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## Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962): Speech 06

Douglas Richards

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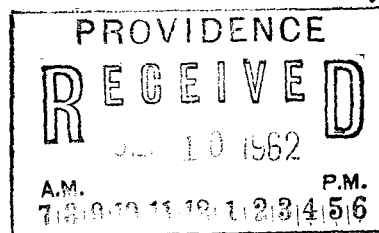
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Statement by  
Douglas Richards, Manager  
Phoenix Symphony Association  
Before the Special Subcommittee on the Arts  
Of the  
Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare

Thursday, August 30, 1962

10:00 A.M., EDST

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Douglas Richards. I reside in Phoenix, Arizona where for the past three and a half years I have served as manager of the Phoenix Symphony Association.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Chairman and the Committee for your invitation to appear at this hearing and present our views on the various Senate Bills now under study by this Committee, and to comment on the general question of the relationship between the Federal Government and the Arts. I also welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the cultural activities in my City and State. We who are actively engaged in the everyday problems of Arts financing and production in the various American cities are gratified to know that these same problems are also your concern.

I appear before the Committee today with a prepared statement based upon a resolution passed by our Board of Directors reflecting their attitude toward Federal subsidization of the Fine Arts in the United States. I wish also to point out that the Board of Directors I serve is composed of prominent community leaders, representing both major political parties.

The Federal Government has been of tremendous value to the Arts by granting tax forgiveness to individuals and corporations who make voluntary contributions to Arts groups. Relieving symphony orchestras and other Arts groups from the necessity of paying the 20% admission tax on tickets has also been of great assistance.

Additional evidence of your concern is apparent in the fact that during the first session of the 87th Congress, no less than 40 (forty) bills concerned with a variety of matters pertaining to the Arts were introduced.

There are many individuals and groups who welcome the recent legislative interest and who sincerely believe that the future growth of the Fine Arts in the United States is dependent upon Federal legislation which would provide for the subsidization of Arts groups by Federal tax dollars.

**WE DO NOT SHARE THIS BELIEF!**

Even though evidence is available that the Fine Arts in the United States are flourishing, these groups and particularly the large budget symphony orchestras are faced with serious financial problems and the professional musician is finding it increasingly difficult to earn a living wage from his profession.

The growth of interest however, is still not sufficient enough in income dollars to offset increasing cost of production in most cities.

**WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE SOLUTION TO THESE PROBLEMS, AS SERIOUS AS THEY MAY BE, MUST BE FOUND AT A LEVEL NOT EXCEEDING THE INDIVIDUAL STATE GOVERNMENT!**

We do not presume to propose a "magic" solution to these problems. Those faced by the Major Symphony Orchestras operating on annual budgets ranging from \$500,000 to more than two million dollars cannot be fairly compared to those faced by orchestras with annual budgets of less than \$500,000. For example, the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra's estimated budget for 1962-63 will be \$145,000. Before exploring possible answers to symphony orchestra financial problems at a level that in our opinion would be most desirable, may I present the objections to Federal financial participation in the Fine Arts by the Board of Directors of the Phoenix Symphony Association:

1. We do not believe that it is a proper function of the Federal Government to finance the Arts in the United States.

2. It is generally accepted that in our form of democracy, the Arts flourish best in an atmosphere of complete freedom, imagination, initiative and local autonomy. We do not believe that it would be possible to conserve these strengths if the Fine Arts were to enter into partnership with the Federal Government.
3. We believe that Federal tax subsidy for the Arts would result in greatly reduced voluntary support at the local level, and voluntary support is one of the cornerstones of our Arts as well as our charitable organization financing. It is conceivable that volunteer support might eventually cease entirely and the Fine Arts would then find themselves in the undesirable position of having to depend entirely upon Federal tax dollars to replace the revenue lost from volunteer support. Eventually the Fine Arts might find themselves with problems far greater than those they presently face.

