

Senza Sordino

Official Publication of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians

VOLUME 33, NO. 2

February 1995

Save the NEA

The National Endowment for the Arts is in trouble again. The far right is waging yet another jihad against “immoral art,” the federal budget is stretched paper-thin, and times are generally tough all over. Ho-hum.

Except that this time the wolf really is at our door.

The NEA, which has been in existence for over three decades and which has distributed hundreds of millions of dollars to professional orchestras (including over \$7 million in 1994 alone), lies on the chopping block. The leadership of the new Republican House of Representatives has all but committed to killing (or “de-funding”) the agency, and it appears that they very well might have the votes to do it this time.

In this issue is a chart of the grants that ICSOM orchestras received from the NEA in Fiscal Year 1994. The amounts are not terribly impressive when compared to most orchestras’ budgets; NEA grants tend to be in the range of 1-2% of an orchestra’s annual income.

So why all the fuss about losing the NEA? Is losing 1-2% of your orchestra’s budget something to get excited about?

The short answer is “yes,” and the reason is that your orchestra is probably going to lose a lot more than that in the end. Most ICSOM orchestras also get significant funding from their state arts boards, while state arts boards get significant funding from the NEA, as the chart on page 2 shows. Government support at the state level, for the orchestras that the American Symphony Orchestra League categorizes as “major” (i.e. with budgets greater than \$4.8 million) amounted to almost twice the level of federal support through the NEA for the 1992-93 season.

So your orchestra’s total income is going to be cut, not by 1-2%, but perhaps 3-5%. What’s the impact of that?

In my orchestra, that’s a few weeks’ worth of salary for the musicians. It may be more or less in your orchestra, but it’s not chicken feed.

Well, management will just have to get out there and raise some more money to replace it. That *is* what they get paid for, right?

Unfortunately, every other arts organization’s federal funding just got “zeroed-out” too, and their state arts board grants got whacked way back as well, so they’re all out there beating the bushes for replacement funds. Not only are they competing with your management’s efforts to replace the funding that your orchestra just lost,

but they’re competing with your management for money that your orchestra *already receives*, and very likely getting some of it, too. After all, your orchestra probably looks like a very big, stable institution to arts funders, and certainly a big, well-cushioned institution like a major symphony orchestra can afford to take a small hit so that a smaller, sexier arts group can survive the loss of its state and federal funding, right? Sure, there will have to be some cuts, the arts funders say, but musicians are well-paid, aren’t they? We all have to make sacrifices, after all; things are tough all over. Right?

How many percent are we up to now?

The professional orchestra business in the United States is facing a defining moment of a kind that comes along once in a generation. The impact of the destruction of the NEA will have the same kind of ripple effects that the creation of the NEA had three decades ago, only this time the ripples may look more like tidal waves to you and your colleagues.

The truly bizarre thing about this debate is that the concept of federal funding for the arts still enjoys widespread public support. Although the right wing has made this a key battleground in their “cultural war,” this is a fight that we can win if we, who are most directly affected by the possible demise of the NEA, choose to fight.

On page 3 are a list of steps you can take. The ICSOM Governing Board has committed significant resources to organizing a campaign to save the NEA, as have the AFM and a number of orchestra managements. But none of that will do the least bit of good if *you* don’t take ten minutes to write, or phone, or fax, or email, your senators and representatives. If we all do so, that ten minutes may prove the difference between the life and death of a number of American orchestras—quite possibly including your own.

Robert Levine

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NEA Grants for Fiscal Year 1994

