

**A:** Molière, not Shakespeare, was my principal inspiration. More precisely, Richard Wilber's translation/adaptation of *Tartuffe* really inspired me. This French comedy is about 100 years newer than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Wilber's diction has a vastly different quality. The words clip along and the rhyme is quite obvious. Likewise, rhyme dominates the structure of cowboy poetry.

## **"I have dreamed of becoming a published playwright since I was 15."**

**Q:** How old were you when you enjoyed your first melodrama?

**A:** There once was a melodrama theatre where City Buffet now stands in Cañon City. I was nine the first time I walked through the door; the ragtime piano music and costumes dazzled me. My love of 19th century theater continued with the Cripple Creek Players and the Iron Springs Chateau, of which I am an alumnus. I chose to avoid melodrama for *A Midsummer Night's Western* because I felt that the market was saturated. I continue, however, to study vaudeville, burlesque, and minstrelsy.

**Q:** Tell me a little bit about your adaptation.

**A:** Shakespeare seasons his classical genre with fairy folklore indigenous to England. Likewise, I have incorporated the indigenous folklore of the Old West - Native American tales. Coyote, the most popular of tricksters, is the obvious choice for Puck.

**Q:** How long have you been writing?

**A:** Since I was 18. I wrote a melodrama in high school and performed it during Entertainment in the Park at Veterans Park in Cañon City. It had seven characters, each performed by one of my friends, and my dad, Rudl Mergelman, painted the set.

**Q:** What was the defining moment that inspired your dream?

**A:** When I started writing the play, I saw the strength of my writing and how it was working for me.

**Q:** Does anyone else in your family write?

**A:** My dad writes cowboy poetry and actually published a children's book.

**Q:** What was your dream?

**A:** I have dreamed of becoming a published playwright since I was 15, and later on my dream was to get published by Pioneer.

**Q:** What is your greatest inspiration?

**A:** For a playwright, it is life experience. Directing and acting also helps. I think a playwright needs the mind of an actor.

**Q:** Who is your greatest role model?

**A:** In the artistic realm, my father and my sister Audrie, because art was very natural and was an everyday thing as I grew up.

**Q:** I know you grew up in Cañon City, but were you born here?

**A:** No, I was born in Gunnison. My dad is from Gunnison and my mom is from Indiana. They met at Western State College.

**Q:** Now that you are published, what's next?

**A:** *Romeo and Juliet* in cowboy poetry.

**Q:** If you wanted to inspire young writers, what would you say?

**A:** I would encourage them to imitate the greats, like I have. It's a wonderful etude.

The production of *A Midsummer Night's Western* will be held most weekends at Red Rocks Community College, 5420 Miller Street in Arvada, in April, 2008. Call 303-914-6010 for information on show times and tickets.

*Many thanks to Greg at Buckskin Joe Frontier Town and Railway for providing a perfect backdrop for August's photo.*