With these points in mind I would like to comment briefly on the Fine Arts in my own State of Arizona and specifically the development of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra. Since approximately 1 B.C. when our area was inhabited by the Ho-ho-Kam, who served as the architects for much of our present irrigation system in Phoenix, to the present day, the Arts have played a vital role in the lives of the people of our area.

There are three symphony orchestras in our state who receive voluntary support from area citizens: The Phoenix Symphony, Tucson Symphony and the Northern Arizona Symphony in Flagstaff.

The citizens of Phoenix support an excellent symphony orchestra, an art museum, a musical theater group, a flourishing chamber music society, a little theater organization and the Heard Museum dedicated to the preservation of primitive arts throughout the world with emphasis on primitive arts of the Southwest area. There are many other cultural organizations in the Phoenix

area...too numerous to mention. The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra will present approximately thirty concerts during the coming season, including performances for adults, elementary school children and high school students. Demand for tickets to concerts for the past three years prompted the Board of Directors to authorize two performances of each concert during the 1962-63 season.

Four years ago the orchestra presented eight adult concerts and the annual budget of the Phoenix Symphony was \$68,000. That season closed with a deficit of approximately \$6,000. The estimated expenditures for 1962-63 will be \$145,000. It is possible to operate our orchestra at this figure due to the fact that our musicians do not depend solely upon orchestral income for their livelihood. The Phoenix Symphony Association and the Symphony Guild will raise from voluntary contributions approximately 51% of the total amount of monies required to operate the orchestra next season and approximately 49% will come from the sale of tickets and program advertising. The Association receives no subsidy from State, County or the City government and to my knowledge, none has been sought. Financial audits for the past three years show that the orchestra has operated in the black and the six thousand dollar deficit has been retired.

I do not intend to intimate that financing the Phoenix Symphony is an easy task. The small success we have enjoyed is due to the dedicated work by volunteer workers soliciting contributions from Phoenix area citizens and industries who sincerely believe that the orchestra helps to serve as a firm foundation for the cultural life of our area.

Within the next five years, due to the rapid growth of our area which will result in an increased demand for more service from the orchestra, we may experience the same financial difficulties that are besieging other orchestras today. A long range planning committee appointed by our Symphony

Association president is presently functioning, seeking to anticipate these problems and devise a plan to combat them. If this day arrives, we believe that the situation can be handled at the local level.

There is one area where the Federal Government is presently being of great assistance to Arts groups and where we believe increased assistance would be most welcome. The Government has been most helpful to Fine Arts organizations by granting tax forgiveness to individuals and corporations who voluntarily contribute to these tax exempt organizations. We would favor seeing the present allowable percentage increased both for individuals and corporations. This would allow increased and additional voluntary contributions to organizations at local levels with Governmental encouragement.

We believe that there are ways and means yet to be fully explored at a local level. For example: State, County and City support for the Fine Arts should be encouraged. A few orchestras presently receive financial support from one or all of these but we have only "scratched the surface" in this area. We believe that every City, County, and State should lend financial assistance to Arts groups for services performed. Such services, as they might pertain to symphony orchestras could include: Educational concerts for children, concerts in cities where an orchestra could not exist permanently, the production of recordings and tapes for school use and many other services too numerous to mention.

There must be increased vigor on the part of those presently charged with the responsibility of financing local Arts groups. State, County and City governments will not, in most instances, appropriate funds for Arts groups unless governmental leaders are thoroughly convinced that the programs offered by these groups will be of real benefit to the tax payers. It is the responsibility of Board Members, women's committee members, managers and

artistic leaders in the various States to convince community leaders that the Fine Arts play a vital role in the lives of our Nations' citizens.

The Fine Arts of America have enjoyed prosperous growth through the utilization of the free enterprise system. As imperfect as that system might be, let us not abandon it to a system that might eventually stifle the creativity of our artists and surrender our local autonomy to the Federal Government.

Thank you,

Douglas Richards