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Butler

Albee Made Available for U.S. Project

Officials of the Albee Theater said today they will make every effort to make that facility available for a proposed repertory theater supported by federal funds.

Rep. John E. Fogarty announced in Washington yesterday that federal funds were assured for a theater to provide classical drama presentations for Rhode Island school children.

Both B. A. Dario, owner of the theater, and Renzo Raiss, its artistic director, said there is no question that the building can be made available.

Their statements appeared to cover one of two considerations on which final federal approval of the project hinges: That local interests provide a suitable theater and that school officials of the 39 cities and towns agree to submit a combined application for grants for the theater under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Rep. John E. Fogarty said yesterday federal funds for the theater are assured and that Providence stands "at the top of the list" of cities being considered as sites for three theaters of drama to be financed by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Office of Education.

Officials noted, however, that the two conditions must be met prior to final approval.

Said Mr. Dario, who purchased the Albee last fall: "I'll do anything they want me to do with the theater to bring the dramas there. I think the federal program is an excellent idea."

Mr. Dario said since he purchased the theater he has had to bear cost of the building himself, at a rate of about \$200 a day out of pocket. And he said the "Merry Widow" now being presented "may lose \$10,000 or \$15,000."

"Somebody's got to support the theater," said Mr. Dario, who sometime ago announced plans to develop the Albee as a performing arts center for the state under a nonprofit foundation.

"An excellent idea, an excellent possibility," said Mr. Raiss of the federal proposal, "We'll do everything we can to make it work. I certainly hope we can have these productions at the Albee theater."

The Albee, built originally as a legitimate theater but later converted to a movie house, has been subject of some criticism for its equipment, but Mr. Raiss said today a number of new lighting and electrical facilities have recently been installed. "We feel the few remaining problems will be solved in the near future," he said.

Mr. Raiss also expressed optimism that school officials would comply with the second condition on which approval of

Turn to Page 10, Col. 1

Theater

Albee Open To Repertory

Theater

Continued from Page One

the theater hinges. He said he has spoken to school officials in Providence and in a few other communities and that "they seem to be excited about the project and would like to have it in Rhode Island."

He said, too, that such a theater would be of great benefit to students. "A young person today has little to associate himself with except the new music styles and the long hair. The classic and modern theater would permit him to develop a new sense of comparison with himself," he said.

Mr. Fogarty made his announcement of pending approval after conferring in Washington with School Supt. Charles A. O'Connor Jr. of Providence and Jack Morrison, representing the federal Office of Education.

Mr. O'Connor said the plan is for the City of Providence to act as administrative agent for the theater project. He said he will try to arrange a meeting of Rhode Island school superintendents to discuss the grant application.

The state Department of Education, he said, will be asked for assistance in arranging the meeting and preparing the application.

Mr. Morrison declined to give an estimate of the total cost of the proposed project because some members of the advisory committee on the school aid program have not yet been consulted.

But Mr. O'Connor said that

local school systems would have to commit about one-third of their potential entitlement under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Act to the project to finance it. Title III provides funds for experimental demonstration programs in education.

Mr. Morison said some funds would also be available under Title IV of the act, which provides funds for research.

Although no arrangements have been made for use of a theater, Mr. Fogarty suggested the Albee, stating he knows that Mr. Dario "has a real interest in this theater project." He said he believes Mr. Dario "in view of the interest he has shown in the city and in promoting the arts, would be willing to take care of the local contribution."

The theater project, as envisioned by the Office of Education, would operate for 32 weeks, from fall through spring, during which about four classical dramatic productions would be presented to all junior and senior high school children in the state.

Federal grant funds would pay for transporting children to the theater and for texts of plays presented for study by students before and after the performance.

The school aid funds would finance operation of the theater once it was established. Funds from the National Endowment for the Arts already have been earmarked by the National Council on the Arts for expenses of organizing a theater company. The council has set aside \$500,000 for that purpose for projects in three cities.