

The LINKVILLE Players PRESENTS



Kevin Coleman

The show man

also wrote and directed his own play, “In the Beginning,” which ran in the fall of 2021.

After performing in so many shows over the years, Coleman describes himself with a laugh as “small-time famous.” When he’s occasionally recognized on the street, he’ll “walk off a little pepped up.”

Indeed, in the small city of Klamath Falls, where the next largest city is hundreds of miles away, the 20-year letter carrier says he’s “often surprised” if people haven’t heard about the theater. “For the people who know about the theater, it is a big part of the community,” he said.

“Everything about the theater is small,” he says of the 118-seat venue, so they have to work with the scale. A few seasons ago, the company performed the comedy “M*A*S*H” with 30 actors, many of whom had to sit backstage to make space for others to move freely on and off the small stage.

One of the most satisfying aspects of community theater, Coleman says, is that the limited resources require creativity and ingenuity on the part of those involved, which tends to bring out the best in them. “You’ve got to make things work,” he said. “We’ve had to come up with stuff in 15 minutes with less stuff than MacGyver had.”

That sometimes includes slapping together boards, joysticks, knobs, doorbell buttons and other analog parts for a production. “It’s always an experience trying to get something to work,” Coleman says.

The carrier loves meeting fellow players. “You’ve got people from all walks of life, people you might never have [otherwise] met,” he said, adding, “We have these pre-conceived notions about what people are”—then they switch to someone else onstage.

There typically are eight weeks of rehearsals before opening night, and five shows per season. All those who work and perform at the theater are volunteers, and so no one gets paid. Any money they take in from ticket sales goes to improving the theater or to paying royalties for shows—a fee paid to secure the rights to perform a playwright’s work.

Coleman says he has been doing voices for “as long as I remember,” and he has become the go-to guy at his playhouse. He loves going on YouTube to do research by watching clips and practicing accents.

His favorite roles to date have been “completely dif-

“It’s fun pretending to be someone else for a while,” **Kevin Coleman** says.

The Klamath Falls, OR Branch 1784 member had wanted to try his hand at acting ever since he had a bit part in “Annie” in the fourth grade, so when he found an audition notice in the local newspaper 20 years ago, “I thought, ‘What the heck,’” he says.

Shortly afterward, Coleman tried out and won a small role. “I just wanted to give it a try and see what it was like,” he added.

His first show, he was nervous, to put it mildly. “What if someone judges me? [I was] so self-conscious,” he recalled. But he caught the theater bug and has been doing it since.

Acting, he says, is “an experience unlike anything else,” adding: “I’ve always been a performer. This gives me a good outlet.”

He’s been involved in more than 20 productions (all but one at his hometown Linkville Playhouse), and he



Scenes from some of the shows Kevin Coleman has appeared in.

ferent from himself,” he said, including Owen Musser in the “The Foreigner” (he got to play “a jerk of a guy”) and Adrian in “Private Eyes,” where he was able to use his English accent.

Another time, someone had to drop out of “August: Osage County,” and Coleman was asked to step in on short notice and take a small part, which he agreed to do. Then another actor got sick and couldn’t perform, so Coleman agreed to quickly learn that part as well. That was one of his favorite experiences, just because of the challenge of switching between two characters and learning the parts in a week.

Another challenge that the carrier always finds worthwhile involves fast-paced three-man shows, where there are 20 to 30 costume changes in an hour and a half.

For his own play, “In the Beginning,” Coleman wondered, “What would it look like if three people were used to create Earth?”

The satirical play follows the trio’s look at humanity’s evolution over time, touching on religions of the world and highlighting the differences among them. “We’re really not all that different, but we’re killing each other over this stuff,” Coleman notes. Dinosaurs are also involved.

“It’s influenced by Mel Brooks’s ‘History of the World,’ of course,” he said, referencing the famous comedy film.

Coleman sat down and started typing one day, ignoring everything else around him. “I had ideas floating around,” he said. “Every waking moment of the day, I was sitting on the computer, typing away. Four days later, I had the bare bones of it.

“My wife was ready to strangle me,” he added with a laugh.

It was approved by the playhouse, the set design was planned out—and then the carrier ran into a string of bad luck in trying to show his play.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused everything to be pushed back. The theater eventually reopened and the crew built the set, and then a week before the scheduled opening night, a COVID-19 surge followed by new restrictions delayed plans again, by a few weeks.

A new plan was set. But as Coleman and his actors readied to finally open the show, there was a fire in the building, above the theater.

“I was devastated,” Coleman said, adding that he thought, “We’re done; it’s just not meant to be.”

They persevered, however, recasting the show and opening in September 2021. He debated whether to perform in it, and now says he’s glad he didn’t take an acting role and instead stuck solely to directing.

“Getting to see my own creation out there was a highlight. It’s absolutely fantastic seeing it come to life,” he said, although he notes that it was simultaneously nerve-wracking and exhilarating.

“In the Beginning” can be viewed on YouTube. “I really hope people get a chance to look this show up,” Coleman said. “Who knows? Maybe word about the show will get out—people of different religions will start having a conversation and things can change.”

While working the front of house at the theater (ensuring quality customer service for attendees before, during and after a show, usually at the box office or in the lobby) recently, he spent time during intermission writing in his notebook—ideas, dialogues—and soon had 20 pages. That draft has turned into a second play, a comedy titled “No Place Like Home for the Holidays,” which he now is polishing. Because of the topic, he is hoping it will open around Thanksgiving of 2023.

Quite a few of his fellow letter carriers know about Coleman’s talents, and he says that many of them have given him positive feedback about his play. Former Branch 1784 President **Justin Barker**, for example, noted how hard Coleman worked through the delays of his play.

And just like Hollywood has the Oscars and Broadway has the Tonys, for the past 18 years, Klamath Falls’s Linkville Playhouse has held the Klammie Awards, in which patrons vote for their favorite performances and productions of the prior season. Coleman has won eight so far.

But the success hasn’t gone to his head. He tries to spot new actors who appear apprehensive and help them work through their jitters.

The carrier isn’t totally sure what’s in his future regarding theater. “Whatever comes along, really,” he says. He’s currently performing as Harry Pepper, a telephone repairman, in “Barefoot in the Park.”

“My first love will always be on stage,” Coleman said. “I love the spotlight. I enjoy bringing entertainment to people. It’s my small way to fight evil and darkness in the world. Putting out light and love helps to make a difference.” **PR**