

Mountain simplicity won

By LIBBY LEWIS
Staff Writer

Memorial Hall reeked with the glamour and money of a Broadway premiere Friday night, with the 1977 opening of the Carolina Regional Theater production of "Appalachia Sounding."

The lights went up to first show Scotty Collier and Jan Davidson picking an old mountain tune that they've undoubtedly played a hundred times before, at all ungodly hours of the night, together with good friends and a lot of beer. (Anyone lucky enough to attend one of Scotty Collier's parties can attest to that.) Now, they were playing the same tune surrounded by a glittering audience and the dignity of a premiere.

It brought to mind what Carter's inauguration must have been like—the cream of Washington society listening to bluegrass and watching the Apple Chill cloggers. A beautiful contrast.

Playwright Romulus Linney's task of writing a "documentary drama" was at once easy and strenuous. The material was there for the researching and the interviewing, since the Appalachian way of life is strongly alive today, and one has only to travel through the mountains of the Appalachian states to see it. But Linney had to capture the spirit of these people in an artificial medium—hardly an easy task, even though the spirit is a colorful one and lends itself to dramatization.

Another hurdle Linney faced was his intent to focus on the struggle of the Appalachian people as a whole, over a time span of 200 years, rather than concentrate on the plight of one particular family in one given time—hence, the absence of names for the characters (other than "Father," "Mother," etc.). Each character embodied a historical line of thinking, behavior and attitudes that remained stable through the harshest weather, a national war, and the raping of the land.

What "Appalachia Sounding" lost in dramatic tension as a result of Linney's intent, it gained in the sheer liveliness of the heritage he was depicting. It showed itself in Collier's and Davidson's wonderful music, as much as in the colorful, humorous language of mountain folk. When a person's

nervous in "Appalachia Sounding," he's not just nervous—he's "as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs." And when a man's about to take a wife, he wants to decide how many children they'll have—"this business of the woman deciding when to put the fiddle on the shelf and throw away the bow is for the birds."

The acting was, for the most part, excellent, save for times when the actors could not be heard. Donald Reeves was dramatically at home in the role of the ather, a swarthy, stubborn, loving character—gruff on the outside, gentle on the inside. He is as fiercely loving in his embarrassment at being caught singing a lullaby to his infant son ("Here! Take this critter! I'm no nursemaid!") as he is in roughly pulling his talkative wife down on his knee, saying "Woman! Hesh!"

Barbara Lea as the Mother has all the energy and determination of the mountain women she is portraying; she carries the truth and realism of her character as much in her performance as in the content of her lines—when a lazy neighbor says, "Ye gotta trust these hills. Trust. That's what gets us through," she leans over in her rolled-up sleeves and says wryly, "Trust... and a powerful lot of sweat, blood, and elbow grease, I say."

Marian Baer is delightful in all four roles she plays. These are all strong, happy women she portrays—from a Ginseng picker, to a "Cures Lady," ("To cure a fever blister, kiss a dog," she advises), to a "Coal Woman" who has psychic powers, or the "secon" sight."

"Appalachia Sounding" is funded by an interesting variety of organizations—historical, political, commercial and artistic in nature. It will be touring 13 states this spring, after which a videotape will be made for national broadcast. Why all the attention? Because Romulus Linney has struck the core of the Appalachian mystique in "Appalachia Sounding"—with its simplicity. That simplicity permeates every moment, every detail of the play. It is a re-creation—not a replication—of the unpretentious truth of a people, and the support of the play is an infectious desire to keep this re-creation alive for as long as our heritage has lived.



Scotty Collier (left) and Jan Davidson (right) perform their music in *Appalachia Sounding*, a theatre production which appeared Friday night in Memorial Hall and will be touring twelve other states this spring.



The Carolina Baroque Opera will perform *L'Ormino*, a 17th century Venetian opera adapted for the modern stage in the original Italian, at 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday in Gerrard Hall. Admission is \$1 for students and \$2 for the general public.

Baroque opera to perform

The Carolina Baroque Opera, has chosen to explore baroque opera because the singing style is an excellent means of training for a career in opera.

According to Stephen Blackwelder, conductor, "The members of the company feel that although in the recent past there has been a decline in interest in opera in the area, the Carolina Baroque Opera is building new interest in and creating new opportunities for motivated individuals concerned with all areas of opera production."

The cast members bring

experience from their various associations with the Sante Fe, San Francisco and College Light Opera Companies, Opryland, the Brevard Musical Theatre, the North Carolina Symphony, department opera, and symphonic groups at UNC-CH.

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—MELISSA SWICEGOOD

Painted sheets and paper scenery

By LIBBY LEWIS
Staff Writer

Toss together four musicians, 20 unlikely instruments, painted sheets for backdrops, papier-mache costumes, cardboard scenery and a dozen recruits from the drama department. Throw it on stage and what you've got is a mess, unless it's the tremendously ingenious "Joan of Arc" that was presented Saturday night by the Bread and Puppet Theatre in Memorial Hall.

The "picture show" consisted of nine scenes done simply and without speech, highlights from the story of the invasion of France and the life of Joan of Arc. Musical interludes between the scenes set the mood for each incident.

One scene, "A voice from heaven speaks to the kitchen," showed Joan on her hands and knees washing the floor. Aluminum cans suspended by string clattered together to provide the sound of church bells. An angel (one of the musicians) climbed a ladder to sound a long horn. The call, repeated three

times, was mellow and strong, ending with a compelling tremolo. The final image was Joan, still kneeling, rapt.

