

Out of the Comfort Zone

Villy grad finding his way by pushing the limits of his craft



St. Thomas of Villanova graduate Kyle Kimmerly will bring the play he co-wrote and directs to the Windsor Walkerville Fringe festival beginning July 23.

(Windsor, Ontario, Wednesday July 19, 2017) – Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable is an attitude that is serving Kyle Kimmerly well.

A graduate of St. Thomas of Villanova Catholic High School, the 25-year-old actor, writer and director has become accustomed to the uncertainty and discomfort that can often go hand-in-hand with a career in the dramatic arts, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

“There's never any sitting around watching and waiting for life to happen, because it just doesn't,” he says matter-of-factly during a phone interview from his home in Toronto. “You can't just wait for someone else to give you a part. We're going to make our own work. It's just more fun to do what you love.”

In keeping with that do-it-yourself outlook on life, Kimmerly – who graduated from the University of Windsor’s Bachelor of Fine Arts Acting program in 2015 – teamed up with fellow graduate and Ottawa native Tamlynn Bryson to co-author and direct a play that will be staged at the upcoming Windsor-Walkerville Fringe Festival and deals with a very uncomfortable subject.

Aptly named *Bedwetter*, it’s a one person show starring Bryson – a former bed wetter herself – who co-wrote the play with Kimmerly as a way of confronting the issue of nocturnal enuresis. It’s been billed as “heartbreaking yet sometimes hilarious story of becoming a woman while still feeling like a child,” but Kimmerly adds that it’s a way to confront the stigma of an issue that’s often considered a taboo subject.

“It’s her personal story,” he says. “(Bedwetting) is something that happens to so many people, but everyone’s too embarrassed to talk about it because they get made fun of. Which really kind of sucks, because it’s normal. It’s not something you can control. One in seven kids do it, so let’s talk about it. One of our goals is just to get the conversation started.”

The effect has been profound. So far, the play has been staged at a comedy club in Toronto as well as a six-show run in June at the London Fringe Festival, where it received rave reviews. As director and stage manager, Kimmerly said he’s earned an entirely new perspective on the issue through watching Bryson, who he describes as an “insanely talented performer,” and by talking with audience members after the shows.

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- Kyle Kimmerly

“Lots of people come up and talk to us about the problem,” he says. “This is something that they never would have talked about before, so it’s nice to see that happen.”

Billed as a PG-13 show, Kimmerly said it’s written for a more mature audience, but he hopes to do a rewrite on it to make it more age appropriate for younger audiences so that it can be toured through schools to help de-stigmatize the issue.

In fact, he hopes the play might one day be staged at Villanova, where getting outside his comfort zone was something that was instilled in him very early on by his drama teachers.

“Miss Jeffrey was very adamant about us not getting comfortable with any particular type of acting,” he said. “She exposed us to Greek theatre, Brecht, mask work, and all kinds of different things. We did our musicals, but she really opened our eyes to what else was out there. She really pushed the boundaries.”

That willingness to explore new avenues has also served him well. Since graduating from university he has remained busy with his craft, co-directing the 150-member cast of the Canadian Badlands Passion Play in Alberta, where he understudied as Jesus, and he's been doing a wide variety of well-paying, live promotional gigs for such companies as Honda, Kia, Canadian Tire, and Skittles.

"You use a lot of the skills you learned in school," he says. "A lot of it is just engaging with people, communicating with them, and keeping them interested."

It was in between those gigs that he spent six months writing *Bedwetter* with Bryson, who he teamed up with while they were still studying in Windsor to create Drawing Board Productions, which now has two other shows to its name. He continues to work on writing new projects, as well as auditioning for other shows. He also plans to take some more classes in order to keep his skills fresh.

Through it all, he's decided that he can't get discouraged and that he constantly needs to be improving if he's going to make his dream a reality.

"You can be getting four or five auditions a week, but that doesn't necessarily mean you're getting any work," he said. "You can't just assume you're good enough, because there's always going to be someone out there who's better."

Bedwetter will be shown at The Windsor-Walkerville Fringe Festival between July 23-29. Admission is \$12. Visit the web site for more info:
<http://www.windsorwalkervillefringefest.com>