"I seldom meet people in theater I don't like."

by Jan Fishback, Jenny Newton, Terry Delli Quadri

A scene from "The Reluctant Adultress" Left to right:
Joy Handloff Elaine Bush Marty Vaselich

Acting and theatre has enticed people for generations. In order for the theatre to function there must be an interest from the audience. The three of us (Jenny, Jan and Terry) followed our interest in acting and art. This led us to more than we actually bargained for, thus we ended up talking to a business manager, an actor, an artistic director and a designer. Eventually we got an overall picture of the Steamboat Repertory Theatre.

Margaret Perry was the Steamboat Repertory Theatre's designer this past season. She has lived in San Diego and has worked for the National Shakespeare Festival at the Old Globe. Theatre. She has been in theatre for about six years and is a graduate from San Diego State. She came to Steamboat specifically to work for the Repertory Theatre. She designed all four plays last winter, and three in the summer. She is now working for the Globe Theatre full time.

"I've worked the box office a lot, and I've acted and directed. I think it's really important to understand everything about theatre, to do whatever you're doing at the particular time well. Because everything affects everything else, it's one of the very few communal art forms. A group of people have to get together and work together to get the product out, and I think it helps if you understand what everyone else is

Margaret Perry

"In Steamboat I find that audiences are very forgiving."

trying to do. It would make an easier job for them and when they explain things to you you can understand what they are saying so you can respond and give them what they need. I go through phases. I've done a lot of costume design work here for the theatre and Perry Mansfield and private things people ask me to do. And so, right now costuming isn't my favorite because I've been doing so much of it, and I feel like I'm kind of designed out. I suppose in the long run I enjoy the lighting the most because it's the most abstract. It's a newer form of design. There aren't as many rules and regulations about it and it tends to be a little bit more creative.

"Designing lights is, I guess, done in about four steps. First thing you do, like designing anything, is you read the script and then talk to the director and decide what it is the lights are gonna have to do to serve the play. Sometimes it's very obvious, like one scene takes place at night and one takes place during the day, and there's an exposion so there are certain things the lights have to do. If somebody has to go and turn a lamp on the lamp has to be there, and you have to take into consideration all the practical aspects of the lighting. Then the second step is to take into consideration the mood effects the lighting can have, some variation of color or amount of light on the stage to begin to manipulate the audience's mood with their perception of what they are seeing on stage.

"Once you've decided what it is you want to do, how you want to do it, and that's designing the light plot, what kind of lighting instrument you're going to hang and where, that gets very mechanical 'cause you need a fairly good knowledge of the electricity. You don't want to overload the circuit breakers with these basic electrical things, and you need to control the lights. We only have 16 dimmers in this building, so I can only control 16 things at once. Very often we have special lights that get plugged and replugged in the booth so I can actually have more than that in the course of the show at any given time, but once that is worked out I decide what I want where, and actually hang them up, plug them in, test them and make sure they work. You sit down with the stage manager and the director and design the lighting cues when certain things are gonna happen, when the lights are gonna come on and when to dim them down a little bit, and then you move into technical works with everybody else and combine everything you've done, what information you have with the actual performance, with the color of the set and the color of the costumes. Then we hope that it all works out right. You have to figure out the timing cues, and by the time the show opens you're done."

"We have run into audiences that have come in expecting to be entertained in the way they are used to being entertained, especially with Shakespeare. You always run that risk if you're doing something new and different. There are people who'll accuse you of not respecting the script, not respecting William Shakespeare and what he wanted, as if they had personally spoken with him and found out what it is he wanted. Some experimental productions don't go over very well for those reasons. Not living up to people's expectations, they get angry because they thought they knew what they were coming to see and we slipped them a fast one. Instead of an enjoyment of taking in something new and different they get their guard up and walk out.

"We've never been booed. It's never been that bad, but people have drifted out over the course of the intermission or the response hasn't been good. I think the worst is to have an audience that does not respond and it's quiet out there. If they boo at least you know how they feel. If they're not saying anything and not laughing, and doing nothing but coughing, there is no way to gauge. They could be having a wonderful time, but they're not telling you. They could be hating

it, but they're not telling you that either, so the actors especially have no way to gauge their performance. They try to figure out what's wrong, because the audience isn't helping.

