NEW DEAL CULTURE IN OKLAHOMA:

THE FEDERAL THEATRE AND MUSIC PROJECTS

by

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In order to relieve the economic distress of unemployed Americans during the Depression of the 1930s, Congress passed the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) on May 12, 1933. Under the FERA, the director, Harry L. Hopkins, set up the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935, to provide work relief instead of dole relief for unemployed Americans.[1] Under the auspices of the WPA, Hopkins initiated Federal One, a cultural program to provide work relief for unemployed artists, musicians, dramatists, and writers. The Roosevelt Administration recognized that the artist was just as entitled to employment at public expense as the manual laborer.[2]

The ideal of the arts projects was also to extend cultural programs out of the urban areas into American communities across the country and to develop programs that would have a long lasting effect on the American public. Traditionally, the arts were supported by the patronage of the wealthy and only accessible to people who lived in urban areas. Art did not reflect the cultural life of the nation, nor did it appeal to mass audiences. In order to create an art following, cultural programs were necessary that integrated the artist and his work into the national life, thereby, creating a nation of cultural consumers. The Roosevelt Administration also viewed art as a medium to uplift and enrich the lives of ordinary citizens. In a sense, the art projects would be instrumental in creating a cultural milieu based on the advancement of classical music, legitimate theater, and the creation of masterpieces of art or the "Fine Arts."[3]

Although the government's perception of what the art projects would accomplish for America was ambiguous, the projects allowed Americans to express how they viewed their culture and how they managed with the uncertainties of the tumultuous era of the 1930s. Oklahoma presents an insightful study on how two art projects, the Federal Music and Federal Theatre, reflected the perception of culture in the Oklahoma mind of the 1930s.

The Federal Theatre and Music Projects in Oklahoma utilized federally funded programs to introduce a culture that little resembled the culture of the people of the state. The Music Project emphasized the development of a "high" music culture. The philosophy of integrating the artists with the culture of the people was not the main goal. The program was not attuned to the indigenous music of the people of Oklahoma, nor did it recognize social music--music that reflected the condition of the people. The personnel of the Music Project, instead, channeled most of their energy into the development of symphony orchestras that only employed professional musicians with advanced musical training. The Federal Theatre

Project in Oklahoma was also an ideal medium for integrating the artists with the culture of Oklahomans in the 1930s, however, playwrights in the Theatre Project concentrated on writing plays that glorified Oklahoma's historical image.

Oklahomans had a predilection toward only recognizing a high artistic cultural environment and a penchant for the values of their historical past. Burton Roscoe's article, "We Lead in Culture," in the Golden Anniversary Edition of the Daily Oklahoman in 1939, described Oklahoma as "The Cradle of Literary and Artistic Genius" by listing the Oklahomans who in music, art, literature, and drama contributed to the cultural welfare of the state.[4] In Stanley Vestal's article, "We Come of Age in Oklahoma," an editor's preface relates how an eastern governor, before arriving in Oklahoma City for a conference, asked if the city had a country club, evidently assuming the state yet too primitive for such refinement. The editor also described how a fellow inquired whether a person could actually obtain water out of the faucets in the state and if indeed Oklahomans wore cowboy hats and blankets.[5] Vestal's article defended Oklahoma by elaborating on the state's historical past which was evidence of the uniqueness of Oklahoma and Oklahomans. Roscoe's and Vestal's articles are typical of the general theme throughout the special edition, a theme that celebrated artistic achievements and looked to the historical past in order to define the cultural atmosphere of Oklahoma.

