

# A “Sympathetic” All-American Program

An analysis of the cultural diplomacy aspects of Alfredo Antonini and Marian Anderson’s 1956 concert in Oslo

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# Prologue

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The librarian Emily Ward at the University of Arkansas library gave me valuable advice in the initial phases of my work, and patiently and helpfully answered all my questions. A mention is also needed for the staff at the National Archives of College Park in Washington D.C., who helped me locate relevant materials, both over email before my arrival and upon my visit there in February. The employees at Riksarkivet have also been most helpful in the search for source material, for which I am grateful.

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# Abstract

On September 19th in 1956, the African American singer Marian Anderson was standing on the stage of the University Aula in Oslo. Her eyes shut as she sang the Romance “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” The Italian-American director Alfredo Antonini conducted the Oslo Philharmonic with dynamic hand gestures. The following days, newspapers wrote of a mesmerized audience, moved by Anderson’s soul-stirring and powerful song, as well as her humble and sincere appearance. In a time of racial segregation in the American south and international discomfort by relentless waves of American popular culture, as well as the ever-present shadow of the Cold War, the fine-tuned and subtle musical art of Marian Anderson was quite remarkable to its Norwegian audience. This made her performance all the more valuable for actors and institutions working strategically to influence popular impressions and values through cultural diplomacy. As such, the dignified performance by the American singer on stage in Oslo was a focal point in a Cold War Cultural war – a quiet eye of a raging storm. This ‘storm’, that is the strategic battles and cultural tensions ‘whirling around’ the concert, is the focus of this thesis.

This thesis argues that the Anderson and Antonini concert, which went under the name of UNESCO, was a focal point of different cultural diplomacy agendas. This was partly a result of the transnational work of two Norwegians, namely Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen, who had built extensive social networks in the US with the aim of promoting Norwegian music across the Atlantic. The Americans involved in the planning of the concert, Harold Spivacke, David Cooper and Alfredo Antonini, had agendas that to some extent were in line with the agendas of governmental cultural diplomacy actors in the US. I argue that this blend of private and governmental agendas, and the Norwegian cooperation and engagement, provides an interesting starting point for a further discussion of the complexities of cultural diplomacy in Norway during the Early Cold War.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

In July 1956, the head of the United States Information Service (USIS) office in Oslo, Theodore C. Streibert, visited the Norwegian capital. In an interview with *Morgenposten*, he explained that USIS' 113-million-dollar budget aimed to give foreigners an accurate understanding of US politics and actions. Furthermore, Streibert emphasized a desire for a greater cultural collaboration with both Western and Eastern Europe. The journalist proceeded to ask how the information service could do work domestically, which Streibert dismissed by stating that Europeans too often jump to thinking about terms such as 'segregation' and the 'Ku Klux Klan', quickly changing the subject by discussing future cultural presentations in Northern Europe.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, the African American icon Marian Anderson and the conductor Alfredo Antonini held a concert with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra in the University Aula in Oslo, partly sponsored by the State Department through the private organization the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA).<sup>2</sup> The conductor Antonini, had earlier conducted the classical piece 'Portrait of Ike' which was composed for the Eisenhower election campaign in the early 50's, and was now the conductor of this all-American show starring Marian Anderson.<sup>3</sup>

The concert was a formal cultural exchange between Norway and the United States, orchestrated under the name of UNESCO but also funded by the Norwegian Friends of the Philharmonic and ANTA. The concert was in the interest of several actors and had been planned on the premise of having mutual cultural exchanges in both Norway and the United States within the same season. The head of the musical department of the United States Information Agency (USIA), David Cooper, told *Aftenposten* about this mutually beneficial agreement shortly after the concert, stating that "Norwegian music has been given a chance to be displayed in the United States", continuing by stating that "Both in the current world situation and towards the future, us Americans believe in the benefit of increased cultural exchanges between our countries." The journalist preceded to ask why Cooper believed American conductors were interested in performing Norwegian music in the states, and Cooper connected this question to American cultural exchanges, indirectly comparing the situations in the US and Norway:

First and foremost, I believe it is because of the idealism of these times. The nations want to understand each other. At least they might understand each

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<sup>1</sup> Oh, «Informasjon som skal forene folk,» *Morgenposten*, July 21, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, «Filharmonisk selskap foran en rik sesong,» *Aftenposten*, August 31, 1956; Veronica, «Den store Amerikanske representasjonskonsert,» *Aftenposten*, September 19, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Baba, «USA-Norge utveksler musikk,» *Morgenbladet*, September 19, 1956.

other, and music is one of the means. We have seen examples of this in the state-sponsored tours that Marian Anderson, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Porgy and Bess ensemble have executed with great success.<sup>4</sup>

American officials often referenced a post-World War idealism in relation to these cultural exchanges. USIA's programs from the early 1950's were designed "to convince people abroad that US goals were in harmony with their hopes for freedom, progress and peace."<sup>5</sup> Despite a link to governmental agendas, the event was also the result of private initiatives in both countries. The result was a concert with unclear and in some cases contrasting strategies and agendas. These complexities illustrate a need for further investigation into the dynamics of cultural diplomacy. With this in mind, the thesis seeks to place itself within a wide array of perspectives in studies of Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War. The research question is:

*How did Alfredo Antonini and Marian Anderson's concert in Oslo in 1956, become a focal point of different cultural diplomacy agendas and strategies?*

The question encompasses a variety of perspectives. Giving a well-structured delimitation is key to avoid overcomplications. For this reason, I have chosen to include a battery of sub questions, which will help clarify how the thesis seeks to answer the research question.

To understand the agendas and strategies of the concert, it is necessary to know and contextualize the actors and agendas involved. One of the sub questions of the thesis is *who were involved in the planning, execution, and evaluation of the concert, and what agendas did they have?* This question is challenging, as it moves beyond governmental agendas and strategies of cultural diplomacy. However, understanding individualistic aims and in some cases conflicting agendas is a necessary process of elimination; as private agendas and strategies are uncovered and discussed, one obtains a clearer image of the nature of the state policies involved and furthermore the interplay between these two.

A second sub question is: *how was the concert received in Norwegian media?* Understanding and contextualizing the Norwegian audience and how the concert was perceived by the population, as far as what was reflected by newspaper coverage, contributes to our understanding of how these strategic efforts were received and how actors' strategies and agendas are reflected

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, «Norsk musikk stort representert i amerikansk kulturutveksling», *Aftenposten*, November 1, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>5</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "How Good Are We? Culture and the Cold War," in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, ed. Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 272.

in these articles. Furthermore, this question allows for a contextualization of governmental policies in that the articles display the Norwegian public's opinion, both on the specific performances but also the underlying opinion on the US. A related third question is: *how was the concert evaluated by the relevant actors?* Like the previous question, this will reflect agendas and strategies, and by extension help our understanding of the research question.

## Historiography

Cultural diplomacy during the Cold War is a topic that has been gaining traction within the field of Cold War questions in what has been labeled a cultural turn in Cold War studies.<sup>6</sup> The early studies often encompassed explorations of US organizations and governmental actors within different cultural programs with state policies, with a focus on *soft power*, which is a term introduced by American political scientist Joseph S. Nye in his 2004 book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. In short, he argues that the exportation of American culture has been crucial in establishing US soft power, which easily explained as obtaining power through attraction rather than active persuasion.<sup>7</sup> The use of culture as a mode of exportation of American virtues and values was an important part of US foreign policy during the early Cold War, and is broadly referred to as *public diplomacy*, explained by the British historian Nicholas J. Cull as “an international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics.”<sup>8</sup> Cull's *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* was published in 2008 and is a vital, comprehensive exploration of the USIA's role in US public diplomacy during the Cold War.

A subcategory of public diplomacy is *cultural diplomacy*. This theoretical approach has been further explored by the German historian Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht in multiple contributions, including the 2010 book *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*.<sup>9</sup> She argues that studies in the field have been dominated by US-Soviet structures, and she aims to “cast a wider net” and write about cultural diplomacy in different regions.<sup>10</sup> Having said that, dynamics of US-Soviet tensions had tangible effects on the entirety of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, and as

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith, “Introduction: Boundaries to Freedom,” in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), xv, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817151>.

<sup>9</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, eds., *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, vol. 6, Explorations in Culture and International History Series (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Gienow-Hecht, “How Good Are We?”; Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “The World Is Ready to Listen: Symphony Orchestras and the Global Performance of America,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (January 2012): 17–28, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2011.01005.x>; Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “Shame on U.S.? Academics, Cultural Transfer, and the Cold War: A Critical Review,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 3 (2000): 465–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0145-2096.00227>.

<sup>10</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, 6:3–4.



such serve as important context when analyzing cultural diplomacy in any region during the period of interest.

In his research, the German historian Alexander Stephan considers both cultural diplomacy and a market-driven exportation of culture as important factors in the Americanization of Europe during the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Nye claims that soft power has occasionally been undermined by controversial foreign policies but that this often happened without affecting American cultural influence, which highlights the importance of acknowledging culture as an independent force moving beyond foreign policies and traditional propaganda.<sup>12</sup> The historians Hans Krabbendam and Scott-Smith add to this point by arguing that even if culture can be used with the intention of achieving specific political goals, the “autonomous nature” of the performances can obscure the image that officials wanted to create.<sup>13</sup>

American race relations was an important aspect of US cultural Cold War engagements. The American historian Thomas Borstelmann published *The Cold War and the Color Line* in 2001.<sup>14</sup> He states that discrimination and segregation was a key US weakness during the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> He further illustrates that race relations both domestically and internationally during the period is crucial context in understanding US Cold War objectives and foreign policy strategies.

The study of race relations in cultural diplomacy has often been dominated by studies of jazz. Penny M. Von Eschen’s contribution *Satchmo Blows Up the World* from 2004 and Lisa E. Davenport’s book *Jazz Diplomacy* from 2009 both provide well-researched contributions in the field, with explanations of how this section of American foreign policy was linked to race relations and domestic struggles, through the State Department’s Cultural Presentations Program.<sup>16</sup> They both elaborate on the extent, motivation and organization of US jazz diplomacy in different parts of the world, and remove us from “a bipolar view of the Cold War,” with a focus that moves beyond U.S.-Soviet optics.<sup>17</sup> The American musicology professor Danielle Fosler-

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, Repr. (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 6. Other important contributions in the field of Americanization include Rob Kroes, *If You’ve Seen One, You’ve Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Richard H. Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II*, 1st ed (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997); Volker R. Berghahn, “European Elitism, American Money and Popular Culture,” in *The American Century in Europe*, ed. R. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Krabbendam and Scott-Smith, “Introduction,” 9.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Another important contribution in this field; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 268.

<sup>16</sup> Von Eschen, Penny M., *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era*, American Made Music Series (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 14.

Lussier includes other genres in the discussion of cultural diplomacy and race relations in her contribution *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* published in 2015, where she discusses African American ambassadors and “The Negro Spiritual” in US cultural diplomacy.<sup>18</sup>

Alexander Stephan argues that the ‘eastern bloc’ of Europe has been of larger interest to historians traditionally.<sup>19</sup> Studies of US cultural diplomacy in Western Europe have nevertheless increased in later years. The Norwegian historian Sigrød Øvreås Svendal wrote her dissertation on the topic of American influence on Scandinavian dance during the Cold War.<sup>20</sup> Her doctoral dissertation *Come Dance With Us* from 2014 discusses US cultural diplomacy as a channel of influence in Scandinavia from 1950 to 1980. Her study highlights efforts of influence in the field of dance made by USIS, ANTA and the State Department. She also discusses two other channels, namely a market-driven influence and individual initiatives made by artists.

Helge Danielsen is an important Norwegian historian within the field of public diplomacy in Norway.<sup>21</sup> In his 2009 article, “Making Friends at Court”, Danielsen found that most public diplomacy efforts in Norway from 1950 to 1965 were *slow media* efforts, which included various exchange programs, academic collaborations and cultural presentations.<sup>22</sup> The Cold War effort of proving that American culture was more than commercial and cheap examples of culture, is a topic that has been discussed extensively in regard to US cultural diplomacy in Europe.<sup>23</sup> The article “American Culture as ‘High Culture’” was published in 2015 and concludes that classical music and high culture was used more extensively than popular culture in cultural diplomacy programs during the early Cold War.

It is important to note that Danielsen’s interest mainly lies with US strategic actors and does not extensively consider private motivations outside of these. Ingeborg Synnøve Nortvedt Bjør wrote her thesis in 2017, on the topic of American cultural diplomacy’s mediation of art in Norway from 1965 to 1977. Her contribution to the field, like Svendal’s dissertation, illustrates the collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions.

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<sup>18</sup> Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 101–22, 126–33.

<sup>19</sup> Stephan, *The Americanization of Europe*, 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> Also, see Svendal’s thesis, which discusses American influence in Norway during the period more specifically: Sigrød Øvreås Svendal, “Amerikansk påvirkning på norsk scene- og populærdans i perioden 1945–1975” (Masteroppgave, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Helge Danielsen, “Making Friends at Court: Slow and Indirect Media in US Public Diplomacy in Norway, 1950–1965,” *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 2 (2009): 179–98; Helge Danielsen, “American Culture as ‘High Culture’: U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in Norway, 1950–65,” in *Nordic Cold War Cultures: Ideological Promotion, Public Reception, and East-West Interactions*, ed. Valur Ingimundarson and Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Aleksanteri Cold War Series 2 (Helsinki, 2015), 17–42; Helge Danielsen, “Pro-atlantisk påvirkningspolitikk i Norge i årene rundt 1949,” *Internasjonal Politikk* 77, no. 1 (2019): 108, <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v77.1620>; Helge Danielsen, “Nettverksbygging som sikkerhetspolitikk: USAs Foreign Leader Program i Norge, 1950–1965,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 101, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 141–56, <https://doi.org/10.18261/ht.101.2.5>.

<sup>22</sup> Danielsen, “Making Friends at Court,” 184.

<sup>23</sup> Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture 35 (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Danielsen, “Making Friends at Court,” 179.

She also points to the fact that these initiatives often were results of collaboration with actors in the receiving countries. However, her study focuses on three American actors.<sup>24</sup> Other historians have combined these aspects in depth, such as the previously mentioned Fosler-Lussier and Svendal.

In addition to the field of US cultural diplomacy, some Norwegian historians have started to show interest in Norwegian cultural diplomacy in the same period. Ragnhild Eitungjerde Høyvik wrote her thesis on the function of the Office of Cultural Relations from 1945 to 1973 in 2014.<sup>25</sup> Svein Ivar Angell has later added to our knowledge of this office, their respective aims during the postwar period and the use of music in Norwegian cultural diplomacy.<sup>26</sup>

Sigrid Øvreås Svendal has done important research in the field related to another expression in US cultural diplomacy, but as she acknowledges in her dissertation, the number one priority of the Cultural Presentations program in the region was symphonies,<sup>27</sup> and as such, further studies on the topic are needed. With the current state of the field's historiography in mind, this thesis is written in an effort to fill the gap by researching aspects that have yet to be explored, and specifically in relation to music. Examples of areas that are currently not researched extensively that this thesis will cover include Norwegian collaboration in US cultural diplomacy and the complexities in the agendas and strategies of the efforts carried out on both sides, as well as how these efforts were related to the US achilles heel in foreign relations, being foreign opinion on domestic racial discrimination.

