

MILO ARTISTS COLONY REACHES OUT

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Dispatch Theater Critic

Columbus' fledgling artists colony is branching out.

Milo Artist Theatre, a collection of artists who live and work in the historic former Milo Public School, is reaching out to its neighborhood community with classes, workshops, films and a new Reader's Theatre. Many begin this week.

For most artists, self-expression is the watchword. For Milo, it's community expression.

"The community is everything, as far as we're concerned," said Dan O'Reilly, Milo's production director.

"We want to bring people in from the Columbus community to train them as actors and directors. The idea is to get people performing and working together."

To that end, the group will launch a weekly Reader's Theatre at 7 p.m. Sunday. The first session will offer an informal open mike to playwrights, poets, musicians and "word artists."

Weekly yoga classes begin at 7 p.m. Monday. Weekly "workshopping" of selected dramatic scenes begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday. Weekly video nights begin at 8 p.m. April 6 with a double-feature of an Andy Warhol and a John Waters film in the Gallery Studio.

In addition, Milo is organizing a collective writing group and a collective art group. For playwrights, poets, authors and other aspiring writers, the first meeting is 7 p.m. Wednesday. For artists, the first meeting is 7 p.m. next Thursday.

Milo's first round of acting workshops, which began earlier this month, ends April 8. New acting workshops, to be conducted Saturdays and Sundays, are forming now. Advance registration is required.

All events take place at the former school, 617 E. 3rd Ave. Admission is free to the

Reader's Theatre and scene workshops. Other classes have a fee. Call 291-0754.

"Expressing art to the people means more than simply bringing in money and allowing actors to be onstage," O'Reilly said. "We want to do what theater was intended to be - a training institute that teaches people about life, about literature, about politics and society."

So far, 20 people live and work at the colony. All are artists of one kind or another: writers, dancers, actors, pianists and painters who share the rent and household duties while developing their crafts.

"We're young, and we're open to other people's ideas," said O'Reilly, a 22-year-old Columbus native. "These next few months we will be concentrating on drawing more Ohio artists into our immediate family."

The group hopes to produce its first full-fledged theatrical production this summer. O'Reilly has acquired the rights to *Waiting for Lefty*, the archetypal working-class drama of the 1930s. He plans to cast the show in May and stage it in the former school's lobby in July or August.

"Lefty is very powerful and rebellious," O'Reilly said. "It talks about the problems facing a capitalistic society. What's more interesting today is that we see those solutions as being very tempting and yet very problematic."

Lefty ties in with O'Reilly's politics of "acceptance." He views the broader mission of Milo as "developing society into a thinking society."

His long-term goal is to establish a "permanant art theater."

By that, Reilly means "a permanent corps" dedicated to learning and teaching Stanislavsky's original acting techniques through long rehearsal periods.

"Right now, we're building a core company," Reilly said. "All this is basically the buildup to forming the company itself."