

THE TELLURIDE TALE OF BUTCH CASSIDY

A Melodrama in Two Acts

by

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NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

Historically, the San Miguel Bank of Telluride was the first bank Butch Cassidy ever robbed. The take was approximately \$21,000, a hearty sum, particularly for those times. At the end of the play is printed a copy of the report from the Rocky Mountain News three days following the robbery in 1889. The facts vary from telling to telling, as the communication was largely dependent on word of mouth in those days. Any facts given in this play are taken from history books and biographies written about Butch Cassidy. The characterizations of the townsfolk and principles are purely fiction and melo-dramatized for the sake of entertainment. Any similarity to actual persons of that time and place are purely coincidental.

This play is categorized as a melodrama. Although it has never been explicitly documented in theatrical history, melodrama must first have taken root in the same areas around the Mediterranean that nurtured the Commedia dell'Arte. American Heritage Dictionary defines it as: A sentimental dramatic presentation characterized by heavy use of suspense and sensational episodes. (F. melodrame, "musical drama") Over the years, definitions became less detailed and placed greater emphasis upon the sensation elements and less upon the musical. When these plays were written, production costs and performers' salaries were much lower than today and could be more easily absorbed. Consequently, many of the plays of the period called for 20 or 30 characters. Whatever else it might be, melodrama is good entertainment.

Designed for tour, this play will work in a small space. Originally written using teenagers as the principles and children ages 8-16 as extras*, as many as 30 people can comprise the cast. Musical in nature, this play depends largely on pacing. The part of the sheriff must be someone who can read an audience and can improvise if necessary.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- SHERIFF GOODGUY:** Sheriff of Telluride, Colorado in 1889. Honest, trustworthy, conservative, macho. In love with Cookie.
- COOKIE:** Owns the Sheridan Hotel and Bar; Sheriff Goodguy's true love; keeps the melodrama moving.
- SALLY SUNSHINE O'MALLEY:** The dedicated schoolteacher; one of the FEW single women in Telluride; marshmallow on the outside, toffee on the inside.
- CHARLIE COUNTWRIGHT:** A teller at the Bank of Telluride; educated in the East but come back to "better his community"; a Clark Kent type.
- FARLEY DIGWELL:** The Telluride undertaker; In love with Sally; greedy and persnickity;
- THE COWGIRL SINGERS:** Trio who sing at the Sheridan. All of their motions are synchronized.
- TOWNSPEOPLE:*** Singers and dancers, transitional characters involved in opening production number, scene transitions and Finale. Suggestions for townspeople are bank teller, Butch Cassidy, Wild Bunch Gang members, saloon girls, barber, mayor & his wife, school children, cowboys & ranchers, Indian scout.
- POSSE:** Sheriff Goodguy's posse; involved in Sheriff's "chase scene", and Finale.

Scene - The town of Telluride, Colorado.

Time - The year is 1889...

THE TELLURIDE TALE OF BUTCH CASSIDY was first performed at The University of Texas at Dallas as part of the Richardson Children's Summer Arts Series in celebration of the Richardson Children's Theatre's annual "Communication Is An Art" workshop. Artistic Director was Debra Carter. Musical Director was Kitty Beletic. Lights were designed by Keith Buresh. Backdrop was designed by Mary Francis. Production numbers were choreographed by Beth Wortley. The original cast was as follows:

SHERIFF GOODGUY
COOKIE
SALLY SUNSHINE O'MALLEY
CHARLIE COUNTWRIGHT
FARLEY DIGWELL
THE COWGIRL SINGERS

Mike Federico
Michelle Carter
Dahlia Mechlowicz
Tyler Tanner
Kelly Groves
Bonnie Barber
Laura Carter
Meagan

POSSE & TOWNSPEOPLE

The participants in "Communication
Is An Art" workshop

This production later toured to Telluride, Colorado where it was performed at the historic Sheridan Opera House.

DEDICATION

The Telluride Tale of Butch Cassidy is a merry tribute to the town of Telluride, Colorado. Even today, visitors can still feel the flavor of the old west, meet townspeople who have endured many hardships for its preservation, and enjoy the beautiful majesty of God's nature. It is to Telluride, its residents past, present and to come that I dedicate this writing. May we work together to keep the town alive!

