

# Roles vary for Center, on stage and in life

By: Melissa Benzel

People play various roles in life. Perhaps no one knows this better than Luther Center.

With the opening of "I'm Sorry the Bridge is Out, You'll Have to Spend the Night," Center is set to star in his 25th production with Roundtown Players.

In this production, Center will play Dr. Frankenstein, a role he says is fun and easy.

"This one's like, as an actor, park the old brain at home, just have fun with it, and that's what I really needed," Center said.

Center has been involved with Roundtown Players since about 1985 and originally he wasn't in it for the acting.

"I'm an engineer at DuPont and a gentleman who works there, also an engineer, was doing tech back in '85 and I just moved from Columbus back to Circleville and he asked me (if I'd be interested in helping out and that's how it started out," Center said.

"I came to do tech on The Turner Stumbles, was the name of the show and I've been on and off ever since," Center said.

Center came to the theater a novice, but he said it was something he had always thought about doing.

"I've always been a show off," he said. "I had never done anything in my life in that vein. I always thought I could. I just always thought I could. Finally I just decided to on a little tiny part so I tried for a few and of course I got the part, because I was there all the time."

From there Center has been involved in a lot of roles at the theater.

"I thought I did pretty good and I guess other people did too because since that time I've had a lot of leads out there and so forth," Center said.

But those are not the only type of roles Center plays. In everyday life, Center plays many roles. There's a lot of music aficionados, for example.

"I'm just a music fanatic," he said.

"I'm a Beatles fan, my license plate says Beatles Fan, I like the Who, but I'm more of an alternative rock fan, but that doesn't mean what it used to," he said. "I find myself drifting toward old country music also."

Being a huge music fan, he should have a lot of music. And he does, he has more than 3,000 records in his collection and boasts three CDs that he has. But his love for music was so strong that he decided he wanted to make it also.

"I always wanted to sing in a band. I always thought I could sing in a band and I auditioned for a band and ever since I've been singing in a band as well," Center said.

He is the lead singer of a local classic rock cover band called Magic and when he's up there he thinks about in the same way he thinks about acting.

"The stage helped a lot with that (singing) because I don't get nervous at all on stage. Now I did at first, but after a couple of productions I never get nervous. I know, I know my lines so I don't have anything to be nervous about," he said. "And that helped a lot when I was singing in a band. I never once got nervous in the band so that was pretty cool."

Magic is on a hiatus right now, Center said.

"It's been a good run. I enjoyed it. We all show various levels of disinterest right now, but we still do it," he said.

When he's not playing the lead singer role, Center may be found playing the sportscaster role: He does the play by play announcing for Friday night football games on CGTV-5 along with Terry Leasure.

And when it's not time for that role perhaps he can be found playing the role of full-time engineer with DuPont. Center realizes the considerable difference between his work and his hobbies.

"To me, being an engineer and being artsy as well is something that

to me comes pretty natural," Center said. "I don't think and this is just my opinion, I don't think I excel at either. I'm just real good at both."

By trade, Center is a mechanical engineer for which he holds a degree from Georgia Tech. He also holds a degree in physics from Eastern Kentucky University.

Center is a 1976 graduate of Rockcastle County High School.

"I grew up in Central Kentucky. Rockcastle County, for those people who go to Lake Cumberland, which they all do from up here they pass right by my old high school," Center said.

Then Center found a job with DuPont and moved to Circleville, where he currently plays all the above roles plus that of a father. Center has a son, Andy.

But among all these roles, Center's upcoming role as Dr. Frankenstein in one of the public won't want to miss he said.

"If this is any incentive for people to come not only do they get to hear Luther sing, which is something they might have done before, but they get to see him dance and that alone is worth the price of admission," Center said.

Center said his character is not as complex as his last character, but he still tries to find his way around them in the same manner.

"I take pride in developing a character or at least a voice if not a character," Center said.

He said the depth of the character usually determines how much preparation is involved with forming the character.

"If the character is very complex it can be hard each night to get into the character," he said. "Sometimes it requires saying 'I need some quiet time guys I'm going to go over to this corner in the dark and close my eyes and think about this'."

"But in some cases, it's like I'm ready - let's go," he said. "It's all over the place - it depends."

But no matter how he gets into the roles he plays it's obvious, even to him that he plays a lot.

"By the time I'm 30 I've never done anything on stage, and now I'm going just a little bit of everything," Center said.

But doing everything can sometimes leave Center wanting more.

"I sometimes wished I excelled at something in particular, but at least I do real good at a lot of things," Center said.

With all these roles it's sometimes hard for Center to find time for himself, but he says he makes it a point to.

"It's hard," he said. "One thing I do is I shut down some days I kinda disappear and don't let anybody find me."

That's why if you try to find him playing one of his roles today, most likely you'll fail, because today is a shutdown day.

The following are Center's answers to the snapshot questions.

**Favorite Part of Acting with Roundtown Players**

"The theater folk for getting a laugh (if it's a comedy)."

**Least Favorite Part of Acting with Roundtown Players**

"Rehearsal."

**First Job**

"Selling vacuum cleaners door to door."

**Favorite Snack Food**

"My favorite I almost never eat because it's fattening, it's probably Doritos, but I don't eat them anymore so it's popcorn."

**Favorite Restaurant**

"JR Hooks"

**Dream Trip or Vacation**

"My ultimate thing would be a five day cruise where I pick the live bands for each of the five nights."

**Favorite Movie**

"Pulp Fiction"

**Best Advice Ever Received**

"Just be nice to people."

**Personal Hero**

"My paternal grandfather, he was a great guy and my dad."

**Life Goal**

"Raise a good son, a son that can be his own man. I would like to retire from DuPont with a full career, there at a reasonable young age and what I would like to do after that is pursue acting as a profession."

(This article is a reprint from The Circleville Herald's October 12, 2002 issue.)

## No Paper Next Week

Due to the Christmas holiday, the *Mt. Vernon Signal* will not publish next week.

Our next issue will be January 2, 2003.

The *Signal* office will be closed

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and will reopen December 30th.



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