



The Ford Foundation Program in

HUMANITIES
AND THE
ARTS

THE FORD FOUNDATION

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HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

IN MARCH, 1957, the Ford Foundation began a program in the creative arts and combined it with activities in the humanities that had been under way since the end of 1955.

The objectives of the new, combined program are:

1. To prepare over the next two years a comprehensive study of the economic and social positions of the arts and of the artist in the United States today.
2. To stimulate the creative development of talented persons.
3. To support experiments, demonstrations, and studies that will help to clarify objectives, set standards, or open new avenues in the humanities and arts.
4. To support humanistic scholarship basic to the humanities generally rather than to specialized fields.

The program begins with a modest budget, in keeping with its exploratory character. The Foundation will not make grants for the general support or operating expenses of any organization or institution; nor will it establish a program of fellowships, as such, to support the development of talented artists generally.

Except for these limitations, the program will be wide-ranging; and in making grants the Foundation will enlist and rely upon the experience and understanding of artistic and cultural leaders throughout the country. In particular, they will play a major role in preparing the comprehensive two-year study of the current status of the arts, and their counsel and advice will be sought in the nomination and selection of talented persons to receive assistance at critical stages of their artistic development.

ORIGIN OF THE PROGRAM

The Foundation began consideration of a possible program in the creative arts and cultural affairs in 1955. It soon became clear that if the Foundation were to launch a regular program in cultural affairs, with grants for the general or operating support of cultural institutions, it should be prepared to make large and immediate allocations of funds. For it was evident that even the largest cultural enterprises in the nation were plagued by serious financial problems which threatened their ability not only to expand, or to be more original and daring, but even to continue normal operations. By the time the Foundation began to review a potential program in the arts, it had already received appeals for support from operas, symphonies, art museums, theaters, and other cultural activities totaling hundreds of millions of dollars, despite the fact that it had never included such activities in its announced program.

The conclusion reached early in 1956 was that the most important immediate need in cultural affairs was the enlargement of analytical data about the current trends in the arts in America since World War II and about the economic and social positions of the arts in the United States at this moment in history. It was even more obvious that the Foundation, by the nature of its operations at that time, was not in a completely satisfactory position to judge the comparative merits of all the cultural proposals that could be made to it and was not, at any rate, ready to commit large sums to a field in which sustained experience and contact were first requisites. The Foundation's effort, therefore, was directed toward definition of a program that in its initial stages would be experimental and exploratory.

THE FOUR PARTS OF THE PROGRAM

Part I: Survey of the Economic and Social Positions of the Arts and of the Artist in the United States

The Foundation needs to acquire experience in the arts as a basis for future policy decisions. It is not committed to future enlargement of the current program, but analysis of the creative arts is a necessary forerunner of future program activities. The contemplated two-year study also will have importance outside the Foundation. The climate of the arts today, as discussion in the field reveals, is complex and various. Many people believe that a re-examination of the traditional ways by which cultural institutions have been organized and given financial support is required.

One prospect increasingly discussed is the possible development of a Federal Arts Council in the United States, modeled somewhat along the lines of the United Kingdom Arts Council

and the recently launched Canada Council for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Foundation takes no position on a possible Federal subsidy to the arts, and it is not the purpose of the two-year study to determine whether a Federal Arts Council in the United States is desirable. The current interest of many persons in this subject, however, leads them to welcome an opportunity to participate in the survey.

It is obvious that although the problems of financial support for the arts are troublesome, the magnitude of public interest in many of the arts is striking. Perhaps the most frustrating experience of many administrators and directors today is their inability to find the money with which to satisfy a growing popular interest in their institutions. The most threatening element of the problem of financial support for the arts may be the time lag between the growth of such popular interest and the willingness of people to bear the cost of what they are coming to like.

One helpful mechanism about which more facts are needed—and which could conceivably grow into a trend in the financial support of the arts—is the use of united community fund raising. A few cities are already well advanced in their "Community Chest" approaches to cultural institutions. In other cities, local branch executives recently have been allowed autonomy in making corporate gifts to artistic institutions. In most communities, however, capital gifts to cultural institutions are in a different category from such gifts to education.

These speculations concern only the problem of financial support of the arts. The two-year study contemplated by the Foundation will be occupied only in part with such problems. Many other social and economic trends in particular arts and in the situation of cultural-affairs institutions are evident. Two such trends will serve merely as illustrations.