"The definition of theatre is that there has to be two parts, the people performing and the people watching. That's why rehearsal isn't theatre. We have to have both of those groups in one room at one time, in one place, so the interaction gets going.

"Believe it or not we found that everyone in theatre is affected by different things. A few of the things we found were personality conflicts, differing opinions and one of the most incurable things in this area, the weather. There are a lot of problems mostly because it's a new theatre. We don't have any tradition set up. Everything that was being done was being done for the first time which makes a difference. Everyone has their own ways of working. We were combining people from very different theatrical backgrounds into a unit that had to work together which took some getting used to. I had never spent a winter in snow before. Interestingly enough it affects what we are able to do here.

"I very seldom meet people in theatre I don't like. They're a little different, and a lot of people make jokes about the fact that the people in the theatre live crazy. It is true to some extent. I think they tend to be a little bit more alive and vibrant and more sensitive to what's going on around them; not only theatre and work, but just in general. I think the people in the theatre tend to fight a lot. It's not that they don't like each other, it's just they have very different opinions; they're not afraid to express those opinions and fight for what they believe is right. It's not because of any ill feelings, it's just that everyone has an opinion they're fighting for. I tend to think that kind of communication is good. I like to know what people are thinking and for them to know what I'm thinking, and hopefully get to thinking the same thing. It's not a personal vendetta of one person against another and anything can be solved if you discuss or argue long enough. You'll come to a solution that will work."

Financial matters must be considered when planning a production. Margaret talked with us about this.

"If you know how much money you have then it isn't that hard, because that just becomes another thing to consider when designing. She has to have a dress is one thing, it can only cost so much money is another. If you know that when you start to design then you'll design to fit all the criteria. It's when you don't know, when you don't have a budget, or your budget gets yanked all of a sudden, that's when it's hard. When you get something thrown at you, it's hard also. A dress can be built out of any number of materials; some of them are very expensive, some of them are very cheap. You just have to adjust to the budget you're working with. We have had quite a few donations of wonderful dresses and suits that help a great deal.

A scene from "The Subject Was Roses" left to right: Michael Pratt, Jeannie Morrisey and Simon Kelly

"There is a problem with theatre, unlike most businesses, once you get started you never get to the point where you have the money first. You always spend it, and make it back. So you need some capital up front, which can be very tricky. You know you're not going to get any money back until you start selling tickets, and tickets are at the end of the process, not at the beginning. That's one reason why the subscription campaign is so important."

We explained to Margaret that we have the same problem with THREE WIRE WINTER. The class has to pay for the printing of each issue and then try to sell it, after it is printed. "Exactly, you spend all the money, publish the magazine, then you have to convince people to buy it. It's tricky, but it can be done. You have to watch your cash flow. Some people buy tickets ahead of time and give us some money to start with. If it's going to be available to everyone, you've got to keep the price down.

"In other theatres you might have to pay $25.00 a ticket and only the very best or the most beneficial theatre gets going because people can't risk the money to put together a show that may not work. I think that's why regional theatre is growing up so much in this country. It's a chance to do something that may not be perfect, but still has the ability to be good, if it's given a chance to work. There's a chance we can make it better, and it may be perfect at the end of its run.

"This winter our houses were 49 to 50 percent full, and this summer our houses were 91 percent full. So it's gone up considerably. I think that reflects two things, one of them good and one of them bad. More people know about the theatre, and I think that's important, but also there are more tourists in town for the summer. They are not as tired at night, so they're looking for something to do. We now have to convince a lot of skiers that they want something to do at night. One of the reasons why we think a theatre will be successful here is because of the tourist industry. That will help suppport everything else in town. We can hit them up to support the theatre and give them something else to do besides hit the bars and the restaurants and ski all day. That's our goal, to get those skiers off the slopes and into the seats.

"We've had some wonderful disasters here."

