



Resolution 624 (1976)¹

Democratic renewal of the performing arts

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having considered the report of its Committee on Culture and Education on the democratic renewal of the performing arts ([Doc. 3766](#)) ;
2. Taking note of the symposium held by this committee on the future of the performing arts in Athens on 1 to 3 March 1976 ;
3. Recalling its Order No. 341 (1973) and the previous Symposium on Freedom of Expression and the Role of the Artist in European Society (Florence, 29-30 June 1973) ;
4. Having also taken into account in this context the work of the CCC on the wider question of socio-cultural animation,
5. Subscribes to the following general principles for the democratic renewal of the performing arts, and in particular that :
 - a. the performing arts should be made more available, more accessible, and more relevant to the creative development of society ;
 - b. the people should be encouraged to play a more active role in this ;
 - c. means should be sought of developing the participation of performing artists in all questions relating to their professional occupation ;
 - d. the state should take both art and the people into account in its urgently needed support for the survival of freedom of cultural expression in Western Europe ;
 - e. the performing arts are particularly dependent for their continued existence on such state support ;
6. Calls upon those interested to consider the principles that follow, and invites them to contribute to the continuing dialogue in conjunction with the Committee on Culture and Education ;
7. Requests the Secretary General, in his capacity as Secretary to the ad hoc Conference of European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs, to submit this resolution to the Ministers meeting in Oslo on 15-17 June 1976, together with the following statement of principles :

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

The performing arts in the general context of cultural participation

(1.) The wider context of the cultural participation of the individual (community arts, amateur groups, experimental and fringe theatre) is essential for a realistic consideration of the traditional performing arts (the "high arts" - broadly defined as theatre, opera, ballet and music).

1. Assembly debate on 3 and 4 May 1976 (1st and 3rd Sittings) (see [Doc. 3766](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education). Text adopted by the Assembly on 4 May 1976 (3rd Sitting).



(2.) These arts and cultural values should not be imposed on the public, but in view of the value of these arts it is important that all members of the public should be given equal opportunity to choose to involve themselves in such arts or in other cultural activities.

(3.) Nor can traditional performing arts survive in democratic society unless this society also recognises their particular value and is prepared to contribute substantially to their preservation.

The need to facilitate access to the performing arts

(4.) Practical measures should be taken to overcome the numerous obstacles which exist to the free exercise of cultural choice, and in particular by :

including the performing arts alongside other aspects of cultural expression in formative and adult education ;

making the presentation of the performing arts more approachable by greater use of intermediary, temporary surroundings and by the designing of permanent theatres with attention paid to the people rather than simply to the arts and to civic or national prestige ;

attempts to involve people in live cultural activities (community arts) rather than leaving them to passive entertainment ;

greater flexibility in subscription and booking arrangements.

The general role of the state, the performing artist and the individual

5.) It is the duty of the state to take account of the cultural and non-material well-being of its citizens just as much as of their material situation.

(6.) There is a need for the careful preparation of realistic policies to encourage individual artistic creativity, cultural consciousness and self-expression, and the traditional performing arts have an important, but not exclusive, role to play in such policies.

(7.) It would indeed be arrogant for the state to plan or direct artistic expression, but this argument must not obscure the need for provision for the possibility of such expression.

(8.) All concerned (from creative artist and performer to audience and financial backer) should be involved in the planning and management of productions ; a principle which has already proved highly successful on both festival and local levels and could reasonably be extended further to the formulation of cultural policies.

(9.) The involvement of the state should therefore be as flexible and many-sided as possible, but it should not be forgotten that the state, with its parliamentary link with the people, remains the sole element capable of combating the quite-differently motivated manipulation by commerce of the people's cultural appetites.

The financial aspect

(10.) The state is today alone able to contribute the financial and legislative support necessary for the subsidising of the high arts at a level where cultural standards can be retained, and alone has the means for implementing general policies for wider cultural participation by the people as a whole.

(11.) In the present economic crisis, governments are finding it increasingly difficult to provide realistic means for the implementation of cultural policies, and in such a context the traditional performing arts are vulnerable to financial cuts based solely on quantitative considerations.

(12.) It is essential therefore to act urgently so that, in the event of the withdrawal of adequate state financial support, the cultural values of the performing arts could be transmitted through a living tradition sufficiently broadly based in the young and amateur elements of society to ensure their independent survival.

(13.) The relatively low priority placed on cultural expenditure in the national budgets of most member states is to be regretted.

(14.) Governments should continue to recognise their necessary role as patron of the high arts, while accepting that any policy of financial support to forms of cultural expression should take consideration of both aspects : of art itself and of the people.

(15.) Such financial support for the performing arts should not be viewed as a dole (which is expensive and largely invites a passive response), but rather as an incentive (to encourage others to participate and to contribute).

(16.) The performing arts are at present only continuing in many countries at considerable sacrifice by the performing artists themselves, in terms of conditions of work and of employment, a fact which should be corrected in the context of the general situation of artists in European society.

(17.) Temporarily unemployed and retired performing artists constitute a real wealth of experience that could be used in schools and other community work to encourage understanding of the performer's art and his performance, and thus serve again to bring closer together the arts and the people without much additional expense.

(18.) Commercial cultural agencies should be held responsible for channelling a proportion of their profits back into the live performing arts on which they essentially rely for their material.

Action on a European and international level

(19.) Free movement of all the performing arts, artists and performances through Europe is a direct means of increasing European consciousness and is also an expression of the spirit of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

(20.) The initiative of the International Festival of Youth Orchestras is to be welcomed, and further efforts are needed to bring about wide participation in such events throughout Council of Europe member states.

(21.) International co-operation on as wide a field as possible is necessary to restrain the exorbitant fees paid to some performers.

(22.) Encouragement should be given to the experiments throughout Europe of international (or European) companies or professional training workshops, and of bilateral exchanges of productions.

(23.) In view of the Council of Europe's mission to safeguard the common heritage of its member states, the Assembly stresses the unique significance of the performing arts as linking, in a living tradition, this cultural heritage with its present appreciation, and furthermore that these arts can help to transcend political, national and linguistic barriers in Europe.