

# Entertainment

## Good actor was bad clerk

By JANICE KEYS  
Assistant news editor  
Rudy Webb was a lousy clerk and a terrible estimator. He also wasn't so hot at working at an advertising agency.

He took a stab at all these jobs after finishing his education and was unhappy at each and every one.

Webb, 37, who was born and raised in Bermuda, can cheerfully admit these failures because when it comes to the profession he finally settled on, he's superb.

Webb's talents as an actor-singer are indisputable and he's become a respected performer since taking the show business plunge in 1967 on a CBC television show called The Good Company.

Other CBC assignments kept his going during those early years but, "There were some very lean times, too," Webb says, grimacing good-humoredly as he settles comfortably on the living room couch in his Goreway Drive townhouse.

During one of the lean times, Webb auditioned for Godspell, being produced at the Royal Alex by the American producers who staged the Broadway show. He was astonished to get a part in the show.

It was his first venture into live theatre.

"It was a very taxing show," he says, "but I was smitten by theatre while doing that show. Theatre became my real passion."

Since he was bitten by the bug, Webb has appeared in several shows at various Toronto theatres, at the Charlottetown Festival for five consecutive summers, at Calgary's Luncheon Theatre and at The Citadel Theatre in Edmonton.

This summer, he appeared in Ain't Lookin' at Toronto Workshop Productions and is currently in the musical Flying at the Royal York.

Ain't Lookin' was the first show he'd done for George Luscombe, the artistic director of TWP, for whom he has great respect.

"He's very imaginative. He opened me up, brought things out of me that I didn't want to do at first. He made me do them and it really worked. Ain't Lookin' was the most rewarding thing I've done in a long time."

Because Ain't Lookin' had an open-ended run and ran longer than he expected, Webb had to leave the show three weeks before it closed to do Flying.

He hated to leave Ain't Lookin', which had a social comment to make, to do Flying, which is pure entertainment, Webb says.

"I think theatre should be informative as well as entertaining. I think it can be instrumental in educating people."

He admires Luscombe for his refusal to take the easy way out by staging fluff pieces. All TWP shows have some social and or political message.

The problem, however, says Webb, is that most theatres have limited budgets and salaries to match. And because the Canadian theatre scene is still small, despite the theatre boom of five years ago, it's hard to find steady theatre work.

"Part of being here (in Canada) is that you do have to resort to commercial things once in awhile, things you don't enjoy doing much."

The absence of a star system in this country doesn't help the employment situation either, he adds. His wife, Diane, whom Webb says is his best critic, agrees.

Such a system has drawbacks but talented, hard-working actors deserve credit for their efforts, Webb believes.

"A star system gives a performer something to work towards. That's why so many performers leave this country, they feel they're going around in circles, instead of progressing."

"You can mention the names of some really superb Canadian actors in a conversation," Mrs. Webb adds, "and nobody knows who they are."

An unassuming person, Webb doesn't yearn for all the trapping of stardom but he would like to feel his successes in so many shows count for something besides personal satisfaction.

"I don't necessarily aspire to be a big star but I would like to be recognized for what I do. And I would like to have the security of knowing I'd be able to keep working."



Rudy Webb

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