to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw by Cung. Brubeck Collection, I.B.3.14. (The Quartet earned a guarantee of \$4,000 a week from the State Department. Any income from their performances was remitted to each local embassy.)

system.<sup>90</sup> Brubeck's so-called round-the-world tour itinerary, set up by the USIA, mirrored this policy directly as the tour skirted the borders of both the Soviet Union and China.<sup>91</sup> "When we finally saw our itinerary clearly we were [almost] making a circle around the Soviet Union," Brubeck noted. "From the State Department's point of view, our mission was one more front in the Cold War ... I preferred to think of our music as an instrument of peace, rather than a Cold War weapon."<sup>92</sup>

Each of the Asian states Brubeck toured had a significant Muslim population, and Penny Von Eschen provides numerous examples of the politically charged atmosphere that greeted the group in certain countries, mentioning the group's stay in India at "the heavily guarded home of an American official," a situation which led Brubeck to anxiously wonder why such extreme security measures were necessary.<sup>93</sup> On May 2, when Brubeck played in Kabul, Afghanistan, he was surprised to learn that much of the audience was made up of Russian officers, engineers, and development workers who were working to build infrastructure throughout the country at that time.<sup>94</sup> The final countries on the tour, Iran and Iraq, were both countries where America had strong interests due to their strategic location and oil supplies. In Baghdad, during the tour's final stop, Brubeck clearly recalled feeling a foreboding sense of danger throughout the city. A few weeks later, after the group had flown back to the U.S., the same hotel the group had stayed in was the scene of a bloody coup led by General 'Abd al-Karim Quassim that resulted in regime change followed immediately by a decline in American influence in Iraq.<sup>95</sup> Thus, it can be seen that the jazz ambassadors were often sent directly to areas contested in the Cold War struggle. Indeed, a review of Cold War jazz ambassador tour itineraries might be considered a type of unofficial means to rank the relative importance of those countries to U.S. foreign interests at the time of a particular tour.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 12. U.S. diplomat and scholar, George F. Kennan, is generally considered the architect of the containment strategy.

<sup>91</sup> Fred C. Hall, *It's About Time: The Dave Brubeck Story* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press 1996), 75. Hall refers to the tour as "The Dave Brubeck Quartet's Great World Tour."

<sup>92</sup> Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*.

<sup>93</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> Dave Brubeck correspondence with author, February 26, 2008. This fact underscores yet another aspect of the Cold War struggle as both the Soviet Union and the U.S. invested in extensive international aid and infrastructure programs to help win foreign leaders over to their way of thinking.

<sup>95</sup> Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 49–56) carefully explains how jazz was used to project U.S. values abroad. The State Department's close ties to the oil industry are clearly demonstrated by viewing the program from Brubeck's Abadan, Iran concert. It shows the Iranian Oil Refining Company as the co-presenter of the concert with the U.S. Information Service. Brubeck Collection, L.F.I.7.

<sup>96</sup> Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 241–245) takes this analysis one step further when she documents how certain artist itineraries were used as attempts to repair specific American foreign policy blunders. She cites an example from 1975 and dubs that effort "culture as damage control." Then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger supported South African-backed rebels in Angola, as well as incursions by white South African troops across the border in support of white settler rights. Reaction by African nations against this U.S. policy was so vehement that the Junior Wells-Buddy Guy Blues Band spent six weeks touring West and Central Africa to help restore America's damaged image. Iola Brubeck satirized the reliance by statesmen on jazz ambassadors during crises in a lyric from *The Real Ambassadors* musical she wrote with her husband and which was strongly influenced by the 1958 tour. The lyric remarks, "When they call us vermin/We send in Woody Herman/That's what I call cultural exchange," as heard in the track, "Cultural Exchange," on Dave Brubeck, *The Real Ambassadors*, Columbia CK 57663, 1994, compact disc (orig. Columbia, 1962).

Entering Poland proved to be one of the most problematic aspects of the entire 1958 tour. Although the Brubecks had followed all the proper advice given by the State Department to obtain the necessary travel visas for their entourage, as the date to depart for Poland neared, Iola Brubeck, charged with securing the all-important visas, had gotten nowhere. She noted, "I spent hours in every [west European] city we played waiting in lines without getting the necessary visas. In retrospect, the State Department might not have approved of the entire family joining the Quartet behind the Iron Curtain."<sup>97</sup>

During a radio interview in Stockholm, Dave Brubeck mentioned that his wife and children had been unable to secure travel visas to accompany him to Poland. Once the issue was made public in the media, he received a call from the Polish mission that resulted in a car being sent, where after the family was whisked to the Polish embassy and the necessary papers were quickly arranged.<sup>98</sup> Shortly after receiving the Polish visas for the non-performers, Brubeck received a telegram in Berlin which ended with the terse command, "No more tricks."<sup>99</sup> Such a message highlights the fact that although no State Department personnel traveled with the tour, the Quartet's activities were being closely scrutinized by U.S. authorities.

Rather than flying directly from Stockholm to Warsaw, the tour was first routed to West Berlin on March 5, where it turned out the Quartet and family were advised by a U.S. Embassy official that they needed additional documents to travel via train across East Germany to the Polish frontier.<sup>100</sup> In an ironic twist, typical of Cold War travel restrictions, documents allowing the transit of East Germany could only be acquired in East Berlin. Brubeck was appointed to travel by car to the necessary office across the border into East Berlin to secure these travel documents. Brubeck's West German concert promoter, Clara Gunderloch, offered the use of her car and driver. As a well-known impresario, she had the privilege of traveling back and forth through the heavily guarded Brandenburg Gate at will. On the afternoon of March 5, Gunderloch instructed Brubeck to get into the trunk of the car, which he refused to do, rightly believing that if he was discovered hiding, he would likely be jailed. Instead, he nervously rode in the backseat determined to secure the necessary transit documents to begin the USIA-sponsored tour. Gunderloch's car was promptly waved through the

<sup>97</sup> Dave and Iola Brubeck, interview with author and Shan Sutton, January 29–30, 2007, Sanibel Island, FL. Portions of these interviews may be accessed online at <http://digitalcollections.pacific.edu/ha/digital/brubeckoral-history> (accessed January 5, 2011), courtesy of the Brubeck Collection. Additionally, a gallery of images from the 1958 State Department tour held in the Collection may be viewed at <http://library.pacific.edu/ha/digital/brubeck1958/index.asp> (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>98</sup> The speedy resolution of the Polish visa problem illustrates how press scrutiny can influence diplomacy, and supports the idea that earlier efforts to secure the travel visas for the entourage's non-performers had likely not been sanctioned by the State Department. Once the local press took up the issue as a cause célèbre, the Polish delegation had no other option than to grant the request immediately or face a diplomatic black eye.

<sup>99</sup> Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*; also cited in Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 49.

<sup>100</sup> Based on readings of Hall, *It's About Time*; Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*, and miscellaneous documents in the Brubeck Collection, the time of the East Berlin visa acquisition must have been late on the afternoon of March 5. The train crossing of East Germany occurred on the night of March 5–6, arriving in Szczecin at 5 a.m. on March 6, after a five-hour journey from the frontier in an unheated bus. The first Polish concert was the night of March 6, as corroborated by documents in the Brubeck Collection, 1.D.6.6.

checkpoint at Brandenburg Gate and Brubeck was soon deposited outside the police station where he was to secure the papers. After waiting the rest of the afternoon while the large hall he was in emptied, a man in a rumpled coat finally approached Brubeck and after a somewhat confusing and protracted verbal exchange, which was hampered by a language barrier, the man handed over the all-important transit documents.<sup>101</sup>

Shortly after exiting the building, Brubeck was picked up by Gunderloch's circling driver and brought back to West Berlin to rendezvous with the entire tour party. After the uncertainty of that afternoon, the re-transit of the Brandenburg Gate began, with the whole entourage embarked on a frenzied dash to make their night train in East Berlin. They traveled through the night, being woken repeatedly by armed soldiers who spoke no English demanding to inspect their papers and musical instruments. Eventually, they arrived on the border with Poland sometime after midnight on March 6, 1958.<sup>102</sup>

The tour entourage, which included drummer Joe Morello and his wife, Ellie, along with the Brubecks' two oldest sons, Darius (11) and Michael (9), wife Iola, plus alto saxophonist Paul Desmond and bassist Eugene Wright, was met in the middle of the night at the frontier between East Germany and Poland by Adam Cung of Pagart, the Polish State Artists Agency. He had procured a dilapidated bus with gaping holes in the floorboards to shuttle them to the first stop on the tour, Szczecin. Here they met Roman Waschko, who would act as emcee for eleven of the group's thirteen Polish concerts, consulting with the group to prepare commentary to add between each song to give the Polish audience the context for each night's repertoire.<sup>103</sup> Most of their arrivals in Polish cities happened by train in the dead of night, due to the late hour they completed performing and socializing after the concerts. At many of the whistle stops, the group was welcomed by small contingents of Polish fans as well as musicians (who often welcomed the group by playing a jazz melody). In a letter to his friend Mort Sahl, Paul Desmond wrote, "Arriving at Szczecin at 6 a.m., met by cluster of jazz fans that stayed up all night to help with luggage. At the train station in Krakow at 5 a.m., were chicks with flowers and a three-piece band playing 'Westwood Walk.'"<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> It appears that the only name this unnamed East German functionary was given for Brubeck was "Mr. Coolu," the moniker he was assigned in the headline of a Polish advance story promoting the upcoming Quartet's concert. This functionary produced that same newspaper story which featured a photo of Brubeck, helping to bridge the language barrier and leading to recognition on Brubeck's part that he was indeed, the very same Mr. Coolu (which translates from Polish as "Master of Cool"). The original clipping was headlined, "Mistrz Coolu," and published in the Lodz *Głos Robotniczy* ("The Worker's Voice"), February 21, 1958. Brubeck Collection, 1E.1.A.8.