One is the great handicap laid upon the educational and scholarly potentialities of the U. S. art museum through its inability to attract and retain professional staff, particularly curator specialists. The roots of the problem apparently are economic—salaries even lower than those in the competing college and university art departments, lack of tenure, lack of time and money for travel, frequently a lack of retirement benefits. A less influential but important cause is the attitude of many fine-arts graduate students that a museum, although it has the actual objects of art within it, is not a home for the scholar.

A few important museums are collaborating with nearby graduate schools in museum training courses, but the products of these efforts will not all readily go into museum work while the salaries for curators remain at their present levels. It is frequently said that until additional sources of financial support for such personnel are found, the American art museum, as an educational and cultural influence in its community, will not even stand still but will go steadily backward.

Another interesting complex of problems might be called "the symphony and the child." No audience is courted more by the symphony conductor, manager, and trustee than the elementary school child. The reasons, briefly, are two: The U. S. symphony orchestra already has discovered that it can sell every seat for every performance and still end the season with a deficit that forces it into fund raising. The anxiety of orchestras to get outside help in promoting children's concerts reflects their intention to rear their own adult patrons. The second reason is illustrated by the current shortage of string players felt by symphony orchestras. This shortage also has economic roots. The average annual salary of violinists is low by any competitive scale. But the shortage of string players also may be a partial

result of the supremacy of the school band in the lives of most school children. Here, again, the symphony manager sees his target as the child, and his national organization seeks large-scale outside support to attack the problem of winning and holding his audience.

These are only illustrations of the problems that may figure in the study.

Part II: Creative Development of Individual Talent

The second program category is stimulation of the creativity of individual artists at particular or crucial stages in their careers. The definition of these stages in the various arts will be undertaken by the Foundation with the aid of local advisers throughout the country. It will also depend upon such advisers for nominations in seeking to identify individual talents for aid. Individual assistance, which has been discussed by Foundation staff members and with hundreds of intellectual, artistic and community leaders, will not resemble a normal fellowship program, and applications will not be required. The budget for this part of the program also will not permit the support of individuals in each of the creative arts every year. The objective is to stimulate artistic creativity by a varied and flexible series of grants whose effect may be felt far beyond the circle of those persons who actually receive temporary aid.

What these grant-making techniques will be, and even the nature of the support given, will vary not only in terms of the art involved, but perhaps of the particular stage in the artist's career. Concerning the art of the painter or sculptor, for example, a frequent suggestion is to look to the artist who has demonstrated his talent, is in the upper ranges of the 35-to-55-year age bracket, and has reached a point at which some financial risk he cannot per-

sonally afford would enable him to test or vary his approach to his medium in a way that might influence his entire development. To meet this sort of need, a normal grant-in-aid, similar to a fellowship stipend, could conceivably prove to be the only mechanism required.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, it is suggested that performing artists, such as actors and singers, for example, do not need fellowships for their own independent use or for further training in school; but they do need a stage on which to try out and test their ideas, in a company of their peers and at a new level of artistic achievement.

In its emerging plans for executing this part of its program, the Foundation has been mindful of the hazards it might encounter if its advisers constituted a clique. It is, of course, the strong determination of the Foundation that all panels used in each part of the program should be kept regionally and otherwise representative of all the arts.

Part III: Experiments and Studies

The third category has to do with grants to institutions or associations for experiments, demonstrations, and studies. It is apparent that many of the most significant experiments in the creative arts will concern demonstrations and that some of these will be artistic performances designed to test a point.

The objective of this part of the program is to support experiments and studies that meet particular tests. They must give promise of clarifying standards, reevaluating the objectives, or strengthening the effectiveness of procedures in an important arts or humanities field, or in humanities and fine-arts education generally. It is probable that in the first two years of the new

program, a greater proportion of funds under this category will be expended in the creative arts than in the humanities.

Initial Grants Made Under the Program

The first five grants made under the new program, in September, 1957, involved studies and experiments and the encouragement of individual talent. It should be emphasized that the grants do not necessarily represent the most important problems brought to the Foundation's attention, and they do not reflect an exact image of its program objectives. Nevertheless, they do serve as illustrations of the types of experiments provided for in the program and of some of the mechanisms by which the Foundation hopes to construct additional opportunities for artists of proved talent.

