

Advocates rally to restore arts funding

By Corinne Abait
staff writer

Instead of sounding the battle cry, yesterday's Art Attack on the lawn of the state Capitol came off more like a well-staged, multimedia pep rally for the arts.

Almost all corners of Michigan were represented in the crowd of some 500 who gathered on a cold, rainy morning to be informed, entertained and later speak with legislators.

In the first Art Attack last year, the goal was to affirm the importance of the arts to Michigan and insure continued state support. This year's mission, was far more dire.

Gov. John Engler's proposal to eliminate arts funding from the state budget and in essence do away with Michigan Council for the Arts by putting it under the Department of Commerce created havoc among the hundreds of institutions and individuals receiving or expecting to receive state support.

Seeking to forestall a bitter controversy, Leon Cohan, MCA chairman, issued a statement just before the Art Attack asking for a meeting with the governor, legislative leaders and representatives of the arts community "to find a fair and balanced solution."

HIS ANNOUNCEMENT at Art Attack that the governor had accepted his proposal and a meeting would be set up brought rounds of applause and cheers. Cohan called the loss of funding for art education "enriching the lives of all who attend our schools" one of the worst aspects of the present crisis. The Art Attack was sponsored by Michigan Advocates for the Arts.

Musician, composer and pops conductor, Mitch Miller, acting as arts spokesman and master of ceremonies, told the gathering, "Michigan has a positive and inviting reputation due to the quality, vitality and accessibility of its arts. Today, Michigan's reputation is in jeopardy."

Using a parody of the "Say Yes to Michigan" slogan, Miller said, "Ex-



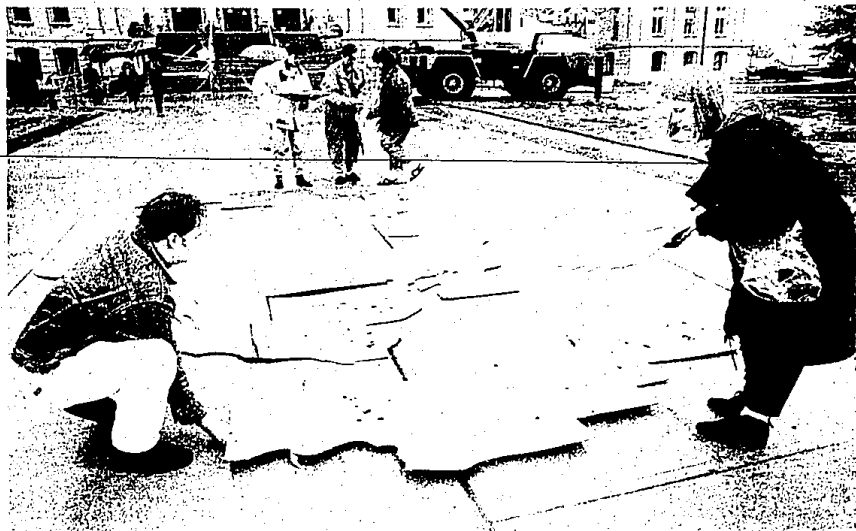
Winkle Covintree from Paint Creek Center for the Arts of Rochester borrowed a wartime slogan to make a point about the arts.

pose a lot of talented people to start saying no to Michigan." Then he put other groups such as developers and tourists in the "say no" category.

Miller, known as a consummate showman, told a cheering audience said the proposed budget cuts "tell us we haven't done a good job as arts educators" otherwise the significance, value and importance of the arts would be common knowledge.

"This is not an impossible task," he said. "Don't lose heart. Don't abandon the fight. . . don't forget a state without arts is a state without a soul."

HUNNY GOLDMAN, tenuously holding on as executive director of MCA, said she was there as a private citizen with her mother Belle Kukes



Paul Wittenbecker, left, and Dorothy Bradshaw of Grand Rapids place the upper peninsula on the state map of the senate districts, each made by artists who live in the district.

of Bloomfield Hills. Yet, she was guardedly optimistic in her off-the-cuff remarks. "Things are getting better - I think things are looking up."

One reason for her optimism could have been the amendment proposed by state Sen. Jack Faxon (D-Farmington Hills) which passed the Senate on Tuesday restoring \$2,363,200 to 30 organizations including a number of symphony orchestras that would

have been cut under the governor's budget. Locally, that includes: \$10,752, Birmingham Bloomfield Symphony; \$8,821, Southfield Symphony; and \$5,346, Plymouth Symphony.

A start back - a respectable new beginning.



Rain didn't dampen the spirits or the banners of those attending the Art Attack.

Staff photos by Dan Dean



Mitch Miller, a frequent guest conductor for the Detroit and Birmingham Bloomfield symphony orchestras, speaks with Marilyn Whea-son, president of Michigan Advocates for the Arts.

Faxon rebuffed

Bid to save existing arts council fails

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Operations Committee, called Faxon's motion premature while saying he shared some of the senator's concerns.

THE SENATE floor leader, Arthurhult, addressed what he felt was a big concern of the arts community - that under Engler's governmental structure, Michigan would be ineligible for grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

But Arthurhult reported that the NEA said that structure, moving the MCA to under the Department of Commerce, does meet criteria for NEA funding.

Engler's plan consolidates the MCA, the Committee for Art in Public Places and the film office under the Department of Commerce. The MCA and the committee previously have been autonomous under the Department of Management & Budget.

The three agencies share related roles so they belong together, not only for administrative efficiency but also as a cost saver, Engler says.

The open question, Arthurhult said, is whether Engler will agree to matching state funds for the arts and to adequate staffing for the

arts office.

SEN. HARRY Gast, R-St. Joseph, who chairs the appropriations committee, asked Faxon, "Do you want paper cuts in home health care, foster care, mental health and A&E?" If you do, damn it, get up and say so and stop all these innuendoes.

Replied Sen. Lona Pollack, D-Ann Arbor, "We can get the money from the Silverdome, and to cities with race tracks, the lottery money - a lot of things which aren't priorities."

Cities with race tracks include Livonia, Hazel Park and Northville.

Observer & Eccentric area Democrat George Z. Hart, Dearborn, was among 15 Senate Democrats who supported Faxon's bid to put his resolution seeking overturn of the Executive Order to a Senate vote.

Among those opposing it were these O&E area Republicans: Matt Dunasus, Lake Orion; David Longman, West Bloomfield; and Robert Grake, Northville.

In all, 18 Republicans and two Democrats sided with the governor. William Faust, D-Westland, had an excused absence.

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