

Who is Picking up the Bill?

Contemporary Cultural Policy and its
Ramifications for American Concert Music

Joshua Penrose

Music 685

Dr. James Anthony

15 May 2007

Having been involved in the arts growing up, arts organizations pleading for funds is about as ordinary and expected for me as the changing of seasons. The ritual was solidified at a very early age: PBS tote bags, marching band fruit sales, choir meat and cheese fundraisers, “Friends of the [fill-in-the-blank]”, NPR fund-drives, etc. While these glimpses of the mechanism that drives cultural institutions were brief, I remained mostly unaware of the incredible complexities that were involved in providing opportunities for public cultural experiences. But somewhere along the way, I had also picked up on that common sentiment that the arts are not valued in America, and that in Europe the streets are paved with gold for the creative-minded individual. But how could this be? I wanted to know the answer - to get more than just a peek at the man behind the curtain. When I began researching sources of support for American music, I was focused on direct funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, assuming this is where I would find the real story. Soon thereafter I found that I was right, and I was wrong. The American system of arts funding – U.S. cultural policy - is complex, obtuse, and unlike any cultural policy anywhere in the world.

The United States has not always had a policy of funding the arts with public money. Some of the founders of the fledgling nation certainly had the arts in mind during the “experiment”. Adams, in a letter to his wife, reveals his thoughts on the kind of legacy he intended to leave: “I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval

architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture.”¹ This sentiment is a kind of national foreshadowing of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, where according to Adams, subsets of human endeavors require support and empowerment from other, more practical endeavors, that sustain and protect communities. So what has become of the vision of the American experiment? Where do we find ourselves along Adams’ trajectory? The focus of this research is to analyze the historical precedent and current condition of public support for American concert music, and to gauge this condition’s effectiveness in propagating the inherited cultural tradition of creative expression.

It hardly requires any research at all to find headlines describing the fiscal insolvency of the largest American concert music institution: the symphony orchestra. Closings, strikes and operating deficits are at an all time high.² Although these institutions only make up a small percent of all the publicly funded music activities, they have historically been a benchmark activity of American Concert music. So how can the Pittsburgh Symphony, for example, arrive a place where it operates at a \$2 million dollar

¹ National Endowment for the Arts, “National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000: A Brief Chronology of Federal Support for the Arts,” *NEA Publication*, 2000, <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007), 6.

² Jacob Hale Russell, “Executive Pay Takes the Stage,” *The Wall Street Journal* Eastern Edition (February 11, 2006): P1, *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc (7 February 2007).

Robert J. Hughes, “As funds fade, Symphonies Cut Their Programs,” *The Wall Street Journal* Eastern Edition (October 9, 2002): B1, *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc (30 April 2007).

Stephen Kinzer, “As funds disappear, So Do Orchestras,” *The New York Times* Late Edition (Final) (May 14, 2003): E1, *LexisNexis*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (30 April, 2007).

annual deficit?³ To begin attempting an answer to this question, we should first take up the history and development of public funding for the arts in America.

While the boundaries of what is accepted as American musical culture has made great leaps and bounds in the 20th Century, certainly the tradition of American concert music, as it relates to the traditions of European art music, plays a considerable role at the heterogeneous table of contributors. In this particular historical stream, the motivations for funding the arts, including music, have always been complex.

From the period of the Renaissance until well into the twentieth century, cultural patronage was the manifestation of the taste and connoisseurship of great potentates. These might be kings, aristocrats, ecclesiastics, or merchant princes. Although the motivations of personal patronage varied in this reputed golden age there is no doubt that self-glorification and/or national glorification played a role.⁴ Self-glorification as a means of arts funding has never completely disappeared. Foundations and patrons, individuals and corporations continue to publicize themselves in connection with the institution or activity to which they give. But in a democratic nation, which is actively involved in supporting creative expression, there must be more at stake in the public interest than national, local, or corporate chauvinism.

³ Kinzer.

