

# Rebellious from page C1

are paid for rehearsals and performances," said Robert Libke, executive director of the Philharmonic.

The community orchestra label denotes a less-than professional performance whereby quality is compromised for the sake of community participation, said Libke.

That kind of brush assessment usually stirs up the grapevine in the rather small metro area classical music community. But the Libke and Nixon-Lane are on a do-or-die course for recognition.

Since last March, the Philharmonic intensified its campaign for younger audiences and as a family entertainment alternative while continuing to pursue the

ever-evaporating corporate funds. Libke, who earlier this year oversaw the merger of statewide arts organizations into ArtServe, assumed administrative responsibilities at the Philharmonic in the spring.

From their theme concerts celebrating Ground Hog Day to their stunning coups in convincing acclaimed artists like Kennedy and pianist Alicia de Larrocha to perform in a high school auditorium, the Philharmonic has drawn kudos for its music-for-music's sake approach.

Unquestionably, Nixon-Lane is the heart and soul of the Philharmonic. In 1990, the one-time shy French Horn player in the Michigan Opera Theatre, looked

around and noticed the high number of quality musicians not in a full-time orchestras, and the "graying" of audiences.

Under the mentoring baton of Gustav Meier, Nixon-Lane has developed a conducting style that downplays mechanics for a deeper interpretation of music.

"I'm an efficient conductor," she said. "I know what the orchestra is looking for because I've been on the other side of the baton."

Initially, she had to call more than 100 string players before one accepted to play in the precursor of the Farmington Area Philharmonic, an ad hoc orchestra called "Group du Jour." And play they did — just about any-

where.

But without a home base, the musical vagabonds found it difficult to build a following. So, what the Philharmonic lacked in physical space, Nixon-Lane figured out how to make up in vision.

"I asked, 'Why aren't there any young people in the audience?'" she said. "There was this perceived elitism about attending a classical music concert."

The Philharmonic is hardly alone. Recently, a study commissioned by the American Symphony Orchestra League projected the demise of many American orchestras unless they fundamentally changed the way they did business.

In the last several years,

orchestras in San Diego, Birmingham, Ala., Orlando were shut down. Meanwhile, those in Milwaukee, Honolulu and Toronto reduced their performance schedule.

Although these orchestras are considered among "major orchestras," the trend has affected so-called community orchestras of the Philharmonic's caliber.

**Hear it to believe it**

"Our goal is to find a permanent home and to bring back theme concerts so middle-class families have an entertainment option," she said.

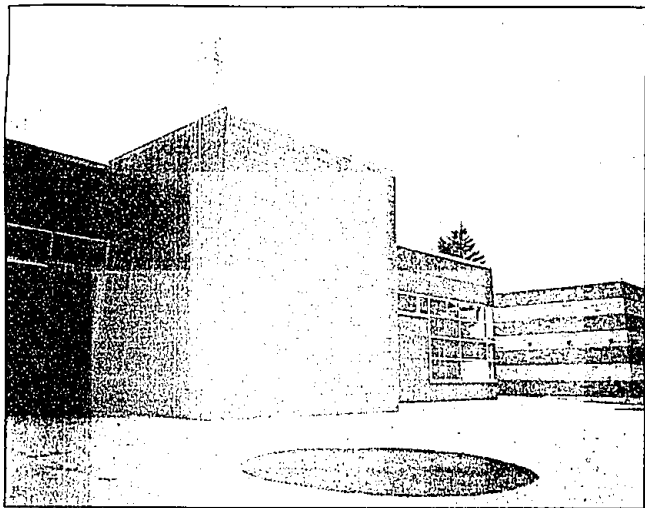
Until last year, the Philharmonic held its annual Ground

Hog Day concert at the Old Mercy Center. To set the mood, audiences brought picnic baskets and wore their summer clothes. Another concert combined concertos with music from "Mary Poppins" where the wind section played kazoo.

"We keep telling people they need to hear us to believe it," said Nixon-Lane.

"We want to pump up this organization, put in place more education programs, especially for kids and a subscription series," she said.

"If I get a call from the Cincinnati Orchestra, who knows, maybe I'll tell them I'm happy where I'm at."