The impelling need for the people of Oklahoma to defend their culture was due to the state's economic instability and the social disorder caused by the Depression of the 1930s. Governor Marland estimated that in 1935, 800,000 of the 2,500,000 inhabitants of the state were on relief.[6] More perplexing perhaps than the economic distress was the obvious condition of the people who found no other alternative than to leave the state. Between 1930 and the end of the decade, 440,000 or 18.4 percent of Oklahoma's population left the state.[7] Like many of the homeless people of the plains states, the destination of Oklahomans was California. Seventy-five thousand or one-fourth of all migrants from the plains states to California in 1935 and after were from Oklahoma.[8] No matter where the homeless migrants came from in the plains states, once they arrived in California they were all known as "Okies." An "Okie" represented an illiterate, shiftless, homeless people who lived out of the backs of their trucks. In the minds of Oklahomans, America viewed Oklahoma, as represented by the "Okies," as a backward, uncivilized, culturally deprived state.

The Theatre Project is indicative of how Oklahomans discounted the culture of the 1930s that manifested the "Okie" image. The concern was not the depiction of the social and economic condition of the people. The personnel of the Theatre Project, instead, emphasized historical achievements. By doing so, the Oklahoma Theatre did not incorporate an important ideal of the National Federal Theatre.

The main focus of the National Federal Theatre Project, under the direction of Hallie Flanagan, was to provide work for unemployed theater people. In scope, this included people

in all aspects of the theater. In the summer of 1935, the relief rolls in American cities showed that thousands of actors, directors, scene-designers, scene-shifters, musicians, box-office cashiers, ushers, and writers were unemployed.[9] The Federal Theatre offered these people gainful employment and utilized their talents to bring theater into American communities that otherwise would not have the opportunity to see a play. The first successful unit was the Vaudeville Theatre. These units played chiefly in CCC and transient camps and in state institutions such as hospitals, prisons, reformatories, and asylums.[10] Circus and Marionette units were also an important part of the Federal Theatre and performed for thousands of people at schools, social settlements, and playgrounds. Besides these specialized groups, Flanagan emphasized that the plan for Federal Theatre was to create theater units vital to the community needs--theaters which would continue to function as an autonomous enterprise after federal funding was withdrawn. The plan was to develop regional theaters around the nucleus of existing theaters with emphasis on presenting experimental productions of new plays by unknown writers in each region. Also, the plan called for the development of theater units which traveled from the regional theaters into the countryside, presenting plays that illustrated community concerns.[11]

Flanagan was enthusiastic about developing regional theater centers because she believed that "the future of the American stage depends largely on persons who write about things they know best."[12] In order to do this, Flanagan stressed the importance of developing regional drama and encouraged the efforts of the state directors to research regional stories illustrating the culture and the social concerns of the people.[13] Flanagan theorized that the theater was not only a medium of entertainment but also a vehicle for educating American society to social injustices and a weapon to fight undemocratic principles. In the playwright's search for regional material, Flanagan stressed that they should study the problems of their region.[14]

On the national level, the Federal Theatre produced plays that depicted the condition of the country and the concerns of the many people who were suffering from economic and social distress. The play Triple-A Plowed Under was a daring project that presented explosive facts about the farmers' condition and the government's ineptness in handling the crisis. The theme of the play attacked the Agricultural Adjustment Administration's unfairness to the tenant farmers and sharecroppers. The play One-Third of a Nation focused on the dirt, disease, and human misery of the metropolitan slums.[15]

In Oklahoma, using the theater as a vehicle to express the social condition of the people never materialized. This was due in part to the lack of professional actors in Oklahoma.[16] In 1936, the state director, John Dunn, developed the Theatre Project into four units that best utilized the few theater people on the relief rolls. These four units consisted of the WPA Little Theatre and Marionette Unit; a Technical Unit, a Production Unit; and a Research Unit.[17] The Little Theatre and Research Units were the most active units in the state project. The Research Unit, by 1937, became the

