

She dreams of state ballet company

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

DORIS RAPPORT'S STORE-FRONT dance studio in Kego Harbor seems an unlikely birthplace for a state ballet company.

But it is here, amidst a crowded waiting room cluttered with second-hand furniture, wilting plants, and used icecans and ballet slippers tacked to

the wall, that the idea for a Michigan ballet company began. Rapoport sits — and sitting still is not easy for her — behind a desk equipped with a Mickey Mouse telephone and a sign proclaiming "Boss Lady." She picks up a pile of books, tosses them into a larger pile beneath the desk, brushes papers aside and gets right to the point.

"We have an opera company, the DSO, several theater groups. Why not a

classical ballet company? It's time. "I've wanted to have my own dance company since I was 9. I opened this studio 10 1/2 years ago, closed it down for four years and reopened 1 1/2 years ago. The time is right. It's always been right for dancers and now it's right for me."

"Why hasn't anyone else done it? I don't know. Maybe fate. Maybe I'm the one."

RAPPOORT'S MICHIGAN ballet company is still in the dream stage, but the Orchard Lake Village resident is determined that by 1988 the dream will be realized.

Auditions are under way for the semi-professional company, which Rapoport says will be called Jol de Vie. Rapoport is looking for 20 dancers between the ages of 13 and 35 who have had appropriate training.

"They should be near-professionals or close to it," she said. "I'll take them and polish them."

She hopes that half of them will be men, though she knows chances of that are slim. "It's just not realistic in Michigan."

Rapoport said the company will begin as a non-profit company and in the beginning dancers will not be paid.

"It will have to be a labor of love," she said. "I'd like to see daily rehearsals, but I understand these people will be going to school and work. We'll have to sit down and work out a schedule."

Rapoport admits one reason for founding the company is self-serving. While her first love is dancing itself, writing and choreographing ballets is "a major love."

SHE HAS WRITTEN several ballets, most of them fantasies. The latest, however, "Her Image of Life after Death," she said, is realistic, the story of a young woman dying of leukemia. "It has every emotion in it," Rapoport said. "I've finally matured to where I can accept the 'cons' of life."

"I want to see brand new ballets being performed. How many times can you do a 'Swan Lake' or 'Nutcracker Suite'? We need new ballets, new classics, with up-to-date themes."

More than providing a showcase for her own creations, Rapoport wants to

provide a place for Michigan dancers to dance.

"It's frustrating, and I know that frustration," she said. "I experienced it myself in New York. I knocked on a hundred doors in New York, but I never got in the door. That was frustrating. That's what the kids here are going through, but there aren't even any doors here."

RAPPOORT BEGAN dance instruction as a 7-year-old Detroit house mother went to a professional ballet and decided it suited her daughter. She studied with Theodore J. Smith, and by the age of 9 knew she had to be a dancer. By 14, she was attending dance classes daily and was selected as a member of the Detroit City Ballet Company.

An extended role as a stepsister in "Cinderella" at age 16 brought her to the attention of the American Ballet Theatre in New York. After graduation from Clarenceville High School in Livonia, she headed to New York, but was side-tracked for a time in Washington, D.C., when she took a job as a flamenco dancer. By the time she joined the American Ballet School, it had lost its grant funding.

She then began a two-year workshop program with the New York City Ballet under the tutelage of George Balanchine, but returned home when she was unable to establish herself in a career.

Back in Michigan she found her former instructors had died and she had no place to dance. "I must have visited 20-25 studios all over Michigan, but the teachers couldn't teach. I was thoroughly disgusted."

WHILE TRYING to find a satisfactory teacher, she eventually turned her creative energies into local amateur theater, marriage and motherhood.

"I never really gave up dance," she said. From 1965 to 1972 she was head of the dance department for the Redford YWCA, offering instruction in ballet, tap and jazz. In the mid-'70s she opened a studio in West Bloomfield, but moved to her present location on Orchard Lake near Commerce Road for more space.



GARY CASKEY/artist photographer

Doris Rapoport is stumping to form a statewide dance company.

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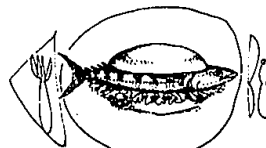
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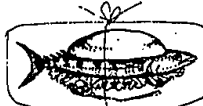
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Massage law OK'd in West Bloomfield

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

learned members of the opposite sex could not give massages.

The amended massage-parlor ordinance became law Monday on a 5-2 vote by the West Bloomfield Township Board.

But trustees Gordon Allardye and Dennis Vatsis strongly repeated their objections that the provision prohibiting serving or attending patrons of the opposite sex was unconstitutional.

Allardye said although the ordinance passed last month — prescribing that massagists be free from disease — was needed, "This amendment is seriously flawed, giving a false sense of security. It indicates any room set aside for a massage must be open to the public. Under Michigan Civil Rights law, it is discriminatory. We would be asking the (massage parlor) employer to violate the sex discrimination law."

"There has been no challenge," said Township Supervisor John Doherty, of the regulation on Detroit's books for 30 years. However, a similar ordinance on the books in Garden City was recently declared unconstitutional by Wayne County Circuit Judge Patrick Duggan on the basis of sex discrimination in employment.

"IF THIS IS NOT passed I assure you he (Jin Sung Chung) will be open tomorrow," said Clerk Betty Sue Dugre. She referred to last week's withdrawal by Chung of his plan to open on Orchard Lake Road after he

Vatsis said the amendment could open the door to homosexual spas, "with West Bloomfield leading the pack. We don't want another San Francisco."

Trustee Jeffrey Leib asked to table the amendment for one month but could muster support only from Allardye and Leib.

He argued, "I'm opposed to this type of business. My concern is we may open more of a Pandora's box. We should not decide in haste and repent at leisure. We should review the ramifications in executive (closed) session with our lawyer."

Treasurer Dorothy McIntosh, however, reminded Leib, "We can't have an executive session on such a matter."

Falling in his bid to table the matter, Leib voted with Doherty, Duffee, McIntosh and Trustee Raymond Highland for the amended ordinance.

THE PARLORS can't be open between midnight and 10 a.m.

Massage parlors must be open for inspection by authorized township department representatives during operating hours for enforcement purposes.

Doherty, said the provision that massage private rooms must be open to the view of other persons does not mean the public may "walk up and down."

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