Naturalistic art: Design of the BBAA expansion integrated features of the current site, including the rolling landscape surrounding the building.

# Expansion from page C1

## A well-kept secret

Additions at the BBAA include a new exhibit space, "The Robinson Gallery," six new teaching studios and spacious storage areas, a casting yard, outdoor classrooms on the south side of the building, and a student commons. Negotiations continue with a local art supply store to set up an onsite discount shop.

Overall, the revamped BBAA includes an additional 10,000 square feet of studio and exhibition space, a 40 percent increase in class offerings per term, and a soon-to-be-revealed public image campaign to posture itself as a regional cultural resource for budding artists, families and businesses.

With these improvements, the BBAA is more than willing to let everyone in on the secret that it has become the largest art association in the Midwest, in terms of physical size, class offerings and membership.

"For years, we were growing in spite of ourselves," said Pat Wiley, BBAA board member. "People found the BBAA through word of mouth. We did event public relations, but there was no long-term strategy for growth."

Within five years, the BBAA expects to increase membership by 35 percent while further expanding its facilities to include renovated administrative offices and an onsite lecture hall constructed from an excavated underground water tank.

The proposed additions are expected to cost up to \$1.5 million, bringing the total estimate for the four-phase expansion to \$3.7 million.

That's a hefty amount for most art associations, and probably an unheard of undertaking just a

few years ago for the BBAA, which operates with about a \$1.2 million budget.

**Cultural impact**

While there isn't a consensus on the reasons for the growing popularity of art associations, the public funding cuts to fledgling arts organizations amid a revival in arts and crafts may explain increased membership at the BBAA, Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester and the Ann Arbor Art Center.

Since opening in 1982, PCCA has steadily evolved. Today, the center, housed in the form Avon Township Hall, is one of the few art associations to seek national artists to their galleries. Throughout the year, PCCA offers about 150 classes, and each September oversees the Art & Apples Festival, one of the top-10 arts celebrations in the country.

Meanwhile, the Ann Arbor Art Center, one of the oldest art associations in the state, has gone from an operating budget of \$80,000 in 1980 to more than \$900,000 last year. To offer more classes, the Center recently purchased a second building not far from its downtown Ann Arbor location.

"Many of our adult students always wanted to take an art class," said Marsha Chamberlin, president of the Ann Arbor Art Center. "Community based art classes must be accessible and educate the community about art."

Advice that the BBAA has taken to heart.

Three years ago, the BBAA expansion went from an often-talked about goal to a pressing necessity when the outmoded wooden-frame modular class-

rooms literally fell apart under the stress of heavy rains.

Architectural plans for the four-phase expansion was awarded to Nordlie and Tryba Architects of Denver, Colo., which had designed museums and other arts facilities around the country.

"Their drawings were very sculptural and they looked at how to use the pre-existing site rather than constructing an entirely new facility," said Stephen Whitney, an architect from Albert Kahn Associates Inc., who advises the BBAA on the expansion project.

Nordlie and Tryba's plan preserved the original building while erecting structural slabs on underground concrete storage tanks.

True to its budgetary vigilance, the BBAA employed a pay-as-you-go strategy during the planning and construction of the first two of its four-phase expansion. They were also helped along by a \$250,000 Kresge Challenge Grant.

Primarily, the BBAA's revenue is derived from membership fees, tuition, corporate and individual donations, along with modest commissions from the Michigan Fine Arts Competition and the annual Art in the Park, held in Birmingham's Shain Park. Throughout the year, the BBAA also holds several fund-raisers.

"Now that we have the space, we're asking, 'What's next?'" said Citrin. "I don't know if people realize the potential economic impact."

"Often times when people are choosing a place to live they look at nearby cultural institutions — that's what the BBAA is becoming."

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## Be part of the Town Meeting!

On Thursday, September 4, you will have a chance to participate in person or by phone in the live broadcast of "First Thursday Town Meeting"

Here is an exciting opportunity to talk with people who have the answers about traffic, schools and just about anything that's happening in the halls of your hometown government.

Sponsored by The Canton Observer and WXYT-AM-1270, this public forum is open to everyone interested in the Canton and Plymouth area.