There are a lot of strange and unusual things that happen in the theatre, like any other business, but you must not take anything for granted. It requires much concentration and above all, total confidence. We questioned Margaret about this and what she told us was quite interesting. "We've had some wonderful disasters here. We turned the lights on one night, ran the show for about 15 minutes and the entire building went out. We had blown our main line and there wasn't any power anywhere. The audience sat there for awhile while the actors were madly trying to figure out what they had done or could do to get it fixed. We finally yanked enough things out to get some lights operating again. That's the problem working in an old building. We don't know a lot about the electrical value of this building, but slowly we're getting it redone and that helps eliminate a lot of the lighting disasters. It took the audience quite awhile to realize what happened. Luckily it was during "How the Other Half Loves," and the couple on the stage were the Phillipses who were in a devil-may-care family. They were yelling at each other about not paying the electric bill, so no one caught on for the longest time, but indeed there were no lights anywhere, and finally the stage manager had a little impromptu intermission. The audience didn't seem to mind. In Steamboat I find that audiences are very forgiving, and the Steamboat attitude of helping out and being laid back, and not getting intensely angry and excited about things helps in the theatre. Because they're very forgiving and understanding they have a good time and take the joke. We were very happy that we got it fixed and could do the rest of the show, and no one got angry. They felt like they were a part of something that couldn't be helped, which it couldn't. There was nothing we could do.

"I think the audience here is very open. They are easy to please, because we're the only game in town. I mean I think they respect that about the theatre because this is their only theatre and they really like the theatre. They're more open than I thought people of a community this size would be. Opening with 'Travesties' was a big gamble. A lot of people did not like that play. Everytime I talked to somebody who didn't like it they would say it's not that we don't like you, or that we don't think you do a good job, it's just the play was difficult for me. That's really encouraging to know that people can differentiate between content and actual performance and begin to critique what they like, and to be able to pick out why they didn't like it or why they did.

"I think in general people are becoming more and more supportive of the theatre, and that's the best thing that can happen to us, to have this community want the theatre to stay around. That is much more important than anything we can do individually. Our primary goal is to make sure Steamboat has a Repertory Theatre in Steamboat, and after that to make sure we make enough money to keep the Steamboat Repertory Theatre in operation for a number of years. I feel very confident because Steamboat has kind of caught on and we're doing very well with our local relationships. I imagine we will continue to do four shows in the winter and three in the summer for quite awhile. It's a good balance for us. I know we are looking at the possibility of doing the show up on the mountain somewhere

rather than here in town, and to do the summer shows there to cash in on the population difference of the seasons.

"The theatre is not a place of permanent employment. Most people are only hired for a season or a show. There is a great deal of traffic from the west coast. People move from theatre to theatre to keep working. That goes for actors as well as designers and crafts people. There is a lot of work out there, but the pay is not fantastic. I suppose most of the people who work in the theatre are just a couple of steps above poverty level, but it's enough to live on. Like any art the reasons for doing it are not financial. It seems you want to do it, because you think it's important and because you're proud of what you're doing.

"I've been lucky. I stumbled into a job when I first got to college and haven't stopped working since. I can imagine I'm one of the few people who doesn't have my share of secretarial and waitress stories, because I have worked always in the industry. I think to work a larger stint you've just got to be willing to admit that you can't dictate your life style, that your job is going to dictate your lifestyle. Designing is one of the reasons I'm still going. I think there's only one or two of the shows we're doing that really excites me, and I'm not sure I could even design rough work because I've designed so much here lately. I'm a little designed out. I need to go somewhere else and get something new thrown at me, some new problems. I know the problems here and I find myself designing down to them. I know my seamstresses, I know what they can do and what they can't do, and I find myself not designing costumes that I know they can't do. Even if perhaps that's the right costume, I keep working down. It becomes another criteria, and I shift into a new situation. So I think it's necessary to stay moving. Here's necessity in two ways, necessity to make a living and necessity to keep going artistically."