## Conceptualization

Marian Anderson and Alfredo Antonini's performance in Norway was like an eye of a storm, with different strategic engagements and cultural tensions whirling on the outside. The metaphor of "the eye of the storm" encaptures the concert as a focal point for different actors, institutions and tendencies. It is a basic conceptualization of complex entanglements of forces with varying agendas, motivations and aims that were working to influence target audiences in Norway, and by extension the US, through a seemingly simple cultural exchange. This approach

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<sup>24</sup> Ingeborg Synnøve Nortvedt Bjur, "Collagediplomati: Det amerikanske kulturdiplomatiets formidling av amerikansk billedkunst i Norge 1965-1977" (Master, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2017), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ragnhild Eitungjerde Høyvik, "Fram fra skjoldets skygge: Norsk arbeid med kulturrelasjoner overfor utlandet 1945-1973" (Master, Bergen, Universitetet i Bergen, 2014), <https://bora.uib.no/bora-xmlui/bitstream/handle/1956/8385/119573022.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>26</sup> Svein Ivar Angell, "The Office for Cultural Relations: Representing Norway in the Post-War Period," in *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Representing the Periphery*, ed. Louis Clerc, Nikolas Glover, and Paul Jordan, vol. 12, *Diplomatic Studies* (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2015); Svein Ivar Angell, "Imaging Norway by Using the Past," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 47, no. 5 (October 20, 2022): 668–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2022.2061046>.

<sup>27</sup> Sigrid Øvreås Svendal, "Come Dance With Us: Amerikansk påvirkning på scenedansen i Skandinavia 1950-1980" (Dr. art. avhandling, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2014), 38–39.

relates to Øyvind Tønnesson's prism method of historical enquiry.<sup>28</sup> The idea was originally described by Birgitte Possing, stating that historical biographies can be regarded as a prism "in which the light of history is refracted and the perspective raises the central figure as representative of a time, a historical situation, a type, a social phenomenon, or a culture."<sup>29</sup> I hold that the same approach is applicable and fruitful in studies of less biographically centered transnational phenomena, by substituting the biography with a cultural happening through which broader perspectives and tendencies can be grasped.

The term *Cultural Diplomacy* has been discussed by a number of scholars in the field, with a large majority emphasizing US cultural diplomacy in a Cold War context. In her book *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy*, Jessica Gienow-Hecht introduces what she labels 'Three Schools of Thought' within the field and argues that all three "walk a fine line between propaganda and information, between state institutions and nongovernmental organizations."<sup>30</sup> While the first two trends align themselves more with the understanding of cultural diplomacy as something mainly governmental, the third trend considers the heterogeneous nature of these exchanges, with some even arguing that cultural diplomacy includes any and all efforts of citizens of a country in promoting the culture of their country.<sup>31</sup>

This thesis does not abide by the extreme of this definition, void of any reference to governmental agendas, but rather one that acknowledges and analyzes the heterogeneity of cultural diplomacy through the lens of state agendas, and how these private initiatives both aligned with and differed from overarching governmental strategies. This can be challenging, in that "the very definition of state interests become blurred and multiply."<sup>32</sup> However, embracing this mess can lead to some interesting discoveries, as proven by Fosler-Lussier and her book *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*. She argues that in many cases, cultural diplomacy was shaped by requests or wishes from natives of various nations who were positive to American guest performances.<sup>33</sup> She argues that social relationships were instrumental in both the execution, planning and results of these concerts, and that US cultural diplomacy was "not pouring information into a bucket but collaborating and communicating in many different directions at once."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Øyvind Tønnesson, "With Christian L. Lange as a Prism: A Study of Transnational Peace Politics, 1899-1919" (Dr. art., Oslo, Universitet i Oslo, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Birgitte Possing, "Biography: Historical," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier, 2015), 647, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.62132-3>.

<sup>30</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, 6:10.

<sup>31</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, 6:10.

<sup>32</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, 6:10.

<sup>33</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 3, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Fosler-Lussier, 5–6.

There are a few terms being used in this thesis who require closer examination. The terms *strategy* and *agenda* are closely related and not easily distinguishable. Britannica defines the word *strategy* as “a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal usually over a long period of time.”<sup>35</sup> This thesis considers strategies to be plans and practical approaches in the execution of *agendas*. The word *agenda* is often explained as having a secretive quality, as in the definition given by Britannica; “a plan or goal that guides someone’s behavior and that is often kept secret.”<sup>36</sup> This thesis adjusts this definition slightly to the purpose of the study by understanding an agenda as a secretive goal or aim of influencing a group of people. A key difference between the two in the definitions given by Britannica is that strategies are described as long term and perhaps more overarching, whereas agendas are more specific to certain initiatives or programs. This distinction of emphasis will be reflected throughout the thesis.

## Primary sources

I have found primary sources for this thesis by searching through archives of the main actors involved in planning the Marian Anderson concert, that is the USIS, State Department, ANTA and the Norwegian Composers’ Association (NCA) headed by Klaus Egge. The process of reading the acquired material can best be described to have been a hermeneutic circle, in that the project started with a presumed notion of the topic, which after consulting a large variety of source material evolved to a more nuanced, holistic and contextualized understanding of the questions I had initially been interested in.<sup>37</sup>

Meeting minutes and other memorandums from ANTA can be found in the archives of the University of Arkansas. These documents have been valuable in analyzing the Music Advisory Panel’s assessments, agendas and strategies, as well as the dynamics between the panel and other actors of US cultural diplomacy. Most documents considered are within a ten-year time frame to provide context, but with particular emphasis on the years from 1955 to 1957, as I believed that most documents concerning the particular concert would be within this period. In addition, these documents were retrieved digitally, and there was a practical limit on the amount of material one could request. Much of the material has been analyzed extensively by other scholars in the field.

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<sup>35</sup> Britannica Dictionary, s.v. “Strategy”, accessed May 16, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/strategy>.

<sup>36</sup> Britannica Dictionary, s.v. “Agenda”, accessed May 16, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/agenda>.

<sup>37</sup> Knut Kjeldstadli, *Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var: En innføring i historiefaget*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1999), 123–24.

Sources from the National Archives in College Park have also been consulted, and the work in these archives was challenging. As stated by Ingeborg Bjur in her thesis, material from USIS-posts and the cultural attachés of the embassy has in many cases been lost.<sup>38</sup> I did nevertheless acquire sources from the archives of the State Department, the American embassy, USIA and USIS. These are governmental or official sources, meaning most are written with that in mind. Some documents are perhaps slightly exaggerated, as for instance reports from USIS on the programs carried out, which are normally very positive in their evaluations. These sources have been analyzed by several scholars as well, often in combination with source material from Arkansas.

Sources from Riksarkivet bring nuance to a topic which has often been dominated by American source material. A large number of letters, meeting minutes, reports and other official or unofficial documents considers an aspect of Norwegian foreign policy and the Norwegian musical scene during the early Cold War that has received limited research as of now. The archives of the Norwegian Office of Cultural Relations have been looked at previously, but the archives of the NCA are to my knowledge unexplored within the field. Sources concerning Klaus Egge and the NCA are less formal and official and are part of a private archive. For this reason, they are often more expressive and opinionated. The archives of NCA also include correspondence with the Norwegian Information Office. Sources concerning the Norwegian Office of Cultural Relations and the Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO are governmental and official, and often appear more ‘neutral’ and ‘to the point’.

Lastly, newspaper articles from a variety of Norwegian newspapers are particularly important in considering sentiments in the Norwegian public, as well as the reception of the concert. These articles have been found by using particular word-searches within short time frames, as for instance searching “Marian Anderson” and limiting the time period to 1950 to 1960. These searches have made it easier to locate relevant materials and have given a valuable overview both of the reception and planning of the concert. Political biases in various newspapers is considered but does decisively diminish the value of these as primary sources of sentiments within the Norwegian public and media at the time.

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<sup>38</sup> Bjur, “Collagediplomati,” 24.

## Structure

The second chapter of this thesis will provide a background to the complex dynamics considered. The early Cold War is already a complex field, which is further intensified by the inclusion of culture and race relations in the context of Cold War politics. The chapter will attempt to shortly outline major developments in Norwegian-American relations. The main focus will be on developments after the Second World War and up until the 1956 concert. In addition, dynamics regarding culture will be highlighted, particularly Western European disdain for American culture and Americanization.

The third chapter is the first analytical chapter of this thesis, where relevant strategies and agendas in relation to the concert will be discussed, and relevant organizations and actors introduced. The fourth chapter will consider the reception of the concert in Norwegian media, as well as American and Norwegian evaluation of the concert. This is to consider how the concert was perceived and how this reflects the relevant agendas. In addition, I will briefly explore how the involved actors themselves evaluated the impact of the concert.

The fifth and final chapter will summarize my findings and giving an answer to my research question as well as the battery of sub questions. The end of the conclusion will be a discussion on the potential for future studies.

## Chapter 2 Background

In addition to considering the anti-totalitarian and anti-communist sentiments after the Second World War, a longer perspective on Western European and American cultural relations is crucial for historians seeking to understand the dynamics of the Cultural Cold War in this area.<sup>39</sup> The inclusion of a background chapter in this thesis is thus necessary to provide context in a field riddled with complexities. This chapter will outline these developments in a precise and economical manner within the limitations of the thesis, and with a focus on cultural exchanges.

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<sup>39</sup> Krabbendam and Scott-Smith, "Introduction," 10.

## Norwegian-American cultural relations towards the 1950s

Norwegian-American relations stretch back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1836 to 1915, more than 750,000 Norwegians emigrated to North America.<sup>40</sup> The 1862 “Homestead Act” reinforced the notion of America as “the promised land,” and resulted in the creation of Norwegian villages throughout the American prairie.<sup>41</sup> The large number of Norwegians who emigrated left behind family members and loved ones. Some of these emigrants also later returned to Norway, bringing elements of American culture with them. These familiar transatlantic connections and travels linked Norway culturally to the emerging superpower from an early stage.<sup>42</sup>

Part of these cultural exchanges were visits from artists. The exchange of American musicians before the Second World War was largely market-driven and privately financed. According to Cull, “the United States trusted its international image to private enterprise, which at the time meant missionaries, touring ‘blackface’ minstrels and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show.”<sup>43</sup> For African-American artists, this market-driven exchange was coupled with a desire to escape from a post-abolition America where social conditions had hardly improved, and in many cases, worsened.<sup>44</sup> Although social conditions bettered towards the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African American musicians continued to tour Europe, many publicly citing discrimination and marginalization at home as a reason for their preferred European presence.<sup>45</sup>

Marian Anderson was one of these African American artists, and in the late interwar period she became a well-known singer in Scandinavia with a large audience base. After her first concert in Norway in 1930, she returned to Europe for an extended period of two years. Her tour schedule in the US remained unchanged despite her success in Scandinavian countries, leading her to temporarily focus on touring Europe and particularly cities in Scandinavia.<sup>46</sup> After her initial visit in 1930 and up until 1934, Anderson returned to venues both in Oslo and in other cities every single year.<sup>47</sup> In other words, her reach at home was likely smaller and less consistent

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<sup>40</sup> Nils Olav Østrem, *Norsk Utvandringshistorie*, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2014), 33.

<sup>41</sup> Østrem, 64–65.

<sup>42</sup> Østrem, 61.

<sup>43</sup> Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Erlend Hegdal, “Charleston i Grukkedalen: Afrikansk-amerikanske artister i Norge før 1940” (Dr. art. avhandling, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2015), 22–23.

<sup>45</sup> Ethelene Whitmire, “Musicians Find ‘Utopia’ in Denmark: African American Jazz Expatriates,” in *Migration and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia*, ed. Eric Einhorn, Harbison Sherrill, and Huss Markus (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022), 283–88.

<sup>46</sup> Marian Anderson, *My Lord, What A Morning* (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), 146–47, <https://archive.org/details/mylordwha-tamorni012600mbp/page/n7/mode/2up>.

<sup>47</sup> Hegdal, “Charleston i Grukkedalen,” xxxii–xxxiii.



than it was on the other side of the Atlantic. Anderson frequently mentions Scandinavia as an important milestone in her career in her 1956 autobiography *My Lord, What a Morning*, stating that her concerts in these countries helped her “realize that the time and energy invested in seeking to become an artist were worthwhile, and that what I had dared to aspire to was not impossible.”<sup>48</sup>

Western Europe had a love-hate relationship with the cross-Atlantic cultural exports during the 1940s and 50s. Although a number of people were critical of American culture, a considerable amount consumed everything American, from Donald Duck to Louis Armstrong.<sup>49</sup> As stated by Victoria De Grazia, Europe was the place where the American market empire was first built, continuing by explaining that “it had to confront the authority that the European region had accumulated since the age of merchant capitalism as the center of vast imperial wealth, astute commercial know-how, and great good taste.”<sup>50</sup>

American officials were aware that the large export of American mass culture was a double-edged sword. American culture was by a number of Europeans regarded as cheap copies of their own high culture, or even simply as “trashy, vulgar and primitive” displays of culture.<sup>51</sup> The USIA believed Scandinavians to have a certain distain towards American culture, reporting that many subscribed to the “myth that Americans have no culture”.<sup>52</sup> As explained by Pells:

When Europeans contemplated the ‘culture’ of the United States, they were not thinking about America’s postwar leadership in science, literature, painting, or architecture, as officers at the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency would have preferred. For Europeans in the 1940s and 1950s, even more than for their predecessors in the 1920s, American culture meant movies, jazz, rock and roll, newspapers, mass-circulation magazines, advertising, comic strips, and ultimately television.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to these cultural anxieties, domestic discrimination tainted the image of American democracy, and was used extensively in anti-American propaganda. The Norwegian

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<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *My Lord, What A Morning*, 145.

<sup>49</sup> Svendal, “Come Dance With Us,” 57; Pells, *Not like Us*, 204–5.

<sup>50</sup> Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4–5.

<sup>51</sup> Berghahn, “European Elitism, American Money and Popular Culture,” 117.

<sup>52</sup> Svendal, “Come Dance With Us,” 57.

