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devastating to incumbents in marginal districts.

To supporters of tri-county arts funding, however, there is growing apprehension of history repeating itself.

Two years ago, after an overwhelming vote in the Senate, a similar arts funding bill was sent to the House. Shortly thereafter, unrelated amendments were attached, and the bill's original intent became convoluted, and eventually floundered.

Bouchard hopes a more deliberate approach will lessen the likelihood of arts funding becoming a political issue by anti-tax zealots and dogged dissenters of any type of support for the city of Detroit where many of the cultural institutions are located.

"Every time we hit one of those political speed bumps, we'll slow down and make sure the issues (in the arts tax) are clearly understood," said Bouchard.

Specifics of the bill

The current regional arts funding bill proposes to amend the Metropolitan Council Act, which would establish a board to oversee the disbursement of tax revenues generated by a millage.

Although the bill calls for a 5 mill property assessment, voters would have to approve the enactment of any tax.

Revenue from the tax would be earmarked to cover operating expenses at the regions' 14 tier-one cultural institutions, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Zoo, Meadow Brook Theatre, Cranbrook Institute of Science and Cranbrook Art Museum.

Approximately one-third of the funds would go back to the county where the revenue was generated to be made available to local arts groups.

"With reduced allotment of public funding to the arts over the years, this type of initiative is greeted with adulation," said Marlowe Belanger, manager of the Southfield Centre for the Arts.

The Southfield Federation of

the Arts includes more than 80 arts groups, many of which use the center for rehearsals, classrooms and performances.

In the Farmington area, nearly two dozen arts groups are included in the Farmington Art Council. Revenue from an arts tax, according to local arts advocate Nanette Reid, would be a much-needed catalyst in the area's effort to establish a community cultural center.

"The key for us would be if we could use the funds for capital expenditures," said Reid.

Redefining local interest

During the last two years, the major roadblock to regional arts funding had been the reluctance of many Oakland County officials, from County Executive L. Brooks Patterson to the majority of county commissioners.

Because the state's most affluent county would generate nearly one-half of the estimated \$40-million tax revenue, county officials wanted assurances that Oakland County would have a proportionate representation on the oversight board.

Bouchard's bill has assuaged these concerns along with added provisions for one-third of the tax revenue going to local arts groups and an anti-obscenity clause.

But by waiting until after the primary for the House to take up the bill, there's a foreboding sense that other political issues will be attached to the bill.

"We don't have any long-term regional cooperation in southeastern Michigan," said Bettie Buss of Detroit Renaissance, which has spearheaded the four-year drive for regional arts funding.

"Maybe part of what we're doing is creating a model of how you can build a cooperative spirit around the cultural institutions we all treasure."

Clearly, when it comes to the region's cultural jewels, geography is only coincidental.

This summer, for instance, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has broadened its concerts at Mend-

ow Brook. And the DSO played to huge crowds in the three-day Fourth of July Celebration at Greenfield Village, July 2-4.

"The DSO exists to serve the region," said Louis G. Spieto, new executive director at the DSO. "Look at the list of our subscribers and where the audience comes from. Our audience is from everywhere."

Since 1990 when its budget was drastically reduced by state funding cutbacks, the Detroit Institute of the Arts has, at times, struggled to keep its doors open.

Last year's unprecedented success, "Splendors of Ancient Egypt," funded by Chrysler, provided a clue to what the DIA could accomplish given a stable revenue flow.

"We like to plan exhibit schedules five years out," said Maurice Parrish, acting director at the DIA.

"To bring world-class exhibits to Detroit, we must have a consistent and stable financial base."

Parrish, who admits to being an eternal optimist, expects the regional arts funding bill will eventually be enacted.

"We all must remember that the legislation enables for the mechanisms for a millage," he said.

"Eventually, the people must decide if they want it."

Many metro areas around the country have enacted regional funding to support cultural institutions.

Lucy Bukowski, assistant curator at the Cranbrook Institute of Science, was formerly at the Field Natural History Museum in Chicago.

The Field, along with eight other museums, received up to 30 percent of its revenue from the regional property tax.

"I understand the political pressure about taxes, but it's short-sighted not to support a region's cultural institutions," said Bukowski.

"To be strong with programs and exhibits means these institutions must be financially stable."

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moment, or unintended abstract images of very concrete subjects.

According to several local professional photographers, preserving memories of Summer '98 can be made easy by remembering a few basics.

Through the viewfinder

Equipment needs for the typical weekend photographer, according to Ristevich, usually can be determined by asking several questions:

■ Do you intend to publish the photos? (Probably a serious photographer, or a wanna-be.)

■ Do you understand the conditions to use different film speeds and camera lenses? (A test for the instructionally illiterate.)

■ Or basically, do you just want to pick up a camera, point and shoot? (Perfect for those with 10 thumbs and no patience.)

A camera can cost from \$100 for a pocket point-and-shoot to \$4,000 for a professional system, according to Ristevich.

"If you're going to really get into photography, it isn't cheap," he said.

Obviously, camera sales indicate that most consumers are choosing the less expensive point-and-shoot models.

Particularly popular, said Ristevich, are the Olympus 130, Konica 140, Minolta Vetta 200 and the Cannon 490 pocket-size cameras. Also attracting attention is the Minolta panorama camera.

With these models, taking photos has largely become fool-proof.

Technically, there should be little concern about lighting and focusing.

But there's no technological remedy for coming up with compelling compositions.

That's still in the eye of the beholder.

Proper perspective

"How do you take a photograph with an interesting composition is the broadest question for photographers," said Andy Garanchik, sales consultant at F-Stop Photography Center in Farmington Hills.

Garanchik has a few tips:

■ Keep subjects out of the center of the picture. Try to fill the lower or upper third of the frame.

