

Make music not war

Is cultural diplomacy the key to international relations?

By Phoebe Sloane
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Darryl John Kennedy brought his unique brand of musical diplomacy to Cairo on Friday when he beckoned the small audience at El Sawy Cultural Center on a world jazz tour, featuring themes from Japan, southern Africa, Egypt, the US, and Europe.

Kennedy, an "independent cultural ambassador" has traveled all over the world representing the US with his flute and saxophone.

During his show he tries to teach the audience the valuable cross-cultural lessons he's learned: "What's interesting about Japanese music is that in Japan there used to be these guys running around with swords, called Samurai," he said.

"After the nineteenth century, there was no more need for them. But inside every Japanese person there is this feeling, this Samurai. That's what you can hear in this next song."

A middle-aged man in a black suit, with neatly parted blonde hair, Kennedy looks as

if he would be more at home in the halls of the State Department than 'jamming' with a jazz band. As he walked around the stage to showcase the Egyptian band which backed him up on drums, keyboard, and guitar, his head bopped to the music.

This is what a younger John Kerry might look like if he tried to dance to world-jazz.

Kennedy always makes an effort to get to know locals, and to encourage young people interested in music. In this show, he featured an all-Egyptian band and had Egyptian children up on stage to dance, sing, and drum in various songs.

Growing up in Wisconsin, he learned to appreciate music from his father who was a music producer and instrumentalist. As he got older, he played in the US with musicians from all over the world and decided that he wanted to play with them in their home countries. This penchant for discovering new places has since turned into a life-consuming mission of cultural diplomacy.

Kennedy works independently, but he cooperates with the State Department and vari-

ous US embassies to produce his concerts.

"During my travels, I have studied and reasoned out what I believe to be the answer to accomplishing the imperative and difficult work of raising international admiration for the United States," Kennedy says on his website.

"The international torch of democratic world leadership which we constantly have to earn, has not been given historically to other nations... We are closest to a true democracy, so we carry that torch alone. That's what makes America special."

"We need to use music, not just as music, but to change policy," Kennedy told The Daily Star Egypt after his show.

"There are only three types of diplomacy: military, economic and cultural. Without music and culture, people can only do business with each other or fight with each other."

This was his third trip to Egypt, and he is full of appreciation for the land of the Pharaohs.

"The Egyptian people have wonderful hearts," he said. "They will open them to you when you get to know them."