⁴ Kevin V. Mulcahy, "Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches," *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 35, no. 4 (2006): 319-30, ProQuest, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (7 February 2007), 322-3.

Brief History of U.S. Public Arts Funding Policy

The first musical ensemble to receive support from the federal government was none other than the United States Marine Band. It began to receive funding in 1790, and to this day is still in existence.⁵ What follows are starts and stops at attempts to fund arts in one way or another, such as unfunded arts commissions and the like. In 1891 the National Conservatory of Music in New York was established under the direction of Antonin Dvorak, over 100 years since Adams expressed his vision for the future of the American experiment.⁶ It is easy to point to the limitations of these two institutions, namely their relative size and scope. However, the more poignant issue here is the length of time between the nation's establishment, and the establishment of public institutions to promote the cultivation and dissemination of the arts. Of course this is not to diminish the rich heritage of public support for religious and civic institutions in the United States. Rather it is noteworthy that this established tradition had not yet been applied to similar structures for supporting the arts. Perhaps it was a reaction against the trappings of anything aristocratic, or even the notion that commercial ventures, not of a philanthropic nature, had given the fledgling nation the vim and vigor to emerge and maintain its independence. Whatever the reasons, it took many years – even generations - before the notion of supporting arts on a sustainable scale gained any traction.

The first program for funding artists, musicians and their work on a large scale came under the Works Progress Administration, known as public service employment

⁵ NEA, "National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000," 6.

⁶ Ibid.

programs. This was part of Roosevelt's "New Deal" agency, and under various subdivisions such as the Federal Music Project, the federal government employed more than 40,000 artists.⁷ A division of this agency, The Federal Music Project, began in 1935 and predominantly served to employ destitute musicians in a whole host of performance ensembles such as orchestras, bands, chamber ensembles, choral ensembles and opera companies. From 1936 to 1940 at least 250,000 performances were funded, reaching roughly 159 million Americans. This policy is a significant leap from no to relatively little public funding to, in one year – 1936, directly employing over 15,000 musicians in 42 states and the District of Columbia.⁸ In the fall of 1939, the project was reorganized as the WPA Music Program, and jurisdiction was given to the state. With the outbreak of World War II, funded projects became less frequent, and the organization became officially disbanded in the summer of 1943.⁹ It is not my intention at this point to take on the socio-economic issues involved with the New Deal and all of its ramifications on the cultural fabric of the United States. However, these federally funded projects of several arts disciplines, not only music, represented a major break with the American tradition of private support for music and the arts. It would be difficult to consider a future that allowed for an agency like the NEA without this precedent. Although there was a gap of 20 years between the WPA programs and the NEA formation, a kind of public funding developed in this intermediary period, although short-lived, and not well known.

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ Metro Voloshin, "Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration," *Groves Music Online* ed. L. Macy, 2006, <<http://grovemusic.com>> (10 April 2007).

⁹ Ibid.

While public arts funding assumes a certain level of transparency in a democratic state, the United States dabbled for a while in covert arts funding as part of its policy in fighting the so-called cultural cold war. With regards to music, one of the central figures in this narrative was Nicolas Nabokov. Nabokov was a Russian-born American Composer, who taught at both Peabody Conservatory and Sarah Lawrence College before entering the employ of the CIA. Nabokov began receiving a salary in 1950, and received access to a slush fund account in 1951 for related expenses. He was placed by the CIA as music director for the American Academy in Rome in 1953.¹⁰ Most of the funding for these CIA projects was laundered through a dummy organization called the Farfield Foundation.¹¹ Nabokov was also financed by the CIA through another front, the Congress for Culutral Freedom, an organization he was associated with for fifteen years.¹² Among the various music projects funded during this period, was a music festival at Paris in 1952 (which included a tour by the Boston Symphony Orchestra – all expenses paid)¹³, The International Conference of 20th Century Music at Rome in 1954 (including a composition prize)¹⁴, another European tour of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1956, and the launch of the Metropolitan Opera in Europe project in 1956

¹⁰ Frances Stoner Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹² *Ibid.*, 221.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 222.