<sup>53</sup> Pells, *Not like Us*, 204.

propaganda poster “Kultur-terror” was displayed by the fascist party Nasjonal Samling in the main street of Oslo in 1943, and clearly plays on some core tenets of a cultural anti-Americanism that these propagandists were trying to tap into during German occupation of Norway. It plays on a trope of the USA as a land of internal ambivalence, contradictions and hypocrisy. The image includes references to the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, black slaves, American music and capitalism. In front of the multi-faceted figure displaying all these references, a small poster reads: “The US wants to save Europe’s culture from doom: With what right?”<sup>54</sup>

World War II brought with it a “new age of propaganda,” with a number of Americans believing that psychological warfare was an indisputable part of fighting a war.<sup>55</sup> This belief, along with a growing concern of communist propaganda, had a profound effect on American national security strategies during the early Cold War.<sup>56</sup> American information initiatives in Norway after the war were however not as extensive as British efforts when it came to anti-Communist propaganda. As stated by Eirik Wig Sundvall, the State Department preferred public diplomacy to more overt propaganda in the early years.<sup>57</sup> Disregarding a short period in the beginning of the 1950s, US officials continuously preferred public diplomacy during the 1950s, as they believed Norwegians were particularly sensitive to propaganda.<sup>58</sup>

The end of the Second World War was a turning point both in American information initiatives and in Norwegian foreign policy. As put by Tamnes, the global and bilateral power structure of the Cold War was drastically different from older European systems,<sup>59</sup> meaning Norwegian neutrality was difficult to uphold. Efforts were made from 1944 to 1948 with the “bridge-building” policy, which had the aim of maintaining friendly relations to both powers. As Danielsen and Pharo states, this was done by “keeping as low a profile as possible over issues where East and West strongly disagreed.”<sup>60</sup> The Marshall Plan was launched in 1947 and proved to be a challenge to this low-profile stance, with the ultimate choice of the government being to participate, partly as a response to Soviet expansionist foreign policies.<sup>61</sup> As explained by Danielsen,

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<sup>54</sup> Justismuseet, NRM.05181, Propagandaplakat «Kultur-terror», Harald Damsleth og Nasjonal Samling, <https://digitaltmuseum.no/011025364447/plakat>. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth A. Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 31–32.

<sup>56</sup> Osgood, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Eirik Wig Sundvall, “Propaganda ‘Worth an Army’: The Norwegian Labour Party, Haakon Lie and the Transnational Dissemination of Cold War Propaganda, 1945–55,” *The International History Review* 42, no. 4 (July 3, 2020): 876–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1622586>.

<sup>58</sup> Sundvall, 879.

<sup>59</sup> Rolf Tamnes, “Et lite land i stormaktspolitikken,” *Internasjonal Politikk* 72, no. 03 (September 23, 2015): 385–86, <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-1757-2015-03-04>.

<sup>60</sup> Helge Danielsen and Helge Pharo, “Reception and Representations of the Marshall Plan in Norway,” in *Images of the Marshall Plan in Europe: Films, Photographs, Exhibits, Posters*, vol. 3, Transatlantica (StudienVerlag, 2009), 88.

<sup>61</sup> Danielsen, “Pro-atlantisk påvirkningspolitikk,” 110.

the European Recovery Programme was “combined with a comprehensive propaganda- and information offensive”, and was meant to build trust with the respective countries. He further explains that the Marshall Plan information service distributed films, manufactured news stories and pamphlets, and was leading for future public diplomacy initiatives in Norway.<sup>62</sup>

## Cultural Diplomacy

Coupled with an increase of American strategies of influence, Norwegian foreign policies had a similar development. The Office of Cultural Relations, under the Norwegian Foreign Office, was established in 1950,<sup>63</sup> largely due to an increased focus on the role of culture as a peace-promoting factor in a world traumatized by recent conflicts. A report from the office from 1956 stated that Norway had a responsibility of participating in international cultural relations “both because we want to consider ourselves as a high-ranking nation in culture, and because Norway is a small state which hinders speculations in what motive[s] may be behind cultural activities.”<sup>64</sup> The effort of making Norwegian music more known abroad was considered important, as the office reported that Edvard Grieg was the only Norwegian composer with significant international recognition.<sup>65</sup> The office added that a third motivation was to create goodwill, which in the long run could lead to an increased understanding for Norwegian policies abroad and an upper hand in negotiations.<sup>66</sup> From 1950 to 1956, the office only had one bilateral cultural agreement with the United States, which was the Fulbright program.<sup>67</sup>

The Office of Cultural Relations, with an independent commission named the Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO, also resumed responsibility for cases related to UNESCO.<sup>68</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was a sub organization under the newly established United Nations, with the aim of increasing understanding between nations as well as promoting peace and justice through cultural collaboration.<sup>69</sup> An important

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<sup>62</sup> Danielsen, 110–11.

<sup>63</sup> Høyvik, “Fram fra skjoldets skygge,” 1.

<sup>64</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, Om virksomheten ved kontoret for kulturelt samkvem med utlandet, 1950–56, 2. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>65</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 32.

<sup>66</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 13, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 3, 6–7.

<sup>69</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 17. Om Norges deltakelse i De Forente Nasjoners Organisasjon for Undervisning, Vitenskap og Kultur (UNESCO), 1956, 1; UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, November 16, 1945, available at: <https://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/14/14-01/constitution-unesco.html>

member of this commission was the Norwegian composer Klaus Egge, a key actor within this web of strategies and agendas who will be discussed further and introduced properly.<sup>70</sup>

As previously mentioned, World War II brought with it a heightened focus on propaganda, and in 1953, the United States Information Agency was established, with the aim of “telling America’s Story to the World.”<sup>71</sup> The Agency was responsible for communicating directly with populations of foreign countries, as opposed to traditional diplomats. The belief was that this communication would ultimately help the United States create sympathy for their political goals. The agency appointed posts abroad which were in close collaboration with the embassies. These posts went under the name of the *United States Information Service*.<sup>72</sup> The posts were independent with the responsibility of conducting US cultural diplomacy in the respective countries.<sup>73</sup>

In 1954, Dwight Eisenhower authorized an emergency fund “to meet extraordinary or unusual expenses arising in the international affairs of the Government” in July of 1954.<sup>74</sup> Up to this point, the State Department’s Cultural Relations Office, which was founded in 1939, had not been a collective effort but rather a result of multiple private and governmental interests.<sup>75</sup> The purpose of this emergency fund was twofold. The first motivation was to demonstrate “to the world that the United States has highly developed artistic abilities and cultural accomplishments all [on] its own and is making an important contribution to the ‘arts of peace’.” The second was to contribute to an increased understanding and friendlier relations with other nations through the “international language of music, arts and athletics,” which ultimately meant to improve foreign relations with nations through cultural presentations.<sup>76</sup> These motivations were undoubtedly similar to the aims of the Norwegian Office of Cultural Relations.

The emergency fund was to be used for the State Department’s Cultural Presentations Program. Rather than assigning this program to the USIA, who had already been executing similar tours, the State Department chose to involve a private organization, namely ANTA. Up until 1962,

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<sup>70</sup> See chapter 3, “Norwegian agendas and strategies.”

<sup>71</sup> Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, i.

<sup>72</sup> The United States Information Agency refers to the large and central organization in the US, whereas the United States Information Service functioned as a cover name abroad with the foreign posts. The word “agency” was believed to send the wrong message, causing this name change. Svendal, “Come Dance With Us,” 43.

<sup>73</sup> Svendal, 43. More information on USIS areas of responsibility can be found in Chapter 3, “American agendas and strategies”.

<sup>74</sup> National Archives College Park (NACP), Record Group (RG) 59, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Policy Review and Coordination Staff*, Country Files, 1955-1966. Box 32, folder “Country Background – Oslo”. Program planning analysis of Educational Exchange and related exchange-of-persons activities for Norway, May 2, 1956; Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Fosler-Lussier, 11.

<sup>76</sup> NACP, RG 59, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 32, folder “Country Background – Oslo”. Program planning analysis, May 2, 1956.

the State Department appointed ANTA as the “professional agent of the Government of the United States in carrying out the activities” of the Cultural Presentations Program.<sup>77</sup> The Department stated in a program planning analysis from May in 1956 in regard to Norway, that they wanted the program to be “to the maximum extent possible” executed by private organizations.<sup>78</sup> Responsibilities included appointing advisory panels to consider artists and programs in different areas, as well as the general administration of the program. The State Department had the final say-so in regard to the decisions made by ANTA. However, as stated by Svendal, the committee rarely disapproved of decisions made by ANTA, meaning the Music Advisory Panel was highly influential in the administration of the program.<sup>79</sup>

The Cultural Presentations Program in Norway was not as extensive as in other areas but was considered as a “Sensitive area” by the State Department in 1950, and in a list of seven “areas of concern”, this area was fifth, being ranked slightly higher on fourth place in regard to priorities.<sup>80</sup> Western-Europe received the most cultural presentations in the beginning of the program as these countries were more cooperative and open, and the vast majority of these tours were within the field of arts.<sup>81</sup>

The maltreatment of African Americans in the US was a topic of high interest in foreign countries at the time, including Norway. A news article from 1952 about the ‘Negro problem’ read “White and black children cannot play together, and Ralph Bunche and Mari[a]n Anderson cannot go to a hot-dog stand for whites”.<sup>82</sup> As a response to this, the Department of State, USIA and USIS frequently orchestrated exchanges of persons (with many countries including Norway) within a variety of programs to quash criticism of US segregation and discrimination. An example of an event like this was the lecture “The Changing Status of the American Negro” held by the lawyer Edith S. Sampson in Oslo in January 1952. The office reported on mixed reactions, as the lecture was held for a variety of organizations. The audience of the Oslo Working Society included names such as the important labor politician Aase Lionæs. Another significant labor politician, Haakon Lie, was her interpreter. The lecture was described to have been “extremely well received.”<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, the audience of the Norway-America

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<sup>77</sup> University of Arkansas, Special Collections Fayetteville (CU), Box 100, folder 1. “The International Exchange Program of the American National Theatre and Academy: Procedural Provisions with Respect to Advisory Panels,” (n.d.)

<sup>78</sup> NACP, RG 59, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 32, folder “Country Background – Oslo”. Program planning analysis, May 2, 1956.

<sup>79</sup> Svendal, “Come Dance With Us,” 54.

<sup>80</sup> Svendal, 39–40.

<sup>81</sup> Svendal, 39.

<sup>82</sup> Jos Norborg, “Negerproblemet i Amerika – den hvite manns problem», *Nationen*, December 6, 1952. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>83</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Office of the Assistant Director for Europe*, Subject Files for Northern Europe, 1948-1962, Box 2, folder “Edith Sampson Tour”, Memorandum from Embassy in Oslo to Department of State, February 5, 1952.

Association had some members stating that the speech was “the most obvious kind of propaganda [...] naively optimistic,” with more echoing these sentiments, stating that the speech was “too optimistic” and “too much like State Department propaganda.”<sup>84</sup>

In November of 1955, the Norwegian labor prime minister Einar Gerhardsen visited Moscow to discuss expanding the cultural exchange programs between Norway and the Soviet Union. All of the suggestions for these sixteen cultural exchanges were outlined in a report from the American embassy in Oslo to the State Department. From July to December of 1955, two major cultural presentations took place in Oslo, with the Peiping Opera Company playing “to sold-out houses and enthusiastic Norwegian audiences,” and an art company sent from the Soviet Union, “consisting of first-class music performers.”<sup>85</sup> The increased cultural collaboration between the Soviet Union and Norway, and by extension countries with communist influence, was deeply concerning to American officials. As stated in a report from the Educational Exchange Program from 1954, the American embassy was “disturbed” over the increased Soviet cultural influence, stating that:

Though Norwegian sympathy still remains strong with the West and particularly the United States, there is increased agitation among University students and Norwegian intellectuals for a closer program with the Soviet and its satellite countries on the cultural exchange level.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to these developments, a bilateral cultural agreement was made with the Soviet Union in 1956, which furthermore led to an increase in the exchange of musicians.<sup>87</sup> A report from USIS Oslo to Washington stated that because of the increased Soviet cultural presentations in Norway, the “promotion of such cultural activities in Norway” (such as cultural presentations through the President’s Emergency Fund) should increase.<sup>88</sup> In what could be interpreted as a counter to this Soviet increase, the Cultural Presentations Program sent a total of four performances to Norway throughout the year of 1956.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> NACP, RG 306, Subject Files for Northern Europe, 1948-1962, Box 2, folder “Edith Sampson Tour”, Memorandum, February 5, 1952.

<sup>85</sup> NACP, RG 59, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Policy Review and Coordination Staff*, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 31, folder “Annual Reports – Oslo”. Semi-annual report on International Educational Exchange Program for Norway, April 19, 1956.

<sup>86</sup> NACP, RG 59, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Policy Review and Coordination Staff*, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 31, folder “Annual Reports – Oslo”. Report on Educational Exchange Program in Norway, 1953-54, August 2, 1954.

<sup>87</sup> Riksarkivet (RA), S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder ‘Musikk og opera. Diverse.’ Helene Andersen to Kungliga Musikalska akademien, May 9, 1958.

<sup>88</sup> NACP, RG 59, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Policy Review and Coordination Staff*, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 31, folder 6 “Annual Reports – Oslo”, Semi-annual USIS report, August 19, 1955.

<sup>89</sup> Danielsen, “American Culture as ‘High Culture,’” 29.

## Chapter 3 Strategies and agendas

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November in 1955, Harold Spivacke and Klaus Egge met in Washington to discuss cultural exchanges between Norway and the US through UNESCO. Harold Spivacke was a member of the US National Commission of UNESCO and Klaus Egge was a member of the Norwegian commission as well as the Executive Board of the International Music Council. However, both men had positions beyond these. The idea of a cultural exchange, which had first been pitched by Harold Spivacke, was to set in motion an increased exchange of musical works within the approaching season.<sup>90</sup> At first glance, these plans were in line with the aims of UNESCO. However, the concert would go from being discussed by two people with private agendas or agendas in line with UNESCO, to being part of American and Norwegian cultural diplomacy during the 1950s, with a range of agendas and strategies. There are many details within this chapter, and many actors who require an explanation. This complicates the subject matter, but they are all important pieces of the puzzle.

To bring some structure to the complex matter at hand, the first half of the chapter will be an explanation of American planning and agendas. Harold Spivacke and David Cooper partook in the initial planning of the concert through the US Commission of UNESCO. The later engagement of Marian Anderson, which was not originally part of the plan, will be explored later, including the involvement of the organizations of ANTA and USIS.

The second half will concentrate on Norwegian planning and agendas. Unlike most other American cultural diplomacy concerts, Norwegian actors had a significant say in the execution. Relevant actors in Norway include Klaus Egge and to some extent Jon Embretsen. In addition, organizations like the Oslo Philharmonic, the Norwegian Office of Cultural Relations, the NCA and the Norwegian National Committee of UNESCO will be brought into the discussion, as they relate to the actors in focus. The overall emphasis is on Egge's transnational networks, as Egge was a nodal connection through which much of the communication related to the concert was channeled.

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<sup>90</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder "Filh. selskap, 1950-9". Klaus Egge to Filharmonisk Selskap, March 9, 1956.