Orchestra	FY 1994 Grant	NEA Grant to State Arts Board	State Grant to Orchestra 1992-93
Atlanta	182,000	515,000	148,000
Baltimore	212,000	495,000	797,580
Boston	236,400	507,000	191,788
Buffalo	85,000	641,000	218,000
Chicago Lyric	315,000	569,000	
Chicago	236,400	569,000	136,830
Cincinnati	187,700	562,000	251,192
Cleveland	236,400	562,000	296,466
Colorado	32,000	479,000	0
Columbus	108,300	562,000	98,600
Dallas	128,000	636,000	4,600
Detroit	180,000	545,000	1,935,000
Florida Orch	32,600	538,134	39,344
Florida Phil	60,000	538,134	392,249
Grant Park		569,000	
Hawaii		453,000	1,116,250
Houston	165,000	636,000	31,212
Indianapolis	134,000	503,000	202,706
Kennedy Center		447,000	
Los Angeles	225,000	783,000	272,037
Louisville	70,000	462,000	221,551
Met Opera	480,000	641,000	
Milwaukee	142,500	496,000	511,008
Minnesota	231,900	490,000	231,800
National	181,500	447,000	0
New Jersey	92,900	527,000	1,479,508
NYC Ballet	300,000	641,000	
NYC Opera	214,450	641,000	
New York Phil	236,400	641,000	218,000
North Carolina	77,800	516,000	1,709,673
Oregon	105,000	473,000	175,100
Philadelphia	236,400	573,000	300,000
Phoenix	87,100	483,000	192,116
Pittsburgh	230,000	573,000	320,000
Rochester	102,000	641,000	184,000
St. Louis	233,000	498,000	660,290
St. Paul	135,000	490,000	160,900
San Antonio	53,500	636,000	9,453
San Diego	75,900	783,000	50,127
SF Ballet	255,000	783,000	
SF Opera	343,150	783,000	
SF Symphony	236,400	783,000	150,224
Syracuse	63,000	641,000	
Utah	96,300	460,000	132,000

For and Against

“I’m going against liberal members of Congress, liberals in the media, the radical homosexual community, the powerful arts lobby (*that’s us, folks—Ed.*), and the National Endowment for the Arts. Jane Alexander is going to Congress, with her friends in the art industry, with her cohorts in the homosexual community, with high-powered lobbyists... and she’s going to ask for 50 BILLION TAX DOLLARS... Do you want Jane Alexander teaching your children or grandchildren about the arts? I DON’T...”

Martin Mawyer, president, Christian Action Network

“My own view of the matter is the National Endowment for the Arts offends the Constitution of the United States. My own view is there is no constitutional authority for it to exist.”

Rep. Dick Armey (R-TX), Majority Leader, House of Representatives

“Both endowments have made mistakes, often grievous mistakes. Some grants, perhaps a few, have been simply indefensible. This does not lead, in my view, to the conclusion that the endowments should be de-funded. I join many other conservatives in supporting their continuation.”

Charlton Heston

“There is, in my view, a ‘public good,’ appropriate for public funding in the objectives of both endowments. That ‘public good’ lies in preservation of, and educated access to, our cultural heritage. There is little disagreement on the appropriateness of these objectives, and most agree that public funding might be part of the mix. That was also the conclusion of President Reagan’s task force.”

Frank Hodsoll, chair of the NEA during the Reagan Administration

“The legislated mandate for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts rests on noble ideals which both Endowments, at their best, should uphold.”

The Heritage Foundation

“It’s going to take absolute grass-roots, full-court effort to salvage the agencies... our problem now is not funding, but the very survival of the agency.”

Nicholas Littlefield, aide to Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA)

March to the Scaffold

Senators Kassebaum and Jeffords have indicated a strong interest in moving quickly in the Senate on NEA reauthorization. The first hearing before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee took place on January 24, with NEA chair Jane Alexander testifying. Additional hearings and mark-up are expected in mid-February and early March.

Congressional hearings on the arts and humanities have been scheduled for the following dates and are subject to change:

Week of Feb. 13 – Senate Education, Arts & Humanities Subcommittee, Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT), chair. Public NEA witnesses; NEH and IMS Administration and public witnesses.

Feb. 16, 10:00 AM – House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (oversight hearing), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Witnesses: Walter Cronkite, Ken Burns and David McCullough.

March 1, 9:30 AM – Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Dirksen 192, Rep. Slade Gorton (R-WA), chair. Witnesses: Sheldon Hackney and Jane Alexander.

March 3 – House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (FY96 funding), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Subject: National Gallery of Art and Kennedy Center.

March 21 – House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (FY96 funding), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Subject: NEH / IMS.