(which received \$750,000 from the Farfield Foundation).¹⁵ When it started to become apparent that the Farfield Foundation was funding the Congress for Cultural Freedom on behalf of the CIA, the projects began to diminish in the early to mid 1960's.¹⁶

All the while, more and more legislation was being attempted in Congress to fund the arts transparently and democratically. Although several attempts were made to establish various kinds of arts counsels at the Federal level (some as early as 1859), these attempts began to first pick up steam during the New Deal era. Three bills were introduced in the late 1930's with the aim of establishing such an agency. None of these attempts were reported out of committee.¹⁷ Another attempt was made in 1949 to establish "an integrated, country-wide organization aided by the Federal government," that would support theater, opera, and ballet. This too, did not make it out of committee.¹⁸ Then in 1951, President Truman spearheaded an investigation into how the Federal Government could participate in financially supporting the arts. The committee reported back two years later, recommending that the Federal government establish a cultural center, whereby financial support would be made available. Two years hence, President Eisenhower pledged in a State of the Union speech to form a Federal Advisory Commission on the Arts. Consequently, while many bills were introduced to congress to provide financial support for the arts with increasing traction, all remained

¹⁵ Ibid., 225.

¹⁶ Ibid., 377.

¹⁷ NEA, "National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000," 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

unsuccessful.¹⁹ Regardless of these failures, the attitude towards public funding began to change, so that there was a new sense of responsibility for “the advancement of the various activities which would make our civilization endure and flourish...”²⁰ Whether this sea change was the result of a new national identity, having emerged from the war as a world leader, or due to the high assimilation rate of the European expatriate “brain drain”, there was a markedly greater awareness about the role that national policy could play in cultural affairs. With the traction that this idea had found, coupled with the continued attempts at legislation efforts, it was only a matter of time until an organization for federal arts support would be established.

Table 1

U.S. Music Funding: Historical Landmarks

| | |
|------------------|--|
| <i>1790</i> | <i>United State Marine Band Established</i> |
| <i>1891</i> | <i>National Conservatory of Music Established in New York City</i> |
| <i>1935-1943</i> | <i>Federal Music Project/WPA Music Program</i> |
| <i>1951-1963</i> | <i>Increasing Attempts at a Federal Arts Council</i> |
| <i>1950-1967</i> | <i>CIA Funds Music via CCF</i> |
| <i>1965</i> | <i>National Endowment for the Arts Established</i> |
| <i>1996</i> | <i>NEA budget cut 40%</i> |

Source: National Endowment for the Arts, “National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000: A Brief Chronology of Federal Support for the Arts.” *NEA Publication* (2000).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.* This quotation is from President Eisenhower’s 1955 State of the Union address.

What followed were several successful bids for federal support, mixed with more failures. 1958 saw a bill signed by President Eisenhower to establish a national cultural center (which would eventually become the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts). In 1960, New York outpaced the Federal government in creating its own State Council on the Arts. Another failed attempt was made in congress for a national advisory council on the arts in 1961.²¹ In 1962, President Kennedy commissioned another investigation (akin to President Truman's a decade earlier) into the possibilities for financial arts support under the jurisdiction of the Federal government. He established an advisory council in 1963. Echoing Adams' sentiment, he stated, "We have agencies of the Government which are concerned with the welfare and advancement of science and technology, of education, recreation, and health. We should now begin to give similar attention to the arts".²² At the end of that same year, the Senate passed into law provisions to establish a Nation Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation.²³ After numerous congressional debates and reorganizations, in 1965 President Johnson signed into law the organizational structure which remains to this day: three elements, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, together make up the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, the umbrella organization.²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

Although its initial funding was modest, the newly organized endowment got off to a brisk start in the first several years. In the agency's first year, a program for funding music was established, among the other six active programs. The NEA received a budget of \$2.5 million, and provided funding for 22 institutions and 135 individuals. In its second year, the council established an important precedent, the Federal-State Partnership Program. This program mandated that a certain percentage of the budget (\$2 million of the \$8 million budgeted in 1967) would be made available to every state, to be distributed by each state.²⁵ This precedent became increasingly important, especially after the reorganization of 1996. By 1971, the agency's budget had swelled to \$15 million, and had seen several new initiatives including funding for the periodical "American Musical Digest", pilot projects for jazz and orchestral music, the establishment of the National Opera Institute, and a major program to support symphony orchestras was established.