We asked Margaret if she and Richard Geer met in Steamboat to discuss her working here at the Depot. She explained to us, "Richard and I conducted the entire decision-making process, about me working here, over the phone. I think we were good for each other, because I have a real wide design background, and they couldn't afford more than one designer last winter. Luckily, now they can. They can afford to have someone to do sets, and someone to do lights, and someone to do costumes, and everyone can concentrate on their individual activities. For me, it was a real chance. The four shows we did this winter were a designer's dream, with really major titles and shows. I was very interested in designing, although I had designed at the Globe. I would design maybe one, possibly two sets a year as opposed to designing seven shows here, and six sets of costumes and the light for three shows."

Being very curious about accidents happening in the theatre, we found out some things quite surprising. We asked Margaret what would happen if one of their star players broke a leg skiing.

"One person did and Richard threw a temper tantrum. There are understudies for the performers though. The only time we didn't perform due to illness or accident was when a brick fell on Jeannie Morrisey's head and knocked her unconscious. There were only seven tickets sold for the show since it was Christmas Eve. They just cancelled the whole thing. Understudies are really important. Every company member must be available. That is no excuse for not doing the performance. The show must go on!"

Bill Egelhoff

"Good theatre is challenging to the audience as well as the actors."

Bill Egelhoff formerly of Fort Collins, is the Steamboat Repertory Theatre's business manager and the business arts coordinator for the Steamboat Springs Council for the Arts and Humanities. He went to school for six years and has a degree in administration. He worked in the marketing department at Copper Mountain before coming here.

"I'm the strange person in this theatre. I do not have a theatre background like everybody else. My strength in coming to this theatre is in planning and researching federal and state

programs, organizational development types of things. So that's where my value is, and hopefully we can get some things going a little stronger and improve the financial picture for the theatre."

He talked about the financial end of the repertory theatre. "Our position as a business is one of tax-exempt, non-profit organization, but we are not a private foundation. That enables us under the statute to be sponsored in the name of the Steamboat Springs Council for the Arts and Humanities. We can solicit donations and operate and accumulate revenues over and above our operating costs, and therein sustain our operations without paying taxes. So that sets us in a unique position to operate businesswise.

"We get donations in the form of federal programs, state monies that are available, the foundation chase. We also try to go through industries and businesses that are involved in a number of different projects like ours and help to convince them that we're a worthy cause and get them to hang onto our coattails. The only market that we've been pursuing lately is the National Endowment for the Arts. Now that's one that we have some real faith in. We really think that after two years of operation NEA will be a primary funding source for SRT.

"You can't sustain theatre through your own ticket sales. You must also have some strategies that raise money independent of theatre operations. These have developed slowly as the day-to-day business takes us away from pursuing those goals. Eventually we will get away from trying to solicit money from the city, county and state programs. We want to get more directly involved with profitability strategies of our own. We see that as being the most likely way of financing our theatre operation. Since Steamboat Springs has many charitable and non-profit organizations directly supported through local government, business and private donations the available funds are limited. This results in an extremely competitive environment for raising local support funds. We believe that SRT's profitability strategies will eventually get us off the community dole. When that happens there should be more money available to other organizations. You might say our business ventures will indirectly benefit the other non-

Bolligrew	Ryder	Luv	Tartuffe
Dec. 21	Jan. 11	Feb. 8	Feb. 29
Dec. 22	Jan. 12	Feb. 9	Mar. 1
Dec. 23	Jan. 13	Feb. 10	Mar. 16
Dec. 27	Jan. 17	Mar. 27	Mar. 6
Dec. 28	Jan. 18	Mar. 28	Mar. 7
Dec. 29	Jan. 26	Mar. 8	Mar. 29
Dec. 30	Jan. 27	Mar. 23	Mar. 2
Jan. 3	Jan. 31	Mar. 13	Apr. 3
Jan. 4	Feb. 1	Mar. 14	Apr. 4
Jan. 5	Feb. 2	Apr. 5	Mar. 15
Jan. 20	Feb. 17	Mar. 9	Mar. 30
Jan. 24	Feb. 21	Apr. 10	Mar. 20
Jan. 25	Feb. 22	Apr. 11	Mar. 21
Jan. 19	Feb. 23	Mar. 22	Apr. 12

"We realize that we're going to be with the depot for a little while."

profit organizations.