April 5 – House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (FY96 funding), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Subject: NEA

House Budget Committee [Rep. John Kasich (R-OH), chair] field hearings to solicit the views of Americans on how to cut the federal budget are scheduled as follows:

- Feb. 4 – Columbia sc Airport High School Gym, 2:00 PM
- Feb. 11 – Manville NJ, VFW Post 2290 Meeting Hall, 1:00 PM
- Feb. 18 – Billings MT, Rocky Mountain College, 2:00 PM

The House Appropriations Committee is expected to draft a rescissions bill in middle or late February, with cuts in current FY95 funding. The House Budget Committee expects to draft its FY96 budget resolution by February 9 or 10.

Information compiled by People for the American Way and reprinted by permission of HotWire, a news summary from ArtsWire.

What To Do

CALL (900) 370-9000. This number, which has been set up by the American Arts Alliance with the support of the American Symphony Orchestra League, will send a mailgram supporting the NEA, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum Studies on your behalf. The charge for the call is \$1.99 per minute, billed to your phone. The call normally takes 3-4 minutes.

CALL the Cultural Advocacy Campaign Hotline at (800) 651-1575. The operator will send Western Union mailgrams to your Representative and your two Senators for \$9.50, which charge will also be billed to your phone.

WRITE your elected officials. Send your Representative a letter at:

The Honorable [name of Representative]
House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515-0001

Send your Senators a letter at:

The Honorable [name of Senator]
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510-0001

Don't know who your Representative and Senators are? Find out by calling the U.S. Capitol offices at (202) 225-3121 (House) and (202) 224-2131 (Senate). Many local phone books have the local phone numbers for members of Congress as well. The AFM BBS also has addresses, fax numbers, and email addresses available for downloading, although email is not yet the recommended way of lobbying members of Congress.

OTHER THINGS TO DO, after you've spent five minutes writing, calling, or telegraphing your Representative and Senators: get your students to write them. Ask your local to write as well. Write op-ed pieces for your local papers and radio and TV stations. You might also set up meetings of your orchestra's board, staff and musicians with your Representative and Senators so that they can hear first-hand what benefits NEA funding has brought to their constituents and see first-hand how many votes they won't get in the next election if they vote to kill the NEA.

FROM THE AFM: "the American Council for the Arts, Americans for the NEA, and the AFM are encouraging everyone to flood their two Senators and their Representative (at their district office) on 'Arts Advocacy Day' (March 14) with calls to save the NEA."

The Los Angeles Endowment for the Arts An Address to the 1994 ICSOM Conference by Joel Wachs

The National Endowment for the Arts is facing the most serious threat to its existence, despite its thirty year record of extraordinary contributions to the cultural enrichment of our nation.

Once again the NEA has exploded into a hot-button issue, and threatened budget cuts could be absolutely devastating. Taken together with prior years' funding cuts, and adjusted for continued inflation, the buying power of today's federal arts dollars has declined so steeply that it is now roughly the same as it was twenty years ago when Richard Nixon was in the presidency.

Yet it is important to remember that despite all of the controversy, and all of the economic bad times, and all of the political threats, the arts remain one of our greatest hopes—and present some of our greatest opportunities—for enhancing the quality of life in America today.

Our support of the arts must not be seen as a handout. It is not charity. On the contrary, it is an acknowledgment that our creative artists have something of enormous value to offer, their talent, for which they should be recognized and justly compensated.

The arguments that so many of us articulated on behalf of the arts at the time of the Endowment's inception are as valid today as they were when we originally made them. In fact, they seem even more relevant today as we confront the extraordinary challenges presented by our changing society.

It's still true, for example, that the arts can and must be used to strengthen the economic base of our nation's cities, as the arts help provide both the jobs and the enhanced urban environment which people seek in determining where they want to live and work—a factor of growing importance in today's service-based economy, where jobs follow people and people often follow amenities.

Indeed, when we adopted a new Los Angeles Endowment for the Arts in our city—an unprecedented program which, when fully implemented, will provide more than \$25 million a year for the arts, in contrast to the \$3 – \$4 million a year we previously spent—we did so because we recognized that our cultural resources are critical to the economic health and vitality of our city.