This "picture" was a fair example of what was done throughout the show. Very serious and moving subjects were dealt with simply and with a quiet sense of humor. The effect was warm and very human in spite of the caricature inherent in the presentational style.

The story continued through the Battle of Orleans and the crowning of the Dauphin to the most moving of the scenes—"A prison in the year of our Lord 1430." Joan, trying to reach a bowl of water, struggled to free herself from a tangle made up of ropes and shrouded fellow prisoners. As she was about to touch the bowl a black-faced figure in a top hat reached down and poured the water out.

The ingenious simplicity of the Bread and Puppet Theatre can only be applauded, as it was Saturday night. This group demonstrates the possibility of a return to a popular live theatre.

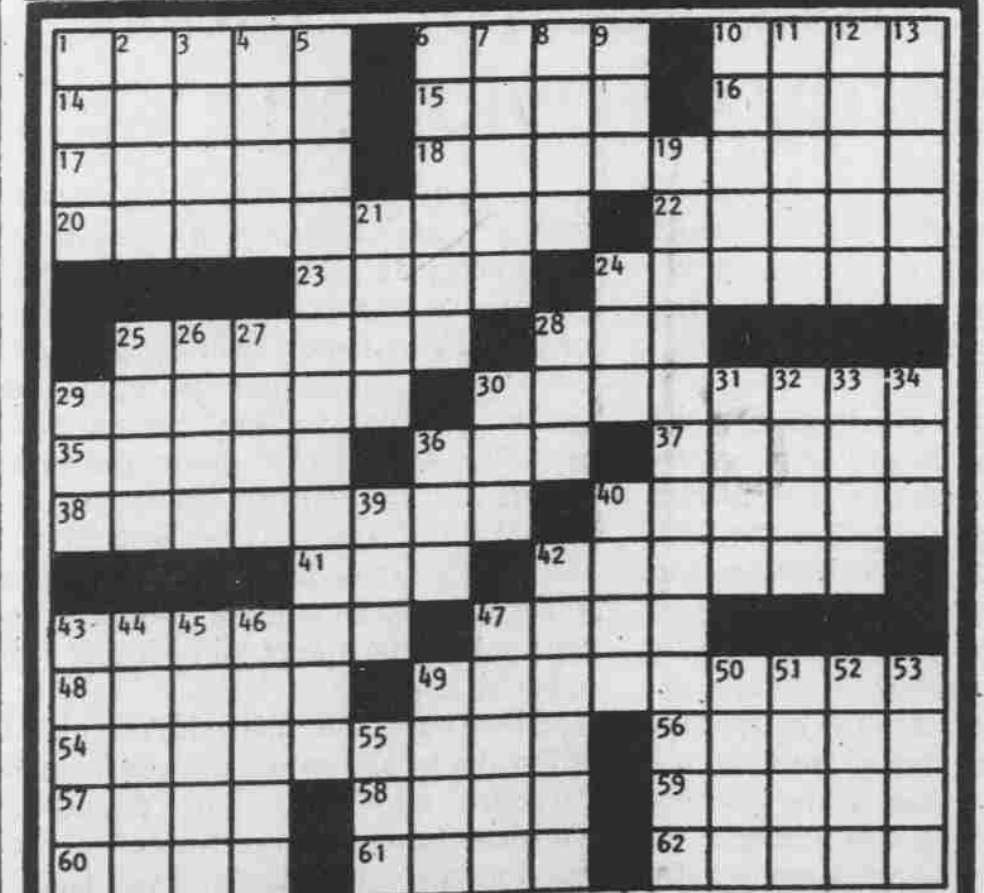
THE Daily Crossword by Evelyn Benshoof

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 23 Make out | 40 Run aground | 7 Columnist |
| 1 Lt. dish | 24 Bedaubed | 41 Couple | 8 Cleveland |
| 6 Irritate | 25 Dastardly ones | 42 Directs | 9 Sooty matter |
| 10 Course of conduct | 26 Bakery item | 43 Coolidge | 10 Criticize severely |
| 14 Vigilantly ready | 29 Anc. Roman garments | 47 Wound | 11 Clergyman |
| 15 — Bovary | 30 Distinguish | 48 Revoke a grant | 12 Minnesota county |
| 16 Celebes ox | 35 Religious faith | 49 Sorrow | 13 Easily reached |
| 17 Ice pellets | 36 Mastiff | 54 Discontinue | 12 Rise above |
| 18 Rocket firing item | 37 Musical composition | 56 Paragon | 13 Repeatedly |
| 20 Regain courage | 38 Withdraw gradually | 57 Camping item | 21 Noble lt. family |
| 22 Annoyed | | 58 Encourage in wrongdoing | 24 Perch |
| | | 59 Promenades | 25 Lively party |
| | | 60 Angers | 26 Fitzgerald or Raines |
| | | 61 Substance | 27 Pity me! |
| | | 62 Obliterate | 28 Dowel |
| | | | 29 Seed |
| | | | 30 Heavy drinker |
| | | | 31 Guiltless |
| | | | 32 Thickening agent |
| | | | 33 Tries for election |
| | | | 34 Kennedy or Williams |
| | | | 36 Singing pair |
| | | | 39 Concede |
| | | | 40 Leading actor |
| | | | 42 Inadequate |
| | | | 43 Desert vegetation |
| | | | 44 Freud associate |
| | | | 45 Sierra — |
| | | | 46 Certain garments |
| | | | 47 Used needle and thread |
| | | | 49 Man of the road |
| | | | 50 Jew. month |
| | | | 51 That: Fr. Prince and Roach |
| | | | 53 Different |
| | | | 55 Touch lightly |

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Verna Taylor Business Mgr.