1971 was also the year that Nancy Hanks began serving as the NEA chairman. Hanks served a total of two terms as chairman, from 1971 to 1978. Under her watch, the endowment's budget grew 1,400% to \$123,850 million in 1978. Her tenure saw the establishment of expanded programs for jazz and opera companies, and the Affiliate Artists program (which developed young conductors as music directors for American symphonies). Hanks was also responsible for authorizing "Challenge Grants", a development that increased the leverage of federal funds. In 1977 when these grants were first offered, one federal dollar could generate three to four additional dollars in private donations. By 1997, that ratio was \$1 to \$8.

²⁵ Ibid., 13-14.

After Hanks' departure the NEA continued to see expansion both in terms of its budget and funding initiatives for several years to follow. Composer's fellowships, "Meet the Composer" program, and funding for festivals, recordings, professional training and solo recitals were all expansions in the Music program alone. In 1981, the agency's budget was at a record high: \$158,795 million. That same year, however, President Reagan appointed a task force to "review the purposes, activities, and records of the Arts and Humanities Endowments", with a focus on finding "methods of increasing private support for the arts and humanities".²⁶ The research produced by this task force resulted in the Office of Management and Budget to propose a 50% cut in the Endowment's budget. This proposal ignited a major controversy, uniting a large contingency in opposition to such a cut. The ensuing debate resurrected foundational arguments over free speech, and the appropriateness of public arts funding.²⁷ The cut ended up being 10%, but signaled that perhaps another sea change had taken place.

Table 2

NEA Budgets: Inception to Present

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| <i>1966</i> | <i>\$2.5 million</i> |
| <i>1967</i> | <i>\$8 million</i> |
| <i>1968</i> | <i>\$7.2 million</i> |
| <i>1969</i> | <i>\$7.8 million</i> |
| <i>1970</i> | <i>\$8.3 million</i> |
| <i>1971</i> | <i>\$15.1 million</i> |

²⁶ Ibid., 33.

²⁷ Julie Van Camp, "Freedom of Expression at the National Endowment for the Arts: An Opportunity for Interdisciplinary Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn 1996): 43-65, *JSTOR* (7 February 2007), 54.

| | |
|------|------------------------|
| 1972 | \$29.8 million |
| 1973 | \$38.2 million |
| 1974 | \$60.8 million |
| 1975 | \$74.8 million |
| 1976 | \$116 million (reorg.) |
| 1977 | \$94 million |
| 1978 | \$123.9 million |
| 1979 | \$149.6 million |
| 1980 | \$154.6 million |
| 1981 | \$158.8 million |
| 1982 | \$143.5 million |
| 1983 | \$143.9 million |
| 1984 | \$162.2 million |
| 1985 | \$163.7 million |
| 1986 | \$158.8 million |
| 1987 | \$165.3 million |
| 1988 | \$167.7 million |
| 1989 | \$169 million |
| 1990 | \$171.3 million |
| 1991 | \$174.1 million |
| 1992 | \$176 million |
| 1993 | \$174.5 million |
| 1994 | \$170.2 million |
| 1995 | \$162.3 million |
| 1996 | \$99.5 million |
| 1997 | \$99.5 million |
| 1998 | \$98 million |
| 1999 | \$98 million |
| 2000 | \$97.6 million |
| 2001 | \$104.7 million |
| 2002 | \$115.2 million |
| 2003 | \$115.7 million |
| 2004 | \$120.9 million |
| 2005 | \$121.3 million |
| 2006 | \$124.4 million |
| 2007 | \$124.4 million |

Source: *American Arts Alliance Online*, 2005, <<http://www.americanartsalliance.org>> (17 April 2007).

