

# A ‘Special Musical Operation’

by Stewart Battle

Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations.... Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance.

If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

—Douglas MacArthur, September 2, 1945

Sept. 22—In a bitterly ironic way, this year’s United Nations General Assembly was perhaps the most divided in its history. U.S. President Joe Biden vitriolically denounced Russia over their incursion into Ukraine, saying “Russia alone has the power to end this war immediately. And it is Russia alone that stands in the way of peace.” Others, such as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Polish President Andrzej Duda pronounced similar rage, essentially throwing temper tantrums in the halls of the one institution endowed with maintaining peace in the world.

On the other hand were calls from across the world for an end to the hypocrisy of the so-called developed world, “a new system,” and finally an end to colonialism. This put a sharp point on the Ukraine war as a reflection of the larger issue of global inequality and hegemony,



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*Dennis Speed moderated Humanity for Peace’s “Special Musical Operation” celebrating International Peace Day at the UN’s Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in New York City, Sept. 21, 2023. “We’re going to show the way the world must be re-composed.”*

an issue that has continued to grow for years but has now burst out more into public discussion this year than ever before. Even those nations which weren’t willing to go that far acknowledge that the ongoing war in Ukraine is causing unnecessary harm to the livelihood of all, and refuse to “take sides.”

The issue was posed clearly by Honduran President Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, who said in her speech to the UN General Assembly:

The military-industrial complex consumes the majority of the budgets of developed countries with trillions and trillions of dollars, but it contrasts with the indifference and inability to contribute to humanity and the defense of nature.

This echoes the reality on the ground in Ukraine, where the much-vaunted counteroffensive has failed, despite over \$200 billion sent from around the world. The language of peace is no longer understood by the nations of NATO, only the language of war.

Outside the main assembly hall were erected carefully segregated rows of demonstrators, most proclaiming and shouting for or against their particular

cause or person. It was cacophonous—all amidst the flurry of thousands of diplomats and other staff as part of the General Assembly.

It was into this environment that a stalwart crew of around 70 people decided to intervene with a distinctly different message.

Members of the international LaRouche movement and Humanity For Peace gathered for an event titled “Music For Peace,” a musical *intervention* intended to give the gift of music in celebration of International Peace Day, September 21. LaRouche movement activists had been doing ground work all week in front of the UN, circulating a newly released [pamphlet](#) from the Schiller Institute titled “Colonialism Is Over: Appeal to the U.S.A. and Europe: Support a New, Just World Economic Order, Not War!” which thoroughly lays out proposals for transforming the depressed physical economic conditions on a worldwide scale—the true cause underlying the various conflicts in the world today. Organizers had been interfaced with hundreds of diplomats and their staff, adding to an already heightened level of discussion at this year’s General Assembly, and cutting through the noise coming from all directions.

In reference to the significance of the Music For Peace event, especially given how much chaos was underway all around, moderator Dennis Speed said: “What we’re doing is showing the way in which the world must be re-composed.”

Speed began the event:

We’ve come here today in peace, but also speaking from the standpoint that only song and music truly speaks the words of peace in a way that everyone can understand. There are too many differences among people to try and reconcile them even in negotiation, unless at one point or another someone refers to what we will call the spiritual realm. The realm of music ... speaks to that within the human soul.... [Music] expresses the essence of humanity.

This is the power of moving the human soul in the deepest way, that universalizes what is truly human about all of us. No one has a franchise on that. Whether that is Buddhist or Hindu or Christian or Muslim, or someone who is non-religious, it is all actually fundamentally the case that we are one human race whose aspirations will someday be unified, including how we treat one another.

Humanity For Peace organizer Anastasia Battle



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*Music is the universal language of peace. Here, Humanity for Peace choristers in a rendition of “Dona nobis pacem” (Grant Us Peace). International Peace Day at the UN’s Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in New York City, Sept. 21, 2023.*

then took the floor. Referencing the tumult going on in the UN and in the world, she said:

This is an important time to overthrow imperialism and colonialism, and that’s what we’re out here to do today. We’re ending war, we’re ending this barbarism within mankind, and we’re rising humanity up to a maturity such that we will never have war, ever again.

Next came J.R. Heffelfinger, the Director of the recent docudrama *8:15 Hiroshima*, about the story of a family that survived the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. Heffelfinger began by playing the famous tune to *Auld Lang Syne* on the trumpet, and then said:

This is a song we often hear on New Year’s

[Eve], as the clock strikes midnight, which is a song that is typically heard at the dawn of new beginnings. Earlier this year on January 24, the Doomsday Clock moved to 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it's ever been since its inception in 1947. Memory is important and hopefully, as we enter any new year or beginning, we are a little wiser than the last.... It's impossible to ignore that our world stands at a more dangerous precipice today [than 1945], one arrived at with a history of violence and clenched fists. But the moment now demands open hands, and that we embrace one another as a global family. We are reminded today especially that though the hands of time move closer to midnight, our destiny is in our hands.