<sup>102</sup> Dave and Iola Brubeck, interview by author and Shan Sutton. Hall (*It's About Time*, 73-77) provides an extended narrative of the night crossing into Poland. The transit is also described in Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*.

<sup>103</sup> Waschko was one of the most knowledgeable and respected writers on jazz in Poland, with a weekly jazz column in a Warsaw daily newspaper. He also authored the first authoritative book on jazz published in postwar Poland, *Jazz: Od Fronu i od Kuchni* ("Jazz: Up Front and Behind the Scenes" Warsaw: Polish Music Press, 1962).

<sup>104</sup> Doug Ramsey, *Time Out: The Life and Times of Paul Desmond* (Seattle: Parkside Press, 2005), 200. "Westwood Walk" was a Gerry Mulligan composition; Ralph J. Gleason, "Mr. Coolu Got a Warm Polish Reception," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1958, n. p.; an expanded version of Gleason's article also appeared in *Downbeat*, July 10, 1958, 14, 42-43; Russ Wilson, "Goodwill Envoys Home from Trip Behind Iron Curtain," *Oakland Tribune*, April 6, 1958, p. B-15. Brubeck Collection, 1E.1.A.8.

The fact that the Quartet was an integrated group—due to the last minute substitution of Eugene Wright for Norman Bates—provided the Poles with an example of a form of racial equality within the context of one jazz ensemble.<sup>105</sup> The members of the Quartet ate together and spent hours traveling together. Each member shared his ideas freely with the Poles they encountered. Nonetheless, these facts did little to alter foreign perceptions about racial discrimination at home. Such perceptions were true and had been publicly substantiated a few months earlier by no less a jazz personage than Louis Armstrong.<sup>106</sup>

**Table 1** Polish Itinerary for the Dave Brubeck Quartet's 1958 State Department-sponsored tour of Poland. Jazz ambassadors such as the Dave Brubeck Quartet kept up a hectic pace while on such tours, especially when the additional time devoted to travel and People-to-People interactions is considered. The March 12 concert was added in Warsaw in order to meet public demand on what had been planned as a day off for the group. On the evening of March 14, 1958, after the main concert, the group went to a local jazz night-spot, Club Rotondo, to listen to and participate in a jam session that lasted until 3 a.m. the next morning. Most other nights, the group met with Poles after each concert before boarding trains late in the evening for their next destination.

Date	City	Description
March 5–6, 1958	West Berlin	Leave for night transit of East Germany via train
March 6	Szczecin	Performance
March 7	Szczecin	Performance
March 8	Gdansk	Performance
March 9	Gdansk	Performance
March 10	Gdansk	No performance
March 11	Warsaw	Two performances
March 12	Warsaw	Performance
March 13	Wroclaw	Performance
March 14	Krakow	Performance
March 15	Krakow	Performance
March 16	Lodz	Performance
March 17	Poznan	Performance
March 18	Poznan	Performance
March 18–19	Poznan	Leave Poznan for night transit to Berlin via train, then via air to Turkey

<sup>105</sup> The last-minute change in personnel likely upset some U.S. diplomats who had touted the group as “all-white” in 1957 messages sent to various U.S. embassies where they might tour. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had written, “For US purposes [a] white jazz group [is] preferable, as this sidesteps regime propaganda linking jazz to oppression [of] Negroes in America.” Cited in Crist, *Jazz as Democracy*, 149. Crist concludes that the struggle for Civil Rights in the U.S. and the ability of the U.S. diplomatic corps to promote America as a true democracy were intimately bound together throughout this era.





**Figure 2** People-to-People Encounters. Meeting Poles on the street in Krakow, Poland, March 14–15, 1958. Pictured at far left, Iola Brubeck; Dave Brubeck near center in cap; son Michael Brubeck at far right, partially visible wearing hood. Photo by Paul Desmond. Brubeck Collection, DBP-58-22, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Copyright Dave Brubeck.

<sup>106</sup> In an Armstrong interview that drew international attention in September 1957, the trumpeter claimed that he had declined a U.S.-backed tour of the Soviet Union due to the government's inability to end school segregation. He famously stated, "The way they are treating my people down South, the government can go to hell," claiming Eisenhower was "two-faced" for relying on black American jazz ambassadors while failing to take action against racism at home. Within a few days of Armstrong's pronouncements, Eisenhower did indeed order Federal troops to enforce school segregation in Little Rock. Cited in Michael Meckna, "Louis Armstrong Blasts Little Rock, Arkansas," in *Perspectives in American Music Since 1950*, ed. James R. Hintze (Abingdon, UK: Taylor and Francis, 1999), 141–152. Danielle Fosler-Lussier has cast some doubt as to whether or not Armstrong's oft-cited claim that such a State Department tour had been offered was in fact true. During discussion after a conference paper presentation on the subject of this article by the author at the 2010 Society for American Music Conference, Fosler-Lussier suggested that based on her own research into Armstrong's career, no evidence of an actual offer of such a tour by the State Department has yet come to light. One possible explanation for this apparent discrepancy might be suggested when one looks at the incubation period for Brubeck's 1958 State Department tour. Initial negotiations between Brubeck's booking agent and ANTA began more than one year before the Quartet's March arrival in Poland (Crist, *Jazz as Democracy*, 139). Using this timeline as a benchmark, Armstrong's agent may well have been contacted by ANTA by September 1957 with such preliminary discussions centering on Armstrong's future availability for a prospective State Department tour forming the substance of such contact. See Michael Cogswell, *The Offstage Story of Satchmo* (Portland, OR: Collector's Press, 2003), 172. Unfortunately, Cogswell, Director of the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, reports that almost no documents pertaining to Armstrong's business dealings are extant today, and thus it may be near impossible to resolve this apparent contradiction in the future.

During a radio interview at his first stop in Poland, Szczecin, Brubeck was asked to comment on both race issues in America as well as the reported problems jazz musicians often had with narcotics. Both of these troubles were cited by the Soviets as proof of the decadence of capitalism and Western society in general.<sup>107</sup> The issue of race continued to crop up throughout the tour.<sup>108</sup> Prejudice in America ran deep, and all the Quartet members could do was agree that U.S. race relations were long overdue for improvement when queried about the subject by their hosts.<sup>109</sup> Still, Poles welcomed the Quartet and clearly saw that, among the musicians themselves, jazz performance provided a platform for free expression without regard for skin color.<sup>110</sup>

After departing Gdansk, the second Polish tour stop, Iola Brubeck expressed concern that some of the same people seemed to be on the train or bus with them after each city. It turned out that a large contingent of Poland's leading jazz musicians were following the Quartet from city to city. "Soon enough one of them approached us and began talking music with Dave," recalled Iola Brubeck.<sup>111</sup> The reasoning behind following the tour to each stop was voiced by keyboardist Krzysztof Sadowski, who explained why Polish musicians wished to attend every concert: "We all attended as many shows as possible. Who knew when the next chance would come, if ever, to hear musicians of such caliber? We really couldn't believe that

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<sup>107</sup> Darius Brubeck, *The Inch That Was Measured by Miles*, audio journal, Brubeck Collection, 4.C.7.10. This radio interview is referred to in this audio diary written by Brubeck's oldest son. The journal's title refers to the fact that the author grew one inch while overseas. It was recorded with help from Iola Brubeck and had been assigned by Darius's schoolteacher to allow him to miss nearly two months of school. The audio journal provides an interesting look at the effects of two-way cultural exchange on a young American, as well as provides important factual and chronological details of the tour not otherwise recorded elsewhere.

<sup>108</sup> Bassist Eugene Wright recalled that, "While we were in India, a man kept asking me how come we [blacks] weren't treated fairly at home. He repeatedly asked me 'what was I going to do about that.' I simply replied that it seemed to me that his country had plenty of its own problems and perhaps he should concentrate on solving those before he worried too much about ours at home." Eugene Wright, interview with author, October 22, 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Calls Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7. Monson suggests that, "During these years, everyone in the world of jazz had to cope with the politics of race in one form or another, whether through denial, engagement, withdrawal, strategic confrontation, cathartic rage, resentment, celebration, or sublimation." This thorough and engaging work is essential reading to better understand the wide range of actions and efforts by jazz musicians, including those who advocated for a militant response, to the racial divide found throughout American life.

<sup>110</sup> During the 1958 tour, foreign audiences rarely found the fact that Brubeck's group was integrated notable, whereas elsewhere, the mixed group continued to face racial bias that limited their opportunities. A proposed January 1959 world tour to Spain, Italy, South Africa, Ceylon, Australia, Hong Kong, and Japan was canceled when the South African promoter reneged on a \$17,000 travel guarantee due to his country's apartheid policy that would prevent bassist Eugene Wright from entering that country. See Ralph J. Gleason, "You Can't Play Here," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 21, 1958, n. p. Soon after the latter incident, the same type of prejudice at home led to the cancellation of 23 of the group's 25 dates for a 1960 Southern college tour. The cancellations came pouring in when the colleges received publicity photos showing Eugene Wright, and various representatives subsequently informed Brubeck's agent that an integrated band could not perform at their schools. Hall, *It's About Time*, 72-73.