After the debate in 1981, the years of generous annual budget increases were over. What followed was a decade and a half of survival and self-justification under fire. The Reagan administration continued with its agenda of reigning in the Endowment's budget by means of the Task Force on the Arts and Humanities, as well as the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, established in 1982. Both of these efforts focused on justifying a lower NEA budget by means of stimulating private donations and tax code modification.²⁸ In addition to these measures, the NEA launched new initiatives from within the organization itself, such as the Test Program of Support for Local Arts Agencies and Challenge II, in an attempt to adjust to its new fiscal environment. The Test Program focused on eliminating inefficiency and waste in the administration of local and regional arts agencies, and Challenge II focused on the same issues, but from within the largest of arts institutions that received NEA support.²⁹ While no new programs for music were introduced during this period, it appears that these initiatives seemed to have had some effect in placating the Reagan administration; the budgeted amount remained flat at the reduced level, and the NEA was able to continue funding many of its existing programs. In 1985 the Music Program underwent "consolidation" the same year that the budget saw another reduction as a result of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act.³⁰ Another blow came in 1989, when a scandal erupted over photography that appeared in institutions receiving NEA funding. This led to increased scrutiny over

²⁸ NEA, "National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000," 34-35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

the grant making process, and the types of programs the NEA funded. Congress established an Independent Commission to review all of these aspects.³¹

In 1996, all bets were off. With the debate over the balanced federal budget combined with the recent scandals over the grant making process, Congress again took up the debate over the propriety of federal support for the arts. The budget was subsequently cut by 40%, levels it had not seen since 1977. 1996 was also the year of President Clinton's budget battle with Congress that resulted in multiple federal government shutdowns. With this contextual backdrop, Congress voted to completely eliminate the Endowment by phasing out funding over 2 years. The organization immediately responded by cutting its staff almost in half in an attempt to survive.³² Congress eliminated all individual artist grants (except for literature fellowships). Seasonal and general operating support grants were categorically eliminated. The grant making process was completely restructured in an attempt to survive within the agency's new financial confines. Where the grant making process previously existed within 17 discipline-based programs (and all of their subcategories), there were now four categories within which each applicant would have to compete with every other applicant for a fraction of the available funds. These categories were (and are still to this day) "Creation and Presentation", "Heritage and Preservation", "Education and Access", and "Planning and Stabilization".³³ While the agency's own existence was uncertain, there was one

³¹ Ibid., 45.

³² Ibid., 54.

³³ Ibid.

thing that was: if the NEA was to exist at all, it would be an entirely new entity, almost unrecognizable to what had existed before.

Although Congress voted to eliminate the Endowment over a two-year period, the agency did receive a budget in 1998, albeit slightly smaller than the initial 40% cut in 1996. But who was complaining? The agency was given the same funding again in 1999, although this time some funding was taken back in August to offset the Emergency Oil and Gas Bill.³⁴ There was another slight cut in 2000, however the agency has been able to see a small and steady increase since then. While funding levels are still roughly at the levels of the late 1970's (not adjusted for inflation), the NEA has survived.

Contemporary Trends in Funding Nonprofit Arts Organizations

So what does survival look like? Where does the NEA fit in relationship to the world of arts funding in America? As of 2004, the NEA is the largest single source of funding for the arts in the entire United States. Even so, the percentage of the agency's contributions to total income for nonprofit arts organizations is less than 1%.³⁵ 44% of nonprofit arts income is derived from sales and box office receipts. The largest portion of the remaining 56% comes from the private sector in the form of individual donors – 31%. Other components of private support include foundations (9%) and corporations (3%) - the smallest contributor to nonprofit arts organizations aside from state and local

³⁴ Ibid., 60.

