

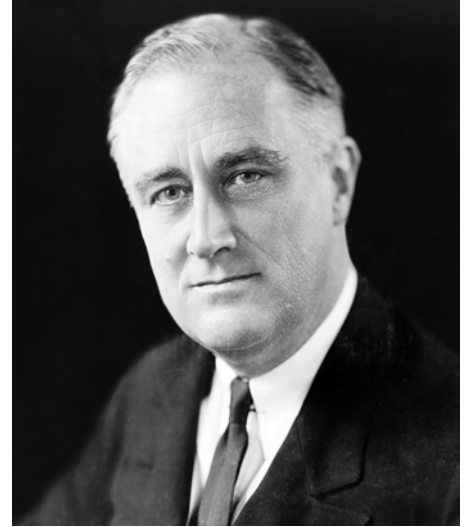
Resurrecting The American Appreciation Of Theatre

Looking at The Federal Theatre Project and Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* to determine how the United States has changed its views on federally funded arts programs.

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What Was The Federal Theatre Project?

- The Federal Theatre Project (FTP) was a government program created to provide job opportunities for unemployed actors, directors, theatre technicians, designers, and anyone else with a career in the theatre industry. The FTP supported plays, as well as marionette shows, circuses, musical comedies, light operas, and foreign language productions.
- The FTP was created as a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which was created to boost the American economy in response to The Great Depression.



Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*

- Marc Blitzstein's play *The Cradle Will Rock* was created as a part of the FTP.
- This play deals with wealth inequality, workers' exploitation, propaganda, violence against women, and the unethical nature of capitalism.
- What fascinated me about *The Cradle Will Rock* was how critical it was towards American society, yet it was federally funded by the US government. At one point in time, The United States funded meaningful art that critiqued itself. So, what happened? What changed?



Arts Funding In The United States Today: What Thrives And What Suffers?

- The most famous forms of theatre today are big-budget, private productions that generate a ton of money. More specifically, Broadway musicals.
- Broadway in New York City's gross revenue is an average of \$1.7 billion dollars.
- Often, jukebox musicals and productions by the Disney Corporation fare best in the Broadway box office. There are very few successful, original musicals nominated for Tony Awards.
- Broadway, once home to the original, socially critical productions of the FTP in the 1930s, is now monopolized by “safe”, big budget productions that will generate the most money.



What Has Changed? How Has Federal Funding Changed Since The New Deal?

- The United States Federal Government spends \$1.27 billion dollars on the arts. However, it spends a whopping \$934 billion dollars on its military.
- The United States did not become a major military presence until after the Second World War, which is after the FTP had already ended. From then on, more and more federal funding has gone to the military, while less and less has gone to the arts.



Federal Arts Funding Around The World Compared To The USA



- An example of a country that values the arts and its artists is Germany. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the German government implemented a €50 billion euro aid package that supports businesses that hire and empower artists in the country.
- By contrast, the USA is spending only \$15 billion dollars to aid the arts in its upcoming stimulus bill. This would translate to about €12.4 billion euros. Despite the USA being the most wealthy country in the world, we have a pitiful aid package for the arts.
- This same stimulus bill has a military budget of \$741 billion dollars.



Notable Organizations In The USA That Support Federal Funding For The Arts

- The National Endowment For The Arts is an independent federal agency that awards thousands of grants to arts nonprofits within all of the United States.
- Theatre Communications Group is the national organization for theatre. It advocates for a fair and thriving theatre community across the country. This organization advocates for continued and improved federal funding for theatre and all arts forms.



How Can Modern Americans Resurrect The American Appreciation Of Theatre?

1. Support candidates and political parties that advocate for more federal arts funding. For example, only 24 US senators signed a letter urging President Donald Trump to keep The National Endowments For The Arts. Make sure politicians know that the arts are a pressing issue.
2. Support more than just Broadway: explore nonprofit regional theatres, especially if they showcase new works and provide educational opportunities.
3. Donate/volunteer in a community theatre. Community theatres are integral to keeping average citizens involved in and interested in theatre.



Americans Deserve More...



- Over the last century, The United States has normalized giving its citizens the bare minimum and still calling it too much.
- People within the wealthiest country in the world should not have to scrape by, especially while all other developed countries provide their people with so much more. More being free healthcare, free public education, environmental protections, and national funding for the arts.
- The people of the United States deserve to survive and thrive. It is time to resurrect the American appreciation for, not only the arts, but human decency and the will to help one another.



“Inequality may linger in the world of material things, but great music, great literature, great art and the wonders of science are, and should be, open to all.”

- *President Franklin D. Roosevelt*

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