<sup>111</sup> Dave and Iola Brubeck, interview with author and Shan Sutton.

anyone could play so fantastically—they seemed as if they dropped out of the sky, from another world.”<sup>112</sup>

Sadowski attended four of the concerts, two in Warsaw, and one each in Krakow and Poznan. Repeated encounters with the Brubecks quickly turned into friendships with many of Poland’s jazz performers. Such off-stage interactions, a key element in the People-to-People strategy, greatly strengthened the connections to jazz that had been established by the *Music USA* broadcasts. Jazz vocalist Wanda Warska and pianist Andrzej Kurylewicz chose to get married on the day of the Quartet’s Krakow performance, thereby demonstrating how deeply Polish musicians were moved by the group’s visit. Warska recalled,

After the main concert [in Krakow], there was a jam session at the Journalist’s Club and [my husband] Andrzej [Kurylewicz] and I felt privileged to perform for them. The selection of that day for our wedding was our way of honoring Brubeck, and in return, when he played later that night at the jam session, he dedicated a piece to us—that was a very special gift we always remembered.<sup>113</sup>

Roslaw Szyabo, then a student at the Academy of Art in Warsaw, decided to also follow the group. However, being unable to afford the train fares, he shadowed the tour on a Lambretta motor scooter. “As a student, I attended every single concert and jam session. We all dreamed of America as the ‘Promised Land’ and now America was coming to us.”<sup>114</sup> Jerzy Matuszkiewicz further remembered, “We followed Brubeck from Warsaw to Krakow where we stood with him and he showed us his musical ideas at the piano, myself, ‘Ptaszyn’ Wroblewski, [Andrzej] Dabrowski and a few others.”<sup>115</sup> Such interactions offer yet another example of the People-to-People exchanges between Polish jazz musicians and the entire Brubeck entourage that happened daily through informal meetings, shared meals, and a regular series of after-hours jam sessions. Such recollections of the lasting impressions formed by the Polish participants in the exchanges attest to the substantial impact that the Quartet made in their role as cultural ambassadors.

<sup>112</sup> Sadowski, interview with author. The aura of exoticism and unreality created by the group’s two-week stay in Poland can be seen in the news clippings before and after the tour. First, a sub-heading below the previously mentioned advance article titled, “Mistrz Coolu: z dalekiej Kalifornii wk rotce w Lodz” (“Master of Cool from California, A Far-Away Land, Soon in Lodz”), *Glos Robotniczy* (“The Worker’s Voice”), February 21, 1958, n. p. This article’s subheading (“A Far-Away Land”) likely rang true for Poles who could not travel outside the country’s own borders. Similarly, Roman Waschko concluded an article that reflected on the group’s two-week stay in Poland by equating the musicians to fictional characters, stating that they, “resembled some positive characters from a novel so much that they almost seemed ... unreal.” Roman Waschko, “Brubeck Time,” *Jazz*, April 1958, 7, Brubeck Collection, 1E.1.A.8.

<sup>113</sup> Warska, interview with author. Warska’s husband, jazz musician Andrzej Kurylewicz, wrote a letter to Brubeck after the tour, offering appreciation for the group’s improvisations, stating, “Your improvisations were wonderful and different on each concert. I should know about it very well, because I heard your concert nine times.” He also asked Dave and Iola to send any new recordings, which they did. He closed by stating, “Never will we forget you ... I hope we will meet again in the future.” Andrzej Kurylewicz, letter to Dave Brubeck, dated June 20, 1958. Andrzej Kurylewicz, interview with author, October 20, 2006. During this telephone interview, Kurylewicz acknowledged the profound impression that the Quartet’s 1958 performances had on his own work as a composer.

<sup>114</sup> Roslaw Szyabo, interview with author.

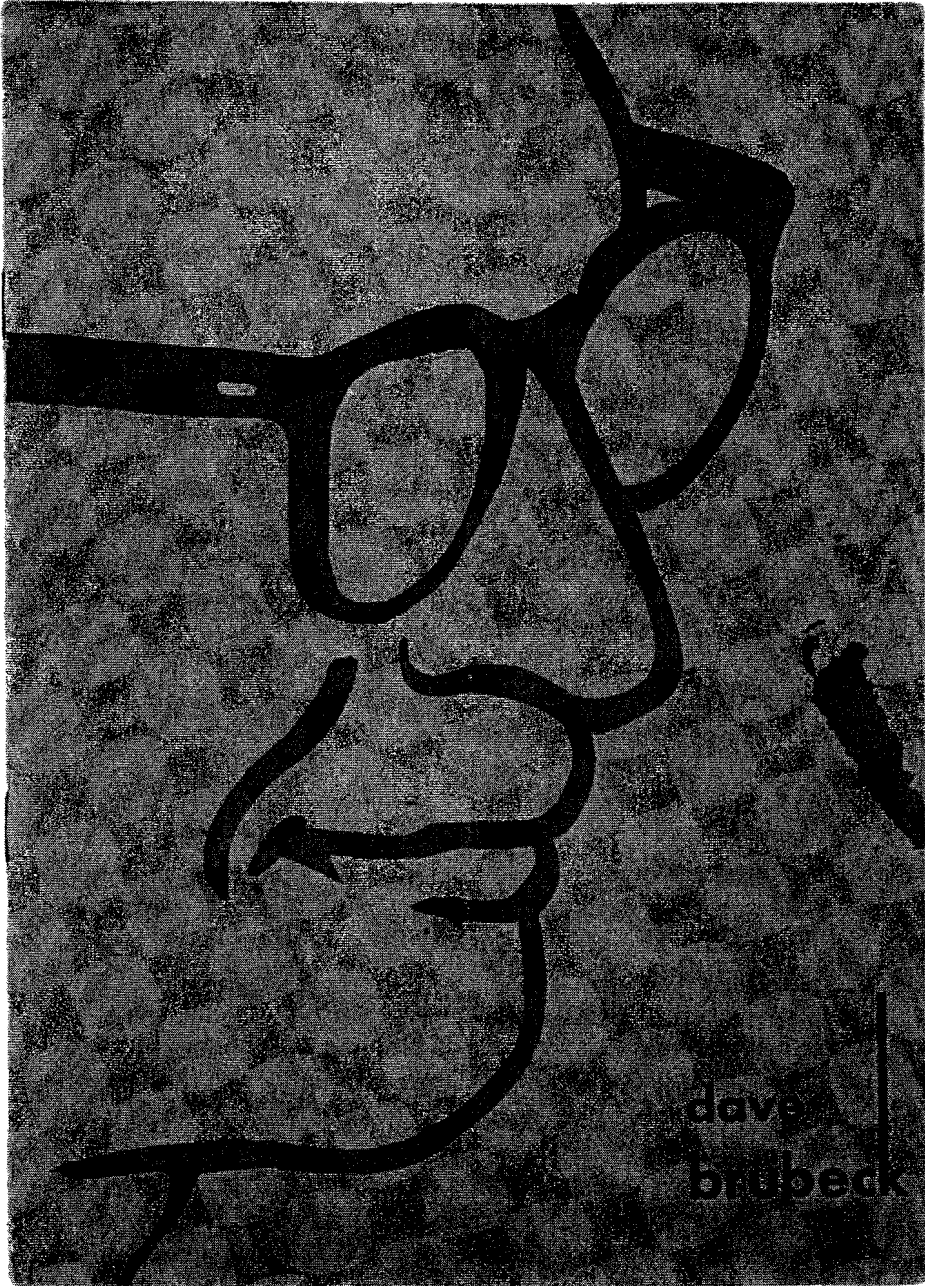
<sup>115</sup> Matuszkiewicz, interview with author. A photo documenting this impromptu music theory lesson was donated to the Brubeck Collection by Pawel Brodowski of *Jazz Forum* in 2007. Brubeck Collection, DBP-58-141.



**Figure 3** Impromptu Music Lesson. Backstage at the concert hall in Krakow, Polish musicians (l-r) drummer Jan Zylber, Jan “Ptaszyn” Wroblewski, an unidentified actor, and Jerzy “Dudus” Matuszkiewicz observe Dave Brubeck demonstrating some of his musical ideas. Brubeck Collection, DBP-58-141, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Copyright Dave Brubeck.

In the three-and-one-half years since jazz musicians were allowed to publicly come together for the Krakow All Soul's Days Jazz Festival, jazz had established itself in Poland as both a musical and cultural force. Although the public performance of jazz was allowed throughout Poland by the time of Brubeck's tour, efforts by the ruling party to illustrate the lack of racial equality found in the West still made their way into the tour's fabric via the official program book that was created for Brubeck's Polish performances.

The 12-page tour program was published with government approval and features a minimalist line drawing of Brubeck on the cover. This impression was immediately recognizable to jazz fans due to his heavy black-rimmed glasses and strong chin. Inside, on page two, Brubeck's opening words, translated into Polish, emphasized that jazz is the music of unity and improvisation, and that the latter facet of the music was used to express feelings to its listeners. Next follows a statement by the Coordinating



**Figure 4** Polish Concert Program. This is the front cover of the 12-page program book printed for the Dave Brubeck Quartet's two-week series of Polish performances. Its contents provide an interesting glimpse into Poland's views on jazz, as well as some commentary inserted by Polish authorities to emphasize the disparities between socialism and capitalism. Brubeck Collection, 1.F.1.7, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

Committee of Polish Jazz Clubs, which discusses the two styles of jazz being performed in Poland, which were New Orleans revival and cool jazz. The statement goes on to provide an explanation of cool jazz, citing diverse influences such as contemporary classical music, the idioms of contemporary concert music composers like Bela Bartok and Arnold Schoenberg, and the overall impact of classical music on the cool jazz milieu. These introductory remarks end with a short history of the Dave Brubeck Quartet and the assertion that the ensemble is the “second greatest jazz group, after the Modern Jazz Quartet, yet better from the latter in terms of improvisation.”<sup>116</sup>

The rest of the extensive program goes on to include a lengthy article that breaks down the various streams of jazz; comments about Brubeck’s music (pro and con) by Western jazz luminaries such as George Shearing, Mary Lou Williams, and Miles Davis; another assertion that “cool” jazz players should have an adequate background in classical music; and a statement about the long-standing Brubeck doctrine that the audience at each performance becomes the so-called “fifth member” of his ensemble.<sup>117</sup> The booklet also includes pictures of Brubeck composing at the piano and a photo of the quartet with bassist Norman Bates, who had quit the group immediately before the tour.