ACT I

SCENE I

SETTING:

The play consists of a backdrop, a piano, a signpost with many arrows marked respectively "Robbers Roost", "Ingram Falls", "Lizard Head", "Sheridan Hotel", and "Utah". Action essentially takes place in two places: (1) The Sheridan Hotel denoted by the piano (downstage rt) and (2) the Schoolhouse play yard denoted by a swing. The Bank of Telluride is upstage center denoted either on the backdrop or double flat painted (or hung) with a teller's both in front, placed UC. Signpost will be moved throughout the play. An downstage Rt. Additional props for Posse and Townspeople (badges, bandanas, stickhorses, sundry character props). Set is stationary except for signpost. 3 stools are placed near piano for Cowgirl Singers.

AT RISE:

Lights are dim. "Old West Theme" is heard for approx. 30 seconds. Enter GOODGUY from upstage left, swaggering and dusting off his chaps. HE seems to be headed for the Hotel, probably for a good hot meal...and a chat with Cookie. It is midday. GOODGUY walks DC to talk to the audience. During his monologue, ENTER TOWNSPEOPLE, COOKIE AND COWGIRL SINGERS, ready for opening number.

GOODGUY

Yeah, yeah, yeah...another ho hum day in Paradise.
(Coughs for the dust rising from his chaps – speaks to audience)

GOODGUY (Continued)

I suppose you think this story is just about Butch Cassidy and the Telluride Bank Robbery. Uh-uh, no siree. Oh, we're gonna get to that soon enough. There's even gonna be a shoot out later on. But first you gotta know a little bit about the folks in this here town. The year is 1889, the month is June and the sun is high over Wilson Peak. Telluride, Colorado

(Enter merchants with carts and baskets to set up market.)

GOODGUY (Continued)

is one of the toughest and busiest mining towns this side of the Rockies...Lotsa cowboys here ...

(COWBOYS enter, all types. THEY interact with merchants, some of them head for the Saloon. The WILD BUNCH enters after them. THEY are boisterous in their pantomime and people point and stare as THEY enter. THEY go directly to the Saloon.)

GOODGUY (Continued)

and a few city types.

(CITY TYPES enter and GOODGUY shakes his head. They also interact with merchants and react to COWBOYS who obviously need a bath)

GOODGUY (Continued)

Not too many women, though.

(Enter a few PRETTY LADIES who stop to shop and flirt with the CITY TYPES AND THE COWBOYS. A fight almost breaks out oover one of the ladies but GOODGUY breaks it up by merely crossing in front of them and lifting his hat. Enter BUTCH)

GOODGUY (Continued)

Butch Cassidy was just a hired hand down there at Mancos with the Stockton outfit. And he was known as Robert LeRoy Parker back then, BEFORE he got famous. He was a friendly sort and often kind to those less fortunate than himself. It's true, he was a sure shot with a gun and fast as lightnin' on Babe, that fine lookin' horse of his...

**(Looks around as the WILD BUNCH cross behind him.
HE whispers to the audience)**

But WE didn't know that then...and that part comes later on in this here story, anyhow...We got some key people ya need ta watch here. There's me, of course, Sheriff Goodguy, heh heh.....and then there's Sally Sunshine O'Malley,

(Enter SALLY)

GOODGUY (Continued)

the local schoolteacher. Workin' on gittin' a new schoolhouse. That Miss Sally is a right dedicated l'il ole gal..and not married yet, which makes gittin' that schoolhouse pretty important, at least by some folks standards. Folks like,

(Enter FARLEY DIGWELL)

GOODGUY (Continued)

Farley Digwell, the local undertaker. Farley isn't married neither, not to say he hasn't tried. He's currently taken with Miss Sally Sunshine

(Interaction between SALLY and FARLEY)

GOODGUY (Continued)

and most interested in helping her build that new schoolhouse. If only he could get the money...

(Exit FARLEY)

GOODGUY (Continued)

But Sally seems to spend her time on more educated things; like music and readin' and....

(Enter CHARLIE)

GOODGUY (Continued)

Charlie Countwright, the cashier at the bank. Charlie is smart...book smart, ya know? Charlie loves Miss Sally...but he doesn't know it yet. So Sally has decided it is up to her to show him the way.

(Interaction between SALLY and CHARLIE. They exit together. GOODGUY pulls up his pants)

Yeah, yeah, yeah...Did I mention Cookie?

(Lights up on Saloon)

COOKIE

I don't think so.

