

Arts & Entertainment

World's comedian Bob Berky is out to 'rattle some cages'

By Deb Pederson
Senior Reporter

The world is his stage, but Lincoln will shine the footlights on international mime artist Bob Berky this week. Berky will work as a resident artist with the UNL Kimball Performance Series and give a number of local performances throughout the week.

Berky said he didn't think about becoming a mime until he was in college. He started out as a french horn player at the Eastman School of Music.

"My parents always said do what you like doing. If you don't like doing it, stop it," Berky said. So he stopped playing the horn.

"When I put the horn down, I needed some way of expressing myself," Berky said. "I did a lot of speaking theater first, and I was an athlete so I became very physical in whatever theater I was doing. That led me to one of the most physical forms of theater, which is mime. And then theatrical clowning is also very physical."

Berky began studying mime technique with a member of the American Mime Theatre in 1970. After one year he went to Rochester, N.Y., and worked as a research assistant in the University of Rochester psychology department, using theater techniques with emotionally disturbed and delinquent children. During this period he continued studying mime at Cornell University with Paul Curtis, director of the American Mime Theatre, and founded and directed the Rochester Children's Theatre.

In 1973, Berky studied with Tony Montanaro, a contemporary of French mime master Marcel Marceau. He was then asked to join Montanaro's company of nine performers in the formation of the Celebration Mime Theatre. As a member of Celebration, he traveled throughout the United States and Canada, performing and giving workshops at universities, theaters and schools. He also established an intensive clowning workshop at the Celebration Mime Theatre, with co-instructor Fred Garver.

Berky said he never really made a conscious decision to pursue mime as a career, it just fell in place.

"I pursued it and before long I found myself in a company, working, making a little bit of money," Berky said. "It's just sort of taken care of itself."

"I'm not a mime, really, in the normal sense of that word. I don't wear a white face," he said.

"People really have no understanding of the art form," Berky said. "When you say the word 'music,' you don't think that it's just rock 'n' roll. You say what kind of music. So when people hear the word 'mime' they think of one thing, one style. So I don't even use the word any longer. I'm a physical comedian. As such I can explore just about anything I



Courtesy of Kimball Performance Series

Physical comedian/mime Bob Berky performs in costume.

want to."

Berky said he liked performing in different countries because "when you get right down to it, no matter what color they are, or what language they speak, they're all human beings."

Television is a bunch of garbage, he said. He suggested drawing a timeline of a lifespan and then cutting off all of the hours spent watching television.

"When you look at it that way, it's scary," Berky said. "It's like somebody's chopping your body off piece by piece."

Americans have lost some of the richness of their culture because of their fascination with high technology, he said.

"You notice in any city, even New York — which is supposedly sophisticated, and I would beg to differ with that — if you have a television in a store window, many people will stop to watch it," Berky said. "It doesn't matter what it is. It's this fascination with flickering and images."

What is important to Berky is exposing people not only to mime and clowning, but using the art forms to expand people's ability to have ideas for themselves and to make them think, he said.

"I'm just going to rattle people's cages all week," Berky said.

He said he enjoys teaching but doesn't have the time right now because he's so busy performing.

"I'll teach later when I can't move so much," Berky said.

Berky said his lifestyle is like anyone else's except that it's not a

nine-to-five situation and he has a lot of freedom and responsibility.

"If you do something wrong, then you can fix it," he said, "But if you're not responsible for your own actions and you do something wrong, then it's up to someone else to fix it and it may never get fixed. That's the problem with institutional living."

When it comes to his philosophies and the messages he sends to audiences, Berky said "you can only be stimulated and stimulate others. You can't change the whole world."

Berky is scheduled to perform:

• Today — East Campus Union (informal performances) 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Harper-Schramm-Smith Informance, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Broyhill Fountain "Fire on the Plaza," 8:30 p.m.

• Wednesday — Theatre Workshop, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Cather-Pound-Neihardt Informance, 6:30 p.m., Chesterfield's Comedy Night, 8:30 p.m. (\$2 cover).

• Thursday — Abel-Sandoz Informance 6:30 p.m. Juggling Workshop — Nebraska Union Ballroom, 8 p.m.

• Friday — Selleck Informance 6:30 p.m.

• Sunday — Picnic in Sheldon Sculpture Gardens, 6 to 8 p.m. Final performance at Kimball Hall, 8 p.m. (\$5 for students, \$8 general admission).

Tickets for the final performance can be purchased at Kimball Box Office in Westbrook Music Building from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. or at the booth in the Nebraska Union from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. weekdays.

Pure talent, no gimmicks show why he is Willie

By Mike Grant
Staff Reporter

Next time you go to a Willie Nelson concert, take along a hat. If you throw it up on stage, Nelson will wear it for a while then throw it back to you.

But this isn't surprising. Nelson wears many hats.

From the moment Nelson and his seven member band stepped on stage at the Devaney Sports Center Sunday night before a nearly full house, he was in fine form.

Carrying his worn guitar, Nelson quietly walked up to the stage with little fanfare. The audience, possibly expecting an opening band or some kind of announcement, took a few moments to realize that the main attraction had begun.

anyone. It is no wonder Nelson is popular with older audiences. Not even Sinatra could perform the songs better than Nelson does.