A close reading of the program’s biography of Brubeck asserts that his family’s wealth and status allowed him to study with the finest music teachers in America, and in comparing his musical training to that of legendary African-American jazz saxophonist, Charlie Parker, the program states that “Parker was a poor black boy born out of [the] American soil, whereas Brubeck was born into a well-to-do family, who with help from his father, could afford access to the best musical studies.”<sup>118</sup> Such commentary, based on the fact that Brubeck was able to afford a conservatory education and graduate studies with Darius Milhaud after the war, demonstrates that although jazz continued to build a wide audience throughout Poland, it was still an art form intimately bound up in the politics of the Cold War. Jazz may have been accepted in Poland, but the party still made the case for capitalism’s inherent inequalities. The comparison between Brubeck and Parker also provided another opportunity to emphasize the separate and unequal nature of race relations in America. Nonetheless, the Polish artists and writers interviewed for this article do not remember such arguments having an impact on their appreciation for Brubeck as both an artist and a jazz ambassador. They were able to appreciate jazz as both a musical style and a symbol of free expression, while acknowledging the fact that blacks faced racism and grave inequalities at home. This Brubeck-Parker comparison, while only a few lines in a lengthy program, serves to remind us that throughout the Cold War era, culture, identity, and politics were inextricably connected and such intersections often led to multiple levels of meaning for the people who interacted with the jazz ambassadors.

<sup>116</sup> *Dave Brubeck*, concert program, 1958 Polish Tour, 3–4, Brubeck Collection, 1.F.1.7. Krzysztof Wilski, who attended the Warsaw concerts, generously gave his copy of the original program to the author.

<sup>117</sup> The evolution of the style of jazz dubbed “cool” or “West Coast” jazz is ably explained in Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>118</sup> *Dave Brubeck*, concert program, 1958 Polish tour, 5. See also Hall, *It’s About Time*, 18, 32. Brubeck graduated from the Conservatory of Music at College of the Pacific in 1942, and then served in the U.S. Army. His post-graduate studies with Darius Milhaud were at Mills College in Oakland, CA.

## The Critical Response to the Tour

The Quartet's tour of Poland was judged an artistic, cultural, and diplomatic success by the Polish press. Reviews were positive, sometimes effusively so, and tended to concentrate on the technical and musical parts of the performances. *Jazz*, at that time the only popular publication devoted strictly to jazz music making anywhere in the Soviet bloc, dedicated the cover of its March 1958 issue (as well as a series of multi-page advance stories) to the Quartet's imminent arrival in Poland.<sup>119</sup>

K. A. Mazur, writing in the Lodz newspaper *The Worker's Voice*, praised the Quartet's performance: "[Their] improvisations are lively and emotionally powerful beyond anything previously experienced in Poland."<sup>120</sup> Mazur closed the review by going out of his way to thank Pagart, the Polish Artists Agency, and the authorities for bringing Brubeck to Lodz. This gesture is especially notable since, according to Polish composer Jaroslaw Kapuscinski, "At that time, such thanks to the governmental authorities were rare, and were likely offered as a subtle means of acknowledging those in power ... people not normally held in high regard by the jazz community."<sup>121</sup> In an article headlined, "Dave Brubeck Quartet Wins Hearts of Szczecin's Music Lovers," the *Voice of Szczecin* commented that the Quartet was made up of individual stars. To support the perception that jazz was art, the reviewer concluded by stating that "One more proof that this is music of the highest caliber, a true great art: the public reacted with great applause but without the usual controversial whistling or foot stomping."<sup>122</sup> This carefully worded assertion shows that the writer was using the measure of audience behavior to help determine the appropriate place for Brubeck's performance in the hierarchy of Polish music. This situation was a marked contrast to the audience responses two years earlier in Sopot when whistling had

<sup>119</sup> The role that the monthly publication *Jazz* played in advancing the cause of jazz in Poland was vital, and certainly on a par with the many student jazz clubs that were active. Pawel Brodowski, editor of *Jazz Forum*, the successor to *Jazz*, recalled that initially *Jazz* was only approved as a one-of-a-kind publication by the communist authorities: "In February 1956, at the last minute before going to print, editor and publisher Josef Balcerak added 'No. 1' to its cover, so angering the censors, that he had to wait four months until June 1956 to be allowed to print the second issue and launch *Jazz* as a regular monthly." P. Brodowski, interview with author. Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*. Balcerak was also the emcee for the March 8 and 9, 1958, concerts the Quartet gave in Gdansk. He also acted as tour guide for the group's People-to-People experiences on their only day off in Poland.

<sup>120</sup> K. A. Mazur, "Dave Brubeck dla Czytelników 'Głosu'" ("Dave Brubeck to the Readers of Głos"), *Głos Robotniczy* ("The Worker's Voice"), March 18, 1958, n. p., Brubeck Collection, 1.E.1.A.8.

<sup>121</sup> Jaroslaw Kapuscinski (a contemporary Polish composer), correspondence with author, September 15, 2007. Further evidence of such appeals to the Polish authorities to allow more exchanges may be found in "Brubeckowie o Polsce" ("The Brubecks [Speak] About Poland"), *Jazz*, November 1958, p. 9. This article ends with Iola Brubeck's remark that the popularity and understanding of jazz was remarkable in Poland and she hoped that many more jazz ensembles would tour Poland. The author then restated her suggestion, which can be seen as a between-the-lines plea for the authorities to allow additional visits by American jazz performers.

<sup>122</sup> "Dave Brubeck Quartet podbił serca szczecińskich melomanów" ("Dave Brubeck Quartet Wins the Hearts of Szczecin's Music Lovers"), *Głos Szczeciński* ("Voice of Szczecin"), March 7, 1958, p. 4, Brubeck Collection, 1.E.3.10. The acceptance of modern jazz as a valid form of musical expression is echoed in the American Embassy's own follow-up report on the Quartet's tour of Poland: "Modern jazz ... has gained respectability [in Poland] and is no longer linked with hoolliganism as an undesirable form of entertainment." Frank Lewand, "Report on Dave Brubeck Jazz Quartet Concerts in Poland," 3, Foreign Service Dispatch #355 to Department of State, March 24, 1958. General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.

been a hallmark of the counterculture that jazz represented to young Poles, and this sort of reaction angered critics who viewed such behavior as hooliganism.

Jazz pianist Andrzej Trzaskowski wrote a lengthy critique of Brubeck's tour for *The Musical Movement*, Poland's most important music journal, a publication generally devoted to commentary and criticism of classical music. Publication of such a review was a clear attempt to elevate the genre of jazz up to the level of classical music from a critical perspective, something that would not have been allowed during the catacomb period. Trzaskowski was trained as a classical musician, but as a co-founder of the Melomani, it can be argued that he represented the voice of Poland's jazz community. As such, the fact that his critique was published in a critical music journal likely carried greater musical weight with the artistic community than those found in daily newspapers aimed at the general public. His detailed article includes some criticisms such as his agreement that, "Brubeck ... is accused of having no clear idea of style and that he does not swing. I have to agree that these accusations are right."<sup>123</sup> Trzaskowski goes on to cite Brubeck's own admission that he has no style but the one of "expressed thought." The critic next offers his analysis of the structure of Brubeck's own improvisations: "They usually begin with an 'introductory motif,' which is subsequently tangled and often polyphoned. Then several layers are stratified, forming a climax." Trzaskowski also compares Brubeck's music to that of Errol Garner stating, "Brubeck's art is not an avant-garde one, it does not create a new direction in jazz. He [and Garner] are both outside the main stream of jazz, although they contributed to the genre with fresh ideas."

Trzaskowski later cites the Brubeck composition, "In Your Own Sweet Way," as one of the highlights of the concert, going on to address the improvisational abilities of Brubeck and Desmond in particular, stating,

I think the level of most of the pieces put in doubt the notion of the superiority of written music over the improvised one—which arose due to long-time abandonment of improvisation in the European music tradition. In fact, many pieces carefully crafted by composers are not worth a note of Brubeck and Desmond's improvisations. So the talent should be the measure.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, near the end of the article, he praises drummer Joe Morello's playing, noting that his solos on "Take the A Train" and Brubeck's own "One Moment Worth Years" were impressive and reminiscent of the style of Shelly Manne. However, bassist Eugene Wright, who had joined the Quartet just days before the group left for Europe, was criticized for not yet being up to par with the rest of the group, "given his flat tone and repetitive improvisations."<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Andrzej Trzaskowski, "The Dave Brubeck Quartet," *Ruch Muzyczny* ("The Musical Movement"), May 15, 1958, 19–22. (The status of this publication can best be compared to the U.K. publication *Gramophone*.) Early in this article, Trzaskowski acknowledges that he was part of the group of Polish jazz musicians who attended the majority of Brubeck's concerts across Poland.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



Trzaskowski's review is one of the few extant that offers a serious appreciation of the music performed. Its appearance in *The Musical Movement* subtly asserts that jazz must be considered as "serious" music by those who made and criticized high art. He cites Brubeck's studies with both Milhaud and Schoenberg to further establish Brubeck's relevance and classical musical pedigree for that publication's readership.<sup>126</sup> Trzaskowski's juxtaposition of written music, which might be interpreted as non-improvisational pieces performed verbatim from a score, in relation to the Quartet's improvisational output, further supports his assertion that jazz must be considered as art, rather than simply popular music.<sup>127</sup>

The status of jazz in Poland's musical hierarchy is also a theme in a March 18, 1958, *Polish Daily* article (from Krakow) that considers the tour's broader meaning by jazz critic Lucjan Kydrynski. In this account, Kydrynski praises the public concert and goes on to describe the after-hours performance by the Dave Brubeck Quartet for Poland's jazz community as an even more exceptional musical event:

After the main concert, the group came to listen to Polish jazzmen. Around 1 A.M., they started to play themselves ... only three pieces, but great music. Improvising musicians sometimes experience moments of exceptional performance—when everything seems to be perfect. It happened that night.<sup>128</sup>

He then goes on to state that the Quartet's visit was largely ignored by the musical establishment: "Worth noticing is the fact that only a few students of [Krakow's] Higher School [Academy] of Music, and none of the professors attended the performances. It is striking—was it of no interest to them? If so, it is sad."<sup>129</sup> Kydrynski's jab at the musical establishment is notable. Ten years after jazz was forced underground, although it had achieved widespread popular recognition, its status within the musical hierarchy remained significantly less than that of classical music in Poland.<sup>130</sup>

One last example of the contemporary reports of the tour helps us to better understand the tour's significance, as in it, the concept of "freedom," which had been one of

<sup>126</sup> Hall (*It's About Time*, 23) reports that during World War II, while Brubeck was stationed in Southern California, he secured an interview and composition lesson with Arnold Schoenberg, who at that time was teaching at UCLA. Although there was no further study with the noted composer, this episode became a point of reference used by the State Department to connect Brubeck's music to the classical field.

