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National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities (1965-1967): Editorial 01

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NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES

1800 G STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506



National Endowment for the Arts
National Council on the Arts

April 12, 1966

EDITORIAL COMMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

NEW YORK TIMES, critic-at-large Howard Taubman:

"The federal government's new presence in the arts makes it almost a certainty that the mid-1960s will be a great watershed in their history in America. Sparked by the money and energies released by the establishment of a National Arts Endowment, a host of projects are being developed... All this planning reflects a salutary change in the nation's cultural climate... In the mid-1960s the federal government is investing directly and openly in artists and artistic institutions. Yet congressmen today, instead of complaining, are appearing personally at the new offices of the Arts Endowment in Washington to push the claims of their constituents and communities for federal aid..." (January 18, 1966)

WASHINGTON EVENING STAR editorial:

"The first year's program, announced last November by chairman Roger L. Stevens, showed courage, imagination and much expert thought. There is no reason to believe those qualities will diminish. There is no reason to believe the need for financial help will diminish. The existence of the National Foundation and its Endowments and Councils in the arts and the humanities has been one of the most encouraging signs of these times. It has meant national concern for the higher reaches and the higher rewards of the human spirit, a concern very long overdue." (April 4, 1966)

BOSTON RECORD AMERICAN, drama critic Elliot Norton:

"In Washington, D. C., the National Council on the Arts has made a good beginning... Before they make recommendations to Congress or even grandiose statements to the press, they propose to spend more time thinking about the prospects and possibilities. They are taking their responsibilities sensibly and are more concerned with making sense than with making news. That's admirable... The National Council on the Arts can do much to create a new image, to prepare the ground for big and substantial changes, by explaining to the public and the politicians how and why federal aid to the theater, music, painting and the other arts would be to the advantage of all the people... If these accomplished people, having carefully considered the hazards and the advantages, should recommend that the United States government follow the pattern of most foreign countries by helping the arts and artists, even to the extent of subsidy, they will be heard with respect and probably heeded... They are notable pioneers in a great and good cause." (April 15, 1965)

WASHINGTON POST, drama critic Richard L. Coe:

"In its unprecedented task of spending federal funds, the National Council on the Arts is moving with what might be called cautious daring. By recognizing the need of individual artists for cheap places in which to work and live, the Council shows that it has its feet on practical earth, an area to which dilettantism rarely descends. By aiming to help finance acting companies for the school boards of three cities, the Council shows keen awareness of the congressional bill's accent on grassroots activity...the Arts Council's think sessions have come up with a seven-point program of imagination, moderation and awareness that the U. S. eddies beyond the Hudson and Potomac." (November 21, 1965)

WASHINGTON EVENING STAR, art critic Frank Getlein:

"The National Council on the Arts...set a pattern for thoughtful discrimination as to need and prospect in the arts. In its first major action the Council demonstrated brilliantly that it will be an imaginative force for intelligent change in the arts structure of this country, as well as a quick and generous support for the truly national institutions in their moments dire...the Council is

not only doing things, it is setting an example of how these things ought to be done...(with) a paltry \$3 million, the Council has made an utterly brilliant beginning. There isn't a false move. The return will be many, many times the investment. And almost every item is so beautifully constructed that it will teach the trustees, patrons, directors and customers of the American art establishment things they should have known before... President Johnson, Senator Pell (D-R.I.) who was chairman of the Senate Special Sub-Committee on the Arts and Humanities and introduced the Administration's legislation, Mr. Stevens and a cast of thousands over the years have brought in a winner."
(November 21, 1965)

WASHINGTON POST editorial:

"The Humanities Council must rapidly formulate guidelines and procedures and dispense the \$3 million allotted to it for this fiscal year. It will be a challenge to the group to produce initial proposals and grants as propitious as those voted by the Arts Council."
(February 9, 1966)

NEW YORK TIMES editorial:

"The law adopted last year set up a National Arts Council, and the President has appointed to it a civic-minded, experienced, sensitive group of men and women. Their advice should be followed. In Great Britain, where the Arts Council decides how to spend the money appropriated by the Parliament for the arts, the program has worked impressively for more than two decades. Washington would be wise to learn from the British experience." (April 5, 1966)

DETROIT FREE PRESS editorial:

"Compared to most nations of Western Europe, ours is a nation of slobs. The Russians say we are "ny kulturny" and the British say we lack class. As President Kennedy pointed out, we have more than

enough quantity but not enough quality. The Arts and Humanities Foundation wouldn't reverse that opinion but it would be a beginning..." (April 6, 1966)

NEWSWEEK coverstory, "The American Way of Giving":

"The government's National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities promises to be one particularly adventurous agency and may even reverse traditional roles. Arts council chairman, Roger Stevens, has authority to finance pilot projects and then ask private foundations to put up matching funds or take over the projects. While foundations claim that they are the venture capital in a pluralistic economy, examples like this have prompted critics to say that government has captured the lead in innovation as well." (March 14, 1966)

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, dance editor Walter Terry:

"The Treasury of the United States has saved a national treasure. Not directly, perhaps, but the taxpayers, through the government's recently established National Council on the Arts, saved the American Ballet Theatre from extinction... The engagement now ending has simply reconfirmed the findings of 1965 and that is that the American Ballet Theatre must not only be preserved but also served, in the future, by other government funds." (February 13, 1966)

NEW YORK TIMES, dance editor Clive Barnes:

"The American Ballet Theatre...became the first American performing arts enterprise to appear with the help of a Federal grant. For this relief much thanks. May it be the first of many enterprises so to benefit..." (January 20, 1966)