We knew that creative artists comprise a significant part of our city's workforce. Indeed, studies have counted more than 100,000 creative artists in the Los Angeles area alone. We knew that the arts are a critical link to tourism, which is our city's second largest industry, and that there is a strong and growing partnership between tourism and the arts, based on the fact that each substantially benefits the other.

We also knew that the arts and the industries they help support are the kind of industries we want to attract to our city, being both

labor intensive, with jobs at every skill level, and environmentally sound, with creativity as their essential raw material. Indeed, a study commissioned 10 years ago by the Greater Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce estimated that the overall economic impact of the arts in the Los Angeles area amounted to nearly \$5.1 billion in 1984 alone.

And this picture is not unique to Los Angeles. Over the past decade, several major studies have analyzed the economic impact of the arts in our nation's cities, and the research virtually always concludes that the arts have a significant impact on the local economy. In 1992 the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey released a study showing that cultural activities in the metropolitan region generated nearly \$3.5 billion in wages, salaries and royalties, that they were responsible for more than 107,000 jobs, and that their total economic impact was \$9.8 billion.

In January 1993 the long awaited comprehensive study by the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies found that the non-profit arts industry alone spends \$36.8 billion annually and supports more than 1.3 million full-time jobs in this country.

We also knew that the arts can and must be integrated into every aspect of urban planning, and that there is not a single city program which couldn't be enhanced by an aesthetic or cultural component. It is not, for example, the arts versus housing and urban development; the arts can be critical to revitalizing our neighborhoods, enhancing our built environment, and preserving our historically significant resources. It is not the arts versus the homeless and people with AIDS; the arts can add beauty to their lives while also

continued on page 5



Joel Wachs (*right*) with Brad Buckley

Los Angeles Arts Endowment

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providing an eloquent voice for their anguish and pain. It is not the arts versus education, but a recognition that the nature of learning has changed. And thus it becomes only natural that we also look to the arts to help heal our nation's ailing cities.

Perhaps nowhere is this more pertinent than in my city of Los Angeles, where we recently suffered the worst civil unrest in modern American history. What happened in Los Angeles is really happening in every city, as the seeds of unrest are present everywhere.

If there is one lesson to be learned from the experience of Los Angeles, it's that we can't escape. We can't build walls high enough to avoid what's happening in society today.

Certainly art can't fix everything, nor is healing necessarily its primary purpose, but the arts are a way of communicating the anguish in our lives and of connecting people with one another, and that is precisely what we need to do. If there's one thing I've seen as an elected city official, it's that people are crying out to be heard. They do have something to say, and they want an opportunity to say it. Two of the most effective vehicles through which they can do so are politics and the arts.

So I was pleased that, in the aftermath of the riots, one of the first programs our city initiated was an arts recovery fund to encourage artists to address these concerns. This was itself part of a larger ongoing city effort to support a broad range of artists and arts organizations and to encourage them, without restriction on content, to address a wide range of social conditions, including the ethnic, racial, cultural, class and generational divisions in our city.

The Los Angeles Endowment for the Arts has placed great emphasis on cultural equity and an insistence upon inclusivity. It is one of the first major governmental programs to embrace the issues of cultural equity, questions which are so absolutely paramount to any meaningful efforts toward healing: who owns our institutions, who makes the decisions, who defines the art, who determines excellence, and whose lives and concerns are being addressed? These are questions which both the arts and our society must address.

We live in a society which is characterized by a remarkable and growing diversity, with many tensions seething beneath the surface. It is from this diversity that we must ultimately draw our strength, and we can only do so if we learn to understand and respect each other's differences. Whether it's through the symphony performing in Korean churches throughout Los Angeles, or festivals celebrating African-American and Middle Eastern cultures in our parks, or whether it's through the self-expression of skid row children at inner city arts, or the angry voices and personal pride of a gay and lesbian film festival, there is really no better way to do so than through the arts. We must never underestimate their poten-

tial. And we must continue to give them our strong support.

It is not the arts which have failed in America; it is us. Because if there's anything we've been guilty of, it's that we've become too complacent after years of effort to secure a place for the arts on America's agenda. After all of our efforts to establish programs of support for the arts at the national, state and local levels—to create an environment in which the arts can truly flourish—we let our guard down against the kind of demagogic attacks that we've experienced in the last few years.