New Symphonic Works

A major problem facing American composers of serious music is the great difficulty in getting a sufficient number of performances for a new work to give it a chance for life. Orchestra managers and composers agree that, important as is the first performance of a new work, it is at least equaled by the importance of second, third, and fourth performances which involve new conductors, new critics, and new audiences. They believe that if these additional performances are guaranteed prior to its original commissioning, if the work is heard by more than one audience or critic, and if it is interpreted by more than one conductor, the composer will have a test of his normal conviction that his new work can survive.

The assurance of multiple regional performances of new symphonic works is the purpose of a \$210,000 grant through the American Music Center, a clearinghouse for the advancement of serious American music in orchestral repertoires here and abroad.

For the next three years, with coordination through a national committee of the Center, the symphony orchestras of Boston, Knoxville, Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, San Francisco, and Washington will each commission one major new work annually. Each orchestra will then undertake to perform its own commissioned composition, plus at least three of the five other new works. Using established arrangements of the orchestras themselves, possibly three of the six will be recorded each year. Those not recorded will be put on tape, through permission of the American Federation of Musicians, and made available to conductors for reference purposes.

Professional Theater in the Small Towns

Not for many years have most of the smaller towns in the interior of the United States seen professional theater except through the medium of film and kinescope. The movies long ago led the professional theater to abandon almost completely the smallest American communities, and both financial and scheduling difficulties have prevented the academic theater from seeking small-town audiences very far from its home base. Although critics of the drama apparently agree that survival of the legitimate stage outside New York will depend ultimately upon repertory theater, it is difficult to find a professional company willing to experiment with small-town audiences.

One such company is The Cleveland Play House, a nonprofit, permanent, resident company now in its forty-second season. The Play House is eager to demonstrate that even the smallest towns throughout the Middle West will respond to good professional theater and has itself assumed a large financial risk in the experiment.

Under a grant of \$130,000 to the Cleveland Play House,

a panel of directors will receive from colleagues throughout the United States nominations of actors or actresses of proved talent who are a few years past completion of their original apprenticeship. Through auditions and other means, twenty actors and actresses will be chosen. From this group, the Play House will select fifteen who in its judgment can best be welded into a repertory company. These fifteen will then spend two years in residence at the Play House, getting advanced training and experience in professional theater. They will perform not only in studio theater but in regular season productions with members of the permanent Play House company. At the end of the training period, the company will tour small communities of the Middle West for a thirty-six week season.

Throughout the three-year period, the Foundation's share in the project will be the salaries of the actors and actresses. All other expenses, including the development and operation of the road tour, are guaranteed by the Play House.

A Contemporary American Operatic Repertoire

Throughout its brief history, American opera has never been tested in a sustained repertoire before U. S. musical audiences. Except for the short compositions increasingly in demand by community opera workshops, American composers find little encouragement to write for the lyric theater.

The New York City Opera Company believes that an audience exists for contemporary American lyric theater but that the point cannot be proved through the infrequent performance of a single work. It proposes, therefore, a five-week experiment in presenting in the spring of 1958 a repertoire of eleven contemporary American operas (nine separate bills) written between 1939 and 1957.

The Opera Company has obtained significant financial support for this demonstration from the City Center of Music and Drama, but it must rely on an outside agency for a forty per cent share in the experiment. For this purpose, the Foundation has granted \$100,000.

The need also has been recognized for enlarging opportunities in the lyric theater for young composers and teachers of composition. The grant, therefore, includes up to \$5,000 to permit selected American composers to come to New York to observe rehearsals of the special New York City Opera repertoire and further their technical competence in the lyric theater.

The Independent Schools of Art

Higher education in the visual arts began in the United States with the independent professional school in 1806 (The Pennsylvania Academy) and was confined there for more than a century. Only in the past generation have curricula in the fine arts become important parts of even the largest academic centers. Such curricula now have a great deal of vitality and are the subject of much provocative discussion. It is possible that the Foundation's program will involve education in the visual arts in a number of ways.

Against this background, the independent art schools themselves may face serious threats to their existence within the next decade. These come largely through the pressure for the regionally accredited academic degrees that such schools normally cannot offer and because community art museums, which historically evolved from local interest in a professional art school, now require the lion's share of funds for support.