With bandmembers like drummer Paul English, whom the singer paid tribute to on his latest album "Me and Paul", Nelson can't go wrong. Jody Payne is a fine lead electric guitarist and Emmons' honky tonk-style piano playing proves she didn't get the job out of nepotism.

My favorite part of the show came when they turned the lights low for smooth standards like "Funny How Time Slips Away".

Nelson has a strong, nasal voice that works simply because he is Willie. You never doubt his sincerity. He's out there to do a job, and he does it well.

The last part of the show alternated between the sacred and the profane. Kicking off the set was "Amazing Grace". While many country singers throw gospel songs in their repertoire as a nod to tradition, Nelson did it with feeling and purpose.

He moved easily from the gospel "I'll Fly Away" to the folkish "City of New Orleans" without missing a beat.

The only weak point in the concert came at the introduction to Kris Kristofferson's "Me and Bobbie McGee", which sounded sloppy.

Also, Nelson seems caught up in duo-mania. That isn't so bad when he does songs with Waylon Jennings, but lame material like "To All the Girls I've Loved Before", done with Julio Inglesias definitely lowers Nelson's standards. Fortunately, Inglesias couldn't make the concert.

Still, Nelson's driving, honest vocals, punctuated by his underrated driving guitar style make him one of the most talented performers in the country today. And, most refreshing, he performs without gimmickry — just pure talent and a friendly persona that didn't pander to Lincoln audiences by invoking everything from Big Red to patriotism. He simply wowed the audience by putting on a great show.

I'm looking forward to seeing Nelson again. Since he's perpetually on tour or in the recording studio, the chances are always good that Nelson will be back soon. And I'll be sure to take a hat.

Concert Review

In faded jeans, a black T-shirt and tennis shoes, Nelson ripped into "Whisky River" and didn't let up for two hours, when he closed with the same song.

Willie Nelson and Family is no misnomer. Not only does Nelson's sister Bobby Emmons play piano for the band, but brothers Paul and Billy English handle the percussion section. A family-like friendly atmosphere pervaded the whole performance which covered all the facets of Nelson's career.

First was a showcase for the songs Nelson has written for other singers, tunes such as "Crazy", written early on in his career for the late Patsy Cline.

He also did "Night Life" a blues tune which B.B. King performs in his live act. King and Nelson both have a sweeping, throbbing guitar technique, which punctuates the lyrics.

Next Nelson did selections from the album that first gave him critical praise, "The Red Headed Stranger". The record weaves ballads like "Time of the Preacher" and "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain" together to tell a story.

Nelson received most of his commercial success from pop classics like "Georgia" and "Star Dust Memories". He performed these with mellowness and class. Although some people complain that these remakes show little novelty, Nelson does them better than

Great Plains series centers on Capitol

By Kris Leach
Staff Reporter

Everything you ever wanted to know about the state capitol will be covered in "The Evolution of the Capitol," this year's series of lectures by the Center for Great Plains Studies. This is the fourth year the free lecture series has been offered.

This year's series consists of six lectures, beginning today. They will be every Tuesday in September and October, center spokesman Jon Nelson said.

All lectures are at 7:30 p.m. in the Capitol's east Legislative Chamber.

The lectures will include information on the history, architecture, art, landscaping and future of the Capitol and the surrounding area, Nelson said.

Frederick Luebke, center director and professor of history at UNL will open the series. His lecture, "The Capitols and Capitols of Nebraska" will discuss the territorial capitols that existed in Omaha, and the political struggles that occurred in the 1850s to 1870s when the state tried to select a site for the capitol building, Nelson said.

The second lecture, presented on Sept. 17, is "The Evolution of a Capitol." The speaker will be Keith Sawyers of the UNL College of Architecture. This lecture will discuss the two Capitol buildings that existed before the present structure. It also covers the Capitol

as a memorial to Nebraska soldiers who lost their lives in WWI and as the state-house for Nebraska residents, Nelson said.

The lectures continue in a progressive manner, each building on the previous lecture. The final lecture discusses the future plans for the capitol, Nelson said.

The remaining lectures are: Sept. 24 — "Hartley Burr Alexander: Architecture and Poetic Vision," presented by David Murphy of the State Historical Society.

Oct. 1 — "The Nebraska State Capitol: Art, Architecture and Humanism" by Dale Gibbs of the UNL College of Architecture.

Oct. 8 — "The Capitol Mural Decorations," by Norman Geske, director of the Sheldon Art Gallery.

Oct. 15 — "The Landscaping of the Capitol," by Robert Ripley of Capitol Restoration and Promotion, State Building Division.

The lectures will be moderated by Nelson, who, along with Ripley, coordinated all the guest speakers and the idea for this year's lecture series.

Entertainment shorts

Singer Melissa Manchester will appear in concert Sept. 15 at 7:30 p.m. in Omaha's Orpheum Theater.

Tickets for reserved seats are \$15.50, \$13.50 and \$11.50.



Berky



Dan Dulaney/Daily Nebraskan