written by Don Baker and Dudley Cocke, and acted by Mr. Baker, Gary Shemp, and Frankie Taylor. The production combined dramatic and Southern Appalachian story-telling techniques with the use of slides of period photographs and motion pictures. It was a remarkable entertainment, the likes of which New York folks don’t encounter every day.

"Red Fox" concerns events that took place in the 1880s and 1890s in the Cumberland Mountains, “where Virginia and Kentucky back up on another.” The central figure is the legendary Dave Taylor, a popular preacher whose activities also included doctoring, surveying, and serving as U.S. marshals. Taylor acquired the nickname of Red Fox from his uncanny ability “to slip through the whoo-hoo grass like.” In 1883, he was hanged for murder, the second hanging in the 27-year history of Wise County. The first man hanged, less than 14 months previously, was Red Talt Hall, whom Taylor as a special deputy had tracked down and arrested.

"Red Fox/Second Hanging" unfolds the close connection between the two events and their relationship to the Big Stone Gap industrialists and financiers who invaded the mountains in the speculative boom of 1890-93.

"Correcting the record"

Mr. Cocke explained in an interview that one of the reasons for doing Doc Taylor’s story was “to correct the historic record.” Part of the story was told from quite a different angle in John J. Fox Jr.’s "The Trail of the Lone-


For their version, the "Red Fox" collaborators went to original event records, newspaper clippings, and other available sources. Most important, they went to the mountain folk who had grown up with the stories of the events and individuals concerned.

“Our version has been kept alive by people,” said Mr. Cocke. "It was different from much of what was published. But we also discovered that accounts in books differed much more widely from each other than the recollections of the different people we talked with. So what we're saying is, 'Here's another look at this time.' "

An Appalshop project

Taylor and Cocke converted their material into a blend of story-telling and drama in which the trio of young actors alternately narrate and re-enact the complex account of what happened. Working on an almost bare stage and with the simplest of props, the cast draws the spectator irresistibly into this strange story of mountain conflicts, the coming of big-money exploiters, and the corruption of justice.

In its own vivid way, "Red Fox" reflects the basic purpose of Appalshop, Inc., the parent organization to which Roadside Theater belongs. Appalshop was founded in 1960 by the Office of Economic Opportunity to record the heritage and struggle for survival of the people in the Appalachian region of mountains and coal mines.

Now an independent cooperative financed by federal, state, foundation, and private funding, it is one of the largest arts organizations in Kentucky, with a yearly budget of about $300,000. Appalshop has trained and employed more than 100 people in various media arts disciplines. Its projects include documentary films, still photography, June Appal Recordings and Mountain Review, a quarterly magazine.

Roadside Theater was founded in 1974 by Mr. Baker and several others with the idea of discovering a kind of theatrical form that made sense for mountain audiences. The troupe began telling traditional "Grandfather" tales unique to its part of the southern Appalachian, sometimes in unison, sometimes "hastening lines back and forth, feeding off of each other's rhythms," they developed a style which they ultimately applied to "Red Fox," which premiered in 1976.