The leading independent schools of art are trying to meet these threats in a number of ways. Some, while keeping the art curriculum within their own walls "pure," have affiliated with

nearby liberal arts colleges to provide their students with arts and science courses. A few have tried to make their own institutions so conspicuous that the parents of candidates do not stress the question of a regionally accredited degree. Many of their directors fear that what survives the current struggle may not resemble the independent art-school curriculum as they have known it, with its major emphasis on a minimum of thirty hours a week in the studio.

The Minneapolis School of Art hopes to maintain control of its curriculum while winning acceptance through a demonstration of values peculiar to visual perception as it underlies artistic training. The School would like to develop a curriculum aimed at visually, rather than verbally, proficient students, whether they are being taught natural science, social studies, or painting. Even though "peripheral vision" may not be considered academically respectable, the director believes it might have imaginative and liberating results as a base for the education of an artist.

With the help of a Foundation grant of \$150,000, the School will conduct a five-year experiment with its curriculum. It will bring in leaders from other member institutions of the National Association of Schools of Design and from colleges and universities, together with critics and artists, for seminars in experimental course design. It will appoint evaluation teams and will share with other institutions the results of its experiments.

The Foundation's interest in higher education in the visual arts, both in professional schools and in colleges and universities, is by no means summed up in the grant to the Minneapolis School of Art. At the same time, importance is attached not only to the results of the particular experiment but to the grant's testimony of concern for the future of the independent art school as an institution.

Debuts for Talented Singers

Americans and foreign visitors alike are impressed by the abundance of talented vocal material in the United States. But there is a serious lack of opportunity for even the highly trained young singer to advance from study and preparation to an important operatic debut. Opportunities on the New York concert or operatic stage for the young singer are rare. With less than a handful of major lyric theaters elsewhere in the United States, the young singer is often driven—at his own expense—to arrange a debut in Western Europe, where states and municipalities support many operatic repertoires. The results vary from success to disillusionment, with some likelihood of the latter in view of the reluctance of Europeans to present totally unknown young Americans as stars.

To meet this problem, Renato Cellini, who was brought to the United States by the Metropolitan Opera Association in 1947 and later became director at the New Orleans Opera House Association, launched the Experimental Opera Theatre of America. Through auditions in New York and New Orleans which were open to recommended singers from any part of the country, Cellini and other directors associated with him selected a number of young artists to be given a public debut in New Orleans in at least one major operatic role. Each singer prior to audition was required to prepare two principal operatic roles and a minimum of three minor ones from operas of the standard repertoire. Since their New Orleans debuts, at least fifteen of the twenty-five young singers have enjoyed roles of some stature in several opera houses around the world. There remains a question whether this result has been accidental.

With a grant of \$165,000 from the Foundation, the pro-

gram will be tested for an additional three-year period. The Foundation's interest extends not only to the experiment but to the opportunity to help meet its objective of assisting the development of talented persons at important stages in their careers.

Under the Foundation's grant, approximately twenty winners of the auditions in each year will be given eight weeks in New Orleans. Each individual singer will appear in public in at least two major roles during a five-week repertoire, and will receive appropriate minimums for the rehearsal and performance periods. His travel expenses to New Orleans will be reimbursed, but not his original expenses to New York for auditions. For the expense of these debuts, in addition to the grant from the Foundation, the New Orleans Opera House Association will guarantee \$18,000.

Part IV: Humanistic Scholarship

Until the end of 1955, the Foundation was not active in the humanities, as such. It had a very large program in education, accounting for some four-fifths of all Foundation expenditures, and many of these grants affected education in the humanities. But humanistic scholarship for its own sake and the advancement of the humanities (literature, language, philosophy, history, music, art, archaeology, cultural anthropology, and so on) were not direct objectives.

In December, 1955, the Foundation began a program in which the humanities could be given more pointed emphasis than was previously possible in the larger and more general program in education. During the following year, attention was centered on two problems: release of scholars' time for research and assistance to scholarly publication.

Consideration of the first problem led to a growing interest

in the American Council of Learned Societies—an association of twenty-five scholarly groups—as it was reshaping its program to foster the development of the humanities. In June, the Foundation appropriated \$2.6 million for a five-year A.C.L.S. program (and was joined in this action by the Carnegie Corporation with a grant of \$500,000). Among other objectives, these grants allowed the A.C.L.S. to establish three research fellowship and grant-in-aid programs adapted to the needs of selected scholars at different levels in their careers.

