The short version of this review is: if you have any interest at all in how the arts and diplomacy work together, go read this book. It is outstanding. The longer version is that editors Damien Mahiet, Mark Ferraguto, and Rebekah Arendt have put together a smart, engaging, and important set of essays on the use of music, musical events, and musical personalities in domestic and international diplomacy. The twelve chapters here, accompanied by a beautifully crafted introduction by the editors, touch on music and peacekeeping, propaganda, and cultural politics ranging from music in “court ceremonial” practices in central and northern Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century to the United States’s recent enterprise in hip hop diplomacy, used globally to spread American foreign policy.

Mahiet, Ferraguto, and Arendt divide the essays into three topical sections: representation, mediation, and negotiation. In the introduction, the editors explain these categories. The essays devoted to representation, they write, deal with the ways in which music and musicians act as representatives of a nation or state, while those on mediation focus on “a third term between competing parties, with peace as its primary raison d'être.” Negotiation “posits an exchange between two or more competing entities and authorizes the form of some accord”; the chapters in this final section examine divided loyalties and collaborative works and spaces (p. 8).

The four chapters on representation span four centuries. Arne Spohr’s study of concealed or hidden music in early modern Europe offers a detailed examination of the cultural capital suggested by the presence of music at court, be it during chapel services or meals, at entertainments such as masques, and even at sporting events. One of the most detailed and fascinating essays in the collection, it presents a close reading of a period account of music during a diplomatic ceremonial in which a French delegation spent fifteen weeks in Denmark being feted and entertained, particularly at pleasure houses. Rooms in such establishments had “sound holes” through which musicians played to patrons; the effect of invisible music streaming through the rooms of the house was considered astonishing and impressive, allowing the visitors to wonder at the technological and artistic marvels of their hosts. The other chapters in this section also engage with political entities using music to try to communicate with or impress those of other nations: Gulia Giovanni writes on the use of Venetian serenatas—lyrical poems for voice and accompaniment—as the perfect vehicles for diplomats to share news and other information with one another during the eighteenth century, when the Venetian doge and his advisors were prohibited by law from speaking with foreigners in the city. Jonathan L. Yaeger discusses the politics of sending the East German Gewandhaus Orchestra on tour as a propagandistic tool of the GDR; and Harm Langenkamp explores the differing approaches to twentieth-century “Silk Road diplomacy” on the parts of China and America.

The section on mediation also reaches from the distant past to the present. Ellen R. Welch explores the concept of universality in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French music and dance treatises, drawing in the histories of philosophy, music theory, and politics along the way. Similarly, Frédéric Ramel studies the concept of “concert” in eighteenth-century philosophy, engaging with the word’s dual meanings of “to agree” and “to perform music” (p. 126). Genre diplomacy in this section comes in the form of Mario Dunkel’s essay on Cold War jazz diplomacy, in which Dunkel analyzes German jazz diplomacy and the role of the Goethe Institut in promoting West German culture both to Soviet bloc countries and the rest of the world. Dunkel discusses the music West German players performed in various venues, and
the importance of those venues themselves—Western Europe, Asia, and Africa, in particular—in the West German program to export its aesthetics and politics. M. Paula Survilla writes on music in the Adrazennie (rebirth) period in Belarus, which began in 1991 and ended in 1994. She offers up information about US-CIA-sponsored musical events and programs that involved both American and Belarusian musicians and coverage of the Belarusian musicians who heavily politicized the performance and production of music during this time.

As with the previous two sections, the essays in the final section, on negotiation, move from the seventeenth century to the near-present. Anne-Madeleine Goulet creates a case study using the life of Marie-Anne de La Trémoille, a French princess who, married to Flavio Orsini, spent much of her life in Rome. Marie-Anne, Goulet writes, “is an excellent witness who can inform us in a trustworthy manner of the relations between Rome and Paris at the end of the seventeenth century” (p. 192). Marie-Anne is a fascinating person in herself, and her accounts provide a wealth of information that Goulet mines in a clear, analytical manner. In his study of Haitian jazz diplomacy, Melvin L. Butler argues that the United States’s diplomacy has never emphasized music as an apparatus for change, but does see “more recent applications of jazz as a cross-cultural diplomatic tool” (p. 209). He goes on to describe musical exchange between Haiti and America and his own experiences performing as a “musical diplomat” (p. 211). Looking to a different geographical area, Kendra Salois examines American hip hop diplomacy in Morocco. Salois creates a case study out of a “failed attempt” at collaboration between an American group and a Moroccan hip hop duo, finding that the American embassy’s lack of understanding of the genre allowed the artists to claim the performance for themselves and express their own political messages. Willow F. Williamson explores issues of technology as means of collaboration in public diplomacy and the role experimental improvisation as cultural negotiation can play in opening channels of communication and expression. An afterword by Danielle Fosler-Lussier draws similarities between the disparate locations and chronological periods of the book’s contents.

All of the essays in this volume are thoughtful and considered, engaging conscientiously with the concepts of power, control, embodiment, performance, audience, and other crucial concepts. I applaud the authors and editors, and recommend this book highly and without hesitation.

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