Heffelfinger returned to the question of: What can we all do to strive for peace in our daily lives?

There is no easy way, but to be in service of humanity demands we do not become passive or complacent during these trying times. Civil discourse is at an all-time low, debate is avoided. Often, disagreements mean the end of the conversation. So I firmly believe we have the moral obligation to have the conversations that allow for the exchange of information and ideas—a healthy debate, to humbly inquire, and most importantly, to listen. And yes, to disagree. We do so with love and empathy for our brothers and sisters because we are all one family.

Music had begun the event with the 25-person chorus singing the three-part canon *“Dona Nobis Pacem,”*



EIRNS/Suzanne Klebe  
*Tenor Everett Suttle sang a selection of African-American spirituals for Humanity for Peace's celebration of International Peace Day. Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza in New York City, Sept. 21, 2023.*

which, despite the ugly ambiance of chants and yelling—including from nearby Ukrainians calling for more weapons to Ukraine—had the effect of calming everyone down. This effect was even more pronounced with the

next round of music, starting with tenor Everett Suttle, who sang the African-American spirituals “Meeting in this Building” and “No More Auction Block For Me,” two civil rights era songs which had been performed by Odetta Holmes during her debut performance at Carnegie Hall in 1960. Suttle substituted “No More Colonial Rule Over Me” during the final verse. He was followed by soprano Indira Mahajan who sang “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.”

When these two sang, even the most rowdy demonstrators nearby couldn’t help but listen and be impacted by their completely different tone.

Independent Candidate for U.S. Senate from New York Diane Sare concluded the event, speaking about how the creation of International Peace Day was the result of large demonstrations in 1981—including over



EIRNS/Anastasia Battle  
*Soprano Indira Mahajan sang “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” for Humanity for Peace’s celebration of International Peace Day.*



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*Diane Sare, LaRouche independent candidate for U.S. Senate from New York: "War is not the natural state of mankind." Humanity for Peace's celebration of International Peace Day.*

one million people in New York City—against nuclear weapons. Said Sare:

War is not the natural state of mankind. If it were the natural state of mankind, we would have been born with very long claws and sharp teeth and thick fur and big ears, and we would have been able to fight. We were not born to do that, we are human beings, and as the poet Friedrich Schiller says in his poem "The Artists," "You were born for that which is better."

Sare then said that half a million people have died so far fighting in Ukraine, while certain members of Congress are happily making money with their Raytheon stocks. She said this reminded her of the story of King Solomon:

Two women came to Solomon fighting over a baby, and both were shouting "the baby is mine!" Solomon said, "I don't know whose it is, so I will draw my sword and cut the baby in half." And one of the women said, "No, spare the child, she can have the baby." Then, Solomon knew who was the true mother.

To continue to demand that weapons be poured into a conflict that will not be resolved in that way belies something else—something not

totally sincere in keeping with the general welfare of mankind.

Mankind should instead find better uses for its money and energy than killing each other. Take for example an asteroid that will someday be headed toward Earth, threatening the existence of us all. Defense against that threat is the kind of endeavor worth investing in, and could perhaps unite the nations of the world together around a common challenge. "We must do better. Mankind must do better. We must hold our elected officials responsible," Sare said.

Many people sent statements in support of the event and the cause. The one from Helga Zepp-LaRouche, spoke of the revolutionary opportunity that exists in the world today, encapsulating the significance of this event, on this day, and at this location.

Throughout the scene, banners were held reading: "Helga Zepp-LaRouche: To Stop WW3, U.S. Must Join the New Paradigm," and "Advanced Power Technology Transfer: The Only True Repayment for Colonialism," among many others. People were moved, happy, and a little surprised at the effect such a seemingly small event had had on that environment. Afterward, even one of the Ukrainians came by to give his compliments.

After reflecting on the meaning of that day's intervention, one of the participating singers later remarked:

I didn't know what I was getting into.... The madness that was going on all around, it was a little unnerving.... You would have had to be there to sense that unrest. It was like cacophony.... But then I closed my eyes and got very quiet until I got a bit of silence and then I sang. I was told later I was in a zone that was the only really peaceful moment of the entire time we were there—was when we were singing. And so that's the key to our future, our salvation; and that is the power of music.

So I thank all of you for letting me be a part of that. And I think we really did something very, very profound yesterday; very, very important: And that's bringing peace through music. To put it on the lowest common denominator: We made peace through music.