## American agendas and strategies

On September 14<sup>th</sup> in 1955, the musician Harold Spivacke sent a letter to the Norwegian composers Klaus Egge and Pauline Hall. At the time, he was the chief of the Music Division at the Library of Congress, but his positions also included being a member of the United States National Commission for UNESCO and a panelist on ANTA's Music Advisory Board. In his letter, Spivacke expressed his concern regarding the lack of interest in UNESCO-countries for musical exchanges. The International Music Council encouraged member countries "to prepare lists of recommended music to be exchanged with interested parties in other countries" in the early 1950s, but the Executive Committee of the council soon abandoned this project because of the limited response it received.<sup>91</sup> Considering this decision, Spivacke wrote to Hall and Egge in an effort to propose a presumed mutually beneficial bilateral program with the exchange of Norwegian and American music. The Norwegian National Committee had been one of the few countries to prepare a list of recommended music, which encouraged Spivacke to mail his letter to the chief of the National Committee Pauline Hall, as well as a member of the committee, Klaus Egge. The initial proposal was somewhat unclear as to what the exchange would entail, and whether the agreement was restricted to a single performance or permitted a series of musical exchanges.<sup>92</sup> Spivacke's suggestion was to have a Norwegian symphony orchestra play an all-American program, with an American orchestra playing an all-Norwegian program within the same season. In his letter, he stated that a musical exchange would "do much to stimulate international understanding,"<sup>93</sup> which by many was considered a key agenda post World War II. The exchange program came to include many exchanges in addition to the Anderson and Antonini concert, most of them being performances of American and Norwegian music in the two countries.<sup>94</sup>

David Cooper was the ICS Music Officer of the USIA and was like Harold Spivacke on the National UNESCO Committee. They were both involved in the planning of the event.<sup>95</sup> As the introduction of the thesis demonstrated, Cooper's interest in the event was in Norwegian media described to be part of the post-World War II idealist agenda.<sup>96</sup> In addition, emphasis was placed

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<sup>91</sup> RA/S-1730/Da. Box 0055, folder "Cultural Activities, Music I", Letter from Harold Spivacke to Pauline Hall, September 14, 1955.

<sup>92</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder "Filh. selskap, 1950-9". Klaus Egge to Filharmonisk Selskap, March 9, 1956.

<sup>93</sup> RA/S-1730/Da. Box 0055, folder "Cultural Activities, Music I", Letter from Harold Spivacke to Pauline Hall, September 14, 1955.

<sup>94</sup> This will be discussed in Chapter 4, "Norwegian evaluation". RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0021, folder "USA/Embretsen: Program/presse, 1956-9". Excerpt from the information service's annual report. (n.d.)

<sup>95</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959. Box 2166, Folder 511.573/1-456, Memorandum from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, «Norsk musikk stort representert i amerikansk kulturutveksling», *Aftenposten*, November 1, 1956.



on how the arrangement would be beneficial for the dissemination of Norwegian culture across the Atlantic. However, the citation of this idealism and mutual benefits were often deceptive, in that other strategies and agendas remained hidden.<sup>97</sup> In this way, UNESCO proved as a useful mask.

Strategies and agendas in US cultural diplomacy were often applied when planning UNESCO exchanges. The Music Advisory Board of ANTA often had a significant say in choosing cultural presentations for international UNESCO conferences, as for instance the conference in New Delhi in 1956. Harold Spivacke was usually the person bringing these events and the following results to the attention of the board.<sup>98</sup> One can assume the Cold War political agendas of the panel were applied similarly to cultural presentations for these concerts, as they were important arenas for international exposure. As stated in the meeting minutes before the New Delhi concert, “The U.S. Government would like to have a first class showing at this time,” with the aim of making “a big splash.”<sup>99</sup> In this manner, Harold Spivacke can be argued to have been a representative of state policies of the program, and as such likely operated by following these ideas.

In a memorandum to the Music Advisory Panel on June 24<sup>th</sup> in 1955, a list of potential projects was sent for the panel to assess. Alfredo Antonini was one of the names included in this list.<sup>100</sup> In the following meeting minutes in September, the panel described Alfredo Antonini as a “good conductor, but not sufficiently representative of the American musical scene” and decided that for this reason he would not be approved as a cultural ambassador.<sup>101</sup> The description of a number not being representative of the musical scene was not uncommon. The exclusion of jazz and folk music was accompanied by a tendency to reject more contemporary and unknown music, manifesting itself as a form of classicism.<sup>102</sup> It was often considered safest to send music that was already well-known and liked, as opposed to more experimental music by younger American composers. Jazz-inspired songs like George Gershwin’s “An American in Paris” were typically considered too risky to send, a song that Antonini would later request to

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<sup>97</sup> Gienow-Hecht, “How Good Are We?,” 272.

<sup>98</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes, Music Advisory Panel (MAP), April 24, 1956.

<sup>99</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes, MAP, September 13, 1955.

<sup>100</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Memorandum, Beverly Gerstein to MAP, June 24, 1955.

<sup>101</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Meeting Minutes, MAP, September 13, 1955.

<sup>102</sup> Emily Abrams Ansari, “The American Exceptionalists: Howard Hanson and William Schuman,” in *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 50–51.

include in the program featured in this concert, along with several unknown and slightly more experimental American compositions.<sup>103</sup>

In addition to this classicism, the panel was known to be conservative in regard to whom they would want to send abroad. Alfredo Antonini was born in Italy and was trained there before moving to the United States in 1939. In March of 1956, the panel received a letter from the State Department, stating that it “was too rigid in terms of who would be acceptable abroad as an American musician,” and that “we cannot limit participation to artists who are clearly stamped ‘made in America.’” The letter continued to ask that the panel would be more lenient in considering citizens who had lived in the United States since the Second World War, particularly if these musicians specialized in American music.<sup>104</sup> In meeting minutes from February 28 in 1956, the panel stated that they were “against approving people who are not American-born and/or American-trained.”<sup>105</sup> One can assume that Antonini’s new citizenship impacted the board’s final decision on sending Antonini as a representative of the program, and that this could be part of the reason for his disapproval.

However, it is important to mention that the board was not always in agreement. In meeting minutes a month before the State Department sent their comment, Spivacke had already discussed this matter and brought it up at a meeting. He described his own ideas for a program explicitly using immigrants as a form of “psychological warfare”, naming it the “I Choose America” program, with the aim of showing “artists of foreign birth who chose to make their careers in America.”<sup>106</sup> Through reading the meeting minutes of the panel, one can see that Spivacke often was opposed to the disapproval of musicians on the basis of their program. The American pianist Eugene Istomin was disapproved in 1956, on the basis of not proposing a representative program. In the meeting, Spivacke “took issue with” the fact that the panel refused Istomin because of his program, which included modern works by the American composer Rorem.<sup>107</sup> The Panel did not approve of the choices of American music however, to Spivacke’s dismay, who gave his approval to the project.

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<sup>103</sup> University of Pennsylvania, Marian Anderson Papers, Digital Collection. Ms. Coll 200, box 187, folder 8699, item 1. Concert Program 1956-09-19. <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3x05xc9q>

<sup>104</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes MAP, March 14, 1956.

<sup>105</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes, MAP, February 28, 1956.

<sup>106</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes MAP, February 28, 1956.

<sup>107</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes MAP, February 28, 1956.

Alfredo Antonini, who was a conductor for CBS at the time, had a personal desire to promote American classical music, which led to an establishment of a transnational network. In August of 1955, Antonini collaborated with Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK), the Oslo Philharmonic, and the NCA in recording music both for NRK and the American record label Composers Recordings, Inc.<sup>108</sup> Upon his visit, he expressed his utmost admiration for Norwegian composers such as Edvard Grieg, Fartein Valen and Klaus Egge in an interview with *Verdens Gang*. He continued by attempting to promote American music, stating that “We have some of the same class in the US as well.”<sup>109</sup> The impression made by Alfredo Antonini upon this first visit was the deciding factor that led to his engagement in the coming cultural exchange, despite Alfredo Antonini’s disapproval from American cultural diplomacy actors. In March of 1956, Klaus Egge gave his recommendation to Antonini as a potential guest conductor for the coming season and added that the leader of the Oslo Philharmonic Odd Grüner-Hegge had wanted to bring Antonini back since his previous visit to Oslo.<sup>110</sup>

### **Enter Marian Anderson**

Marian Anderson was not initially considered in the planning of the concert. When these plans were first being made, Anderson already had plans of an extensive European tour. After Antonini’s engagement was confirmed, he originally requested a pianist for what he planned would be an all-classical program, even if the responsibility of choosing a soloist ultimately was up to the Oslo Philharmonic.<sup>111</sup> One can assume that the ultimate engagement of Anderson was partly a result of her already being in Europe, as well as her popularity in Norway. Nevertheless, as a newspaper article at the time stated, the Philharmonic alone did not have the budget to engage Marian Anderson. As a result, ANTA chose to cover two thirds of Andersons fee.<sup>112</sup> ANTA made distinct choices regarding which concerts they wished to fund, which is illustrated by the fact that the only two countries supported by the President’s fund on her European tour was the concert in Oslo and a later concert in Berlin in October.<sup>113</sup> One can in other words assume that careful consideration went into deciding whether or not Anderson would receive official support from the Cultural Presentations Program.

<sup>108</sup> This was a record label founded by Oliver Daniel, Director of Contemporary Music Projects at Associated Music Publishers (Broadcast Music Inc.) and specialized in classical music; RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0021, folder “USA/Embretsen, 1954-5.” Letter from Embretsen to Klaus Egge, July 20, 1955.

<sup>109</sup> Anonymous, «Norsk musikk begeistrer USA-dirigent», *Verdens Gang*, September 5, 1955. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>110</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder “Filh. selskap, 1950-9”. Klaus Egge to Filharmonisk Selskap, March 9, 1956.

<sup>111</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder “Filh. selskap, 1950-9”. Norwegian Information Service to Klaus Egge, June 18, 1956.

<sup>112</sup> Veronica, «Den store amerikanske representasjonskonsert», *Aftenposten*, September 19, 1956.

<sup>113</sup> CU, Box 48, folder 4. “Projects completed and approved for assistance”, 1954-1965.

In a memorandum from the general manager of the program, Robert C. Schnitzer, to the Music Advisory Panel, a list of names submitted for approval by the USIA was included. The names were musicians listed by the USIA for consideration as ambassadors through the Cultural Presentations Program. Marian Anderson was mentioned on this list, and according to the memorandum, was approved as an act by ANTA as early as 1954.<sup>114</sup> Throughout the Music Advisory Board's discussions surrounding upcoming or possible tours, Marian Anderson is mentioned in passing but without further discussion unlike most other acts under assessment.<sup>115</sup> Most acts are discussed more thoroughly in regard to both talent, skill, personality and a potential program, whereas Anderson is addressed in the minutes by the panel when discussing "top name artists", stating that they "have had quite a big success with getting big name artists to cooperate."<sup>116</sup> The reputation of artists was considered an important factor in choosing artists, as both "well-known names and reputations" were considered to be "so desirable abroad."<sup>117</sup>

Her early approval by multiple actors and the lack of discussion surrounding her possible tours by the advisory board illustrates that she was a highly skilled candidate with wide approval in Washington, including with the more conservative Music Advisory Panel. A later mention of Anderson in the meeting minutes illustrates this fact, when, ironically, the panel disapproved of a sponsored Marian Anderson tour in Africa. The tour was rejected on the grounds that too many African American musicians had been sent to the area, but the panel stressed that "we all admire her tremendously", apologetically explaining their decision with "although she has a wonderful human quality and is a great artist the program is unable to sponsor her."<sup>118</sup> The approval of Anderson as an artist even came from President Eisenhower himself, who had included one of Anderson's recordings of the Spiritual "He's Got the Whole World in His Hand" in the gramophone album labeled "The President's Favorite Music," shortly before Anderson's European tour.<sup>119</sup>

Marian Anderson's inclusion of Spirituals in the program was in contrast with the general management of the program by ANTA. During the early years of the program, the overwhelming majority of musicians being sent were within the classical tradition. As explained by Emily Ansari, this was the result of a rather conservative Music Advisory Panel.<sup>120</sup> African American

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<sup>114</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Memo from R. C. Schnitzer to MAP, December 13, 1955.

<sup>115</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Meeting Minutes, MAP, February 28th, 1956.

<sup>116</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Meeting Minutes, MAP, April 24th, 1956.

<sup>117</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Meeting Minutes, MAP, February 28th, 1956.

<sup>118</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 7. Meeting Minutes, MAP, May 19, 1961.

<sup>119</sup> Anonymous, "Raskt overblikk", *Aftenposten*, September 15, 1956.

<sup>120</sup> Ansari, "The American Exceptionalists," 42–43.

musicians, often in the field of jazz, were not preferred, particularly in Western Europe.<sup>121</sup> This was likely both a result of conservative and unrepresentative attitudes within the advisory panel, and the resonance these attitudes had with the Western European ‘elite’. This classism also excluded folk music. Spirituals were turned down on the grounds of not being neither art nor “American songs.”<sup>122</sup> According to Emily Ansari, panelists argued that ‘lighter music’, including folk music, was difficult to include in the program, and expressed that the only factor used for judging this kind of music was charm, thereby stripping these musical styles of their artistic value.<sup>123</sup> Marian Anderson’s wide approval by the board, however, was likely a result of her classical training and her already existing popularity in Europe. Additionally, she was widely known for her expertise in delivering Spirituals, meaning ANTA likely acknowledged the ‘charm’ of this part of the program. Unlike ANTA, the State Department and USIA often recognized the value of using African American music.<sup>124</sup> Their strategy was to send African Americans abroad to better the American image internationally, which they would accomplish by demonstrating “that African Americans were not held back by prejudice and that they were able to achieve great things.”<sup>125</sup>

Unlike many other African American musicians at the time, Anderson often refrained from publicly commenting on the movement, or demonstrated an optimistic attitude by emphasizing a positive trend. In 1956, the USIA published a pamphlet which stated that “the Story of the American Negro since his emancipation in 1863 has been one of constant progress towards full enjoyment of the rights and privileges of free men.”<sup>126</sup> After the Little Rock High School crisis in 1957, Anderson had to respond to questions publicly and diplomatically while on her tour in Asia. Officials were pleased with the answers she gave, in that she often answered diplomatically and refrained from commenting any further.<sup>127</sup> In addition, her mere presence was in several cases cited as symbolic. After Anderson’s performance on her Asian tour in Manila in December 1957, the Manila Times reported that: “Her presence here is a reminder that she looms much larger than the ordeal of Little Rock, which after all will pass, whereas Marian Anderson is of all time.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ansari, 44.

<sup>122</sup> Ansari, 50.

<sup>123</sup> Ansari, 50; Emily Abrams Ansari, “Shaping the Policies of Cold War Musical Diplomacy: An Epistemic Community of American Composers: Shaping the Policies of Cold War Musical Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (January 2012): 46, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2011.01007.x>; Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy*, 23.

<sup>124</sup> Daniels, “American Culture as ‘High Culture,’” 31.

<sup>125</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy*, 120.

<sup>126</sup> Fosler-Lussier, 111; Melinda Schwenk-Borrell, “Selling Democracy: The United States Information Agency’s Portrayal of American Race Relations, 1953-1976” (Dr. art., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 72–73, 136.

<sup>127</sup> Allan Keiler, *Marian Anderson: A Singer’s Journey* (New York: A Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 2000), 283–84.

<sup>128</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 93, Despatch from Manila embassy to Department of State, December 6, 1957. Translated by public affairs officer Richard S. Barnsley.