³⁵ National Endowment for the Arts, "How the United States Funds the Arts," *NEA Publication*, 2000, <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007), viii.

government. Of the 13% of total income that is derived from public funding, 9% comes from federal sources (including the NEA, other federal agencies, legislation and earmarks), 3% from local government, and 1% is derived from state funding sources.³⁶

Table 3

Average Income for U. S. Nonprofit Arts Organizations

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Earned Income | 44% |
| Contributed Income | 56% |
| Private | 43% |
| Individuals | 31% |
| Foundations | 9% |
| Corporations | 3% |
| Public | 13% |
| Federal | 9% |
| Local | 3% |
| State | 1% |

Source: National Endowment for the Arts, “How the United States Funds the Arts,” *NEA Publication*, (2007): 20, <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007).

Surprisingly, one of the largest sources of support not revealed in these figures, are the tax incentives for charitable giving embedded in the U.S. tax code. Since 1917, donations made to a nonprofit organization (this includes charities and religious organizations), have potentially qualified the giver for a tax deduction. For those who itemize their tax deductions, this means that anywhere from 28 to 40 cents of every dollar donated is tax deductible (depending on the individual return). In a sense, this is yet another form of government support for the arts, one that many European governments

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

are lacking³⁷. In 2005, Americans donated roughly \$13.5 billion to the category “Arts, Culture, and the Humanities”. These statistics show that the U. S. government has allocated, at the very least, an additional \$3.8 billion in 2005 to the arts by way of foregone tax revenue.³⁸ While these “contributions” are a significant encouragement to private philanthropy, they lack the validating stimulant of a government grant.

Even with this apparent variety of funding sources, it is difficult to make ends meet. Nonprofit arts organizations are in a unique position, in that they have to negotiate several different streams of competitive income sources. All the while, they must work to create cultural experiences of the highest quality. Kevin V. Mulcahy, author and professor of political science and public administration at Louisiana State University, writes that arts institutions “have long had to balance the need for philanthropy (often with strings attached) and earned income (often involving corporate sponsorships and predictable “blockbusters”) with traditions of curatorial independence and the advancement of scholarship and connoisseurship.”³⁹ And it is precisely this notion of “curatorial independence” that makes these institutions distinct and necessary. It would be a mistake to make the assumption that a chamber ensemble is on the same continuum as a commercially supported ensemble. Alan Horn, president of Warner Brothers is quoted as saying “Our job is to make money for our shareholders. I like to think we are

³⁷ Ibid., 20. “Historically, European governments have not offered comparable tax benefits to their arts, although the trend is toward offering more benefits.”

³⁸ Ibid., 18-20.

³⁹ Kevin V. Mulcahy, “Entrepreneurship or Cultural Darwinism? Privatization and American Cultural Patronage,” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* Vol. 33, No. 3 (Fall 2003): 165-184, *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (7 February 2007), 169.

producing entertainment. These are not teaching tools. We're providing mass entertainment for mass consumption."⁴⁰ Nonprofits are therefore dependent on public and private funding. Yet with the largest portion of private funding coming from charitable giving, nonprofit arts organizations have a great deal of competition for these funds. Of the \$190 billion of U.S. charitable giving in 2001, only 5.8% of that was given to the category "Arts, Culture, and Humanities" close to the bottom of the list (43% was given to the category "Religious Organizations").⁴¹ And the philanthropic environment has changed in the last decade. Marian Godfrey, a director for the Pew Charitable Trusts (a large private grant-making organization) describes the environment as having "taken a radical turn for the worse."⁴²

Holding Up a Mirror

So how does this condition impact American symphony orchestras, for example? Among all the ramifications of the increased levels of scrutiny introduced in the Reagan administration, one of the more positive legacies was the establishment of the NEA's research department. As a way of gauging its own effectiveness and providing a means for responding, the NEA conducts regular national surveys and demographic analyses of the American population and its engagement with public arts programs. According to some "broad" NEA estimates in 2006, 39% of orchestra income comes from private

⁴⁰ Ibid., 181.

⁴¹ Ibid., 168.