■ Aim to keep the horizon of any composition either in the lower or upper half of the photo, not in the middle.

■ When outdoors, keep in mind that early morning and late afternoon lighting are usually the best situations. High noon and bright days often wash out the color in subjects.

The general rule about film speed for general purposes, said Garanchik, is 100 ASA for outdoors and 400 ASA for moderate lighting indoors.

Although there's much hype surrounding digital cameras and computer printers replacing traditional development processes, Garanchik doesn't see a threat in the near future.

"The resolution has to improve quite a bit before the quality can be compared (to a photograph)," he said.

"It's about where the personal computer was when it first came out - it still has a ways to go."

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Composer from page C1

classes for all over the Opera House. Writing workshops will be held in the box seat area on the second floor. A children's art class will meet in one of the Opera House's ornate stairwells.

Meanwhile, the "How To Plaster" classes will convene back stage behind the orchestra pit.

The nontraditional settings for the classes reflect DiChiera's contention that in order for people to open up and learn, they must feel comfortable. Apparently, a classroom setting would be too mundane.

She figures who couldn't feel the pulse of artistic expression amid the walls at the inspiring Opera House?

"I've always been interested in the environment where people live," said DiChiera. "If you know what kind of house, school and work environment where people live, then you get a sense of their comfort level."

And in order for the arts - and particularly opera - to survive, there must be growing audiences willing to open up and find some relevance between art and their lives.

From there, according to DiChiera, the connections flourish.

"People create their way through their days," she said. "If you can make people aware that the arts can help them improve in their lives, there's nothing like it."

Fertile ground

There are signs that "Learning at the Opera House '98" is not only a work-in-progress, but a fertile ground of ideas for 21st-century culture in metro Detroit.

At the conclusion of the program on Sunday, Aug. 2, a performance party will be held. That event featuring local musicians, singers and dancers, just may be the beginning of an annual summer arts celebration for years to come, said DiChiera.

But for now, she realizes that there are more details to consider, including integrating more classes on Middle Eastern and Native American cultures.

Some may be overwhelmed by particulars. But not DiChiera.

She's making it all seem spontaneous.

ART BEAT

Art Beat features various happenings in the suburban art world. Send Oakland County arts news leads to Art Beat, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009, or fax them to (248) 644-1314.

CULTURAL ARTS AWARD NOMINEES

Nomination forms are available for the third annual Birmingham Bloomfield Cultural Arts Award.

The award is presented to the individual or organization who had the greatest impact on art and culture in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area during the past year.

Forms are available at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, The Community House of Birmingham and the Baldwin Library. Also, please look for nominating forms in the Eccentric newspapers.

Deadline for nominations is Friday, July 31.

Last year, the award went to Birmingham resident John Cynar, co-curator of the Pontine '97, a sculpture exhibit that brought together nearly 100 local artists. Marshall Fredericks received a lifetime achievement award.

The award will be announced in early September. The formal presentation will be made at the opening of the Birmingham Society of Women Painters Exhibit on Friday, Sept. 18 at the BBAC.

SALE FOR ART

ArtServe Michigan will hold its annual Riverbend Regatta for the arts at 6:30 p.m. July 15.

Honorary captains for this year's race are Ron Kagan, director of the Detroit Zoo, filmmaker Sue Marx, and Maurice Parrish, interim director of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

The Livonia Civic Ballet hosts a workshop 10 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Friday-Sunday, July 24-26 at Miss Jean's Dance Arts, 15619 Farmington Road, Livonia. For information, call (734) 427-9103.

Guest teachers are Alain DuBruiel of the Birmingham Royal Ballet in London and John Anzalone, assistant choreographer for the current Broadway musical "Jekyll and Hyde." Classes for advanced, intermediate and youth level dancers age 8 and older include ballet, pointe, jazz, and modern.

DuBruiel joined the London Festival Ballet at age 18 and the Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet (now the Birmingham Royal Ballet) in 1973. His partners have included Margot Fonteyn and Natalia Makarova. Anzalone performed on Broadway in "Cats" and "A Broadway Tribute to Agnes DeMille." He toured with "La Caga Aux Folles" and "West Side Story."

Screenwriting from page C1

only pays off, it's a prerequisite.

Inarguably, in terms of popularity and cultural influence, no other medium has the impact of movies. Subsequently, there's been increasing attendance at screenwriting seminars, not to mention increased sales of how-

to books and software.

"There's a lot of people who have a story to tell, but writing a movie is one of the most difficult things to do."

Of course, that might be relative considering the odds of having your phone calls returned

from a prospective agent or producer, said Oshvinsky.

Clearly, the focus of the two-day seminar is on the self-discovery process along the way to completing a script.

"I give them the tools and the framework," said Oshvinsky. "But the truth of the story will come out regardless of the structure."

With his characteristic effusive style, Oshvinsky teaches the fundamentals of character and plot development by appealing to the universal inclination to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end.

Typically, the first morning of the seminar is aimed at getting the students to think of themselves foremost as storytellers, said Oshvinsky.

Eventually, the students learn to distinguish between a plot which moves the story, and the theme which pertains to the lesson of the story.

During the seminar, only passing references are made to the onerous rewriting process and the "Let's do lunch" networking required to sell a script.

Hardly a word is mentioned about the typical Hollywood script-development process which includes rewrites by a series of unrelated writers contracted to manipulate the original script to the whims of producers, directors and big stars.

Despite the popular appeal of blockbuster, mega-million-dollar action movies, the scripts of students in recent years have had more dialogue and less commercial appeal, said Oshvinsky.

"I teach the three-act structure - beginning, middle, end - and tell them if you write a script, you have to tell the truth."

"Essentially, the students become their own protagonists in their stories."

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