<sup>127</sup> Another aspect of the group's musical abilities, as accompanists, was singled out for comment by Krzysztof Sadowski: "We were amazed that individually each member was so talented, but they had the ability to become nearly anonymous when they accompanied each other. No Polish group had yet achieved this level of group playing and it astounded us." Sadowski, interview with author.

<sup>128</sup> Lucjan Kydrynski, "Wieczor I noc z Brubeckiem" ("An Evening and Night with Brubeck"), *Dziennik Polski* ("Polish Daily"), Krakow, March 19, 1958, n.p. Likely due to the lack of a decent piano at the Club Rotondo, "the piano was hauled from the concert hall to the club for a jam session that continued until three o'clock the next morning." Frank Lewand, "Report on Dave Brubeck Jazz Quartet Concerts," 1.

<sup>129</sup> Kydrynski, "Wieczor I noc z Brubeckiem."

<sup>130</sup> Ironically, today, the status of jazz in the academy within Poland has advanced little according to the Polish jazz artists interviewed for this article. "Official studies in jazz are only offered by one high school in Warsaw and one college with about sixty five students in Katowice," asserted Krzysztof Sadowski, President of the Polish Jazz Association. He further adds that "young Polish jazz musicians today are still mainly self-taught." Sadowski, interview with author. A current survey at the time of this writing also lists jazz studies at the Academy of Music in Gdansk, as well as private schools of popular music and jazz found in Warsaw, Wroclaw, and Krakow.



**Figure 5** Late Night Jam Session in Krakow, Poland. After the group's evening performance on March 14, 1958, the Quartet attended a jam session at Club Rotondo, which featured Poland's leading jazz musicians. After 1 a.m., Brubeck's Quartet took the stage and performed three extended numbers to the acclaim of the audience and press. Photo by Wojciech Plewinski. Brubeck Collection, DBP-58-43, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific. Copyright Dave Brubeck.

the symbolic cornerstones of the Polish jazz movement, was finally linked directly to the performance of jazz. The founder of the Lodz jazz circle, Zdzislaw Bartoszewicz, wrote an in-depth interview with Dave Brubeck which appeared in the March 17, 1958, edition of Lodz's *Worker's Voice*. An analysis of this interview adds to our knowledge of the tour's significance from both Brubeck's point of view and that of the Poles. While Brubeck commented that the audience makes up the so-called "fifth member" of his Quartet, a statement that had been published before, here he underlined the fact that "the Polish public knows and understands jazz," a fact one must conclude was due, at least in part, to the impact of three years of *Music USA's* influence on Polish audiences. When asked whether his style was traditional or modern, Brubeck briefly summarized his own biography, which included his own interest in classical music, thereby further confirming that his connection to classical or "serious" music merited mention.<sup>131</sup> Bartoszewicz also asked Brubeck what he thought of the caliber of the Polish musicians

<sup>131</sup> Zdzislaw Bartoszewicz, "O Polsce, jazzie i sobie—mowi Dave Brubeck" ("About Poland, Jazz and Himself: Interview with Dave Brubeck"), *Glos Robotniczy* ("The Worker's Voice"), March 18, 1958, p. 1.

whom Brubeck had heard at after-hours jam sessions throughout Poland. Brubeck praised them and stated that “a few more years of work could bring them to the world’s stages.” Brubeck immediately followed that remark with a key statement which holds definite political overtones. He asserted that, “True, pure jazz can develop best in freedom-loving countries. I consider Poland to be such a nation.”<sup>132</sup> To Poland’s jazz devotees, this statement made perfect sense. Jazz had grown exponentially in Poland, in large part, because its followers connected it directly to their desire to exercise free expression and the fact that during the catacomb era it had been repressed, thereby enhancing its cachet as a countercultural force. In this remark, made near the end of his tour of Poland, Brubeck’s new-found understanding of the underlying spirit of the Polish jazz movement, which grew from the repeated People-to-People encounters he experienced, led him to make an overt political statement in an Eastern-bloc country. Why was such a comment not censored? While it is clear why such a statement would resonate with the Polish jazz community, it caused no known reaction from Polish authorities. This lack of response was likely due to the fact that as Polish culture continued to evolve, Brubeck’s statement could also be construed as an endorsement of the level of freedom found at that time in Poland by its leaders.

Thus, Brubeck’s “freedom-loving” phrase likely carried three levels of meaning in this context. First, as an American jazz ambassador, Brubeck saw the need for a society that embraced free expression in order for jazz to flourish.<sup>133</sup> Second, Polish jazz musicians saw their emergence, in part, as the result of their perseverance to keep jazz alive during the catacomb era, eventually securing the right to express themselves more freely in public. Finally, the authorities had nothing to gain by disagreeing with Brubeck or Polish jazz performers, since Polish jazz had come to be a vital and developing style, due at least in part, to the party’s support. Such an analysis reinforces the complex intersection of words and ideas encountered within the context of cultural exchanges and shows how various constituents could assign different meanings to concepts such as “freedom.” As was the case with many of the jazz ambassador’s tours reported elsewhere, their music created both dialog and meaning outside the context of formal diplomatic protocols with little formal oversight from the State Department.

### The Impact of Two-Way Cultural Exchange

Stylistically, the Quartet made a deep impression on Polish jazz performers. Jerzy Matuszkiewicz recalls that the Quartet’s style was embraced by nearly every Polish jazz musician: “It was the first time we were able to see American jazz performers playing modern jazz, so we now had a perfect example to follow. The pianists all emulated Brubeck, saxophonists Desmond, drummers Joe Morello and bassists, Eugene

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Adding to this line of reasoning, *Music USA* host Willis Conover regularly broadcast his opinion that the musical freedom embodied in jazz mirrored the political freedoms represented in a democratic system of government. Cited in Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 16; and Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 207.

Wright.”<sup>134</sup> Polish drummer Andrzej Dabrowski went so far as to adopt a variation of Joe Morello’s name, becoming “Morelek” Dabrowski, a stage name he continues to be known by today in Poland.<sup>135</sup> In November 1958, the Polish monthly *Jazz* reported on a concert in Gliwice given by Polish jazz artist Jan Kwasnicki devoted entirely to the music of the Dave Brubeck Quartet and sponsored by the local student jazz circle.<sup>136</sup> As a result of the 13 concerts given in Poland and attended by nearly all of Poland’s preeminent jazz performers, the Quartet’s style of West Coast jazz (in the Quartet, this idiom was especially associated with the improvisational voices of Paul Desmond and Brubeck) established itself as a major influence in the emerging sound of Polish jazz.<sup>137</sup>

A December 8, 1958, article titled “Warsaw Likes Jazz Hot or Cool, But Serious, at the Philharmonia,” by *New York Times* foreign correspondent A. M. Rosenthal, painted a clear picture that Brubeck-influenced jazz was not only alive in Poland, but that it was thriving. Rosenthal states that Dixieland music remained very popular but people in their twenties preferred music in the Brubeck style. He also reaffirms the secondary meaning attributed to the music by Polish youth arguing that jazz “is a form of young rebellion, an avenue of subtle political expression.”<sup>138</sup> The scarcity of jazz recordings in Poland is also mentioned along with the fact that a thriving business selling black market records existed. Evidently, young jazz musicians would collectively purchase such recordings, at a price equivalent to about \$24 at that time, then share them amongst themselves, for studying and enjoying the music.<sup>139</sup> The fact that within nine months of Brubeck’s visit, jazz concerts were regularly being presented at the Philharmonia, Warsaw’s premiere orchestral concert hall, demonstrated that from the perspective of both the jazz intelligentsia and the ruling party, jazz had become an essential part of Polish culture.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Jerzy Matuszkiewicz, interview with author. As to the repertoire the group performed, program notes from concerts in Germany, Ceylon, and England document a mix of original compositions and standards, with the standard repertoire slightly outnumbering the group’s own compositions. Cited in Crist, *Jazz as Democracy*, Table 3, 151.

<sup>135</sup> Andrzej Dombrowski, interview with author, July 31, 2007, Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>136</sup> Henryk Cholinski, “Gliwice” (“Notes of Recent Concerts”), *Jazz*, November 1958, n.p. Brubeck Collection, 1.E.7.3. Another article by Adam Slawinski, “Brueckowskie echa” (“Echoes of Brubeck”), *Jazz*, January 1959, p. 4, gave an overview of Warsaw’s 1958–1959 *Jazz at the Philharmonia* season in Poland, then went on to compare two Polish groups, the Kalwinski Quartet and the Ambrosetti Quartet, which both closely emulated the Dave Brubeck Quartet’s music. Brubeck Collection, 1E.1.A.1959.

<sup>137</sup> Jazz historian Dionizy Piatkowski argues that Brubeck’s 1958 Polish tour was a pivotal influence in determining how Polish contemporary jazz evolved: “Most of all there were the modern jazz concerts of the Dave Brubeck Quartet that completely confirmed the direction taken by contemporary jazz in Poland.” Piatkowski, *Time of Komedas*, 73.

<sup>138</sup> A. M. Rosenthal, “Warsaw Likes Jazz Hot or Cool, But Serious, at the Philharmonia; Stomping Is on Stage, Not in Aisles,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1958, p. 42.