As a preparation for this concert, USIS provided the Philharmonic Orchestra with music from the US.<sup>129</sup> The USIS posts were often responsible for receiving, promoting and organizing state-sponsored concerts, and in contrast with embassies, these offices were meant to communicate directly with the population of the respective country.<sup>130</sup> They were often given a chance to “capitalize on” the concert, “both before and after it had taken place,”<sup>131</sup> and were consequently sent material before these performances.<sup>132</sup> In early February of 1956, USIS offices received two films, presumably sent from the USIA. One of the new additions to the office’s film library collection was a USIA-made movie about Marian Anderson and read as a ‘rags to riches’ story, from her relatively humble beginnings to her high reputation and success both in Europe and the United States.<sup>133</sup> The movie was advertised in several Norwegian newspapers in February of 1956.<sup>134</sup> Shortly after its arrival, *Vestfold Fremtid* reported that the Worker Society had a public showing of the movie after a meeting,<sup>135</sup> and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, a little over a month before the concert, the head of the office, Keith Botterud held a speech about USIS during a Norwegian-American union meeting which was followed by a showing of the Anderson movie.<sup>136</sup>

During the spring of 1958, Marian Anderson was publicly honored by the State Department in Carnegie Hall in New York City, at an event with the National Urban League where Anderson presented her experiences from the state-sponsored Asian tour and the film about the tour called “The Lady From Philadelphia”, made with the involvement of the State Department, USIA and CBS.<sup>137</sup> A letter to Anderson written by Assistant Secretary Andrew H. Berding was read at the event on March 31st, stating that Anderson was to be honored because of her many “outstanding contributions to the cause of better understanding between Americans and peoples of other lands”, he further continued:

As a renowned artist you demonstrated to audiences in a dozen countries that the United States can and does provide to its talented citizens opportunity, encouragement, and recognition. And through your warmth and dignity you

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<sup>129</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 2166, Folder 511.573/1-456, Memorandum from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>130</sup> Bjur, “Collagediplomati,” 1.

<sup>131</sup> Danielsen, “American Culture as ‘High Culture,’” 27.

<sup>132</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1, Meeting Minutes MAP, February 28, 1956.

<sup>133</sup> Anonymous, «Nu kan De låne musikkfilmer med verdens største kunstnere,» *Morgenbladet*, February 13, 1956.

<sup>134</sup> Anonymous, «Musikknytt», *Dagen (Bergen)*, February 24, 1956; Anonymous, «Godt program i Arbeidersamfunnet mandag», *Vestfold Fremtid*, February 18, 1956; Anonymous, «Nu kan De låne musikkfilmer med verdens største kunstnere,» *Morgenbladet*, February 13, 1956.

<sup>135</sup> I was unable to trace the origin of the Worker Society, but as the issue was featured in *Vestfold Fremtid*, I assume this was the origin of the Worker Society; Anonymous, «Godt program i Arbeidersamfunnet mandag», *Vestfold Fremtid*, February 18, 1956.

<sup>136</sup> Anonymous, «På norsk amerikansk foreningsmøte ...» *Bergens Tidende*, September 5, 1956.

<sup>137</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 93, Lester B. Granger to Christian A. Herter, January 31, 1958.

brought an equally vital message wherever you traveled to those you met both formally and informally.<sup>138</sup>

When Berding wrote his letter to Anderson in 1958, he remarked that the concerts on her 1957 tour had successfully demonstrated that talented American musicians were given “opportunities” at home.<sup>139</sup> Although this could be a general statement, it could also refer to her role in alleviating commonly held beliefs throughout the world, of talented African American musicians struggling to be successful on their own turf as a result of institutional racism and marginalization. Visits by lecturers and artists were considered to be among the most effective in correcting the alleged misconceptions held by Northern Europeans,<sup>140</sup> in part because of this symbolic effect. Unlike the lectures given, concerts addressed U.S. race relations indirectly by using African American musicians to essentially convey a message of improvement. As explained by Fosler-Lussier, the State Department often chose African American performers of classical music, in order to “combat the impression that African Americans had no access to education”, which was a response to the foreign outrage concerning the violent segregation of schools in the US.<sup>141</sup> In 1958, the African American pianist Vivian Wilkerson performed in several venues in the north of Norway. Simultaneously, two professors from the Fulbright program held lectures about American education, culture and science. The following report to the State Department, sent from the embassy, stated that Wilkerson had gained more interest and been more popular in Norwegian media. Furthermore, the report stated that “Her technical competence and quiet charm were living evidence of present day achievements of her race.”<sup>142</sup>

The involvement of Marian Anderson was likely somewhat arbitrary and partly a result of convenience. However, her performance was financially supported by ANTA, and as an ambassador she embodied a number of central strategies and agendas of the USIA and State Department, colored by Cold War dynamics. These agendas and strategies were in line with the execution of the Cultural Presentations Program in Western Europe, in contrast with Alfredo Antonini and his initially proposed program.

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<sup>138</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 93. Andrew H. Berding to Marian Anderson, March 31, 1958.

<sup>139</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 93, Andrew H. Berding to Marian Anderson, March 31, 1958.

<sup>140</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Office of the Assistant Director for Europe*, Subject Files for Northern Europe, 1948-1962. Box 2, Folder ‘Northern Europe – General’. Letter from Henry F. Arnold to Margaret V. Haskins, June 26, 1953.

<sup>141</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 77.

<sup>142</sup> NACP, RG 59, Country Files, 1955-1966, Box 31, folder “Annual Reports – Oslo”. Report on Educational Exchange Program for Norway FY 1958, from Embassy Oslo to State Department, August 22, 1958.

## Norwegian agendas and strategies

The only well-known Norwegian musical composer abroad during the 1950s was Edvard Grieg, and the Office of Cultural Relations felt that an important part of their work would include the exchange of new Norwegian music.<sup>143</sup> Edvard Grieg's music was within the national romantic tradition of classical music, which many believed to convey a nationalist sentiment.<sup>144</sup> Svein Ivar Angell states that the Office could have been trying to remove connotations to nationalism at the time, in light of the post-War European trauma. He continues by explaining that the demonstration of democratic values was the overall goal of Norwegian cultural diplomacy in this period, along with the "image of Norway as a modern society," and modern music was a means towards this goal.<sup>145</sup> The engagement and funding of foreign musicians was believed to contribute towards this aim, with the hope that cultural impulses from Norway would influence these visitors and create an interest for Norwegian cultural life.<sup>146</sup> As a result, the office frequently helped fund acts through the Cultural Presentations Program, like the Boston Symphony Orchestra performance in 1956 which was funded with 2,000 NOK.<sup>147</sup>

In 1949, Jon Embretsen and Sven Oftedal sent a letter from the Information Office in New York, presumably to the Office of Cultural Relations. The letter reflects the Office's aim of promoting music, with a particular emphasis on the importance of the music being performed abroad, and thereby the necessity of shipping notes and recordings. Furthermore, the letter stressed the importance of focusing on modern music. Rather than citing the indirect message of modern music as beneficial, they explained a needed focus as a response to "a demand made both by the audience and critics," and that modern music creates a larger discussion. The benefits of the newly appointed Jon Embretsen's social network in the US is mentioned, stating that it has been built throughout a period of 15 years, and includes personal relations to "outstanding artists and conductors," including the conductor Toscanini who had been Antonini's mentor.<sup>148</sup> In other words, Angell's presumptions regarding the focus of modern music in cultural exchanges is transferable to other organizations such as the Information Office, though the reasoning of the strategy differs slightly.

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<sup>143</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 32.

<sup>144</sup> Angell, "Imaging Norway," 679.

<sup>145</sup> Angell, 679, 682. The idea that Norwegian modern music had too little recognition abroad is also mentioned in Høyvik's thesis: Høyvik, "Fram fra skjoldets skygge," 21–22.

<sup>146</sup> Utenriksdepartementet. St. Meld. Nr. 78, 32.

<sup>147</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder "Musikk og opera. Diverse." Report from the Office of Cultural Relations, July 1, 1956 – July 1, 1958.

<sup>148</sup> RA/S-2259/Dzd. Box 3695, folder "Norgesbesøk av utenlandske kunstnere og forfattere," Letter from the Norwegian Information Office in New York, June 1949.



After the Second World war and well into the 1960s, the Norwegian composer Klaus Egge was an active and important member on the “Propaganda Committee” of NCA. In addition, he was on the board of an Art Advisory Committee to the Norwegian Office for Cultural Relations. At the time, Egge was also a member of the Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO, and 1954 he was elected as a member of the Executive Board of the International Music Council, which he himself described as an important step in his work for closer relations with the US. He wrote in a letter to the Norwegian ambassador Tor Myklebost that since the Council worked extensively with cultural exchanges, his new engagement would allow him to draw Americans’ attention to Nordic countries.<sup>149</sup> Even if Harold Spivacke made the concrete initial suggestion, Egge likely laid the groundwork. The many positions Egge had complicates the image of his agendas, as well as the aims of the various organizations he was involved in, a tendency which is acknowledged by other scholars within the field of cultural diplomacy.<sup>150</sup> However, the aims of Egge and these various actors seemed to align, in that they all wanted to promote Norwegian music. His music as a composer even coincided with the ideas fronted by the Office of Cultural Relations, in that post-World War II, Egge moved away from his previous national artistic inspirations, and toward a more “universal sound”.<sup>151</sup>

In 1956, Egge returned from a trip to America which was financially supported by the Norwegian Office for Cultural Relations.<sup>152</sup> Upon his return, he stated that “What impressed me the most in America, in respect to Norwegian cultural interests, is the propaganda work that is being executed over there for the good of Norwegian art with the limited resources at disposal.”<sup>153</sup> The work that Egge refers to involves several actors, including the Norwegian Information Office in New York, the Office for Cultural Relations and the Norwegian embassy in Washington. He credited the majority of the work to the Information Office, which was headed by Jon Embretsen. His letter to the Office for Cultural Relations after his trip, can be read as a plea for a larger budget devoted to promoting Norwegian music abroad, as well as a wish for a larger information office. He highlighted the lack of funding devoted to these aspects of Norwegian foreign policy, whilst stating that there were “enormous opportunities” for “a small country like Norway” in the US, which had not yet been taken advantage of. Furthermore, he expressed concern regarding treating propaganda in the US similarly to other countries, stating that: “I am

<sup>149</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Ac. Box 0001, folder “Korrespondanse: 1950-7, A-D». Klaus Egge to Tor Myklebost, November 20, 1954.

<sup>150</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, 6:10.

<sup>151</sup> Morten Eide Pedersen, “Klaus Egge,” in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, last modified June 29, 2022, [https://nbl.snl.no/Klaus\\_Egge](https://nbl.snl.no/Klaus_Egge). My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>152</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0020, folder “UD: 1954-6”. Klaus Egge to Kontoret for kulturelt samkvem med utlandet, March 15, 1956.

<sup>153</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0020, folder “UD: 1954-6”. Klaus Egge to Kontoret for kulturelt samkvem med utlandet, March 15, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

terribly afraid that the work [...] is treated similarly with the work with other nations whom Norway has cultural agreements with.” He further continued that whilst on his journey, he had personally collaborated with the information office in laying the foundations for more cultural exchanges and stated that: “The first effect of this work will likely already be demonstrated in the coming season,” continuing by clarifying that the idea was an “exchange of symphony concerts or symphonic works within the same concert season in the name of UNESCO.”<sup>154</sup>

Egge’s transatlantic work during this decade was highly significant and extensive, and he was in close collaboration and constant communication with the previously mentioned head of the Norwegian Information Office in New York, Jon Embretsen.<sup>155</sup> Both men had created a transnational network within the field of music, a network that was utilized in the planning of this concert, and a network that by extension was beneficial for ANTA and the US cultural diplomacy. After Spivacke suggested the exchange program, Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen discussed the possibility. As previously mentioned, Egge stated that the event should go under the name of UNESCO to demonstrate its official support, despite the fact that the event was not funded by UNESCO.<sup>156</sup> As stated in a letter, the commission could not give any financial support, but was “willing to support the happening morally.”<sup>157</sup> In a way, Egge was a willing collaborator in the obfuscation of American political agendas in relation to the concert, as the official stamp of approval from UNESCO undoubtedly formed a public opinion of the concert that was void of any ideas of propaganda.

The motivations of the Norwegian Friends of the Philharmonic are likely more self-explanatory. The involvement of the organization was largely a result of the social networks of Klaus Egge and Alfredo Antonini, and the immediately apparent agenda of the organization was likely to create a program that would spark interest. However, Alfredo Antonini made most of the decisions in regard to the concert program.<sup>158</sup> Most of the compositions were unknown to the audience and in some cases never played before in Norway.<sup>159</sup> In other words, the concert was not originally likely to draw as big of an audience. As stated by Jon Embretsen when he forwarded Antonini’s initial proposal for a program to Klaus Egge, the choice of a soloist would probably

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<sup>154</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0020, folder “UD: 1954-6”. Klaus Egge to Kontoret for kulturelt samkvem med utlandet, March 15 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>155</sup> Correspondence between Embretsen and Egge can be found in but is not limited to RA/PA-1446/1/D/Db, “USA/Embretsen”.

<sup>156</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0021, folder «USA/Embretsen: 1954-5», Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 22, 1955; RA/PA-1446/1/D/Db, Box 0020, folder «UNESCO: 1947-59». Meeting protocol, the Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO, September 29, 1955; Meeting minutes, Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO, October 11, 1955.

<sup>157</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0020, folder «UNESCO: 1947-73». Liv Hennem to Klaus Egge, October 17, 1955. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>158</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder “Filh. selskap, 1950-9”. Jon Embretsen to Klaus Egge, June 18, 1956.

<sup>159</sup> “To uroppførelser og mange førstegangsforeførelser i Filharmonisk sesongprogram”, *Morgenbladet*, September 1, 1956.

be in the hands of the Friends of the Philharmonic.<sup>160</sup> With this in mind, it is not unlikely to assume that Marian Anderson was a desired act by the organization, as she could do what Antonini couldn't, namely draw a big audience.

When reading the letters written by Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen leading up to the concert, it becomes clear that these Norwegian actors wanted to take advantage of the situation, a situation that in part was facilitated and strategized. Jon Embretsen's social network and Klaus Egge's inauguration in the International Music Council as well as his travels to the US were causes for the eventual execution of the musical exchange program, suggested by the American Harold Spivacke. It is important to note that the mutual exchange of persons and Norwegian involvement was beneficial to US officials even if Norwegians seemingly instigated the arrangements. Americans were able to avoid the disliked 'obvious propaganda', and in addition, Norwegians visiting the US were believed to be useful in correcting misconceptions. The Norwegian Ambassador to the US, Wilhelm von Munthe af Morgenstierne, acknowledged this fact by stating that "Those who have become acquainted with America do not so easily fall for the frequently rancorous criticism of everything American constantly expressed particularly in the European press."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/Db. Box 0002, folder "Filh. selskap, 1950-9". Jon Embretsen to Klaus Egge, June 18, 1956.

<sup>161</sup> NACP, RG 59, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Policy Review and Coordination Staff*, Country Files, 1955-1966. Box 31, folder "Annual Reports – Oslo". Report on Exchange of Persons Program 1954, April 29, 1955.

