Mark Twain Tonight w/Hal Holbrook [1]

"I haven't a particle of confidence in a man who has no redeeming petty vices." Mark Twain -- *A Biography*

Hal Holbrook's recreation of Mark Twain in the one man show *Mark Twain Tonight* [2] has long been a favorite of mine. Mark Twain was controversial in life and has remained so long after his death. One of his most famous books *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [3] has been called everything from the father of the American novel to trash, though the latter has been for differing reasons through the years. Often we forget that Mark Twain was not just a writer. He was, in his time, highly regarded and in demand on the lecture circuit. Today we might think of him as a standup comic.

Mark Twain Tonight [4] is about as close as we will ever get to seeing Mark Twain on stage. Holbrook studied hours of film made during his later years and listened over and over again to the few existing recordings of his voice in order to imitate not just his sound, but his timing as well. Holbrook does not follow a set script when he recreates Mark Twain. He has developed a large repertoire of stories, quotes, and readings which he uses to make every show a different experience. To see Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight* is to go back in time and enjoy one of the greatest humorists in all of American history.

Here is one last bit of trivia about Twain: he was considered to be a master of the silent pause. It is said he walked out on stage one night to what was a very hostile and humorless audience. When he walked out to the podium he began looking over his notes, occasionally looking up at the people in the house and then continued looking over his notes until he heard a sort of nervous laughter ..."It was then," he said, "that I had them."
Posted by Keith C. on August 18, 2011
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