Research and Play Bureau of the Southwest, and by the close of the Theatre Project in 1939, it was considered the only successful aspect of the Federal Theatre in Oklahoma. The main purpose of the project was to collect regional material suitable for playwrights or individuals interested in playwriting.[18] The personnel of the Research Project in Oklahoma interviewed people in the 1930s who remembered the pioneer days and statehood. From these interviews, playwrights dramatized the stories into regional drama in Oklahoma which emphasized folk history, pioneers, outlaws, cowboys, Indian lore, and legends. The results of their efforts were plays such as The Wild Man of the Black Mesa, Little Redskin, Puckahoo of the 101 Ranch, and Chisaohayo, the Sweetheart of the Corn.[19] Many of these plays were Little Theatre and Marionette productions. The Marionette Unit not only produced folk stories but also children's plays such as, Socko, Jocko and Kicko, Topsy, Flopsy, and Mr. Brown, Beauty and the Beast, and Rumpelstiltskin.[20]

One function of the Little Theatre was to organize drama activities among the underprivileged, in particular, in community camps on the outskirts of Oklahoma City. The idea was to furnish recreational outlets for the people in the camps perceived as the "dregs of human society who lived in homes made of packing boxes, scraps of tin and whatever else they can find in junk heaps . . . ."[21] To the members of the Theatre Project, drama provided the underprivileged an activity and an opportunity to improve the mind. The concern was not in illustrating the conditions in American society that reduced people to living in tin shacks or the back of their trucks. Rather, the concern was evidently in demonstrating to the people in the community camps a "higher" form of civilization.

In Irby Community Camp, described as located on the edge of the city dump near Oklahoma City and having the poorest people and the worst type of poverty, The Little Theatre produced the play The Right Road is the Best Road, showing the importance of good character development. Other plays presented at the camp, entitled They Do Say, which delivered the message that "gossipy women were victims of their own talkativeness;"[22] and a Toothbrush Fantasy, a play centering on teeth and health,[23] are indicative of how the Federal Theatre in Oklahoma used the medium of the theater as a tool to teach. The theater personnel used drama as a way to instruct a class of homeless people that life would be better for them if they had a stronger character, if they did not gossip, and if they improved their hygiene.

Another theme used by Oklahoma playwrights on the Theatre Project was one illustrating Oklahoma as a progressive state. Oklahomans preferred to think of their state and its people as progressive. This perception relied on looking at Oklahoma's historical achievements, in particular, the commercial production of oil in Oklahoma when the state was still a territory.[24] Not surprisingly, one of the Theatre Project's most successful plays was Precious Land written by Oklahoma playwright Robert Whitehand. The central theme of the play evolved around the conflict in the 1920s with the farmer's

reluctance to give up his way of life by selling his land to the oil companies. It was a conflict over progress.[25]

The Univereity of Oklahoma's drama department produced Precious Land in 1936. Although not recognized as part of the Federal Theatre Project in Oklahoma, the drama department at the university produced Federal Theatre plays.[26] These included not only plays written by Oklahoma playwrights but also National Federal Theatre dramas. The plays, however, were subject to university scrutiny. In February 1936, the student newspaper, the Oklahoma Daily, announced the casting for two "social plays" to be presented by the university drama department. The plays were Clifford Odit's Waiting For Lefty, a play illustrating struggles against social and economic injustice, and Till The Day I Die, relating to the struggle of youth for an ideal.[27] The university administration considered the plays "Red" drama and President Bizzell cancelled production claiming that the "playhouse is not an open forum for the discussion of political, religious or moral questions . . . we do not believe it is the department's place to give propaganda plays that will lead to wide discussion uninformed persons were too ready to arrive at the conclusion that members of a department and a cast were in sympathy with ideas expressed in the play."[28]

The type of material emphasized by John Dunn, as director of the Federal Theatre in Oklahoma, perhaps was influenced by the university's conservative attitude in regard to controversial subject matter. Dunn turned down a request by Flanagan in September of 1936 to encourage the production of Sinclair Lewis' It Can't Happen Here by the Federal Theatre Project. It Can't Happen Here is an anti-Facist play with the central theme that Facism could happen in America. Flanagan believed that plays dealing with contemporary problems in American life should be scheduled for production across the country simultaneously.[29] Dunn rejected Flanagan's request to produce It Can't Happen Here in Oklahoma. Dunn's reason for rejecting Flanagan's request was that the Federal Theatre in Oklahoma did not have a dramatic unit.[30] Probably closer to the truth was that Waiting for Lefty and Till The Day I Die were censored seven months earlier and a play depicting fascism had very little chance of being accepted by Oklahomans.

