

New schedule sought

Symphony seeks to reorganize

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

The West Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra (WBSO) is considering playing half of next season's concerts in Birmingham to capture a larger audience. The move could prompt a name change for the orchestra, founded in 1975.

"Nothing has been definitely decided," conductor Felix Resnick said, following an orchestra rehearsal Monday night. "It's an ideal compromise to get maximum support from both communities."

"I think it's important for people to know we're not abandoning West Bloomfield," Resnick said. "I hope both will be equally attended. We're broadening our base. We're looking for more support to reach more people."

THE SYMPHONY has filled only half the 800-seat West Bloomfield High School Auditorium for its series of five concerts, where it once played to sell-out audiences.

Even its annual holiday presentation of "The Nutcracker" did not draw as they once did.

Patrons and sponsors have dwindled from 50 to eight.

"We're willing to chalk a lot of it up to the state of the economy," Resnick said. "There are drops in attendance (at symphony concerts) all over the city. It's a general thing."

The symphony board has had preliminary talks with Birmingham School District officials about possible use of Seaboard High School, which has an auditorium capacity close to 1,000, said WBSO board president Harold Patrick.

If the move to Birmingham is approved, the season could be expanded to six concerts — three at West Bloomfield High School and three at Seaboard, Patrick said.

HARD ECONOMIC times apparently prompted WBSO founders Gordon and Carolyn Muir and several board members to resign in March 1982 when their proposal to permanently shut down the orchestra did not carry.

At the time, new symphony president Harold Patrick set the deficit at \$1,000 to \$2,000. Mrs. Muir, who was executive director and an orchestra member, put it at \$5,000.

At the same time, Detroit Symphony

Orchestra principals resigned, rather than play a free concert to give the orchestra a chance to financially regroup. They were replaced by other musicians who do not command their high salaries.

The symphony board recently filed a law suit alleging Mrs. Muir and former board member William Windschiel (now moved to Atlanta) made three withdrawals of symphony funds between Feb. 1, 1980, and Dec. 2, 1981, totalling \$4,500 which had "no corporate purpose."

THE SUIT filed in 48th District Court, Bloomfield Hills, alleges Windschiel and Mrs. Muir collaborated to get a 2-for-1 matching grant for the orchestra from Gulf Oil for which Windschiel works, but that Windschiel was later reimbursed by the orchestra for his personal contribution.

The symphony suit asks \$4,000 be returned, alleging Muir and Windschiel "wrongfully interfered with plaintiff's possessory interest" in the money and asserted "wrongful control" over it. Attorney Jeffrey Leib, representing Mrs. Muir, said the withdrawals were money paid to Windschiel for "in-kind

services," which was immediately repaid to the symphony.

Patrick alleges there is no record of that repayment. Although the Gulf program is aimed at monetary contributions to community organizations, as opposed to matching for in-kind services, Leib said he believes Windschiel had reviewed the process and received approval from his employer.

No hearing date has been scheduled.

SYMPHONY BILLS are paid up to now, Patrick reports. "But we've got one more concert to go. We have to raise some money between now and June."

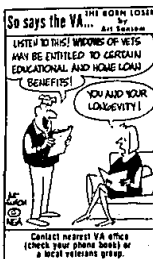
The season's final concert at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 22, will feature "Music of the Theater" with Harold Orbach, tenor and cantor of Temple Israel, West Bloomfield.

The Age of Gold Ballet Suite by Shostakovich, On the Waterfront by Bernstein, Annie by Strouse and selected Broadway hits are scheduled for this concert.

Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students. To order tickets, call 643-7288.

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