

Sanders Starts Arts Program To Lift Spirits in Community

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Ignoring his sesame seed bagel with cream cheese, Bernard Sanders explained what he believes the function of art should be in society. "Art should say; 'I want to talk to you. I want to reach your soul.' Art should seek to make the world a better place."

The mayor-elect was postponing lunch to publicize a maiden voyage on the high seas of a cultural program he envisions for Burlington. Sanders plans to launch the arts with a free Sunday concert for "children of all ages." The event, which will take place in the Edmunds School gymnasium from 1 to 3 p.m., features the Two Penny Circus, folk singer Jon Gailmor and the Green Mountain Volunteers, a traditional folk dance troupe.

Sanders said that his plan for the aesthetic side of life will emphasize "using brains, not money." In an effort to "do a lot more for the arts and for kids than has been done in the past," Sanders foresees tapping private funding sources, foundation grants and such in order to present free or low-priced admission performances throughout the city.

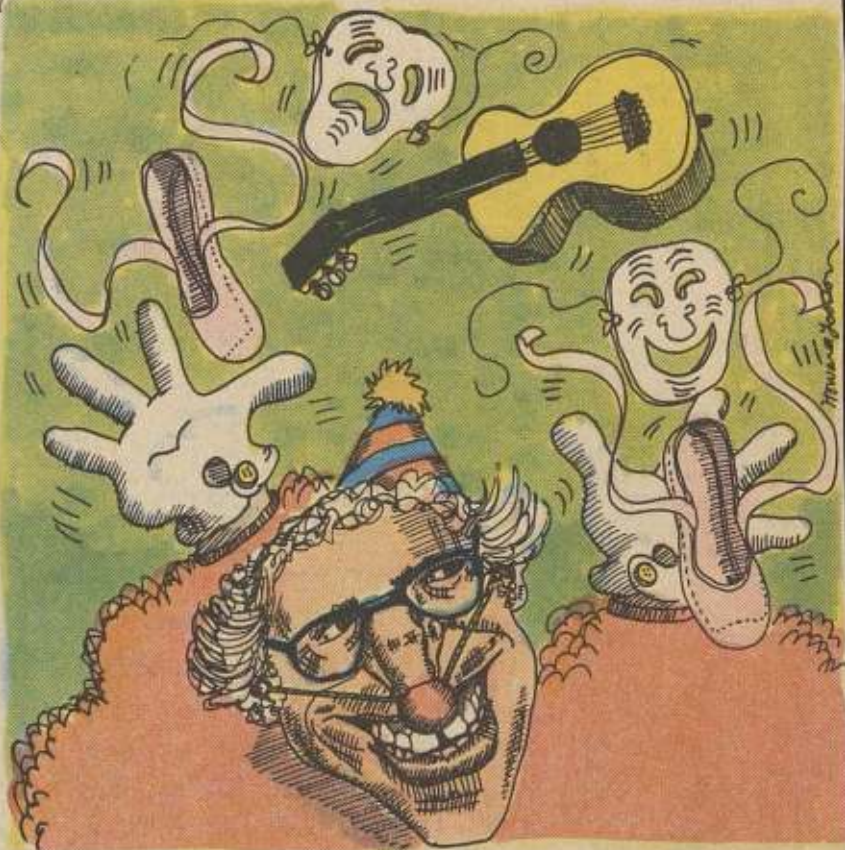
"I hope Sunday's show will be the start of a long chain of events," he says. "Things like this will lift the spirit of the community. It will just be a nice thing. A beautiful end unto itself. In the past, the arts have often been something only the well-to-do were able to enjoy, with ticket prices of maybe \$10 to \$15 apiece."

Sanders would try to satisfy "many different tastes," with "projects that will involve people." He would like to sponsor children's film programs on weekends. Remembering his own childhood with Saturday matinees of movies like "Robin Hood," Sanders believes that many films appropriate for kids can be rented at low rates and shown at some of the city's schools. "Perhaps there could even be some live entertainment included, for maybe a ten cent admission. And if we do it right, it would not cost the city a nickel."

In the summer, Sanders would like to foster an arts program that "brings in different acts — music, dance, theatrical — to entertain all different segments of the community." For young kids, there might be a Make-a-Circus project, in which the Two Penny Circus could teach 75 to 100 children the craft of clowning, with the goal of putting on a public performance for parents and other circus fans.

For older groups of people, Sanders suggests the expanded use of Battery Park for concerts. "Or maybe it would be possible to put on a show at North Beach," he speculates.

Though Sanders hopes that visiting out-of-state performers might volunteer a little time to bring art "out onto the streets," he is a good deal more certain that Vermont talent will get involved in the Burlington arts campaign. "I've heard from many entertainers who are very excited by my election," he said.



Sanders has sought the advice of an unofficial committee on the arts, composed of people knowledgeable about theater, dance, music and other cultural activities.

"I'm very aware that we have to serve many different tastes," he says. "We'll have classical, folk, country, jazz. Even rock, which I personally have a hard time with."

Sanders' own musical preferences tend toward the softer sounds. "I like country music because the lyrics say something. The stories are more real-life than rock songs. It's music of working people, talking about the facts of life, the socio-economic realities. It has content. Look at a song like 'Take This Job and Shove It,'" Sanders says, referring to a hit tune by Johnny Paycheck.

"I'm a writer myself and I wouldn't mind writing the lyrics for songs some day," he admits. "On the radio, I never hear songs that tell it like it is. Songs about the oil companies, for instance."

In the realm of films, another career area that Sanders has explored, "movies, like everything else, are the product of the American capitalist society. With very few exceptions, we are not allowed to tell the truth about things. That's why you see so much garbage coming out, films about crime, horror, sadism. Hollywood manipulates mass tastes."

Sanders recalls the first film that ever affected his social consciousness. "When I was at the University of Chicago, in the early 1960s, I saw 'Death of a Salesman.'" This movie, based on the Arthur Miller play about a travelling salesman who has futilely pursued the American Dream of success, "shook me totally," Sanders, the son of a paint salesman, acknowledges. "It struck close to home."