## Chapter 4 Reception and evaluation

An *Aftenposten* news article labeled the All-American program as the “Event of the Season” after its announcement by the Norwegian Friends of the Philharmonic.<sup>162</sup> Marian Anderson and Alfredo Antonini’s concert was highly anticipated in Norway. One *Aftenposten* article even stated that it had been described as one of the most important cultural events since the war.<sup>163</sup> The venue was overcrowded, and people were “turned away at the door”, and furthermore, reviews of the concert commanded front page space in multiple nationwide newspapers.<sup>164</sup> The importance of the event was symbolized by the attendance of the American ambassador and the Crown Prince regent and soon to be King of Norway, Olav V.<sup>165</sup> Alfredo Antonini contributed to the knowledge of American ‘serious’ music, and Marian Anderson drew the audience in with her performance of Spirituals and Romances. The journalist Egil Vedø stated that:

The scores that Alfredo Antonini brought with him were absolutely suitable for stimulating the interest for new American music. All this time we have thought that modern music from the United States was Copland and Barber and Piston and nothing more, but then we are presented with one composer after another [...] with names that have been completely unknown for most people.<sup>166</sup>

Taking a closer look at how this concert was received is important to further understand US and Norwegian strategies and agendas, and whether or not the apparent reception complies with how the concert was planned. The first half of this chapter will go through newspaper articles’ reviews of the concert and will illustrate how these reviews aligned with relevant strategies. With the same goal in mind, the second half of the chapter will take a look at how the concert was evaluated by both Americans and Norwegians who had previously been involved in planning the concert.

### Reception in the Norwegian Media

Norwegian media was not concerned with US objectives related to the concert except for the obvious motivation of expanding the market for American culture. The concert was not perceived as propaganda, but rather as cultural exchange without ulterior motives. The partial

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<sup>162</sup> Anonymous, «Filharmonisk Selskap foran en rik sesong», *Aftenposten*, August 31, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>163</sup> Anonymous, «Stor amerikansk konsert», *Aftenposten*, September 17, 1956.

<sup>164</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 2166, Folder 511.573/1-456, Joint memo from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>165</sup> Egil Vedø, «Marian Anderson i Aulaen», *Stavanger Aftenblad*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>166</sup> Egil Vedø, «Marian Anderson i Aulaen», *Stavanger Aftenblad*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

Norwegian funding by the Oslo Philharmonic helped to undermine the idea of the concert as politically beneficial for the US, which likely became a win-win situation. Anderson was clearly a popular and anticipated act, and as such, the aspect of motivation for influence becomes less obvious. These initiatives were often popular and desired by the respective population, as opposed to more targeted propaganda which often was received negatively, illustrated by the Norway-America Association's reactions to the lectures of Edith Sampson in 1952.<sup>167</sup> In addition, Americans considered Norwegians to be more susceptible to influence when the relevant initiatives were a collaborative effort with Norwegian actors.<sup>168</sup> As such, apparent willingness to host Anderson and Antonini did not necessarily diminish the potential political benefits this concert had for Americans, nor did it mean that there was no hidden US agendas.

In addition to the Norwegian funding, the involvement and knowledge of different actors likely had an effect on how the concert was perceived. Norwegian newspapers mentioned ANTA's funding, but mostly by using a mass-produced description of the organization in reviews and announcements, which read: "the public institution [which] has the task of supporting excellent American artists' guest concerts abroad."<sup>169</sup> The lack of information of governmental agendas behind ANTA's funding is interesting, albeit not surprising as the Norwegian public undoubtedly had scarce knowledge of the full extent of the organization. The State Department did not want foreign publics to be aware of their involvement in these concerts, and the origins of the funds for the concert were usually kept hidden.<sup>170</sup> This might be part of the reason why these mass-produced descriptions of ANTA were given to Norwegian newspapers.

One newspaper article in *Stavanger Aftenblad* rejected the presence of Cold War agendas, by describing the cultural exchange as 'sympathetic':

A sympathetic feature of post-war cultural life is the efforts made by the nations in making domestic art known beyond the borders of the country. Sympathetic because the time's competitive nature is not applicable. The aim is exclusively to create environments and conditions – economic and artistic – for the performers of the arts.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> See Chapter 2, under "Cultural Diplomacy."

<sup>168</sup> Danielsen, "Pro-atlantisk påvirkningspolitikk," 113.

<sup>169</sup> Anonymous, «Stor amerikansk konsert», *Aftenposten*, September 17, 1956; Anonymous, «Marian Anderson i amerikansk representasjonskonsert.», *Dagbladet*, September 17, 1956; Anonymous, «Marian Anderson i Filharmoniske!», *Vårt Land*, September 18, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>170</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 12.

<sup>171</sup> Egil Vedø, «Marian Anderson i Aulæen», *Stavanger Aftenblad*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

Vedø acknowledged Cold War tensions between the two superpowers but did not connect this cultural exchange to American foreign policy and Cold War strategies. He rejected the idea, emphasizing an artistic exchange with a personal economic and artistic motivation rather than competition, a thought process that was likely strengthened by the performance going under the name of UNESCO. Rather than obtaining political goals, the initiatives were seen as a way for American artists to widen their reach, simultaneously expanding the American market. This post-war idealism appears to be dominant in Norwegian media in relation to the concert. The idealist and market-driven idea of the concert can be supported by source material, as the majority of the concert's program was planned by actors with a personal desire to increase musical collaboration between the two countries. Additionally, the initial plan only involved Alfredo Antonini, and even if Antonini wanted to promote music by American composers in line with governmental agendas, he was not originally supported by the president's fund, as the board deemed him "not sufficiently representative of the American musical scene."<sup>172</sup>

Actors' personal and private motivations coupled with UNESCO's idealist approach to cultural exchanges after the war seem to signify that the concert perhaps was more 'sympathetic' in its nature than other concerts supported by the President's fund were. However, there are examples of these performances having multiple agendas from various actors beyond this idealism. The earlier concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1956 also had multiple financiers, namely ANTA and the Norwegian Office of Cultural Relations.<sup>173</sup> This combined funding further illustrates that US cultural diplomacy often benefited from other countries supporting and encouraging the performances.

Marian Anderson had a unique reputation in Norway, particularly with the 'elite audience'. As the concert program of the Norwegian Friends of the Philharmonic stated, Anderson "hardly needs an introduction with people who are in any capacity interested in vocal arts." The program further mentions how Anderson has gained popularity in Norway both from her live performances and recordings.<sup>174</sup> As argued by Danielsen, the upper class and highly educated were the target groups of the USIS and other information initiatives during the 1950s, and within this group, cultural diplomacy in the form of high culture was more effective.<sup>175</sup> Many journalists viewed more favorably on high culture.<sup>176</sup> Sending Anderson, who by definition was within the

<sup>172</sup> CU, Box 100, folder 1. Meeting Minutes, MAP, September 13, 1955.

<sup>173</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder "Musikk og opera. Diverse." Report from the Office of Cultural Relations, July 1, 1956 – July 1, 1958.

<sup>174</sup> University of Pennsylvania, Marian Anderson Papers, Digital Collection. Ms. Coll 200, box 187, folder 8699, item 1. Concert Program 1956-09-19. <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3x05xc9q>. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>175</sup> Danielsen, "American Culture as 'High Culture.'"

<sup>176</sup> Odd Skårberg, "Da Elvis kom til Norge : Stilbevegelser, verdier og historiekonstruksjon i rocken fra 1955 til 1960" (Masteroppgave, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2003), 153.

realms of high culture, was likely a way of securing what they believed would be exclusively positive reviews from both conservative and more liberal newspapers.

Anderson performed two sections, one with Spirituals and one with Romances written by American composers. The section of Romances received some attention, notably the performance of Howard Swanson's "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," after the world-famous poem written by Langston Hughes, which was described as "riveting" and "intense."<sup>177</sup> With this exception in mind, praises given to Anderson were mostly in regard to her interpretation of Spirituals. Her performance of Spirituals received the utmost flattering reviews, with *Telemark Arbeiderblad* stating that Anderson "is of the highest artistic esteem."<sup>178</sup> Part of the praise was in regard to her impeccable singing technique and large register.<sup>179</sup> Most of the reviews, however, focused on her expression. As the music critic Conrad Baden descriptively put it: "It is still a world of color in her golden voice, and the thousands of small nuances in sound and expression indicate an artistic imagination and feeling that places her in a special position among today's vocalists."<sup>180</sup>

Spirituals were popular with the Norwegian audience. In 1972, *Aftenposten* described the genre as "one of the states' few contributions to the music history of the world."<sup>181</sup> The interest for the genre was traditionally closely tied to stories of African-American oppression.<sup>182</sup> It often denotes the idea of African American protest as a result of its origins, but another important essence in these songs is the religious aspect. Marian Anderson seemed to be considered by Norwegian newspapers as the embodiment of this genre, with indirect emphasis both on the color of her skin and her spirituality. Emphasis was placed on Anderson's personal *need* to sing, describing her singing as an "admission" or "revelation" in a *Dagbladet* article reviewing the concert. The journalist stated that:

The way Marian Anderson experiences her people's songs, she lights a halo of beauty around herself. It is not only the voice, but even more the ability, the need to convey that makes her performance so captivating, and creates the peculiarly intimate connection between the podium and audience.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Andreas Haarklou, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert», *Nationen*, September 20, 1956; Pauline Hall, «USA okkuperer filharmonien», *Dagbladet*, September 20, 1956. My translations from Norwegian.

<sup>178</sup> Anonymous, «Sangsensasjon i Oslo», *Telemark Arbeiderblad (Skien)*, September 18, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>179</sup> Pauline Hall, «USA okkuperer filharmonien», *Dagbladet*, September 20, 1956; Reimar Riefling, «USA-musikk i Aulaen», *Verdens gang*, September 20, 1956.

<sup>180</sup> Conrad Baden, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert», *Vårt land*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>181</sup> Anonymous, «Slavene la sin lengsel i sangen», *Aftenposten*, January 4, 1972. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>182</sup> Hegdal, "Charleston i Grukkedalen," 143.

<sup>183</sup> Pauline Hall, «USA okkuperer filharmonien», *Dagbladet*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

In Anderson's autobiography *My Lord, What a Morning*, which was published in 1956, Anderson describes her personal relationship with Scandinavia. The book was translated into Norwegian in 1957 merely a year after initial publishing, which speaks to just how popular she was with this particular audience. In her book, Anderson writes about her own personal relationship with Scandinavia. One of the points she stresses in her autobiography is that Norwegians appeared to be rather welcoming towards African Americans. It was not uncommon for African American musicians to have a positive reaction to Scandinavia's supposed openness, like Anderson illustrated in her interview with *Dagbladet* in 1956:

- Why do you Norwegians have such great sympathy for us colored people? It is so overwhelming, and so good.

Yes, why, why? Marian Anderson herself has been part of creating this sympathy. She was the first to visit us, and after that we have had many, many.<sup>184</sup>

Marian Anderson elaborated on this stereotype in her autobiography. She describes that the feeling of artistic freedom was coupled with one of acceptance and open-mindedness.<sup>185</sup> This sentiment was often found with African American jazz musicians, who settled in European cities after experiencing what they felt was a more liberating and accepting atmosphere on tour.<sup>186</sup> Employment and difficulty booking gigs was another important factor as to why many African Americans gravitated towards Scandinavia, with some even emigrating.<sup>187</sup>

Upon Marian Anderson's arrival and during the press conference ahead of the concert, she was questioned on the Civil Rights Movement. The inclusion of this perspective, however, was only present in *Dagbladet's* publication. Notably, other nationwide newspapers like *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang* did not make any reference to the questions that the *Dagbladet* reporter had asked during the conference. Most did not mention the topic of American race relations, despite the existence of a general similarity in their articles. The liberal *Dagbladet* was considered particularly critical of American race relations by USIS Oslo, and in an assessment report from 1957-1958 the newspaper was described as "one of the papers most vitriolic in its criticism last year."<sup>188</sup> In their feature ahead of the concert, the journalist wrote extensively about the Constitution Hall event in 1939, where Anderson was denied performing by the Daughters of the

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<sup>184</sup> C., «I kveld opplever vi Marian Anderson igjen,» *Dagbladet*, September 19, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>185</sup> Anderson, *My Lord, What A Morning*, 141-42.

<sup>186</sup> Whitmire, "Musicians Find 'Utopia' in Denmark," 284.

<sup>187</sup> Whitmire, 284.

<sup>188</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Information Center Service/Bibliographic Division*. Copies of Country Plans, 1952-1959, Box 2, Folder 10 "Norway". USIS Assessment Report Norway 1957-1958, from USIS Oslo to USIA Washington, November 4, 1958.



American Revolution. The reason for this dismissal was racist and discriminatory, and it resulted in a public outcry headed by Eleanor Roosevelt herself.<sup>189</sup> The article continued by stating that “One hails her not only as a great singer, but also as a personality and as a pioneer in the fight for the human rights of the colored race.”<sup>190</sup> After discussing this event, the journalist continued with Anderson’s thoughts on US race relations:

I asked her whether she would like to speak on the current events in the Southern states. But she shook her head. – I pay attention to the going-ons, but I do not want to say anything publicly. From what I have seen lately, the conditions have improved. The improvement in some places is slower than in others, but it is clear that there is a wish to take a step in the right direction.<sup>191</sup>

As illustrated in the *Dagbladet* article, Anderson tended not to discuss these matters, which could be another reason why so few newspapers included the topic in their articles after her interview. This likely gladdened State Department officials, ANTA and USIA. Anderson’s humble disposition was deemed as particularly valuable in American cultural diplomacy agendas. The Civil Rights movement was regarded a threat to the goal of increased U.S. global influence during the Cold War.<sup>192</sup> Northern Europe was at the time considered to be a largely homogenous region, and consequently, many Americans, including American officials, considered racial prejudice to be non-existent in the area.<sup>193</sup> Scandinavia was considered to lack an historical understanding of complex racial issues, and thus deemed particularly vulnerable to anti-American propaganda referencing to U.S. race relations.<sup>194</sup> As a result, the USIS office in Oslo spent resources on making manufactured stories regarding the Civil Rights Movement appear in Norwegian media. As stated in a report from the office in 1958:

USIS has been sending forth a steady flow of stories and photographs, not to mention a Norwegian version of the Louisville Story, all aimed at getting the race question into better focus. Agency-furnished mats on Negro achievements

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<sup>189</sup> C. «I kveld opplever vi Marian Anderson igjen». *Dagbladet*, September 19, 1956.

<sup>190</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Historical Collection*, Subject Files, 1953-1999. Box 172, Folder “Concerts and Performing Artists, 1956.” Despatch from the U.S. Embassy in Oslo to State Department, December 4, 1956. Translated by public affairs office William R. Auman from original article: C. «I kveld opplever vi Marian Anderson igjen». *Dagbladet*, September 19, 1956.

<sup>191</sup> C. «I kveld opplever vi Marian Anderson igjen», *Dagbladet*, September 19, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>192</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 268–69.

<sup>193</sup> NACP, RG 306. *Office of the Assistant Director for Europe*, Subject Files for Northern Europe, 1948-1962. Box 2, Folder ‘Northern Europe – General’. Letter from Henry F. Arnold to Margaret V. Haskins, June 26, 1953.