<sup>139</sup> Speaking with Poles in 2007, the author learned that \$24 (U.S.) represented a sum equal to or slightly greater than a Pole’s monthly wage in 1958. Gleason, “Mr. Coolu Gets Warm Reception.” Iola Brubeck also mentioned the sum of \$20 (U.S.) as the going rate mentioned by Polish jazz fans in 1958 to purchase one black market recording.

<sup>140</sup> “Norman Granz: Jazz Genius Behind the Scenes,” an episode of *Jazz Profiles*, National Public Radio, August 8, 2006, available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93324539> (accessed January 5, 2011). Polish jazz clubs borrowed the name “Jazz at the Philharmonia” from the nearly four-decade series of concerts and recordings, *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, which was produced by U.S. music producer and concert promoter Norman Granz, who initiated the long-lived program (which was also exported to become tremendously popular throughout Europe) on July 2, 1944, in Los Angeles, California.

The Poles, however, were not the only ones affected by the cultural exchanges afforded by the tour. The Brubeck sons, Darius and Michael, were shaped by their time in Poland as they regularly participated in discussions with their Polish hosts about politics, freedom of expression, music, and daily life in Poland. For example, Darius Brubeck's journal recounts lively political discussions with Adam Czung and Roman Waschko. In one such discussion, Darius learned about the "Polish October" of 1956 and how it fit into an understanding of the broader context of the relations between the U.S.S.R. and its satellite states.<sup>141</sup> He saw firsthand how different life for Poles was when the Brubeck family visited the home of a musician in the town of Oliva, outside Gdansk. Here, three generations of one family lived in a two-room apartment, and the grand piano and baby crib shared the same space.<sup>142</sup> The fact that many of Poland's cities were still littered with rubble, 13 years after the end of World War II, put the struggles of the Polish people into perspective for the Brubeck family and fellow musicians.<sup>143</sup>

While in Warsaw, Brubeck had been invited to make a visit to Zelazowa Wola, to see the home of Poland's most famous musician, Frédéric Chopin. Brubeck was inspired greatly by the experience, so much so that he composed a new piece entitled "Dziękuję" ("Thank You") on the train ride to Poznan, where the final two Polish performances would occur. Shortly after the tour, this composition was featured on the Quartet's next album, *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*.<sup>144</sup> Another piece, "Brandenburg Gate," written and recorded for the same album, reflects the frenzied nature of Brubeck's experiences going back and forth across that checkpoint to secure the East German travel permits, then making his night crossing of East Germany.

A final episode that occurred after the group left Poland helps to show the ongoing impact of Brubeck's tour. After the group's Turkish performances, Iola returned home in late March with Darius and Michael, anxious to speak about her experiences

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<sup>141</sup> Poles at that time would tell a joke about the Polish reaction to the Hungarian uprising of 1956 against the Soviets and the role that the Czechs played in that event. Darius Brubeck learned this joke and its symbolic meaning from Adam Czung, the Pagart tour manager who escorted the tour. Darius then studiously recounted it in his audio journal: "The Hungarians behaved like Poles—they fought bravely; the Poles behaved liked Czechs—they stayed quiet; and the Czechs behaved like pigs—they did nothing to help the Hungarians." Darius Brubeck, *The Inch That Was Measured by Miles*. Historically, the Czechs, at Moscow's bidding, denied the Polish army passage when they appealed for transit privileges to go to Hungary and act as a peace-keeping force there. The same interpretation of this joke may also be found in the previously cited Flora Lewis interview, "After Stalin," 4.

<sup>142</sup> Darius Brubeck, *The Inch That Was Measured by Miles*. Brubeck's host in Gdansk, *Jazz* founder Josef Balcerak, had an eight-year old son, Christopher, whom Darius befriended; noting that he "attended Sopot #4 School." While in Oliva, the Brubecks also received a demonstration of the magnificent pipe organ in that town's church, one reputed to have been played by J. S. Bach.

<sup>143</sup> Dave Brubeck, *A Time to Remember*.

<sup>144</sup> Dave Brubeck Quartet, *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*, Sony BMG 724727, 2008, compact disc (orig. Columbia, 1958, LP). The first performance of "Dziękuję" was recorded in Poznan by one of the founders of that city's jazz circle, Andrzej Wroblewski. The tapes were given to Dave Brubeck. They are now part of the audio holdings in the Brubeck Collection, 4.B.8.8.



**Figure 6** Dinner with Poles. The group shared most meals with their Polish hosts and on some occasions were guests for home visits with Poles as part of their People-to-People activities. Pictured here at a hotel dinner are (from left foreground): Eugene Wright, Joe and Ellie Morello, Adam Cung, Iola, Michael, Dave and Darius Brubeck, and Roman Waschko. (Note Polish ensemble in the rear.) Brubeck Collection, DBP-58-32, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. Copyright Dave Brubeck.

abroad.<sup>145</sup> The scarcity of jazz recordings available for Polish musicians and fans left a profound impression on the elder Brubecks. Iola mentioned the absolute scarcity of jazz records, books, and American jazz magazines throughout Poland in a number of interviews in print and on the radio, thereby unintentionally launching a new chapter in the People-to-People program. In an interview with jazz columnist Ralph J. Gleason, she told readers that, “The Poles are starved for all this [recordings, sheet music, etc.], they pass jazz magazines around until they are in tatters.”<sup>146</sup> Iola’s comments resonated with American jazz fans, and an unsolicited outpouring of records, magazines, sheet music, and books on jazz started arriving from the public at the Brubeck home in

<sup>145</sup> The entire entourage was in Turkey from March 21–28, 1958. The Quartet then left Turkey and continued the tour playing in the rest of the Asian countries arranged by the State Department. The most complete itinerary for the 1958 European and Asian tour by the Quartet has been compiled in Crist, *Jazz as Democracy*, Table 1, 134–136.

<sup>146</sup> Gleason, “Mr. Coolu Got a Warm Reception.”

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**Dave Brubecka**  
*poświęcona „polskiej publiczności”*



Grafika  
**FELIKSA  
TOPÓLSKIEGO**

„DZIEKUJE”



Brytyjski „Muzyk roku”  
**Johnny Dankworth**



rozmawia z „Jazzem”

Muzyka: Dave Brubeck  
CAŁY UTWÓR NA STRONICACH 12, 13 I 14. PRZEŁACZENIE TEKSTU - NA STR. 15.  
Słowa: Dave i Iola Brubeck

**WYNIKI 2 ANKIET JAZZOWYCH**

Figure 7 “Dziekuje” (“Thank You,” also cited as “A Song Dedicated to the Polish People”). This was the cover of the January 1959 issue of *Jazz* which also included a reproduction of the sheet music for the song inside. Brubeck Collection, 1.E.7.4, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

Oakland, California, as well as at Ralph Gleason's office. Within 48 hours of the article appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Iola Brubeck cited the public's response in a letter to Willis Conover:

I am enclosing a clipping ... which might interest you. As a result of this story and a local radio broadcast which stemmed from the Gleason article, there has been an unsolicited response from local jazz fans to send phonograph records, literature on jazz, sheet music, etc., to the Polish jazz clubs.<sup>147</sup>

Five weeks later, representatives of Polish and Czech jazz clubs were writing to the Brubecks and to their manager, Mort Lewis, pleading for shipment of more recordings of American jazz. The head of the Lodz jazz club, Zdzislaw Bartoszewicz, who had met Brubeck during the tour, asked for any records that might be sent to his jazz circle for the members to study, suggesting that even records that might be discarded by Americans would be a form of "musical help" given by American citizens to Polish citizens.<sup>148</sup> Here was evidence that on both sides of the Iron Curtain, Eisenhower's People-to-People strategy was effectively creating a connection that neatly transcended the broader political divide between East and West. Iola Brubeck recalls that from 1958 to 1960, "We did send recordings, magazines and sheet music regularly to Poland."<sup>149</sup>

By October of 1959, the Brubecks' effort to facilitate the distribution of People-to-People donations of jazz music was dubbed the "Jazz-Lift" by the Polish magazine *Jazz*, a nod to the famed Berlin Airlift a decade earlier that broke the Soviet's food blockade of West Berlin.<sup>150</sup> These donations were sent in care of the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, which then made them available to the Polish jazz community. Krzysztof Wilski emphasizes the key role played by the U.S. mission in Warsaw in sustaining the jazz movement and positive images of America in Poland throughout this period:

The [U.S.] Embassy had a large collection of jazz recordings that they would loan out to anyone, like a library. Initially, this was accepted, but in time, borrowing these records became risky. Soon, secret police would follow you from the Embassy and question you about your intentions visiting the American mission. No matter, many people still were willing to take that risk to hear jazz.<sup>151</sup>

Since jazz was a well-accepted art form in Poland by this point, such interest by the authorities was more likely due to varying degrees of vigilance on the part of the secret police for any suspicious or repeated visits to the U.S. mission in Warsaw rather than

<sup>147</sup> Iola Brubeck, letter to Willis Conover, dated April 8, 1958, Brubeck Collection, I.C.1.20.

<sup>148</sup> Zdzislaw Bartoszewicz, letter to Mort Lewis, dated May 14, 1958, Brubeck Collection, I.A.2.8.

<sup>149</sup> Iola Brubeck, correspondence with author, December 12, 2007.

<sup>150</sup> Dave and Iola Brubeck, interview with author and Shan Sutton. According to the Brubecks, Balcerak also helped to distribute the records sent by the Brubecks among Poland's growing regional jazz clubs.

<sup>151</sup> Krzysztof Wilski, interview with author.





W przyszłym numerze podamy dalsze szczegóły o wznowieniu za pośrednictwem „Jazzu” akcji BEZPŁATNEGO nabywania amerykańskich płyt jazzowych, ofiarowanych przez „Jazz-Lift”, tym razem płyt standardowych — ale nie mniej znakomitych!