"The Repertory Theatre is in the marketing business. We sell Steamboat every day to people in and out of town. We do this by helping make Steamboat Springs the most desirable place to vacation and live. We feel we make a pretty solid statement throughout theatre itself and our broad reach in advertising and publicity. Every time somebody reads a positive review of the theatre and hears about the neat thing that's happening up in the mountains of Colorado it creates a strong picture and positive impact on that person. That helps our tourist trade.

"I wish we had more money so that we could carry on with more of our plans. Our growth is very much affected by the amount of money that we can generate. We had hoped to make a quicker statement in the community about who we were and what we had to offer. We were a little over-optimistic on how people would react to us. After operating for one year we have been able to compromise our goals. We realize that people just aren't going to jump on the band wagon immediately and support the theatre and see it to the potential that it could have and that we would like to develop it into. We have made analogies of theatre eventually occupying the same position in Steamboat that it does in Ashland, Oregon. The theatre in Ashland essentially makes that town the best resort town in the country. The theatre is the economy. We see that as being a dream that we want to pursue. We would love to have the super-theatre status.

"I would like to have a centrally located theatre, a bigger facility so we can increase the flexibilities as far as what relative programs are in the theatre. One that we could eventually increase is an audience large enough to sustain the cost of running that plant. We can't afford the property up on the mountain. They would have to give it to us or build the theatre for us. I don't think that will happen. We realize that we're going to be with the depot for a little while, and we can make this facility a really nice place to be and a nice place to perform, if we can continue getting money and rehabilitate the facility.

"We will be expanding our staff in light of what we have discovered efficiencywise in the past two seasons of operations. We realize this is something that has to happen to every business. You have to evaluate the position that you have with your organization and see if you're getting the right kind of return on the efficiency of that position. If you're not then you're going to have to change some things around. We have felt a tremendous need to get a production stage manager. This is a person who has an ability to coordinate all the aspects of production. They're pretty much a whip snapper, an oiler of rusty wheels. They make things happen, make people reach their deadlines.

"It's not a high salary job. People do this kind of thing because they see a real value in developing the arts. So there is a certain amount of communality that everybody that works here shares. There is a certain amount of insanity that everyone must have to work for the theatre at the same time. So there are some mutual interests that we all have. It's been wonderful working with the staff down here. Communication is really an important part of theatre. It's what theatre is all about. It's what it takes to run a business to find out what everybody's doing.

"In our first year we slightly exceeded expectations. We're on course. We didn't anticipate a lot of money coming in, and we anticipated a slow buildup of community support. We hoped to have that peak real quickly. That didn't really happen. We had hoped to get stronger support than we got. We've still done very well. We've had some triumphs and some mistakes. We're coping. We're very adaptable, and we seem to come up with a lot of creative solutions, and that's what it takes."

Richard Geer

Richard Geer is the artistic director for the Steamboat Repertory Theatre. He graduated with honors and received some scholarships and awards for his work in theatre. He was working on his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota when he married and moved to Steamboat in 1973. We asked him why he decided to move to Steamboat and he replied, "I decided I didn't need a Ph.D. in theatre; it would be much better for me to do it

rather than study it. An actor, unlike a person who works in a store or any other kind of work, is constantly moving around. I've worked in maybe a dozen theatres altogether, doing all kinds of things from technical theatre to directing. That means living out of a suitcase and being away from my family. So rather than that I decided that I would attempt to make a proposal to the Humanities Council for establishing a professional theatre in Steamboat and see what would come of it. Instead of rejecting the proposal like I expected they told me to go out and raise the money.

