

# A CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

*I*n 1955, Henry Lewis was drafted into the U.S. Army. Based in Germany, he conducted the Seventh Army Symphony as part of a Cold War program designed to foster goodwill among NATO member nations. Under Lewis's direction, the group performed for audiences from London to Greece, and wowed music critics across Europe. After returning home in 1957, he became the assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic under renowned maestro Zubin Mehta. In 1963, Lewis returned once again to Europe, this time as a cultural ambassador for the State Department. In 1964, he became a member of the California Arts Commission, and, in 1969, he joined luminaries such as Sidney Poitier, Etta James, Duke Ellington, and James Baldwin as a founding member of the nonprofit Black Academy of Arts and Letters.

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On July 2, 1960, Henry Lewis married Marilyn Horne. Just five months earlier, in Greensboro, North Carolina, four Black college students refused to leave a "whites only" Woolworth lunch counter before being served. The incident was a seminal moment in the Civil Rights Movement, and would spark sit-ins across the country. America, however, was still far away from accepting racial equality. In 1960, the union between Lewis and Horne was still illegal in many states. Despite the prejudices of the era, both flourished in their respective careers, and Lewis played a pivotal role in showcasing Horne's vocal abilities. In her autobiography, Horne wrote, "I would have had a career without Henry Lewis but he really led the way."



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