

The 1.3 million jobs supported by the arts industry resulted in \$25.2 billion in paychecks earned by and paid to workers in every industry in the country. More than 20,000 people in Minnesota work in the arts industry.

The arts are an investment that will pay off in a better future work force. Arts have been shown to improve student learning, instilling self-esteem and discipline.

The NEA stimulates local economies and spurs urban renewal.

Jobs supported by the nonprofit arts industry represent, alone, nearly 1 percent of the entire U.S. work force.

Arts alliances are wise to underscore those points, given the current political landscape. Perhaps details about how the arts affect the economy will resonate with influential pragmatists who don't relate to flowery talk from people like actress Jane Alexander, the head of the National Endowment for the Arts. And yet. . . .

And yet for those who see the arts as an essential to life, not as a frill, all this is a little cold. To those who have felt the power of a film, an ethnic dance troupe or a good book, the value of the arts is as clear as a mountain stream.

Not surprisingly, that value is most succinctly put by an artist. Violinist and conductor Pinchas Zukerman told a lingering St. Paul Chamber Orchestra audience the other night (OK, so we'll admit to being part of the blue-jeaned "elite" at the "Casually U" series):

"It comes down to this: Do you want Beethoven's Ninth in your life or not? It all depends on what the hell kind of soul you want, as a society."

That says it.

[From the Mississippi Rag, Feb. 1995]

MINNEAPOLIS, MN.

Public broadcasting must be saved. I base this opinion on the following background:

I have invested my career in over 50 years of American broadcasting as an employee, member of the military, free-lancer, and listener.

In the private sector as an employee, I researched, programmed, announced, and marketed broadcast services and sound products in New York City, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver, San Francisco, and Duluth-Superior.

In the public sector, I currently serve as programmer, spokesperson, and interviewer.

In the military, I was a member of a team developing radio broadcast concepts for hospital rehab programs during World War II.

I have also spent some 20 years studying and teaching in the area of electronic media. Here are some of the realities.

With some exceptions, it is my conviction that the profit-oriented broadcaster is not prepared to experiment, innovate, explore and expose new program concepts. I am willing to bet a microphone cord and a stack of classical and jazz CDs that few commercial broadcasters, if any, will rally to fill that specialized space in the bankrupt radio and TV spectrum should public broadcast funding be eliminated.

What will be the alternative? Again from experience in the revolving door of commercial broadcasting, I say do not count on the commercial licensee's sense of the public interest to pick up the slack.

Further from this half century perch and experience, I suggest most commercial broadcasters are electronic lemmings locked in battles of ratings and demographics.

These broadcast marketers are hung up on formula TV and format radio. Operating a variety of musical ferris wheels, they dump on us everything from a repetitive load of adult contemporary, album-oriented rock, urban, and country music to what amounts to TV tabloid journalism. Add, if you will, sensation directed talk hosts whose topics are run as their counterparts program music in hit radio.

What will be the alternative to the audiovisual commodity business? I suggest again, with some exception, the commercial AM and FM TV dial will continue to program from the bland to the sensational and the violent. I contend the most creative investment in commercial broadcasting is reserved for spot advertising and promotions. Public broadcasting, for this debate, invests in new programs, concepts and people.

Slash those funds and there will be a giant "sucking sound" swallowing those unique voices and programs as the public broadcasting transmitters sign off because of lack of funds. Privatize public broadcasting and public broadcasting will be subject to the same demographics and rating game.

I ask you, don't we as Americans deserve a broadcast service which gives us an alternative system—a system which truly invests, innovates and experiments with new program concepts regardless of ratings, age, or background? No content warning for the most part! The CBC, BBC, and our own Voice of America are examples of innovators. So is American Public Broadcasting!

Time is of the essence. Join with me. Call your friends. Contact your congressman and senator. Public broadcasting must be saved for it is an important investment in . . . democratic debate, cultural understanding, family values, moral leadership and character.

Far from elitist, public broadcasting is a medium for breaking barriers and isolation. It is a catalyst for building unity and celebrating who we are as Americans.

LEIGH KAMMAN.

[The Mississippi Rag, February 1995]

EDITORIALIZING

In this issue, jazz broadcaster Leigh Kamman makes an impassioned plea in favor of continued government funding for public broadcasting, asking RAG readers to join in the fray. This editor has already done so, contacting my senators, congressman, the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader.

At approximately \$1 per year per person, public broadcasting is a fantastic bargain for a jazz fan. My television is most often tuned to the local public television station where I've been able to view superlative programs on Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, and Benny Goodman, among others. I've also caught a few jazz festivals.

My car radio dial is set for four stations—all are public broadcasting stations which feature jazz (one exclusively). Every week, I make an effort to catch "Riverwalk," Butch Thompson's "Jazz Originals," Marian McPartland's "Piano Jazz," "Jazz at Lincoln Center," and Leigh Kamman's "The Jazz Image," all on public radio stations.

Ask yourself what jazz programs you regularly listen to. Dollars to donuts, you're listening to public broadcasting rather than a commercial station. Stay silent during the hearings to drop, cut, and/or rescind funding

for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and be prepared to lose that programming.

One argument against funding is that public broadcasting is unnecessary now with all the options offered by cable. This argument ignores the obvious, however—cable is expensive, not available in many rural areas, and therefore not an option for many citizens.

Another argument is that commercial stations will pick up the slack. A perfect counter argument is to offer an example of a now-defunct jazz program on WCCO-AM, a major Twin Cities commercial radio station known as "The Good Neighbor to the Northwest." The show, hosted by a fine, conscientious late night broadcaster, Joe McFarlin, actually inspired the launching of this newspaper. Joe (who was featured in an early RAG) spent hours preparing an eclectic collection of fine classic jazz, complementing the music with knowledgeable commentary. This weekly show ran in the wee hours of the morning, and many an early RAG was put to bed as we listened to him. Joe did this show on his own, with no support from the station—the show was not publicized, despite efforts on this editor's part to get the station's publicist to recognize the substantial following and respect Joe had earned. Eventually, with no budget for buying records (most he purchased on his own or brought from home), and no recompense or appreciation from the station for the hours he spent preparing the show, Joe gave up the good fight. I suspect that many of you can cite similar stories.

Traditional jazz and ragtime enthusiasts must realize that if we're going to keep this music alive for future generations, we have to fight for it on all fronts. It's no secret that most school music programs—elementary through college—go no further back in jazz history than Stan Kenton, choosing to ignore the roots of jazz and ragtime because the teachers themselves are not knowledgeable guides to this music. Some (not enough) jazz and ragtime societies are addressing this issue, making valiant efforts to get young people interested in the music through jazz education programs, jazz camps and scholarships, and they are to be commended for their work. The challenge, as the RAG sees it, is to educate the teachers as well as the students.

Public broadcasting has been and can be an effective medium for doing this. We document jazz and ragtime history in these pages, and we value the role public broadcasting has played in expanding our own knowledge. This educational role often seems to escape those who would privatize the programming of public broadcasting. They fail to appreciate that education is rarely "market driven" and is seldom profitable per se, but it's crucial in making us aware of the diversity of our culture. At its best, public broadcasting feeds the "Gee Whiz" factor, helping us to discover concepts that are not only new but exciting.

And, there is another consideration. The traditional jazz and ragtime recording business is more prolific than ever, but the recordings need exposure in order for the labels to justify the expense. Where are you most likely to hear a recording by jazz or ragtime performers who are eminently capable but hardly household words? Think about it.

Let's not close any doors that can be opened to spread the word about the music we love. Let your voice be heard now.

Sincerely,

LESLIE JOHNSON.