Join co-hosts Jimmy Barrett, WXYT on-air personality, and Tedd Schneider, Editor of The Canton Observer as they broadcast live from the Damon's The Place for Ribs on Ford Road. A panel of Canton community leaders will be on hand to answer questions and discuss issues.

There is no admission or reservations; however seating is limited, so come on down early, take a seat and enjoy a rousing exchange of ideas and information.

Don't miss this opportunity to offer your opinion or ask that burning question in person or by phone! CALL 248-559-1270.

Broadcasting from 10 a.m. until 12 noon in Damon's The Place for Ribs on Ford Road

# Conversations from page C1

David Haygood, Jr.'s "Endangered" reflects the vacant stare of a poverty stricken African American child.

And Ian is quick to point out that the racial origins are hardly obvious of those artists who've created the abstract works in their gallery.

Grant chose the name of his gallery from one of the seven principles of Kwanza. It means "unity." Unity among men, man and nature, man and woman.

For the Grants, their art business is not about race, politics or even profit. It's about something more lasting, simply called "Umoja."

**Spirit of independence**

The Grants' aspirations are indistinguishable from what they want for their two young sons — and those who share in

the odyssey of African-American history.

"We'd like our sons to understand where they've come from," said Ian. "And if they want, they'll have a place that they can run one day."

But the day when Ian is ready to give up the reins on his dream is a long way off. There's plenty of work ahead educating their customers, black and white, about the rich cultural heritage of African-Americans.

Nearly one-third of Umoja's customers are from the "cross-over" or "white market." A figure that Grant expects to increase to about 40 percent in a few years.

And when the images of African-American history becomes inseparable from American history, the Grants will feel like they've done their job.

"We want our sons to feel the spirit of entrepreneurship — the

confidence and independence."

Included in the Grants' ambitious plan is a stand-alone building where artists from various cultures will work alongside each other, and an on-site gallery where their work is sold.

And when that day happens — and don't bet against it — the Grants say they'll think of it as merely extending their family.

It might just be a case of both being Leo's. But there's a more suitable explanation. And the name of their gallery says it all.

*Do you have stories about your arts group, an artist or any arts-related issues? Please contact Frank Provenzano, (310) 991-2557. Or write to him at the Birmingham Eccentric Newspaper, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. Frank covers arts for communities in the Eccentric coverage area.*

# Pianist kicks off Music Hall series

Music hall Center for the Performing Arts kicks off its 1997/98 season 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 5 with a concert by solo pianist George Winston performing his "Summer Show."

Tickets are \$33, \$28, and \$23 available now at the Music Hall Box office, 360 Madison, Detroit, and all Ticketmaster locations.

A food drive to benefit Gleaners Community Food Bank will be held prior to the performance. Ticket holders are encouraged to bring non-perishable food donations to the show.

Winston will perform a variety of songs from his newest release, "Linas & Lucy — the Music of Vince Guaraldi." The recording features interpretations of compositions by the late jazz pianist

Vince Guaraldi, known for his jazz standard piece "Cast your Fate to the Wind," and the first 16 musical scores used on the popular "Peanuts" TV specials.

"Vince's music is very much a part of the fabric of American culture," said Winston. "It generates joy, warmth and humor, but not as many people know the man behind the music. I want to do what I can to keep his musical legacy alive."

On stage, Winston presents a varied and colorful musical tribute to the seasons, featuring songs from his seasons, featuring songs from his season rural folk piano albums. "Everything I do musically comes from the seasons; that's the whole undercur-

rent of everything I play and visualize as I'm listening to music," said Winston.

His music is deeply influenced by his upbringing in Montana's Big Sky country. Winston's 1994 recording, "Forest," won a Grammy in 1995.

The 1997/98 Music Hall season continues with Philip Glass' dance opera spectacle, "Les Enfants Terribles," Sept. 23; Capitol Steps' the musical political satire, Oct. 23-24; Hubbard Dance Theatre of Harlem, Feb. 17-22; Pilobolus Dance Theatre, April 24-26; and Ed Asner in "Don Juan in Hell," May 7-10.

For more information, or a season brochure, call, (313) 963-2366.