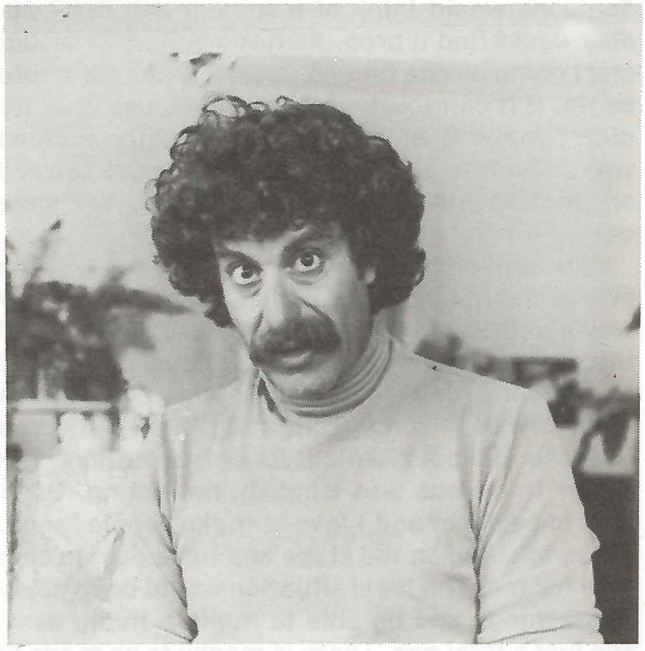
"The theatre tends to go in cycles. You start off with a new idea and it takes two years to get accepted. After it's accepted it becomes exciting, that's assuming that it's good. Then if you don't take some risks and make some changes and do some new things that bring people in, it starts to die. That's why I don't intend to be here forever. After another five years I'll leave, and someone else with a new vision will come in."

Richard talked with us about the number of plays done in this area. "Right now we are doing about the right amount of plays for where we are, with the development of our season. If you get up to twelve plays then what you end up with is people not wanting to subscribe to an entire season. They want to pick and choose. That gets to be completely different booking jobs, and so I think seven or eight or even nine plays may be about right.

"Theatres work as autocracies (ruled by one person). Everything that happens in the theatre I am responsible for. It must be that way because only one person's vision works. If you take two pictures and project them you have an overlap that is confusing, and artistically it's one person's view that becomes the view of the theatre. That's what an artistic director does, creates the philosophy of the theatre. He also is in charge of all the firing and hiring and overseeing of the employees which is about a total of fifteen to twenty people. Also he decides on the season, auditions actors, which I'm doing here and in Denver and San Diego, and hires directors and designers. I consult with all kinds of people outside theatre, friends and acquaintances, as well as people in theatre. I've been down to Denver interviewing the best actors in Colorado. We have to bring in new people whose new ideas will excite us and cause us to do things better. New people have fresh ideas.

"The more I work in the theatre the more I realize it's just a big family. There is something magical about this depot theatre here, people enjoy themselves. There's a circle between the audience and the actors. The audience performs for the actors as much as the actors do for them. That gratifying circle is when the magic starts. It happens here quite frequently. That's the wonderful thing about theatre.

"The thing I am most interested in right now is doing art in my community. My goal is not to be directing a play on Broadway or directing an Oscar-winning film. My goal is to do the best work I can and to move the audiences that I work for. I'm very interested in developing our audiences on all levels - from children to adults, to senior citizens. I want to be the best individual I can and try to balance my life so that I'm the best person at home I can be, and the best person I can be to the people I work with here. I also want to be the best artist that I can be in the work that I do in the theatre. I think if you treat people with respect and are honest with them and in every way treat them as you would want to be treated then life will treat you very well back again, and that's proving itself to me."



Michael Shaloub

"I really don't know if I'm that good I just know what works on stage."

Michael Shaloub is an actor who acts with the Steamboat Repertory Theatre. Michael has been acting in Steamboat for nearly eight years. His beginning was really with the "Great American Laughing Stock Company."

"There has always been theatre in Steamboat, since the days of Perry Mansfield who had a community theatre. In 1972 John Samson and

Charley Taylor rolled into town from Fort Collins. These two had both received degrees in Drama and Theatre at C.S.U. and started a little company called the 'Great American Laughing Stock Company.' We performed wherever we could — places like above the Cameo, at the Pine Grove and the Depot. That went on for several years. There are several people who used to be in GALSCO, but I think Charley and Stuart Handeloff and I are the only two left in Steamboat. So I guess I could say that I've been in the theatre for eight years.

