Hopkins Reports 20,000,000 Persons Have Attended WPA's Music Concerts During Six-Month Period.

Works Progress Administrator Harry L. Hopkins announced today that 20,000,000 persons throughout the Nation have attended concerts and performances sponsored by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Music project between January 1 and July 1, 1936.

Mr. Hopkins' announcement is based on a report submitted by Dr. Nikolai Sokoloff, national director of the Federal Music project.

The report stated that approximately 15,000 musicians were on WPA rolls. This phase of the report covers the first nine months of the project's program.

Dr. Sokoloff added that 1,600 teachers of music have carried their work among the relief population and more than 600 American composers have heard their music performed by Works Progress Administration units.

Musicians on the Federal Music project rolls on June 30, were divided into the following classifications:

One hundred forty-one symphony and concert orchestras, absorbing 5,669 musicians; 77 symphonic, military and concert bands, with 2,793; 15 chamber music ensembles; 81 dance, theater and novelty orchestras, (including Tipica, Gypsy, Hungarian, Hawaiian and Cuban Marimba groups) employing 2,051; 38 choruses, quartets and vocal ensembles; 141 teaching projects; one composers' project, two vocal and instrumental
soloists' projects, 24 projects for copyists, arrangers, librarians and binders; two tuners and instrument repairers' projects; and 11 miscellaneous (coordinating, administrative and clerical) projects.

"The great majority of these musicians were on the relief rolls when the Federal Government moved to preserve their skills and to maintain their professional abilities until they were again self-sustaining," Dr. Sokoloff states in the report.

"Only skilled musicians were eligible for this form of relief. Audition boards of recognized musicians, formed in hundreds of districts, passed on the qualifications of applicants for music assignment. While music standards differed in various sections - as between urban and rural regions - there has been a firm insistence upon proved musical integrity for concert performance and educational activities.

"Thousands of brilliantly trained, seasoned and experienced musicians were found among the unemployed. The transfer as quickly as possible to some other relief agency was recommended when the applicant was found to lack the skill of a professional musician."

Cooperating sponsors for these musical activities under the WPA embrace many types of civic and community organizations.

"In developing the program the first consideration of the Works Progress Administration was whether there were needy unemployed musicians of skill in the community where the music program was to be prosecuted," the report reads.

"When these facts were established there were conferences with local sponsors before the project unit was created."
Cooperating sponsors include among the universities: Harvard, Pennsylvania, Temple, Minnesota, California and Southern California, North Carolina, Chicago, Loyola, Illinois and New Mexico, through their music schools or other college divisions; New York University, City College of New York, the University of Denver, Ohio State and Columbia.

City commissions, city councils, county and township boards, school districts and boards of education, chambers of commerce, locals of the Musicians Union, recreation groups and park boards, service clubs, fraternal orders and veteran organizations also are local cooperating sponsors. The National Federation of Music Clubs, with more than 5,000 member bodies was among the first to assume cooperating sponsorship for the Federal Music project program.

More than a score of symphony orchestras, comprising between sixty and 110 musicians, have been created under the Federal Music project. New York City has three and Boston has two orchestras of symphonic calibre. Philadelphia's Civic Orchestra employs a hundred men. Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland and San Diego; Syracuse, Buffalo, Hartford, Bridgeport, Providence, New Orleans, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Tulsa, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Asheville, Richmond, Newark, Jacksonville and Miami have been hearing music of the great symphonic literature in frequent programs.

In many other cities there are concert orchestras of between twenty and sixty musicians, and, like the larger symphonic groups, these orchestras have emphasized the performance of music by American composers.
In all sections of the country audiences have been listening to
the stirring strains of seventy-seven WPA symphonic and concert bands. More than 2,000 musicians are enrolled in dance, theater and novelty orchestras.

Grand opera, operetta and opera comique have been brought to many thousands, the report states, who were barred from such performances by the heavy expense of production. Plans for the future call for wide expansion of these forms of the lyric drama in widely separated parts of the country. Particular success has attended the presentation of opera in New York, Massachusetts and California.

Excerpts from grand operas by four American composers have been heard.

In the cantata and oratorio field many of the mighty and familiar works have been given repeated performance. There also have been revivals of many lesser known works. Among the ten world premiere performances in New York City alone was the presentation on May 24, of Seth Bingham's "Wilderness Stone", a folk cantata, deeply American in character, which affords a musical setting for excerpts from Stephen Vincent Benet's epic poem "John Brown's Body".

In the music educational field with its 1600 teachers there are enrolled more than a million students. In Mississippi alone they number 69,000, while in New York City enrollment exceeds 100,000. Minnesota, Massachusetts and Oklahoma have set up the teaching programs on state-wide bases.

Through the teaching of music in the rural districts on the unprecedented scale made possible by the Works Progress Administration new texts and technics are being evolved, the report states.
One section of Dr. Sokoloff's report is devoted to the Composers' Forum Laboratories which were created as an extra-curricula activity of the Education Division of the Federal Music project. Since the inception of the Forum in New York City in October, 1935, when the compositions of Roy Harris were performed, the works of more than sixty American composers have been heard in Forums in New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and Minneapolis, and in Florida and California.

In these Forum Laboratories the composer is exposed to the questions of his audience. This gives him unique opportunity to change, correct or amend his work in the experience of audience reaction.

The creation of additional composers' forums are contemplated with the Fall season in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland; Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo; Portland, Ore.; New Orleans, Tulsa, and Jackson, Miss.

Another section of the report relates how 7,000 WPA musicians participated in Spring music festivals and the observance of National Music Week, May 3-10. In New York City, Richmond, Va., Vicksburg, Miss., St. Paul and Minneapolis, Fort Worth, Tex., Ashland, Ky., Asheville, N. C., and Manchester, N. H., programs were devoted largely, and sometimes exclusively, to the music of American composers.

Many of America's most distinguished musicians promptly proffered their assistance to the Federal Music Project when it was created with WPA Project No. 1 for the Four Arts.

"They saw in this emergency project," Dr. Sokoloff states, "not only a wise step to conserve the skills of musicians but the potential building as well of a new body of musical appreciation in the Nation."
Leopold Stokowski, Frederick Stock, Hans Kindler, Willem van Hoogstraten, Henry Hadley, Arthur Fiedler, Rudolph Ganz and Paul Stassevitch were among those who offered their services for rehearsal or concert with the new WPA orchestras being organized.

The report reviews briefly the status of the professional musician in America since the turn of the century. It refers to the tonal domination of foreigners and foreign music up to the Armistice and the important drifts and trends towards a native American music following the World War.

"There was a peculiar irony in the tragedy that descended on the trained musician with the depression," the report states, "for their incomes were becoming increasingly precarious with the advance of sound production technics even before 1929. Finally there came the wide-spread separation from payrolls; music schools reduced their faculties, classes of private teachers dwindled.

"When the Federal Music Project was set up under WPA to retrain deteriorating skills hundreds of musicians were taken from the labor jobs to which they had been assigned - they made notoriously poor ditch diggers and teachers were indifferent clerks - and placed in new units for which their training equipped them."

In conclusion the report says: "All of this music belongs to the Nation. Whether it presages the creation of a public and an audience; whether it is establishing the groundwork for a native musical tradition, rests with the future. Certainly it has disclosed a desire for music and a creative musical talent that had not been anticipated when the Federal Music Project came into existence."