The Foundation also gave independent consideration to a program which might help the problem of book publication in humanistic scholarship. It did not wish to provide direct support for publishing organizations, or to assume responsibility for choosing among scholars and among manuscripts, or to establish criteria of its own for such choices. These were left in the hands of those groups which were ultimately subject to the scholars' own influence—the directors of university presses and their editorial boards.

With the help of an advisory committee, the Foundation made grants to some thirty American university presses after invitations were extended to all. The advisory committee was composed of Taylor Cole, professor of political science at Duke University and formerly an editor of the *American Political Science Review*; Kerker Quinn, editor of *Accent: A Quarterly of New Literature* and associate professor of english at the University of Illinois; and Chester Kerr, secretary of the Yale University Press and author of *A Report on American University Presses*.

Under the grants, which may be repeated over a five-year period under stipulated conditions, the Foundation makes available to each press an annual sum originally based upon the volume of the press's operations in 1955-56. The entire sum in each case

is reserved for additional titles in the humanities—and the social sciences, as well—not including textbooks or handbooks; and half of the total is further reserved to assist the publication of works written by scholars outside any academic institution in which an eligible press is located.

Other presses are eligible to apply for similar grants whenever they qualify.

It is expected that by the end of the five-year program, the Foundation will have assisted the publication of at least 250 titles in the humanities and social sciences that perhaps would not otherwise have been published and will have also freed the authors of a like number of volumes from contributing any of their personal funds toward such publication. The latter objective is particularly important to younger scholars whose advancement in academic circles often depends upon publication, but who frequently are asked to defray a part of the cost of publishing their research at a time in their careers when they can least afford to do so.

Funds to support humanistic scholarship under the new combined program in Humanities and the Arts are at this stage far less than those represented in the earlier grants to the A.C.L.S. and the university presses. For the present, additional efforts to stimulate humanistic scholarship will be confined to projects considered basic to scholarly interest broadly across the humanities, including scholarship in the creative arts, and not merely to some special field within the spectrum. Furthermore, priority will be given to needs that are different in kind from those met by the A.C.L.S. and university press programs.

To date, the Foundation has made only one grant in the new combined program—support for the revision of the *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books* over a seven-year period required to complete the work in the United States and in the

United Kingdom. While not considered absolutely typical of some of the proposals that might be considered under this part of the Foundation's program, the revision of the *Short-Title Catalogue* faithfully reflects the choice of a scholarly venture important to all the humanities rather than to individual or specialized disciplines.

SUMMARY

The Foundation's current program in Humanities and the Arts, which in its exploratory phase is expected to occupy three to five years, has these fundamental characteristics:

1. The Foundation will depend heavily upon the participation of artistic, cultural, and community leaders in every region of the United States.
2. In its present stage, the program does not include grants for the general support or the operations of artistic and cultural institutions or of academic programs in the humanities and the arts.
3. The culminating objective is to develop a factual and analytical study of the economic and social positions of the arts and of the artist in the United States, not only for the purposes of helping to develop any future policy of the Foundation in the cultural affairs field but also to help increase the factual data available to American cultural institutions.
4. A considerable proportion of the funds to be granted will be designed to stimulate creative production in every field by concentration upon the opportunities for

individual creative artists at critical stages in their careers. Individual applications for such grants, however, will not be invited.

5. The Foundation will attempt to keep abreast of trends and of problems in the humanities and the arts in every region of the country. This will be accomplished primarily by staff work in the field but also through conferences with individuals and groups at the Foundation's headquarters in New York. Communications to the Foundation regarding the development of its program, or concerning proposals to be made, should be presented in the first instance in writing. Direct grants to institutions and organizations in this or other Foundation programs are limited to those which are exempt from Federal income taxation.

Applications for grants under the third and fourth categories of the program—experiments, demonstrations, and studies in the humanities and the arts, and scholarly enterprises in the humanities—should be addressed to the Secretary, The Ford Foundation, 477 Madison Avenue, New York 22, New York.

The officer of the Foundation having administrative supervision over the program in Humanities and the Arts is William McPeak, vice president. The director of the program is W. McNeil Lowry.

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