The conservative atmosphere in Oklahoma contributed to the fact that the Federal Theatre in the state was not used as a vehicle for depicting the social and economic deprivations of many of the people. Theater used as a tool to illustrate societal ills is referred to as social theater. Drama presented in the social theater expressed the attitudes of the times and the people. One aspect of the Federal Theatre under Flanagan's direction, was to develop a social theater that encouraged people to write plays about their experiences as Americans and American workers.

Another drama group in the state not associated with the WPA did accomplish Flanagan's objective. The Red Dust Players, with the support of the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union, travelled the state of Oklahoma in 1939 presenting social drama at migrant and community camps throughout the

state. The Red Dust Players wrote their material around topical issues that were of immediate importance to the people--the plight of the sharecroppers, the economic conditions, unfair labor policies, homelessness, and poverty. The activities of the Red Dust Players were short lived in Oklahoma. Accused of spreading communist propaganda, most of the members were threatened and run out of the state by 1940.[31]

John Steinbeck's novel The Grapes of Wrath, which illustrated the same social theme as the dramatizations performed by the Red Dust Players, was also unpopular in Oklahoma. The Grapes of Wrath, published in 1939, the year of Oklahoma's Golden Anniversary, depicts regional drama that illustrates the condition of many Oklahomans in the 1930s. The book, published too late to be considered by Hallie Flanagan and the Federal Theatre for production, is a sensitive story about a family forced off their land in Oklahoma due to economic hardships. This is reality in Oklahoma in the 1930s, but what disturbed Oklahomans about Steinbeck's novel was the image portrayed in regard to the people of Oklahoma.

Steinbeck's characters are illustrated as earthy, poverty-stricken people who succumb to many indignities in order to survive.[32] To Oklahomans, Steinbeck's characters represent Oklahomans as illiterate and uncivilized. What escaped the people of Oklahoma was the condition of humanity in the 1930s which Steinbeck was illustrating.[33] He could have just as easily placed the environment of his story in Kansas or Missouri: the human condition was the same.

Like the Theatre Project, the Music Project did not emphasize programs that reflected the culture of the people of Oklahoma in the 1930s. The Music Project established cultural programs that enriched the cultural appreciation of the people and followed closely the elitist attitudes of the national director, Nikolai Sokoloff, who emphasized a "high" musical culture. Like the other art projects, the main function of the Music Project was to provide work relief for the unemployed musician.

The professional musician in American society felt economic hard times not only due to the Depression but also due to new technology. Perfection of the radio in the mid-nineteen twenties, the introduction of sound film which resulted in the loss of 20,000 American theater musicians, and the popularity of the phonograph changed the music culture of many Americans. In 1935, the Federal Music Project created an opportunity to employ the musician and also to initiate programs to reeducate American society to the culture of live music--thereby creating permanent employment for the musician.[34] The stated purpose of the Federal Music Project was to create employment for "instrumentalists, singers, other concert performers, and those participating in music education and recreation." Professional musicians were employed in each state in symphony orchestras, concert orchestras, dance bands, chamber music ensembles, as instrumental and vocal soloists, in grand opera, operetta, opera comique, and teaching music and music appreciation. The employment of music librarians,

music copyists, music binders, piano tuners and instrument repairers were also important.[35]