⁴² Hughes.

donations. This income source provides only 5.8% of its total distributions to “Arts, Culture, and Humanities”. This is the same source described as having taken “a radical turn for the worse”.⁴³ 36% of orchestra income is derived from concert ticket sales. Starting in 1982, the beginning of the trend in federal funding cuts, attendance rates for concert music events among young adult (ages 18-34) were at 12.2%. Attendance in the same category then fell to 10.2% in 1992, and fell again to 8.5% in 2002, the last year this data is made available by the NEA.⁴⁴ In the broader category of adults in general, the decline is less precipitous: 13% in 1982, 12.5% in 1992, and 11.6% in 2002.⁴⁵ Some independent figures show an additional 13% drop in attendance from the 1999-2000 season to the 2003-2004 season, the same period in which 9 symphony orchestras were forced to close their doors.⁴⁶

According to the NEA, orchestras on average receive only 4% of their income from federal funding sources as of 2006. While they provide no such data for federal funding from before the cuts of 1981 and subsequent cuts and restructuring of 1996, we know that all direct funding programs for symphony orchestras and chamber groups were categorically terminated in 1996. It is clear that the 4% federal portion of the 2006 report would have been much greater in the years prior to 1996, when many orchestras were

⁴³ NEA, “How the United States Funds the Arts.” 19.

⁴⁴ National Endowment for the Arts, “The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life,” *NEA Publication*, November 2006, <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007), 6.

⁴⁵ National Endowment for the Arts, “2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts,” *NEA Research Division Report #45*, March 2004, <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchReports_chrono.html> (27 April 2007), 12.

⁴⁶ Russell.

receiving seasonal and general operating support grants via the (now defunct) NEA Music Program.⁴⁷ Many American symphony orchestras continue to receive some support from the NEA (accounting for the 4% average), however this support is only given on a single project basis, and the orchestra must apply competitively for each individual project, and must justify each project according to one of the four NEA grant categories previously mentioned. The result is significantly more work for the nonprofit for a significantly less chance at significantly less funding from the NEA.

Another benchmark used to survey public engagement with concert music, is the level that concert music is consumed through various mass media formats. The NEA, in a 2006 analysis, stated that classical music broadcast over the radio “is critical to long-term audience development, particularly for live classical concerts.”⁴⁸ The same publication also indicated “most classical music listeners access the art primarily through radio.”⁴⁹ Between 1998 and 2005, the number of commercial classical radio stations dropped 30%, roughly in line with the decline of those listening to classical music by way of radio: 26%.⁵⁰ In total media use, classical music leads other disciplines in arts participation. That being said, it also experienced the greatest declines in the period of

⁴⁷ NEA, “National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000,” 33.

⁴⁸ National Endowment for the Arts, “Airing Questions of Access: Classical Music Radio Programming and Listening Trends,” *NEA Research Note #92*, September 2006, <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchNotes_chrono.html> (27 April 2007), 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

1992 to 2002. Viewing classical music on television declined 8%, listening to classical music on the radio fell 7%, and listening to audio recordings dropped 5%.⁵¹

Conclusion

While it is not my intention to prove the causality of the precipitous decline in the public engagement with concert music in America, the steady and systematic erosion of support in both public and private spheres is clearly seen as a trend in parallel motion. One theory states that the growth in popularity of the “mediatized” forms of these historically live experiences has put them in direct competition with the commercial cultural marketplace. Philip Auslander, author and professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, argues that “it is no longer tenable to suppose that theater, classical music, opera, ballet, and other live formats belong to a cultural system (that of high culture) separate from that of the mass media”, and that “it is very clear that the mediatized version of these arts defines the normative experience of them.”⁵² While this may account in part for some of the cultural shift in the last 40 years, it does not take into account the socio-political trends in public funding, and ultimately, public cultural policy.

Policy here is defined as what people (via their government) choose to do, or not to do. If, through the NEA and other such agencies, the U.S. government wishes to “promote a public sphere for dialogue and debate across cultures by providing

⁵¹ NEA, “2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts,” 21.