Nasze zdjęcie przedstawia moment podpisywania płyty przez ofiarodawcę — Dave Brubecka.

Figure 8 The Jazz-Lift. Dave Brubeck is pictured here autographing musical materials being sent to Poland. American jazz fans delivered gifts of jazz albums, books, and sheet music to the Brubeck home, which they then shipped to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw for distribution to the Polish jazz circles. The photo and caption were published in the October 1959 issue of *Jazz*. Brubeck Collection, I.E.7.3, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

any fear of the music itself, as intelligence and counter-intelligence efforts continued unabated throughout the Cold War era.<sup>152</sup>

Three years after the ground-breaking Polish tour by the Dave Brubeck Quartet, jazz had further established its place in Polish society. In a March 25, 1961, *New York Times* commentary on the upcoming elections in Poland, Arthur J. Olsen reported on the contrasting ideologies present in Poland. Olsen began by citing First Secretary Gomulka's two-and-one-half-hour speech at a rally designed to kick off the election campaign (the speech was held in a 2,000-seat hall that was roughly two-thirds full). Meanwhile, one floor below the rally, the Kongresowa restaurant, probably the plush-est nightspot in the Communist world, was packed to the limit, pulsing to the rhythms of jazz. Its doorman turned away latecomers to the regular weekly Saturday afternoon jazz jam session. Olsen theorized that the lesson to be learned from the comparison was that although Western leaders viewed Poland as a battleground between the Catholic Church and communism, the reality was that "so far as Polish youth is concerned, it is just possible that the struggle has already won by a third contender—jazz."<sup>153</sup> He goes on to explain that jazz has a greater symbolism to Polish youth in that it was also an expression of the independent personality, and as such, strongly identified by youth as an antidote to the dictates of any political or religious system.

Olsen's analysis, when considered alongside the interviews of Polish musicians and jazz lovers from this era already presented, further helps to confirm that jazz was an essential element in the movement to increase free expression in Poland. Polish Jazz Society President, Krzysztof Sadowski, sums up the status jazz achieved in Poland during the Cold War era: "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.'"<sup>154</sup> Jazz had achieved a highly symbolic meaning in the minds of an entire generation of Polish jazz musicians and fans, one that it retains for them to this day as the foremost emblem of their Cold War efforts to secure the right to express themselves freely through music, art, film, and literature.

<sup>152</sup> The U.S. Embassy continued to draw close attention from the authorities in Warsaw throughout the Cold War era. More than two decades after Brubeck's first visit to Poland, Brodowski was awarded a grant by the USIA to make an extended research, study, and professional development visit to the U.S., where he met many American jazz artists, scholars, and critics. During his 1985 visit, he acquired a wealth of books and recordings unavailable in Poland. He notes: "As I collected these materials, I simply sent them to the State Department in Washington DC, who then forwarded all of them on to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw. When I returned, I didn't have a car, so I made frequent trips to carry everything home from the US Embassy, which drew the suspicion of the secret police. As we were still formally under martial law at this time, I was instructed to go their headquarters where I was interrogated as to my real purpose for making repeated visits to the US Embassy, who was my contact and so on. The fact that my trip was for my own professional development was kept a secret from Polish authorities, as they would have viewed the USIA as an enemy institution. Polish authorities were told I was only going to attend the International Association of Jazz Educators conference in Dallas, when I actually also went to New York, Washington, DC, New Orleans, Chicago and Boston." Pawel Brodowski, correspondence with author, April 29, 2009. The ongoing suspicions as to jazz's role in the Cold War by Eastern bloc authorities had been demonstrated earlier by the report in Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 126. This source notes that after Benny Goodman's 1962 U.S.S.R. tour, *Izvestia* published the suggestion that four members of Goodman's band were actually secret agents.

<sup>153</sup> Olsen, "That Jazz in Warsaw."

<sup>154</sup> Sadowski, interview with author.

## The Legacy of the Jazz Ambassadors

This analysis of the role of cultural diplomacy as reflected in the Brubeck 1958 tour and its particular impact on the emerging jazz movement in Poland reminds us that mixing culture and politics may result in creating multiple levels of meaning to those engaged in such exchanges. By deftly speaking about the realities of life and art in America, Cold War jazz ambassadors—such as the Dave Brubeck Quartet—helped to facilitate meaningful dialog with a wide range of people across a variety of cultures, leading to a better understanding of the complexities of life back in the U.S. The jazz ambassadors did not gloss over the fact that African Americans faced segregation at home, instead they decried it and proclaimed their belief that the situation must be improved.

U.S. diplomats on station in the countries visited by the jazz ambassadors generally accepted the fact that artists were not going to espouse the nation's current policy points. They allowed this in large part because the goodwill created by the musicians' performances and the People-to-People exchanges far outweighed any contradictions brought to light by the ideas and statements of America's jazz performers who toured for the State Department.<sup>155</sup> America's landmark Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s did lead to greater rights for African Americans, likely weakening to some extent Soviet assertions that capitalism was oppressive to blacks. Although one might argue that issues of race, class, and poverty continued to be problematic in the U.S. throughout the Cold War era, America's efforts to demonstrate that it could live up to the ideal espoused in the nation's founding document, that all men are created equal, certainly helped the jazz ambassadors wield significant power during the Cold War.<sup>156</sup>

At the same time, jazz has continued to help define Polish culture with many accomplished Polish contemporary jazz artists such as Tomasz Stanko, Adam Makowicz, and Michael Urbaniak gaining international acclaim, while still referencing the influence of the Cold War jazz era on the evolution of Polish jazz. "[Its] message was freedom," according to trumpeter Stanko. "For me, as a Pole living in a communist country, jazz was [a] synonym of Western culture, of freedom, of this different style of life." Stanko's remark clearly echoes the sentiments of the vanguard of the Polish postwar jazz movement cited earlier.<sup>157</sup>

The process of how jazz assumed a broader meaning in the context of one nation's emerging cultural identity, as demonstrated through this study of Poland and the Dave Brubeck Quartet's 1958 State Department tour, shows how the music communicated deeply and on multiple levels across various barriers. Thus, it can be concluded that

<sup>155</sup> Most but not all jazz ambassadors were allowed free artistic license. Von Eschen (*Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 246) cites U.S. officials stationed in Romania who during a 1975 jazz ambassador tour accused Charles Mingus of attempting to project his political views with song titles in a way that could prove embarrassing. They changed the titles of his compositions in the Romanian language program book without Mingus's knowledge as he did not read the language and never knew his statements had been subverted.

<sup>156</sup> Mary Dudziak, in her *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), persuasively argues that concerns about foreign perceptions of the racism experienced by blacks in America and the detrimental effect this could have on Cold War politics resulted in a greater drive toward desegregation in America.

<sup>157</sup> Nate Chinen, "Trumpeting Freedom in Spirit, Thought and Jazz," *New York Times*, October, 25, 2006, p. E3.

America's Cold War jazz ambassadors, including the Dave Brubeck Quartet, helped to foster relationships and levels of understanding of American culture and life that traditional diplomatic efforts would have been unlikely to produce.

### **Abstract**

While there is an increasing body of scholarship on the role of America's jazz ambassadors during the Cold War era, less has been written about how these tours were perceived in the host nations. This article focuses on the 1958 U.S. State Department-sponsored tour of the Dave Brubeck Quartet and its impact on both Polish culture and this country's emerging jazz genre, at a time when jazz was clearly contested territory between East and West. This investigation and analysis is based on new research gleaned from personal interviews with Dave and Iola Brubeck, excerpts from Brubeck's unpublished autobiography, materials in the Brubeck Collection, and interviews with a number of leading Polish jazz musicians. The author argues that American jazz—and Brubeck in particular—played a key role in raising the expectations for artistic and political freedoms during this era in Poland.

Both the 1958 Polish concert program, as well as the published reviews, are analyzed in terms of the perceptions about jazz by the various stakeholders. Such considerations help to articulate how jazz represented much more than music to the era's two superpowers. New light is also shed upon a little-known aspect of Cold War cultural diplomacy: the "Jazz-Lift." This initiative sent gifts of jazz recordings and magazines donated by American citizens to Poles as a direct outpouring of sympathy at a time when jazz recordings could not be imported to or sold in Poland.

## Appendix I

### Selected Biographical Summaries for Polish Musicians and Interviewees

**Andrzej Dabrowski** (1938–). Dabrowski is a drummer, jazz vocalist, pop singer, and journalist. As a jazz drummer (beginning in 1958), Dabrowski was easily one of the most visible performers in Poland, but he transitioned to becoming a popular recording artist in the 1970s. Dabrowski performed with many of the most accomplished Polish jazz musicians of the Cold War era, including Andrzej Kurylewicz, Krzysztof Komeda, and Jerzy Matuskiewicz. He has also played and recorded with international performers, including Stan Getz, Art Farmer, Don Ellis, Bud Powell, Johnny Griffin, Jon Hendricks, Louis Hjulmand, Toots Thielemans, Paul Gonzalves, Eje Thellin, Brad Terry, Herb Geller, and Bernt Rosengren. Dabrowski still performs today as a jazz drummer and was a featured performer at the 2007 Golden Jubilee of the Sopot Jazz Festival.

