

# third dimension | public radio, t.v.



"Tape is rolling... quiet in the studio." Everyone in the studio freezes where they are, and coughs are stifled. The actors on the set come to life. For the next five minutes, the world outside the four walls ceases to exist; the studio is their universe.

Taping sessions for "Anyone for Tennyson?", starring the First Poetry Quartet and special guest talent, have been taking place at the Nebraska Telecommunications Building for the last ten months.

Each time it is a different set, a different world, from seventeenth-century London to the Roaring Twenties. It is easy for one watching the session to be gently lulled into believing that it's the real thing. Except for occasional interruptions.

"Cut! Let's go for another take!"

Photos by Steve Boerner



## NETV programs 'not merely escapism'

By Betsie Ammons

You won't see situation comedies, medical dramas, or police and detective series on the Nebraska Educational Television Network (NETV).

You will see public affairs programs, instructional series, programs on the arts, and "some of the best classical drama around today," said Ron Hull, NETV program manager.

"We try to do things that aren't done on commercial networks," Hull said. "We are not here to provide programming that is merely escapism."

Hull said he thinks people need to develop their skills and intellect to live rewarding lives, and added that they are turning more to television to do so.

Therefore, Hull said, NETV programming is designed to help alert people about what is happening in the world today. He said he thinks NETV provides people with a worthwhile way to spend their leisure time.

### Valuable time invested

People invest valuable time watching television, he said, and NETV "tries to give them a return on that investment."

Nebraska has benefitted from public broadcasting since 1954, when KUON, Channel 12, began operations at the University of Nebraska, Hull said. Nebraska was the eighth state in the nation to develop an educational television station, he added.

In 1963, the NETV Commission was formed by the Nebraska Legislature, and a nine-channel ETV network was formed, he said.

John Fetzer, owner of KOLN-TV in Lincoln and KGIN-TV in Grand Island, was instrumental in bringing public television to Nebraska, Hull said. Fetzer helped UNL acquire channel 12 from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), he said. He added that FCC approval is needed to change channel designation from commercial to public broadcasting.

From 1953 to 1956, KUON broadcast from the KOLN-KGIN facility, Hull said. Today, the station is located in the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Center, on UNL's East Campus.

The NETV Commission is the official policy-making body of NETV, according to Hull. Currently, nine NETV commissioners are chosen by the governor for three-year terms, he said. Among the commissioners are NU President D.B. Varner and State Commissioner of Education, Anne Campbell.

### Schools represented

Commissioners represent state school districts, state colleges, Nebraska's private schools and Congressional districts, he said.

Programs shown on NETV are provided by the Public Broadcast System (PBS). Local programs are included in NETV's format. More locally-produced programs are broadcast on NETV in the afternoon because educational programming is shown in the morning, Hull said.

Contents of daytime shows are prepared in correlation with the curriculum of Nebraska schools, and are produced in cooperation with the State Board of Education, he said.

The NETV audience is made up of persons of all ages, Hull said. It includes pre-schoolers who watch "Sesame Street" and persons over 65 who enjoy "The Grand Generation," a program for retired persons.

Lincoln-area viewer surveys show that a very successful NETV program will draw eight per cent of the television-viewing audience at a given time, Hull said, adding that the average is three to four per cent.

"To be useful," he said, "we have to be concerned with these figures." But he added that some programs are too important to be discontinued because of a small audience.

Hull estimated that the yearly budget for NETV is about \$2 million. Money to operate the network comes from state, federal and privately donated funds, he said.

Contributions are raised by the Nebraskans for Public Television, Inc. (NPTV), a volunteer group which promotes public awareness of NETV, said George Collins, NPTV development officer.

Currently, the group is broadcasting a campaign asking persons to join NPTV, he said. Membership dues help finance NETV programming, he said.

Collins said NPTV also sponsors an auction each year

to raise funds for NETV. The third annual auction will be broadcast from 6 p.m. to 12 a.m. April 21 through April 25. More than 1,000 persons from across Nebraska are soliciting items to be auctioned, he said.

Federal funds are distributed in the form of Community Service Grants, based on need, and also by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Hull said.

### Ford revising financing

President Ford is implementing a new way to finance ETV networks, according to Collins. He said the government will return \$1 to the network for each \$2.50 raised from local, non-federal sources.

Collins said NPTV has a long-term membership goal of 15,000, the maximum number the group may have to receive the most federal funds.

Programming also is financed by the Station Program Cooperative, he said. Separate stations submit program ideas to the cooperative, and member stations vote on the programs they believe should be produced, he said.

More than 200 proposals are made to the cooperative each year, and 30 programs are chosen for production, Hull added.

### NETV sophisticated station

"In terms of facilities, NETV is one of the most sophisticated ETV stations in the country," Hull said. All states except Montana, Wyoming and Delaware have ETV stations, he said.

However, Collins said Nebraska is one of the few states with a state-wide ETV network. Most ETV stations are based in single communities, he added.

Persons living in every part of Nebraska have access to NETV, Hull said.

But, NETV Commissioner June Popken of Brady said some placed in Nebraska receive poor NETV reception because of obstructing hills or valleys.

New translators are being constructed to remedy this, Popken said, adding that these communities will have clear reception within the next two years.