⁵² Philip Auslander, “No-Shows: The Head Count from the NEA,” *The Drama Review* Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 5-9, *JSTOR* (7 February 2007), 6-7.

opportunities for civic engagement and aesthetic reflection⁵³, then the trends represented in this research indicate that the current policy is failing. Beginning with the Reagan administration's agenda to relocate the public arts into the commercial sphere, concert music has suffered; both in its increased curatorial dependence on ticket sales (resulting in the homogenization of programming), and in the sheer numbers of institutional insolvency and disbandment. This policy has encouraged nonprofit concert music organizations to duplicate commercial music experiences, and thereby diluted their distinct role of providing aesthetic alternatives to what is offered in the marketplace.

⁵³ Mulcahy, "Entrepreneurship or Cultural Darwinism?" 183.

Bibliography

- American Arts Alliance Online*. 2005. <<http://www.americanartsalliance.org>> (17 April 2007).
- Americans for the Arts Online*. 19 April 2006. <<http://www.americansforthearts.org>> (25 April 2007).
- Auslander, Philip. "No-Shows: The Head Count from the NEA." *The Drama Review* Vol. 49, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 5-9. *JSTOR* (7 February 2007).
- Dority, Barbara. "Artistic Repression in America." *The Humanist* (May/June 1999): 36-7. *The Free Library*, Farlex, Inc. (7 February 2007).
- Hughes, Robert J. "As Funds Fade, Symphonies Cut Their Programs." *The Wall Street Journal*. Eastern Edition (October 9, 2002): B1. *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (30 April, 2007).
- Kinzer, Stephen. "As Funds Disappear, So Do Orchestras." *The New York Times*. Late Edition (Final) (May 14, 2003): E1. *LexisNexis*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (30 April, 2007).
- Miller, Judith. "Despite Arts Funds Cutbacks, New York Fares Well." *The New York Times*. Late Edition (East Coast), (January 1, 1997): 1.17. *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (7 February 2007).
- Mulcahy, Kevin V. "Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* Vol. 35, No. 4 (Winter 2006): 319-330. *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (7 February 2007).
- Mulcahy, Kevin V. "Entrepreneurship or Cultural Darwinism? Privatization and American Cultural Patronage." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* Vol. 33, No. 3 (Fall 2003): 165-184. *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc. (7 February 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. "How the United States Funds the Arts." *NEA Publication*, January 2007. <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. "The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life." *NEA Publication*, November 2006. <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. "National Endowment for the Arts, 1965-2000: A

- Brief Chronology of Federal Support for the Arts.” *NEA Publication*, 2000. <<http://www.nea.gov/pub/pubAbout.php>> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts.” *NEA Research Division Report #45*, March 2004. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchReports_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “Trends in Artist Occupations: 1970-1990.” *NEA Research Division Report #29*, August 1994. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchReports_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “State Counts of Performing Arts Companies: Economic Census Data Show Losses for Several High-Index States.” *NEA Research Note #93*, November 2006. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchNotes_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “Airing Questions of Access: Classical Music Radio Programming and Listening Trends.” *NEA Research Note #92*, September 2006. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchNotes_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “Consumer Spending On Performing Arts: Outlays Flat For 2005; Non-Spectator Categories Show Growth.” *NEA Research Note #91*, August 2006. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchNotes_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- National Endowment for the Arts. “Arts Employment, 2005.” *NEA Research Note #90*, July 2006. <http://www.nea.gov/research/ResearchNotes_chrono.html> (27 April 2007).
- Russell, Jacob Hale. “Executive Pay Takes the Stage.” *The Wall Street Journal* Eastern Edition (February 11, 2006): P1. *ProQuest*, EBSCO Industries, Inc (7 February 2007).
- Saunders, Frances Stoner. *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: The New Press, 1999.
- Van Camp, Julie. “Freedom of Expression at the National Endowment for the Arts: An Opportunity for Interdisciplinary Education.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn 1996): 43-65. *JSTOR* (7 February 2007).
- Voloshin, Metro. “Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration.” *Groves Music Online* ed. L.Macy, 2006. <<http://grovemusic.com>> (10 April 2007).