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U.S. Assures Stage Plays For R.I. Pupils

\$300,000 to Subsidize Classic Drama for 40,000 Children

By WILLIAM H. YOUNG
Journal-Bulletin Washington Bureau

Washington — Rep. John E. Fogarty yesterday announced approval by the U.S. Office of Education of a \$300,000 grant for the long-planned repertory theater program for Rhode Island high school students.

The grant, with assurance of other federal government grants totaling \$416,000, constitutes final approval of the repertory theater project.

Representative Fogarty announced approval of the grant under the Elementary and Secondary School Act at his office here. Present for the announcement was Charles A. O'Connor Jr., Providence school superintendent, who came to Washington to sign a contract for the grant.

Under the theater project, 40,000 students from secondary schools throughout Rhode Island will see free productions of four classic dramatic works during the coming school year. The productions will be staged by the Trinity Square Repertory Company at the Rhode Island School of Design auditorium.

Mr. O'Connor said a target date of Oct. 4 has been set for the first performance in the program.

Formal announcement of additional federal government grants for the project are expected in the near future. The National Endowment for the Arts is expected to announce a \$165,000 grant to the Trinity Square Company to pay the costs of preparing and rehearsing the productions.

Assurances also have been given of an additional \$251,000 in federal government grants under educational aid programs and the Trinity Square Playhouse has pledged a local contribution of \$40,000. The total budget for the first year of the project is \$756,000.

The Rhode Island project is one of the two school theater projects for which federal gov-

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R.I. Pupils to See Stage Plays

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ment grants were announced yesterday. Funds also have been approved for a project in New Orleans.

Plans for the Rhode Island project call for each high school student in the state to be taken to the School of Design auditorium by bus for four performances during the school year.

In addition, texts of the classical dramas will be provided to the schools for study by the students before they see the productions, and members of the professional cast will visit the schools to discuss the plays.

The project is a cooperative venture by all school systems in the state that have high schools, the State Department of Education, and the Trinity Square Company.

The Providence school system acted as agent and coordinator for the other school systems in applying for the grant.

The \$300,000 grant announced yesterday was provided under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary School Act, a section providing funds for demonstration projects in education. The participating school systems agreed to devote a substantial portion of the state's allocation under this section to the combined project rather than submit separate project applications.

Additional education grants

for the project will be provided both under Title III and Title IV, a section providing funds for experiments and research in education.

Both the Arts Endowment and the U.S. Office of Education expect that the project will continue on a demonstration basis for three years, supported by additional federal government grants.

Mr. O'Connor said that the plays to be presented during the first year have not yet been selected, but that it has been agreed that a Shakespearean play, a Victorian play, a modern play and a contemporary play will be presented.

The idea for the repertory theater project was first disclosed last December by Mr. O'Connor in a speech to high school English teachers. The announcement was termed premature at that time by Representative Fogarty and spokesmen for the federal government agencies involved.

Since that time there has been almost continuous negoti-

ation, and some controversy, over the project between federal, state, and city officials and representatives of theater and arts groups in the state.

The major controversy involved a site for the theater project. The Albee Theater in Downtown Providence was offered as a possible site by B. A. Dario, who purchased the former motion picture theater with the intention of converting it to a performing arts center.

The School of Design auditorium was selected by the Providence officials who said use of the Albee would have boosted the cost of the project substantially.