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Vast New Program of Aid For Arts Urged on Nation

A Report by Rockefeller Brothers Fund Cites Need for Support

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

A vast, comprehensive program of augmented nationwide support for the performing arts is called for in an exhaustive report issued today by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

The 55,000-word report, two years in the making, finds that the arts are in trouble despite a cultural boom, and urges increased support by Government at all levels, foundations, business and the public.

The most extensive inventory of its kind ever undertaken here, the report examines the problems, goals and methods of progress for nonprofit, professional performing arts such as resident theater, symphonies, operas and dance troupes.

Its objective is to explore ways to expand the performing arts in the United States without sacrificing indispensable high standards. The report is the seventh done by the fund's Special Studies Project. Since 1958 the project has studied foreign policy, defense, education, economics, democracy and economic and social aspects of American life.

The performing arts were chosen as a topic because, the report says, "the arts are not for a privileged few but for the many; their place is not on the periphery of society but at its center."

The major recommendations fall into the following categories:

GOVERNMENT

While government should in no circumstances "vitalize private initiative, reduce private responsibility for direction or hamper complete artistic freedom, the relationship, traditionally standoffish, between government and the performing arts must be examined anew.

The Federal Government should develop the newly formed National Council on the Arts, strengthen existing Federal arts programs and administer programs that indirectly affect the arts with a greater awareness of their cul-

tural implications. It should also provide matching grants for the construction of facilities.

Local governments can strengthen local arts groups by insuring adequate facilities, providing funds for operating costs, supplying supporting services, purchasing arts organization services for schools and community activities and exempting such groups from taxes and license fees. Perhaps most important, the study of the arts, for appreciation and performance, should be part of school curriculums.

BUSINESS

Of all corporate contributions to all causes, only 3 or 4 per cent go to the arts. Only a few more than half of all corporations give anything at all to the arts. Corporate contributions can make a life-and-death difference to performing arts organizations. Companies should realize that a healthy cultural environment is in the self-interest of the business community.

FOUNDATIONS

The performing arts are often inept in seeking foundation grants. Foundation support is "minuscule," although there is some evidence of a general increase. The role of local foundations may be as important as any single factor in the development of the arts. They should provide continuing support.

National foundations can contribute most, effectively in areas of planning and innovation. Foundations are particularly well suited to encourage bold and venturesome projects.

PUBLIC

Of the nation's total philanthropic giving, cultural projects receive only about \$200 million a year, or less than 2 per cent of the whole. Performing arts get much less than half of this small sum. Despite tax burdens on larger incomes, high and middle income brackets can still provide more support.

EDUCATION

Effective exposure of the young to the arts is as much a civic responsibility as health and welfare programs.

AUDIENCE

The performing arts should not be required to live entirely on box office receipts, and "indeed, they cannot do so and still fulfill their true cultural mission."

GOALS

The nation's artistic goal will be realized when "the performing arts are considered a permanent year-round contribution to communities around the country and our artists are considered as necessary as our educators."

Until this long-term goal is achieved, an interim objective would be to develop and maintain a number of companies that would operate on a 12-month basis, in contrast to the seasonal operation of most organizations at present.

These would consist of the following:

¶ Fifty permanent theater companies, approximating the metropolitan areas with populations of more than 500,000, sufficiently large to support year-round resident theater.

¶ Fifty symphony orchestras, which would provide, along with full-orchestra concerts, musicians for smaller musical groups.

¶ Six regional opera companies, offering short seasons in several metropolitan areas not yet ready to support year-round performances. These would be in addition to the present four major resident companies and two permanent national touring companies.

¶ Six regional choral groups.

¶ Six regional dance companies in addition to the two major resident dance groups already established.

The report estimates that, at present, \$60 million is being spent each year to operate high-quality nonprofit arts organizations, excluding commercial theater and semi-professional and amateur activity.

"Well-informed estimates of the annual operating cost of the establishment outlined for the future fall between \$150 million and \$200 million," the report said. "Therefore, somewhere between \$90 million and \$140 million of additional operating funds would be needed."

Tickets could account for between \$50 million and \$80 million a year, the report continued. The proposed arts establishment would then need between \$40 and \$60 million annually from other sources for normal operating expenses. This estimate is based on current costs, and does not take into account capital expenditures for more and better halls and theaters.

"The larger amount is not much over one-hundredth of 1 per cent of the nation's present annual income," the panel observed.