



Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961
Directive on Programming for Light Music and Dance Music (January 2, 1958)

In January 1958, the GDR government issued a directive on light music and dance music programming for the radio and live performances. The guidelines stipulated that at least 60% of the pieces performed had to be by East German composers or composers from other Socialist states. The guidelines were motivated by an ideological desire to limit “bourgeois-decadent” forms of art, but they also responded to practical considerations, such as the lack of foreign currency needed to pay royalties to Western composers.

To elevate the level of light music and dance music in the shaping of a Socialist cultural life, to combat manifestations of decadence and decay, and to promote the work of the authors of the German Democratic Republic and to prevent undue hard-currency obligations, the following is decreed in agreement with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance:

§ 1 (1) For all events involving light music and dance music, the program should be arranged such that at least 60% of all works performed were created by composers who have their residence in the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union, or the people’s democracies. And these works must not have been previously published outside of these areas. In the case of light music, it is permissible within the percentage indicated above to perform works for which the legal protection has expired.

(2) Events in the sense of this directive are all public performances, including those in taverns, at sports events, in cultural parks, at amusement sites, at variety shows and circuses, at advertising events, as well as at all events by organizations, enterprises, clubs, and in clubhouses and houses of culture. Public mechanical playback, such as the playing of records and tapes, are included in these kinds of events, as are radio broadcasts in cities, swimming pools, and trains.

[. . .]

§ 3 (1) Programmers who deliberately or negligently violate the regulations of § 1 (1) or § 1 (2) can be punished with a fine of up to 500 DM.

[. . .]

§ 4 Independent of the imposition of a fine, professional musicians who have repeatedly violated § 1 (1) or § 1 (2), can have their professional card revoked, in accordance with the regulations of the Decree of September 9, 1955, about the issuing of professional cards for the full-time performance of light music and dance music (GBl. I, p. 660). In such cases, part-time musicians can be excluded from placement by the Music Agency.

§ 5 This directive takes effect one month after its announcement.

Source: *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* [*Legal Gazette of the German Democratic Republic*], Part I, 1958, p. 38; reprinted in E. Schubbe, ed., *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED* [*Documents on the Artistic, Literary, and Cultural Politics of the SED*]. Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1972.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap