

TRILOGY

By Fred Hobbs

Theater. Motion pictures. Operas. Most folks think of those as examples of performing arts. Broadcasting not so much. That's okay with me, although television does bring a measure of "quality" drama and music to the small screen. Most critics agree, however, that the *quantity* of such offerings is sadly lacking.

Consequently, a career in radio and television does not qualify me to be a member of the elite or even the "also-rans" of the performing arts. In fact, any involvement with acting or singing before a public audience goes back to my elementary and junior high school days. Only three "performances" in my entire life come to mind. Though more than gilding the lily, please allow me to call them a "trilogy." (Shakespeare, forgive me, but that makes me feel more important!)

In sixth grade, I participated in two such endeavors. One was a puppet show involving rustic characters and "hillbilly music." The class actually created the puppets. Broomsticks were cut into various lengths; then large staples were inserted at both ends, allowing the movement of the puppets' arms and legs. Students made all the costumes. The kids fashioned the heads of the puppets by shaping a mixture of sawdust, water and some kind of thickener.

I voiced the character Zeb, who was supposedly the fiddle player. "Zeke," he would say, "get your gittar fixed; everytime you play, you get the chords all mixed."

As a finale, we would sing to the audience of parents and neighbors, a ditty called "I Love Mountain Music"...good, ol' mountain music played by a real hillbilly band."

That same school year, our class was chosen to be part of the annual "Play Festival" featuring kids from the Denver Public Schools and held at the old City Auditorium, now the Ellie Calkins Opera house and the Buell Theater. We performed a dance in the costumes of Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Just before we changed into our costumes, we were informed that one of the girls had become sick and was sent home and also that by mistake one Mickey costume had been left behind. Would one of the boys volunteer to wear the remaining "Minnie"? Guess who was talked into that embarrassing role? With the mouse ears sticking up and from a distance many in the audience couldn't tell a Mickey from a Minnie, anyway. Fortunately, my classmates didn't make fun of me, though some expressed relief they weren't selected for the "honor."

In junior high, the drama and speech teacher tapped me to play the lead in the 8th grade school play, "Buddy's Exciting Night", a tale of adventure involving the strange disappearance of the owner of the mountain cabin where Buddy and his teenage friends were staying. (I think with chaperones, but I can't remember for certain.) Everything turned out happily thanks to Buddy's innate detection skills and strong leadership qualities! (Why I was chosen for that role I'll never know. It certainly was not typecasting.)

As is the case with sports such as pro football and skydiving, I confine my connection to performing art by watching, listening, reading and enjoying.