In Oklahoma, the Music Project was varied but incorporated most of the national directives. The Music Project was organized into four units: the Oklahoma Federal Symphony Orchestra, designed to reemploy, retrain, and rehabilitate unemployed symphony musicians; The Federal Music Production Unit, to employ unemployed copyists, arrangers, and composers; Music Education Unit, to reemploy unemployed music teachers; and The Research in Folk and Indian Music, to establish a research project to classify, transcribe, and make a permanent record of folk and Indian music found in Oklahoma.[36] The Oklahoma Federal Symphony was by far the most successful unit of the Music Project. In 1937, the Federal Music Project employed 150 persons in the Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra, the Ardmore WPA Orchestra, the Shawnee WPA Orchestra, and the Colored Dance Orchestra.[37] In addition, there were also a string band and an old fiddler's band. The underlying ideology of the Federal Music Program in Oklahoma was to reach as many people as possible and introduce them to a new musical culture.

Oklahomans' aspirations for the development of a musical culture that reflected the high moral standards of the nation were evident in the attitude of Frederik Holmberg, the first Dean of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma in 1909.[38] Holmberg believed that Oklahoma's handicap in obtaining a musical culture was due to Oklahoma's rapid development or "hurried civilization" which left little time for cultivating the arts. He also considered that it was the university's position to spread the "gospel of Music" which would supercede what he referred to as the disease music of ragtime. In Holmberg's opinion, community music--real music "causes democracy. It makes people feel alike." Holmberg was instrumental in developing the first Symphony Orchestra in Oklahoma City.[39]

The idea of a symphony orchestra first started with the Ladies Music Club in 1922. The purpose of the club was to create and develop a musical cultural atmosphere. The first orchestra started with a group of violin students who presented small orchestral programs. The first Oklahoma City orchestra debuted in 1929, under the conductorship of Frederik Holmberg. It was Holmberg's opinion that the orchestra was "doing much to put the state of Oklahoma on the cultural map."[40] By 1932, however, the Oklahoma City orchestra was not able to maintain the musicianship which Holmberg considered necessary for a professional group. From either a lack of talent or insufficient amount of rehearsal time, the orchestra could not acquire sufficient excellence until the Federal Music Project was initiated in 1935.

Oklahoma City aspired for a quality musical culture. The federal funding for the development of a symphony orchestra was important in obtaining the city's cultural goal. An orchestra was considered an important cultural improvement for Oklahoma City and the main goal was to develop a sponsorship for a state symphony orchestra that did not rely on federal funds.

In developing orchestras that employed quality professional musicians, in the major cities in Oklahoma, Dean Richardson, state director of the Music Project, requested from the Federal Music Project Regional Office in New Orleans twenty instrumentalists to complete the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra. Richardson was somewhat selective in his request. He stated that he preferred young American male musicians who would fit into a western atmosphere.[41] The point is that in order to obtain the quality of musicianship needed to develop the desired musical culture, recruitment outside the state was necessary. The idea of the Music Project as a vehicle for relief for the unemployed musicians in Oklahoma was not the main goal. The Music Project was remiss in not establishing music programs that utilized the talents of people in the music culture of the state. This music culture was not of significance to the elitists who equated civilization with "high" culture.

The culture of a people encompasses all aspects of life. A music culture can incorporate the folksongs of a ballad singer, the talents of a banjo picker, the blues of a piano player, or the ceremonial music of the American Indian as well as music that utilizes the talents of a professional musician. Oklahomans paid little attention to the music culture of a majority of the people. The Research Unit was the only unit that initiated a program that reflected the culture of the people. This unit attempted to collect and record Indian music and folk music native to Oklahoma.[42]

The collection and compilation of folksongs was a part of the Federal Music Project on the national level. Although not considered as a cultural program to stimulate interest in the fine arts, the effort made by the personnel in folk research perhaps left a larger legacy for Americans. In 1938, a Joint National Committee of Folk Arts employed personnel from all four of the art projects. The chairman was B.A. Botkin of the Federal Writer's Project, vice chairman Charles Seeger of the Federal Music Project, Herbert Halpert of the Federal Theatre, and Adolph Glassgold of the Federal Art Project. Their mission was the preservation of folk music. Their method was to travel throughout the states and record folk music from people who still sang the songs of their ancestors. The legacy of this project is a vast collection of folk music housed in the Library of Congress of American Folk Music, today known as the Archive of Folk Culture.[43]