<sup>194</sup> NACP, RG 306. *Office of the Assistant Director for Europe*, Subject Files for Northern Europe, 1948-1962. Box 2, Folder ‘Northern Europe – General’. Letter from Henry F. Arnold to Margaret V. Haskins, June 26, 1953.

and honors have been placed repeatedly in as many as 100 newspapers, about one-half of Norway's dailies and weeklies.<sup>195</sup>

Throughout the period in question, the United States Information Agency attempted to map out international opinion on U.S. race relations through a series of questionnaires. When Norwegians were asked about their opinion on the treatment of African Americans in the US in 1957, a vast majority chose the option "Bad, Very Bad". In fact, the Norwegian statistic along with the Danish and Swedish, were some of the decisively most pessimistic, with Norway having a negative net approval of 79%, as opposed to the Western European four-nation average negative net approval of 44%.<sup>196</sup> This statistic might help explain why the *Dagbladet* journalist questioned Anderson on US race relations. As mentioned by Danielsen, issues of segregation and racial violence were frequently discussed in Norwegian media and by the general population and naturally appeared to be at odds with an American democracy with core values such as individual freedom and universal possibilities.<sup>197</sup> However, it is important to mention that some journalists displayed a contrasting attitude, citing Norwegians' inability to understand the complexity of these issues:

We are humbled after a while – quiet because we are on the outside – not capable of gaining an understanding of the entire issue. It seems idiotic to come from Norway with ready-made school theories. They are good enough for us at home – when we are sat at a thousand cordial coffee tables, solving Americans most horrid issue in between sips.<sup>198</sup>

In addition to the recognition of what Norwegians felt could be a lack of understanding, the awareness of Norwegian shortcomings in the treatment of minorities was somewhat present during the 1950's, and subsequently taken advantage of by USIS. This introspective criticism often manifested itself as a consequence to the critique of US segregation, as for instance in a *Aftenposten* article from 1956, where the author discussed the African American activist Autherine Lucy's expulsion from what was (until she was initially accepted as a student) the all-white University of Alabama. Whilst recognizing the unjust nature of her expulsion, the journalist added that Norwegians were perhaps too quick to judge, considering their own treatment

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<sup>195</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Information Center Service/Bibliographic Division*. Copies of Country Plans, 1952-1959, Box 2, Folder 10 "Norway". USIS Assessment Report Norway 1957-1958, from USIS Oslo to USIA Washington, November 4, 1958.

<sup>196</sup> Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: World Opinion of U.S. Racial Problems," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1968): 304–6, <https://doi.org/10.1086/267608>.

<sup>197</sup> Danielsen, "Nettverksbygging som sikkerhetspolitikk," 148.

<sup>198</sup> Eva Braathen Dahr, «De hvite amerikaneres svarte samvittighet», *Aftenposten*, July 28, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

of the Norwegian minority, the Sami.<sup>199</sup> A similar stance can be found in a *Dagbladet* article, saying “that the Norwegians shouldn’t be so smug in judging race relations abroad, since race segregation of a sort was also present in Norway.”<sup>200</sup>

The concert proved to be a welcome counter to the new American popular culture, which had caused headlines around the world, many of negative character. The first Norwegian showing of the movie *Rock Around the Clock* with *Bill Haley and his Comets* was merely a few weeks before Anderson’s visit in September 1956, and though it was a hit with the more youthful audience, the vast majority of critics remained unimpressed and highly critical, particularly journalists from conservative newspapers.<sup>201</sup> As explained by Skårberg, a likely explanation for this can be that journalists and the Norwegian public evaluated the genre from the viewpoint of high-brow culture,<sup>202</sup> meaning critics at the time were usually more favorable when reviewing ‘high culture’ displays. The genre of rock ‘n’ roll was described as stolen and noisy; “The genre is nothing else than theft from pure and cultivated jazz forms, mixed with noise.”<sup>203</sup> In comparison, a newspaper article in *Verdens Gang* wrote this about Anderson after her arrival in Oslo:

There is no hectic and loud commotion connected to the singer Marian Anderson’s rare Oslo-visit, in contrast to the visits of her fellow singing and playing countrymen. Commercially speaking, she is more quiet-mannered. In this case there are no silver trumpets, it is the quiet, introverted art that gets to speak.<sup>204</sup>

The excerpt from the article enlightens two important aspects. The first being that the journalist distinguishes Anderson from commercial and loud culture, indirectly citing her artistic merits and high skill level, which as established was a key US agenda. The “commercial” performances are likely references to jazz and rock ‘n’ roll musicians. When Louis Armstrong visited Oslo, police forces were hired in order to control desperate fans.<sup>205</sup> The journalist is indirectly creating a dividing line between popular and high culture, placing Anderson and her artistic merits firmly within the realm of high culture. In addition, the article describes popular music as loud, hectic, and perhaps, if one reads between the lines, as something flashier. This brings us to the second aspect, which is how one can interpret this as a representation of a public

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<sup>199</sup> Eva Braathen Dahr, «De hvite amerikaneres svarte samvittighet». *Aftenposten*, July 28, 1956.

<sup>200</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Information Center Service/Bibliographic Division*. Copies of Country Plans, 1952-1959, Box 2, Folder 10 “Norway”. USIS Assessment Report Norway 1957-1958, from USIS Oslo to USIA Washington, November 4, 1958. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>201</sup> Odd Skårberg, “Da Elvis kom til Norge: Stilbevegelser, verdier og historiekonstruksjon i rocken fra 1955 til 1960” (Masteroppgave, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, 2003), 153.

<sup>202</sup> Skårberg, 153.

<sup>203</sup> Citation from a *Bergens Tidende* newspaper article, cited in; Skårberg, 154. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>204</sup> Anonymous, “Beskjeden sangfugl i Oslo,” *Verdens Gang*, September 19, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>205</sup> Bjørn Stendahl and John Bergh, *Cool, Kløver & Dixie: Jazz i Norge 1950-1960* (Kolbotn: Norsk Jazzarkiv, 1997), 10.

opinion. One cannot claim that public opinion can be reflected in a single article, but one can acknowledge the existence of these opinions, as the journalist likely played to beliefs held by others. The appreciation for high culture that is demonstrated for instance in this article is a common denominator in the reception of Anderson and Antonini, but there were aspects that received more criticism.

Most journalists were positive in their review of Antonini's skills. The words 'lively' and 'dynamic' were used to describe his personality as a conductor.<sup>206</sup> The coverage of Antonini was not as extensive as the one of Marian Anderson. He did not have celebrity status. Although known in Norway, Antonini was not a household name but rather a known figure within specific musical circuits in the capital. As a result, most reviews are focused on Anderson and her performance. Alfredo Antonini and the chosen All-American program are often discussed separately from Anderson's performance.

Alfredo Antonini's Italian origins were highlighted by many critics. A few also mentioned his changed citizenship, likely in light of the All-American program. An *Aftenposten* journalist discussed his education and former career in Italy, including him being discovered by the infamous conductor Arturo Toscanini and continued stating that "from there [the La Scala Opera] the road was clear to America, and now Antonini's so American that he arrives here as a promoter for new American music."<sup>207</sup> Another journalist similarly mentioned his Italian origins and followed this up by stating that he had now become an American.<sup>208</sup>

Some critics appeared rather conservative in their review of the repertoire. The music that Antonini had chosen to represent America was not what you would describe as crowd-pleasers, in contrast with Anderson's spirituals. There were a total of four musical works that had never been heard in Norway, and the result was somewhat mixed reviews.<sup>209</sup> One critic highlighted Gershwin's "An American in Paris" as the high point of the program, but even so the composition was described as weak and a "mixed bag".<sup>210</sup> The review states that "It can be discussed whether the chosen music was the most beneficial, the music that could best showcase the young USA-composers' productions of today". The journalist and Norwegian pianist Reimar Riefeling continued by suggesting that there were "names 'over there' like Barber, Schuman, Copland, Harris, Menotti, Bergsma [...] that probably could even better represent the level and

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<sup>206</sup> Conrad Baden, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert», *Vårt land*, September 20, 1956.

<sup>207</sup> Veronica, «Den store amerikanske representasjonskonsert», *Aftenposten*, September 19, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>208</sup> Anonymous, «To store møtes på Continental», *Morgenposten*, September 19, 1956.

<sup>209</sup> Anonymous, «To uroppførelser og mange førstegangsforeførelser i Filharmonisk sesongprogram», *Morgenbladet*, September 1, 1956.

<sup>210</sup> Reimar Riefeling, «USA-musikk i Aulaen», *Verdens gang*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

color of American music.” Riefeling’s perhaps most positive review is given to Ned Rorem and is partly explained by Riefeling to be due to Rorem’s French influence in his composition.<sup>211</sup> Another journalist shared the critical perception of the concert in a similar fashion stating that “One can hope that America can offer us more valuable things at the next representation.”<sup>212</sup>

Whereas some journalists were negative, some praised the unusual modern American works by Paul Creston, Ned Rorem, George Gershwin and Wallingford Riegger. One journalist cited that Antonini had successfully handled the “spiritual and bizarre rhythms that seem to be characteristic in American music of today.”<sup>213</sup> Most of his mentions were positive, overall praising the compositions, with a few exceptions like Riegger’s “Dance Rhythms”, which was described both as “an orgy of life and movement” and uninteresting.<sup>214</sup>

The reviews of the concerts program are interesting in that they seemingly echoed many of the agendas of US cultural diplomacy. As stated by *Vårt land*’s journalist, “American modern music is not something we know well here, and a concert like the one the Philharmonic had yesterday, can therefore be highly enlightening.”<sup>215</sup> Even if journalists were critical towards the songs, few were negative to the event in itself. As illustrated, the majority of the attention went towards Marian Anderson and by extension ANTA. As a result, the part of the program that seemingly was an afterthought and to some extent a matter of convenience, became the main focus.

## Evaluations of the Concert

### Norwegian Evaluation of the Concert

The Norwegian evaluation of the concert seemed to be in concord with the media’s assessments of the event as a major success. In a letter to Jon Embretsen, Klaus Egge describes the event’s triumph. He mentions that the conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic, Odd Gruner-Hegge and the orchestra were thrilled with Alfredo Antonini’s great work. Antonini had apparently been a pleasure to work with and had “presented the American works with great honor.” Egge was most happy reporting that the venue was overcrowded, stating that “Marian Anderson was of course the reason for that.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Reimar Riefeling, «USA-musikk i Aulaen». *Verdens gang*, September 20, 1956.

<sup>212</sup> T. K., «Marian Anderson i Filharmonisk», *Friheten*, September 22, 1956.

<sup>213</sup> Andreas Haarklou, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert», *Nationen*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>214</sup> Andreas Haarklou, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert.» *Nationen*, September 20, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>215</sup> Conrad Baden, «Amerikansk representasjonskonsert». My translation from Norwegian. *Vårt land*, September 20, 1956.

<sup>216</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0022, folder «USA/Embretsen: 1956», Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 25, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

The Norwegian Information Office in New York utilized the success of the event and the subsequent musical exchanges as a promotional tool. In the newsletter “Spirit of the Vikings”, emphasis was placed on how important these exchanges had been, stating that “a number of American orchestras performed a large selection of Norwegian works” and adding that “This Music Exchange Program created a great deal of interest in this country for Norwegian music.” In fact, the newsletter was a response to the increased American interest for Norwegian music following these exchanges and was meant to supply information and news regarding Norwegian music to the people who had expressed their interest.<sup>217</sup>

The event was recognized to be a success, but emphasis was put on reasons why the exchanges orchestrated by American actors were important and influential for the US. On the other hand, the evaluation from a Norwegian perspective of the agreement was mixed. The concert featuring both an American conductor and singer had raised some questions as to why no Norwegian conductors had paid a visit to the United States. It seemed as if Americans were hesitant in engaging Norwegian conductors, even if the agreement led to an increase in performances of Norwegian music in the US.<sup>218</sup> Klaus Egge brought the issue up in his letter to Jon Embretsen and the Norwegian Information Office in New York:

But there is actually one thing I want to ask you to seriously consider. Until now I have actually managed to place the boys who have visited from America. If you think about it, Copland, Mahler, Whitney, Antonini and Thor Johnsen [...] have all conducted in Oslo within a year. We have played several American works by now, and the list is getting long. And now people are asking me: what about Norwegian conductors to America? Is it just talk, or what?<sup>219</sup>

Egge described that receiving these questions was “embarrassing” because he himself did not have a response. He continued to state that the only Norwegian conductor to visit the US traveled to Minneapolis in 1954 and was wholly funded by Norwegian beneficiates.<sup>220</sup> One can argue that the lack of Norwegian conductors in the US illustrates an imbalance in power dynamics within these cultural exchanges. It is difficult to say whether this was the result of a lack of infrastructure in Norwegian cultural diplomacy, or whether this was a result of an unwillingness to finance these visits on the American end. Nevertheless, to Egge’s frustration, the

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<sup>217</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0021, folder “USA/Embretsen: 1956-59”. Norwegian Information Service “Spirit of the Vikings” Newsletter, November 4, 1958.

<sup>218</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0022, “folder USA/Embretsen: 1956”, Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 25, 1956.

<sup>219</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0022, “folder USA/Embretsen: 1956”, Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 25, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>220</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0022, “folder USA/Embretsen: 1956”, Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 25, 1956.

agreement appears to have been slightly more extensive on Norwegian soil. Fosler-Lussier elaborates on this point by stating that:

Official State Department brochures described U.S. cultural and information programs as promoting international understanding and ‘mutual respect’ among peoples, which might suggest an equality of exchange between partner countries. Nonetheless, the short-term aim of combating Soviet propaganda about the United States meant that broadcasting the American message to other peoples usually seemed more urgent than developing truly mutual cultural exchange. With the exception of the Soviet-American exchanges that were regulated by treaty, the United States sent out more musicians than it received as guests.<sup>221</sup>

It is important to mention that the exchange of conductors was more difficult in general because of the lack of name recognition abroad. But, as stated by the Office of Cultural Relations in 1959, these problems were “worth solving, as Norwegian conductors have a strong need for more routine than what they can get in the domestic market.”<sup>222</sup> In addition, they pointed towards the fact that these exchanges indirectly led to performances of Norwegian music by symphony orchestras abroad. Øivin Fjeldstads transatlantic visit is mentioned as an example of a successful exchange to the US, but it is nevertheless acknowledged that these travels were orchestrated through Jon Embretsen and the Information Office in New York, and that his networks had been instrumental in providing Fjeldstad with “outstanding offers”, demonstrating the importance of social networks in cultural diplomacy.<sup>223</sup> The exchange of persons was important in Norwegian cultural diplomacy as well, with the office reporting that visits to the US from leading musicians was considered important in making new Norwegian music known in the US,<sup>224</sup> which was a key agenda with both the NCA, the Information Office and the Office of Cultural Relations.

In spite of the lack of Norwegian conductors in the US, the concert did have a direct impact in that it resulted in an increased exchange of musical works. Several orchestras played Norwegian works throughout the season. One cultural exchange was mentioned by *Aftenposten* as a direct

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<sup>221</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 4.