So now it is imperative that we permanently mobilize an ever expanding arts community into a powerful political force, and not allow the demagogues and no-nothings in our society to frame the issues in narrow, partisan ways.

We must become a powerful and effective lobbying force, educating both the general public and our elected officials, and holding our officials accountable for their actions. There are really only two things that make politicians tick. Either they believe in something themselves, or they think their constituents believe in it enough to make it politically wise to support.

We need to make public officials more supportive of the arts, both by electing sensitive and knowledgeable people who will champion our cause and by nurturing broad public support by forcefully articulating the benefits which only the arts can provide. The policies of inclusion can only help us in this regard, for politicians are always looking to stack up power, and inclusivity always strengthens one's political base.

Indeed, in Los Angeles, it was the key factor in creating public support for the passage of our new arts endowment. Rather than dividing our efforts, it strengthened them. By bridging communities, and showing people that the endowment would in fact be accessible to all, they rallied behind it to create a strong base of political support. And they have continued to be a part of its implementation, thus assuring that it achieves the goals it promised.

The cultural enrichment that is possible in our cities is the highest and most eloquent expression of urban life itself. The arts and our cities are inseparable. It is our responsibility to keep it that way.

Unfortunately, the current battle over the national endowment is really about pennies. The NEA looms small in the overall federal budget — less than 0.25% — and the same is true for state and local arts budgets as well. But although the amount is shamefully small, the import is enormous. As an old Persian saying runs: "if you have but two pennies, with one buy bread and, with the other, hyacinths for your soul." We must not let America lose its soul.

Joel Wachs is a member of the Los Angeles City Council

Newslets

The **Louisville Orchestra** management and board have given the musicians a deadline of March 7 to accept their demands that the orchestra be reduced from the current number of 67 full-time musicians to 45. This demand follows concessions made last April by the musicians that reduced expenditures mandated by the 1993 collective bargaining agreement by \$300,000. Management has announced that subscription sales and fundraising for next season will be postponed until the musicians reach an agreement with them, an action that the *New York Times*, in an article on February 9, characterized as “preparing to invoke a clause of the 1993 agreement that allows [the board] to dissolve the orchestra for lack of operating funds” by “starving itself of ticket income and contributions.” In addition, the Greater Louisville Fund for the Arts, which shares several board members with the orchestra’s board, has threatened to suspend the orchestra’s annual grant of \$1,000,000.

In November, a committee whose membership included Fund for the Arts president Alan Cowen, orchestra board member (and American Symphony Orchestra League chairperson) Carole Birkhead, and orchestra executive director (and ASOL vice-chairman) Wayne Brown, recommended to the board that it cut the orchestra’s compensation for the 1995-96 season by \$280,000, \$200,000 less than the board is now demanding. Cowen demanded that the orchestra develop “a fiscally creditable budget that includes elimination of the accumulated debt within five years” and “product refocus,” as well as a “viable restructure of the Louisville Orchestra’s configuration to match financial resources with market demands.”

Consultants Ron Bauers of the University of Nebraska and William Thompson of the University of Kentucky, who were hired by the Louisville Orchestra musicians, disagree vigorously with the board’s contention that the orchestra will run a deficit of \$410,000 next season, claiming instead that current trends, including substantial increases in corporate and private donations since 1990, would produce a surplus of \$96,000.

The consultants’ report raises a number of questions about the board’s projections, including why the board has projected no additional income from a 45-week season over a proposed 40-week season that included musician concessions. Brown explained this to the Louisville *Courier-Journal* by stating that he planned no additional concerts despite five additional weeks of orchestra services. Bauers and Thompson also ask why the board is projecting ticket income to fall by \$199,000 over 45 weeks next year from this year’s projected figures for a 44-week season, as well as why contributions from the orchestra’s largest volunteer group are projected to fall by 50% next season.

Brown told the *Courier-Journal* that “without an agreement for the 1995-96 season, the board will have to decide whether to exercise a provision—based on financial performance—to continue to operate the organization. We would prefer to achieve a transition from our current position to our proposed position in a cooperative way. We will exercise other options if we are unsuccessful in achieving that position in a cooperative way.”

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