The research of folk music was the only unit of the Federal Music Project that incorporated the arts with the people. The vice chairman of the Joint Committee of Folk Arts, Charles Seeger, disagreed sharply with the elitist attitude of the Music Projects national director, Nikolai Sokoloff. Seeger believed that there was great value in the music of the people and that folk music or social music had a place in American society along with fine art music.[44]

In Oklahoma, the research into folk and Indian music was short-lived. By 1940, the project was classified incomplete and never finished due to a reduction in employment on the project. Many people in Oklahoma did not believe that Oklahoma had a musical culture indigenous to the people.

According to a report on the history of music in Oklahoma, compiled under the Oklahoma Writer's Project in the 1930s, Oklahoma did not have indigenous music because of the rapid settlement of people from all parts of the country. The musical heritage of the early settlers was of Eastern influence and therefore Oklahoma did not have music of any distinctive type.[45] This report is accurate in defining the musical culture as diverse. What escaped Oklahomans was the fact that the music culture that the early settlers brought to Oklahoma was representative of the states they left and were the same songs sung in Colonial America with a European heritage. People of English and Scottish ancestry who settled in Oklahoma left a large repertoire of songs from England and Scotland. The music was somewhat transformed to reflect a new environment, but this was not the music's first transformation. The music was just as much a part of the people of Oklahoma as it was a part of the people of the Southeast or the Northeast or England.[46] Other songs, just as valuable to Oklahomans, were original songs reflecting the folklore of the West. None of this music was important enough to allocate funds toward collecting and preserving.

Another valuable source of music in Oklahoma that is perhaps truly indigenous to Oklahoma and the Southwest Region is the music referred to as Western Swing. The people who migrated to Oklahoma from the Southeast and Texas brought with them distinctive musical sounds. The combination of Eastern hillbilly music, rhythm and blues from the cotton fields, Mexican tempos, and Louisiana Jazz culminated in Oklahoma into the sound of Western Swing. The music incorporated the backwoods fiddle, the Dobro, and the steel guitar with the traditional string band instruments. Added to this were the woodwinds, clarinets and saxophone.[47] In the 1930s, at the same time the Federal Orchestra was drumming up talent from across the region, Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys were achieving national acclaim in Tulsa. Wills' western swing or western jazz was a combination of two folk musics--frontier fiddle music and the blues and jazz of black field hands of the cotton camps of east and west Texas. The sound produced by the Bob Wills Band, a strong band of six musicians (five strings and a piano) evolved into a big swing orchestra of eighteen members including saxophones and a horn section. By 1939, Bob Wills had one of the largest swing bands in the nation.[48]

Besides the development of an original sound as produced by western swing, Oklahoma in the 1930s inspired music that illustrated the social concerns of the people, songs that told stories about what people were experiencing and feeling. Woody Guthrie, in particular, wrote folksongs that told the country about the condition of the homeless migrants of Oklahoma. Guthrie's songs were a social commentary of the 1930s and were as unpopular in Oklahoma as Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Oklahoma did not want social commentary in plays, books, or songs that defamed the image of their state and its people.[49] It is interesting that the National Federal Music Project's efforts to collect and record folk music in the south did not include Oklahoma. It is ironic that the only listed music in the Folk Archives that represent

Oklahoma's folk culture are the socially oriented folksongs of Woody Guthrie.[50]

The legacy of the Federal Theatre and Music Projects can be judged by what value they had for the people of Oklahoma. The Federal Theatre was not used as a tool to educate Oklahomans to social ills apparent in their society. Instead, the theater offered a diversion from the day to day reality of economic distress. By producing material that reflected the achievements of the historical past, the Federal Theatre Project in Oklahoma offered Oklahomans a sense of security and cultural identity.[51] This was important in an era of conflicting values and insecurity. The people of Oklahoma preferred their historical culture over the culture created by social unrest of the 1930s.