<sup>222</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder “Musikk og opera. Diverse.” Note by the Office of Cultural Relations. July 8, 1959. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>223</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder “Musikk og opera. Diverse.” Note by the Office of Cultural Relations. July 8, 1959. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>224</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja, Box 0360, folder «Musikk og opera» Letter from Royal Norwegian Consulate General to the Office of Cultural Relations, June 25, 1956.

response to the Anderson and Antonini concert, namely the performance of Klaus Egge's 1st symphony in December 1956 by the Fort Wayne Symphony Orchestra.<sup>225</sup> The Office of Cultural Relations also acknowledged the program as a success for this very reason, stating that it had led to the performances of "a string of Norwegian compositions in various American cities".<sup>226</sup>

In January of 1957, approximately half a year after the concert, Klaus Egge mailed a letter to Jon Embretsen in which he discussed a potential visit from the American conductor Igor Buketoff. Whilst discussing the possibility, Egge voiced a somewhat negative disposition towards Antonini and the program that he had chosen the previous fall. He stated that he had more respect for Buketoff than Antonini and explained that this was because Buketoff was "not a political tactician but speaks his mind straight."<sup>227</sup> He further disapproved of the American music that had recently been performed in Norway, stating that it was too dull of a representation of American musical life, and that it would negatively affect the interest for American compositions.<sup>228</sup> In other words, Klaus Egge's sentiments in regard to the program were not entirely positive.

### **American Evaluation of the Concert**

Like the Norwegian evaluation of the concert, American officials considered the performance to have been a fruitful event. The American embassy and USIS in Oslo sent a joint message to the State Department and USIA after the concert, with an evaluation of the performance and eight pages of translated newspaper articles. The message opened by stating that the program "was a highly significant and successful musical event."<sup>229</sup> The presentations sent by the State Department normally received a great deal of positive attention. As written by Danielsen, after eight years of the program, a report stated that "even if the organization of the program had not been impeccable in all aspects, at its best, it had been highly effective and in line with program objectives."<sup>230</sup> Positive reviews were more common than negative ones in American evaluations of the program, and rarely did the embassy or USIS posts report that a concert had been unsuccessful. One can assume this was partly strategic, at least with USIS posts, in that they

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<sup>225</sup> Anonymous, «Norsk musikk stort representert i amerikansk kulturutveksling,» *Aftenposten*, November 1, 1956.

<sup>226</sup> RA/S-6794/Dja. Box 0361, folder "Musikk og opera. Diverse." Report from the Office of Cultural Relations, July 1, 1956 – July 1, 1958. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>227</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/D/Db. Box 0022, folder "USA/Embretsen: 1957". Letter from KE to JE, January 14, 1957. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>228</sup> RA/PA-1446/1/D/Db. Box 0022, folder "USA/Embretsen: 1957". Letter from KE to JE, January 14, 1957.

<sup>229</sup> NACP, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Box 2166, Folder 511.573/1-456, Memorandum from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>230</sup> Danielsen, "American Culture as 'High Culture,'" 35.



were interested in larger budgets devoted to cultural presentations, and as such could exaggerate the effects of the respective events.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's state-sponsored concert in Norway on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September in 1956, approximately a month before Anderson and Antonini's arrival received rave reviews from Norwegian journalists, with the American embassy in Oslo going as far as describing it as the "high point of the concert season", stating that the musical performance "was one of the most significant events which has ever taken place in Oslo... [and] an outstanding success and a triumph for American cultural life". The ambassador added that:

The musical events backed by [the President's] fund have established a series of cultural successes for the United States and have helped in an immeasurable way to contradict a belief held in some Norwegian circles that the United States neither has nor is interested in cultural traditions.<sup>231</sup>

The dispatch sent from the American embassy included several excerpts from Norwegian news articles, particularly emphasizing the orchestra's highly skilled conductor and musicians, and the impressive performance. Although mentions of American compositions were made, the majority of the music critics' praises went to their skill, with the article from *Aftenposten* writing that "The orchestral tone is almost unbelievably homogeneous, the precision masterly and every single one of the carefully-chosen musicians trained in a spirit of refined musical culture."<sup>232</sup> As explored by Gienow-Hecht, symphony orchestras were often sent to display common cultural traditions and appreciations, as the music rarely was "culturally peculiar" and was more an example of musical internationalism, meaning the repertoire and performance was more important.<sup>233</sup> This slightly changed with Cold War politics however, where the exportation of what was considered "American culture" became a key agenda.<sup>234</sup>

Unlike Anderson and Antonini with their all-American program, the Boston Symphony Orchestra had a varied repertoire. In addition to playing an American symphony, the orchestra played music by Western European composers such as Beethoven and Ravel.<sup>235</sup> It is not unlikely that this well-executed demonstration of a common cultural heritage contributed to the

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<sup>231</sup> NACP, RG 306, *Historical Collection*, Subject Files, 1953-1999. Box 172, Folder "Concerts and Performing Artists, 1956." Despatch from the U.S. Embassy in Oslo to State Department, October 25, 1956.

<sup>232</sup> Newspaper article from *Aftenposten*, September 3, 1956, translated by William R. Auman, retrieved from: NACP, RG 306, *Historical Collection*, Subject Files, 1953-1999. Box 172, Folder 'Concerts and Performing Artists, 1956'. Despatch from the U.S. Embassy in Oslo to State Department, October 25, 1956.

<sup>233</sup> Gienow-Hecht, "The World Is Ready to Listen," 23, 26.

<sup>234</sup> Gienow-Hecht, 26.

<sup>235</sup> Anonymous, "Folketeateret, lørdag 1. September" *Aftenposten*, August 22, 1956.

outstanding reviews given by both music critics and the general audience. However, in creating discussion around American music and composers, the Anderson and Antonini concert was deemed more successful. The evaluation stated that even if some of the compositions that had never been heard before in Norway were criticized in newspaper articles by critics, the performance “gave leading Norwegians a further insight into our attainments and interests in the field of music.”<sup>236</sup>

Another aspect of the event that the office commended was the social gathering that was held at the American embassy after the concert. The get-together was naturally a transnational networking opportunity, with the attendance of around 200 people within different facets of the field of music and culture, including the entire Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>237</sup> Klaus Egge reported that the evening had been delightful.<sup>238</sup> Having these events after a concert was common procedure, as stated by Fosler-Lussier, in that they would connect “the embassy into local social networks.”<sup>239</sup> Needless to say, having the figureheads of Norwegian musical life in the same room was regarded as useful in building these networks and facilitating a foundation for further collaboration in the future.

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<sup>236</sup> NACP, Box 2166, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Folder 511.573/1-456, Memorandum from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>237</sup> NACP, Box 2166, Central Decimal Files, 1955-1959, Folder 511.573/1-456, Memorandum from embassy and USIS to Department of State, December 4, 1956.

<sup>238</sup> RA/PA-1446/Db. Box 0022, “folder USA/Embretsen: 1956”, Letter from Klaus Egge to Jon Embretsen, September 25, 1956. My translation from Norwegian.

<sup>239</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 5–6.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

In the beginning of this thesis, I asked the following question:

*How did Alfredo Antonini and Marian Anderson's concert in Oslo in 1956, become a focal point of different cultural diplomacy agendas and strategies?*

In an effort to clarify, I followed up this research question with three sub questions. The answers to these questions will be summarized with the research question in mind. After a brief discussion, I will give some closing thoughts on the conceptualization of the thesis and a possible road ahead.

The first sub question I asked in my introduction was *who were involved in the planning, execution, and evaluation of the concert, and what agendas did they have?* I have introduced several important actors throughout the foregoing chapters. The State Department, USIA, USIS, ANTA and the US National Commission of UNESCO were all instrumental in different ways. The State Department, USIA and ANTA were more distanced from the execution and evaluation of the concert but were to an extent involved in the planning. However, the majority of the planning by Americans was done by Harold Spivacke and Alfredo Antonini. Whereas Spivacke took the initiative in suggesting what the exchange would entail, Antonini shaped the musical program for the concert. ANTA's funding of the concert and Marian Anderson's performance was likely somewhat circumstantial, but still reflected strategies and agendas of the Cultural Presentations Program.

The question of agendas is more difficult to answer in a concise manner. All organizations, perhaps with the exception of the US National Commission of UNESCO, had similar agendas and strategies.<sup>240</sup> One of the most important strategies was to give a counterweight to the massive exportation of American popular culture. Marian Anderson was believed to be a good fit with her expertise both in classical singing and performance of spirituals. An additional agenda of state officials was to shape foreign opinion on US discrimination and segregation, particularly by using African American successful musicians to demonstrate that African Americans had opportunities in the US, contrary to what journalists reported. Interestingly, because of the

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<sup>240</sup> The US National Commission of UNESCO is not considered to be an independent actor, but rather Harold Spivacke, as he appears to have been the one to initiate these exchanges.

individuals involved in the event, the concert's program ended up becoming rather unorthodox for US cultural diplomacy.

The most crucial Norwegian individual actors in the planning of this concert were Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen. Although several organizations were involved by extension, these two men were the key orchestrators. They both shared many aims with the organizations they were members of. The importance of utilizing the US market was emphasized by both Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen, who had both built extensive social networks in an effort to facilitate more Norwegian-American cultural exchanges.

The Office of Cultural Relations believed promotion of modern Norwegian music was particularly important in a new era of internationalism, and modern music would promote an image of democracy and modernism. These motivations tell us that the American concert likely was a win-win situation, as the agreement was a mutual exchange. However, as mentioned, Egge had some concerns regarding the lack of visiting conductors to the US, in light of the many visits by Americans in Norway. This unequal power balance is worth noting.

In Svendal's conclusion, she argues that American influence in Scandinavia during the Cold War cannot be understood as American cultural imperialism.<sup>241</sup> Although my study does not assess how these initiatives influenced Norwegian music, I believe the argument is transferable to the question of how the concert became a focal point for cultural diplomacy agendas. Fosler-Lussier describes a "key paradox of cultural diplomacy", stating that both a top-down (more in line with traditional propaganda) and a bottom-up view (characterized by mediation), are "true pictures of the situation, but neither picture is complete."<sup>242</sup> My findings are within the category fronted by Fosler-Lussier. The initiatives were dependent upon Norwegian cooperation, and in some cases, like the Anderson and Antonini concert, the Norwegian cooperation even extended to roles of facilitating and orchestrating. It was not uncommon for these events to be funded cooperatively across private and official organizations. In this way, the cultural exchange (and perhaps by extension, influence) was willfully ordered. However, it is important to mention that the agendas present, the reception and the subsequent evaluation of the event also demonstrate a top-down approach which was independent from the negotiations and cooperation taking place.

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<sup>241</sup> Svendal, "Come Dance With Us," 321.

<sup>242</sup> Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 6.

I would argue that the reception of the concert reflect these discrepancies in the actors' agendas and indirectly illustrate the top-down approach. However, the articles often cite understanding, mutual cultural exchange and internationalism as aims of the performance, as these were the terms used by both the American and Norwegian actors. Despite a lack of recognition of these agendas, the reception reflects these indirectly. This discussion brings me to the second sub question, which reads *how was the concert received in Norwegian media?*

A good example of state agendas being visible in news articles is *Dagbladet's* interview of Marian Anderson, where her responses perfectly reflected the narrative that the State Department and USIA pushed, with an emphasis on progress.<sup>243</sup> Other examples include the many articles discussing the never-before-heard American compositions and the high skill of both Anderson and Antonini. The majority of the press coverage was positive, which likely was the outcome that American actors hoped for. However, there were some critical comments directed toward many of the unknown American compositions, which perhaps is an indication of why certain people on the Music Advisory Panel were so conservative in regard to sending contemporary American music. The Norwegian pianist Reimar Riefling expressed that the top performance had been of a work by Ned Rorem, which he believed to have some French influence.<sup>244</sup> The long-established European classical tradition was difficult for Americans to challenge, and the reviews could possibly be read as a resistance to new impulses. However, the critique was likely only meant to promote a friendly, spirited discussion, as the audience undoubtedly were slightly more critical, with the promotion of the concert as an "American representation concert" in mind.

The third and final question was, *how was the concert evaluated by the relevant actors?* In their evaluation of the concert, American officials were exclusively positive. The report reflected the agenda of introducing American original music to the Norwegian audience, as opposed to for instance the evaluation of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which was mostly concerned with skill. Norwegians evaluated the event similarly, with emphasis on the fact that this event would bring with it opportunities for Norwegian music in the US. Egge did nevertheless acknowledge a power imbalance, as previously stated. In a way, this reflects back on US strategies, in that they were eager to send American conductors to Norway with partly Norwegian funds but were more hesitant in receiving and funding Norwegian conductors in return. This is nevertheless

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<sup>243</sup> See chapter 4, "Reception in the Norwegian media," 37.

<sup>244</sup> See chapter 4, «Reception in the Norwegian media,» 41. Reimar Riefling, «USA-musikk i Aulæen».

one perspective, which is important to keep in mind, as there could be other reasons for this lack of funding as well.

Before answering the research question, I want to discuss some potential ideas for further studies, as they have largely sprung from the findings I have made throughout this thesis. In my work with this thesis, it became apparent that there is a lot of potential for further research. An overarching study of how American officials in Norway tackled the ‘Negro problem’ within said time frame could be both interesting and valuable as an addition to the field. Many scholars within the field have discussed this aspect of US cultural diplomacy, without diving deeper into the subject matter. Through my work with source material, I have noticed that there is potential in this area, which could be combined with a study of how Norwegians received these cultural diplomacy efforts aimed at ‘correcting misconceptions’ about African Americans.

Another topic that has piqued my interest is the topic of Norwegian cultural diplomacy in the US, or simply the transatlantic work of Klaus Egge and Jon Embretsen. There is a large amount of source material available which could deepen our understanding of how transnational social networks made by individuals fit into the image of cultural diplomacy. In addition, this would likely involve a further exploration of the Norwegian Information Service in New York, the Norwegian Composers’ Association (and the propaganda committee), the Norwegian National Commission of UNESCO and the Office of Cultural Relations.

This thesis has pointed towards interesting aspects of US cultural diplomacy in Norway by taking a closer look at one concert, but another potential study could expand the scope by considering all acts sent through the Cultural Presentations Program in the 1950’s and 60’s, giving a more holistic image. Within the confinements of this study, an analysis of the Anderson concert provides an interesting case study and potential starting point for further investigations into the complexities of US cultural diplomacy in Norway, but this could likely be incorporated in a broader perspective, leading to interesting discoveries.

Finally, I want to bring back the conceptualization that I introduced in a short summary with an answer to the research question. As seen in the previous discussion of the sub questions, the 1956 concert became a focal point of different cultural diplomacy agendas and strategies both from strategic plans and plans that appeared to be more coincidental. What began as a privately initiated proposal by two men became the storm that I earlier referred to with the metaphor “the eye of the storm”. I believe that the metaphor “the eye of the storm” encaptures the complexities

of cultural diplomacy well, in that the concert truly was a calm, meaningful moment surrounded by a storm of actors with specific strategies and agendas.

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