

Use the Muse:

So here's a thought. Why not send our great art into the world instead of our great armies?

You may have noticed recently that the visit to North Korea by the New York Philharmonic orchestra was a marvelous success. The good will created and the frozen stares that were thawed were the best news to come from that direction of the globe in quite some time. Funny how that works. People just seem to respond better to beauty than to threats. Go figure.

Now, I'm not so softheaded as to think that beautiful music is the answer to every international diplomatic challenge or that it would do anything at all in any number of circumstances. I mean Hitler's gang regularly played some of the world's greatest music at their "pep" rallies. Their misuse of Beethoven in particular led directly to some unfortunate and long lasting bad vibes on the part of many people towards the music. I have a friend in Chicago who refers to the whole category of Classical music as "War Music" mostly because of how the German and Austrian composers were used by the Reich.

And I don't think that North Korea's nut boy of a dictator is about to roll over and declare an age of peace and love because the Philharmonic played Gershwin for him. This guy has more than a few screws loose and rather enjoys his position as Leader for Life. But for the citizens of that poor country who listened to the broadcast concert it must have come as a relief indeed that the U.S. had something else to offer the world besides bombs and forced "democracies". It must have been nice to listen and smile and applaud. So much nicer than hunkering down, digging in and waiting for the next verse of "shock and awe".

We have so much to offer the world other than the latest death technology. We produced some of the great playwrights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Why not send the world something by O'Neill or Miller or Williams? Why not produce a play for the people we're trying to influence instead of land mines and Humvees. I know, it's quicker to just start shooting but based on our performance of the past five years I'd say it's time to dial back on the artillery and pile on the art.

We have an incredible music industry which has an unbelievably diverse repertoire ranging from classical to country, from gospel to jazz. We have the ability to put inspirational music wherever we want, whenever we want. We have mega star entertainers who would be more than happy to participate in a mission with a world view based on outreach and shared experience. Let's be done with "Us good, you bad" diplomacy and get on with "I guess we're stuck here together so let's take a shot at being happy."

We have a scientific community which has exposed, explored and expounded on the major concerns facing the global environment. We have a huge technological apparatus funded, trained and ready to act. We have the ability to be the absolute green inspiration for the world. We could be the undisputed leader of the world's movement towards more enlightened policies. We could be the world's hero again starting tomorrow morning. If only we would choose to be. Our actions in the world these past few years have been driven by the enemies of sustainability. Consumerism, greed and bullets have had their day and we're worse off for it. Let's start showing off our backbone instead of our biceps. Let's try a decade of integrity, for a change.

We have a citizenry in this country which has a history of colossal generosity. From public education through disaster relief and the Labor Day Telethon, Americans will give a significant piece of their pie to whomever is in need. One of the smartest things President Kennedy ever did was the Peace Corps. Why not a new national effort, an appeal to people who have the heart, to give themselves to the world for a few years? People are hungry for an invitation to help. People need more than increased share values to give them a sense of belonging in the world. Why not engineer a vastly expanded Peace Corps by appealing on a daily basis (like the Army does) to service age youngsters, looking for their rightful place on the planet? Let's try the extended hand in place of a punch in the nose.

We are rich here. We are rich in so many more things than money alone. We have heart and art and science and soul to share. We have more of the stuff that the world needs than any other nation on the planet. Let's be about the noble business of spreading our own good nature. The bully's time is done. It's time for the beacon.