GOODGUY

Cookie, darlin'! I just been tellin' the tale...

COOKIE

You've been makin' this show longer than it could be. Let's get on with it!

GOODGUY

She's sassy and smart and beautiful, to boot!

COOKIE

And I'll boot you right out of here if you don't get on with this story. These people need a song.

(Both look at each other. Music cue for opening vamp)

GOODGUY

(To audience)

It was a good year for minin', which means a good year for money in the bank, which means an interestin' time for law and order...

COOKIE

Oh, Goodguy, you're so strong and handsome and brave...

GOODGUY

Aw, shucks.....

COOKIE

...and you wouldn't know a music cue if it hit you in the face. Ladies and gents, I give you the Telluride Tale of Butch Cassidy! Hit it girls....!

SONG - THE TELLURIDE TALE OF BUTCH CASSIDY (IN 1889)

(What follows is a production number involving entire cast. COWGIRL SINGERS sing verses with TOWNSPEOPLE joining the chorus. Purpose is to depict life in Telluride, highlight characterizations of principles, and make clear that people are putting their money in the bank! BUTCH AND HIS WILD BUNCH "case" the bank and befriend the TOWNSFOLK)

COWGIRL SINGERS

IN A TIME, IN 1889 THE TOWN OF TELLURIDE WAS A BOOMIN' TOWN
THE MINERS CAME THEY KNEW EACH OTHER'S NAMES
FROM UTAH AND MONTANA THEY WERE FOUND

ALL

IN THE TOWN OF TELLURIDE TO-WOO . . . YOU RIDE!
THE MOUNTAINS PROMISED FORTUNE AND SOME FAME
I SAID IT'S TELLURIDE KNOWN FROM HERE AND YON AND FAR AND WIDE
THE TOWN OF TELURIDE WILL NE'ER FORGET YOUR NAME

COWGIRL SINGERS

CAME A TIME, IN 1889
THE TOWNSFOLK PUT THEIR MONEY IN THE BANK
21 THOU, A TREASURE EVEN NOW
THE PAYOFF OF THE MINERS THERE TO THANK

ALL

IN THE TOWN OF TELLURIDE TO-WOO . . . YOU RIDE!
THE MOUNTAINS PROMISED FORTUNE AND SOME FAME
I SAID IT'S TELLURIDE
KNOWN FROM HERE AND YON AND FAR AND WIDE
THE TOWN OF TELLURIDE WILL NE'ER FORGET YOUR NAME

COWGIRL SINGERS

A RANCHER'S SON, THEY LOVED HIM EVERYONE
BUTCH CASSIDY BECAME HIS OUTLAW NAME
HE SMILED AND GRINNED. HE WAS EVERYBODY'S FRIEND

GOODGUY

(To TOWNSPEOPLE)

Hey wait!!! Don't tell them what happens!

ALL

Why not?

GOODGUY

If we do that then they'll know the ending.

ALL

So?

GOODGUY

So then they'll know what happens!

1-1-7

ALL

Right.

GOODGUY

So then we don't have a show. If they know the ending then we might as well go home...

(Cast just looks at him)

GOODGUY

We don't want to go home, do we?

ALL

...No...

**(Exit cast, grumbling, as if this wasn't the way
the show was rehearsed)**

GOODGUY

I'll let you know when it's time.

**(After all have exited except COOKIE and GOODGUY,
GOODGUY Comes DC to speak to audience)**

GOODGUY

Besides, I've got a big number comin' up later that you're not gonna wanna miss.

(Music cue for OLD SUSANNAH)

like I said before, the year is 1889, the month is June and the sun is high over Wilson Peak. It's a day like any other day in a busy mining town like Telluride. Folks is goin' about their business...

**(Town comes alive. Enter FARLEY who crosses to
the schoolyard. SALLY is seated in the swing)**

GOODGUY (Continued)

Just after lunch it is, and Miss Sally is in the schoolyard. Old Farley Digwell makes it a habit to stop by, just after the youngun's leave for their afternoon break. Whad'ya suppose he's up to now?....

(SALLY is swinging, munching on a bit of lunch. FARLEY comes up behind her, takes off his hat, slicks his hair and clears his throat so SHE knows HE is there)

SALLY

Hello, Farley.

FARLEY

Now Miss Sally, how did you know it was me?

SALLY

Oh, just an educated guess, I suppose.

FARLEY

That's what I like about you, Miss Sally. You are such a smart girl!

