

Expense means cultural events to be cut back

By Susan Edwards

There is no doubt that the performances and workshops of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra are popular. Last year the tickets sold out in about two hours; this year lines formed as 90 per cent of the tickets sold in less than a day.

Next year, the orchestra won't be here. Of the \$35,000 in fees and operating costs to bring the orchestra here this year for four performances, \$20,500 was absorbed by grants from the Mid-America Arts Alliance and the Nebraska Arts Council.

The orchestra's tours are not going to be sponsored by Mid-America next year and, according to Performing Arts Coordinator Ron Bowlin, the extra \$20,000-\$25,000 needed for this one cultural event can't be met by university-generated funds or by ticket price increases.

One example

The plight of the St. Louis Symphony is just one example, an unusually expensive one, of the problems of financing cultural events. According to Bowlin, dance and theater companies cost a minimum of \$8,000 while solo artists charge from \$2,000 to \$10,000 for a single performance.

Bowlin said the arts have never existed where there was no strong financial subsidy to cover all costs. Last year was a banner year for the university in terms of thousands of subsidy dollars from government and private sources, he said.

Financing for a performing arts event, he said, comes from three main sources: ticket income from Kimball Hall, university-generated funds from student fees and the College of Arts and Sciences, and subsidies from outside sources.

The national trend to withdraw state and federal

funds from university arts programs and the escalating artists' fees may double or triple the cost of an event, Bowlin said.

Ticket sales yield a limited income, he said, because of the small size of Kimball Hall, with only 850 seats, and the commitment to reasonable ticket prices.

In order for an event to pay for itself, for example, the tickets for St. Louis Symphony would have to sell for about \$11 a seat, Bowlin said.

Acoustical disaster

The alternative to move the orchestra to a larger hall, such as the Coliseum, was rejected by Bowlin, who said it would defeat the purpose of bringing in an excellent orchestra to house them in an "acoustical disaster."

Until a larger performing hall is built in Lincoln to help offset costs, Bowlin said that the university must either forego expensive groups such as the St. Louis Symphony, settle for less than first rate performers, or look for more money from student fees or outside sources.

Performing arts events are programmed by the Cultural Affairs Committee, composed of students, faculty and staff members representing music dance and drama and headed by Bowlin.

Next year, the committee has committed its approximately \$20,000 for the Performing Arts Series, the Alvin Ailey Dance Co. and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

\$10,700 allocated

The 1975 board recently allocated \$10,700 to subsidize next year's programs in addition to the \$20,000 and \$15,000 for the 1976-77 season.

The committee had requested an additional

\$25,000 for the St. Louis Symphony and \$5,000 for a ballet company and Lively Arts Booklet.

According to Marguerite Boslaugh, chairman of the Fees Allocation Board, the problem is striking a balance and deciding the maximum amount that should be spent to subsidize an event.

"If you can't afford a spectacular event," such as the St. Louis Orchestra, she said, "you can afford and settle for the merely acceptable."

The arts cannot be compared, in financing or experience, to entertainment, Bowlin said. It should be a part of the university's liberal arts experience.

Although FAB member Jim Lewis, assistant professor of math, agreed with the importance of the performing arts, he said the extent that student fees can help pay for events is limited.

'Not clear'

"It's not clear," he said, "that the typical student would want his fees used that way. He may prefer financial help in buying a Lynyrd Skynyrd ticket at Pershing."

The Cultural Affairs Committee already receives about 12 per cent of the Fees Allocation Board budget, Lewis said, and the committee must decide when the budget becomes impractical.

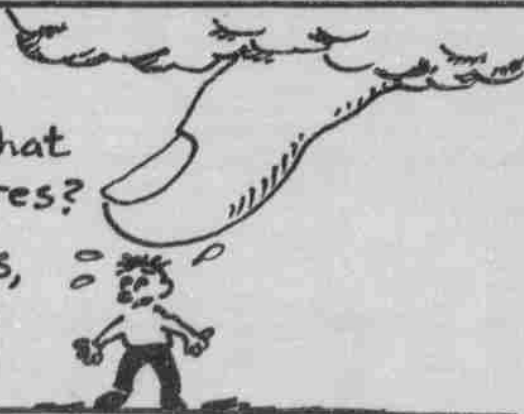
Both Lewis and Boslaugh said that increase in ticket prices is a necessary alternative. Bowlin said that he still is committed to low ticket prices to encourage students who otherwise might not attend concerts.

"The person sitting in the audience seat must assume a greater burden for the privilege," Lewis said.

"Without the programs, though, the university shirks the responsibility to be more than a classroom," he added. "Without the arts, we become more of a trade school."

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