

12-1-2017

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Recommended Citation

German, Myna Ph.D. (2017) "Mikkonen, S. & Suutari, P. (Eds.). Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War. London: Routledge, 2016.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 9: No. 1, Article 14.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1379

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol9/iss1/14>

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Recent Russian research provides clear evidence that cultural exchanges in the Arts flourished with the United States even at the height of Cold War tensions. Using this data, scholars from many backgrounds have contributed to a seminal collection of work, gathered and edited by Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, about music, visual arts, and ballet to show the trying-but-persistent interface between the two governments at many levels.

Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War spans the interdisciplinary fields of art and visual culture, modern art, western music styles, and early classical and twentieth-century music. Every attempt is made to divorce music and politics, but there are constant allusions to what was going on in the world at that time, outside the arts arena.

The aim is to better understand the objectives and impact of Soviet interaction with the West at what seemed to be a time of polarities and bifurcation. The goal is to show the healing or mediative power of the arts even in difficult political times. In the forward, writer Susan E. Reid discusses the “permeable membrane” (p. xi) that existed even in the time of the Cold War when East and West were portrayed by the media as impenetrable antagonists.

After an introduction by the editors, in chapter two author Oliver Johnson in “Mutually Assured Distinction: VOKS and Artistic Exchange in the Early Cold War” discusses the mutual visits of chamber orchestras and soloists between the two countries. He discusses U.S. composer Alan Bush’s 13 trips to the Soviet Union and VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Contact with Foreign Countries), music chairman Grigory Shneyerson’s trips to the United States. In Pauline Fairclough’s and Louise Wiggins’ “Friendship of the musicians: Anglo-Soviet musical exchanges 1938-1948,” chapter three, the writers note that soloists typically were sent to the United States, while whole orchestras went to the Soviet Union. The Soviets thought the effect of soloists would be greater and the temptation to defect less appealing when one was alone. In chapter four, “This Can’t Happen Here,” John Urry talks about the tourist-gaze and turning the visited country’s natives into the “other,” compared to experiencing life on the inside. He talks about Estonians in Stockholm during the height of Cold War tensions. In chapter five, “The Real Ambassadors? The Cleveland Orchestra Tours the Soviet Union, 1965,” author Clayton Koppes writes about the Oberlin Conservatory Orchestra from Ohio visiting the Soviet Union on tour and its limited contact with peers, who wanted to know all about the Civil Rights Movement and the Kennedy Assassination. The group’s interactions with others was closely watched and limited by all parties for the exchange of sensitive information. The U.S. State Department reserved the right to edit any submissions to the Ohio newspaper, *The Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, about the trip by the students.

Other chapters discuss Soviet ballets such as the Bolshoi visiting the United States, and the Russians viewing this as a chance to display their cultural superiority and hoping to gain political adherents or assure U.S. audiences that the by-products of their political regime were not as distasteful as thought by the average citizen. There are chapters about the Cleveland Orchestra visiting Russia and Soviet performances in cities such as Gdansk and Stockholm.

The editors have done an admirable job discussing the entangled history of culture and the Cold War from a global or international perspective, without tilting any of the documents toward any one side in discussing the complicated duality of that era. The United States and Russia are discussed with equal admiration and aplomb.

Scholars and practitioners interested in cultural diplomacy will benefit from the lively discussion of the authors, culled from all disciplines and continents. With East-West cultural relations a controversial issue today, much is timely in the historical discussion.

East-West Cultural Relations are seen as strengthening relations across national borders in troubled times, and the historical situation discussed in the book certainly has an implication for today. It explores and raises awareness of the state of cultural relations and diplomacy between Eastern and Western Europe. It aims to reflect on the East-West cultural connections in another era, the Cold War, but the main focus is on artistic movements only and not politics.

Important background information is revealed through the current situation in which cultural exchanges are becoming more difficult—especially under strained relations between Russia and the European Union. Furthermore, facilitating the transnational mobility of artworks and artists at a time of low public support on all sides was a challenge, and this difficulty is explored in detail in the book.

The rise of nationalist discourse in the Cold War era is explored in depth, but it certainly has counterparts in today's conversational arena.

The primary goal of the book is to serve scholarly needs, but it also could find an interested audience in the general population. It makes a broad study of collaboration and dialogues in a difficult era, not unlike that of today, between the United States and Russia.

It limits itself to artistic relations and cultural diplomacy, stressing how breakthroughs occur in relationships outside diplomatic action. It sets a historical backdrop, quite unexpectedly, for understanding the troubled regional ties today.

It raises the question of: Are art and music a cultural commonality that transcend politics and can lead to greater integration of societies? The book would find a new audience in diplomats, administrators and art professionals, outside the academy.

In this interesting anthology, scholars share their research findings, offering examples of cutting-edge approaches and engaging in dynamic discussions about historical topics that would help nurture intercultural dialogues and bridge scholarly and practical questions.

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