"What we were doing then was 'Improvisation Theatre' at the Pine Grove, something like the cartoon, 'Feiffer's People,' a series of little sketches, blackouts, etc. Some of them were really funny and, of course, some were not. Lots of people didn't even get them. Most people liked it, and we decided we could write our own stuff. Someone would think of a subject and someone else would find a prop, then someone else would start going on one thing or another, and we would begin. If it came out good, we would use it...a lot didn't make it at all. What eventually evolved was an hour to an hour and a half of work toward original theatre, well, semi-original, we stole quite a bit of it.

"I wasn't always a part of it. When some of the others started on something and needed me, they would call and if I wanted to do my thing, I'd call them back. I really don't have any real background for acting. I guess I've always been a performer. I come from a big family and you have to be outstanding to get attention. My major in college was English, not acting. But I love to perform and I love to make people laugh. I love to stand on the stage and have people clap only for me. The ideal situation would be to do all those things and be able to make a living at it. It's just a total gas. There is money to be made in acting, but it's a tough, competitive field. People seem to be so desperate to do anything in theatre, they will do so much for so very little money. That's how hungry most actors are to do theatre. I love the theatre and I do it for nothing many times.

"Actually there are few people in the arts that are in it for the money. Except, of course, those who do commercial stuff. We do it for the adulation because it's such a 'rush,' having 200 or 300 people out there clapping. There is something magic about 'Live Theatre.' I love and hate it at the same time. One never knows what it's going to be like. You could go out and do four performances on a weekend and every night will be different. The play can be exactly the same, the timing will be either right on, or could be a beat off. The laughs won't be there when you want them to be. It's uncomfortable, so you try to cover up or hurry up the pace...often it doesn't work. A lot, of course, depends on the audience. Sometimes you get a real responsive audience who will laugh at absolutely anything, and therefore, you do a good job for them. It's like an energy feed. You put out to the audience a really dynamite performance, and they give you back their energy, their applause. Those are the magical nights."

We asked Michael how he feels after he has finished a good performance. "When I leave the theatre it usually feels as though someone should tether my legs... it's like I'm floating 100 feet in the air. It's a super high. It's unbelievable, like nothing else in the world. It takes me as long to come down after a good performance as it does to do the performance. But, it's not always like that. If it was continually like that, you would be like a junkie, going to get a 'fix' of people clapping for you. Sometimes it's just nothing. I'll go home and swear that I'll never go back again, that I'll have to leave town.

"Perhaps, 'Rosencratz and Gildenstern are Dead' was one of the best plays I've ever done. 'Lion in Winter' was another tremendous play. Mickey McCoy and John Samson played the lead parts. I had a good part, but felt I wasn't just right for it. In spite of that, it was still a beautiful, beautiful play. Carol Samson did a Moliere play. We didn't have money for costumes. All the time and work was donated. It was hard. We did it because we loved it, and we wanted to see some good theatre in Steamboat."

As we continued to talk to Michael, we found our interest grew only stronger. We were curious about how it might feel to walk out on stage and forget your lines. Here's what Michael told us when we questioned him.

"Every actor I have ever known or talked to has the same nightmare. That nightmare is being pushed out on stage in a costume that you have never seen, and somebody is giving you a cue line that you have never heard. Suddenly there is nothing in your head. It sure gives you a bizarre feeling. That's why when you are in a play, you have to over learn your lines. When I broke my leg a few years ago, it was actually a blessing in disguise. It forced me into isolation. There was nothing else for me to do but learn my lines, and learn my lines well. Actors can get away with murder on stage. I performed with my broken leg, covered it up well... costumes are marvelous... no one even noticed until after the play.

"Acting is a lot of fun. It's also a lot of hard work. I think it takes special people to walk out on a stage and perform well. You have to believe in it. That's the key, how believable you can make what you are doing. That's the real task."