The legacy of the Music Project for Oklahomans was the development of a fine symphony orchestra which was evidence that Oklahoma was culturally acceptable. But perhaps more important, were the smaller benefits of the music education programs throughout the state. A survey in 1936 by the Music Project revealed that rural schools in Oklahoma had no music education.[52] A widespread music program was initiated by the Music Project to bring music education and musical activities to the underprivileged children and adults of Oklahoma.

It was important in 1930 for Oklahoma and the nation in general to sanction the development of American culture. The closing paragraph of a survey of the Oklahoma Music Program in 1940 is indicative of the consensus that an acceptable cultural environment was a worthwhile and obtainable goal:

> A program that is cultural must reach the individual continually in order to be effective. In turn, the government's recognition of individuality undoubtedly strengthens and matures the appreciation of that government, its institutions and its guarantees of liberty, and domestic tranquility. As the taste of a nation is a matter of systematic and continual exposure, the kind of tastes a nation acquires is a responsibility of that nation.[53]

NOTES

1. Searle F. Charles, Minister of Relief (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 30-31.

2. William F. McDonald, Federal Relief Administration and the Arts (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), 129.

3. Jane De Hart Mathews, "Arts and the People: The New Deal Quest for a Cultural Democracy," Journal of American History, 63 (September 1975):316.

4. Daily Oklahoman, 23 April 1939.

5. Ibid.

6. Cecil L. Turner, "Oklahoma's New Deal: Program and Reaction," (Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1963), 7.

7. Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 48. In reality the migrants who left the dust bowl of the plains states were not dispossessed because of the drought or the dust storms but because of the advances in commercial agriculture, especially the use of the tractor. The tenant farmer and the migrant who worked the farmer's land were replaced by the tractor because the tractor produced the crops cheaper. In the Interstate Migration Hearings it was reported that one farmer who purchased three tractors forced 31 tenants and croppers off the land. U.S. Congress, House, Committee to Investigate The Migration of Destitute Citizens, Oklahoma City Hearings, Seventy-sixth session. Part 5, 19 and 20 September 1940, testimony of Otis Nation.

8. Ibid., 50.

9. Hallie Flanagan, "Democracy and the Drama," The Listener (April 1939):822.

10. Federal Theatre Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 4, March 1939. Hallie Flanagan Davis Collection, Vassar College.

11. Hallie Flanagan, "First Meeting of Regional Directors Federal Theatre Project," October 1935. Special Collections, Fenwick Library, George Mason University.

12. Washington Post, 8 September 1935, "99% of Fund to be Paid Idle as Wages, she says."

13. Federal Theatre in the South, Quarterly Bulletin Works Progress Administration, October 1936, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

14. Hallie Flanagan, "A Theatre Is Born," Theatre Arts Monthly (November 1931):908.

15. Jane De Hart Mathews, The Federal Theatre, 1935-1939 (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), 15, 17. Material presented in regional centers across the country was not entirely socially oriented. A wide range of plays from the classics to nineteenth and twentieth-century Americana was presented. Shakespearian plays such as Macbeth, A Comedy of Errors, King Lear, Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet were emphasized along with Ibsen's plays The Wild Duck, Peer Gynt, and An Enemy of the People; Gilbert and Sullivan's The Pirates of Penzance and The Mikado; Shaw's Great Catherine, Androcles and the Lion; and Oscar Wilde's play The Importance of Being Earnest. Federal Theatre Magazine, 1, No. 4.

