



musical **ambassadors**
america exports jazz

dizzy gillespie

The Dizzy Gillespie Quartet performs in the Plenary Hall, Kenyatta International Conference Centre.

Nairobi, Kenya, 1973



Representing the United States at ceremonies celebrating the 10th anniversary of Kenyan independence, Gillespie composed a song, "Burning Spear," as a tribute to President Jomo Kenyatta. The musician addressed the audience in Swahili, saying that he considered them his people.

Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

dizzy gillespie

Dizzy Gillespie and many of his band members in front of their plane during a layover.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1956



During this brief stop in the Caribbean, band members recovered from a harrowing experience flying through a hurricane. According to the group's recording engineer and producer, Dave Usher, who was along for the ride, the plane dropped precipitously over 1,000 feet and leveled out just before hitting the water. The history of the cultural diplomats' travels is replete with near misses, uncomfortable means of transportation, illness, and exhaustion. These challenges make their contributions to international understanding all the more impressive.

Courtesy of the Dave Usher Collection. Photograph by Dave Usher.

duke ellington

Duke Ellington and Paul Gonsalves 'take five' for local recreation.

Ctesiphon, Iraq, 1963



The band's opening-night concert in Baghdad was broadcast by the country's only television station. U.S. officials reported that "all over the city thousands sat around television sets in open-air cafes and restaurants or in the comfort of their own homes and enjoyed the artistry of one of the great contemporary figures in American music."

Courtesy of the Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

duke ellington

The Bharatiya Kala Kendra Orchestra performs for 'The Duke.'

New Delhi, India, 1963



Ellington would have appreciated President John F. Kennedy's praise for "the poet, the artist, the musician, [who continues] the quiet work of centuries, building bridges of experience between people, reminding man of the universality of his feeling and desires and despairs, and reminding him that the forces that unite are deeper than those that divide."

Courtesy of the Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

benny goodman

Benny Goodman performs for a young audience in Red Square.

Moscow, Soviet Union, 1962



When Goodman saw members of the Red Army marching toward Lenin's Mausoleum, he couldn't resist breaking into a jazz version of "*Pop Goes the Weasel*"—keeping time with the rhythm of the soldiers' boots. For the children in this photo, the King of Swing became the Pied Piper of Moscow.

Courtesy of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Benny Goodman Papers, Yale University

benny goodman

Benny Goodman, the King of Swing, meets the King of Thailand.

Bangkok, Thailand, 1956



Goodman receives a clarinet from King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The Thai king, an accomplished jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, and trumpeter, was delighted to play with Goodman. They further cemented their musical friendship in 1960 when the sovereign visited Manhattan—jamming with Benny during a rooftop party at the band leader's home.

Courtesy of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Benny Goodman Papers, Yale University.

dizzy gillespie

The Dizzy Gillespie Quartet performs in the Plenary Hall, Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, 1972



Representing the United States of America, celebrating the 50th anniversary of African independence, Gillespie performed at the "Nairobi Session" in a tribute to President Jomo Kenyatta. The musician addressed the audience in Swahili, saying that he was honored to be present.

Source: © David Johnson, courtesy of Meridian International Center

dizzy gillespie

Dizzy Gillespie and many of his band members in front of their plane during a layover, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1958



During his brief visit to the Caribbean, band members returned from a rehearsal in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. According to the group's recording engineer and producer, Dave Liver, who was along for the ride, the group stayed overnight and "Dizzy had some food and just ate everything the whole time. The history of the cultural department is really in music with jazz music, contemporary music of Caribbean folk, blues, and soul. These challenges make their contribution to international understanding of the jazz tradition."

Source: © The New Yorker Collection, Photograph by Rex USA

duke ellington

Duke Ellington and Paul Gonsalves 'take five' for local recreation, Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1943



The band's legendary night concert in Bahía de Cienfuegos was broadcast by the country's radio station, WCAI. It is often reported that "at one of the city's restaurants and around the town, the saxophone and piano players were playing in the middle of their own homes and around the activity of one of the great contemporary figures in American music."

Source: © The New Yorker Collection, Andrew Davis, National Museum of African American History and Culture

duke ellington

The Bhartiya Kala Kendra Orchestra performs for 'The Duke,' New Delhi, India, 1952



Ellington visited the celebrated President Jawahar Lal Nehru in India for "The Duke" the artist, the musician, and the man. He performed the Duke's own compositions, including "The Duke's Blues" and "The Duke's Blues." The musician addressed the audience in Hindi, saying that he was honored to be present.

Source: © The New Yorker Collection, Andrew Davis, National Museum of African American History and Culture

benny goodman

Benny Goodman performs for a young audience in Red Square, Moscow, Soviet Union, 1942



When Goodman saw members of the Red Army marching toward Lenin's Mausoleum, he quickly switched from "The Duke's Blues" to "The Duke's Blues" - "keeping time with the rhythm of the soldier's march." For the children in the square, the King of Swing became the First Paper of Moscow.

Source: © The New Yorker Collection, Andrew Davis, National Museum of African American History and Culture

benny goodman

Benny Goodman, the King of Swing, meets the King of Thailand, Bangkok, Thailand, 1956



Goodman received a personal invitation from King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The King, long an admirer of jazz, was delighted to play with Goodman. They further cemented their mutual friendship in 1960 when the King invited Goodman to perform at a royal party at the King's Palace.

Source: © The New Yorker Collection, Andrew Davis, National Museum of African American History and Culture



This poster show is based on Meridian International Center's *Jam Session* exhibition. See the full show at www.meridian.org/jazzambassadors.



Founded in 1960, Meridian International Center is a not-for-profit organization in Washington dedicated to promoting international understanding through the exchange of people, ideas and culture. Its *Art for Cultural Diplomacy* program creates exhibitions and related activities that emphasize socially relevant topics and important world regions. Meridian's *Jam Session* exhibition has traveled to six continents under the aegis of the U.S. Department of State and has reached millions of people. Learn more at www.meridian.org.



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