**Roman Dylag** (1938–). Born in Krakow, Dylag grew up studying the accordion, trumpet, and piano, but then took up the double bass as a teenager. After graduating from the Lyceum of Music in Krakow, he began playing with the Melomani and performed at Sopot in 1957. He frequently collaborated with Komeda, both as a member of the Komeda Sextet, and in other ensembles. In 1960, the Karolak Trio (with W. Karolak on piano, Dylag on bass, and A. Dabrowski on drums) recorded an album with visiting American saxophonist Stan Getz, and in 1962 they also recorded with trumpeter Don Ellis. Shortly thereafter, as a member of the Wreckers (led by A. Trzaskowski), Dylag was part of the first Polish jazz ensemble to tour the U.S. (in 1962) at the request of the U.S. State Department. After his return to Poland, he came to view the limitations on personal and artistic life as untenable. After touring Scandinavia (with Komeda), as well as Paris (with the Polish Jazz Quartet, which included Wroblewski, Karolak, and Dabrowski) where the band played with Johnny Griffin, Kenny Drew, and Bud Powell, Dylag decided not to return to Poland. After this, he began performing and recording in the West, and took up residence in Sweden from 1963–1978. During this time, he performed with the Eje Thelin Quintet and frequently backed up visiting American artists, including Anita O'Day, Ben Webster, Dexter Gordon, Art Farmer, and Phil Woods. He also played on a 1964 Prestige release with the Benny Golson Orchestra. In 1972–1973, he performed with Michael Urbaniak. Since that time, he has appeared with a number of large ensembles, including Paul Kuhn SFB Big Band (West Berlin), Swiss DRS Big Band, and Oscar Klein's International Chicago Jazz Orchestra. Since 1999, he has resided in Switzerland and teaches at the Basel Academy of Music Jazz School.

**Krzysztof Komeda-Trzcinski** (1931–1969). Komeda-Trzcinski was a pianist, composer, and band leader who received classical piano training in his youth. Though he ultimately received an M. D., he continued to play jazz “underground” with close friends (one of whom was Jerzy Matuszkiewicz). He also performed with Matuszkiewicz's group, the Melomani. It was with the Komeda Sextet that Komeda-Trzcinski

created his most innovative ensemble, as it focused on the performance of “modern” or contemporary jazz, which he performed in Warsaw’s first “Jazz at the Philharmonia” series in 1958. His ensemble was the first in Poland to regularly perform this music, and the band was instrumental in fostering an acceptance for contemporary jazz in Soviet-bloc countries. His 1965 album, *Astigmatic*, was both a commercial and critical success, and has been cited as one of the most influential recordings of Polish jazz. Komeda-Trzcinski was also a film composer, scoring 68 films, working with director Roman Polanski on several motion-pictures, including the critically acclaimed *Knife on the Water* and *Rosemary’s Baby*. While working in Los Angeles under the terms of a three-year contract with Paramount Studios, Komeda-Trzcinski suffered a tragic accident in 1969 that left him with severe brain trauma; he died a few months later in Poland.

**Andrzej Kurylewicz** (1932–2007). Kurylewicz was trained in the classical tradition, receiving piano and composition instruction at the State Academy of Music in Krakow. Known as a pianist, trombonist, and composer, he was undeterred after being expelled from the Academy for playing jazz (which was forbidden), and he immediately joined the band MM176 as a keyboardist in 1954. In 1955, he founded his own ensemble. Kurylewicz also recorded with his wife, the painter and vocalist Wanda Warska, with whom in 1967 he founded the Artistic Cellar of the Kurylewicz’s, which was an important gathering place for artists in Warsaw for more than 40 years. He toured America and many countries in Europe as an instrumentalist and conductor. He was the director of the Polish Radio and Television Orchestra in Warsaw for three years (1964–1966). Kurylewicz had begun composing early in his musical career (both songs and music for 26 films), and in 1980 he largely retired from performing to continue his composing. He wrote concert music (64 works), film and theater music, and successful pop songs. He still made occasional appearances on stage performing jazz or classical repertoire up until his death.

**Jerzy “Dudus” Matuszkiewicz** (1928– ). A jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer, Matuszkiewicz was the leader of the “underground” Polish jazz group, the Melomani, which formed in 1951. Official restrictions on jazz were significantly relaxed by 1955, however, and the Melomani successfully toured and performed throughout Poland to great acclaim. Though the group dissolved in 1958, Matuszkiewicz continued performing in jazz venues, often leading his own groups. His regular performing partners included Krzysztof Sadowski, Andrzej Kurylewicz, and Krzysztof Komeda. In 1966, Matuszkiewicz retired from performing and took up composing instead. He has been responsible for the music to 60 films, nearly all of them in Polish, and in 1996, he resumed performing jazz, initially to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Sopot Jazz Festival, and thereafter appearing in clubs throughout Poland.

**Zbigniew Namyslowski** (1939– ). Namyslowski was initially trained to play piano and cello, but he ultimately achieved fame as a saxophonist. Initially, he worked as a member of other ensembles (including collaborations with Krzysztof Komeda), but he founded his own group, Jazz Rockers, in the early 1960s. Shortly thereafter, he and

fellow Jazz Rocker Michael Urbaniak joined the Wreckers, a group that quickly became one of Poland's most popular jazz ensembles (with Andrzej Trzaskowski on piano). The Wreckers were invited by the U.S. State Department to tour the U.S. for a month in 1962, and this visit culminated with a featured performance at the Newport Jazz Festival. Namyslowski has released more than 30 albums, including releases on the Decca, Koch, BKQ, and Muza labels. He was—and continues to be—a very active performer, touring most recently throughout Europe, as well as in Israel, Brazil, and South Africa.

**Krzysztof Sadowski** (1936– ). Sadowski is a Polish jazz keyboardist. From 1957, he performed with a variety of Polish jazz ensembles, whether as a leader (in his own group, the Modern Combo), or as a sideman (in the Jazz Rockers, the Swingtet, and the Jazz Outsiders). He is best known in Poland as a performer in the Bossa Nova Combo and the Organ Group. Over the course of his career, Sadowski collaborated with several noted Polish musicians, including Andrzej Kurylewicz, Jerzy Matuszkiewicz, and Jan Wróblewski. He remains an active performer.

**Roslaw Szyabo** (1933– ). After earning a degree in graphic design from Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts in 1961, Szyabo spent the first eight years of his career as a freelance designer creating a wide variety of visual media. He notably produced album covers for Komeda and other early Polish jazz artists. In 1966, he immigrated to London where he first became Art Director at Young and Rubicam Advertising, and he subsequently served as Creative Director for CBS Records (for fourteen years), where he designed album covers for Dave Brubeck's European releases. He is especially recognized for his poster art which has been the subject of numerous exhibitions throughout Europe. He is now Professor of Creative Photography at his alma mater in Warsaw.

**Andrzej Trzaskowski** (1933–1998). Born in Krakow, Trzaskowski started studying piano as a child, and he later studied musicology at Krakow's Academy of Music. In 1951, Trzaskowski helped found the Melomani. By 1958, he was working with both the Jazz Believers and another quartet led by Jerzy Matuszkiewicz. In 1962, he formed his own hard-bop group, the Wreckers, which toured the U.S. for a month in 1962 and which appeared at jazz festivals in Newport and Washington, D.C. Trzaskowski also performed and recorded with American musicians Stan Getz (1960) and Ted Curson (1965–1966) when they visited Poland. Many leading Polish musicians (including Zbigniew Namyslowski, Michael Urbaniak, and Tomasz Stanko) gained early exposure through playing in his groups. From 1975–1991, Trzaskowski led the Orchestra of Polish Radio and Television Studio S1. Although he was an excellent pianist, from the 1970s, he chose to concentrate more on composition, and he wrote a variety of music for film, theater, and concert hall contexts, including two jazz ballets and "Nihil Novi" (a third-stream work performed by Don Ellis at the Jazz Jamboree in Warsaw). From 1992 until his death in 1998, he taught at the Fryderyk Chopin School of Music in Warsaw.

**Jan “Ptaszyn” Wroblewski** (1936– ). Born in Kalisz, Wroblewski performed jazz during the catacomb era in his home town (mostly at parties). He made his professional debut at the 1956 Sopot Jazz Festival as part of the Krzysztof Komeda Sextet. He was chosen by George Wein to represent Poland in the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival as a member of the International Youth Band (he was notably the first Soviet-bloc musician to join this group). Following that performance, he toured several cities in the U.S., then returned to Europe to appear at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair. Upon his return to Poland, he became the leader of the Jazz Believers, a group that incorporated many of the musical influences he had absorbed in America. In 1968, Wroblewski was asked to become the director of the Polish Radio Jazz Studio, which from 1968–1978 featured Poland’s most accomplished jazz performers. After meeting Willis Conover, Wroblewski hosted a weekly jazz broadcast, *45 Minutes of Jazz*, on Polish Radio (the program debuted in 1970). He has composed a wide variety of works, including “Third Stream” music which features symphonic orchestras with jazz combos. He has maintained an active profile as a performer, leader, composer, and recording artist.

**Helena Zaworska** (1930– ). Zaworska was born in Gucin (now Legionowo) near Warsaw. In 1954, she graduated in Polish Philology from Warsaw University. While pursuing an advanced degree, she began working for the Institute of Literature Research at Polish Academy of Sciences. She completed a scholarship program in Paris from October 1963 to March 1964. As a literary critic, she published book reviews in numerous journals. The first collection of her essays was published in 1973 under the title *Encounters*. She became head of the editorial department for *The Outcome* in 1979, a monthly literary journal (of which Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz was editor-in-chief, a position she held for eleven years). She frequently contributed reviews to *Gazeta Wyborcza* (“Electoral Gazette”), one of the most important Polish dailies of the post-communist era. Her books include: *Yesterday and Today*; *Mirrors of the Poles*; *It Is Life Which Matters for Us*; and other titles.

Sources for Appendix: *Grove Music Online* ([http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo\\_gmo](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo_gmo)); *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* ([http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo\\_t237](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo_t237)); the Polish Cultural Institute of New York website ([www.polishculture-nyc.org](http://www.polishculture-nyc.org)); the Official Homepage of Krzysztof Komeda website ([www.komeda.vernet.pl](http://www.komeda.vernet.pl)); the Culture PL website ([www.culture.pl](http://www.culture.pl)); and Tomasz Szachowski, “Polish Jazz” ([http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es\\_polski\\_jazz](http://www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/es_polski_jazz)). Special thanks to Joseph Franke for his assistance in compiling these biographies.