16. Hallie Flanagan, "The Experimental Theatre in America," The Landmark (September 1934):463.

17. John Dunn, "Progress Report" 25 March 1936, Federal Theatre Project Oklahoma, Records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

18. John Dunn, "Annual Report Federal Theatre Project of Oklahoma," January 1937, Federal Theatre Project Oklahoma, Records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

19. Narrative Report 5 June 1936, Federal Theatre Project Oklahoma, the records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

20. John Dunn, Annual Report, January 1937.

21. "The WPA Little Theatres," 9 June 1936; Elizabetn Mullin, "Synopsis of Activities of Teachers-directors to promote theatre education among the underprivileged," December 1936; John Dunn, "Progress Report," 25 March 1936. Federal Theatre Project Oklahoma, Records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 16, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

22. Oklahoma News, 19 January 1937.

23. Daily Oklahoman, 9 January 1937.

24. W. Richard Fossey, "Talkin Dust Bowl Blues-A Study of Oklahoma's Cultural Identity During the Great Depression," Chronicles of Oklahoma, 55 (1977):12.

25. Robert Whitehand, Precious Land, Special Collections, Fenwick Library, George Mason University.

26. Playbills for the stage productions at the University of Oklahoma in the 1930s indicate that a significant number of plays were Federal Theatre plays. Also significant, is that the plays were directed by John Dunn, part time professor of drama and director of the Oklahoma Federal Theatre Project. Special theatre collection of John Bryan, Drama Department, University of Oklahoma.

27. Oklahoma Daily, 7 February 1936.

28. Norman Transcript, 12 February 1936.

29. Mathews, Federal Theatre, 95-98.

30. John Dunn, Correspondence with Hallie Flanagan, 11 September 1936.

31. Suzanne H. Schrems, "Radicalism and Song," Chronicles of Oklahoma, 62 (Summer 1984):190.

32. John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York: Penguin Books, 1939); Martin Staples Shockley, "The Reception of the Grapes of Wrath in Oklahoma," American Literature, 15 (January 1944):351.

33. Richard H. Pelles, Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 216-219.

34. Grace Overmyer, "The Musician Starves," American Mercury, 32 (June 1934):224.

35. Special regulations for the Federal Music Project, August 1936, Federal Music Project Oklahoma, the records of the Works Project Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

36. A survey of the WPA Music Project in Oklahoma, May 1940. Federal Music Project Oklahoma, the records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

37. Special Regulations of the Federal Music Project, August 1936.

38. Personal papers of Frederik Holmberg, Frederik Holmberg Collection, Division of Manuscripts, Western History Collection, The University of Oklahoma.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Letter, 18 March 1937, Federal Music Project Oklahoma, the records of the Works Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

42. "The Aims of the WPA Music Project," Wardell Collection, University Archives, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

43. McDonald, Federal Relief Administration, 639.

44. Neal Canon, "Art For Whose Sake: The Federal Music Project of the WPA," in Challenges in American Culture, eds., Ray Brown, Larry Landrum, William Bottorff (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970), 85.

45. "Music in Oklahoma," WPA writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

46. Ethel and Chauncey O. Moore, Ballads and Folk Songs of the Southwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964).

47. Jerry Zolten, "Western Swingtime Music," Sing Out n.d. For a comprehensive discussion of the evolution of jazz and western swing in Oklahoma see William W. Savage, Singing Cowboys and all that Jazz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

48. Charles Townsend, "Bob Wills and Western Swing: The Oklahoma Years, 1934-1942," in Rural Oklahoma, ed. Donald Green (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1977), 84-100.

49. Guy Logsdon, "Woody Guthrie: Poet of the People," University of Tulsa Magazine, 9 (October 1970), 2.

50. The folk music recorded and collected by the Federal Music Project is identified by state in the Check-List of Recorded Songs in the English Language in the Archive of American Folk Song to July 1940.

51. Alfred Haworth Jones, "The Search for a Visible American Past in the New Deal Era," American Mercury, 23 (December 1971):710.

52. "Musical Developments: Survey of the Need for Music," 28 July 1936. Wardell Collection, University Archives, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

53. "A Survey of Oklahoma's WPA Music Program," Federal Music Oklahoma, the records of the Work Projects Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives, Washington, D.C.