



## Life in Berlin

# Music As The 21st Century Diplomat

MARCH 11, 2011 · 10:50 AM ET

By Anouschka Pearlman



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diplomacy.

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"What we've been noticing through the lectures and panel discussion in this conference is that music in many ways is an even more powerful language than actually language itself. Very often music can touch individuals, not only in terms of their minds, but also their hearts. Very often music can transcend political borders. They can transcend cultural borders, and, in situations where it's sometimes impossible to bring different people together from different cultures, different religions, different nationalities," Donfried says.

Andras Simonyi, former Hungarian Ambassador to the U.S. can attest to this first hand. He grew up in Communist Hungary and believes that rock and roll's message of freedom and hope, along with leadership in the Western world, helped to bring down the Iron Curtain.

"Whatever the authorities tried...however they wanted to suppress rock and roll music, it was not possible because of the attraction, because of the appeal, because of the greatness, because it was suggesting freedom," Simonyi says.

As a former musician, Simonyi used his guitar playing as a diplomatic tool while working in Washington D.C.

"About a year into my job as an ambassador in Washington, I decided to create a rock and roll band with like-minded friends, like, for example, Sandy Vershbow, who was then the US ambassador in Moscow, and I asked him if he wanted to play the drums. I found a terrific singer, bass player Lincoln Bloomfield, who, at the time, was Assistant Secretary of State. And we also invited another friend, and he's now the Deputy Secretary for Energy in the Obama Administration.

"But we also made sure we had someone who can actually carry the band, and this was Jeffrey "Skunk" Baxter, formerly with the Doobie Brothers and Steeley Dan. But what I

suddenly found was that Americans really appreciated the fact the Hungarian Ambassador reaches to the culture that is so American and so close to the American people," Simonyi says.

Whereas music became an extra language for Simonyi, it is becoming a lost language in Italy.

Former Italian Minister of Culture, Dr. Rocco Buttiglione, says Italy's great tradition of opera is dying due to lack of government funding. He stressed the urgency for a national policy to bring Italy's legacy back to its people in schools, parishes and operas.

For Dr. Buttiglione, musical literacy is necessary as music is fundamental to life.

"Music is a kind of natural language that cuts across cultural barriers and political barriers. It may have the effect of setting free dimensions of the soul. Music can carry a message of liberty and be, not only a diplomatic tool, but also a revolutionary experience. It can convey values and it can stimulate the development and the social change and the political change," Dr. Buttiglione says.

The consensus among diplomats, scholars and students present seemed to be that music is much more than entertainment.



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A screenshot of the NPR website for the '140 SEKUNDEN' podcast. The page features a large title '140 SEKUNDEN' with a speech bubble icon containing a clock face. Below the title is a navigation menu with links for 'HOME', 'NEWS', 'MITMACHEN', 'KONZEPT', and 'TEAM'. The main content area is split into two columns. The left column shows a photo of a man wearing headphones, likely the host Alwyn Collins, and a small illustration of a person in a trench coat. The right column contains the text 'FOLGE 40 @REALTIMEWWII' and a short description of the episode, mentioning that it is narrated by Tim and set in May 2012. There is also a search bar in the top right corner with the text 'SUCHEN' and a magnifying glass icon.

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