

STATE SUPPORT OF MUSIC

an old tradition in europe

Subsidy of music is no new thing in Europe. Italy was pouring money into opera when the tower of Pisa took on its famous slant in the fourteenth century. France's *Opéra*, along with the Louvre, has been that country's pampered pet since long before world wars were even thought of. Sweden's Stockholm Opera came into being in 1773 through the royal decree of King Gustav III, who himself wrote some of the operas' texts. Frederick the Great gave Berlin its first opera house in 1740. October 18, 1746, he issued the order: "Having received many complaints of the decline of the art of singing, and the neglect of it in our gymnasiums and schools, His Majesty commands that the young people in all public schools and gymnasiums shall be exercised more diligently therein, and to that end shall have singing lessons three times a week."

Still today opera seems to be the favored goal for subsidies in Europe. Practically every city in Germany has an opera company complete with orchestra and staff, not to speak of a fine building to house it and full equipment to facilitate it—all stabilized through grants from the federal, state and local governments. These "Staatsoper" service the entire region, with performances held in many cases nightly eleven months of the year. Though federal and state governments help subsidize such companies, the running policy is usually decided at the municipal level. Just now East and West Berlin authorities are competing fiercely for operatic prestige, each placing lavish resources at the disposal of the home company—the sort of cold war that even pacifists can revel in.