(Comes around in front and sits on the stump beside her. Dusts it off with his hadnkerchief first)

SALLY

(SADLY)

I don't feel so smart today.

FARLEY

(Overreacts)

My dear, what can the matter be?

SALLY

(Sighs)

Oh Farley, the preacher was just by. He says the collection taken last Sunday in church, the one for the new schoolhouse, was hardly anything at all. Seems the miners don't care much about education. They mean well, and the preacher says we shouldn't give up...but I don't see how anybody can care much about improvin' the youngun's minds when there's horses to bet on every Saturday night!

FARLEY

Just what I was saying to McAdams over at the bank. There needs to be some sort of law about those horse races...My next conversation is with Goodguy!

SALLY

Oh Farley, there's just no use. I've been trying to get this schoolhouse built for 2 years and no one seems to think it's that important!

FARLEY

I do, Miss Sally.

SALLY

I know, Farley, but what good does that do? I mean, we need more than just you...and me. We need support...We need people who understand what is important...

FARLEY

Like...like...

SALLY

Like more textbooks, so the children don't have to share. And updated too, with more current information!

FARLEY

Of course! And...

SALLY

And enough slates and chalk for each child! Not to mention the schoolhouse itself!

FARLEY

Not to mention it!

SALLY

(SHE grabs his coat)

Oh Farley, there is so much we could do if we just had the money! I would do ANYTHING if we could just get the money!

FARLEY

(To audience)

ANYTHING?

SALLY

Anything, Farley! There is no sacrifice that I wouldn't make.

(Music cue) SONG - I WOULD DO ANYTHING - FARLEY AND SALLY

SALLY

I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO HELP THIS TOWN
THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS TO BE DONE
PLENTY OF ROADS LEFT TO BE FOUND

I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SAVE THE DAY
TO GIVE THE CHILDREN HOPE FOR A WAY
FORGET THE PAST LIVE FOR TODAY!

(Spoken)

SALLY (Continued)

Oh Farley! I just know that if the folks in this town simply understood how important it is to concentrate on the QUALITY parts of life...like teaching our children how to read and write... how to find the JOY in learning....if YOU could just make them understand, I know that they would see fit to put some money towards the tools that it takes to do those things...

FARLEY

M-m-m-me?

SALLY

I'm talkin about a new schoolhouse, Farley...a proper place to learn, a place where there are books and maps and a slate for every child! Oh think of it, Farley! This is America, after all. In America, folks can do anything, if they set their minds to it! ANYTHING, Farley. You can do it, I KNOW YOU CAN!

BOTH:

(Sung)

(I) YOU CAN DO-OO-OO DO ANYTHING!

(Throughout song, SALLY drags FARLEY from place to place, making her point. HE smooths his clothing, just in time for her to wrinkle the other sleeve. SHE takes his hat...which HE cherishes...HE tries to get it away...nicely. On final note SHE puts his hat back on his head - So emphatically that it goes down over his face)

BLACKOUT

.....
PROCEED TO ACT I, SCENE V BELOW

ACT 1

SCENE V

SETTING: The hotel

AT RISE: Lights up on hotel. **COOKIE** changes scene card as **FARLEY** speaks. **HE** has a sarsparilla in hand.

FARLEY

Why, only this morning I was saying to Miss Sally Sunshine that this town needs to rid itself of those horse races. Maybe then there would be money enough for the new schoolhouse.

SALLY

Farley, you and I both know that those miners work hard. They have a right to some entertainment. Besides, you do YOUR share of bettin' on the horses, Farley. Now don't you forget that.

FARLEY

(Looks around to see if anyone heard her. No one else is in the hotel)

FARLEY (Continued)

Cookie. I only support my client's interests. Please don't pass that information on to anyone.

(COOKIE looks at audience and smiles)

FARLEY (Continued)

Besides, I have a new reason to raise money.

COOKIE

(SHE is re-doing her lipstick as HE talks)

Oh?

1-5-19

FARLEY

Oh yes. Miss Sally is desperate to build that schoolhouse. I just have to find that money some way...somehow...

COOKIE

Farley? Can I make a suggestion?

(Puts down lipstick)

FARLEY

Of course, Cookie. Shoot!

