

OVERTURES

MILO ARTS CENTER TO RING ITS BELLS

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Dispatch Music and Dance Critic

The Milo Arts center, home or office to 40 artists and performers, will open its doors to the public this weekend.

The refurbished city schoolhouse, at 617 E. 3rd Ave., will present dancer-choreographer Susan Van Pelt and whatever-we-want-to-call-him Robert Post from 6:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday.

Van Pelt and Post, who have studios at Milo, will highlight a fund-raising event for the Milo project.

"Milo is a building and a concept," Van Pelt said. "We are trying to develop an artists cooperative."

Van Pelt's studio has high ceilings and wood floors. When deliverymen dropped items off last week, she said, they kept hanging around the room.

"It turned out they went to school at Milo years ago," she said. "They told me my room had been a library."

Van Pelt's studio and others will be full of activity Saturday. Tickets - \$12, or \$20 a couple - may be reserved by calling 294-0450. They cost \$13.50 at the door.

Big weekend for symphony

Tickets are moving quickly for the weekend's three Columbus Symphony Orchestra concerts.

Music Director Alessandro Siciliani will be back on the podium after a short break, and Midori, one of the most popular concert artists, will be back.

The young violinist played a dynamic interpretation of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the symphony in November 1991. This time, she'll play Max Bruch's

Scottish Fantasy. Also on the program are Samuel Barber's most popular work, Adagio for Strings, and Schumann's Symphony No. 4.

Concert times are 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday in the Ohio Theatre. The best bet for good seats might be Sunday. For tickets, \$9-\$36, call 224-3291.

A tale of two 'Nutcrackers'

When the world-famous Kirov Ballet approached the Wexner Center for the Arts recently and asked to rent Mershon Auditorium for two weeks in December, an eager "yes" would have seemed the logical response.

After all, the Kirov would have paid the Wexner Center about \$40,000 to use the hall, and Columbus would have become the first Midwestern venue for the Kirov's new production of The Nutcracker, a ballet that the company premiered 100 years ago in St. Petersburg. Ohio State University also might have earned \$60,000 from parking fees.

But Bill Cook, the Wexner Center's acting director, said no.

"The thing that is upsetting to me is that it is really hard to turn down something of that much potential quality," Cook said. "Part of our mission is to bring world-class art to Columbus."

The reason for his decline should be obvious to balletomanes, because of the month and the ballet: The Nutcracker has been the exclusive turf of BalletMet for well more than a decade. A "yes" from the Wexner Center would have put the Kirov's Nutcracker head to head with BalletMet's.

Talk about dueling cavaliers and mice.

"I made two calls after the Kirov called me. First was to our legal department to see what our options were," Cook said, "and second to Mary K (Bailey) at BalletMet. She hit the ceiling. And then I was hit with an enormous amount of protest."

BalletMet board members got on the phone, Cook said, and they were not amused.

"If it had been any other ballet but The Nutcracker," said Bailey, BalletMet's executive director. "It is our single most significant source of income."

The company made \$1 million from Nutcracker ticket sales this season and a little more than \$700,000 last season - in each case, more than 20 percent of its operating budget.

"And it is not just our cash register. The Nutcracker amounts to 20 percent of our production crew's annual contract, 20 percent of the dancers' annual contract, and it is the highlight of the year for students of our academy. The net revenues from The Nutcracker enable us to produce new work, which is more risky and doesn't attract a

big audience. It goes to the heart of our artistic integrity."

For its part, the Kirov, once completely government-supported, is going begging in the former Soviet Union. In an effort to survive the dangerous economic times at home, it is striving to become an international company, with headquarters in the United States, Japan and possibly South America. In Washington, D.C., the Kirov might replace the Joffrey Ballet's Nutcracker at the Kennedy Center in 1995.

Making the Kirov economically viable certainly is important. But should American ballet companies, some in danger of extinction themselves, bear the burden?

The questions raised are far from simple, and the Wexner Center found itself in the position of having to answer them all last week.

Cook refused the Kirov rental on the grounds of community good. Is he the Grinch who stole Christmas? Is BalletMet?