(COWGIRLS duck when HE says this)

COOKIE

Well, I was thinking that if there was a community way to raise the money...you know, a way that the community could pay for the schoolhouse without exactly calling it that...Maybe the horse race money could go towards a "good cause"...or better yet, get somebody to match the money that's won on the Saturday horse races...that way the town would be winning on both counts....ya see what I mean?

FARLEY

(Lost in thought)

Yes. I think I do. Figure out a way to make the community pay for the schoolhouse, but not really KNOW they are doing it. Figure out a way....and everybody wins...

(Whispers to audience)

... especially me!

SALLY

What did you say?

FARLEY

I said, ah...excuse me... Thank you, Cookie. You have been a great help to the cause.

(Gets up to leave)

FARLEY

Cookie, if all goes well, when next I see you, we will be on our way to a new schoolhouse.

(Exit FARLEY)

COOKIE

I love it when a plan comes together.

(The COWGIRLS have been observing this scene)

Come on, ladies. Surely you have a song for this occasion!

(COOKIE changes scene card as COWGIRLS sing)

(Music cue) SONG - SCHOOLDAYS - THE COWGIRLS

SCHOOL DAYS SCHOOL DAYS GOOD OLD GOLDEN RULES DAYS
READING AND WRITING AND `RITHMETIC
TAUGHT TO THE TUNE OF A HICK'RY STICK
I WAS YOUR GIRL IN CALICO
YOU WERE MY BASHFUL BAREFOOT BEAU
YOU WROTE ON MY SLATE I LOVE YOU SO
WHEN WE WERE A COUPLE OF KIDS

(Lights fade on hotel during song)

ACT I

SCENE VI

SETTING: The bank

AT RISE: Lights up on bank. CHARLIE is there counting. MR. HARDCORE is watching him count. FARLEY does some business in the bank. When finished, HE steps outside of bank to observe. HARDCORE leaves, then CHARLIE closes up the bank. FARLEY hides, then tiptoes to audience)

FARLEY

The bank is closed. Nighttime is near...I see the moon rising over Wilson Peak. Time for all GOOD boys and girls to be in bed...time for CONNIVING and CLEVER men to figure a way...to be wed...

(Music cue) SONG - IT'S ME WHO ROBBED THE BANK - FARLEY

THIS MUST BE A CAREFUL PLAN
SO INTRICATE THAT NO MAN CAN
DETECT THE SOURCE OF WHENCE IT CAME
A SECRET TO BE SANK
A SCHEME THAT OUTWITS EVERYONE
A FORMULA MOST VENTURESOME
A RESOURCE FOR THE SCHOOLHOUSE
IS MY PLAN TO ROB...THE BANK

IN THE DAY WHILE ALL IS TAME
THE FOLKS IN TOWN WON'T GUESS MY GAME
I'LL WEAR DISGUISES SUCH SURPRISES
WHO WILL BE TO BLAME?
STEALTHILY I'LL FAST APPROACH
NOT UNLIKE A HUNGRY ROACH
A SLY OLD FOX A WILY WOLF
THE KING OF MELODRAME!

FARLEY (CONT'D)

SALLY, OH SALLY...I'M DOING IT FOR YOU
SALLY O'MALLEY...SUCH LOVE YOU NEVER KNEW!

STEP RIGHT UP COME RIGHT THIS WAY
FOR THIS SERVICE YOU'LL NOT PAY
TAKE A LOOK YOUR MONEY'S SAFE
AND YOU HAVE ME TO THANK
IN THE BANK YOUR CASH CAN STAY
SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY
TRUSTING SOULS WILL NEVER KNOW
IT'S ME WHO ROBBED THE BANK!

SALLY, OH SALLY....OUR MARRIAGE IS TO BE
SALLY O'MALLEY...THEN YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!

(Sigh)

THIS MUST BE A CAREFUL PLAN
SO INTRICATE THAT NO MAN CAN
DETECT THE SOURCE FROM WHENCE IT CAME
A SECRET TO BE SANK
A SCHEME THAT OUTWITS EVERYONE
A FORMULA MOST VENTURESOME
SUCH A SECRET SUCH SURPRISES
DON'T FORGET THE DROLL DISGUISES
THIS COULD BE THE GRANDE FINALE
ALL FOR FARLEY AND MISS SALLY

(Pause...looks around)

SHHHH! I PRAY YOU DON'T REVEAL...

(Whispers to audience)

IT'S ME WHO ROBBED THE BANK!

BLACKOUT